

Chapter-One

Introduction

Diasporic Consciousness and the Formation of 'Third Space'

[F]or me, the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and set up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.

(Bhabha, "Third Space," 211)

This research analyses the 'hybrid' status of characters in *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*, more in alignment with Homi Bhabha's observation in the opening citation. Many earlier researches in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee and Manjushree Thapa have tended to focus on the psycho-social difficulties of immigrant characters in their respective works. However, this research illumines the lives these characters follow in the foreign lands as something of historical necessity, rather than the 'forced' and 'worse' form of human existence. Lives of immigrants as portrayed in these works do not come to a stoppage even after their (un)settlement in foreign lands. They live in-between native culture and alien culture; they are faced with difficulties to adjust through often 'alien' cultural realities where their original cultural location becomes a far cry. Yet, this new location comes with the possibility of emergence of 'new' space in-between. What Bhabha has called 'received wisdom' no longer hold validity in the lives of these characters; they tend to free themselves from the shackles of cultural persistence back home, and flourish. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the resources of hope ingrained in Lahiri's

The Namesake, Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* that Bhabha and other theorists have cherished and nurtured in the discussion of locating postcolonial subjectivities.

What provides the impetus for this research is the question of how people of different races and cultures in the subsequent novels interact in the spaces of the other locations and construct their identities. As an alternative to the notion of an 'original' identity, forever fixed in the antagonistic paradigm of 'us' and 'them', or alterity, Homi Bhabha and other theorists offer the possibility of a 'third space' for the enunciation of subjectivity. This research seeks to answer the question if there is a return to the performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration.

This research work discusses the critical process of the formation of third space. Therefore, discussion of the 'first' space and the 'second' space sets forth in the initial chapter. Though migration has been ubiquitous phenomenon, especially after the decolonization of nation states, this research chooses South Asian diaspora community in America as its research issue which is subsequently portrayed in Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*. *The Namesake* and *Jasmine* are based on Indian-American diaspora experiences whereas *Seasons of Flight* portrays the life of Nepali-American immigrant. Taken together, these works represent the current situation of diaspora community from Indian subcontinent, a large part of south Asia that exists at present.

However, the reason and duration after each major characters' flight to foreign land varies significantly: In *The Namesake*, Ashoke Ganguly departs from Bengal, India to America to further pursue his academic career, lives with his wife and children as a teaching faculty in American university for a long period of time. In

Jasmine, Jyoti is a widowed Punjabi girl, victim of tumultuous history of India after partition, who follows her dead husband's dream to 'reach America at any cost,' and manages to sneak into America illegally. In *Seasons of Flight*, Prema wins diversity visa lottery and leaves Nepal to work and live in America even though she had a respected career back home. In spite of varying spacio-temporal realities back home, all three narratives are loosely connected in terms of the characters' motif after fleeing to foreign land—political turmoil, sense of insecurity, and above all, dream for better life. The thread of 'concord in discord' extends well through the characters' social positioning in their home country; they belong to high caste family and are well-off in their academic career—the cream of society with immense possibilities of growth. Their worries are almost similar though; the sense of individual and familial insecurity at the backdrop of communal and political violence reigning high in their respective countries.

So, deep sense of dissatisfaction with native place, people and culture mixes with their individual wish to board a flight. In this sense the visible and apparent causes which encourage them to 'be flushed out' into alien territory is somehow a cover after their own psychology of diaspora-in-making. They were preparing for what was to come. This holds true at least in the case of Prema in *Seasons of Flight*. After her training in forestry, she prefers to live in a small village-bazaar, not in village proper or bazaar proper-neither too far nor too near, in-between. Her relationship with her family and friends is also one of the many other instances to reveal her disavowal and disengagement; Prema never confirms to any of the deep allegiances in relationship. Similarly, Ashoke, in *The Namesake*, distances himself from social activities. Accident, train accident, has to occur to change his mind for migration; he never readily and easily accepted things as they are. *Jasmine* infuses

fate as a driving force in its protagonist's life which she goes on defying for life-time. This defiance is viewed as crucial attitude in diaspora-in-becoming where individual identity is a colorless fluid which goes on adding colors as per the necessity of situation. Bhabha's emphasis on this transient nature of hybridity, instead of fixed notion of either/or belongingness forms the core theoretical departure of this research.

Evolution of diaspora consciousness, or belongingness, and spaces of identity formation of immigrants, forms the major part of the first chapter. In this process, the first space—the beginning spot of individual allegiance to native culture, religion, politics, caste and creed, etc.—is discussed at length along with the touristic process of stereotyping and orientalizing of this identity carried forth through colonizing mission. The second space then is the consequence of encounter between native and foreign, a breeding ground for cross-pollination, germinating in cosmopolitanism, color fetish, severing roots, creating 'mimic men,' or *bhadralok*, the necessary 'staff' community and native spokesperson for imperial culture. The third space, the major theoretical troupe of this research, is the state of condensation, not evaporation, of first and second spaces. Migrants learn to accept reality as it is and seek to move forward. Because the chances they slip are high given to their fluid base and edgy steps, they let go the first and second spaces. But, the nature of things around them does not permit them to remain in the sense of loss forever. They have to wake-up and into the new reality of their life, the third space, they must succumb to. Along with these discussions of spaces, this chapter also broaches things to be discussed in coming chapters. That is, the discussion of selected novels for this research purpose in the light of 'exuberance' of third space is carried forth. It is hoped that this discussion of spaces in this chapter captures the historical evolution of diaspora identity which

has given way to migrant identity at present, provides with the ample starter for the discussion of the novels themselves in the chapters to follow.

Robert Frost's famous lines from his poetry that is evocative of the place of home in individual's life reads: "Home is the place, when you have to go there, / they have to take you in." ("The Death of the Hired Man," Lines 122-123). Most of the literary works on the pangs of leaving home written over centuries of human civilization make their wandering characters wish to return to their homeland at least for 'peaceful' death. What is so 'noisy' in dying at the place where people have lived and struggled for life time? And, what is so soothing and comforting to come back to die and lie in the soil peacefully even after the death in the place they have left far behind and for so long period of time? Why this expectation and sense of certainty and security with home as a place where whenever 'one goes they have to take you in,' to borrow Frost's words? To answer this question, many theorists, poets and philosophers have invested considerable time and words, more so while discussing about individual and communal identity and effect of 'home' in people's lives. Literature has tried to frame the nature of 'first space' called 'home' for a long period of time. Similarly, this research seeks to identify the nature of home inscribed in many prominent theoretical works in alignment with *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*.

Stuart Hall attempts to theorize the identity and nature of first space in an introduction to his book *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* by questioning the emergence of identity. "[I]n relation to what set of problems, does the irreducibility of the concept, identity, emerge?"(1) Hall asks. Indeed the supplementary title of the introduction to the book is itself a question, "Who Needs Identity?" This is a

rhetorical question with a departure for arguments on what Hall is positing in the work. So, he immediately answers back, "I think the answer here lies in its centrality to the question of agency and politics" (1). Hall elaborates the role of 'agency' and 'politics' as following:

By politics, I mean both the significance in modern forms of political movement of the signifier 'identity', its pivotal relationship to a politics of location - but also the manifest difficulties and instabilities which have characteristically affected all contemporary forms of identity politics. By 'agency' I express no desire whatsoever to return to an unmediated and transparent notion of the subject or identity as the centered author of social practice, or to restore an approach which 'places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity.' (1)

Modern forms of political movement in the first space, that is home, play a significant role in shaping of one's cultural identity. Hall here hints to the process of organized political movements against the backdrop of colonization. A native subject is however engaged and influenced by the rubrics of political movements and affirms or seeks his/her identity in the premises of such movements. The leader, or the agency, of such movements somehow dictates of subject's consciousness, as Hall calls, 'the centered author of social practice.'

To furnish his notion of flourishing of identity consciousness, Hall puts the notion of Michael Foucault. He quotes Foucault: "[O]rigin of all historicity - which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness" (qtd. In Hall 1). Hall provides with details on why he goes for Foucault's notion of historicity: "I agree with Foucault that what we require here is not a theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of

discursive practice" (1). But, He uses this notion to further his own argument regarding the development of identity:

However, I believe that what this decentring requires - as the evolution of Foucault's work clearly shows - is not an abandonment or abolition of 'the subject' but a reconceptualization - thinking it in its new, displaced or decentred position within the paradigm. It seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs - or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all such subjectification appears to entail, the question of identification.(1)

Hall contends that identity is subject to change, not change in terms of complete transformation but change according to socio-historical reality, or 'paradigm.' The 'new' subject is not aloof from cultural identity at home. Rather, it follows a 'discursive practice.' The 'whenever you go, they have to take in' concept about home is rooted in subject in spite of his/her exposition to, and encounter with, other societies and cultures.

This research allows for an inclusive study of the reciprocating relationships between culture, language, and the representation and acculturation of identity. This work addresses the present and future sense of self of characters, it can also keep diasporic studies from becoming too limiting by exploring the different voices at work in the characters' construction of self. Lahiri's *The Namesake*, for example, can be viewed as a reproach against the concept of identity-crisis of immigrants in foreign land. The protagonist has both the Bengali name of Nikhil, meaning 'he who is entire encompassing all,' as well as the rather curious name of Gogol bestowed on him by

his father, Ashok Ganguli. When Ashok lies injured after a train wreck, the fluttering pages of the edition of the Nikolai Gogol's stories he has been reading catch the attention of rescuers who might otherwise not have seen him. The name of Gogol is perhaps therefore a lucky one to give a son linked to a new life. "The prospect of naming family's first sahib" (*The Namesake*, 25) is celebrated with much enthusiasm in India. This process is supposed to be carried out by the elder member of family, in this case the responsibility falls into great-grandmother's jurisdiction. This tradition continues in the naming process of Indian-American immigrants as well:

Though the letter was sent months ago, in July, it has yet to arrive. Asima and Ashok are not terribly concerned. [A]fter all, they both know an infant doesn't really need a name. Names can wait. In India, parents take their time. It was not unusual for years to pass before the right name, the best possible name, was determined. Asima and Ashok can both cite example of cousins who were not officially named until they were registered, at six or seven in school. The Nandis and Dr Gupta understand perfectly, 'Of course, you must wait,' they agree, 'wait for the name in his great-grandmother's letter.' Besides, there are always pet names to tide one over: a practice of Bengali nomenclature grants, to every single person, two names. (25)

These lines resemble simultaneous autonomy and interconnectedness with cultural identity at home of the migrant characters. As Lahiri's characters remember back to earlier generations and look ahead to future ones, and as they constantly struggle to construct an identity in their interactions with diverse and traditional characters, Lahiri's stories emphasize the transience not only of a sense of self dependent upon locale, but also of how a sense of self is always contingent upon a character's ability

to cope with and communicate with an ever-changing world. In general, the characters who rely too heavily on homeland nostalgia and the characters who look only toward progressing in diasporic space, are unsuccessful in finding a space for their own identity. To truly construct self revolves around the ability to transcend these oppositions as either-or scenarios and accept and navigate them as personal options or beliefs.

Similarly, *Jasmine* is result of varied ways of adapting to immigrant life in America and particular types of American identity, a process that sometimes calls into question the viability of national identity itself. But Mukherjee nonetheless creates the tradition and cultural identity of her character in many instances. The narrative sometimes revisits the protagonist's postcolonial pasts through memories and flashbacks, and sometimes more explicitly through the narrator's interjection of historical details about the country left behind in the process of immigration. This provides with significant insight of home imbedded in 'subject' in question. Jasmine's narrative is set against the violent historical backdrop of post-independence, post-partition India: her family comes to settle in their village after the events of 1947 make them outsiders in their ancestral city of Lahore. For Jasmine's family, an acute sense of loss and displacement defines the post-partition, postcolonial condition. They were forced violently from their comfortable, upper-middle class lifestyle in Lahore – where they had previously owned land and shops, lived in a sprawling home, and were respected for their family name – and forced into “a village of flaky mud huts” (*Jasmine* 41). Jasmine narrates how this loss of home, homeland, and status plagues her family:

Mataji, my mother, couldn't forget the Partition Riots. Muslims sacked our house. Neighbors' servants tugged off earrings and bangles, defiled

grottoes, sabered my grandfather's horse. Life shouldn't have turned out that way! I've never been to Lahore, but the loss survives in the instant replay of my family story: forever Lahore smokes, forever my parents flee. (41)

The trauma of this departure forces Jasmine's parents into an exile that makes her mother distrustful and pessimistic. Her father in particular never comes to accept the changed reality. Jasmine describes his perpetual attachment to Lahore in the kurtas he continued to wear, "the Pakistani radio broadcasts he listened to, and his disgust for anything not related to Lahore – including the mangoes, women, music, and Punjabi dialect of the Indian side of the partition" (42). In the next generation, this trauma replays itself – more and more violently each time– throughout Jasmine's life in India.

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* explores the process of 'Nepaliness' being confirmed in the life of immigrant living in America. In one moment, Prema delineates 'aesthetics of dislocation' as one component of an Nepali American identity:

The other is that we have all come under the sign of America. In Nepal, no one would ask me if I were Asian American or Asian. Here we are part of a minority, and the vision of being 'unserved' comes into our consciousness. It is from this consciousness that I create my life and new identity. (*Seasons of Flight* 16)

Nepal-born generation of immigrant like Prema embarks on the psychological and socio-cultural journey of 'becoming' and, more specifically, adopting a Nepali American identity while affirming her cultural past. In the story, Prema once returns to Nepal after five years to visit her family. *Seasons of Flight* explores the cultural dissonances experienced by immigrants caught between the culture of their birthplace

and the unfamiliar ways of their adopted home. Thapa as an author incorporates her opinions and perspective into the literature to better portray the experiences of her characters. The interpretation and comprehension of 'familiarity' and 'foreignness' function to cater their life in becoming.

Creative and critical works of literature, which evoke to the theory and practice of non-western societies after political decolonization, is the basis of this research work. Critical works on the nature of non-western societies is discussed under the rubric of postcolonial criticism, hence this discussion.

The idea of 'home' is the point of departure for postcolonial studies. Postcolonial primarily meant the excavation of 'home' culture that had been discarded, marginalized and suppressed under colonial culture. In their influential *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin argue that "any culture affected by colonization can be seen as part of a postcolonial geography" (1). Ashcroft et. al. write: "The semantic basis of the term 'postcolonial' might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power" (2). Temporal factor plays an important role in shaping early postcolonial studies: "It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence . . . in constructing national literary histories, or in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories" (2). Independence is the milestone from where colonialism ends and postcolonialism begins. Ashcroft further writes:

Generally speaking, though, the term 'colonial' has been used for the period before independence and a term indicating a national writing, such as 'modern Canadian writing' or 'recent West Indian literature' has been employed to distinguish the period after independence. We

use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. (2)

The extension of colonialism even after political decolonization of nation states is the focus of present day postcolonial criticism: "This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). The suggestion of this new definition of the term spreads across disciplines: "it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted" (2). The postcolonial critic's major concern therefore is to analyze "the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures" (2).

'Difference' inevitably has become the buzz word in postcolonial critical circle, not only in terms of distinct home culture from that of imperial culture, but also in terms of difference that has gradually shown in native identity. Postcolonial literatures developed through several stages which can be seen to correspond to stages both of national or regional consciousness and of the project of asserting difference from the imperial centre.

Ashcroft distinguishes the nature of representation of colonized world during and after colonialism. He notes that the major difference in these depictions lies in allegiance to colonial power. "Writing in the language of the imperial centre is inevitably, of course, produced by literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonizing power," Ashcroft writes, "thus the first texts produced in the colonies in the new language are frequently produced by 'representatives' of the imperial

power" (4). Ashcroft refuses to identify these works produced during colonial periods with authentic representation of imperial world. He contends:

Such texts can never form the basis for an indigenous culture nor can they be integrated in any way with the culture which already exists in the countries invaded. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created. (4)

Here, we notice the concept of 'home' from the colonizer's perspective. 'Native' is the term colonizer has provided with the world they have invaded. This creation of binaries; us/them, home/native; metropolitan/provincial, civilized/barbaric, scientific/superstitious, objective/subjective, etc., has remained the characteristic feature of imperial literature produced during first stage of production.

The second stage of production within the evolving discourse of the postcolonial is the literature produced "under imperial license by 'natives' or 'outcasts'", for instance the large body of poetry and prose produced in the nineteenth century by the English educated Indian upper class . . ." (4). Ashcroft traces the cause behind further stability of imperial discourse:

The producers signify by the very fact of writing in the language of the dominant culture that they have temporarily or permanently entered a specific and privileged class endowed with the language, education, and leisure necessary to produce such works. (4)

It is characteristic of these early post-colonial texts that the potential for subversion in their themes cannot be fully realized. Although they deal with such powerful material as the brutality of the imperial system, the historical potency of native cultures, or the existence of a rich cultural heritage older and more extensive than that of Europe, has been overlooked. They are prevented from fully exploring their anti-imperial potential. Both the available discourse and the material conditions of production for literature in these early post-colonial societies restrain this possibility.

Ashcroft further writes:

The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. (4)

The development of independent literatures depended upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literatures.

One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all 'variants' as impurities. Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' becomes established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice: "For this reason, the discussion of post-colonial writing which follows is

largely a discussion of the process by which the language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested from the dominant European culture" (7).

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. Indeed, critics such as Bhabha have made this the defining model of postcoloniality. Ashcroft writes:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labor. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. (8)

The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are features common to all postcolonial literatures in English.

In his monumental *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Robert J. C. Young argues that there is a continuity between anti-colonial politics and postcolonialism, and that the latter has emerged out of the development of what he calls 'tricontinental' Marxism – that is, a Marxism directed towards the specific concerns and contexts of the three colonized continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. "The triumph of tricontinental theorists," he suggests, "was to mediate the

translatability of Marxist revolutionary theory with the untranslatable features of specific non-European historical and cultural contexts" (6). In other words, anti-colonial politics largely drew on the resources of one of the most incisive critiques of modern colonialism and imperialism, namely Marxism, but adapted its concepts and theoretical paradigms in order to suit their own circumstances.

Tricontinental Marxism was therefore a "transculturation of Marxism" (169) and, in charting its genealogical impact on postcolonialism, Young restores Mao Zedong's fundamental role in the history of the struggle for decolonization. Inspired by Mao's mobilization of the peasantry, anti-colonial liberation movements were

Increasingly inclined to identify with the peasantry rather than the urban proletariat and to present themselves as peasant revolutions. The communist commitment to the urban proletariat as the only vanguard revolutionary force had been a constant impediment to its political success in the predominantly rural tricontinental societies' (183).

Young argues that it was precisely the Communist Party of India's (CPI) unremitting orthodoxy which prevented it from acquiring any political momentum during decolonization and left the various communist factions politically marginalized for decades after independence. As Young describes it, Indian communism failed to challenge for the leadership of the national liberation movement, which was occupied first by Gandhians and then by Congress Socialists whose leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, became India's first prime minister, and whose "model of cosmopolitan secularism [. . .] until recently formed the dominant pattern for Indian intellectuals" (339). Ironically, this may be one of the factors which have contributed to India's prominence in postcolonial studies because India's broad, elite-led mass movement mobilized anti-colonial forces by concentrating on culture and identity and by wrestling with the

ideological problems posed by religious, ethnic, regional and linguistic differences within India itself. The emphasis was on cultural politics rather than social revolution, and this has been attractive to postcolonial scholars interested in the 'subjective effects' as well as 'objective material conditions' of colonized peoples.

Young's insists that postcolonial cultural critique has nothing to apologize for since cultural politics has frequently played a vital role in anti-colonial resistance (Young, 8).

In contrast, postcolonial studies has found, in the relatively more peaceful decolonization of South Asia, a suitable environment for the exploration and theorization of its preoccupation with the politics of representation. As Young puts it,

The operations of colonial discourse, its effects on the psychology of the colonized and the psychology of resistance, the staging of the colonial encounter as a contrapuntal negotiation between discrepant knowledge-systems, and the limits and possibilities of hybridity – although this has often involved the elision of historical tragedies in the region, such as Partition and its genocidal consequences. Such issues were not unique to South Asia, however, and the problems of refashioning culture and identity as a response to the upheavals and dislocations of colonialism were also experienced by many of the other regions in Asia. (308)

All these colonized nations shared with the Indian subcontinent a common postcolonial problem: their respective national movements were trying to create a single nation-state encompassing regions which had hitherto never been unified other than by the colonial states they were trying to supplant. The emancipation of India

took a unique form quite what that unique form really consisted of remains a central subject.

The histories of the liberation movements were all individual, but the freedom movement was unique in its operation as well as in the ideological participants. In its broad contours, it was not dissimilar to independence movements in other parts of the British Empire: after the uprising of 1857, anti-colonial movement for the most part aligned itself with the home, common to Ireland and other parts of the empire. Young sees this similarity in formations of many crucial parties and organizations:

Many elements were similar to other liberation movements: the beginning of a constitutional reform with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the Muslim League in 1906 and the impact of the Khilafat movement and pan-Islamism, development of a Communist Party. The grasping of the radical alternative posited by these movements and the links to the India's successful non-violent non-cooperation was then subsequently imitated by African and other colonial activists. (309)

Two factors, however, contrast with other nations' struggle for independence with Indian struggle: the existence of the Congress Party whose organizational and ability to control its members deprived the Communist Party of an effect which elsewhere it used to maximum effect; and second, the singular, unique role played within and outside the Congress Party by the man by far the best known of all anti-colonial leaders, Mahatma Gandhi. "These factors had repercussions that continue in Indian political and social life until the present," Young holds, "However, Indian Marxists of orthodox and other varieties could have played supplementary role in India's long independence struggle" (310). India later fought through an Indian nationalism

centered around the ideas of organized 'hindutwa' through the Indian National Congress, and the surviving 'muslimization' as Khilafat movement expressed through the Muslim League.

Congress remained, nevertheless, amalgamation of bourgeois intellectuals until Gandhi assumed leadership in 1920 through a broad popular base. Even with Gandhi and Nehru, Congress was in a situation in which it was trying to control and direct forms of popular militancy that were constantly surging up from below, not only but also from paramilitary communalist organizations of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and peasant movements from which Marxism in India assumed its own local form as the dominant political ideology, while Party remained relatively distant from the independence movement.

The movement was led instead by a man whose views and practices on the execution of the freedom struggle in very different terms applied indigenous models: Mahatma Gandhi. Young holds that "in many ways, however, this was of presentation than authenticity" (309); Gandhi's views, like everything else, "were irredeemably syncretic" (309). Resistance to British colonialism begins with resistance to its ideology and material practices. This would mean to detach themselves and to experience a rebirth in which they would upholster the cultural values developed during the long history of Indian civilization. Gandhi argued that only individual regeneration through personal selflessness can safeguard Indian culture. Cultural argument was developed from Gandhi's first encounter with religious philosophy. Ironically, this occurred while he was staying in South Africa. He became acquainted with Indian philosophy in its anglicized version. Having joined, and subsequently becoming secretary of, the Vegetarian Association, he met many of the counter-

cultural figures of his day, and learnt 'theosophical' culture through the very Orientalism that was subsequent object of Edward Said's critique. He recounts that

At the end of my second year in England I came across two Theosophists, brothers unmarried. They talked to me about the Gita. They were reading Sir Arabindo's work translation - *The Song Celestial*- and they invited me to read the original. I felt ashamed, as I had read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit nor English. They also recommended *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold ... and I read with greater interest than I did the Bhagavad Gita. They also took me on one occasion to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduce Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant. (Gandhi, 65-6)

Gandhi also emphasizes on the use of native Gujarati, making a significant intervention in the politics of language, culture and education debates in India, which continue unabated. "Gandhi's brilliance was to infuse theosophical thought to focus not on colonialism itself but to provide a critique of western civilization - of modernity as such" (127-62). He cites examples of contemporary western critiques of western culture (Ruskin, Tolstoy, Carpenter) to expose the weaknesses of the ideology upholding the betterment of British India. By arguing for the moral and cultural superiority of Indian civilization, Gandhi removed the main ideological argument used to sustain throughout the rule - that India was incapable of ruling itself. He thus provided the first and in many ways still the most substantial tricontinental critique of colonialism and the culture that produced it: "The legacy of Gandhi's critique of modernity, and his critique of an unquestioning, derivative use of western knowledge as a powerful force in the thinking of certain contemporary Indian thinkers" (Nandy 1).

In "Gandhi's Counter-modernity," Young argues that alongside the aim of national self-rule, *swaraj* and cultural reaffirmation, Gandhi emphasized the notion of self-reliance, *swadeshi*, for the Indian economy. "He did not invent or initiate any of these concepts: they were already central to nationalist politics of the freedom struggle," Young holds, "However, from *Hind Swaraj* (1910), where he joined the concepts of national to individual self-rule, he provided his own interpretation of them and made them his own" (321). Gandhi described *swadeshi* movement as being "comparable in conception to the ideology of *Sinn Fein* (Our Own)" (Gandhi, 21). In resisting industrialization and ideology, which he called, Gandhi cultivated a model very different from the ideologies of the west, but which drew heavily upon utopian socialism economics, particularly the advocacy of resistance to industrialization. Gandhi resisted consumerism altogether, and advocated 'voluntary poverty.' He argued that human only take the minimum resources necessary for their sustenance, a movement that shaped the environmentalist tendencies of the ecopolitics of the 1990s. Gandhi's views are now also accorded a significant place in Post-Development theory. At the same time, Gandhi himself remained excluded from the public world of Indian national life, impoverished today would be described as subalterns - particularly the peasants and caste system, the so-called untouchables. In his dress and cultural identification, he constructed an eccentric subject position at the outer limits of social exclusion, a radical declaration against elitism and orthodoxy alike. No anti-colonial leader identified himself more publicly and with the wretched of the earth than Gandhi. As Chatterjee (1986) has argued:

Gandhi's orientation towards the peasantry constituted a key move in the history of freedom movement and henceforth, through which the struggles of the peasantry and untouchables very often conducted

against local *zamindars* rather than the British colonizers. There was nominal participation of this group with the independence campaign conducted by the bourgeois elite. Certainly his foregrounding of the peasantry, who became power base, puts Gandhi firmly in the tricontinental ideological camp, of his ideas, such as *ahimsa* (non-violence) or *shakti* ('soul force') that sit awkwardly with the tricontinental Marxism of his peers. (213)

Thus, Gandhi intervened into the nationalist politics of the bourgeois elite, whose rule, he suggested, would be almost indistinguishable from the British, in spirit to that made by M. N. Roy and later Fanon. His own position was complex. In *Hind Swaraj* he speaks of Indian nationalism as the force against anti-colonialism. His ecumenical idea that the Indian inevitably include all its diverse peoples and religions was, however, to appease minority after his return from South Africa, where he had worked closely with Muslim leaders of the Indian National Congress. In 1920 the leadership of the Congress Party by declaring his support for the movement which had already embarked on a course of non-cooperate with the British.

Gandhi's subsequent suspension of the Non-Cooperation movement however, ended his alliance with the Khilafat movement and his dream of a joint Hindu-Muslim national movement.

At the same time, Gandhi's support for the Khilafat Committee also destroyed the possibility of the moderate M. A. Jinnah, who opposed its tactics. Jinnah was later to use resources of the old Khilafat movement to create the Muslim League less-often heard history of Indian independence: that of the creation of Muslim state, Pakistan. (Khairi 95)

Gandhi's nationalism was complicated by the fact that it was directed against western modernity as against British colonialism: "for him, Indian freedom means rejection of both" (Chatterjee 85). This also meant the rejection of political ideologies identified with modernity, particularly orthodox feminism (although, he encouraged women's political participation in his movement).

Gandhi's dreams were by no means fulfilled at Indian Independence in 1947. His insistence of Hinduism as an anti-colonial, national identity for India helped to corresponding politicization of Islamic identity under Jinnah and the Muslim League, resulting in the partition of India at independence, badly mismanaged by authorities, but equally demonstrating that the nationalist elite and even had little control over the mass of the Indian population, produced communal violence in which more than a million died, many millions more were displaced and from which India has never since freed itself. The violence with Gandhi's influence, had often been avoided in the anti-colonial struggle, but emerged again August 1947 which made Indian national independence probably more traumatic than any other freedom movements. Gandhi's own assassination was but a single manifestation of that event, and much contemporary Indian political and cultural thought can be viewed from its perspective.

The experience of migration, separation and displacement undergone by so many Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, suggest that the relevance of the cultural experience of the migrant is by no means less than the Indians who have moved from the subcontinent to the west. Migration also constitutes a defining historical experience within the Indian sub-continent.

Asia has been the theatre of competition, conflict and even, on occasion, collaboration between five European colonial empires. Beginning with the establishment of Portuguese colonial outposts in western India following a decisive

naval victory at the Battle of Diu in 1509, which introduced "a system of armed trading (and gunboat diplomacy) into the shipping routes of the Indian Ocean" (Chaudhuri, 85), Asia's fabled riches – its spices, textiles, minerals and precious metals – attracted first the attention of Europe's merchants and then its monarchs as trade subsequently led, in turn, to conquest.

Concluding that the loss of India meant an accommodation with nationalist forces in their other colonies, the British Government pursued a strategy of yielding independence within the framework of the Commonwealth of Nations. Furthermore, what also distinguishes South Asia from these other former British territories is the existence of a vigorous anglophone literary tradition that has been strongly and warmly received in Britain and the USA. This, perhaps as much as anything else, has bound South Asia to the Anglosphere. The emergence of postcolonial studies from within literary departments in British and US universities has undoubtedly enabled this anglophone tradition to occupy a principal position in its discourses, encompassing as it does much more than recent blockbuster novels and prize-winning contemporary authors.

From the early nineteenth century, South Asians have employed English to articulate their tortuous relationship to colonial modernity and their own place within it. Using English, nationalists and social reformers such as Rammohun Roy, M. G. Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, B. G. Tilak, G. K. Gokhale, M. A. Jinnah, M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose have debated how, why and if they should 'modernize' their culture. As lawyers they have both enforced and contested the laws established by the colonial state; as politicians they have deployed its rhetorical flexibility in debating chambers, legislative councils and on the streets and *maidans*, critiquing the finer points of legislation on the one hand, fashioning a

discourse capable of mobilizing increasing numbers of supporters on the other. Writers, artists and journalists –the novelists R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri, for example, have created a body of work that has documented in precise, meticulous detail the evolving relationships between colonizers and colonized on the one hand, and between South Asians on the other, providing insights into the operations of colonialism and the processes of resistance adjacent to and sometimes contesting those discourses that may have been more directly related to the field of political struggle.

As such, it is in India that the British colonial experience was at its most intense, and the historical record in South Asia provides ample testimony to the strengths and weaknesses, convictions and contradictions of British colonial rule. The scope of the archive that remains provides a resource for postcolonial scholars that is unparalleled in Asia and unsurprisingly is the principal focus of attention for postcolonial research in that region.

Edward Said's study *Orientalism*, the now classic work in which Said examined European discourses on the 'Orient,' "that semi-mythical construct which even though some orientalist accounts were admiring and even romanticizing, the orient was usually described as less developed, civilized, and rational, as a negative mirror image reflecting the self-described positivities of the occident" (3). Said showed how the alluring and appalling image of the Orient was used to underpin and legitimize European imperialist and colonialist undertakings. Orientalist discourses built on binary oppositions contrasting the 'typical' features of East and West, dichotomies that were unequal in praising the West as more 'progressive' while viewing the Orient as static, non-progressive, or even backward.

In sharp contrast to the supposedly rational and straightforward West, the East was painted in irrational and mysterious hues. Conscious or unconscious, the image of the Orient was a fantasy filtered through Western fears and desires. The Orient was as much an imaginary as a real territory, while Orientalism, well-intentioned or not, was a discourse serving imperialist and colonialist aims.

At the same time, celebrations of alterity can end up re-exoticizing and re-objectifying 'other' people and products, concealing and reproducing imperialist power and prestige even in the process of criticizing it. Looking at postcolonial studies from a sociological perspective, Graham Huggan observes in the *Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) that "academic concepts like postcolonialism" may be "turned . . . into watchwords for the fashionable study of cultural otherness" (ii). As postcolonial critics we may unwittingly contribute to a "global commodification of cultural difference," (ii) a process in which the postcolonial literature and culture we may wish to promote become cultural commodities that are part and parcel of a "booming 'alterity industry' that [postcolonial studies] at once serves and resists" (iv). Since there may thus be "varying degrees of complicity between local oppositional discourses and the global late-capitalist system in which these discourses circulate and are contained," Huggan finds it useful to make a distinction between 'postcoloniality' and 'postcolonialism' (vii). An adequate account of this practice must go beyond the usual categories of social alienation such as master/slave; free/bonded; ruler/ruled, however important and widespread these may be in post-colonial cultures. After all, why should the free settler, formally unconstrained, and theoretically free to continue in the possession and practice of 'Englishness', also show clear signs of alienation even within the first generation of settlement, and manifest a tendency to seek an alternative, differentiated identity?

The most widely shared discursive practice within which this alienation can be identified is the construction of 'place' or 'space'. The gap which opens between the experience of place and the language available to describe it forms a classic and all pervasive feature of post-colonial texts.

Experiences of South Asian-American immigrants is the major research concern in this work which attempts to analyze Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* (2010). While Lahiri and Mukharjee weave the intricacies of the lives of Indian-Americans in their work, Thapa's fiction illumines the hardships of Nepali-American Immigrant.

This proposed research seeks to identify the possibility of 'third space,' as neither the immigrant characters in aforementioned works of fiction seem to confirm traditional values from their home countries given to the general indifference towards and physical distance from their culture at home, nor do they readily accept and accommodate with American culture in spite of their seer participation in Christian-American religious and cultural celebrations like Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. They 'prefer' to live in-between the first space, the cultural space of home country, and the second space, foreign and strange cultural space of America. The researcher builds up this assumed 'third space' from the notable critical inquiries and theorizations in diaspora with three representative works of fiction in the same subject matter (*The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*) from what is now an abundant and rich discipline.

The Namesake, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* explore the alienated yet celebrated status of South Asian-American immigrants and their fluid existence—they live in-between two worlds. Even their names keep on changing as they change their places of habitation: Gogol in *The Namesake* becomes Nikhil; Jyoti becomes Jasmine and Jase in *Jasmine*; and, in *Seasons of flight* Prema turns into Prey-muh. Certain

research questions are to be addressed in the chapters that follow: What is the nature of diasporic existence as the immigrants in those works of fiction reject confirmation over social, cultural and religious values from both their homeland and the place now they are living?; Do their life-experiences demand to be read as a process of creating identical space in between two worlds?; Is the concept of third space fixed like first space and the second space?; And, above all, what is the nature of recognition placed over the identity of these 'nomadic' characters, so to say?

This research attempts to justify this hypothesis: Life of immigrants as depicted in *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* is a recent phenomenon where pieces of life experiences of diaspora contribute to create a major third space—the space where the seemingly fluid, estranged, and alienated experiences of diaspora which is often abstract and ever-changing nonetheless, persists. They celebrate their sorrows and detest their happiness in an identical fashion thereby making the possibility for identical and celebratory space—the third space—the in-betweenness of the two worlds.

On the basis of the theoretical compass of diasporic consciousness formed earlier by theorists like Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and others, this research aims to explore the nature, possibility and challenges of third space, a space in process which writers like Lahiri, Mukherjee and Thapa intend in *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*. The prime objective of the study is to highlight the depiction of the third space in these novels. Hence, much of the conceptual context for this effort comes from postcolonial analyses of diaspora subjectivities, aligned to Bhabha's formulation of diaspora identity and consciousness discussed at the beginning of this chapter and elaborated in the middle part with Stuart Hall's words. The succeeding chapters simultaneously explore these issues in subsequent fictions.

Chapter-Two

Wasted Names: Attraction and Repulsion in *The Namesake*

Regardless of location, ethnic origin, age or gender, immigrants in Europe and the world overall have to struggle with the tension between alien/native culture and identity. They keep journeying between the land of their roots/origin and the land of adoption for their existence. Lahiri's *The Namesake* narrates the assimilation of an Indian Bengali family from Calcutta, the Gangulis, into American culture, the cultural dilemmas experienced by them, and their American born children in different ways; the spatial, cultural and emotional dislocations suffered by them in their efforts to settle "home" in the new land. This shows the juxtaposition of conventional thinking, and unconventional desires, their fruitless effort to satisfy a traditional lifestyle, while trying to comprehend the open western culture.

The Namesake begins with a premonition to what is to come in the life of Ashima and Ashoke, The Bengali Gangulis who have migrated to America in search of opportunities. They are expecting a child and Ashima struggles hard to create a native flavor of concoction, a mixed snack she craves for of rice krispies, peanuts, chopped red onion, slices of green chili pepper, lemon juice, without mustard oil to pour into the mix. She frowns as there is something missing; the taste lacks its native flavor, a feeling she has to undergo in everything including relationships, job, food, etc. here in America. She is pregnant with a baby enthused with Indian seed and American upbringing—a deep sense of insecurity and uncertainty looms over the Gangulis beginning from his naming, to his language, friends, schooling, and social contact. She resents her present situation but gladly accepts her role in celebrating both her native rituals and American ways of life, for her lifetime to come. Political volatility, unemployment and communal violence back in India gives her a little

respite for her leaving home as does the sense of freedom and workmanship here in America. But, something missing in native cultural celebrations in foreign land and sheer individualism added with seeking satisfaction in material goods sometimes drags her into awkward situations. But, she learns to settle down by and by, as do many other Indian families living in America in search of job, academic career and permanent residency. This sense of attraction and repulsion in the lives of immigrants is the major research concern of this work in general; in particular, this chapter discusses Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* in this light.

Ashoke and Ashima, like many other fellow Indian families, are described with the term 'diaspora' and their situation is defined through the words like 'scattering,' 'transnational,' 'migration' and 'resettlement.' Within the current research, these terms are used, alternately, to describe very specifically, but also generally, the various circumstances of migrating people. However, this muddle of language also points to a different phenomenon – the practice of immigrants to describe patterns of their migration as well as the social identities and political constructions that are created by diaspora populations around the places they call 'home.'

Through migration, immigrants have lost their material relationship to the land of origin, but they can still preserve their cultural or spiritual relationship through memory. The novel opens with Ashima recalling her homeland fondly. She is in an advanced state of pregnancy, admitted in a hospital for her delivery.

Nothing feels normal to Ashima. For the past eighteen months, since she's arrived in Cambridge, nothing felt normal at all. It's not so much the pain, which she knows, somehow, she will survive. It's the consequence: Motherhood in a foreign land. It was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved. (TN 6)

Ashima tries to settle in and adjust herself to her surroundings, but she feels strange and lost in this country and spends hours remembering her parents and family, and reading the same five Bengali novels time and again. While waiting for the child to be born, she relives the past until the point of her departure for Boston. The thought of bringing up a baby in an alien land terrifies her: ". . . to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (6).

Gradually Ashoke and Ashima's circle of Bengali acquaintances grow and the cultural spirit of Bengal is recreated whenever the friends meet. This is because of their shared history. The first generation wants to preserve their culture and customs in the foreign land. They are clinging to their culture through tokenism. It is significant that every other Saturday Ashoke and Ashima send Gogol for Bengali language and culture classes at the home of one of their Bengali friends: "But the children in the class study without interest, wishing they could be at a ballet or softball practice instead" (TN 66). They are truly caught between two worlds, one is powerfully alive, the other powerless to be born.

Reflecting on the power of names as markers of identity, Jhumpa Lahiri takes the reader through the life of Gogol Ganguli, son of Ashoke and Ashima, a second-generation male US immigrant from India. She delineates with insight and empathy how two generations of the Ganguli family come to terms with their very different lives and how, despite resistance and alienation, manage to build a bridge to each other. In a nation of immigrants, such stories are hardly unusual. In this novel, Lahiri introduces her Western readers to Bengali upper-caste, (Hindus of high ritual status), middle-class, well-educated immigrants who came to the US in the late 1960s to work in the medical and engineering professions or to teach in universities. Their middle-

class status sets the Bengalis apart from many American immigrant communities, though the experience of cleaving to the ethnic community remains the same.

Lahiri's novel begins with Gogol Ganguli's father, Ashoke, who comes to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a graduate student in engineering. He later returns to Calcutta for an arranged marriage with Ashima Bhaduri, whose name provides a marker; like Ashoke, she is also a Brahmin-not surprising, as marriages are generally arranged on caste lines. Caste, however, does not play much of a role in *The Namesake*; it ceases to be of much relevance in America, where the commonalities of class and ethnic interests cement bonds within the community. Indeed for the second generation, Gogol and his sister Sonia, caste hardly rears its head. What is more interesting is that race as such is scarcely considered either. As educated immigrants within a university community, whose children are high achievers in a society that respects achievement, perhaps Lahiri's characters have been shielded from racial discrimination. But the lack of it in their lives is surprising. Throughout the book, Gogol's closest relationships are with mainstream American whites. The importance of nomenclature to an alien society resonates throughout the novel. Lahiri discusses the practice of assigning two names, a pet name and a 'good' name, that sets the Bengalis apart both abroad and in India:

In Bengali the word for pet name is *daknam*, meaning, literally the name by which one is called by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people. Every pet name is paired with a good name, a *bhalonam*, for identification in the outside world. Consequently, good names appear on envelopes, on

diplomas, in tele-daknam, in phone directories and all other public places (*The Namesake* 25-26)

Gogol Ganguly's problem as he sees it is that he has been saddled with a daknam in the place of bhalonam. His 'daknam' has significance in his father's life though: Ashoke was saved from a train wreck because the pages in a book of short stories by the Russian writer, Gogol, fluttered in his hand, catching a rescuer's eye. Gogol first hears the story as a college student who has been feeling estranged from his family, and this moment of enlightenment is perhaps the most important in the book, and contributes to the building of the fragile bridge between the generations:

And suddenly the sound of his pet name, uttered by his father as he has been accustomed to hearing it all his life, means something completely new, bound up with a catastrophe he has unwittingly embodied for years. 'Is that what you think of when you think of me . . . Do I remind you of that night?' 'Not at all,' his father says eventually, 'You remind me of everything that followed.' (124)

"If that is about the familial origins of the naming of the place and city of Gogol's origin," Sanjukta Dasgupta writes in "Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*: Reviewing the Russian Connection," "then Gogol's rather dismissive and radical prescription about choosing one's own personal name in the concluding section of the novel is significant" (535). This can be further illustrated in the text: "there's no such thing as a perfect name. I think human beings should be allowed to name themselves when they turn eighteen . . . until then, pronouns" (*TN* 245).

The second generation lives a better life than the parents whose roots still do not allow them to embrace the foreign land but their identity always reflects their

parents past migrant history. After graduating Gogol gets a job in a firm and is posted in New York.

In this way, 'food' in the novel is an object, an encouraging fragment of the homeland, which these immigrants want to stick on to. Spices and flavor waft through like themes in a piece of music as evidenced by the following passage: ". . . with the samosas, there are breaded chicken, cutlets, chickpeas with tamarind sauce, lamb biriyani, chutney made them to create their native kitchen on foreign land" (*TN* 150). Ashoke, Ashima and all first generation settlers want their children to do well and get good jobs. The American dream looms in front of their eyes and they want their children to exploit the situation and derive the maximum benefit for themselves; but they must follow the Indian moral and cultural code at home. This is the only way these immigrants keep searching for their homelands through different levels of existence, physical, as well as material.

Even though assimilating, the representatives of the first generation immigrants are nevertheless cultural hybrids. They know their roots, but they also know that to achieve success they need to adapt to new cultural codes, which they inevitably do, because of the contact with another culture. To use Homi K. Bhabha terms they live in the Third Space, characterized by in-betweenness. No purist view of identity applies to them because entering another culture they are "neither the One . . . nor the Other . . . but something else besides which contests the terms and territories of both" (*Commitment to Theory* 41). Their entrance into the Third Space is a deliberate act. Having the direct experience of the two worlds they are aware of what they leave behind in their homeland and what opportunities are offered in the new country. Thus they find it easier to define their new path of life and identify the goals of their American Dream. Although positioned as hybrid identities, their life is an

inevitable progression towards assimilation, however fluid and unstable it may be, because as newcomers they have only this direction of transformation – to acquire (sometimes unconsciously) the elements of culture with which they come in contact.

The representative of the second generation depicted in the story is in a different situation. Being born in America but to Bengali parents, Gogol, Sonia and Mausami live in the third space all their life. Consequently, their life is marked by a constant tension between the culture of parents and of her homeland, America, which results in confusion and inability to achieve the American Dream.

Gogol is an example of upward mobility. Well-educated, hardworking, he becomes an architect in New York. Gogol's life between Indian and American culture is a constant negotiation between them. Regarding new diaspora Vijay Mishra writes in *The Diasporic Imaginary and the Indian Diaspora*:

We note that the 'new' surfaces precisely at the moment of (post)modern ascendancy; it comes with globalization and hypermobility, it comes with modern means of communication already fully-formed or in the making (airplanes, telephone, e-mail, the internet, videocassettes, DVD, video-link, webcam) In a thoroughly global world, the act of displacement now makes diasporic subjects travelers on the move, their homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media. (15)

His father's death makes him identify strongly with Indian heritage. Gogol lives immersed in the memories of his dead father, and even though it contradicts his American upbringing, he starts imitating his example. He does not reject American clothes, taste for American food, nor does he use Bengali, his parents' native language. He rejects something more fundamental: his independence, professional

success, and sense of equality with his American girlfriend. He accepts his position according to the Indian tradition: serving his mother (his father always did it), being mainly a son and a brother.

Gogol is able to identify neither with his homeland India, nor with America, thus he suffers from "double displacement." James Clifford posits: "Diasporas usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future" (246). Gogol suffers from his estrangement as a son and as a second-generation subject. His unwillingness to pursue the American Dream is indicative of his problems with identity. It informs of his lack of belonging, which is emphasized in the narrative by his movement, going on "routes" rather than growing "roots." The position of in-betweenness, living between two cultures, is uncomfortable and confusing for him.

A major theme of the diasporic discourse is its supposed complexities and ambivalences due to the tensions between localities and spatio-temporal dualities. For large groups of people around the world the concept of identity is precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements and self-imposed sense of exile. In the late-modern celebratory argument on behalf of diasporas, diasporic communities are said to occupy a broader zone where the most vibrant kinds of interaction take place, and where ethnicity and nation are kept separate. In this argument, diasporas are fluid, ideal social formations happy to live wherever there is an international airport and stand for a longer, much admired historical process. Therefore, though the accounts of diaspora as a category of sociological and political thought understandably differ, there is a common shifting and unfinished history of diasporic displacement and settling. A further implication, however, was associated with their tendency to shed their ethnic identity and to assimilate local norms which

can produce strong nostalgic as well as separatist tendencies. Already in its inevitable concern with the idea of homeland, the concept of diaspora has also been extended to refer to the mixed or hyphenated identities of persons or ethnic communities and of texts that express and explore this condition, sometimes themselves employing mixed written and visual discourse. Evidently, the term helps critiquing essentialist notion of identity which as Paul Gilroy writes “should be cherished for its ability to pose the relationship between ethnic sameness and differentiation: a changing same” (Gilroy, x-xi).

Living and writing in multi cultural societies, the Indian writers abroad are affected at multiple levels by both cultures. Jhumpa Lahiri often feel that their entity in a foreign country is a social construct-an amalgamation of feelings, consciousness, memories, mythologies, longings, dreams and allegorical and virtual elements. As the questions of identity and the dynamics of relationships affect the writers, they are constantly in a state of flux. These writers reflect, analyze and criticize that particular environment and the world around them even when they do not become part of it, a kind of belonging and not belonging. Similarly, these expatriate writers lack a shared memory, which is often the basis of writing in one country, one nation. Mostly, these writers are afflicted with a feeling of cultural alienation. Hence, the term ‘diaspora’ literally and metaphorically refers both to the physical displacement as well as the shaping of a different sensibility. Therefore, slowly, the hyphenated identity of the diaspora writers has become an interesting topic in Indian writing in English.

As a popular young writer of Indian background, Jhumpa Lahiri is a sort of representative figure for the Diasporans who do not fully understand what it means to straddle the line between two cultures. Caught between two worlds with an ever increasing multiplicity of identities, Jhumpa Lahiri examines and defines the

conditions of the Diasporic people. *The Namesake* provides the reader with pictures of the life of expatriates. Lahiri explores the ideas of cultural and personal isolations and identities through her various characters, whose cultural isolation result in the personal. Her characters draw upon different aspects of Lahiri's Indian background and project the life of second generation Indian Americans like Lahiri herself. *The Namesake* contains themes of conflict in relationships between couples, families, and friends. Through these relationships she explores idea of isolation and identity, both personal and cultural. The characters frequently encounter crisis of identity, which are tied to their inability to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. She often correlates her characters' cultural isolation with extreme personal isolation, suggesting that the cultural isolation causes the personal. The instances in which this cultural isolation are resolved or avoided are generally accompanied by a similar resolution or avoidance of personal isolation.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is viewed as a reproach against identity-crisis of immigrants in 'accustomed' world by most of the observers. Sally Dalton-Brown, for example, argues that immigrant's life is squeezed in between death and chance. She writes:

In Lahiri's *The Namesake*, the protagonist has both the Bengali name of Nikhil, meaning 'he who is entire encompassing all,' as well as the rather curious name of Gogol bestowed on him by his father, Ashok Ganguli. When Ashok lies injured after a train wreck, the fluttering pages of the edition of the Nikolai Gogol's stories he has been reading catch the attention of rescuers who might otherwise not have seen him. The name of Gogol is perhaps therefore a lucky one to give a son linked to a new life. However, such a simple reading of this detail

remains unsatisfying, particularly when one considers that Ashok's favorite Gogol story is 'The overcoat.' (332)

For Dalton-Brown, shuttling between identities and name-wreck is the phenomenon that occurs particularly in the life of immigrants. 'Gogol' is the very name that shaved the life of Ashok whereas it becomes almost impossible to bear the burden of meaningless name that his son changes this name with Nikhil in the middle of his life.

In reviewing Lahiri's novel David Kipen writes that the protagonist's true identity is "hung up somewhere between India and the United States" (2) that "names has always been contested territory in immigrant families" (2) and finally that "in the world of literature, Lahiri writes like a native" (3). The first quotation appears to suggest that the protagonist, the son of Indian immigrants, has a true identity to which he might have access were it not in fact suspended in mid air, in the form of a letter bearing his name that never arrives. The second indicates that the names and naming are of importance for all immigrants, possibly more so than for natives, while the final coming could imply that Lahiri is a literary immigrant to the country of writers where she writes 'like' but is not 'a native.' Ruediger Heinze in "A Diasporic Overcoat: Naming and Affection in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" argues that by using the concepts of diaspora as an exclusive explanatory framework on risks neglecting "the interrelationships among various often conflicting dimensions of difference" (192). He further writes:

The concepts of diaspora lack a suitably complex formulation, one which adequately explains several contemporary features of so-called diasporic literature. I argue that a number of potentially insoluble uncertainties remain at its core and that the concept should be treated with caution. Indeed, one might asks what exactly counts in Lahiri's

The Namesake is the work which addresses these problems by discussing the function of naming which makes the work a typical south-Asian diasporic novel. (192)

Heinze observes *The Namesake* from the theoretical frameworks of diaspora and postcolonial theory. He argues that 'naming' is the special cultural trait of South-Asian people, and to remain to the name till the death is what is expected from the bearer. For him, *The Namesake* is as a matter of fact diasporic as the whole work revolves around love-hate relationship with one's own name.

Mridula Nath Chakraborty writes in "Leaving No Remains: Death among the Bengalis in Lahiri's Fiction" that Lahiri's death scenes in her work performs the function of witnessing the otherwise uncataloged lives of the specific migrant community she writes about. Chakraborty argues that Lahiri weaves the cultural rituals of the Hindu Bengalis from the Indian subcontinent. She further writes:

She [Lahiri] is interested in elaborating what happens to a people when culture cannot produce earthly proof of its presence on the landscape of American life namely, in the shape of markers like graves and reliquary legacies to commemorate names. Because of the Hindu practices of cremation and scattering of ashes, there are no 'remains' of the Bengali diaspora, except in ineffable morning rituals intelligible only to the initiated. Thus the community has to be constantly instantiated and incantated with others who authenticate the existence of the group, and yet that very group has to be worked against to forge and 'earthly' relationship with the new country of residence and rooting. (815)

Chakraborty's observation is critical of the differences that exist between American-Christian religious values, which prefer to keep the remains of the dead one so as not to live only on memory, and Bengali-Hindu religious values in death rituals which instead 'throws' away all the remaining of dead one in order to secure his/her memory in groups and families.

The Namesake provides readers with different paradigms of life among people representing distinct cultures and worldviews. It is in this context, however, that we ought to remember Edward Said's scepticism with the concept of cultures as something distinctive, representative of an exclusive to a certain group or nation in *Culture and Imperialism* so as to understand the basic problem with such terms. Said writes:

Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Mathew Arnold put it in the 1860's Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralizes, the ravage of a modern, aggressive, mercantile and brutalizing urban experience....In time culture comes to be associated , often aggressively, with the nation or the nation or the state, this differentiates 'us from them' almost always with some degree of identity, and a rather combative one at that

(xii)

Against this concept of culture as a homogenization of the good, patriotic attributes of a nation for the sake of exclusiveness and creation and preservation of an identity, Said mentions 'multiculturalism and hybridity' next in order to praise their 'permissiveness' and 'relatively liberal philosophies' (xiv). In case of Jhumpa Lahiri's character, a search for their origin, finding a place or a nation that may be called one's

own and belonging to either the Indian subcontinent or the USA or in other words, making a choice between the concept of cultural identity and multiculturalism seen to remain juxtaposed always.

‘Multiculturalism’ suggests the co-existence of a number of different cultures. It does not prescribe homogenization and conformity directly nor does it encourage overtly different ethnic religious, lingual or racial constituents of a particular society to denigrate and alienate each other to such a society is damaged or destroyed permanently. It is at a transitional point between two hemispheres east and west and two segments of the world hierarchy –third and first –or, the Indian subcontinent and the USA that we may locate most of Jhumpa Lahiri’s fictional world. Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake* explores the theme of transnational identity and trauma of cultural dislocation. Being "an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration" (Nayak 206) and her parents having the experience of the perplexing bicultural universe "of Calcutta in India (now Kolkata) and the United States, Lahiri mines the immigrants experience in a way superior to Bharti Mukherjee and others," observes Aditya Sinha (Sinha 20).

This novel is a story about the assimilation of an Indian Bengali family from Calcutta, the Ganguli, into America, over thirty years (from 1968- 2000); the cultural conflict experienced by them and their American born children in different ways, the spatial, cultural and emotional dislocation suffered by them in their effort to settle “home” in the new land. Like many “professional Indians” who “in the waves of the early sixty’s”, “went to the United States, as part of the brain drain” (Spivak 61). Ashoke Ganguli too leaves his homeland, and comes to America in pursuit of higher studies to do research in the field of “fibre optics” with a prospect of settling down “with security and respect” (TN 105). After two year’s stay in the USA he comes back

to India, marries a nineteen years old Bengali girl from Calcutta named Ashima, who has no idea or dream of going to a place called Boston so far off from her parents, but agrees for the marriage since 'he would be there.' After the legal formalities, she flies alone to be with her husband, with a heavy heart and lots of instructions from her family members and relatives who come to see her off at Dum Dum Airport "not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair and forget the family the moment she landed in Boston" (TN 37).

Ashima often feels upset and homesick and sulks alone in their three room apartment which is too hot in summer and too cold in the winter, far removed from the description of house in the English novels she has read, she feels spatially and emotionally dislocated from the comfortable 'home' of her father full of so many loving ones and yearns to go back. Home is "a mystic place of desire" (Brah 192) in the immigrant's imagination:

Most of the time she remains lost in the memories of her home thinking of the activities going there by calculating the Indian time on her hands which is ten and a half hours ahead in Calcutta. She spends her time on rereading Bengali Short Stories, poems and article from the Bengali magazines, she has brought with her. She keeps her ears trained, between the hours of twelve and two, for the sound of the postman's footsteps on the porch, followed by the soft click of the mail slot in the door waiting for her parent's letters which she keeps collecting in her white bag and re-reads them often. (TN 36)

But the most terrifying experience for her is "motherhood in a foreign land, so far from home," unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, "without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side" and to "raise a child in a country

where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare." After the birth of her son Gogol, she wants to back to Calcutta and raise her child there in the company of the caring and loving ones but decides to stay back for Ashoke's sake and brings up the baby in the Bengali 'ways' so "to put him to sleep, she sings him the Bengali songs her mother had sung to her" (TN 35). She keeps all her emotional hazards and disappoints to herself and not intending to worry her parents. She presents in her letter a good picture of the domestic facilities and cleanliness here.

Gradually she learns how to be independent. Takes pride in rearing up the child, moves out alone in the market with her baby in the pram, communicates with the passersby who smile at him and goes to meet her husband on the campus, thus she grows confident. The very feeling of displacement is felt more by her, after their migration from the University Apartments to a University town outside Boston when Ashoke is "hired as an Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University." The shift to this suburban area with no 'streetlights, no public transportation, no stores for miles' makes Ashima feel 'more drastic more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge had been'. Feeling lonely and displaced in foreign land, Ashima begins to realize that,

Being a foreigner . . . is a sort of lifelong pregnancy- a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect."(TN 49-50)

Like immigrant of other communication Ashima and Ashoke too make their circle of Bengali acquaintance. They all become friends only for the reason that “they all come from Calcutta” (38). Robert Cohen rightly remarks “a member’s adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history” (Cohen, ix). These Bengali families celebrate these different customs and ceremonies like, marriages, death, childbirth, festivals, etc. together. They celebrate these as per Bengali customs, wearing their best traditional attire, thus trying to preserve their culture in a new land. John McLeod remarks that “their belief, tradition, customs, behaviors and values along with their ‘possession and belonging’ are carried by migrants with them to ‘new places’” (McLeod, 211). The immigrants also face political displacement “they argue riotously over the films of Ritwik Ghatak verses those of Satyajit Ray..., for hours they argue about the politics of America, a country in which none of them is eligible to vote” (TN 38).

Lahiri in her novel also shows how these immigrants are making efforts to preserve their 'home culture' in their new homes. The first generation immigrants train their children in Bengali language literature and history at home and through special Bengali Classes and expose them to their own family lineage, religious custom, rites, beliefs food tastes, habit and mannerisms. They also groom them to cope with the way of life in America. Lahiri shows that the immigrants in their enthusiasm to stick to their own cultural belief and customs, gradually imbibe the cultural ways of the host country to.

Ashima teaches Gogol to memorize a four line children poem by Tagore, names of deities at the same time when she goes to sleep in the same time when she goes to sleep in the afternoon she switches the television to channel -2 and tells Gogol to watch ‘sesame street’ and the electronic company in order to keep up with the

English he uses at nursery school. Though initially Ashoke did not like the celebration of Christmas and thanksgiving but as Gogol recalls that ". . . it was for him, for Sonia (his younger sister) that his parents had gone to the trouble of learning these customs" (286). Their own children groomed to be 'bilingual' and 'bicultural' face cultural dilemmas and displacement more though forced to sit in pujas and other religious ceremonies along with the children of other Bengali families. Gogol and Sonia, like them, relish American and continental food more than the syrupy Bengali dishes and enjoy the celebration of the Christmas.

Transnationalism is a process by which migrants, "through their daily activities and social, economic and political relations, create fields that cross national boundaries"(Schiller 1-2). In fact, migrants live a "complex existence" that forces them to confront and rework different hegemonic constructions of identity developed in their home or new nation state(s) and "reterritorialize" their practices as well as their identities" (Ashcroft et.al. 89). For example, as Ashima and other Bengali immigrants in the novel feel 'deterritorialized' in the United States, they attempt to restructure the territory by starting to celebrate Christian festivals in their own way. They celebrate Christmas and thanksgivings the way they would deserve Hindu festival like Dipawali and Durga Pooja. By doing so, they integrate US culture that crosses national boundaries.

Towards the second-half of *The Namesake* Gogol celebrates his twenty seventh birthday at his girlfriend Maxine's parents Lake house in New Hampshire without his parents. Maxine and her mother Lydia throw a dinner to celebrate his birthday. At dinner Gogol encounters Pamela, a middle aged white woman who insists on viewing him as Indian, despite his polite response that he is from Boston. When Gogol denies it, she asserts, "but you're an Indian . . . I'd think the climate

wouldn't affect you given your heritage" (156). Maxine's mother corrects Pamela, asserting that Gogol is American, but in the end even she hesitates, asking him if "he actually was born in the United States" (157). Even Gogol's United States citizenship does not guarantee his identity as an American. This tendency to categorize Gogol as an Indian might be viewed as an example of "othering" of "Indian" immigrants in the United States, where individuals are identified according to their roots, rather than their country of residence or citizenship.

However this is a novel that celebrates the cultural hybridity resulting from globalization and the interconnectedness of the modern world and rethinks conventional immigrant's experience. Lahiri is aware of the existing problem of cultural diversity in the multicultural United States, and she argues that the struggle to grasp a transnational identity becomes an urgent issue for immigrants in this environment. While she represents Gogol as someone who is confused about his identity, she also presents Gogol as a prototypical transnational agent who lives between two different worlds with the possibility of creating multiplicity of identities. In fact Lahiri offers a revision of the contemporary United States not as a static and insular territory but a participant in transnational relations. Given the nature of mobility of people and their culture across nations, Lahiri deterritorializes the definite national and cultural identities of India suggesting that individuals cannot confine themselves within the narrow concept of national and cultural boundaries in this globalised world characterized by hybridity, transculturalism and migration.

Gogol doesn't think of India as his country or 'desh', he sees himself as purely American. Though Gogol considers himself an American, he is brought up by between two diametrically different cultures, similar to Bhabha's in between space where "people can, to a certain extent, move and negotiate within their worlds"

(Bhabha1-2). He is both Indian and American. He belongs to Indian parents on a different geographical space than India and is acculturated as an Indian at home but outside the house, he is an American. He thinks of India as a "foreign country far away from home, both physically and psychologically" (TN 118). He struggles to reconcile his dual culture. On one hand, he is fascinated with the free and happy lifestyles of his American girlfriend, Maxine. On the other hand he feels a sense of obligation towards his parents. Like that of every immigrant child Gogol's real challenge is to secure an identity in the midst of differences influenced by US lifestyle. Gogol tries to distance himself from his parents and adopt an American identity. He spends "his night with Maxine, sleeping under the same roof as her parents, a thing Ashima refuses to admit her Bengali friends" (166). Lahiri's character attempts to form a multiplicity of identities in a process of cultural formation. Their cultural identity formation includes pieces of cultural inheritance to incorporate into their lives as Americans, which is similar to Hall's idea of "being and becoming of cultural identity" (Hall 70). Redefining homeland becomes a matter of redefining identity.

Lahiri's focus on the tension between past and present complicates Hall's idea of 'being' and 'becoming.' For instance, Gogol lives between the world of past and present. Although he attempts to escape from the past by denouncing his cultural roots and changing his name, he is someone now connected to his roots. He is uncomfortable with his past. He, likewise, cannot understand the significance of the name Gogol that his parents chose for him. Rather it is because of the very name, he is being teased by his friend. As a result, when he turns eighteen, he goes into a Massachusetts courtroom and asks the judge to change his name. Gogol thinks that by switching his name to Nikhil he would get rid of his past, but his parents still calls

him by his original name. This shows that a simple name change does not alter the fabric of a person. Later he comes to know from his father Ashoke that how his name 'Gogol' is connected with his father's past life. Ashoke tells Gogol, "the story of the train he had ridden twenty-eighty years ago, in October 1961 . . . about the night that had saved him and about the year afterward, when he'd been unable to move" (123). Ashoke survived the accident because he was reading Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" when the accident occurred near two hundred and nine kilometres away from Calcutta "killing the passengers in their sleep"(17). Gogol realizes how his life had been interwoven between the past and present. However, although Gogol is living in the in-between space and struggling to balance the two different world, he still longs to balance the two different world, he still longs to escape from his cultural roots and venture into his US girlfriend's life.

By contrasting the life style between Gogol's and Maxine's parents, Lahiri suggests that the immigrant's children are fascinated to adopt the American life style. Gogol's immersion into his girlfriend's life is an indication of a second generation immigrant's child's realization that an identity far from their own cultural roots is a necessity to live happily in the multicultural United States. It is Gogol's ability to understand the difference between the lives of his parents and Maxine's that prompts him to desire Maxime's lifestyle. He is surprised to find the warm welcome from Maxine's parents. Gogol finds a sense of freedom and independence even in the dinner table at Maxine's house: "A bowl of small, round, roasted red potatoes is passed around and afterward a salad. They eat appreciatively, commenting on the tenderness of the meat, the freshness of the beans. His own mother would never have served so few dishes to a guest . . . " (TN 200).

Insisting someone empty the plate or requesting to eat more, which is a common practice in Indian in Indian culture, is something that irritates Gogol. It is this freedom and individualism that instigate a desire for his way of life in Gogol. Though Gogol makes a conscious effort to be different from his parents and he wants to be different from his parents and he wants to live in a world free from the Bengali culture, adjective, and history (he does not join the Indian association in America) but being a sensitive child he experiences the cultural dilemma and identity crisis on a number of occasion.

Lahiri in this novel presents that it is not only the Indian migrants who feel dislocated in other countries and face cultural dilemmas, the immigrants from any cultures dilemmas, the immigrants from any culture feel the same in the other dominant cultures. For example, Graham, Maushumi's fiancé during his visit to Calcutta finds the Bengali customs and culture 'taxing' and 'repressed' as there was no drinks and he couldn't "even hold her hand on the street without attracting snares" (217). So, he decides to break with Maushumi. Even Gogol and Sonia do not feel "at home" in Calcutta where their parents find solace and comfort. How the first generation migrants reject the space where their parents find solace and comfort, How the first generation migrants overcome their cultural dilemmas and sense of displacement and bring change by refashioning and mobilizing received idea from their home culture and host culture, and how through this act of 'performance' new 'hybrid identities' are 'negotiated,' has been shown by Lahiri through Ashima's decision to draw and paint on this year's Christmas card with "angels or nativity scenes." She goes in to draw "an elephant decked with red and green jewels, glued on to silver paper." Through this act of hers one can say, a new 'hybrid' cultural identity is in the 'process of formation and 'transformation.' This shows that the diaspora and

migrants too intervene in the dominant culture. Thus new subjectivities are born and fixed borders are 'crossed' imaginatively and from the 'in between' marginal status, the migrants go 'beyond' the 'binary fixities' of natives/migrants and carve new 'routes' instead of lamenting over the lost roots, this can be found in Homi Bhabha where he theorizes this situation in *The Location of Culture*.

Lahiri shows that all migrants carve their own 'routes' in the course of time and it is not necessary that they want to settle in the countries of their origin. Ashima is shown to grow with passage of time during her thirty two years of stay in America, retaining her culture in dress and values as well as assimilating the American culture for her personal growth and for the sake of her children. She after the death of her husband decides to divide her time every year both at Calcutta and in America, she has grown more confident, and enjoys the best of both cultures. Sonia's decision to marry Ben (a half Chinese boy) and Maushumi's attitude of not sticking to any one culture or country shows how the second generation is going Global and are becoming multicultural. They are also exploring new identities through "transnational contingencies of routes" (Gilroy 93).

So, we come to the conclusion that while portraying the theme of cultural dilemmas and dislocations of the migrants, Lahiri does not remain confined to the dislocations of migrants in foreign lands alone. Rather she is philosophical in her approach; she presents dislocation as a permanent human condition. Man is dislocated in this world. He may have a home in the native nation, builds a 'home' in a 'new land' adapting to the cultures, but ultimately he has no home. Lahiri, in fact, comments on Ashoke's death in America "who had forsaken everything, to come in this country, to make a better life, only to die here?" (180). This reflects Lahiri's philosophical maturity and existential dimensions in this novel.

The above analysis of the novel shows how Jhumpa Lahiri constructs and brings alive the picture of the unknown world that is as much a land of opportunities as it is of conflict and confusion. Jhumpa Lahiri handles multiple experiences of immigrants. She believes that for immigrants, the challenge of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world are more explicit and distressing than for their children. Question of identity is always a difficult one, and especially for those who are culturally displaced. The novel also shows how the immigrants face cultural dilemmas in the foreign system. Lahiri shows that the immigrants in their enthusiasm to stick to their own cultural belief and customs, gradually imbibe the cultural ways of the host country too. Their own children groomed to be 'bilingual' and 'bicultural' face cultural dilemmas and displacement more. But at last Lahiri also shows that all immigrants carve their own 'routes' in the course of time and it's not necessary that they should settle in the country of their own origin.

Chapter-Three

Moderation of Immigrant's Identity in *Jasmine*

Another prominent literary figure in the representation of Indian-American diaspora, Bharati Mukherjee, traces the road taken by Jasmine in the process of her migration from Punjab to America in the novel, *Jasmine*. The episodes of Jasmine's failure, awakening and success in building her life enunciates the migrant's position in contemporary American society; once discarded, humiliated and marginalized human force in America, the immigrants, now hold prominent role in the development and continuation of the 'host' country. Though the love for native land, culture, language and people is deeply engrained in the life of Indian- American diaspora, they have assimilated themselves with American values, cultural celebrations, and people. In this troublesome process they have learnt to celebrate their native identity in American fashion and American identity in native fashion. This follows a process of negotiation, assimilation, and moderation; a hard road that must be taken to live with changed identity. This chapter attempts to explore this hard road taken by Jasmine in Bharati Mukherjee's fictional work *Jasmine* in the light of theories in diaspora and 'third space.'

In Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine*, Jasmine traces the story of the heroine in her American odyssey. Here starts her transformation from a village girl under the shelter of her father and brothers, to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. She is widowed and returns to India to her family. She has to now choose between the rigid traditions of her family and perform *Sati*, or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America. Jasmine sways between the past and the present attempting to come to terms with the two worlds, one of 'native culture' and the other that of 'immigration.' She keeps the baggage of her past all through her life. The

village girl from Hasnapur survives in America and does not sacrifice herself. After landing on the Gulf Coast of Florida she is raped, and in turn she murders her rapist. This defiles her mission and death is denied her: "Lord Yama, who had wanted me, and whom I'd flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me" (*Jasmine* 107). The pain that she feels and the scar always remind her of that moment in her life, when she tried to run away from her fate. And she tells this to her sisters: "It's my third eye [. . .] now I'm a sage" (2). When Jasmine runs to her sisters at the river, she swims a while in it and suddenly sees a rotten dog's body. The stench she smells and the pictures follow her for the rest of her life. Later in life she still remembers the stench whenever she drinks a glass of water: "I know what I don't want to become" (3).

Jasmine's journey from Punjab, through Florida, New York, and Iowa, to California depicts the various stages of her diasporic condition. But these dislocations are also the representations of her mental condition. Jasmine assumes different mythological avatars in her various journeys of life: She shuttles between identities: "Jyoti [was] the Sati-Goddess, Jasmine lives for the future" (166). Jasmine releases herself from being an illegal immigrant into a self-assured American woman but her spiritual call comes from India: "I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness" (204). The 'old-world dutifulness' forms the mental makeup of Indian migrants to the West. Uprooted from her native land India, Jyoti does her best to introduce herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant; the culmination is finally indicated in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man, Bud. Jasmine's past life played an important role in her present life and the inescapability of memory. Jasmine feels unable to express herself. Due to the simultaneous existence of the past and present, memories of India and her current life in America, Jasmine is

forced to view herself from the perspectives of "Jasmine," "Jase," and "Jassy" all at once. Her past life crawls upon her once again appearing in the form of disguise.

Jasmine starts her journey from India, uproots, re-roots herself and survives in all odd circumstances. Mukherjee introduces Jasmine's existence as two opposite poles: her beginnings as Jyoti, in an Indian village, and her life as Jane Ripplemeyer, in Iowa. Thus, she is caught between the two cultures of the east and west, past and present, old and new in an alien land. She explores the encounter between the mainstream American culture and the new one formed by her spirit of a migrant being. Thus Jasmine has lost their Indian identities in one way or another; and they try to struggle to find in a determined way to survive in an alien background in which many are at least partially successful. Jasmine has had to reinvent herself to survive which represents a strategy of negotiation between East and West, and an approach of assimilation which neither privileges the dominant nor leaves any regret for the marginal. In this way the immigrants attempt to assimilate two cultures and to find a place in the mainstream life of the adopted country. This is done only through different mediums. These mediums are geographical, material as well as psychological. This is the kind of attempt of immigrants that helps them survive in an alien land which they have embraced any way.

By definition a postcolonial writer, Bharati Mukherjee is no multi-culturalist. She took explicit aim at the term in 1994: "Multiculturalism emphasizes the differences between racial heritages . . . often led to the dehumanization of the different . . . dehumanization leads to discrimination . . . discrimination can ultimately lead to genocide" (Mukharjee, "Beyond Multiculturalism" 2). Later she writes: "Parents express rage or despair at their U.S.-born children's forgetting of, or indifference to, some aspects of Indian culture . . . what is it we have lost if our

children are acculturating into the culture in which we are living?" (2). She is plainly disinterested in the preservation of cultures, the hallowing of tradition, obligations to the past; at least, she is not interested in the nostalgic aspects of such preservation. Rather, her current work forwards a distinction between 'pioneers' and pitiable others for whom attachments to personal and cultural pasts foreclose possibilities. These pioneering characters undergo personal changes in their movements from culture to culture, changes that Mukherjee characterizes in the strongest terms. In an interview from 1988, she discussed the origins of her fictional characters' immigration experiences in her own:

We [immigrants] have experienced rapid changes in the history of the nations in which we lived. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. Our lives are remarkable, often heroic....

Although they [the fictional immigrant characters] are often hurt or depressed by setbacks in their new lives and occupations, they do not give up. They take risks they wouldn't have taken in their old, comfortable worlds to solve their problems. As they change citizenship, they are reborn. (Interview 654)

Using the category of 'rebirth' for these changes avows their thoroughness and also, by opposing rebirth to 'comfort,' implies a quality of anxiety and even violence therein. Mukherjee is so far from veneration of tradition that her works accept; indeed, embrace the violence that accompanies cross-cultural revision and personal change. One of her most important and famous heroines, Jasmine, in *Jasmine* says:

"There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake ourselves. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams" (25).

It is the willingness of Jasmine and others of Mukherjee's ethnic characters to murder their past selves that enables them to actively advance into unknown but promising futures. The futures they propel themselves toward-and even help to shape-are not guaranteed to be successful, but do have the potential for personal, material and spiritual success. By contrast, those of her characters who hold onto history, the past, and their past places in their cultures simply for the sake of maintaining its traditions are doomed to failure, stasis, and often death. Most significantly for the student of American literature, she articulates her central subjects' productive violence quite closely with the ideology of American progress and risk-using such dearly held tropes as the frontier, the cowboy/pioneer, and the astronaut to mark her heroes and heroines. Just as importantly, however, she separates 'America'--as an ideal space/temporality of continuous self invention from America's dominant citizens.

In revisionary-subversive response to the nativist American ideology which holds that Anglo- Americans are the blessed children and international acolytes of this American ideal, Mukherjee turns the tables. In her work, many Anglo-Americans become spiritually, emotionally, and even physically crippled, overwhelmed by the obligations of living up to America's potent promises and traditions, while some first-generation immigrants Americans, though she dislikes qualifying 'American' in any way, accept the dangers and take the risks necessary to make the leap into a truly new future, a leap Mukherjee figures as specifically and quintessentially American. For Mukherjee, this revisionary immigrant American identity is inextricably intertwined with representations and tropings of modern technology.

Mukherjee's concept of violent personal, transcultural transformation is different from the attempts at total erasure practiced by the colonizing powers on their conquests. Mukherjee may disclaim allegiance to cultural pasts and traditions, but her characters do more than simply discard these. Jasmine murders her 'native' self in order to recreate different selves, but she can never wholly deny, forget, or escape the previous ones. Even at the end of the novel, as she prepares to transform herself again by leaving Bud and going to California with Taylor and Duff and the baby she's carrying, her past is with her: "Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stove.... I cry into Taylor's shoulder, cry through all the lives I've given birth to, cry for my dead" (214). They are dead, but not gone, for they can never cease to frame, warn, and influence Jasmine.

As much as Mukherjee figures Jasmine as a subject who makes fleeing her past (India, her family, her fate, even her names) a virtue, Jasmine is continually evoking that past and re-fashioning it and herself. Her continuous and aggressive revision of the fate fore-told in her childhood by a Hindu seer and her ability to affect it, to attain agency in its dynamics, most clearly demonstrates this simultaneity of past, present and future. It is important to note, however, that this self-determination is inflected with some of the same cultural narratives that Jasmine attempts to redirect. Her present is a tense, contingent result of continual negotiations between her past and her future; her future self can never entirely escape her past inscriptions.

In a recent article on *Jasmine*, "We Murder Who We Were: Jasmine and the Violence of Identity," Kristin Carter-Sanborn reads Jasmine's 'shuttling between identities' differently from Mukherjee's apparent desire to have them constructed as self-empowering. This reading deemphasizes important elements in the text that are crucial in understanding its inscription of Jasmine/Jyoti as autonomous and

independent, albeit within the parameters of certain cultural fields. Carter-Sanborn points out that Jasmine's near-euphoric sense of her (and other immigrants') ability to change and adapt to new circumstances is expressed in the highly ambiguous image. "We murder who we are so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams," Carter-Sanborn asks ". . . but of whose dreams?" (577). Under Carter-Sanborn's reading, each change or transformation that Jyoti / Jase/ Jasmine goes through, from traditional village girl to modern Indian wife to avenging killer to nurturing day mummy to 'foreign' Iowa farm wife, all occur under the control, sometimes outright, as in Prakash's lectures on her new identity, sometimes more subtle, as with Bud's joking references to her as the 'Jane' of Tarzan movies-of others, usually men.

Reincarnation, the text's central figure for these personal / subjective transformations, Carter- Sanborn believes,

[. . .] may in fact disguise the imperial subject dreaming of and violently remaking its 'third world' Others to fit those dreams Bud, Taylor, and even her first husband Prakash, whom Jasmine characterizes as a type of Professor Higgins, call upon these Orientalist vocabularies in order to speak the narrator's name and thus remake her in the shape of their own fantasies. (579)

One of Carter-Sanborn's central pieces of evidence is her reading of the scene in which Jasmine is raped by a smuggler named Half- Face, whom she then kills. Carter-Sanborn notes an evacuation of agency from the character of Jasmine as she prepares to murder him. In the shower after the rape, the glass fogs so that her face becomes indistinct, and her revenge is figured not as her own, but rather as a result of the action of the goddess Kali, as Jasmine feels herself become "walking death" (106). This transformation, Carter-Sanborn labels a "dissociative state," and claims that the

recourse to the Hindu goddess "blocks access to agency" (589). As further evidence, she points to the section of Chapter Eight in which the young Jyoti kills a rabid dog, noting that in her description of the event agency transfers from the young girl to the staff: "The staff crushed the dog's snout while it was still in mid-air" (*Jasmine* 49). Carter-Sanborn says, "It is as if the staff has leaped out of Jyoti's hands and done its work alone; she describes the scene from the point of view of prone and helpless observer" (587). For Carter-Sanborn, agency is thus displaced at crucial moments from Jasmine elsewhere, in a pattern that has been and will be repeated throughout the narrative. Carter-Sanborn is accurate when she sees Jane/Jasmine's chain of identities as divided, often as objects of others' desires and agendas: To act, for Jasmine, is to become entirely other.

In an interesting inversion of the colonial project sketched by Bhabha, Jasmine can authoritatively impute the idea of "multiplicity" to her own character only retrospectively from the perspective of a woman with an all-seeing "third eye." In cataloging her selves Jasmine is able to conjoin them in the overarching "multiple" consciousness of the narrative. But in the very construction of that consciousness there is no "simultaneity" or even continuity to be found. The narrator is not the widow and the au pair; the Iowa wife and the undetected murderer. The continuity between one of these states and any other is either obscured or destroyed, her implicit argument goes, by the violence of the transformative moment. She abandons agency in this moment to her theoretical Other, and it is this Other who determines and delivers her into new forms. There is no question that Jasmine does shift between identities and positions frequently. At the end of the novel, when Jane is leaving, the transformations undergone is analogous, at the individual level, with the broader cultural dynamics Homi Bhabha observes:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (2)

It is here that Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane's episodic leaps between identities and 'worlds,' her continual negotiations with her past and its 'fate,' and the 'images of dreams' she finds in ever more modern worlds, and in the mythologies of new places. Here Bhabha writes of the accompanying validity of tradition to be used, as Jasmine does, in working out new subjectivities that confront and surmount different and contradictory intersections of powers and cultures:

The right to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are in the minority. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. (2)

Put simply, it is Jasmine's right and power to call upon Indian cultural and religious traditions in this new setting, in a process which transforms those traditions into active tools of power for her, altering both. It is within this context that the usage of the goddess Kali actually instantiates agency in Jasmine. Or, more precisely, there occurs

a calling forth, in which Kali functions as an articulation of Jasmine and vice-versa, both inscribed upon and yet also different from each other. This is evidently a tense and anxious, only partial identification, an interstitial subjectivity which cannot be wholly one presence nor wholly another. It functions, importantly, in a multifaceted border space between Jasmine's proxy mission, the violence inflicted upon her by Half-Face's erasure of her identity as widow and his brutal subjection of her, and the new cultural cartography of America, in a hotel that, with its "Western shower" which Jasmine "had never used . . . with automatic hot water coming hard from a nozzle instead of cool water from a hand-dipped pitcher," is both torture chamber and "a miracle . . . It was a place that permitted a kind of purity" (*Jasmine*104).

Samir Dayal's assessment of Jasmine's identity accords with its radically unstable nature:

Jasmine instinctively grasps that self-assertion does not necessarily imply a confidence in a stable, reified self. Her struggle to maintain her precarious sense of self registers the effectivity of violence in the continual articulation of her precarious subjectivity in the world, . . . a violent self-transcendence. (80)

The inescapable excess of cultural interaction, the borderland postcolonial subjectivities that are multiple, is never thoroughly integrated into stable boundaries. For Mukherjee, the mutually reinforcing tropes of technology and America serve as metaphors and vehicles for a version of the "revision and reconstruction" Bhabha speaks of as defining the postcolonial identity.

Technology is a continual and highly ambiguous presence in *Jasmine*, and its functions and associations are crucial to our understanding of the new subjectivities achieved by the text's most highly valorized characters, Jasmine and Du. While

technology is evident throughout the various cultural zones of the text, including even "feudal" Hasnapur, it is America that provides its most "natural" home, its most active locus. America and technology are reciprocal figures, each providing the optimum conditions and frame for the other, articulating each other along a borderline named mutability. The mutability of technology subtends, allows, and reiterates the protean character of America in the novel, and the mutual interaction of this continual fluidity enables and in-scribes Jasmine's own personal subjective changes. Early in the novel, Jane observes: "They tell me I have no accent, but I don't sound Iowan, either. I'm like one of those voices on the telephone, very clear and soothing. Maybe Northern California, they say. Du says they're computer generated" (*Jasmine* 10-11).

Here, Jasmine/Jane's adaptability is underlined by her similarity to the dispersed and functional voice of the computer network. This previously unimagined reappropriation from the margins has an important forerunner in the novel. On her way to America, Jasmine and other illegal aliens move via what she calls "phantom airlines," in the shadows and corners of the authorized networks. The very technological/transportation linkages-international air-lines, airports-that support, at one level, the global capitalism that centers the West and performs economic and ideological neo-colonial operations on the "Third World," are also spaces of opportunity and refashioning for Jasmine and her fellow-travelers: "There is a shadow world of aircraft permanently aloft that share airplanes and radio frequencies with Pan Am and British Air and Air-India, portaging people who coexist with tourists and businessmen. But we are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers . . ." (90). It is significant that Jasmine and her fellow "phantom" passengers are not written as being accepted into that system of legalized, valorized national citizenship available to the privileged subjects who can afford it.

Rather, they are "ghosts," unthinkable and diaphanous entities taking advantage of the liminal, unauthorized and interstitial spaces that are the inevitable possibilities--the remainders, the excesses--of those pathways hurled outward to draw global Others into the sphere of power of the modern West: "What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues The zigzag route is the straightest . . . I phantom my way through three continents" (*Jasmine* 91). Her inscription as phantom in this context underlines the danger and power of her interstitial position: the phantom is dangerously less real; she would have no defense if detected. Yet, at the same time it is this liminal position that allows her to mimic the centered subjects of this international system to her advantage.

In the similar vein, that is, Jasmine's use of international system/ position to her advantage, Beerendra Pandey holds that Jasmine does not cling to her native / first space or foreign / second space, rather she enunciates third space. Pandey begins his article "Third Space of Enunciation: Reading Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*" with Bhabha's observation on 'third space of enunciation':

It is significant that the productive capacities of the third space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance, for a willingness to descend into that alien territory . . . may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures but on the inscription and articulation of identity. (qtd. in Pandey 229)

Pandey explains Bhabha's observation in reference to Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*: "The in-between location turns out to be a room for manoeuvre--a site of enabling agency allowing for an active interference in its eternal wisdom" (229). For Pandey, Bharati mukherjee's migrant protagonist in *Jasmine* "maintains the agency to make

her aphasia 'speak' in order to problematize the scene of representation both in the native third world and the alien first world" (229). "Jasmine refashions dharma, the hindu social order seen as complicating the issues of bloody violence and female subalternity in the postcolonial Indian society," he writes, "The novel shows the subaltern protagonist as bringing to crisis her subalternity with an air of subversiveness, which is reminiscent of Hindu goddess kali" (229).

Jasmine transcends *Dharma*. The novel interweaves the juxtaposition between *Dharma* and social practice in order to measure the inherent paradoxes. As Pandey writes, "Jasmine points to two major flaws in hindu dharma: the subaltern position of women and the refusal to acknowledge the harsh reality of the splitting of human blood in hindu society" (230), the real dharma practice is fraught with anomalies and segregation between the sexes. Pandey contends:

A woman, according to dharma should be self effacing, submissive and true to the husband—a tradition to the extent of joining him in celestial joys by performing *sati*--a traditional practice of self immolation on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. Seized by the need to correct the dharma against the bloody backdrop, *Jasmine* reincarnates Kali, the goddess of blood and death in the form of Jyoti turned Jasmine-turned-Jase turned Jane. The blow of fate, however fails to unnerve Jasmine, who overcome the odds, Kali like; violently and unyieldingly. By thus demonstrating her Sakti--the archetypal power of Kali--she beckons the subaltern women to seek a wider, more redemptive vision of her destiny. (230)

Shattering her traditional past, Jyoti enters to America where she is now in the position to make comparison between two different cultural traditions, Hindu-Indian

and Christian-American: "Whereas an Indian widow has to commit sati or else lead a dog's life, American women do not remain widow for long" (232). Pandey refers to the novel to illustrate his stance, "As the narrator says, 'with all the old Iowans in southern California, [Darrel's sister] does not think she will be a widow for long' (9)" (232). He further writes, "Mukherjee dramatizes the depth of the subalternity of Indian women by foregrounding the contrast between poverty-ridden rural India and prosperous urban America on the one hand and the big difference existing between the status of the women of two countries on the other hand" (232).

Jasmine defies traditional orders of both native and foreign societies to affirm her own position: ". . . Mukherjee takes the subversive activities of Jasmine in the constructive sense of establishing order through disorder" (236). Jasmine has experimented with all kinds of subversions to stay tuned to her position in foreign land. Her sexual freedom "functions as a measure of her rapid westernization on the one hand and her detachment from traditional sexual mores on the other" (237).

Pandey further contends:

The transformation from the myopia of a backward Indian village girl into the far-sightedness of a metropolitan lady who finally engages herself in self-aggrandisement comes through the cumulative insight obtaining in the coalescing of the myth of Kali. . . . Jasmine's knack for integrating the Indian religious tradition with mythic American way of life alters the two cultural sites into a power field for her, thereby modifying both. The integration reinforces itself through the novel's support of a possible negotiation between destiny and opportunity, between a sexed subaltern and subversive woman, and between non-violence and violence. (238)

In Mukherjee's fiction, people and nations scatter and gather. Assimilation is cultural exchange, or a willful and sometimes costly negotiation: an eye for an eye, a self for a self. People mix with gods and goddesses, or become gods and goddesses, reincarnating, translating narratives of coherence. Translated men and women make nations metaphorical, imagining homes in the cracks between nostalgia and frontier dreams. Violence roams, Kali's bloody tongue, to destruct the worst and preserve the best of cultures.

Because Mukherjee employs familiar American narratives in order to transform them, and to make them transformative, her representations of America and Americans are also different. For example, Victoria Carchidi sidesteps the violence and anxiety in Mukherjee's fiction to read Mukherjee as insisting "that when such multiple worlds meet, the result can be a glorious freeing of the lives of the kaleidoscope, that complexly intermix and produce a new pattern"(98). Susan Koshy suggests that Mukherjee's stories themselves elide the question of violence. She argues, "Mukherjee's celebration of assimilation is an insufficient confrontation of the historical circumstances of ethnicity and race in the United States and of the complexities of diasporic subject-formation"(69). But Mukherjee's stories do not simply promote American multiculturalism or celebrate assimilation; rather, precisely in order to confront "the historical circumstances of ethnicity and race in the United States" and "the complexities of diasporic subject-formation," Mukherjee fabulizes America, Hinduizes assimilation, and represents the real pleasures and violence of cultural exchange. Representing immigration through the logic of transformation, Mukherjee's project involves, as David Mura puts it, "a discovery and a creation, as well as a retrieval, of a new set of myths, heroes, and gods, and a history that has been occluded or ignored" (204).

To discover, create, and retrieve America's multicultural myths and histories, Mukherjee rejects the expatriate's nostalgia. She rejects the hyphen and the acceptable stories it generates—stories about immigrants struggling between two incommensurable worlds, finally choosing one or the other. Her immigrant characters are settlers, Americans—not sojourners, tourists, guest workers, foreigners. Arguing that "[w]herever I travel in the (very) Old World, I find 'Americans' in the making, whether or not they ever make it to these shores.... dreamers and conquerors, not afraid of transforming themselves, not afraid of abandoning some of their principles along the way" (27), Mukherjee holds America accountable for its promises and favorite myths about itself. This nation and its people are diverse dreamers, generous, heroic, hard-working, democratic, lovers of truth and defenders of equal opportunity for all. This American Dream offers possible worlds, unleashes the imagination. Despite its actual failures, this is its transformative power, and Mukherjee's work engages this most generous aspect. In her novel, hope has transformed violence, a leap toward 'freedom.' Dialogues with the false hope offered by an American dream premised on white supremacy and disseminated by global capitalism's exploitations are the later contents of *Jasmine*.

Mukherjee's appropriation of powerful American myths and transnational American dreams to the rewriting of hyphenated 'Americans' as Americans thus walks a critical tightrope. Arjun Appadurai views:

The United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images, but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes. The world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination in social life. The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms which direct us to something critical

and new in global cultural processes, the imagination as a social practice. (327)

The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order. The imagination as social practice and social fact works where myth logic meets fractals, chaos, fuzzy set theory; globalization is ineffectually understood purely in terms of Western or U.S. hegemony. Narratives of Americanization elsewhere must be interrupted by narratives of indigenization; neither the center nor the periphery can hold, or hold on. As the main character of Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* passionately argues:

I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit a life into a groove that was not prepared to receive it. I should never have been Jane Ripplemeyer of Baden, Iowa. I should have lived and died in that feudal village, perhaps making a monumental leap to modern Jullundhar. (214)

When Jyoti's future was blocked after the death of Prakash, Lord Yama should have taken her: "Yes, I say, I do believe you. We do keep revisiting the world. I have also traveled in time and space. It is possible." (214). Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff's day mummy and Taylor and Wylie's au pair in Manhattan; that Jasmine is not this Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch with Mary Webb at the University Club today. Jasmine says: "And which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms?" (127).

David Mura's call for "a new set of myths, heroes, and gods, and a history that has been occluded or ignored" (18) transforms, in Mukherjee's imagination, into stories of immigrants as active agents of change. These stories join, rather than

replace, the histories of economic and physical violence that fuel immigration and which immigrants face upon reaching the New World.

To bring these stories and histories together, Mukherjee marries the literal and the metaphorical. For example, in *Jasmine* she writes Jasmine as "a love goddess" (Interview [Connell et al.] 25)--both destroyer and preserver, powerful with want and wanting, facing and making violent change, moving through lives with tornado force, "in love with the country ... revitalizing it, if it allows itself to be revitalized" (Interview [Connell et al.] 26). Like Vishnu the Preserver, who contains "our world inside his potbellied stomach," Jasmine "cocoon[s] a cosmos" (*Jasmine* 224); "Like creatures in fairy tales, we've shrunk and we've swollen and we've swallowed the cosmos whole" (*Jasmine* 240). Like Kali the Destroyer, Jasmine kills to feed cycles of rebirth. Reading *Jasmine* too literally, or reading her only as an individual human being, ignores the work of metaphor: "The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order" (Appadurai 327). To read *Jasmine* only through the lens of assimilation ignores that when a goddess transforms, she doesn't lose herself: she is no singular self; she contains the cosmos. When a goddess transforms, she takes action, exerts great power. Hence, immigration is transformation in multiples, 'immigration' is a force of nature as transformative as global warming; immigration demands myth, imagination, metaphor.

Giving up the India that she was born into, and the India she initially (re)created to anchor her own New World anxiety, Mukherjee-the-writer determined to "invent a more exciting-perhaps a more psychologically accurate-a more precisely metaphoric India: many more Indias" (Mukherjee and Blaise 297). As part of this process, she also invents a more precisely metaphoric America, many more Americas-

amnesiac, violent, free and possible. She filters her insistently American stories through what she describes as "a Hindu imagination; everything is a causeless, endless middle" (Mukherjee and Blaise 175). The violence and hope twinned in Mukherjee's writing must be understood in terms of this imaginative 'Indianness,' where "Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world" (Mukherjee, "Darkness," xv), where Indian-ness means that "different perceptions of reality converge without embarrassing anyone" (Mukherjee and Blaise 296). This metaphoric, imaginative Indianness fuels her desire, and her struggle, for an equally metaphoric America. Creating this America, she writes:

It is, of course, America that I love. Where history occurs with the dramatic swiftness and interest of half-hour television shows. America is sheer luxury, being touched more by the presentation of tragedy than by tragedy it-self. History can be dealt with in thirty-second episodes; I need not suffer its drabness and continuum In India, history is full of uninterrupted episodes; there is no one to create heroes and define our sense of loss, of right and wrong, tragedy and buffoonery. Events have no necessary causes; behavior no inevitable motive. Things simply are, because that is their nature. (Mukherjee and Blaise 168)

In Mukherjee's imagination, America is a place in flux, a metaphor that represents freedom from Indian history-as-fate. She knows she should have ended up a Brahmin wife, privileged, angry, innocent, bored, dutiful, rebellious: "in Calcutta, we are rarely allowed to escape what our hands reveal us to be" (Mukherjee and Blaise 219).

However, as Jessica Hagedor observes, though America can offer a "profound sense of 'freedom' (to) a woman-a freedom of movement and choice.... Freedom (also) has its price" (175). For Mukherjee, American freedom costs her the clarity and stability

of full-Brahmin status, sacrificed when she marries a white French-Canadian American.

In an essay entitled "In a Free State: Postcolonialism and Post-modernism in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction," Gail Ching-Liang Low describes a seminar she convened on the "politics of speech and re-presentation, the creative ways in which women of colour countered racist and sexist erasure in mainstream white culture by reclaiming the right to tell their own stories" (8). When the group turned to Mukherjee's work, Low writes, "we found that we could not fit her writing into the model of postcolonial and diasporic texts that we had collectively mapped out as important There was real anger and dismay ... at Mukherjee's easy dismissal of much of what we took to be necessary interventions in the cultural mainstream" (9-10). Low explains: Mukherjee seemed not to be concerned with preserving cultural identities and did not want to be labeled an "Indian" writer. She is whole-heartedly unapologetic about her celebration of cultural dislocation and opposes Indianness as "a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration." Instead of consolidating cultural specificities against a dominant white urban America, "she positively rejects it" (9).

Discourses that emphasize the insurmountability of cultural differences, then, naturalize racist conduct. Mukherjee's fictions, and her discussions of them, emphasize resistance to discourses of difference put to this use.

Hence Mukherjee's argument that she and other immigrants are "Americans"-a metaphor/process/state of mind that signifies transforming selves, transforming the nation, rejecting the "mothering tyranny of nostalgia" ("Four-Hundred-Year-Old Woman" 25) for a worldview that knows culture is a live thing that cannot survive intact. For Mukherjee, U.S. complicity with the logic and practice of "new racism" is

balanced, though not erased, by a strong history of civil rights activism and by the beckoning of the New World possibility that the United States represents: "I made my choice; I shouldered my way into the country in which I felt minority discourse empowered rather than enfeebled me.... This time I was repossessing a 'homeland' I had willed into existence, not inherited" (Mukherjee and Blaise 303).

As Jasmine says, "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself... We murder who we were so we can rebirth our-selves in the images of dreams" (29), she gives herself up to this new life; she goes down the rabbit hole and takes America with her. Patricia Wald writes, "Character and culture come together not in the fear of merging but in the fear of disappearing into incomprehensibility-into an identification... with an immigrant divested of the cultural narratives, and the familiar terms, that mark person-hood" (239). Precisely because she interacts and identifies with new Americans, and is being changed by them, *Jasmine* tells contradictory stories. She struggles to keep her stories comprehensible even as she tells stories about incomprehensibility and displacement.

Jasmine's version of reincarnation is somewhat different, pointing to a definition of personal identity that is far from constant, but shifts into the space provided by the culture. By the passage's end, she is no longer an individual self, but joins with all immigrant women, all women sexually victimized in places and vehicles of transience. Between the scene of arrival in America -Jasmine's first sight is of two nuclear cones and some plastic garbage - and the rape, the novel flashes forward and she wonders if Bud, her banker lover, even sees the America she does:

We pass half-built, half-deserted cinder-block structure sat the edge of town, with mud-spattered deserted cars parked in an uncleared lot, and I wonder, Who's inside? What are they doing? Who's hiding? Empty

swimming pools and plywood panels in the window frames grip my guts. And Bud frowns because unproductive projects give him pain. He says, 'Wonder who handled their financing.' (*Jasmine*109)

The book is also an ambivalent hymn to assimilation. As a woman, Jasmine finds freedom by escaping first India and then the immigrant Indian community. The task of healing the rift (a rift that is not Mukherjee's subject) will belong to the next generation. Jasmine's task is escape from old-world constraints and from mortality, the stench of "the soft water logged carcass of a small dog" with which the first chapter concludes: ". . . every time I lift a glass of water to my lips, fleetingly I smell it. I know what I don't want to become" (3). Mukherjee does not focus on American poverty, violent racism, woman hate. What interests her is contrast between the protected, taken-for-granted, "ordinary lives" of the Americans she sees, and the immigrant's longing for that protected ordinary life. Jasmine says:

Oh, intellectuals: For them, experience leads to knowledge, or else it is wasted. For me, experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill. At Du's school, they say Du's doing so well, isn't he, considering. Considering what? I want to say. Considering that he has lived through five or six languages, five or six countries, two or three centuries of history; has seen his country, city, and family butchered, bargained with pirates and bureaucrats, eaten filth in order to stay alive; that he has survived every degradation known to this century, considering all those liabilities, isn't it amazing that he can read a Condensed and Simplified for Modern Students edition of *A Tale of two Cities*? (214)

Yet even in safe America, the man who killed Jasmine's young husband appears, somewhat improbably, as a New York hotdog vendor. Even in the heartland, farmers

crazed from their farms going under shoot bankers or hang themselves. Americans enjoy more safety than most, but not for long. In the end, Jasmine is released from obligation and from her existence in middle of America, where any mention of Hasnapur is like naming an old lover, disloyal and threatening. Rescued by the man she loves, she escapes into a fairy-tale American happiness, an ending which rings false but not fatally so. There are plenty of unhappy endings in this book to contradict any suggestion of facile optimism, so that the book manages to keep its cake and feed us too. Never mind that Jasmine's leaving the man who left his wife for her, who has become paralyzed in a wheelchair and whose child she's carrying; she doesn't hesitate. Partly this is due to contingencies, a sense that his ex-wife will probably take him back; but mostly it's because she's the novel's moral anchor.

Jasmine is a novel that resists closure and suggests a strategy of continual transformation as a necessary and historically contingent ethic of survival. This continual remaking of the self invokes "two temporalities: that of oppression, memory, and enforced identity, and that of emergence after the 'break,' the counter memory, and heterogeneous difference" (Radhakrishnan, "Ethnic Identity" 211). On the one hand, Jasmine thematizes narration and identity by bringing into focus how differences are social products of interested desire. At the same time, it offers the symbolic possibility of the emergence of a reinvented, paralogical, heterogeneous "family," based on affinity and multiplicity rather than fixed identity. Jasmine is a counter-narrative where "re-inventing ourselves a million times" becomes a reflexive, historically situated strategy for negotiating power. Discussing narrative history, Frantz Fanon writes that when the colonizer comes to write the history of the colonial encounter "the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation . . ." (41). Such interested productions

become, for Lila Abu-Lughod, "the great self-congratulatory literature of the rise of the West, which for so long has shaped our view of the past ..." (111). Suggesting that this literature should be "revaluated" and "remade," Abu-Lughod recommends an analysis based on triangulation, or multiple, contradictory points of view (112).

But, at the same time, this voice is seen as a threat to the accomplishments and values of Western culture simply because it has been historically marginalized and may have a different story to tell. In other words, the silent, demarcated subject who is the product of Western and patriarchal historiography built upon theories of synchronous development is again resituated just at the very moment of emergence, at the very moment Jasmine speaks. Moreover, as Edward Said suggests, when the postcolonial subjects speak, they are considered by many Western intellectuals to be merely "wailers and whiners," denouncing the evils of colonialism. They are thus implicated in the politics of blame. As Said explains, such a politics proceeds from a willingness to assert that colonialism has ended. Therefore, "any claims about or reparations for its damages and consequences into the resent are dismissed as both irrelevant and preposterously arrogant" ("Intellectuals" 54). The phrase "into the present" is crucial.

This is the kind of concerns addressed by *Jasmine*: resistance, hierarchical distinctions, and boundaries that exclude and include. Chandra Mohanty calls "relations of ruling a model for cultural analysis that posits multiple intersections of structures of power and emphasizes the process or form of ruling, not the frozen embodiment of it" (14). In *Jasmine* these concerns, embedded in relations of ruling, reveal themselves through the actions of the religious fundamentalist, Sukhwinder, the rapist, Half-Face, and the seemingly benevolent banker, Bud Ripplemeyer, individuals who continually attempt to place Jasmine into prior narratives of desire

that would define her as a known, visible, and essential self conforming to one or another of the myths that their narrativized knowledge of her authority and legitimacy. Confronted by the repeated pleas from Bud Ripplemeyer, the father of her unborn child, Jasmine reflects upon how much he doesn't know about her. In fact, he has studiously avoided such knowledge, since her "genuine foreignness frightens him" (22). Instead, his desire and interest are spurred by his image of "Eastern" women. For her prospective husband, she is "darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plunges me into visibility and wisdom" (178). This visibility then involves an identity as an already-known subject. But she knows differently: she has been "many selves" and has "survived hideous times" (190). In contrast to her, Bud lives innocently within "the straight lines and smooth planes of his history" (190). Two versions of history and narration emerge in the narrator's comments.

For Jasmine, history is the discontinuity and rupture produced by material and political events and, as a result, the self becomes plural and contradictory. Her survival depends upon a flexible strategy of appropriation and transformation. For Bud, history is a straight line, a teleological and progressive ordering of existence where the phenomenological world is transparent and the self is unified and autonomous. It is "a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies an end of time, a completed development" (Foucault 152). The narrator's displacement of fixed identity and these two views of history provide a point of entry into Mukherjee's *Jasmine*.

In the course of the novel, the narrator is Jyoti, Jasmine, Jane, and Jase. Each of her names represents a transitional self as she travels from Hasnapur, India to Baden, Iowa. Rather than a recapitulation of the stereotype of the deceitful, mendacious Asian, these name changes can be seen as a response to the still ongoing

effects of colonialism. She must change to survive and to continue her journey.

Jasmine's journey has taken her from Hasnapur to the United States aboard unregistered aircraft and ships. As an illegal immigrant traveling on a forged passport, she must complete her pilgrimage to Tampa aboard *The Gulf Shuttle*, a shrimper engaged in "the nigger-shipping bizness" (99). She ends up in a motel room at the run-down Florida Court with the captain of the trawler, Half-Face, whose name derives from the loss of an eye, an ear, and half his face in Vietnam, where he served as a demolitions expert. Half-Face, a character "from the underworld of evil" (103), is thus marked by his neocolonialist experience in Southeast Asia, and in this sense is like the young man at the bar later in the novel who reacts to Jasmine's entrance with the remark that "I know whore power when I see it" (179). Recognition and association are immediate: "His next words were in something foreign, but probably Japanese or Thai or Filipino, something bar girls responded to in places where he'd spent his rifle-toting youth" (179).

The young man and Half Face, both veterans of the East, respond similarly because Jasmine represents an already known and gendered subject. With banal conviction, Half-Face tells Jasmine, "You know what's coming, and there ain't nobody here to help you, so my advice is to lie back and enjoy it. Hell, you'll probably like it. I don't get many complaints" (102). For Half-Face, Jyoti's vulnerability is a "sort of turn-on" (101), and his boast implies a prior knowledge/narrative of known Eastern women and an entire history of others who have not complained. In other words, for Half-Face and his cohorts, women have not complained because ultimately they accepted the inevitability of the hierarchical situation and their presumed sexual nature, thus discovering that they "really" liked it after all. In this interested

configuration of desire, cause and effect are conflated, and the threat of violence occluded.

The myth of the available and passive Eastern woman eliminates any possibility of resistance, any possibility that these women did not "really" like it. For Half-Face, Jyoti is merely "one prime piece," a gendered marking of the body that "cancels out" any other considerations (103). With mechanical and perfunctory obliviousness, Half-Face drinks, rapes, and then falls asleep. As a consequence of her "personal dishonor," Jasmine considers killing herself as Half-Face snores in the next room.

Occurring at the exact center of the novel, Jasmine's rape signals a crucial moment in her successive transformations and in the formation of her ethics of survival. Instead of killing herself and passively conforming to an identity politics that would define her solely as a victim, she decides instead to kill her attacker. With ritualistic attentiveness, she first thoroughly cleanses her body, and then she purifies her soul through prayer. She has a small knife, given to her by Kingsland, a savvy fellow nomad traveling aboard The Gulf Shuttle. She first uses it on herself, cutting a strip across her tongue. As Mukherjee explains, Jasmine becomes "Kali, the goddess of destruction, since "Kali has her red tongue hanging out" ("Interview" 21). In addition, this gesture of marking and naming reclaims her body. It is an active intervention in the relations of ruling that provided the justification of her rape and her subsequent conception of herself as a victim. One further observation here has implications for Jasmine's later desertion of her crippled husband. Mukherjee has remarked that Kali is "the goddess of destruction, but not in a haphazard, random way. She is the destroyer of evil so that that world can be renewed" ("Interview" 21).

As such, this restructuring and renewing function of Jasmine as Kali provides a key to the possibility of a postcolonial politics where resistance to the myths, histories, and narratives of the metropolitan center involves an active thematizing of the structures of enforced identity, and an affirmative transformation that involves appropriating the weapons and technologies that have served to maintain the center. Jasmine's killing of Half Face involves a reappropriation, a violent sundering and subsequent adapting of the controlling strategies of violence and desire, and the reinscription of active resistance into the patriarchal narrative of vulnerability and availability. She appropriates the knife/phallus, and she penetrates his body. Then, instead of committing *Sati*, burning the suit of her dead husband, and then lying on the fire, the 'mission' that controlled her journey to the United States, Jasmine burns Prakash's suit and her Indian clothes in a trash can next to the motel. She breaks the chain of causality. Jasmine passes from innocence and enacts a radical break, suggesting a form of resistance that is contingent, disruptive, and strategic. Rather than reifying a past that is continuous and identical with itself, Jasmine suggests a history dislodged from origins and a self fractured from organic wholeness.

As R. Radhakrishnan writes, "[t]he task for radical ethnicity is to thematize and subsequently problematize its entrapment within these binary elaborations with the intent of stepping beyond to find its own adequate language" ("Ethnic Identity" 216). For Jasmine, this "adequate language" involves the ability "to adjust, to participate," without succumbing to the desire to hold on to the past and certainty (128). To do so would be to become like Professor Vadhera and his family, who recreate an "artificially maintained Indianness" (145). In contrast, Jasmine must seek to negotiate and resituate, continually, the horizon of her fears and desires. This process of constant adjustment propels her. In contrast to her earlier transformations,

she asserts that "I changed because I wanted to" (165). She thus becomes "Jase, the prowling adventurer" (157). Rather than preservation, stasis, and attachments, Mukherjee's novel proposes a counter-narrative that suggests that "transformation" must be embraced (214). Such a strategy questions the drive to essentialize that characterizes Sukhwinder, Half-Face, and Bud Ripplemeyer. It also suggests a different relationship between former colonial partners, a resituating of history that involves a thematizing of prior myths of enforced identity and a breaking into a new space, provisional and based on affinity, not identity. This postcolonial space is portrayed symbolically as the reconstituted family that emerges at the end of the novel: Jase is carrying Bud's child, Duff is an adopted child, and Taylor is emerging from a failed marriage. In addition they are going to California to be reunited with Du and his sister, victims of Vietnam's colonial past. In the reconstituted family, they do not have the certainty of Bud's straight line of his story, but neither do they have those benevolent assumptions that authorize exclusions based on fear of immigrants. Here, individuals survive through a flexible strategy of "scavenging, adaption, and appropriate technology" (138).

Chapter-Four

Prema's Struggle for Alternative Identity in *Seasons of Flight*

Nepali immigration to America, the central context of Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight*, is a more recent phenomenon in comparison to Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine* in many ways. Firstly, Unlike Lahiri and Mukherjee, Thapa's narrative captures the trend of Diversity Visa lottery—every year United States of America chooses certain number of people from developing countries to permanently settle them in America, Nepali has remained a 'buffer zone' for this US project since its inception not long ago— and her protagonist is one of the winners. Secondly, the moving force behind the protagonist's departure to foreign land in *Seasons of Flight* is not casual accidents as in *Jasmine* and *Namesake*, but a sense of insecurity protruded in people's lives by the decade-long Maoist insurgency. And, thirdly, Prema belongs to the first generation of immigrants from a peripheral location still in her 30s till the end of narration; neither she has any family or many people of her native origin to associate herself with in foreign land nor people have heard of her country. This is also different to the context of *Jasmine* and *Namesake*.

In many ways, the history of Nepali immigration to US is to begin with Prema, the female protagonist of *Seasons of Flight*, there were already Indian immigrants aplenty in Lahiri's and Mukherjee's narration. This complete darkness and sense of alienation because of this, paints diasporic experience of Prema with more brightness and color than Jasmine and Gogol. Yet, the process through which Prema creates herself and her identity amidst the foreign land, people and culture is similar to Jasmine and Gogol given to their common identity of South Asian diaspora in America. This chapter explores how Prema associates herself to the process of

creating alternative identity, from a migrant to a citizen, what her challenges are, and, why she is similar or different from other immigrants.

In his book *Reflections on Exile*, the critic Edward Said defines exile as "the unbearable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (173). At the heart of the essential sadness of exile is dislocation, the sense that, having left one's home behind, one no longer belongs anywhere. As Said writes in "introduction" to the book *Reflections on Exile*, "Living with strange status of an immigrant unlike all others is often a troubling aspect of daily life, since marginality and the solitude of the outsider, can frequently overcome one's sense of habitually being in it" (xi). This experience of dislocation is the thematic thread that ties together the whole experiences of Prema's life in America and elsewhere in Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*.

Edward Said's aforementioned lines resonate with Thapa's discovery of alienated self in her characters in *Seasons of Flight*. While it is true that *Seasons of Flight* contains heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in immigrant's lives, these are more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrows of estrangement. The material achievement that the immigrant family gets is permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever, living the life of succeeding generation spiritually orphaned and alienated.

Thapa's story objectifies anguish and a predicament most people rarely experience first hand. The postcolonial 'global' world has begotten millions of bereaved people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography. Thapa's work has primarily focused on Nepali first generation immigrants, exploring themes of exile, isolation, and assimilation. *Seasons of Flight* continues to examine this territory while enlarging and further universalizing its scope. Thapa's insights into the

psychology of relationships, aging, maturity, loss of remarkable, and her prose is a marvel — slightly formal and luminously straight forward. *The Boston Globe* describes *Seasons of Flight* as "beautifully crafted story that reaffirm Thapa's status as one of Nepal's most accomplished and graceful young writers" (26). "Though she is a young writer, her work is confident and timeless," Robert Simmons reiterates:

Seasons of Flight explores the cultural dissonances experienced by immigrants caught between the culture of their birthplace and the unfamiliar ways of their adopted home. Thapa as an author incorporates her opinions and perspective into the literature to better portray the experiences of her characters. The interpretation and comprehension of this story is largely dependent on the inclusion of accounts from the author's own life and experiences. In *Seasons of Flight*, diaspora makes it difficult for the characters to assimilate to the new customs and moral convictions of each new environment. (27)

Prema's life in the novel becomes a thing thrown to darkness. She confesses: "I also entered a world my parents had little knowledge or control of: school, books, music, television, things that seeped in and became a fundamental aspect of who I am" (151). She spoke English "without an accent" (151), comprehending the language in a way her parents "still do not" (151). "And yet there was evidence that I was not entirely American," Prema unfolds the knot of her coming to America:

In addition to my distinguishing name and looks, I did not attend Sunday school, did not know how to ice-skate, and disappeared to oblivion for months at a time. Many of these friends proudly called themselves Irish-American or Italian-American. But they were several generations removed from the frequently humiliating process of

immigration, so that the ethnic roots they claimed had descended underground whereas mine were still tangled and green. I was not American by birth, nor would I ever be no matter how hard I tried. I felt doomed by this pronouncement, misunderstood and gradually defiant. (152)

When she first started writing, Thapa was not conscious that her subject would be the Nepali-American experience. What drew her to this craft is the desire to force the two worlds she occupied to mingle on the page. "On the cusp of a new century, the term 'Nepali-American' has become part of this country's [America's] vocabulary," Thapa resents on her character's compulsion to leave her homeland, "I've heard it so often that these days, if asked about my background, I use the term myself, pleasantly surprised that I do not have to explain further" (*Interview*, 153).

Her experience of cultural intermingling are shocking and interesting at the same time: "the traditions on either side of the hyphen dwell in me like siblings, still occasionally sparring, and one outshining the other depending on the day" (154). But like siblings they are intimately familiar with one another, forgiving and intertwined. The publication of *Seasons of Flight* marks the tradition of immigrant experience of Nepali diaspora being scripted in English. In *Seasons of Flight*, Thapa continues to explore this theme of Said, this time with a focus on the lives of first-generation immigrants who must navigate both the traditional values of their immigrant parents and the mainstream American values of their peer.

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* is at once a personal drama depicting the life of Prema, a Nepali immigrant to United States of America, and a social panorama pointing up aspects of identity and cross-cultural experiences. Thapa's narrative skills and keen observations are evident throughout the text rendered in its

restrained, reasonable, almost matter-of-fact ventilation of her own attitudes and experiences and the ones of those whose culture has left distinguishing scars on her identity. Her observations include comments on the life of Prema as a Nepali-Immigrant, the mechanics of immigration, traditional Nepali society, and the condition of immigrants in America. The lived reality of relocations and dislocations of vast populations makes the phenomenon of diaspora a commonplace in our time. In this paper, the researcher contends that a strikingly troubling embrace of American nationality is expressed in a recent novel by Manjushree Thapa, a Nepali writer writing in English. Nepali-ness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world.

Though the major female character in this novel, Prema, is--or was--Nepali, the researcher sees most of the episodes in her story as stories of broken identities and discarded languages and the will to bond oneself to a new community against the ever-present fear of failure and betrayal. Prema embraces being 'American,' not Nepali and American, not hyphenated. Further, she wants to be recognized as 'an American chick' in the tradition of American people. In one moment, Prema delineates an 'aesthetics of dislocation' as one component of an Nepali American identity:

The other is that we have all come under the sign of America. In Nepal, no one would ask me if I were Asian American or Asian. Here we are part of a minority, and the vision of being 'unserved' comes into our consciousness. It is from this consciousness that I create my life and new identity. (*Seasons of Flight* 16)

Nepal-born generation of immigrants like Prema embark on the psychological and socio-cultural journey of becoming 'American' and, more specifically, adopting a

Nepali American identity. In the story, Prema once returns to Nepal after five years to visit her family. As she crosses national border, she is forced to recognize her own dual identity--more American in clothing, speech, body language than Nepali, though ethnically marked. Nepali Americans are also described in Nepal as NRNs--Non-Resident Nepalis. Although Nepal does not allow dual nationality, this is a way to retain close emotional ties; hence, even as American citizens, they are still identified as 'Nepalis' albeit 'non-resident'--a form of "flexible citizenship," to borrow Inderpal Grewal's phrase. As Grewal notes this condition in India,

The Indian government nurtures the ties to home since they want to entice NRI financial investments to India; this NRI population is not interested in forming coalitions with other people of color in the US, and most are uncritical of the US 'ideology of 'democracy' and 'freedom.'(2)

Prema embarks with cameras on a journey to see her family in the eastern hills of Nepal. She wants to learn from the ethnic heritage that is not part of her everyday geography in the US. Thapa sensitively captures the image of this native-returned-as-tourist in the portrayal of Prema, whose interest in the local guide/driver is interpreted quite differently by the foreign-returned and by the native. Many incidents in the narrative unfold in the US, others travel back to Nepal through the character's imagination and history. Some are set in Nepal with the ever-present West looming in the wings. There are women who have affairs, men who leave their wives, women who chose careers over family, non-traditional women and men. Thapa's characters demonstrate the diversity of the South Asian American community with their various languages, religions and regional food cultures. Their daily lives in this diasporic location unfold as they struggle and dream, argue and entertain. These portrayals

broaden the representations of Nepali Americans, abandoning any fixed notion of 'great' Nepali culture.

Language uses are a significant part of diasporic experience. In the novel Thapa recreates the levels of ignorance about Asian languages and cultures in US society: "Can you speak Mexican... No I am from Nepal... Can you speak Hindi?" (*SF* 118). Such ignorance compounds an immigrant generation's conflict about learning mother-tongues that are not heard in mainstream culture. Yet those languages, especially those mother-tongues, cling to them, stuck almost like a second skin that cannot be shed. In yet another episode, a second-generation daughter leaves home. The cultural gulf between daughter and parents is so wide that she has to make an escape in the middle of the night, and has to face the question: "in which language would she leave a note to her parents?" (*SF* 142). How can she write in English to her parents who have never spoken to her in anything but Nepali: "who will have to have someone translate the lines and curves, the bewildering black slashes she has left behind?" (142). She hopes that later, as she learns to make her own space in the world, she will be able to communicate more openly with her parents: "Maybe the words will come to her... halting but clear, in the language of her parents, the language that she carries with her, for it is hers too, no matter where she goes" (142).

In another episode, a mother struggles with the knowledge that her son is being racially harassed in school. The mother feels helpless because she is not fluent enough in English to argue with the teacher: "My few English phrases," she thinks. "She [the teacher] will pluck them from me, nail shut my lips" (202). Through a few deft phrases, she evokes fear and cultural impasse. Longing for homes left behind may be intense for first-generation immigrants who seek a community to belong to. In becoming diasporic, we need to keep in mind the political parameters of home,

community and nation, as analyzed usefully in Chandra Mohanty's essay, "Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on being South Asian in North America":

What is home? The place I was born? Where I grew up? Where I live and work as an adult? Where I locate my community-my people? Who are 'my people'? Is home a geographical space, a historical space, an emotional sensory space? Home is always so crucial to immigrants and migrants... I am convinced that this question-how one understands and defines home-is a profoundly political one... Political solidarity and a sense of family could be melded together imaginatively to create a strategic space I could call 'home.' (5)

Conflation of the desire and dread of Nepali identity, and the instances of "mimicry" percolate in the text (Bhabha 85). Prema tries to buy her freedom despite undergoing Bhabhian hybridity, the mixture of Nepali and American forces. She creates herself, or her 'selves,' as she moves through those worlds. She is not able to purchase her freedom, pursuing a most unusual career as a kitchen attendant, maid servant, and environment activist.

The complexity of Prema's dual identity, shifting between Nepali and American, is a persistent and at times richly contradictory theme in her life-story, one which neatly illustrates Homi Bhabha's important concept of cultural hybridity, or the condition of in-between-ness. Hybrid identities open up a 'third space' for oppositional critique, challenging the monolithic opposites which structure so much of our thinking, such as black and white, good and bad, male and female (86). In Bhabha's words, hybridity allows for "the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other" (85). There are dozens of stances of hybridity in Prema's story, where he appears neither Nepali nor American. Some of these

moments occur shortly after Prema's arrival in America as, alienated and lonely, the girl seeks acceptance into her new environment. Bhabha seeks assistance from Edward Said to formulate his thesis on the nature of mimicry: "Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination--the demand for identity stasis and the counter-measure of the diachrony of history-- changes, difference – mimicry represents an ironic compromise" (Bhabha 87). Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other,' as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. This is to say, in Bhabha's terms, that the discourse in mimicry "is constructed around ambivalence" (86). In order to be effective, mimicry must "continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (88). The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that Bhabha has called mimicry is therefore stricken by indeterminacy: "mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (87). Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power. Bhabha further holds that mimicry is also "the sign of the inappropriate [ness]" (90). However, mimicry ferments a difference which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both normalized knowledge and disciplinary powers. The text challenges the reader to think about the process of acculturation, and the extent to which a mind can be colonized by the dominant culture.

Thapa's narrative captures the humanity of ordinary people, struggling with traditions, arranged marriage, food preparation, and helping the destitute. Her characters take diasporic leaps to create new lives even as they keep hold on the small details of their culture-eating with fingers, enjoying a specific regional pickle,

speaking native languages, being dutiful. While her characters remain self-consciously aware of their ethnicity, they participate in this US culture through their intimate relationships, married, single, raising children, driving that extra mile to get an absolutely necessary ingredient for a favorite recipe. Even as their ethnicity as Nepali Americans is performed in daily life, they work towards a hybrid realization of their subjectivity as Nepalis and as Americans.

Contemporary discussion on diaspora speculates on some theoretical relation between the concept of diaspora and double consciousness. The debates about multiculturalism and transnationalism demand a rethinking of diaspora. This debate finds a resonance in resurgent multicultural debates. In this regard, Dayal in "Diaspora and Double Consciousness" quotes James Clifford: "we are seeing the emergence of new maps: broad land cultural areas, populated by strong, diasporic ethnicities assimilated to dominant nation states" (46). Dayal sees a strategic value in cultivating a diasporic double consciousness. "It affords an interstitial perspective on what it means to be, say, 'British' or 'American' - a perspective that allows for the emergence of excessive and differential meaning of belonging," Dayal contends, "as well as a 'parasitic' location, where double consciousness is not synthetically and dialectically resolved, but rather enables and internal critique while suspending the mundane question of assimilation" (47). Thus, Dayal finds 'double-consciousness' as bearing a strategic value of cultivation. This helps European perspective to have the "differential meaning of belonging as well as parasitic." That is why the question of assimilation for him is not more than a mundane. He conceptualized double consciousness as "neither just this/nor just that" (47).

The diasporic perspective as double-consciousness seems fruitful particularly in such emphasis like transnational scope for contemporary Cultural Studies. All

diasporic elements seem to have the automatic possession of double consciousness, that they are fully self reflexive ambivalent and cosmopolitan riding of cultural differences. To prove this Dayal insists that "diaspora in the First World, furthermore, is not always an elective or volunteerist condition . . . diasporic sensibility presented in the fiction of Hanif Kureishi or Anitav Ghosh is very different from that in Tayob Salih's or in Yambo Ouloguem's" (49). The cosmopolitan does not always share the same cultural location as the refugee or the exile. The figure of diaspora defines the limit of 'nation-ness' and its operational rhetoric of assimilation or belonging, of ethnicity, of the other. Such double-consciousness holds the power to split, to render irrecoverably multiple- the official narratives that together make up the nation.

Diasporic double consciousness can be the name for transcultural studies which includes the possibilities of reading one culture's space and time from the space and time of another. It problematizes the correspondence different identity and place or biology, and the cultural differences in a more pivotal case of post colonial hybridity. Said shows a political touch regarding diaspora by the different perspectives of Nair and Fusco. He further writes:

While Nair's diasporic eye lights upon a localized politics of recognition and representation interstitially situated between the South Asian diaspora and the older diaspora of African-American, Fusco's more fully theorized interest is in the circulation of a symbolic economy, where recognition and representation are redeemed into a new uneasiness about the confrontation of self and other in transnational frame. Both Nair and Fusco thematize double consciousness as irony. Fusco explicitly theorizes a counter--

ethnographic irony, where else Nair confidently turns this irony upon the diasporic themselves. (58)

This helps to conclude that for Nair double consciousness is less politicalized, less pained. And on other hand, Fusco's sense of hybridity seems more acute, as a desire or nostalgia for some cultural solidarity. These diverse experiences of diasporic double consciousness offers a starting point for exploring the implication for cultural and postcolonial studies and criticisms.

Despite the popularity in Diasporic writing, the theory of diaspora is not free from controversies. The diasporic writers and theorists have been assailed or being inauthentic and misrepresenting the reality. They are also critiqued for using more fantasy and exaggerating the reality of their faraway homeland in order to create and aesthetic effect on the reader or to engage large audiences. Despite the adverse criticism, fantasy is still an inevitable part of diasporic writing. It is an only source that makes it possible for the immigrant characters to be connected between their past and present.

Culture is a fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions. Such actions then take the forms of social structure, the actually existing network of social relations. Culture and social structure are then different abstractions from the same phenomena. The culture is a term defined in an ethnographic way too. E. B. Tylor, in "Culture or Civilization: Rudimentary Definition," contends that "Culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor I). Thus, the object or target of culture is to refresh to the morals, manners and ways of life of subordinate social strata.

In the contemporary postcolonial period, the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involve in political and social authority within the world order. It forces us to involve in an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value other composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. Homi K. Bhabha, one of the postcolonial critics, takes culture as strategy of survival:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement ... It is translational because such spatial histories of displacement...make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, rather complex issue. (Bhabha 438)

In contemporary postcolonial studies, the varieties of culture and the need to acknowledge these varieties to avoid universal cultural definitions plays a vital role. In common uses the cultural diversity or cultural variations suggests that cultural authority resides not in a series of fixed and determined diverse objects but in the process of how these objects come to be known and so come into being. In this regard, Ashcroft quotes Homi Bhabha: "cultural variation employs the terms as oppositions to draw a distinction between two ways of representing culture" (60). It is insufficient to record signifiers of cultural diversity which merely acknowledge a range of separate and distinct systems of behavior, attitudes and values. Thus, Bhabha's view seems to contend that cultural differences enhance to create different identities because cultural diversity includes "a range of separate and distinct systems of behavior, attitudes and values" (60).

The cultural diversity seems to grasp the Spirit of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, and culture of humanity. It studies the culture in its micro level opposing the cultural universalism. It also helps to know the formation of cultural totalities by emphasizing our awareness of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons. Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" mentions two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. He further defines:

Cultural identity is defined in terms of its own shared culture, a soil of collective 'one true self. Hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting division and vicissitudes of our actual history. (111)

Halls' argument regarding cultural identity seems to reflect that identity is a shared culture, and a sort of collective true self. It focuses the communal feeling and a sense of 'us.' These identities share common historical experiences and cultural codes. It connotes that cultural identity is a formation of particular social and cultural necessities which has a long historical lineage.

Cultural identity has played a critical role in the postcolonial struggles which has reshaped our perception of the world. It continues to be a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation among hitherto marginalized people. Cultural identity, which follows along the many points of similarity, has critical points of deep and significant difference that constitute what we really are, or rather what we have become. Hall expands his notion:

Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming 'as well as that 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. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything, which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (112)

In this sense, identity is subject to continuous play of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere recovery of the past, waiting to be found, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past. It is only from this second position of the identity proposed by Hall seems that we can properly understand the traumatic character of the colonial experience out of which are constituted the identities such as Indianness, Carribeanness, Africanness and Blackness.

Thapa is primarily concerned with the problems of identity as they beset the Nepali-Americans, shipwrecked as they are between two cultures. Her reflections of her characters focus on their sense of dislocation and their complex relationship with foreign geography and environment. In Spite of her enormous appetite for good life, Prema's life reveals the lost energies of her generations; or perhaps her own inability to identify herself entirely with her adopted homeland. This is the proto-colonial curse that afflicts her, causing much of her family's ensuing chronicle to unfold in a void. Yet, when Prema's own voice comes to the fore, in the end, the novel is redeemed. Prema's talent for dialect and mimicry is brilliantly exploited in this segment; Prema's love-life embodies the decline of the Nepaliness, and the Nepali-American dilemma, in the moving and perfectly realized conclusion of the novel. Prema's view of Nepal is mediated through the diaspora sensibility and perspective of a Nepali writer; this story of a life lived on the margins of Americanism describes, with equal insight and

objectivity, the racism and fallacies of globalization, and the misogynistic superstitions holding Nepal back from progress. The changing geographical and political landscapes of Nepal are skillfully deployed as a backdrop to the central story.

In the opening pages of *Seasons of Flight*, Prema, a young Nepali living in the US, is asked where she's from. She tries explaining: “‘It is near India’, or ‘Where Mt Everest is’, or ‘You’ve heard of the Sherpas?’”, so that they might say, ‘Geez, that’s real far’, or ‘I could have sworn you were Mexican/ Italian/Spanish’, or ‘You speak good English’” (1). In this efficient, endearingly familiar way, second-time novelist Manjushree Thapa introduces us to a story about displacement, self-definition and one South Asian woman’s search for fulfillment.

Prema’s story starts in a small village near Kathmandu, ascending quickly through the loss of her mother in childhood and the commonplace hardships of poverty, to a college degree in forestry, resulting in a job with an NGO. Secondary plot-lines include a younger sister who runs off with Maoist rebels when they come calling, Prema’s romance with a fellow NGO worker and a stoic, undemanding father who only wants to see her daughter go forward in her life.

One day, in a spirit of indifference, Prema signs up for the US Green Card Lottery. When she wins, her response is characteristically laconic, as if resigned to her fate. Her inner world, however, is taut with emotion and she turns her face westward with a faint quickening of hope. When she finds a lover in the US, an attractive Guatemalan, she responds with an ardour native to her own passionate nature and her mountain culture. She knows her path is an “ever-directionless zigzag trail” (7). In the spirit of a true seeker, she exceeds the stereotype. Her strength lies in the miniature scale of her aspirations. Like a tiny field-mouse “setting out to find a niche in the

limitless sprawl of the North American cornfield,” (24) she succeeds by being undeterred by her smallness.

Thapa has a light touch and maintains an admirable balance between telling a story and making socio-cultural observations. The beginning of the story is resonant with all the ambiguities and complexities of the many different cultural experiences it implicates. It addresses several aspects of first generation Nepali-Americans. All the characters in the novel are subjected in one way or another way to overt or subtle forms of western domination. The material fulfillment does not blur the divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations. The continuing unequal treatment of immigrant peoples in American society testifies to the fact that Thapa's narrative is the continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. At the literal level, this citation provokes humor in the narrator's commentary that to get the news of her Father "she watched the news," But it punches at the middle of confused relationship in between family members of immigrant Nepalis. What if a daughter realizes her father's presence only when going through a newsreel!

Family and distance between relatives home is the revered concept in Nepal, and even daughters are married off in nearby villages in Nepal. But what a contradiction in the lives of people living in America who come from same heritage: "she lived on a separate coast thousands of miles from where she grew up, a place where her parents knew no one, where neither of her parents, until today, had set foot" (11). After losing a root perhaps, it remains as a fatal curse that even a daughter and father cannot meet each-other.

Not quite the same, not quite the other, Prema stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out: "It was and it was not far, where she came from [. . .] some days her birth village felt centuries away, and other

days it was too close; she couldn't get far enough away from it" (2). Prema is both physically and psychologically distanced from her home. Home for her has been a place that naturally haunts her as she is lonely in the foreign land. The narrator further unfolds Prema's dilemma:

She lived now in America in a spare uncluttered flat with a transient feel. Her only memento from home was an ammonite, a lustrous stone the color of shale, the shape of lopsided egg. A fossil of marine life from when the Himals were below the sea, millennia ago. Where the granite band ran through it, its halves opened with a clack to reveal a coiled impression of an exoskeleton . . . her mother, devout, used to worship the coil at the center as a shaligram, an avatar of Bishnu . . . praying for what? (2-3)

Prema wants to reinvent herself in America, and faces with the ultimate dilemma of humanity in exile, for she repeatedly ventures through the question, "what is there to being human?" (3). Most of the time she remains inconclusive: "the body which desires, persistent and unreasonable; thoughts and temperaments, instincts, a capacity to harm, and history, which lingers as a spectre" (3). She roams through uncertainty: "every now and then she still wondered what she was doing in America" (3).

There are many reasons for a Nepali individual to adopt another country for living, and the most persistent is the political cause. Thapa boldly juxtaposes the political insecurity with the demands of globalization in her work. The seemingly voluntary retirement into the foreign land appears at once to hold the forced exile as the native soil is no longer livable for an independent professional. The life at home

and of family members living there becomes a constant cause of anxiety for the immigrants. Thapa observes the recent political turmoil in Nepal:

By then the war had come to her birth village. The Maoist rebels had come one day, recruiting one member from each family. From Prema's family they had taken her sixteen-year-old sister Bijaya. Her father had feared a similar fate for Prema. Month after month when she had telephoned home, her father had advised her not to visit. Years past. She didn't go back. (4)

Thapa's objective analysis of the situation reveals the diasporic existence of those people who come to cities in search of study and work. They cannot go back to their birth villages for the fear of being recruited into Maoist army. Even her father is reluctant about her returning back to the village as her only sister is already taken away.

Another is the global dream of American life which is distracting many people from native soil. Thapa has smeared this state of affairs into Prema's life. Though considered as 'seer' luck, Thapa invents this part of American dream to keep the story realistic. Thapa presses Prema to be a part of this 'luck game' in Nepal and other places of underdeveloped world where the US 'pulls' citizens from across the world and allows them to live and work with a status of a Green Card holder. Thapa lines up Prema in the long line of applicants for American diversity visa who comprise of top-level bureaucrats and professionals from all walks of life: "yet, one day, she entered her name in the American green card lottery . . . late in the season of winds, the season of restlessness, when the breezes shook the last of the dead leaves off the trees, denuding the branches" (10).

Thapa also addresses the pressing state of blooming business of filling up applications for ‘green card’ and its entering into the village borders from city: “when at last the boy fixed it in place, he moved back to inspect his handiwork . . . straining against the wind, the banner announced: ‘Automatic Guarantee Green Card’” (10), and the local clerk for all this, Kanchha, immediately turns to Prema, “sister, you must also apply” (10). Thapa brilliantly juxtaposes global reality with local politics so as to make a strong case for the former and also to prepare some convincing ground for the flight of her protagonist here: “two clashes between the Maoist and the army had claimed fourteen lives; a curfew had been imposed in a border town” (10).

Most of the stories of Prema’s home country, Nepal, are her retrospections. The events simultaneously occur back and forth between Nepal and America. Its like something around her room, inside and outside of it, catches Prema’s attention and holds her for hours. This swinging back and forth is the objective correlative of Prema’s psychological state of mind itself. There is Prema, a caregiver in a posh Washington mansion who repeatedly goes back to her village and country in her mind. And there is Prema who is attending to American state of affairs. And a real question persists through out the text: which one is the real Prema! Perhaps this is what postcolonial critics call ‘half and half way of life.’ The story is told from this perspective of Prema inconsistent state of mind where she paces back and forth, always recalling her ‘before’ and ‘later’ of life: “three years later she was working as a homecare attendant for an old lady, Esther King, who lived in a beachside neighborhood in Los Angeles” (13). And yes, this citation demands for the further exploration of the exploitation of migrant workers whose profession back home is simply ignored, their previous life become irrelevant. For example, Prema has been an officer who has specialized in forestry and soil conservation. In Los Angeles, she is

among the 'fortunate' immigrants who make her living as a homecare attendant. And many other immigrants are forced to believe that they never had any past. So past becomes a constant source of their nagging, after some years in America immigrants are not so sure of their past.

It is equally hard for Prema to get accustomed to the demands of free society in terms of love and sex relationships. Prema comes from a Hindu family in Nepal where both these concepts of love and sex follows after marriage. And, both these necessities are viewed as inseparable practices. But, America demands Prema to get accustomed to the practices before marriage. Marriage in America is altogether a malign concept: so foreign as love and sex are immediate and accidental which can occur and break in no time. Thapa further unravels Prema's American experience: "she had already had American sex once, and had found it wanting in love . . . it was enough to have an attachment to one person, and to have left him" (38). In America, sex is less spiritual and more physical need. Moreover, Prema hops from one relationship to another in search of 'true' love. Love happens to her over and over again and with someone whose cultural upbringing is completely different to hers: "rare though it was to meet an American who knew anything about Nepal, it did not occur to Prema that she and Luis would be friends" (39). Though Luis does not know many things about Nepal as "his notion of Nepal was . . . touristy" (39), and "Americans didn't know where she was from" (39), he happens to evoke a sense of love for Prema.

Her love life is the inevitable consequence of her longing for more: "till she had won the green card lottery, Prema had been content enough, having wrested a middle class life out of a childhood of poverty" (45). She is supposed to remain contented with what she had as "there was nothing wrong with what she had" (45).

'More' is the buzzword for a Nepali middle class then which equally applies to Prema as well: "yet it seemed she wanted more" (45). The narrator pushes on the irony of Nepali middle class, their lust for 'more' which is inflicted as a curse of capitalism and economic liberalism. This wanting bluntly puts the middle class within the 'circle' of need. It is long before they realize that there is no gateway from this vicious circle. In between, many things are bound to change; their religion, nationality, culture and even relatives including the loved ones.

Thapa presents Prema as the part and parcel of this global phenomenon. Prema voluntarily submits herself to this phenomenon as she "lacked the heart to stay (in Nepal)" (46). And, again, the political insecurity fortifies Prema's desire to give her heart away: "there had been thousands of such army arrests-abductions-during the course of the war and few had ever made the news" (48). As the narrator puts it:

Prema was convinced the war would escalate from here on. The Maoists would not give up, and neither would the king and the army; and the people who had nothing to do with either side would get drawn in. Should she not leave? This shabby, third-world country. Having received a chance-having won a lottery. Was this not an opportunity to keep on progressing? America was rich, it was proper, solid. She kept feeling a shivering in the marrow. America. Nepal. America. Nepal.

(51)

Domestic political turmoil obviously provides with some reason to migrate, but the discourse which divides West from the South Asia, the circulation of the knowledge that 'West' fares well in economic as well as political solidarity to the Asian and African societies, fuels the desire of 'third-world' people to opt for migration. That the 'third-world' is 'shabby,' 'insecure,' and 'yet to be civilized,' plays with the

sentiment of people around here which is why they migrate in-masse. The likes of Prema are the most potent believers as now they have something to loose, as they have a 'bright' future ahead, and as they have now accumulated the 'knowledge' of the world. Though a birth place with friends and family around, Nepal becomes a 'hated' choice to spend a life-time whereas America at once becomes a mystery garden where one can live 'free' earning in hundred-folds turning a simple Nepali into a millionaire in no time. America is the desired destination, a passion of a life time for many people, including Prema.

Prema now is placed in the 'ocean' of faiths, cultures, races, and development. Luis appears as a boatman who alone can rescue her from the aloofness of life, her long and 'native' desire to mingle into a promising and permanent relationship. Thapa writes: "She asked him out in the end . . . her swim in the ocean had changed her somehow" (68). She feels as if her desperation has now come to an end: "for the first time in America she was happy" (68). She feels it is possible to "reinvent" herself: "every morning now living the hot, stifled inland for the coast, she kept wanting to go farther" (68).

Thapa explores the nature of profession and the role of 'middleman' in 'fixing' things for the newly arrived Asian immigrants in America. The people who went before manage places to live and work for the later droppings in the cities of America for the handsome sum of money. But, neither the job or the place the newly arrived are promised to land into is realized in truth. Thus, newly immigrated people in America find it very hard to get a nice and expected start in the new land. Their first day begins with uncertainty and anxiety. The narrator thus explores the anxiety-filled first day of Prema in the US:

She never saw the middleman's nephew again. When she awoke the next day, the husband, Sushil, told her that his wife had gone to work. Neeru worked at an Indian restaurant where the middleman's nephew had also found a job for Prema. 'That's the best kind of work you can find when you come first to this country, bahini,' Sushil explained to her delicately, as though to allay her disappointment. I myself deliver pizza for a food chain. (89)

South Asian immigrants in the US either land up working in a restaurant or some cleaning job irrespective of their academic credentials or trainings back home. This is more hardened by the laws for the immigrants. Prema's life as a US citizen begins thus with a second class status. Prema's life is further marred by her lack of the knowledge of American life and custom and the accent, which is equally alien to her, mostly unlike the English she had been accustomed to back home. And Prema share this state of affairs with many other immigrants as well: "others too would share the absurdities of life here" (92). America becomes some 'gothic' place for many others:

They [immigrants] talked of Americans-foreigners-with some perplexity. 'Every time a black man comes to the shop, I'm worried he will rob us,' one man said. 'Don't be friendly with Mexicans, one woman told Prema every time they met: if they talk to you, just say no habla espanol.' Another woman told her, 'never trust the Chinese. Or the Koreans. An always watch out for Indians. As though in all of America, only they and the white people were pure. (92-3)

The notion of cultural purity exists as America claims herself to be multicultural. In the multicultural restaurants, cities and subways there is always a reason to be offended by someone who is not white. Every other citizen from country other than

America and every man/woman who does not belong to 'white' class is to be 'watched out' and 'not believed.' This notion creates a hierarchy and discrimination among citizens in America. Friends suddenly turn out to be foes in this place of earth. African descendents are portrayed as robbers, Mexicans as thugs, Koreans and Chinese as untrustworthy, and Indians as some very dangerous element to believe to. This Prema hears with a certain palpitation. She feels as if there is no one she can trust to. This situation compounds to ferment a constant notion about immigrants in general.

Beside of legally documented citizens like Prema, America is also a heaven for other illegal immigrants. The narrator pecks a cursory glance at the varying status of immigrant workers beginning with the place where Prema works: "the staffs were furtive about their private lives [. . .] Prema found out that . . . Ganga and Shyam were illegal; undocumented workers, Narayan had arrived years ago, on a student visa, now expired" (93). The illegal immigrants are not arrested or deported to their home country as they are ready to work in places where American themselves are reluctant to work, and in a low wage. They are kept there to fulfill the crushing demand for lowly paid manual jobs.

Prema identifies herself with 'new' identity: "she had become one of those Americans whose lives she had wanted for herself" (87). Imagination about homeland forms the vital part of discussion among Nepali immigrants: "her compatriots spoke in the Nepali language among themselves; and their talk inevitably turned homeward; the Maoist rebels, the king and the army, the faltering movement for peace" (92). Home begins to come as a distant thought after sometime for Prema:

She had deliberately cut off contact with home. Early on in little Nepal, she had bought a phone card and telephoned her birth village. After the

operator had fetched her father, she had told him she had found work. Chhori, you're on your way, then,' he had said in his soft, gravelly voice. She had agreed: 'yes ba.' She didn't offer to send him money: what little she earned at the Shalimar she needed for herself. Nor did he ask her to send any. Still when she hung up, she felt she had abandoned him, and her sister, to their broken fates. The war. She did not know what to do with this feeling. She never called home again.

(96-7)

In her voyage to be an American, the thought of her country, her village and her father, all become hindrances. The thought of home alone comes with multiple obligations and responsibilities which Prema cannot afford to fulfill. And again these thoughts were her barriers to individualist American life. She cannot afford to think of her home because "she wanted to reach America" (99). There is no turning backward. She learns that what she is doing is American way of life. Everybody around her look like a bunch of pretentious mimic men/women: "then, unexpectedly, she hugged Prema in the American way, but awkwardly" (102). Prema gets accustomed into American living: "so began a lonely year of stocking the shelves with tinned food, bottled drinks, packaged meats" (104). But she, like many other immigrants, is careful about her crispy Dollars as if that is the single thing she wants in life: "on payday Prema would count each dollar carefully: this note is legal tender for all debts, public and private . . . she felt desperate-and was this what poverty did?- she felt hungry, wanting" (105). Immediately after food and dollars, Prema gets accustomed to another of American duty, casual but intimate relationships. First, she falls for Andy:

'I have a date,' Prema announced: 'the man who is making the house.'

'Mr home builder, next door? Oh, he's all right.' Susan winked. 'I went out with him last week, he's stud. You know what you'll need, though? She rummaged through her handbag and brought out a plastic pack. A condom. Keep this handy, she said. I mean it! A girl's gotta watchout for herself!' then she hugged Prema. Oh honey, knock'em dead!' (108)

In search of the physical pleasure of American body, Prema rummages through some leftovers of her roommate, and Andy comes in perfect as one who was amazing in bed with her roommate. Unlike in her home country, she is quite sure and prepared to gift him a condom and get into his bed in the first date. Perhaps, she is getting accustomed to the American life. But some memories never end: “When he [Andy] kissed her she kissed him back . . . but when he held her she couldn't help thinking of Rajan” (109). In the midst of love-embrace, Prema sees Rajan's face. Rajan is none other than an NGO activist in Nepal, Prema's first love. So, the more intense the situation gets, the more she is back to her country. Homeland and memories back home lingers there within: “Prema's hunger, her wanting, remained as did her desire for what, she did not know” (111).

Prema's condition is best portrayed in the *Indian Express*, Devyani Oniyal contends that Prema's journey “follows a trajectory familiar to many immigrants” (23). Oniyal writes:

Winning a green card in the US government's diversity lottery, a young Nepali girl arrives in Los Angeles. Her journey from finding a corner of home away from home — in her case living with a Nepali family in Little Nepal — to moving out and embracing the American way of life to realising that the past can be put on hold but can't really be shaken off and that reinventing oneself is not as final as it sounds.

“It was and it was not far, where she came from. Some days her birth village felt centuries away, and other days it was too close, she could not get far enough away from it. (23)

In Manjushree Thapa’s novel, Prema leaves behind a country caught between Maoist insurgency and brutal counter-insurgency, and a sister who has joined the Maoists. Her flight takes her from her village up in the hills of Nepal to a beachside neighborhood of LA. She leaves behind an ageing father to work as a homecare attendant of an elderly American woman. Oniyal empathetically places the dilemma of expatriates at the heart of *Seasons of Flight*.

Seasons of Flight is the 'zigzag' tale of a young Nepali woman, Prema, whose life follows a butterfly-like trajectory in every sense of the word. Flitting from her village in eastern Nepal to Los Angeles, she juggles jobs and men to little satisfaction, before she finally begins to connect with the world around her. Yet, she does not cling to both her native identity and the identity of her new home. Prema is a representative south asian diaspora who dares to create alternative identity in the place that 'sucks.'

Chapter-Five

Conclusion

Becoming in Unbecoming

The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation makes *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* representative narratives of South Asian diaspora, and a quest for their identity in an alien land, America. The Ganguli's and the Majumdars in *The Namesake*, Jasmine in *Jasmine*, and Prema in *Seasons of Flight*, undergo several transformations during their journey of life in America, and often experience deep sense of estrangement resulting in a fluid state of identity. Their journey becomes a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Uprooted from their native land, India and Nepal, they do their best to introduce themselves into the new and alien society as immigrants.

Thinking beyond narratives of original, initial subjectivities is innovative and crucial in *The Namesake*, *Jasmine*, and *Seasons of Flight*. Homi Bhabha, whose theorization on diaspora consciousness has remained pivotal in theoretical aspects of this research, argues that such tension within critical theory, between institutional containment and revisionary force, can be understood in terms of ambivalence, with reference to other cultures. He opposes cultural difference to cultural diversity in the politics of culture: cultural difference is a process of the enunciation of culture as knowledgeable and authoritative-adequate for the construction of systems of cultural identification and statements of culture producing fields of force; cultural diversity implies culture as a relatively passive object of empirical knowledge-the recognition of cultural pre-givens, constants and customs. The concept of cultural difference focuses on the ambivalence of cultural authority, "the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of

differentiation" (*Location of Culture* 34). That is, the enunciative process introduces a split between the traditional culturalist demand for a stable model and the necessary negation of certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands—here Bhabha refers to what Frantz Fanon saw as 'culture as political struggle' or 'the zone of occult instability where the people dwell' and says that in our cultural capacity to speak of others, and judge them, we necessarily place ourselves in their position. Gogol, Jasmine, and Prema change themselves constantly, ferrying between multiple identities in different spaces and at different times. They show the most predictable crusade towards Americanization and its obvious uncertainty and without feeling infuriated they survive to make a new start in the host country.

Geographically, the stories begin in India and Nepal and then take off from there to America, where the characters bounce back and forth through various states, and sometimes return back to their native place. The novelists deliberately transport their characters in time and space again and again so as to bring in a sense of instability into the novel. Born in privileged high caste families, the protagonists in the novels have the distinction of being the most desired and clever in the family in their native country. They are seen against the backdrop of the rigid and patriarchal society in South Asia.

In the first chapter of this research work, the role of 'politics' and 'agency' in the formation of native identity has been discussed at length pointing to the ambiguities and anomalies of such constructions in the course of individual life. As Benedict Anderson calls nation an 'imagined community,' such imagination and fixities are bound to change in the narratives of diaspora like *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*. Even the 'vignettes' of national history and her heroes are revisited after certain period of time. A supposed ideal anchored after such cultural

and political heroes fades in no time as philosophers and poets have put it, 'change is the only certainty of existing things'; 'nothing is permanent,' etc. Thus, the chapters that followed in this research explore the 'change' in diaspora identity—diaspora is usually portrayed as the wretched of the earth, homeless, crying all the time-type of community and individual thrown in the marsh of foreign lands, alienated beings etc., in earlier theories and researches.

But, Gogol, Jasmine, and Prema soon find themselves stifled by the inertia of this home for it was completely isolated from everything American. Considering it to be a stasis in their progression towards a new life, they try to separate themselves from all that is Indian and Nepali, and forget their past completely. They proceed with their migratory pattern and move various states of America, to become the *au pair* for an American family, for example. With American people they create yet another identity upon a new perception of themselves. But though these characters in the novels create a new identity for every new situation, their former identities are never completely erased. They emerge in specific moments in the text and exacerbate the tension, thereby causing them to create another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before. While living with the American people, they begin to master the English language, empowering themselves to further appropriate American culture. The protagonists in *The Namesake*, *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* imply these words and move forward, which symbolically represents the uncertainty of what the future will bring but nevertheless confident in their decision to leave. This sense of movement further reinforces the notion that their identity is forever evolving, they cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of their survival. The surrounding environments influence the formation of their identities and they navigate between temporal and spatial locations, their perceptions of themselves

change, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create a tension within themselves and they feel the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside them. Thereby we see them reinvent their identity completely in the textual analyses section of this research work.

And, a sense of revelation came forward: to observe these narratives placing them in the tribunal of theorists like Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, R. Radhakrishnan, Edward Said and others, is to view the optimistic side of human potential. In the beginning, the researcher was not that much convinced in what he was doing; a thought had crossed his mind that what he was doing is more theoretical, and not the real experience of characters in the novel; his job was to somehow mould the texts into relevant theories. This is quite possible from the place he is writing, in a Nepali academic community where postcolonial and migrant experiences are limited to the discussion of much earlier postcolonial thinkers and writers in the discipline. This research experience has been a real eye opener though.

After the clearance of "melting pot" theory, the academic world has formulated a "salad bowl" theory where immigrant population can wholeheartedly give themselves to the cognition of their culture back home, America has assimilated herself with the second frame of diasporic consciousness in researches. My research has prominently dealt in the formation of third space which is the space of recognition for people of multiple identity. But, the research enunciates the opportunity of further elaboration of recognition of multiple identities in American society.

Now, this research can strongly postulate what has been done: immigrants pangs and crisis of identity in the narratives of Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Thapa is the part of the process of newer identity formation, indeed a process of becoming in unbecoming. This work concludes with the line of Rachel Carson from *A Sense of*

Wonder, which enunciates, among other things, the major thrust of this research work:

'Those who dwell as scientist or layman, among the beauties and the mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.'

Works Cited

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on postcolonial Indians."

Cultural Critique 7 (Autumn 1987): 109-136.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imaginary Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread*

of Nationalism. London: Verso, 1983.

Aneja, Anu. "Jasmine, the Sweet Scent of Exile." *Pacific Coast Philology* 28.1

(Sept. 1993): 72-80.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-colonial*

Studies. London: Routledge, 1998.

- - -. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Bhabha, Homi K. *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*. Bloomington:

Indiana University Press, 1994.

- - -. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation."

Nation and Narration. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990.

291-322.

- - -. "A Four-Hundred-Year-Old Woman." *Critical Fictions: The Politics of*

Imaginative Writing. Ed. Philomena Mariani. Seattle: Bay, 1991.

- - -. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *October* 28

(1984):125-33.

- - -. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge,

1996.

Carchidi, Victoria. "The Paradox of Belonging: The Indian Woman in Fiction."

Modern Fiction Studies 31.2 (1995): 81-109.

- Carson, Rachel. *A Sense of Wonder*. New York: Amazon, 1965.
- Carter-Sanborn, Kristin. "'We Murder Who We Were': Jasmine and the Violence of Identity." *American Literature* 66.3 (1994): 573-93.
- Chakraborty, Mridula Nath. "Leaving No Remains: Death among the Bengalis in Lahiri's Fiction." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 4 (Fall 2011): 813-29.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* New Delhi: OUP, 1986.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-38.
- Dalton-Brown, Sally. "The Freedom of the Inbetween: Gogol's Ghost and Jhumpa Lahiri's Immigrants." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 47.3 (May 2011): 332-44.
- Dasgupta, Sanjukta, and Shamita Das Dasgupta. "Women in Exile: Gender Relations in the Asian Indian Community." *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America*. Eds. S. Maira and R. Srikanth. New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1997. 381-400.
- Dayal, Samir. "Creating, Preserving, Destroying: Violence in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine." *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. New York: Garland, 1993. 65-88.
- - -. "Diaspora and Double Consciousness." *Studies in Novel* 39.4 (2009): 22-82.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." *Critical Inquiry* 20.2 (Winter, 1994): 328-356.
- Dhakal, Prem. "Interview With Manjushree Thapa." *The Kathmandu Post* 18.109 (2010): 6.

- Foucault, Michel. "Different Spaces." *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*. Ed. James D. Faubion. Trans. Robert Hurley, et al. Vol 2. New York: The New Press, 1998. 175-186.
- Frost, Robert. "The Death of the Hired Man." *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (Fourth Edition). Eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy. New York: Norton, 1996. 324-28.
- Gilroy, Paul. "The End of Antiracism." *Race, Culture, and Difference*. Ed. James Donald and Al Rattansi. London: Sage, 1992. i-xiv.
- Grewal, Inderpal. "Reading and Writing the South Asian Diaspora: Feminism and Nationalism in North America." *SAMAR* 13.6 (Winter, 1992): 1-27.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Heinze, Ruediger. "A Diasporic Overcoat: Naming and Affection in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 43.2 (August 2007): 191-202.
- Huddart, David. *Homi K. Bhabha*. New Delhi, Routledge, 2006.
- Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London; New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Kipen, David. "An Indian Immigrant's Son Who is Neither Here Nor There." *San Francisco Chronicle* 14 (Sept., 2003): 1-2.
- Koshy, Susan. "The Geography of Female Subjectivity: Ethnicity, Gender, and Diaspora." *Diaspora* 3.1 (1994): 133-45.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

- Low, Gail Ching-Liang. "In a Free State: Postcolonialism and Postmodernism in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction." *Women: A Cultural Review* 4 .1 (1993):8 -17.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University, 2000.
- Mohanty, Chandra. "Introduction." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 1-50.
- - -. "Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America." *Modern Language Studies* 32.2 (Autumn, 2002): 4-22.
- Mukherjee, Bharati. "Beyond Multiculturalism." *Des Moines Register* (1994): 1-13.
- - -. "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists!" *The New York Times Book Review* (28 Aug. 1988). 28-29.
- - -. "Interview." *The Iowa Review* 20.3 (1990): 7-32.
- - -. "Interview." *The Massachusetts Review* (1988): 645-54.
- - -. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.
- Mukherjee, Bharati, and Clark Blaise. *Days and Nights in Calcutta*. St. Paul: Hungry Mind, 1995.
- Mura, David. "A Shift in Power, A Sea Change in the Arts: Asian American Constructions." *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*. Ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan. Boston: South End, 1994. 183-204.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Nayak, Jatin K. *Fakir Mohan Senapati: Perspective on His Fiction*. Ed. Jatin K. Nayak. Jagatsinghpur: Prafulla Pathagar Publications, 2004.

- Pandey, Beerendra. "Third Space of Enunciation: Reading Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*." *Inventing Ties and Bonds in English: Diasporic Literary Consciousness*. Eds. Binod Mishra and P. J. Paul Dhanasekaran. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2007. 229-39.
- Pandit, Shraya. "The Pangs of Foreignness." *The Kathmandu Post* 18.117 (2010): 5.
- Radhakrishnan, R. *Between Identity and Location: the Cultural Politics of Theory*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007.
- - -. *Diasporic Meditations. Between Home and Location*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Rutherford, Jonathan. "The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990: 207-221.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- - -. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- - -. *Reflections on Exile*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001.
- Shakya, Sanjeev. "Some Familiar Questions: Why Prema Left Home?" *The Kathmandu Post* 18.102 (2010): 6.
- Simmons, Robert. "Flowing the Thapa Way: Chance Encounters in Unaccustomed Earth." *The Boston Globe* 15.21 (March, 2008): 22-31.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World." *Textual Practice* 10 (1996): 245-69.
- Thapa, Manjushree. *Seasons of Flight*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010.
- - -. "Interview." *The Kathmandu Post* 18.127 (2010): 5.

Tylor, E. B. "Culture or Civilization: Rudimentary Definition." *Slavic Review* 48.4

(Winter, 2008): 692-93

Wald, Patricia. "Theorizing Spirit: The Critical Challenge of Jasmine." *Studies in the*

Literary Imagination 37.2 (2004): 232-49.

Williams, Patrick, and Laura Chrisman. *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial*

Theory: A Reader. Eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York:

Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. London: Blackwell,

2001.