

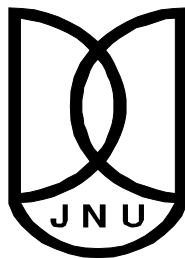
**A STUDY OF CHILD CHARACTERS IN THE
WORKS OF INDIAN NORTH AMERICAN WOMEN
NOVELISTS**

Dissertation submitted to
Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

by

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CERTIFICATE

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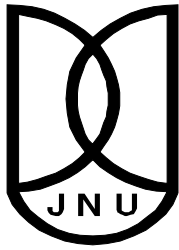
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This thesis titled “A Study of Child Characters in the Works of Indian North American Women Novelists” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree, diploma of any university or institution.

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For my Parents

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INTRODUCTION

The itinerant impulse of human beings from one place to another in search of material opulence can be best conceptualised under the rubric of diaspora. The rootlessness which is central to diasporic consciousness is not merely a physical movement from one place to another but, a substantial shift from one country to the other with the intention of settling there for brief period of time if not permanently. But the life of an immigrant is always different because of overlapping and intersecting experiences between the 'home' and 'abroad'. They constantly struggle between the two worlds, the one in which they have decided to settle and the other they left behind. But the choice to leave one's own country varies widely from time to time. Previously people immigrated to other countries not out of their own will but were forced to leave either because of political reasons or were exiled to far off lands as bonded labourers and slaves. But, the scenario changed completely in the US during 1960's with the enactment of Immigration Act 1965 which marked a mass influx of immigrants into America. This new wave of immigrants were not the victims of any circumstances of deprivation or marginalization but were well-read and skilled professionals who had willingly immigrated into America out of their own choice and one of the major reasons for this mass movement was the rapid technological advancement during the latter half of the twenty first century where physical distance was no more an invincible barrier. Travel and communication, both had become more convenient, and both became less and less expensive. Long distance telephone calls became not just easier and cheaper, the improving technology made them seem as if you were talking to someone next door. By the turn of the century we had computer assisted communication which cost very little and now with the help of latest technology like "Skype" which helps in creating a virtual world where an immigrant can see as well as talk to his people back at home just with the clicking of a 'mouse' button, we have a more connected world that overcomes physical distance virtually. (Matt, A27)

According to John Powell's *Encyclopedia of North American Immigration* "As a group, Indians were among elite immigrants, generally well educated and often arriving [in America] with capital to invest in business and industry." (Powell, 145) Economic factor is one of the predominant causes for which the immigrants willingly keep themselves alienated from their motherland. After several years of staying in America, India is no more their principal place of

abode but they maintain their relationship with their homeland by sending dollar cheques back home and through occasional sojourns. The wish to return to India is a nostalgic dream, which is always compromised in the American realities of affluence, comfort and abundant freedom in life. But in spite of their privileged position in America, the immigrants always carry with them the baggage of pre-defined racial identity along with its association of beliefs, customs, rituals and practices, the framework of norms and values including the formation of family and kinship relation, various 'cultural signifiers' like dressing, food habits, manners and etiquettes, and of course their language(s).

To an Indian immigrant in America, English is absolutely a foreign language that has no morphological connection with any of the ancient, classical or prevailing modern languages of India, yet it turns out to be their principal language of communication. Nonetheless, it is a natural instinct in all human beings to adopt some survival strategies so as to make life easy and comfortable, irrespective of the place one decides to live in. It is always difficult but not impossible to adapt to the prevailing culture and customs of the land in which an immigrant settles. But, when it comes to the issue of adoption of language, it turns out to be extremely difficult, even an acute problem, for especially all those women who have no professional engagement with the outside world. They hardly need to communicate with the outside world, and have come to settle in America with their husbands only after their marriage. Even if they come from elite families and have some knowledge of English, they find themselves in tongue-tied situations and their articulation often lacked proper expression and intonation while conversing in the commonly spoken American English. The situation of women become more critical when they find that their own children who are born and raised in America have adopted the American language and gradually their mother tongue is completely taken over by the foreign language. So, the parents especially the mothers often fail to talk or relate to their own children at home thereby creating an invincible barrier between the parents and their children. All these issues come up repetitively as the subject of diasporic writings, particularly by the women novelists, and leave an undeniable impression on us readers of the autobiographical elements (of the author's own life) within the diasporic space.

However, for the current purpose of this research, I would like to focus on the second generation immigrant children who are of Indian-American origin and are trapped in a maze of

their being Indian and their desperation as well as compulsion to become American as reflected in the works I will analyse. In this context I would like to clarify my usage of the word 'child'. I have used 'child' in an alternative sense to categorise all those who are 'infants', 'adolescents' and the 'young adults' to bring them under one singular term. I have also used 'America' or 'Americans' to denote only North America and the entire analysis of the thesis is specifically based on the Indian immigrant children in North America.

The 'child', considered as the genesis of future generation, becomes an important concern in the diasporic women's writings. In the works of almost all the diasporic women's writings, the domestic space has been explored in great detail and since women writers are more prominent in the diaspora writers market, diasporic writings are often labelled as feminine writings but it could be just a narrow interpretation as diasporic women authors have more things to offer although this is a subject of great debate and has to be excluded from the current study to avoid unnecessary deviation as here I would like to concentrate only those works which diligently deal with the Indian immigrant children within the multicultural society of America.

Diasporic writings especially by the women authors help to study the emerging pattern of cultural practices among the second generation immigrant children. The study of child characters offers a lens through which the magnified view of the fractures and fissures of the adult world can be seen more intuitively. This thesis intends to foreground how the second generation immigrant children come to terms with their culturally pluralised world where there is a constant tussle between the dominant versus subordinate—the West versus East—the cultural present being mediated by a tradition imposed by an earlier generation. How does the second generation immigrant try to establish the ways by which one can create one's individual identity, a space for oneself or is it an impossibly fraught task, one's own space being just an utopian ideal, something unattainable? For the purpose of the current study the followings diasporic works have been taken into account: Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer winning short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999), her first full length novel *The Namesake* (2003) and the latest collection of her short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008); Indira Ganesan's first novel *The Journey* (1990), and her second and most recent novel *Inheritance* (1998). Also the name of Bharati Mukherjee immediately comes up while dealing with diasporic authors. Although a lot of research had already been done on her, while dealing

with the child characters I personally feel the need to mention at least one of her short stories “The Management of Grief” from her short story collection “*The Middleman and Other Short Stories*” (1988). I have chosen only this particular story because I find it very pertinent to an important issue dealing with child characters and for that purpose I have chosen the character of a young adolescent girl ‘Pam’ to study in great details. There is also another reason that as far as my knowledge is concerned I have not find any work done before on this story from the standpoint I have already mentioned. I consciously avoid her other works as I think only this story is apt to the topic of analysis.

It has been observed that the works of diasporic women authors not only explore the domestic space, but also that the individual experiences of the authors have undeniable impact on their works. However, these authors appear like social scientists or anthropologists who have been observing powers to study men and their manners, to study the society at large. So we often find that they have strong psychological insight into their fictional characters. For the themes and characters, they mostly depend on memories, which they recollect and strengthen from their frequent visits to India and also from the friends and acquaintances they know and meet on several occasions so that they can represent the places and situations close to reality in their works. In various public interviews they confess that their occasional sojourns in Indian provide them necessary staple for their works and nourished them in the American soil. Jhumpa Lahiri in an interview held on the occasion of the publication of her first novel *The Namesake* in 2003, when she was asked by the interviewer about the significance of the setting of the novel which is predominantly in India, replied:

When I [Jhumpa Lahiri] began writing fiction seriously, my first attempts were, for some reason, always set in Calcutta, which is a city I know quite well as a result of repeated visits with my family, sometimes for several months at a time. These trips, to a vast, unruly, fascinating city so different from the small New England town where I was raised, shaped my perceptions of the world and of people from a very early age. I went to Calcutta neither as a tourist nor as a former resident—a valuable position, I think, for a writer. The reason my first stories were set in Calcutta is due partly to that perspective—that necessary combination of distance and intimacy with a place. Eventually I started to set my stories in America, and as a result the majority of stories in *Interpreter of*

Maladies have an American setting. Still, though I've never anywhere but America, India continues to form a part of my fictional landscape. As most of my characters have an Indian background, India keeps cropping up as a setting, sometimes literally, sometimes more figuratively, in the memory of characters. *The Namesake* is, essentially, a story about life in the United States, so the American setting was always a given. The terrain is very much the terrain of my own life—New England and New York, with Calcutta always hovering in the background. Now that the writing is done I've realized that America is a real presence in the book; the characters must struggle and come to terms with what it means to live here, to belong and not belong here. (Das, 176)

So, it seems that the autobiographical details of these authors are very essential because their own experiences often contributed to the portrayal of their fictional characters.

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most significant Indian diasporic writers in the contemporary period. Her gamut of writings explores her personal experiences, which she has coloured with the tinge of her creative spark. Jhumpa Lahiri, whose real name is Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri, was born in 1967 in London and raised in South Kingstown, Rhode Island in America and is now settled permanently in Fort Greene, Brooklyn with her husband Alberto Vourvoulias Bush, a Guatemalan-Greek-American journalist and their two children Octavio and Noor. In her works, it is found that a second generation immigrant suffers the feeling of homelessness more than the immigrant parents. Jhumpa Lahiri herself suffers from the problems of cultural assimilation of three countries—India, United Kingdom and United States of America. She had her cross-cultural marriage to an American, which might be an attempt (a response to the unconscious urge) to assimilate into the mainstream cultural milieu of the host country. In the context of the publication of her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999 for which she won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, when she was interviewed by Vibhuti Patel, Lahiri was asked about the role of Calcutta in her imagination, and she said:

A significant yet marginal role. I spent much time in Calcutta as a child—idle but rich time—often at home with my grandmother. I read books, I began to write and to record things. It enabled me to experience solitude—ironically, because there were so many people, I could seal myself off psychologically. It was a place where I began to think imaginatively. Calcutta nourished my mind, my eye as a writer, my interest in seeing

things from different points of view. There's a legacy and tradition there that we just don't have here. The ink hasn't dried yet on our lives here. (Maladies 1999)

Again, in another context when Jhumpa Lahiri was interviewed by Arun Aguiar, when he asked her about her necessity of visiting another country; she said:

I [Jhumpa Lahiri] have also written stories set in places and/or times of which I had no idea, and had no little bit of research, and questions, and get some details that way. It's easy to set a story anywhere if you get a good guidebook and get some basic street names, and some descriptions, but, for me, yes, I am indebted to my travels to India for several of the stories. (Das, 173-174)

Moreover, the subtitle *Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond of Interpreter of Maladies*, clearly demarcates the geographical territories that encompasses her work so as to depict such characters who stand at the crossroads of cultural encounters.

At the book release of her *The Namesake* in 2003 when she was asked about her own distinguishing experiences as a child of an Indian immigrant in America like her protagonist "Gogol Ganguli" who too is of Indian origin, a second generation immigrant child, she confesses:

...The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are culturally displaced, as immigrants are, or those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously, as in the case for their children. The older I get, the more I am aware that I have somehow inherited a sense of exile from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more American than they are. In fact, it is still very hard to think of myself as an American. (This is of course complicated by the fact that I was born in London.) I think that for immigrants, the challenges 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. On the other hand, the problem for the children of immigrants—those with strong ties to their country of origin—is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. This has been my experience, in any case. For example, I never know how to answer the question "Where are you from?" If I say I'm from Rhode Island, people are seldom satisfied. They want to know more, based on things such as my name,

my appearance, etc. Alternatively, if I say I'm from India, a place where I was not born and have never lived, this is growing up, the feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belonged. (Das, 177)

Jhumpa Lahiri thus states that the problems of immigrant parents in America are never the same to that of their children who are born and brought up in America.

Indira Ganesan is also one of the most contemporary Indian-North American diasporic novelists. She was born in 1960 in Srirangam, in Tamil Nadu and came to America with her parents at a tender age of five, stayed in several places in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Spring Valley, and New York in 1960's and went back to India for a year at the age of ten. Again, she returned to New York to complete her bachelor degree in English with honors and distinction from Vassar College and Poughkeepsie. Also in her later age she journeyed to different places in America. She was appointed as the faculty in the department of English in Southampton College on Long Island during from 1997 to 1998. She also taught in the University of Missouri and is now currently teaching in the University of California at San Diego. She frequently visits New Jersey to meet her parents who are now staying there. So, her life is abounding with journeys not only to several places in America but also with successive visits to India that has provided her raw materials for her fictions. Her two most acclaimed works till date are *The Journey* published in 1990 and *Inheritance* published in 1998. She has also been nominated as a finalist for prestigious Granta Best Young American Novelist Award in 1996 for her first novel *The Journey*. The titles she chooses for her works is perhaps taken from her own bicultural experiences.

Bharati Mukherjee was born in 1940 into a Bengali Brahmin family in Calcutta. The first eight years of her life was spent in an extended family at her father's house in Calcutta. But at the age of nine she moved to London with her parents and her two sisters. Again the family returned to India in 1951, but within this period Mukherjee had already adjusted her tongue to the fluency of English language and the English accent. After completing her B.A and M.A. degree in English from University of Calcutta and University of Baroda respectively, she moved to the United States for the Creative Writing Programme in the University of Iowa and subsequently obtained a Ph. D. in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. During this period she married the Canadian novelist, Professor and journalist Clark Blaise and they stayed first in Toronto and then in Montreal as Canadian citizens till 1980 with their two sons—Bart

Anand and Bernard Sudhir. The children were named in such a way so as to represent their English and Bengali parentage. In 1980 the family moved from Canada to New York and settled there permanently. Presently she is teaching in the department of English in the University of California at Berkeley. Like Jhumpa Lahiri, she too holds a special attachment for Calcutta as she says in an interview:

I love Calcutta. I love it more than Bombay or Delhi. I feel the pleasure of reunion here. People are very friendly. When I lived here, I did not realize it. Coming back after living a long time in the West, I can realize it better now. I like Calcutta even more now—the streets, the foliage, the people, all seem related to me. (Mandal, 291)

The authors chosen here in spite of their Indian origin are now permanent residents of America. Through their discourse they constantly try to create a space for themselves along with the other second generation immigrants within the mainstream American society and at the same time constant efforts have been made to retain their individuality as Indians, the identity with which they are born into the world. It was often believed that the category of diasporic literature has the universal theme of nostalgia, lamentation, a feeling of homelessness, and a focus on family, friends and relatives the writers left back at home many years ago. However, in this thesis I intend to make a close textual analysis of the child characters in the works of the authors already mentioned with the newness of approaching these texts from the perspective of a child and to find out the child's position vis a vis three different generations—the generation of his parents, the generation of his grandparents, and lastly his own generation.

Chapter 1 titled “The Study of the Child in Relation to His Parents” deals with the argument about how the formation and development of a second generation immigrant child is affected within the sphere of his familial bonding especially in relation to his Indian immigrant parents. The parent-child relation most often is seen as a site of constant conflict since most parents usually hold utopian ideals that their children might follow their Indian lifestyle without considering the fact that their understanding of world might be alike to that of their children who are born and raised in America. So, it is very likely that these children turn out to be more American than Indian because of the inevitable influence of the society, which results in a constant conflict between parents and their children and this chapter primarily focuses on the

different terrains of conflict and also attempts to see how this conflict is played out and explore how the writers bring out any reconciliation, if at all possible.

In this chapter within the familial space only the relationship between parent and child has been taken for analysis because of the nucleated family structure in America where 'family' meant parents and their children and very rarely includes grandparents. This forms the 'core family', unlike in India where there is generally an extended family branching with different terms for different relations. Jhumpa Lahiri through her protagonist Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake* very poignantly brings out the bewilderment of an American born Indian child who is absolutely unaware of the extended kith and kin relations of an extended Indian family. When the Ganguli family returns to Calcutta for a vacation, Gogol and Sonia feels disturbed and even scared at the thought of remembering names like 'mashi' (maternal aunt) and 'pishi' (paternal aunt), 'mamma' (maternal uncle) and 'mamima' (maternal aunt), 'kaku' (paternal younger uncle) and 'jethu' (paternal elder uncle). Thus, the trips to India which most immigrant parents consider as a sort of compulsory ritual is displeasing to their American born children. The attachment of children with their Indian relatives is tenuous. They attempt to remember the relatives they meet during their occasional visits, through photographs, but they can hardly remember their faces as seen when Renu Krishnan, the young protagonist of Indira Ganesan's *The Journey*, fails to relate the face of her beloved cousin brother Rajesh (who had died recently in a train accident) with the photographs. Renu's failure to remember Rajesh's face is because of the slippage of memory as she had not seen him for several years.

As the child grows, the child's interaction with the outside world widens and gradually, instead of his parents, his peers and friends become important influences. His defensive attitude towards his parents is the result of his fear of being secluded from the mainstream society. In Lahiri's "Hell-Heaven", Usha is unhappy with her mother, but she cherishes a great liking for the American girl Deborah. She even harbours a feeling of hatred for her Indian lifestyle like attending Indian festivals/ 'pujos' or the way Usha's mother asked her to dress. The situation is the same with Pam and her mother Kusum in Bharati Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief". Pam is so much estranged from her mother that after the sudden death of her father in a jet crash, her mother returns to India to spend the rest of her solitary life in an ashram at Hardwar, completely withdrawing herself from her daughter. However, it has been observed that

harmonious liaison between parents and their half American children exists as long as the child is confined within the family and has no personal attachment with world outside but as they grow up, the parents are expected to understand and accept the changes of their children. It is for this reason that Usha's mother Aparna at the end does not get worried about her daughters' several illicit relationships with several boys. At the end she has learnt to adjust herself with her daughter so much that Usha feels free to discuss all her private problems with her mother. If Aparna would be reticent towards her daughter then, she might have met same fate as Kusum. However, in the later chapters, we will try to analyse the second/third generation immigrant children in the context various other relations.

In the Chapter 2 titled "The Study of the Child in Relation to His Grandparents" I concentrate on the study of a second/third generation immigrant children in relation to their grandparents. Although born and raised in America, it never appears that the children are having problems with their grandparents, the geographical and generation gap never stand in-between their intimate bonding. The grandparents can also perform the role of parents as is found in Sonil's grandmother Kamala in Indira Ganesan's *Inheritance*. Throughout the novel it is the grandmother-granddaughter relation which is central theme of the novel. Sonil cannot be strictly called a second generation immigrant child; her father is an American, which hints at her future diasporic belonging as at the end of the novel Sonil set out for America to pursue her higher studies in the Radcliffe University. It is again her grandmother who first inspired Sonil to go abroad. When her grandmother told her stories of her days in Malaysia, Sonil's young mind thought to see those places in her own eyes.

Indira Ganesan has such a special fascination with the grandparents-grandchild bonding that the plot always develops in the grandparents' house. In *The Journey* also Grandfather Das and Renu Krishnan share a very intimate bonding. Before settling in New York, Renu comes to spend her vacations at her grandfather's house and he too eagerly waits to see her. His ailments cannot stop him from receiving his granddaughter from the station. The concern of the grandparents is so intense that they even prayed for their future grandchildren as is found in Shoba's mother's elaborate worship for the good health of her future grandchild.

This chapter also brings into light another important aspect of this special relation. The grandchildren often help to smoothen up the previous entanglement the grandparents had with

their own children. In Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth", Ruma's relationship with her mother revived on the pretext of Ruma's pregnancy and later on after the birth of Akash, both of them had regular conversations over telephone regarding Akash's latest development. It seems that she talked to her over the telephone more than she had ever talked to her throughout her life before the birth of her son. Moreover, Ruma had never been in good terms with her father but he develops a very friendly relation with Akash on his first visit to Ruma's house in Brooklyn. Within a very brief period Akash gets so attached with his grandfather that instead of sleeping with his mother, he slept besides his grandfather.

Thus, the grandparents of second generation immigrant children help them to have some understanding of their ancestral roots as well as give them the quintessence of an extended family which is impossible to attain for their immigrant parents who seems to exist in nowhere land. However, the diasporic authors (Jhumpa Lahiri and Indira Ganesan) chosen in this context never portrayed a long time relationships of the grandchildren with their grandparents. In most cases the life of grandparents has been cut short by death or they are separated from their grandchildren due to geographical distance which hints the fact that they cannot provide lifelong scaffolding to their grandchildren but the brief period of time they spend with them nourishes the children with wisdom and knowledge and is forever a guiding path for the rest of their life. So what it is to be as an Indian-American in America is focus of study in the penultimate Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 titled "The Study of the Child in Relation to His Own Age" intends to foreground the study of second or third generation Indian-American immigrant children from the perspective of their own generation. The formation of identity is impacted by various cultural signifiers/markers like the effects of language, the prevalent system of education in American, and various other agencies like the process of naming, the attitude towards celebration of festivals and rituals, the inculcation of habits from food to dress and also physical appearances. These cultural signifiers produce both positive and negative ambivalences that finally help to produce an individual entity of a child in the multicultural society of America.

Language is one of the dominating elements that play an important role the process of assimilation of a child within his contemporary society. A child born in America picks up English as his prime language of communication in spite of the parents' especially the mother's repeated attempt to teach an Indian language. But soon his own parents become strangers as he

feels comfortable more with his English. It is for this reason Usha, the young girl of Jhumpa Lahiri's "Hell-Heaven" from *Interpreter of Maladies* is more at ease with Deborah the American girl with whom she can talk freely.

Language is accompanied with the mode of curriculum in junior and high schools in America, which follows an absolute model of western tradition. For this reason the pupils remain unaware of their indigenous culture. Mrs. Kenyon in Lahiri's "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" from *Interpreter of Maladies* is a representative of such decrying attitude. When Lilia expresses her interest to study about Asia, Mrs. Kenyon instead of inspiring her deliberately curbed a little girl's inquisitive spirit and commands Lilia to keep the book back in the shelf, as her class assignment is not based on Asia. Moreover, Lilia herself says that the topic of Asia never comes up as a subject of study; instead they are made to learn about the American Revolution and she can point out the map of America with her closed eyes, but this same child being an Indian in origin is completely unaware of her Asia and knows nothing about the Partition of India. Thus, it shows that a child being born in America has to adapt herself with that place by compromising with her own wishes and desires.

This chapter also deals with other cultural signifiers like physical appearance which become a visible marker of the child's foreignness in spite of how well he has adjusted his tongue to English pronunciation and articulation and how well he knows American Geography and History. The tone of his complexion, colour of eyes, and hair creates a visible difference from his American friends and peers, which causes embarrassment to a second generation immigrant child. They are also equally reticent about their Indian names and later on accept gladly the reformed names given by their American friends like Meenakshi in Indira Ganesan's *The Journey* who prefers to call herself Manx as this expresses her negative attitude towards her Indianness. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* centers on this 'naming' episode. The protagonist Gogol Ganguli is so discontented with his name that he goes to the extent of changing his name officially following the legal procedure and changed his name to Nikhil and is called Nick by his friends. His sister Sonali too prefers to call herself as Sonia.

The life in America has its influence on food and dress. The American child born of Indian parents refuses to take the Indian food cooked by the mother. The children constantly complain against the spicy oily preparation although they used to eat it during their infancy but

now this food is refused and replaced by box-food and non-oily and non-spicy American diet. Even Akash, a three years old kid of Ruma (in Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth") expresses his hateful attitude towards Indian food.

Finally, in terms of choosing a romantic partner each of the young adolescents is found to get involved with a non-Indian and preferably an American as their partner. Some of these relationships remain stable while in most cases the children end up with broken relations. While Ruma's relation with Adam and Sonia's with Ben finally turn into successful marriages, Gogol's relation with Ruth and Maxine and then Sonil's relation with Richard end up failing. Moreover, the numerous relations of Usha and Pam are also symptomatic of a typical American wayward lifestyle.

Based on the three chapters this thesis intends to study the child characters through their relationship with three different generations comprising their parents, grandparents and their own generation and bring out the fact that lived experience of a child within his diasporic belonging cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER-1

THE STUDY OF THE CHILD IN RELATION TO HIS PARENTS

This chapter analyses the study of a second generation immigrant child from the perspective of his interpersonal relationship with his parents within the diasporic space. There is a general notion in all societies of the world that a child is the seed of transformation and creation of a better new world. This utopian ideal almost becomes a burden to a child especially in an immigrant society where there is a constant cultural conflict between the host country and the country of their origin. The parents usually hold utopian ideals for their children without considering the fact that their understanding of world might not be similar to their children's who are born and raised in the land where their parents' immigrated (in this context the American society). It is very likely that these children turn out to be almost Americans rather than Indians because of the inevitable influence of the society which results in a constant conflict between the parents and their American born children and this chapter primarily focuses on the different terrains of conflict and tries to reason out its source and the ways to bring out any reconciliation.

The subject of one's origin has always fascinated us since time immemorial. It is an eternal quest, which has its journey from cradle to grave throughout our span of life. It has perhaps no definite answer as to who we are. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her "Introduction" to *Multitude- Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers* has rightly said "It is unlikely that any of these questions has a single definitive answer; yet if we are to make sense of the complex world in which we live and interact with others—if we are even to survive—some sort of answer must be attempted." (Divakaruni, 3) As Divakaruni points out that the identity of an individual is a political construct which demands constant redefinition.

The first place in the formation and development of child begins within the home one is born into without any choice of one's own. Home is not just a place where one lived for years and ages but also the association of people who has helped each other to make a house a home. It is at home from where a child receives his first lesson of socialisation. The early years of childhood right from birth is very vital as it leaves an undeniable impression for the rest of his life. Social development is a dynamic process, which varies on the basis of cultural differences,

race and ethnicity, beliefs and rituals and, above all, the influence of the place where one, belongs. However, the experience of a child born to an Indian parent in India is not the same as a child born to an immigrant Indian parent in America in spite of the fact that both are Indians. A child often picks up the culture of the society where he lives and grows up because the process of assimilation is very rapid during the early years of a child. Unlike the first generation immigrant adults who more often than not cherish the memories of the past they left long back in the country of their origin and love to reside within that cocoon of nostalgia, a child born and brought up in America has no such past memories of being an Indian apart from the fact that he is born to Indian parents. The first generation immigrant parents show pride in displaying their Indianness through various cultural agencies like food, dress, celebration of ritual and festivals, and realize/feel that complete assimilation is never possible in the American soil. They think that a better choice for them is to maintain and celebrate their individual ethnic differences with the expectation of attaining some sort fixed identity of their own which would be unique in the matrix of American multiculturalism or even stand apart from it. There is also another truth that being nostalgic or performing various cultural ethnically grounded acts are vents of escaping the reality of American affluence with which most of the immigrants are unwilling to compromise or at least think that they are not tainted by it. To them going back home is a dream in reality. The interpersonal space is thus ruptured with complexity of belonging in the two worlds. In *Living in America- Poetry- Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers*, Litu Kabir rightly points out:

... Two cities on two opposing points of the globe: two pasts, two presents, and in ever so many times, two truths. But always it is one life. One life must touch the two ends, give meaning to the chasm in between, reconcile the irreconcilable. Who amongst us have left faces, a home, and a land behind have not experienced the anguish of this duality? (Kabir, 125)

Litu Kabir's statement enunciates the universal predicament for diasporic people who has chosen the path to immigrate into another country for whatever reason, that they would inevitably face the immediate consequences of the resultant feeling of alienation in the midst of foreign culture. To live there successfully he has go through the process of adjustments until 'the square pegs' fit in the 'round holes' and a similar idea has been repeated by Jaswant Sigh

Sachdev when dealing with the life of an immigrant particularly in the context of diasporic living in America. He says,

All in all, our lives will become more productive, pleasant and less problematic if we keep ourselves in a learning mode rather than staying fixed on the behaviors and attitudes we brought with us from back home. The individuals who keep an open mind to the situations around them will be the ultimate winners in this complex and somewhat alien culture. The 'square pegs' will certainly fit snugly into the edges. Only then will we fit snugly in the culture in which we have decided to surround ourselves. (Sachdev, 130)

FAMILIAL BONDING

The complication of the adult world in the diasporic space opens up the scope to study and analyse critically the child born to immigrant parents. Sireesha Telugu argues that:

...a young Indian growing up in America is exposed to two cultures, one at home and the other at school and as a result, the young person experiences stress and identity conflicts. As both the power of the emotional bond especially between parents and children, and the power of social sanction are important, family remains an area of ambivalence... (Telugu, 25)

It is this ambivalence that is found in almost all the second generation immigrant children as depicted in the works written by diasporic women writers. All of them are from India, but become permanent citizens of America at different stages of life. In the works of these contemporary diasporic authors, I would like to elucidate how these authors bring out the universal predicament of a child having a bi-cultural identity. The world of an immigrant child is no more an innocent world but is perhaps more complex than an adult' because on one hand they themselves cannot articulate their sufferings and on the other hand the adults are too afflicted with their own preoccupations that they lack the patience and temper which is vital for the understanding of a child's psyche. Often the immigrant parents consider that their diasporic status might be advantageous to their children so that they can follow a smooth path of achievement and success in the future, but the seemingly protected comfort zone of a bi-cultural child is a bewildering array of disappointments and frustrations where they repeatedly attempt to

adjust themselves both at home and also in the outside world so that they accommodate themselves within their hyphenated status.

It is through the institution of family that a child receives the first lessons of socialisation. However, the Western concept of family is absolutely different from the Indian concept. According to the Western concept “family” comprises of wife, husband, and their children and to some extent the grandparents; while brothers and sisters of the spouses are considered as “folks” who are excluded from the “core family”. So, apart from “core family” other members have only collective stock names like uncle, aunt (without any particular reference to whether paternal or maternal) and so on unlike the Indians who have different terms for different relations. (Sachdev, 56) In *The Namesake* (2003) Jhumpa Lahiri through her protagonist Gogol Ganguli, very poignantly brings out the bewilderment of an American born Indian child who is absolutely unaware of the kith and kin relations of an extended Indian family. When the Ganguli family returns to Calcutta after several years for a long vacation of eight months, Ashima and Ashoke are delighted to see their relatives who come to receive them at the airport, while their children Gogol and Sonia feel disturbed and even scared at the thought of remembering their names:

Gogol and Sonia must remember to say, not aunt this and uncle that but terms far more specific: *mashi* and *pishi*, *mamma* and *mamima*, *kaku* and *jethu*, to signify whether they are related on their mother’s side or their father’s side, by marriage or by birth. (*Namesake* 81)

The act of recalling the names and faces of relatives who form the innumerable branches of the family tree is more an act of compulsion on second generation immigrant children like Gogol and Sonia. These extended relationships no longer hold any importance to them because they hardly see these relatives right from their birth. The more the parents cherish their intimacy with the India relatives, the less a child is acquainted with them. Before emigrating to America, Ashima and Ashoke spent a large part of their life in Calcutta in the midst of a large extended family, friends and relatives, who are mostly Indian and more specifically Bengali, while Gogol and Sonia find themselves completely alienated in these groups because of the cultural drift between the East and the West. Having been born in America they hardly come across such extended relations amongst their American friends, so it is impossible for them to remember the complex family branching. Gogol and Sonia’s attachment to their Bengali relatives is only

through their occasional visits to India, or through photographs and stories which their parents tell and retell very often out of nostalgia.

Renu Krishnan, the nineteen years old young protagonist in *The Journey* (1990) by Indira Ganesan, also suffers from the slippage of memory and faces the same dilemma like Gogol and Sonia. After returning from New York to her grandfather's house Nirmila Nivasam, at Madhupur, on the fictitious island of P.I. or Pi (as named it by some Western explorer as Prospero's Island) Renu fails to visualise the face of her beloved cousin Rajesh, who had died recently in a train accident. Renu come to India with her mother Rukmani and her younger sister Manx/Meenakshi to attend the funeral of Rajesh. Rajesh was not just her cousin but both of them were more like twins. Both of them were close to one another. Even after going back to New York, they maintain their bonding of mutual love and friendship through the regular exchange of letters. But Renu started forgetting her past almost immediately and it is only when she flips through the pages of an old family photo album that she realises that she cannot visualize the face of her dearest and perhaps the best friend of her life.

...Tomorrow she could go through the photographs, the letters—it was enough now to summon up his face. But already the memory was dim, one minute indelible in her mind, the next minute gone. (*Journey* 14)

Although, Renu can recall every vivid detail of the time she spent with her beloved cousin brother, still she could not recall his face and this makes her insomniac for the rest of days she spent on the island till she made up her mind to go back to New York again. The sensitive child Renu is shocked by and cannot believe the fact that she could forget his face so quickly. It takes a long time to get over with the grief but she finally realises that life is not stagnant. It is in the final ending of the story that Renu finally manages to get over her negative memories of being alone without her childhood companion Rajesh and ready to sail in the journey of her life into the larger world beyond the P.I. Through the ending of this novel, the author probably tries to hint at the fact that one cannot travel long distance depending on the memory lane of past.

The sense of nostalgia for the past is something which lingers for the entire life of a first generation immigrant, but is at the same time equally incomprehensible to a second generation immigrant child who finds it impossible to relate with his parents' sentiments. In Jhumpa Lahiri's

short story “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” from her Pulitzer winning collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999) Lilia, a ten year old girl started missing Mr. Pirzada when he went back to his own city Dacca to visit his wife and seven young daughters. Mr. Pirzada had become a frequent visitor at Lilia’s house in Boston to chat with her parents, watching television and dining with them. He often tells them the stories of his family back at home to express his desperation to go back to his country. But, Lilia does not understand the reason of his desperation as she is unaware of what it means to be on the look-out for someone who stays miles apart. When Lilia says,

Though I had not seen him for months, it was only then I felt Mr. Pirzada’s absence. It was only then, raising my water glass in his name, that I knew it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months. (“Pirzada” 42)

Lilia did not understand what it means to be nostalgic as she is born in Boston and is too young to understand such complex human feelings. It is only when Mr. Pirzada went back to Dacca that she began to realise what it means to be nostalgic as she recollects the stories told by Mr. Pirzada. Even the feature on television about the political condition of Dacca makes Lilia offer her secret silent prayers for his wife and daughters. She gradually sensed his absence:

Our evenings went on as usual, with dinners in front of the news. The only difference was that Mr. Pirzada and his extra watch were not there to accompany us. (41)

Lilia is an example of an immigrant American child whose Indian parents always believe that they are residing in an alien land and kinship relations can only be established with someone who comes from their native country with whom they can share the same legal status of a foreign national. Lilia often observes that how her parents and Mr. Pirzada are alike and soon Mr. Pirzada became their close acquaintance with Lilia’s parents and later on with Lilia also.

If certain behaviour is repeatedly performed, then it develops into habit. Like Lilia, Usha also unconsciously gets manipulated by her parents’ behaviour. Usha in Lahiri’s short story “Hell-Heaven”, from the collection *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), learns to call Pranab Chakraborty as Pranab Kaku (uncle). Indians are in the habit of adding suffixes to the names so as to establish an informal relation with an outsider and also to show the level of intimacy and

for specifying one's relation to the other. In any case, Indian culture does not allow addressing or calling an elderly person by their first name. Pranab Chakraborty is not the real brother of Usha's father. They met accidentally and then gradually Pranab became a frequent visitor in Usha's house in Central Square. Pranab used to call Usha's father Shyamal Da (brother) and her mother Boudi (sister-in-law), instead of calling them by their first names. In the same way Usha learnt to call him as Pranab Kaku and thereby establishing an unofficial uncle-niece relationship in America where she has no real uncle.

COMMUNICATION GAP WITH PARENTS

The feeling of loneliness is much more a real crisis than feelings of nostalgia. The first generation immigrants always lament about the past they left at home and in the process they make situations difficult not only for themselves but also to their children who are most affected in this cultural duality. This results in emotional and psychological crisis in the children. Neither do they understand their parents' feeling, nor do the parents' relate with their children's problem. It is this inability to relate to and communicate with one another that the women diasporic writers try to gauge through their representation of immigrant child characters.

The constant effort on the part of the parents to make their children a product of their own culture is a major crisis in the immigrant household. 'Family' (and home) that is generally considered as a harmonious space to live together become a contestational ground of cultural conflict in the diasporic setting. The harmonious coexistence between parents and children is possible as long as they are tuned together in the same scale. With the increasing years, a child's interaction with the outside world widens. But the outside world is absolutely a whole new different world never completely explored by their immigrant parents either because of their own unwillingness to assimilate themselves with the dominant culture or for the fear of losing their own identity. This gradually results in weakening of family ties between the parents and their children and soon the child's peer groups become his manipulators. He understands that he cannot control his parents' behavior, but he defies and withstands their decisions which are contrary to his own wishes. This results in the inevitable clash in the parent-child relationships. Their own children became strangers to them. In Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth", from the collection named with the same title, the story begins with Ruma as a mother of a bi-cultural child Akash representing the adult world, but in the latter half of the story the author lays much

emphasis on the childhood of Ruma and her brother Romi as second generation immigrant children. Both the brothers and the sisters annoyed their parents especially the mother.

Twenty years ago her mother had done everything in her power to talk to Ruma out of marrying Adam, saying that he would divorce her, that in the end he would want an American girl. Neither of these things happened, but she sometimes thought back to that time, remembering how bold she'd had to be in order to withstand her mother's outrage, and her father's refusal to express even that, which had felt more cruel. "You are ashamed of yourself, of being Indian, that is the bottom line," her mother had told Ruma again and again. She knew what a shock it was; she had kept her other involvements with American men a secret from her parents until the day she announced that she was engaged. Over the years her mother not only retracted her objections but vehemently denied them... ("Unaccustomed", 26)

Ruma's mother realised that her daughter had gradually adapted to American culture but she could not think of her going to the extent of getting acquainted with American men and it was a bolt from the blue when she came to know of her daughter's decision to marry an American. Ruma's father is equally displeased on her decision and expresses his discontentment by completely ignoring her presence in the house. Ruma's parents' reactions are very common amongst diasporic parents as they feel that Americans are licentious by nature and hardly care to maintain the sanctity of matrimonial alliances, as they think that divorces are very frequent incidents in American society, and so they fear that Ruma too might face the same consequences although no such thing had happened and later on her relationship with her parents also comes to a peaceful understanding.

On the occasion of her father's first visit to Ruma's house in Brooklyn, her father speculates about his grandson Akash who will turn out to be a stranger to Ruma when he will grow up just like Ruma and his brother Romi did during their college days when they freed themselves from the scaffolding of their parents.

He [Ruma's father] remembered his children coming home from college, impatient with him and his wife, enamored of their newfound independence, always wanting to leave. It had tormented his wife and, though he never admitted it, had pained him as well...He and

his wife were their whole world. But eventually that need dissipated...That loss was in store for Ruma, too; her children would become strangers, avoiding her. (54)

Akash is a bicultural child of Indian–American parentage—Ruma and Adam. Adam is an American and so Akash does not even share a Bengali surname and this leads to Ruma’s father’s prediction about his daughter that she too would soon face same problem as he and his wife did for Ruma and her brother years ago. Although Ruma parents are both Indians, still they failed to inculcate into their children their traditions and culture while residing in America. It is because the process of adoption is a lived phenomenon, and cultural amalgamation is sure to occur while residing in a multicultural society like America.

The predicament of Ruma’s father is a universal predicament to all those immigrant parents caught up in a never ending dichotomy of acculturation. The more they assimilate themselves with the outside world, the more they can relate with their children. Usha, the adolescent protagonist of “Hell-Heaven” in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* was born in Berlin but later on moved to Central Square, with her parents and settled there permanently. She is more an American with her behaviour and mannerism than an Indian. Usha feels belittled when she compares herself with Deborah’s daughters. Although married to an Indian Pranab Chakraborty, Deborah maintains her American ways of living which she inculcates into her daughters and it is this way of life Usha craves for herself.

...their two identical little girls who barely looked Bengali and spoke only English and were raised so differently from me [Usha] and most of other children. They were not taken to Calcutta every summer, they did not have parents who were clinging to another way of life and exhorting their children to do the same. Because of Deborah, they were exempt from all that, and for this reason I envied them. (“Hell” 75)

Usha’s dissatisfaction against her mother, Aparna is because of her Indian belonging and her imposition of various restrictions on her social behaviour which are in absolute contrast to her American lifestyle. When she compares herself with Deborah’s daughters, Usha feels jealous of them. Deborah’s daughters, although have an Indian father, Pranab Chakraborty, they inherited their physical appearance mostly from their mother and if there is a little Indianness they received genetically from their father it is easily surmounted by Deborah’s American upbringing.

However, a young girl like Usha fails to apprehend the fact that it is was easy for Deborah to raise her daughter in her own way because of the immediate influence of the place in which they are living irrespective of her children having an Indian father. For Deborah's daughters, it is more the influence of the society than the biological factor that intertvenes here. If Deborah's daughters were taken back to their father's ancestral land in India then they might be different from they are now. Aparna often compares herself with Deborah and raises her grievances against her.

...she [Aparna] often conjured Deborah as her antithesis, the sort of woman she refused to be. "If she were your mother, she would let you do whatever you wanted, because she would't care. Is that you want, Usha, a mother who doesn't care? ... (76)

Although, Aparna and Deborah are diametrically opposite to each other, in terms of their motherhood both are similar. Like Deborah, Aparna too wants her daughter to be grows up like herself, as an Indian. But, the difference between the two mothers is because of their cultural differences that are held responsible for their different outlook. The situation is easy for Deborah as she is living within her own cultural milieu whereas, for Aparna, the situation is very intricate as she herself is a displaced woman thrown into an absolute different culture where she is constantly throbbing between the two cultures—the one in which she had born and raised and the other she has been living in. It might be easy for Deborah to relate to her daughters but it is equally difficult and perhaps impossible for Aparna as she cannot surmount the indomitable influence of the western culture in which Usha is born and raised. Aparna feels everything out of place in America, as whatever she had learnt from her own cultural background has no similarity with the life lived in America and so from her perspective she finds Deborah too indifferent and uncaring towards her children. However, Aparna fails to understand that her conservative attitude slowly alienates her from her daughter. To Usha, her mother's restrictions is like a chain which impedes her free movement as she wants her mother to consider her like other American children.

I began to grow out of my girlhood entering middle school and developing crushes on American boys in my class ... But my mother must have picked up on something, for she forbade me to attend the dances that were held the last Friday of every month in the school cafeteria, and it was an unspoken law that I was not allowed to date. "Don't think

you'll get away with marrying an American"...I was thirteen, the thought of marriage irrelevant to my life. Still, her words upset me, and I felt her grip on me tighten... (75)

As she is born and raised in America, it is normal for her to pick up the culture of that place and also normal is the desire of a girl at her age to be like her friends so that she will not be secluded by her the group in which she spends most of her hours. Her attraction towards the other sex is a common characteristic of adolescent age. Her particular liking for American boys brings out her inferiority complex of not being an American by herself—an American boyfriend might able to provide that confidence which she might not achieve because of her Indian ethnicity. Again, her willingness to attend dance classes is a step towards her socialisation with the American culture. But, her mother forbids her from attending such gatherings as she wants to keep her daughter alienated and insulated as much as possible from the influence of western culture and she also cares for the safety of her daughter. She has a persisting fear that her daughter might be exploited if she has too much involvement with her American friends.

Little by little the distance between Usha and her mother increases a great deal and to avoid continuous confrontation with her mother she develops the mechanism of keeping secrets from her with the help of her friends:

I began keeping other secrets from her, evading her with the aid of my friends. I told her I was sleeping over at a friend's when really I went to parties, drinking beer and allowing boys to kiss me... (76)

Usha is an adolescent girl of thirteen, the age which is marked by the rapid development both physically and psychologically. It is a very sensitive phase of life which needs special assistance on the part of the parents. But Usha's mother's over conservatism does not allow her to take her mother into confidence. For this reason Usha started inventing lies and maintaining secrets from her mother. It is at the end of the story that Usha's mother is seen to attune herself with her daughter as she realised that she would never be successful in making Usha an Indian on the American soil and at the end gives up her effort to change her. Usha's mother realizes that their immigrant status is responsible for Usha's difference of outlook in terms of attitude, customs, manners and behavior and therefore rather than try to mould her daughter into her crust, she decides to leave her to live out her own wishes and desire.

Usha's mother acceptance of her daughter's life is not out of her willingness but out of her own condition. She repeatedly complains to her husband about their immigrant life in America which might lead her daughter astray. Her particular attitude is also the outcome of her being secluded from the outside world. Unlike Usha and her father, she has no life of her own.

...When my mother complained to him [father] about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. "If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta," he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other. I began to take my cues from my father in dealing with her, isolating her doubly. When she screamed at me for talking too long on the telephone, or for staying too long in my room, that she knew nothing about me, and it was clear to both that I stopped needing her... (76-77)

Usha's mother has no professional life of her own and because of that she had never felt or realised the need to become a part of the American mainstream culture and if she has any social life that too is confined within the Indian immigrant families. Uma's father who has his lucrative job does not think of going back to India and Usha too has made a life of her own in America and so the one person left out is Aparna who has no engagements with the outside world, and started feeling secluded, lonely and left out from the world of her husband and daughter and this situation continues till she decides to create a space for herself and decides to pursue "a degree in library science at a nearby university" (82). However, their relationship improved only when her mother learns to adjust herself with her half American daughter.

My mother and I had also made peace; she had accepted the fact that I was not only her daughter but a child of America as well. Slowly, she accepted that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with them, and even that I lived with one though we were not married. She welcomed my boyfriends into our home and when things didn't work out she told me I would find some better. (82-83)

The unbridgeable between parent-child relations is also because of the western notion of privacy that results in the nuclear structure of family. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* the protagonist Gogol never gets the essence of joy and happiness of living together in large

extended families while living in America. They adjusted themselves within their private dens and love to be alone without the parents' intervention. Too much privacy often becomes the source of estrangement of a child from his parents. This can be traced in the relationship of Gogol and his father Ashoke. On the occasion of his fifteenth birthday, when Gogol's father came to his room to gift him a collection of "*The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*", (*Namesake* 74) Ashoke knocked at the door before entering his son's room which shows that American etiquette forbade a father to access his fifteen year old adolescent son's room without prior permission. The son is equally repelled at his father's presence in his room and as soon as his father left the room Gogol immediately closed the door:

Gogol gets up and shuts the door behind his father, who has the annoying habit of always leaving it partly open. He fastens the lock on the knob for good measures, then wedges the book on a high self (the book which his father had gifted) between two volumes of the Hardy Boys. He settles down again with his lyrics on the bed... (78)

Although Ashoke very rarely enters his son's room, still Gogol feels irritated for this short interference into his private space. He has to lower the volume of his stereo music in his father's presence but as soon as he left the room, Gogol closed the doors from inside and turned the music aloud and returned to this private cocoon again without understanding the fact that it might hurt his father.

People might respond differently in the same situation on the basis of their cultural differences. In the American society, privacy is given due importance. Even a child at her very early age is allowed to have her private room, a private space of her own. Hema is another character from Jhumpa Lahiri's "Once in a Lifetime" (from the collection of her short stories *Unaccustomed Earth*) who feels ashamed to reveal to her American friends at school that she still regularly shares the bed with her parents, the habit which her friends had already discarded at their infancy. Hema has a room of her own where she kept her dresses and things, but she was never allowed by her mother to sleep alone in that room. Her mother Shibani who is a Calcutta bred Indian woman came to America only after her marriage, and is unable to comprehend the American culture:

...My [Hema] mother considered the idea of a child sleeping alone a cruel American practice and therefore did not encourage it, even when we had the space. She told me that she had slept in the same bed as her parents until the day she was married and that this was perfectly normal. But I knew that it was not normal, not what my friends at school did, and that would ridicule me if they know. ("Once" 229)

The difference of understanding between the mother and the child is the unbridgeable gap of cultural assimilation. In spite of her Indian parentage, Hema is born and brought up in America. She spends most of her hours at school in the midst of her American friends which helps her to assimilate harmoniously with the mainstream American society, while her mother cannot adapt herself to the culture of the host country. Hema is just a representative of an agonised child suffering from the secret fear of being marginalised. However, after her repeated insistence Hema was finally allowed by her mother to sleep alone in her room, but she used to check several times at night to ascertain her daughter's safety and comfort. In the first few days Hema herself was scared and terrified at the thought of being alone in the room, but gradually she conquered her fear and adjusted herself with her newly acquired privacy.

In Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief", from the collection of *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), through some passing reference of Kusum's elder daughter Pam the cold conflict between a mother and her daughter is explicitly revealed. Pam is an adolescent girl who has perfected herself in the western lifestyle. :

She's the daughter who's always in trouble. She dates Canadian boys and hangs out in the mall, shopping for tight sweaters. ("Management" 181)

Pam's minimal dresses, her dating boys and also her odd choice of job at 'McDonald' show her boldness and uncompromising attitude with regard to the Indian conservative tradition. She stands as a perfect foil to her submissive sister whom she calls "the goody-goody one" who sings "bhajans", a typical Indian classical devotional song at her home in Canada and for these reasons Kusum can relate more to her younger daughter than Pam who has outgrown her to be a westerner. The gap between Pam and her mother can be traced from the conversation which follows right after the news of Air India jet crash has been reported. It is in this jet in which Pam's younger sister and father were returning from Indian. Out of sudden shock Kusum yells at

Pam saying that, “You know what I want to do? If I didn’t have to look after you now, I’d hang myself.” (182) Pam also expressed her years of suppressed anger at her mother and instead of pacifying her mother she accused her saying:

You think I don’t know what Mummy’s thinking? Why her? That’s what. That’s sick! Mummy wishes my little sister were alive and I were dead. (182)

After the jet crash incident, the distance between the Pam and her mother increased so much that even after the death of her father and sister she does not appear to be at all sympathetic towards her mother. Instead of being with her mother, Pam dwells within her own impulsive world:

Pam left for California. She wants to do some modeling, she says. She says when she comes into her share of the insurance money she’ll open a yoga-cum-aerobics studio in Hollywood. She sends me postcards so naughty I daren’t leave them on the coffee tables. Her mother has withdrawn from her and the world. (190)

Pam is more worried with the claim of her insurance share than sharing emotions with her bereaved mother. Her planning for her future prospects shows her insensitivity and her materialistic outlook that she picks up from her western grooming. At the end of the story Kusum sells her house in Canada and returns to India to spend the rest of her solitary life of widowhood in an ashram at Hardwar, withdrawing herself from her surviving daughter and from all worldly aspects. She has understood the harsh reality that both she and Pam will never able to live with each other so she prefers to live an isolated life, giving Pam the freedom to choose her ways.

The lack of communication between parents and children is represented from an absolute different perspective in Indira Ganesan’s second novel *Inheritance* (1998), where the hostile mother Lakshmi always maintains privacy not only from her family but also from her fifteen years young daughter, Sonil. While, living under the same roof, she suffers unbearable aloofness from her mother who never speaks to her. It is only after her grandmother’s death, then her mother becomes her normal self:

I was sunburnt by my mother. She was the incandescent light in my life, illuminating my days with an anger that tempted me to kick at rocks and stones. If I saw her face, my teeth ached with rage...Never did she gaze at me with curiosity as I did at her. I screamed to get her attention.

I wanted to pull her hair, tug at her ears as babies did, I wanted to cry for milk.
(*Inheritance* 15)

Lakshmi's strange behaviour and her indifference towards her daughter is the result of her several broken relationships. Her three daughters born of three men—Ramani is her first child born of her first husband who died when Lakshmi was twenty one years; the second daughter Savitri was an illegitimate child born of a rich filmmaker's son and Sonil's father is an American expatriate who too left her when Sonil was just six. Lakshmi had suffered from her relationships severely and the daughters born out of those relations are like markers of her sufferings. So she tries to keep herself secluded from the rest of the world which is absolutely unbearable for Sonil. Sonil is raised by her aunts in Madras. She met her mother after nine years when she came to her grandmother's house at Pi (a fictitious island) to recover from her long ailment of bronchitis. But the cold barrier between mother-daughter breaks much later after her grandmother's death, her mother suddenly gets back to a normal life, taking care of the household. It is also for the first time Lakshmi speaks to daughter. It seems that the entire world has changed for her:

My (Sonil) family was something precious, like jewelry, like a necklace you never take off. My family was deep as a rose, true as any tree. As my mother spoke to me that day, my laryngitis abated, and I felt that I knew something, just as I had always yearned. But I was so shocked and overcome with all that had happened to me, I began to yawn, and my throat began to hurt a little, and I began to think of cold fruit juice or ice crème and merely smiled at my mother to thank her. She let me rest. I recovered rapidly. (181)

Although, Sonil's mother is not an immigrant woman and it is not mentioned anywhere in the novel that Sonil had any experiences in America, but she too is a second generation American on the grounds that her father is an American and she too will also go to America for pursuing her higher studies in the Radcliffe University.

The breaking of long silence from her mother gives Sonil the sense of having a complete family that she craves for since she was born and later on at the end of the novel Sonil too found her American photographer father at Missouri in the United States.

Thus, the different contexts mentioned above clearly bring out the rupture of the familial bonding of a second generation immigrant child within a multicultural space thereby promoting the celebration of new identity which the first generation immigrant parents failed to establish for themselves. Michelle Superle in his *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* rightly observes Sunaia Maria's views that "(s)econd-generation youth learn in childhood that they have to negotiate different ideals of youthful behaviour in specific contexts and select certain images or identification within particular social and structural constraints" (Superle, 134) so as to overcome their bewildering array of crises which their Indian immigrant parents fail to comprehend. It is because they themselves exist in an utterly confused state which makes them absolutely incomprehensible to their own children who are raised wholly in America. So, instead of being negative towards American culture, the parents need to be sympathetic enough to understand their children and establish a compassionate bonding to bridge the gap between them. In this context the grandparents play a vital role to give them a sense of stability which is otherwise not possible by their immigrant parents. It is this bonding between grandparents and grandchildren which will be dealt in great details in following chapter.

CHAPTER-2

THE STUDY OF THE CHILD IN RELATION TO HIS GRANDPARENTS

This chapter deals with the study of second or third generation immigrant children through the relationship with their grandparents in the works of diasporic women novelists. In the previous chapter it is seen that the parent-child relation is always a site of contestation within the diasporic space. It is in this context the grandparents act, bridging the unfathomable gap between the next two generations—the parents and their children. The child characters to be discussed in the given context are the second generation immigrant children whose parents had immigrated into America many years back but metaphorically dwells in their old world while, their children lives in the perpetual crisis of achieving their dubious ‘hyphenated’ bicultural status. The term ‘hyphenated identity’ as Arun Prabha Mukherjee used it in her *Oppositional Aesthetics: Readings from a Hyphenated Space* which Jasbir Jain interprets in her essay “Rethinking the Diaspora: Of Hyphens, Hybridities and Translated People” as:

...they project a problematical area and an identity perpetually placed in a precarious balance, perpetually probing cultural histories and memories and resisting imposition of hegemonic structures. There is anger, interrogation, insistence, and a constant opposition to the training and knowledge imbibed through imperialist discourses. The diasporic presence as such becomes a resisting self, a ‘postcolonial’ interrogator and a spokesperson for the past of the mother country, a voice which sheds fear and goes on to articulate the cultural difference. (qtd. in Jain 26)

But Bharati Mukherjee’s use of ‘hyphenated identity’ is more apt to describe the children of these immigrant parents as “acquisition of an additional identity, a covering layer”. (Jain, 26) So, ‘hyphenated identity’ of immigrant children opens up the gap between parents and children within the American society. The Indian-American children unlike their parents are born and brought up in America which is responsible for having an absolutely different outlook toward the host country. It is in this context the grandparents acquire an important position in the study of the (grand) children with respect to their hyphenated status.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRANPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN

It has been observed in a random interview amongst a young group of thirty graduates and undergraduates (of South-Asian immigrants in North America) that when asked with whom they prefer to spend quality hours, quite unexpectedly, with the exception of four members, they replied that it was their 'grandparents' (Parameswaran, *Living in America- Poetry- Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers* 181). Thus, it reveals that the role of grandparents is quite important in the life of immigrant children and can help them to negotiate the geographical distances that exist between a child's land of belonging and his land of origin. It has been found that most of grandparents willingly or unwillingly do not settle with their own children and can see or meet them only on occasional visits. But the bonding of grandparents with their grandsons is something that most of the parents fail to establish with their own children. This is best exemplified in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "Unaccustomed Earth" from the collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) through the relationship of Ruma father and her son Akash. Ruma was never a favourite daughter to her father and her marrying Adam, an American, results in widening the gap between Ruma and her father. They become so distant to one another that the brief mails he used to send (very rarely) to her never had the mention of her husband and son's name. But, the father appears to be a completely changed person in terms of his relationship with Ruma's three year's old son, Akash, during his short visit to Ruma's house in Brooklyn. Within this short span of staying at Ruma's house, Ruma is utterly surprised to see how rapidly an intimate bonding develops between her father and her son. Her little son Akash who is very Americanised not only in his physical appearance but also in his habits and behaviour, quite unexpectedly begins to consider his grandfather as his dependable companion. Akash meets his grandfather for the first time in his life but within a very short period it seems that both of them are quite familiar to each other and as if they were eagerly waiting to have each other's company for a long time.

On their first meeting, Akash expresses a completely indifferent attitude towards his grandfather. When Ruma's father asks Akash about his age, "Akash did not respond, behaving as if her father did not exist" ("Unaccustomed" 12) and to express his indifference he turns aside and starts conversing with her mother. However, this attitude of Akash is the result of 'stranger anxiety' a very common reaction for a child of three years towards a person whom he has not

seen frequently in his house. But their relationship smoothens gradually when he realises that his grandfather is also a part of their family. His grandfather soon becomes his playmate; playing the game of gardening in the backyard of their kitchen or strolling around the city, also following his grandson to his swimming class or capturing his footage in his video camera. Within this short period Akash's attachment to his grandfather grows so deep that in spite of his routine habit to sleep beside her mother and listening to bed-time stories he "insisted on being read to at night by her [Ruma's] father, sleeping downstairs in her father's bed" (48) and later on when Ruma's father left their place, Akash felt terribly miserable and started crying helplessly, pleading with his mother to take him to his "Dadu" (grandfather)

"Where's Dadu?" Akash asked...

"He went home today."

"Why?" In her son's small face she saw the disappointment she also felt.

"Daddy [Akash's father] is coming back tonight," she said, trying to change the subject...

..."I want Dadu."...He picked up the empty watering can her father had left underneath the porch and pretended to water things in his little plot. (57).

While Akash develops attachment with his grandfather, he completely forgot his grandmother as she passed away when he was only two. His only memory with her is through pictures:

He [Akash] would know nothing of the weeks her mother had come to stay with Ruma after his birth... Her mother had refused to put him into the bassinet, always cradling him, for hours at a time, in her arms. The new baby would know nothing of her mother at all, apart from the sweaters she had knit for Akash, which he'd already outgrown and which the new baby would eventually wear. (17)

Akash could not recall his association with his grandmother; he can only identify her through the photographs while the other child of Ruma who is yet to be born will never be able to experience what it means to have a grandmother. Ruma's mother's was very protective and caring about her grandson, who was revealed in her reluctance to put Akash in the bassinet, instead she cradles

him for hours in her arms. Such warmth and affection for Akash also brings her closer to her daughter once again:

It was after she'd had a child that Ruma's relationship with her mother became harmonious; being a grandmother transformed her mother, bringing a happiness and an energy Ruma had never witnessed. For the first time in her life Ruma felt forgiven for the many expectations she'd violated or shirked over the years. She came to look forward to their nightly conversations, reporting the events of her day, describing what new things Akash had learned to do. (26-27)

Ruma is a second generation immigrant who had adopted American ways irrespective of her mother's conservative attitude towards Indianness which she strictly maintained at home. She offends her mother most when she decided on marrying a non-Indian, but the birth of Akash erased all the years of unpleasantness between Ruma and her mother. Through her grandson, Ruma's mother got a new avenue to shower her unrequited love for her own children. Akash happens to be the centre of attention and affection for both the mother and the grandmother that further allows Ruma to get some common ground to initiate conversation with her mother where she informs her with regular updates of Akash's growth. Moreover, Akash brings a new lease of life in his grandmother as she now wished to be alive till her two years old grandson reached the age of getting married. Never before had Ruma seen her mother so energetic, her mother had changed completely soon after Akash was born. She had changed so much that to keep herself healthy she started going for regular exercise, "wearing an old Colgate sweatshirt of Ruma's" (27). Her mother always expresses adverse attitude toward western dress, but she readily wears Ruma's sweatshirt which is symbolic of her inner transformation to assimilate into the mainstream culture. She perhaps realised that the more she assimilated with the American culture, the more she can relate herself to her grandson who is not only a third generation immigrant child but also an American by birth and by citizenship.

In the story "A Temporary Matter" from the Pulitzer winning collection *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999), Jhumpa Lahiri brings out the concern of a grandmother through Shoba's mother who comes to stay with them in Boston during her advanced stage of pregnancy. Her mother although she had spent decades in America, yet she did not shed her Indian (here Bengali) practice of elaborate idol worship:

She was a religious woman. She set up a small shrine, a framed picture of a lavender-faced goddess and a plate of marigold petals, on the bedside table in the guest room, and prayed twice a day for healthy grandchildren in the future. (“Temporary” 9)

Shoba’s mother’s dedicated prayer reveals her desire to have a grandchild. Her regular prayer for the sake of her future grandchild’s good health expressed the sincerity of love and affection of a grandmother.

The grandparents play a major role in the life of a child. It is in their association that a child can gain immense wisdom and knowledge that leaves an undeniable impression for the rest of the life. Amongst her vast spectrum of characters, Jhumpa Lahiri very poignantly depicts the role of grandparents in her various works. In *The Namesake* repeated references are made to the role of grandparents in the life of both Ashima and Ashoke, even after they emigrate from Calcutta to America. Ashoke Ganguli, the father of Gogol, develops his voracious reading habit from his childhood inheriting it from his parental grandfather who was once a professor of European Literature at Calcutta University. Ashoke was so influenced by his grandfather that he named his son Gogol, after his grandfather’s favourite Russian author Nikolai Vasillievich Gogol. Ashoke had special interest in Russian Literature which is solely the influence of his grandfather who had gifted him a single volume of “hardbound collection of short stories by Nikolai Gogol...when he’d graduated from class twelve” (*Namesake* 13). He was so fascinated by this author that later on when he was asked to name his son in the hospital record, his mind comes up with no other name but Gogol. Gogol had never seen his great grandfather but he will be remembered forever through his name.

The ‘naming’ episode of Gogol also has an interesting anecdotal gesture to his mother’s (Ashima) grandmother. It is a customary among Indians, especially among the Bengalis, that a child should be named with the name given by grandparents which is a way of expressing regards to the senior most members of the family. So, Ashima’s grandmother who is burdened with her eighty years of age walked to the post office with her cane to drop the telegram bearing two names for her great grandchildren—one for a boy and the other for a girl, the names which she had not revealed to anyone before her death. But the ‘names’ were lost forever as the telegram never reached the hands of Ashima in America. Moreover, at that time there was no alternative to telegrams as both Ashok and Ashima’s grandparents do not have working

telephones; so they never come to know about those names. But, America is a land of abundance where substitutes can be easily found and so, the 'Nandi' family and Dr. Gupta becomes the substitutes for Ashima's relatives at Calcutta; although she always longs to share her joy of giving birth to her first child with them. This association with the grandparents had developed because both Ashoke and Ashima grow up in the company of their grandparents.

From the above stories one can see that there is a common trend in Lahiri's depiction of grandparent-grandchild relationship in which she never allows such relations to develop completely. There is always a sense of incompleteness in the representation of the figures of the grandparents as they are mostly depicted as people who were dead or stayed many miles away from their grandchildren. The grandparents appear to exist more in memories than in reality. Ruma's mother died when Akash was just two years old and later on he could recall her very faintly through the photographs. Every time Akash snapped through her pictures, he never failed to mention that she was dead and pronounce with such emphasis that as if grandmother's existence can be traced only through pictures and she never had any real existence. The same is the case with Ruma's father who spent only few days with Akash. Although their intimacy develops very deeply and rapidly within a brief period, the author has not given any hint for its future fulfilment. Again, in the case of Gogol, his first and last impression of his grandfather is through the old photographs which are one of her mother's prized possessions which she carried with her when she moved to Boston after her marriage with Ashoke. It is one of the temporary sojourns when Gogol comes to Calcutta with his parents and sister in his mother's ancestral house at Amherst Street that he finds himself immersed in his grandfather's memories:

On Amherst Street, Gogol sits at his grandfather's drawing table, poking through a tin full of dried-out nibs. He sketches what he sees through the iron window bars...people passing under the soiled canopies of rickshaws, hurrying home with parcels in the rain.
(*Namesake* 83)

The paintings of his grandfather act as reflectors through which Gogol gets some glimpses of Calcutta at his grandfather's time. If his grandfather would alive then he could have told him the stories; the paintings here act as substitutes for him.

The grandparents play a vital role in the life of a child, perhaps a role more important than that of parents. Such is the role played by Sonil's grandmother Kamala in Indira Ganesan's second novel *Inheritance* (1998). Sonil is a fifteen year old adolescent girl who comes to stay for a long summer vacation at her grandmother's house in the island of Pi for change of air. She has been granted four months of sick leave from her pre-university to cure herself from her long illness under the caring umbrella of her grandmother.

Sonil is a "skip-generation child", a term coined by Jean Seligmann in his essay "Variations on a Theme" to describe a child who is brought up by her grandparent because the parents fails to perform their parental duties as they lose control of their lives through drugs, financial difficulties, or extreme self-absorption. Sonil, whose name has no definite meaning, also has a qualified parentage. She is half orphan whose American father has left her mother Lakshmi before her birth while her mother's several failed relationships with different men makes her life miserable. To Sonil, her mother always remains a mysterious figure who keeps herself secluded from rest of the family members. Sonil was brought up by her aunts in Madras; it is after nine years she meet her mother. Her mother's unnatural behaviour forces her to be incandescent towards her "enigmatic absentee" (Seaman) mother. Lakshmi is the source of bitterness and embarrassment for her daughter:

They [elder sisters of Sonil] did not miss my mother, they had erased her from their lives. She was an embarrassment, a thought flicked away. But she consumed me. I felt I was only half, that she took my soul somehow, that she kept it from me. My identity was lost, and I did not know who I was. She named me Sonil but gave me nothing else. (*Inheritance* 17)

Sonil's other two elder half-sisters, Ramani and Savitri, are too busy in their conjugal life with husband and children that they hardly felt the need for their mother. But, Sonil because of her young age eagerly desires to be with her mother further aggravating her hateful attitude towards her mother as she never allowed her daughter to penetrate the boundary of her secluded life which she had willingly chosen for herself. To Sonil, her grandmother is the only source of comfort in her insufferable state. It is from her grandmother that she receives her first lesson of drawing. Her grandmother performed all the duties that are supposed to be carried out by a

mother like preparing special dishes for her. At her grandmother's place she enjoys enormous freedom of not maintaining a routine life. She can read storybooks late at night, without any pressure of waking up early on the next morning and spend the rest of day enjoying the enchanting beauty of the place. In short, her grandmother and everything related to her are the only sources comfort in Sonil's parent-less life. However, her grandmother's too caring attitude at times seems to be humiliating. The day when she took Sonil to the bank, while standing in queue, her grandmother's repeated enquiries as to whether she wanted to use the rest room makes Sonil embarrassed:

...I stood in line with my grandmother...who only meant kindness, asked for the third time if I did not wish to use the rest room, which filled me with humiliation—as if I were five! As if I didn't understand my body. Instead of thinking something else to say, I could only wish to be someone else. There stood the American, confident and knowing, his watch sparkling, his shoes scuffed. (*Inheritance* 145)

Sonil's grandmother's attitude reveals her Indian sentiment which grandparents normally feel for their grandchild irrespective of their age. Sonil's dependent relation with her grandmother made her think that Sonil is still a little girl, who needs constant supervision. This also expresses over dependence of an Indian child upon her elders that appears to be quiet unnatural according to American/western standard. Her grandmother enquiring such private matter also reveals the intimacy of their bonding.

Moreover, Sonil's grandmother loves all her grandchildren equally well. She was so shocked at the news Jani's (Sonil's cousin sister) leaving the house and her decision to become a nun made her so distressed that "She began to devote herself to the garden and mutter under her breath..." (89) and soon after she fell ill and finally passed away. Her grandmother's death is a terrible blow for Sonil. The depth of her attachment with her grandmother can be fathomed in the choice of adjectives when she says,

My grandmother. My green hill. O, my grandmother, how could this happen? It must not have happened. If only I could do something, my dear, darling, lovely, brave, practical, doting grandmother. My eyes filled with tears, my nose started to run, my chest began to panic...

Mandalas, I should have made more mandalas. I should never have stopped. In doing so, I had neglected my grandmother... (159-160)

She was utterly distressed with grief and anger and held herself responsible for her death grandmother, her adorable “mothering muse” (160). She blames herself on the ground that if she could have made more mandalas, then she could have kept her grandmother away from her death. Also the repeated emphasis on “mandala” bears an important significance. At one level it shows the faith of the Indians on cosmology and on the other it is the site of Western gaze considering the East as the repository of unscientific beliefs and superstitions. Sonil learnt the intricacies of drawing mandalas from her grandmother and she grows up believing that mandalas can overcome bad omen and that ill luck would never befall on the person or that household to whom it has been dedicated. It is her love for her grandmother which made her believe what she says. Towards the end of the novel, Sonil opens up her heart saying that,

I had thought for so long that they defined me, that I would be a repetition of them. I had thought that inheritance was inescapable. It is, but not in the ways I had imagined. My family is ingrained in my actions; they are uppermost in my mind. Yet there are parts of me that are nothing like them; I am a random mix of genres and attributes. I do not have to be like my mother. I am not destined to walk in her shadow. Yet a shard of her exists in everything I do, in the way I look at men, in the way I view my life. My grandmother is in my heart, a mandala I never part with, and my mother is the necklace I never take off. My father, my father is a hat, protecting me from sun and rain, but a hat I can lift off at will. (192)

Even after emigrating to America and finding her long lost father, she never feels detached from her grandmother even after her death. Sonil says that she might be the daughter of her parents through genes, but her grandmother is her true ancestor from whom she has inherited all her positive qualities. Her mother becomes normal much later after the death of her grandmother. She met her father at the stage of her life when she has achieved all that she wanted to become. Both her parents have hardly any role to play in this phase of life. She has suffered with her grandmother since her childhood—the most crucial phase of life when a child is expected to be in the company of her parents. The metaphor she uses to describe her mother, her father and her grandmother is quiet apt. Her mother is a “necklace” who glorifies her life by saving her from

the stigma of an orphan, although she was always a half orphan reared by her aunts and grandmother. Her American photographer father whose existence she feels more in stories than in reality and whom she met only much later in life after coming to America, might be a protective shield like a “hat” for her future life. But her grandmother is her “heart” and performs the major and the most vital role in her life. Without her unconditional love and affection she could not able to bear the burden of her inheritance. To Sonil, her grandmother whether she is alive or dead is her forever companion from cradle to grave.

Indira Ganesan in her debut novel *The Journey* (1990) also depicts grandfather-granddaughter relationship through Renu’s and her grandfather Das. Renu’s grandfather was suffering from a long ailment since she was ten. His eagerness to see his granddaughter is so much that in spite of his ill-health he went to the station to receive Renu:

He was waiting at the station, skinnier than ever. He looked like a starved stray cat, hunching his shoulders, pushing back his broken glasses. Renu taught him an Orissan song she’d learned, and he taught her the words of a new pop tune. *Bye, Bye, Miss American Pie* they sang in the taxi. (*Journey* 5)

His disheveled look is symptomatic of his ill health but this is no constraint to the joy he receives in the company of his granddaughter. It seems that both of them eagerly wait for these short vacations when they can unite again and share their newly acquired skills. During their short stay in the grandfather’s house, Renu and her cousin brother Rajesh were often summoned by the grandfather to his sickroom to check their advancement in studies. The children also followed him in his junkets. While Renu has the scope to spend some days with him before her parents decided to settle in New York, her younger sister Manx has no such memories of him. Manx sees his grandfather for the first time when he is in his bed ridden condition, standing almost on the verge of death:

He lay in his bed studying his granddaughters for a long while before turning his head away. He seemed a stranger; nearly nine years had passed since Renu had last seen him, and in those years he’d changed so much. Gone was the stern taskmaster who had demanded she study hard...Gone was the man who could make his mouth a grimace, a thin line that judged the entire world. Now lay in bed, bald, shrunken, calm. He was

preparing for his death; he had been in bed for the past three years...Each night he slept as if it would be his last... “For ninety years I have moved about—why should I continue?” he asked. (18)

Renu could not relate to her grandfather whom she met after nine years. During this period of her long departure, both of them almost appear to have become strangers to each other. With his physical decay, his mind also started eroding. His gaze is filled with certain blankness which shows that he could not recognise his granddaughters. It is not only the face he failed to recall but also their difference of outlook. This is revealed through the incident when Manx lost her American watch. He expressed his pessimistic attitude towards western culture. Manx is born and brought up in America as a result of which she develops an American habit of wearing watch even at home. So, when she lost her watch, her grandfather says, “What do you need a watch for anyway?”... “I [Manx] like to know the time.”... “You Americans want to know everything” (35). His conversation with Manx reveals his orthodox nature. In his youth, he did not allow his daughter Chitra to move out of the house and for this she had to sacrifice her prospective musical career; yet his conservative nature cannot restrain his other children. Renu’s mother herself emigrated to New York where both she and her husband accomplished themselves as scientists. Even after her husband’s death, she continues living there alone with her two daughters. Hence, Indira Ganesan tries to present both set of grandparents—old stereotyped and the other a contemporary one. In the very onset of her first novel, *The Journey*, she presents the grandfather figure as fragile, vulnerable, burdened with age and wished to spend his last days on the holy land of Benares. He is the representative of the first category, a conservative old man who is not tolerant towards changes and hence Manx does not find him interesting. Manx felt “bored” while talking to her grandfather:

Manx wandered around. She felt bored and useless here. She wondered what her friends back home [in Long Island] were doing. They were probably at the Metro, flipping through the record bins. Nothing was fair. It was a stupid world. (38)

Manx’s grandfather was not only grown old in age, but also grown old in his attitude and become who cannot accept change and hence he could not relate to his younger granddaughter who was born and brought up in America. However, at the end of the novel, Manx expresses her willingness to stay back on the island at her grandfather’s house. In her second novel

Inheritance, Kamala, the grandmother of Sonil, is not portrayed as a weak old lady, instead she is a bold authoritative figure, capable of skillfully managing the entire household full of females and the only male member is Sonil's great uncle Raj whose presence is hardly felt in the house and who played an almost insignificant role in any family responsibilities. It is her grandmother who is responsible for maintaining the entire household from cooking to giving lessons of drawing to her granddaughter. Her farsightedness for the future prosperity is revealed from her banking transactions. She had also learnt some Cantonese words during her three years of immigrant life in Malaysia. She used to tell Sonil the stories of her days in Malaysia, the culture and heritage of the place. Her grandmother's stories fascinate her so much that she often imagines herself to visit those places and wishes to see through her own eyes. It is from her grandmother that Sonil gets the inspiration to pursue her higher studies in America; nonetheless there is also a dominant desire to find her lost father. Sonil's grandmother is a highly spirited woman who has faced and overcome impediments with calm and composure. She never loses control over her castaway daughter, Lakshmi, and Sonil learns this attitude from her grandmother, which later on helped her to accept her father uncomplainingly.

The grandparent's figure has been portrayed by different authors from different perspectives. In the case of Jhumpa Lahiri, her presentation of grandparents-grandchildren is completely from the perspective of an immigrant family as it is easy for her to depict such characters because she is all through an American-Indian, brought up by her immigrant parents. Through the character of Ruma's father, Lahiri represents a new generation of grandparents who have well adjusted themselves in their lives. Unlike the stereotypical Renu and Manx's grandfather, Ruma's father prefers to live his retired life on his own terms and therefore he refuses to stay with his daughter in spite of Ruma's repeated requests. He no longer desires to confine himself within the domestic chores and wants to enjoy his long lost freedom that he sacrificed with the beginning of her conjugal life. When Ruma meets her father after seven months, she is surprised to find her father "resembled an American in his old age" and later on she also came to know about her father's relationship with some Mrs. Bagchi with whom he has decided to spend the rest of his life. His new adopted American ways helps him to assimilate with his grandson very smoothly.

Thus the influence of grandparents on their 'hyphenated' bicultural grandchildren is a mixed influence of both acceptance and refusal. The bonding becomes strong only through the process of "syncretism", (Ganesh 21) where different views and opinions combine and attempt to seek some sort of reconciliation. The difficulty of studying this relationship is because of the fact that most of the diasporic writers do not get the scope to experience such relationships completely because most of their grandparents stayed back in India in their ancestral homes. So there is always a sense of incompleteness; so there are only very few grandparent characters who have been allowed to get in touch with their bicultural grandchildren as in most case grandparents are found as dead and represented only through pictures.

Thus, the grandparents or grandchildren play the role of communicators in the effort to bring together different strands of familial relationships. Sonil's grandmother Kamala act as communicator between Sonil and her mother. It is from her grandmother that she first heard the story of her mother's previous life; while the situation is absolutely opposite in case of Ruma's mother when Akash plays the role of a communicator. After her long years of estrangement, Ruma's relationship with her mother revived on the pretext of Ruma's pregnancy and later on after the birth of Akash, both of them had regular conversation over telephone regarding Akash's latest development. It seems that she talked to her over telephone more than she had ever talked to her throughout her life before the birth of her son. The identification of grandparents through pictures or through other articles as like the paintings of Gogol's grandfather witnesses the fact that they help their grandchildren to establish a legitimate connection with their parental roots. They also reveal to their grandchildren the family's age old secret stories, traditions and customs. From these stories the children of second generation immigrants who have no connection to India can have the sense of their ancestral roots as well as quintessence of an extended family which is otherwise not possible for their immigrant parents as they themselves seem to exist in nowhere land. However, the grandparents whether alive or dead, far or near, traditional or modern, leave a lifelong impression on the children that helps them to enrich their life with wisdom and knowledge the grandparents gained from their vast span of life. So, a child's relationship with his grandfather acts as a guiding principle for the rest of his life and in this context brings out the relevance to study the child in the context of his own age which is discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER-3

THE STUDY OF THE CHILD IN RELATION TO HIS OWN AGE

Every new generation brings with it a new emerging pattern developed from a definite past but followed by an anonymous future. This anonymity can be metaphorically represented by a 'child'. A child is born into a particular family, region or culture in which process he has no control of his own but what he will turn out to be in the future is independent of his parents; besides, his views and opinions might not match with those of his parents thereby creating a gap between him and his parents. This chapter intends to foreground the study of second or third generation Indian-American immigrant children from the perspective of their own generation in the works of the diasporic women novelists who represent diverse experiences of second or third generation Indian-Americans children in their writings.

In the previous two chapters efforts have been made to establish the position of a child in respect to his parents' generation as well the generation of his grandparents, while, this chapter aims at studying the child by placing him in the context of his own generation. A child of second generation immigrant origin finds himself in a constant 'tug of war' situation so as to locate his existence within the dual identities—the 'Indianness' received from one's land of origin and the other habitual 'Americanness' that a child develops from the association with peers within the land of diasporic belonging. Stuart Hall in his famous essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" rightly points out that, "Cultural identity...is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories." (Hall, 110) Hall here expresses his views regarding the formation of cultural identity which is apt when considering the formation of the identity of an immigrant child who is caught up with his past as well as in the present (and both are intrinsically related to one another). But, this puts a second generation immigrant child into a suspenseful dilemma when he tries to adapt himself to be fully an American (as he is born there) and in this process he has to confront with the unacceptable realities of the visible markers like his physical appearance which he inherits from his Indian parents as well as the cultural markers of belonging to an Indian family (although settled in America). His Indian origin at this juncture places him in a crestfallen state from which there

appears to be no respite. To these children India is as alien land as to a native American, but still the invisible gap exists because of his visible markers. It is from this perspective the chapter focuses the study the diasporic child characters so as to analyse the dilemma caused as a result of various cultural markers. These markers force him to stand at the cross roads, having him to choose the road to take towards a particular identity within the space of his own generation. As Michelle Superle rightly points out:

These young bicultural characters are frequently bewildered by the task of individually confronting their cultural identities. The personal responsibility of having to cope with integrating cultures and creating an identity from these elements is overwhelming for them. (Superle, 146)

Within the diasporic space a bicultural child is more often than not found to be in a bewildered state, but in what ways the experiences of such children are “overwhelming” is the basis of analysis in this particular chapter.

With the growth of the child, he crosses the boundary of his known familial world and steps into the larger world outside, the place that he is born into and not the land from where his parents originally arrived. Instead of mixing with Indian society, he tries to assimilate and integrate within the mainstream American culture through his intercultural mixing with the peer groups at school, in the neighborhood and then finally with his more intimate romantic bonding with a non-Indian and more specifically with an American. The departure from one’s own culture might be the reason for the hope of arriving into a new space with the hope of attaining some sort of reconciliation where cultural differences can be avoided and stability can be achieved. Meenakshi Bharat in the context of identifying a child in postcolonial fiction brings out the fact that, “...through him [child], the threat of the erasure of identity can be combated and the novelist can take the opportunity of creating meaning through the discursive agency of fictional writing with a child at the centre...he becomes a metaphor both for effecting and representing a break with the erstwhile ‘centre’...” (Bharat, 156) The impact of various ‘cultural signifiers’ on the second or third generation immigrant children have been very diligently portrayed in the characters of Lilia in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Pulitzer winning short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999), Akash, Usha, Kaushik, Hema, Rupa, Piu in another of Lahiri’s collections of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008)

and also Gogol in her debut novel *The Namesake* (2003); Renu and her sister Manx in Indira Ganesan's first novel *The Journey* (1990), Sonil in Ganesan's second and most recent novel *Inheritance* (1998), and Pam in Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief" from her short story collection *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988).

CHILDREN AND LANGUAGE

Among various cultural markers, 'language' plays a dominant role which helps to study an immigrant child within his contemporary generation. A child acquires his first knowledge of language from his parents during the first few years of his life. During childhood, a child rapidly develop the traits and habits of his elders and the people surrounding him through the process of mimicry and so he picks up the language of his parents, but his tongue automatically adjusts with the foreign accents as soon as he starts going to school. English might be a foreign language to his parents, but it triumphs over his Indian mother tongue with his increased association with his peer groups in school and other social spheres of the mainstream American society. Soon his parents become strangers with whom he cannot relate or articulate completely because of language differences. Language, the prime mode of communication, turns out to be the cause of alienation between a child and his parents. In Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "Unaccustomed Earth", Akash a three year old kid is a third generation immigrant born to his Indian mother (Ruma) and an American father (Adam) is least expected to understand or to speak in Indian language (here it is Bengali) as his mother tongue. Understanding Akash's situation, his grandfather (Ruma's father) begins his first conversation unhesitatingly by "calling out in mock bewilderment, in English." ("Unaccustomed" 12) Akash's mother Ruma herself is a second generation immigrant born and brought up in America and was never comfortable with her Bengali mother tongue from her childhood.

By now Akash had forgotten the little Bengali Ruma had taught him when he was little. After he started speaking in full sentences English had taken over, and she lacked the discipline to stick to Bengali, to point to this or that and tell him the corresponding words. But it was another to be authoritative; Bengali had never been a language in which she felt like an adult. Her own Bengali was slipping from her. Her [Ruma's] mother had been strict, so much so that Ruma had never spoken to her in English. But her father didn't mind. On rare occasions Ruma used Bengali anymore, when an aunt or uncle called from Calcutta to wish her Happy Bijoya or Akash a Happy Birthday, she tripped over words, mangled tenses. And yet it was the language she had spoken exclusively in the first years of her life. ("Unaccustomed" 13)

The author here very explicitly brings out the difficulty of adopting an Indian language by both the second and the third generation immigrants represented through Ruma and Akash. Although her mother tried to teach Ruma the Bengali language, her effort turns out to be utterly futile when Ruma grows up with her American English lexicon. It is because language is such a phenomenon which needs constant practice in its everyday usage else it would perish and turn into a dead language. Being born and brought up in America she never felt the need to speak Bengali on any occasion except with her mother who always wants to stick to her Indianness. So, in spite of talking in Bengali during her early childhood days, in the later years Ruma gives up her Bengali especially after marrying the American Adam, so Bengali becomes obsolete in her own family and therefore she never feels any desperation for Akash to learn Bengali except very few words like "Dadu" (grandfather in Bengali), "Dida" (grandmother in Bengali). Yet, her fuzzy attempt to teach Akash Bengali might be considered as Ruma's desire to transmit some Indian tradition which might also be an act of tribute to her dead mother.

The constant insistence of parents especially of mothers to teach native language to their children is found in all most all immigrant families. Like Ruma's mother Usha's mother Aparna in Lahiri's "Hell-Heaven" had made talking Bengali mandatory within the house irrespective of her daughter's unwillingness to grasp the language. For this reason Usha finds it easier to communicate with the American girl Deborah than her own mother:

The more my mother began to resent Deborah's visits, the more I [Usha] began to anticipate them. I fell in love with Deborah, the way young girls often fall in love with women who are not their mothers. ("Hell" 69)

Deborah, the future wife of Pranab Chakraborty, "a fellow Bengali from Calcutta", gets acquainted with Usha's family and Usha begins to anchor a strong feeling for her. It is only the habit of speaking English which brings Deborah and Usha close to one another while the same language is also the cause of estrangement with her mother. Usha's American accent with proper intonation has no trace of Indianness:

...Deborah and I spoke freely in English, a language in which, by that age, I expressed myself more easily than Bengali, which I was required to speak at home. (69)

A child develops his intimacy on the basis of how closely he can relate to the person he is conversing with independent of the time and span spent with the other person. So, within a few occasional visits, Deborah turns out to be Usha's friend with whom Usha can talk about her keen interest in English books and western folk tales:

She knew all about the books I read, about Pippi Longstocking and Anne of Green Gables. She gave me the sort of gifts my parents had neither the money nor the inspiration to buy: a large book of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*... three Nancy Dews... (69).

Although she is born into a family of Indian parents, Usha is very similar to Deborah. Like Deborah, Usha has grown up by reading American books which her Indian parents never read in their childhood. Moreover, they never express any interest to read these stories with her. So, it is a very likely for a child to get fascinated by someone with whom she can relate easily and in this case it is Deborah who seems to belong to Usha's world. Thus, language is the zone of comfort as well as discomfort in a bi-cultural society.

The habit of using or speaking a particular language is more a personal choice irrespective of geographical region, group or community. Ruma's mother or Usha's mother although they had stayed in America for several years, never feel the need to replace Bengali with the English language as they consider it a foreign language with which they do not want to contaminate themselves and so they never allow it in their private space. Whereas, Kaushik's

mother Parul (in Lahiri's "Years's End") who comes from an upper elite Bengali family is well conversant with English even before she emigrated to America, unlike Kaushik's step mother Chitra, a divorced woman whom his father married soon after Parul's death. During a telephonic conversation when his father invited Kaushik to come home for Christmas with the intention of introducing him to Chitra and her two daughters, his father makes an excuse for his second wife's weakness in English:

...my father said, adding, "Her [Chitra's] English is not so good."

"Worse than my Bengali?"

"Possibly. She will pick it up, of course."

I [Kaushik] didn't say what came to my lips, that my mother [Parul] had learned English as a girl, that she'd had no need to pick it up in America. ("Year's End" 254)

Here, 'language' appears as marker of social status. Chitra's incompetency or lack of fluency in English reflects her low social status as her parents could not afford to enroll her into an English medium school, unlike Parul who had convent education background. Chitra's daughters—Rupa and Piu—come to America at the age of seven and ten respectively, the age at which they have grown enough to have the understanding that their Indian standard of "English-medium" lessons is of no help to overcome their tongue-tiedness in English and might be the cause of embarrassment while speaking in public places or at schools in America where most pupils are Americans. To overcome such situation Kaushik advised his step sisters:

The more you use your English in these situations, the better it will be. It's already good."... "A few kids might laugh in the beginning, but it doesn't matter. They laughed at me [Kaushik], too. I came here from Bombay when I was sixteen and had to figure things out all over again. I was born here but it was still hard, leaving and then coming back again. (274)

But Kaushik knows from his own experiences that America will soon shape Rupa and Piu to into perfect Americans not only with its American English but in every other way. Their severe sounding English accents will soon be replaced like "unstylish sweaters, their silly hairstyles." (263)

REPRESENTATION OF CHILD AND EDUCATION

The use of particular language is channelised through the pattern of education system in that place. The curriculum pattern of American academic institutions is modeled solely on western tradition that hardly allows the pupil from immigrant communities to have the scope to know and understand the culture or tradition of their own their ancestral land. It is not just the medium of instruction is English but also the content and the syllabi is based on the knowledge of the western world. Jhumpa Lahiri brings out this situation very intensely through the situation of Lilia, a young child of ten in the story “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” from *Interpreter of Maladies* to show that how the curriculum pattern moulds a young mind to develop a particular view of the world. One day when Lilia’s Indian immigrant father enquires about what she is learning about the world. Lilia replies:

We learned American history, of course, and American geography. That year, and every year, it seemed, we began by studying the Revolutionary War. We were taken in school buses on field trips to visit Plymouth Rock, and to walk the Freedom Trail, and to climb to the top of the Bunker Hill Monument. We made dioramas out of colored construction paper depicting George Washington...made puppets of King George... During tests we were given blank maps of the thirteen colonies, and asked to fill in names, dates, capitals. I could do it with my eyes closed. (“Pirzada” 27)

From Lilia’s statement it is clear that the content of her school curriculum includes only American history and American geography. She has no knowledge of the important events like the Partition of India and Pakistan; instead she knows the history of revolutionary war of American independence which she has to read every year as a part of her course. Being an Indian by origin she cannot point out East Pakistan (Bangladesh) but can blindly point out the maps of the thirteen colonies of America. It is her diasporic belonging which does not allow Lilia to have an understanding of the land of her origin and in this way made her an American child. Moreover, her mother who works on a part-time basis as a bank teller seems to be proud and quiet happy with their immigrant status when she says her husband that,

Lilia has plenty to learn at school,” my [Lilia] mother said. “We live here now, she was born here.” She seemed genuinely proud of the fact, as if it were a reflection of my character. In her estimation, I knew, I was assured a safe life, an easy life, a fine education, every opportunity. I would never have to eat rationed food, or obey curfews, or watch riots from my rooftop, or hide neighbors in water tanks to prevent them from being shot, as she and my father had...Imagine her having to read during power failures by the light of kerosene lamps... “How can you possibly expect her to know about Partition? (26-27)

Lilia’s parents have experienced the massacres aftermath of Partition before they emigrated to America. So, according to Lilia’s mother, their immigration to America confirms their daughter’s secured future but she fails to ponder over the fact that it is not just the knowledge of history and geography that she has been estranged in but also her estrangement from all that is non-American which might also include her parents and that is what her father says in his predicament about her daughter, “But what does she learn about the world?”... “What is she learning?” (27).

From this story, Jhumpa Lahiri also highlights the fact that an immigrant in every turn has to compromise her personal choice with the dominant mainstream culture and even a child cannot escape from the situation. At her school library, Lilia noticed a self full of books on Asia, but the subject of Asia never comes up in her school assignments, but one day out of her own curiosity she “found a book titled *Pakistan: A Land and Its People*” (33) but when she started flipping through the pages of a chapter about Dacca, Mrs. Kenyon, her teacher angrily asked her to keep the book back in the self as it has no relevance to her class report topic. She says,

...Mrs. Kenyon...lifted the book by the tip of its spine as if it were a hair clinging to my sweater. She glanced at the cover, then at me.

“Is this book a part of your report, Lilia?”

“No, Mrs. Kenyon.”

“Then I see no reason to consult it,” she said, replacing it in the slim gap on the shelf... (33)

Mrs. Kenyon's expresses her dominating mind-set and decrying attitude toward other nations thereby curbing a child's inquisitive spirit to know facts beyond America. Lilia never felt the importance of knowing any place outside America because her school curriculum has made her believe that whatever exists outside the geographical boundary of America is insignificant and therefore worthless of knowing. Lilia's interest to study about Asia and more specifically about Pakistan is the result of Mr. Pirzada's absence as he went back to his home in Dacca. He has developed a very intimate relation with Lilia's parents as well as Lilia, so when he went back to his home, Lilia started missing him so badly that out of desperation she started to find him in the pages of the book related to Asia. Mr. Pirzada here acts as an agent in implanting the seeds of inquisitiveveness within Lilia and makes her realise the need and importance of knowing the world outside America.

REPRESENTATION OF CHILD THROUGH VARIOUS CULTURAL MARKERS

The most problematic aspect faced by an immigrant child is the effect of various cultural markers from physical appearances to clothing, from food habits to celebration of festivals and rituals, which turns out to be a challenging ground for identity formation in multicultural space as Shahnawaz Begum rightly quotes Bhabha in her essay,

...the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity... (qtd. in Begum 110).

It is this new formation of 'transnational identities' that these diasporic writers try to represent through the children who are born and raised in a land which is their own by birth and alien by origin.

To begin with, let us look at the ritual or act of 'naming' that plays an interesting role in the representation of identity. Jhumpa Lahiri in her first novel *The Namesake* (2008) deals with this issue at large. The act of giving two names, one good name, "bhalonam" or official name and the other pet/nick name or "dak" is a very common Bengali tradition which is quite unlike the western tradition where people are called or known with only one name and even the same name used by the father or forefather with the addition of prefix like 'junior' or 'elder' or adding numeric suffix like 'I', 'IV'. But according to Indian tradition good name is used in public place and official purposes and pet names are used amongst close acquaintances and relatives. The

author herself is an Indian American who faced the same dilemma like her protagonist Gogol. Jhumpa Lahiri's real name is Nilanjana Sudeshna but she is popularly known by her pet name Jhumpa. In an interview she says:

...I'm like Gogol in that my pet name inadvertently became my good name. I have two other names on my passport and my birth certificate (my mother couldn't settle on just one). But when I was enrolled in school the teachers decided that Jhumpa was the easiest of my names to pronounce and that was that. To this day many of my relatives think that it's both odd and inappropriate that I'm known as Jhumpa in an official, public context. (qtd. in Das179)

Gogol Ganguli has strong resentment towards his name given by his father. He believes that being an American citizen he too has every right to choose a name of his own and this idea strikes him on the day after reading an article titled "Second Baptism" published in the *Reader's Digest*. The article also provides a series of famous personalities who had changed their names and every year "ten thousands of Americans had their names" (*Namesake* 99) with a simple procedure of a legal petition. Gogol finally changed his name from Gogol Ganguli to Nikhil Ganguli and further shortened it to Nick the name by which his friends used to call him. Although Gogol knows that his decision to change his name might be shocking to his parents but what he fails to realise at his adolescent age is the sentiments of his father associated with the name. His father Ashoke has named him Gogol not just after the name of a Russian novelist Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, but a book written by this author which acts a signal to rescue Ashoke from the site of a dreadful train accident. Bhagabat Nayak quotes Chitralekha Basu when she says, "Gogol Ganguli. Named after Nikolai Gogol, the Russian author his Bengali father adored, is a citizen of the world, connected to countries and cultures across centuries, in a bondage far more intense than he cares to understand." (qtd. in Nayak 138). To Gogol his prime concern is how he can establish himself as an American and for that he does not even care to think how his parents will react to it. In Indira Ganesan's *The Journey* also Meenakshi Krishnan, the younger sister of Renu, prefers to call herself Manx which also expresses her attitude of detestation towards her Indian name. When Manx come to Pi Island with her mother and sister from New York, when her aunt Bala first saw her and called her by her good name as

Meenakshi, she instantly gets infuriated hearing her Indian name and sternly protests to her aunt saying that her name is Manx.

Apart from 'naming' which is a personal event, the attitude of a child towards 'celebration of festivals and rituals' also helps to analyse his position in the multicultural American society. Jhumpa Lahiri through her stories tries to bring out diverse diasporic experiences towards adoption and assimilation and also to what extent the host country allows such integration. Lilia in Lahiri's "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" participates in the Halloween and her parents' over enthusiasm to dress her perfectly for the occasion reveals their open mindedness towards American culture. But her participation in the 'Halloween' with the costume of a witch flabbergasted many of her neighbours. "Several people told me that they had never seen an Indian witch before." ("Pirzada" 39) This statement is based on the stock belief that Indians are conservative by nature and therefore they try to keep themselves aloof from being contaminated with any western customs and traditions. However, Lilia's parents have no such adverse attitude towards host culture, instead they are happy to be in America, a land of "every opportunity" (26). Unlike Lilia's parents, Usha's parents (in "Hell-Heaven") consider 'Thanksgiving' is just like another red letter day in the English calendar and so there is no splendor in its celebration, but they express gusto of passion in the celebration of Indian "pujo". Even the celebration of birthdays in some immigrant family is considered unworthy. In "Once in a Lifetime" Hema's mother never celebrate her birthday.

My [Hema] mother's birthdays came and went without acknowledgement by my father. I was the one who made a card and had him sign it with me on the first of every June. ("Once" 236)

Even the celebration of a birthday is considered to be unworthy and unimportant. Hema's father never feels the need to celebrate his wife's birthday but, Hema born in America, adopted the western culture and so she considers it an important event in one's life to celebrate the birthday of her mother and so she tries to do whatever was available within her limited means to acknowledge her mother's birthday. However, her mother is not at all indifferent towards celebrating her birthday as she sounds unhappy when she told to Hema's father the way Dr. Choudhuri (Kaushik's father) celebrated his wife's birthday by gifting her an extravagant trip to Rome in "First class". It is just that her father never feel the need to celebrate her wife's birthday.

From Hema's parents' attitude, it can be said that celebrations such as birthdays are a mere showoff to highlight one's elitist position in the society. It also shows that celebrations of festivals, rituals or special days can be observed in all countries without getting biased with the thought that only a particular celebration for particular community, ethnicity or race is correct, and parents should try to instill the spirit of democracy into the children. It is a very similar situation in a diasporic space when most adults do not express enthusiasm in the celebration of western festivals without realising the fact that their children too will express similar attitude towards Indian festivals and this might be an act of defiance towards their parents as well for not being cooperative with them. This can be clearly read from Usha's attitude. As her mother does not allow her to celebrate Halloween or Thanksgiving, she too never feels like attending the Bengali festivals or parties that largely comprise of Bengali women. Both Deborah and Usha feel uncomfortable in these gatherings where they are expected to converse in Bengali.

A child develops a particular 'habit' depending on the place and location where he is born and raised. In "Interpreter of Maladies", Mr. and Mrs. Das' son Bobby is astonished to see the driver sitting on the other side of the car on his first visit to India. In America, the driver sits on the left side of the car which is just the opposite in India. So Bobby asked his father, "Daddy, why is the driver sitting on the wrong side in this car, too?" ("Interpreter" 48) Bobby has not yet matured enough to understand that customs, practice as well as the mechanism of law change from country to country, from one continent to the other. Here the difficulty which Bobby faced is just a microcosmic depiction of the larger issues a child faces when he has to live in-between two cultures.

It is in the same way the 'food habit' also varies widely. The preparation of food also becomes an important site to mark the cultural difference. Akash, a third generation immigrant child of three years, condemns taking Indian food. When Akash was younger Ruma had followed her mother's [Ruma's mother] advice to get him used to the taste of Indian food and made the effort to poach chicken and vegetables with cinnamon and cardamom and clove. Now he ate from boxes:

I hate that food." Akash retorted...he was turning into the sort of American child...
("Unaccustomed" 23)

Akash's aversion to Indian food is not the influence of the outside world as he is too little to move out of the house alone but because of his genetic origin that he inherited from his American father Adam. When Akash was young he used to take Indian food as he hardly had the strength or the voice to show his resistance against his mother's wish but as soon as he grows up he started expressing his strong resentment towards taking spicy food and instead prefers to eat box foods. Manx or Meenakshi for too, when came to her grandfather house from New York, packed her suitcase with "jars and jars of peanut butter" (*Journey*, 19) so that she could have her at least something to taste like American food as she knew that she do not feel like taking Indian food.

The habit of consuming wine or other alcoholic drinks and especially in front of children is blasphemous especially in a Bengali middleclass household. Some of them maintain this attitude even after their immigration into America as found in Hema's parents in "Once in a Lifetime". But, Kaushik's parents stand as perfect foil to Hema's. They used to drink "Johnnie Walker" ("Once" 237) after dinner and their behaviour is so much westernized that it contrasts stragely with her parents whom years of staying in America change much:

My parents were at once critical of and intimidated by yours, perplexed by the ways in which they had changed. Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had...There were remarks concerning your mother's short hair, her slacks... Johnnie Walker... to drink after the meal was finished... My parents, who had never set foot in a liquor store... (236-237)

During their several years of absence from America, Kaushik's parents develop western habits and manners while Hema's parents' long stay in America leaves no impression on them. It is only the young girl Hema who is susceptible to changes with her strong American accent and her American habits. She develops admiration for Kaushik's mother Parul with whom she can relate more than her own mother. In spite of her dislike for Kaushik, Hema gradually grows fond of his mother, Parul is attractive because of her western lifestyle, her manners and etiquette, which makes Parul a more familiar person to Hema than her own mother Shibani who strictly follows her meager Indian lifestyle and never show any intention of giving up her Indian values and traditions. This is exactly the same love and affection which Usha has for Deborah.

It is more the outward appearances that happen to be the cause of attraction of a young girl to someone who is a sort of an idyllic model that the young girl aspires to be. Usha's love for Deborah's is primarily because of her physical appearances representing her American origin:

I loved her serene gray eyes, the poncho and the denim wrap skirts and sandals she wore, her straight hair that she let me manipulate into all sorts of silly styles. I longed for her casual appearances; my mother insisted whenever there was a gathering that I wear one of my ankle-length, faintly Victorian dresses, which she referred to as maxis, and have party hair, which meant taking a strand from either side of my head and joining them with a barrette at the back ... ("Hell" 69).

Usha's craving for an American appearance in other way expresses her reluctance towards her Indianness which is also a source of embarrassment. Later on in the story, Usha is seen to involve in several sexual encounters with American men and finally end up with broken relationships. However, Usha's mother at the end is adjusted with her daughter as she realised that to make the home a "heaven" from "hell" she has to compromise with her daughter who has already grown up to be an American in her ways of life.

The desperate need to assimilate with the larger mass also results in the choosing of a particular style and this is more noticeable through the most visible marker of 'dresses'. In Indira Ganesan's *The Journey*, Manx or Meenakshi, the fifteen year old younger sister of Renu can be immediately identified as an outsider to in her grandfather's ancestral house in the island of Pi. The immediate reaction of Aunt Bala at the very first sight of Manx reflects the latter's difference in upbringing:

She [aunt Bala] stopped short at the sight of Renu's younger sister, dressed in a black T-shirt and black pants, her hair roughly razor-shorn.

"Meenakshi? You look like a boy," said Bala.

"My name is Manx," said Renu's sister. (*Journey* 18)

Here, Manx tries to represent her Americanness through her dress and appearances. She has shortened her hair and prefers to dress herself in western outfits. Moreover, Manx's refusal to call herself as Meenakshi is a strong statement of her unwillingness to associate with anything

Indian. Meenakshi is a typical Indian name given by her parents to denote her Indian origin while, Meenakshi wants to hide that identity and therefore she shortens her name to Manx which sounds like an English name. It is also her typical American appearance that gives her the identity of an outsider. For this reason when Freddie Flat with whom Manx will later be involved in a romantic bonding, is startled to see a girl like her in the market place of the island.

...he [Freddie] looks straight at Manx, steadily absorbing her face, her clothing, her youth, all at once. Strangely, her skin prickled and she very nearly blushed (50)

Freddie at their first meeting finds Manx a very unusual girl in that place. By her appearance she might be a foreigner but the tone of her skin visibly marks her Indianness, although she lacked the coyness of the island girls and so instead of blushing and trying to avoid the company of a guy, she immediately starts conversing with Freddie.

The fondness of a child for a particular person or a habit is the outcome of the immediate influence of the society in which he is living. His liking for a person develops on how closely he can relate himself with the adult opposite to him not in terms of contrasting ideals but in terms of his association of similarity. This is the reason for Hema's liking for Kaushik's mother and Usha's admiration for Deborah. Also in the similar way Renu, the protagonist in Indira Ganesan's *The Journey*, fantasises to have American mother:

As a child, Renu had wanted to be the daughter of her friend's parents. She liked being around Mrs. Kaminsky, who taught the girls to make cheese blintzes, who stood in front of Carrie's closet telling her to dress more colorfully, that boys notice. She liked Harriet's mom, who drove a sportscar and said divorce was a gift from the heavens. She even liked Lin's mother, who fretted all day about her, who covered her couches in plastic, who called her cat "Smidgins". (*Inheritance* 92)

Like other immigrant children Renu too desires to have American parents. She thinks that it is a disadvantage not having American parents. The choice of names she imagines like 'Mrs. Kaminsky', 'Harriet's mom', 'Lin's mom' and even the name of the pet cat 'Smidgins' is symptomatic of enthrallment towards western culture. Although Renu's parents were scientists in New York, she wished her mother would be like one of the others doing trivial activities like making cheese or brooding over herself and fondling her pet cat. The job of a scientist is more

prestigious than driving a mere sportscar but a young girl like Renu is unaware of such difference as it is the inherent nature of child to consider it right what is commonly seen and accepted rather than being different. Moreover, the above extract also reveals the ideological difference, between the two cultures. In India the custom of marriage is considered to be a sacred lifelong bonding and is predefined by God, while Harriets's mother considers marriage is just like any other social event and such relation can be split at any time simply by getting divorce which also reflects that western society does not believe in lifelong matrimonial commitments. In addition to these, there is also a huge cultural difference in the nurturing of a child as like when Mrs. Kaminsky taught her daughter how to dress so that the boys get attracted towards her. Her idea is blasphemous to an Indian mother especially the mother of a girl. Mrs. Kaminsky and other represent the radical progressive Americans while Renu's mother represents the conservative Indian women to whom her daughter's safety and security is the first priority. After her father's death, Renu's mother continued living in New York with her two young daughters Renu and Manx who are fifteen and eleven years old respectively and instead of going back to India she continues living there with her job as a chemist. Raising two young girls in foreign land where there are no relatives or acquaintances who can sympathise with and support her is a great struggle she has gone through apart from the bereavement of her husband's death, and it requires great courage and strength of mind. So Renu's mother's conservative nature cannot be mistaken for her weakness. Perhaps she is more progressive than Mrs. Kaminsky or Harriet and Lin's mother who can spend time with insignificant activities. However, when Renu's father was alive, he made great emphasis to adapt his daughters to the western ideas, customs and practices so that they can easily accommodate themselves with their life in America. Moreover, Renu's parents maintain a well disciplined life.

...It had been another thing in New York. Renu's parents were scientists and their lives were austere, defined, tangible. One lived, one ate, one read newspapers, and rarely trusted anyone. "You were born in the space age," their father would say, and Renu and Manx grew up believing they could become astronauts. Except for a self of ivories and bronzes depicting dancing gods, there was no trace of Pi in their house on Long Island.
(21)

Through his own life Renu's father taught them that without being prejudiced to any culture one should follow and maintain what is best. On one hand he made the effort to inculcate western ideology in his daughters and on the other hand through his simple and dignified life he showed that he was not at all attracted with the unnecessary consumerism of American society. Renu's parents came to America out of their own choice and so they do not harness any unnecessary nostalgic feelings for ancestral home of Pi and this is palpable from the décor of their house on Long Island which has no articles they carried with them as a token for their longing except an ivory self which is more a precious object than something associated with memory.

However, the choice or the adoption of a particular culture is a two way process depending on the society as well as on the individual preferences. So however much Renu's father tries to instill his own philosophy of life on his daughters, it has not the same effect on Renu and Manx. Alan Roland in his essay "Identity, self, and Individualism in a Multicultural Perspective" states that,

This self-creation of identity takes place within a social milieu in which contemporary culture in the United States imposes on the individual an enormous degree of autonomy in the adolescent and young adult years. Young people choose who will be their mate or love partner, what type of education and vocational training to pursue, and then what kind of work to do, what social affiliations to make, where to live, and to what kind of ideology or value system to commit...Although this psychological description obviously does not apply to all ethnic groups, it is the dominant mode of psychological development in youth in the contemporary United States. (Roland, 19)

According to Roland, the American culture gives enormous emphasis to freedom on individual choice and preferences. Even a young child who has not yet passed his adolescent phase is given freedom to choose his own way and decides in which direction he wants to set his life, which includes from choosing his professional life to the choice of finding his life partner. Nonetheless, Roland does not forget to mention that this particular psychological set up of an individual is found particularly in the United States and it is not 'the' only of creating an individual identity. But, this creates the crux of problem to a second generation immigrant child 'sandwiched' between two cultural influences that is, the one his parents brought with them from their country of origin and the other in which the child himself is living. The situation is very commonly found

in all most all the Indian American immigrant households when it comes to the choice of a profession.

In Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief" Pam, the daughter of Kusum, chooses to work at McDonald and later on she has already planned to take up modelling as her profession and also wants to open a yoga-cum-aerobics studio in Hollywood although she does not succeed and finally ends up "working in a department store, giving make-up hints to Indian and Oriental girls." ("Management" 196) In the same way in Indira Ganesan's *The Journey*, Renu and Manx started doing some odd jobs after their father death:

Manx was offered a job in a record store in the mall, which her mother refused to let her take unless Renu worked there as well. So, Renu worked part-time at a Chinese gift shop two doors down. If, on a break, Manx saw Renu dusting lacquered curios, she pretended not to know her. Rukmani came home to dinner weary and anxious and spoke of leaving her job. (*Journey* 23)

In spite of being the daughter of scientist parents, Manx never hesitates to choose the job of a sales girl in a record store. She chooses to work not because out of necessity but solely out of her own will as she consider that a girl of her age in New York must earn in order to gain more freedom and economic independence from her parents. She chooses to work in spite of her mother's strong disapproval and she was not allowed to work unless her elder sister also did so that she could observe her. So Renu has to take an odd job at a Chinese gift shop for the sake of her sister. But her sister feels embarrassed when she finds Renu dusting a show piece without realising the fact that it was for her that Renu had to take up the job. Manx's 'gaze' upon her sister is also the representation of the 'gaze' of an American upon an indigenous immigrant.

Contrary to the second generation immigrant children, their parents come to America with a lucrative job. They feel upset when their children engaged themselves in any odd jobs which their parents cannot even think for themselves if they were in India. In *The Namesake*, Gogol's father also set high expectations for his son and want him to pursue engineering at MIT as he had maintained 'A' grade marks all through his academic life but, finally Gogol makes his own choice by completely ignoring his parents' wishes:

...They are already distressed that he hasn't settled on a major profession and a profession. Like the rest of their Bengali friends, his parents expect him to be, if not an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist at the very least. These were the fields that brought them America, his father repeatedly reminds him, the professions that have earned them security and respect. (*Namesake* 104-105)

Gogol's parents come from a middle class Bengali background of Calcutta which is responsible for having a stereotypical notion about the choice of profession. Gogol's parents are no exception to the category of Indians especially amongst the Bengalis who consider that a child should become either an engineer, doctor or a lawyer as according to them there is no other profession worthy of giving so much respect and prosperity. Such thoughts confirm into belief if they managed to get a money-spinning job in America. Gogol's father strongly believed that he has made a right choice regarding the field of study which provided him a perfect job and helped him to come to America that assured him a lifetime of security. But, Gogol being a second generation immigrant child who is born in America and therefore it is impossible for him to comprehend his father's feelings. Moreover, like Gogol and others of a second generation immigrant descent securing a job for themselves is more out of passion than out of necessity as almost all the parents of second generation immigrants are well educated middle or upper middle class who had already secured the future for their children. It is this that makes their children to choose any profession whimsically without thinking for their future as they know well enough that their parents had already credited their future with economic stability. They already know that their immigrant parents struggled hard to earn respect for themselves and fortune for their next generations. In this context one can agree with Alan Roland's view which states that:

In essence, psychological development and functioning in India does not involve the self-creation of identity as it occurs in mainstream United States culture. Rather, it involves processes and organizations of what I call a "familial self" and, among many people... (Roland, 16)

Considering specifically the Indians as well as the mainstream Americans in the United States, Alan Roland explicitly brings out how the psychological development of an individual is affected by the family at its microcosm and the society at its macrocosmic level. In the Indian context, the formation of identity of a child is largely affected by the adult world. It is his elders

who are always responsible in manipulating his decisions and choices instead of creating a space for the child where he would be free to take his own decisions. It might be because of the fact that the elder members of a child's family always think from their own perspectives and consider that their own experiences of life which they gather over the ages would act as a path finder to avoid complexities so that the child can have a smooth future. But in this process they fail to consider that their situation and circumstances might not be the same as that of their younger generations. It is for this reason that Gogol's father's has the notion that best career option to a child with good academic record is engineering or medicine or law to achieve success in life. Gogol's father here represents a most commonly found myopic vision which is responsible for the social milieu of Calcutta in which he has grown up and which makes him think in that particular way. In contrast to this, an American child is given the option to think freely and independently. In *The Namesake* Gogol's situation is best exemplified when he is made to compare with his girlfriend Maxine, an American girl from Massachusetts:

...he is continually amazed by how much Maxine emulates her parents, how much she respects their tastes and their ways. At the dinner table she argues with them about books and paintings and people they know in common the way one might argue with a friend. There is none of the exasperation he feels with his own parents. No sense of obligation. Unlike his parents, they pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side. (*Namesake* 138)

Gogol is surprised to see Maxine's easy relationship with her parents and the way she has respect for them. Moreover, Maxine is allowed to discuss and argue with her parents and they too without any arrogance or vexation participated in the debate raised by their daughter which is very unlikely for Gogol's parents. To maintain this peaceful relation her parents never forced Maxine to do anything beyond her will and she is no way committed or responsible to her parents. It is possible in the Western society where the individual child is given the prime importance and the expectations of the society, which "... are seen as essentially subordinate to the needs of individuals, who are governed by rationality and their own self-interest in mutually consenting contractual relationships." (Roland, 12-13)

However, a child's first step of learning is through the process of mimicry and it continues throughout his life but, in the adults the process of imitation is immediately followed by the

judgmental quality of what to accept and what to reject. It is because a child lacks this judgmental quality as his mind had not yet matured enough that the process of imitation in a child is almost a blind process.

The different cultural markers discussed above show the position of a second generation India-American child from a different standpoint. The desire to assimilate with the mainstream culture can be seen as well in the child's preference to establish in a romantic relationship with a non-Indian most preferably an American. The initiation into such relationships is mostly during the adolescent age, the age which is defined by Kulhen as "the transition period between childhood and adulthood". The adolescent age is also characterised by the desire to live an independent life without the control of parents. It is also in this age when a child desire for social approval and acceptability. In his book *Childhood and Society* (1963) E. H. Erikson defines adolescence as the age of the final establishment of a dominant positive ego identity. It is then that a future within reach becomes part of the conscious life plan. It is then that the question arises whether or not the future was anticipated in earlier expectations." The situation becomes difficult for an immigrant adolescent child who has experienced all through the ages the problem of belonging in both the worlds—the world of his parents and the world outside and has developed this understanding that perfect reconciliation can only be achieved if he can cross the borderlines of his ethnicity, race and origin. A young adolescent child find himself more comfortable if centered by American friends and associate which gives him the confidence to be in an empowered position "progress from confusion, to pain, to confidence". (Superle, 149).

This might be the reason that an adolescent boy or a girl not only desires to involve in sexual encounters to establish their newly earned freedom but also to be involved in a passionate relationship with a partner outside his or her community. This is best identified in the situation when Hema, a school girl in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Once in a Life Time" feel admiration and desire for the opposite sex. She confesses:

I was also nervous at being sent off with you, disturbed by the immediate schoolgirl attraction I felt. I was used to admiring boys by then, boys in my class who were and would remain unaware of my existence. But never someone as old as you, never someone belonging to the world of my parents. ("Once" 234)

Hema's confession reveals that Hema never harnessed any feelings for an Indian boy like Kaushik. Nonetheless, her friendship with Kaushik is not out of her own choice but as a result of both their parents' previous alliance.

In *The Namesake*, Gogol's dating Kim in his high school days and later on Ruth and Maxine reveals his desire to assimilate more intrinsically into the American society. He too is well aware of the fact that neither his parents think or expect him to date American girls as they too like most Indian parents are of the opinion that American girls are lecherous by nature and the outcome of such relationship will be a split in the future. However, this prediction turns out to be true as Maxine finally breaks up with Gogol as both of them realise that their love was not so great that it can overcome the vast cultural difference between them and later his failed marriage with Moushumi Mazoomdar witnessed the fact that "no culture is sacrosanct and every culture exist with its survival strategies." (qtd. Nayak 147) Unlike Maxine who is an American girl from Manhattan, Moushumi too like Gogol is an Indian immigrant with her university degree from New York which has made her a perfect American and the only trace of Indianness is her surname that indicates her Indian origin. Later on Moushumi and Gogol's marriage also failed because Moushumi was never satisfied marrying someone who has Indian origin and finally Gogol and Moushumi get separated and she finally goes back to her former lover Dimitri Desjardins, who is of Russian-French origin. While Moushumi is dissatisfied with everything related to Gogol like his name, the very name of Dimitri ignites some sort of spark in her heart and she finally gets divorced to be with him.

The desire of an immigrant child to search for friendship or a partner often ends up finding a partner who acts as her alter ego. In *The Journey*, Indira Ganesan has created such relationship between Manx and Freddie Flat. She comes to India with her mother and sister to attend the funeral of his cousin brother at the grandfather's house in Madhupur. But soon she finds herself out of place in her grandfather's house. Unlike her sister Renu, Manx (or Meenakshi) is born and brought up in the atmosphere of freedom in New York. On coming to her grandfather' house, within a few days, Manx finds the place drab and claustrophobic and realised that, "she was missing everything..." (*Journey* 49) So at the very first encounter Manx and Freddie felt something for each other. Manx finds him in the marketplace and by his appearance she understands that Freddie is also an outsider to the island like herself and very

rapidly their relationship turns into a more intimate bonding. Their relationship develops quickly as both are foreigners to the place. But soon Freddie became a frequent visitor to the Krishnan household and through this the author hints that their relationship may turn into a long future commitment. It is the end Renu is astonished when she decides to go back to Long Island, while her sister Manx in spite of her former maladjustment in the island, decides to stay back with her mother.

Even Sonil in Indira Ganesan's *Inheritance* falls in love with a thirty years old American expatriate Richard in spite of her bitter past with her American father who abandons her and her mother. Like her mother Sonil too faced the same ill fate as Richard also leaves her. It is Maria who brings out the sad predicament of the value of romantic relationships in American life. She says to Sonil that:

...In America, if you have a heartbreak you can tap into a network of female sympathizers, women who will listen to your problems about men and offer solutions. Even girls your age discuss such things. There are magazines that cater to this sort of troubles, with questions and answers about boyfriend problems, quizzes on compatibility. It's quite an industry. Indian girls must talk about these things, too. (*Inheritance* 131)

Maria's predicament shows that broken relationships is a so frequent in American society that a whole industry has been set up for the counseling of such girls. Unlike the Indian tradition 'love' does not necessarily lead to marriage or long term commitment. These are just casual episodes of life. Maria expresses her true American sentiment when she says:

I wouldn't worry about all those things, Sonil. I would forgive myself for being in love with Richard and move on. You have so much life ahead of you, my God, so much to explore and accomplish. (133)

True to Maria's words, later on Sonil has accomplished her target by seeking admission in zoology major in Radcliffe University; but she never achieved that "American symbiosis" as the image of Richard still looms in her mind; even in Missouri, while snipping through the photographs taken by her father, one of those pictures featured a "light-bearded man" (192) who immediately reminds her of Richard. Thus there is a never ending attempt on the part of an

immigrant child of Indian-American origin to seek solace in the company of their American peer groups so as to attain some stability although the future outcome rests in the future only.

The development of a child involves a two way process—physical and psychological. Physical development refers to the child's 'organic development' which is universal in nature, genetically inherited from his parents and ancestors; whereas the psychological development is constructed by a child's interaction with the society. However, in the context of a diasporic child he has to undergo a third level of transformation where the physical and psychological reconcile at a stage which can be called the idealized version of imaginative reality that offers a child a new set of identity within the diasporic space. As Meenakshi Bharat rightly points out,

...the idea of the quest itself gives direction to the search for identity. The second quest is for political and therefore, psychological independence. ... this quest is synonymous with the search for individual and national identity... (Bharat, 46)

It is in this conception of identity that he will be relieved from the paradigm of choosing one way or the other. Therefore, an immigrant child of second or third generation is not exactly an "ABCD—American Born Confused Desi" (term coined by Tanuja Desai Hidier in *Born Confused*, qtd. in Superle 15) but quite confident of his choice and decisions. The 'confused' are the elder generation of immigrant parents who always hold certain stock notions as to what a child should become in the future and in the process completely negate the fact that a child is altogether born with an individual entity and so is free to choose what suits him best. Thus, the various cultural signifiers discussed in this chapter help to complete the formation of orbit from "being" an Indian in America into the "becoming" of an Indian-American by taking into account the predicament that nothing can be substituted for a lived experience within the diasporic belonging.

CONCLUSION

No place on earth is perfect if one is not happy in it. This thesis particularly foregrounds the study of second/third generation Indian-American immigrant children. Such a child of a second generation Indian-American immigrant subsists in the middle of the two worlds, the one in which he is born and the other to which he is related in terms of his genetic origin. He is a child born in America, unlike his Indian parents who had come to America by their personal choice with the intention of achieving prosperity and success and who finally succumbed to the alluring world of American dreams and settled there permanently. The children born into such families bearing transnational identities faces an absolute different process of socialisation which was the locus of analysis in all the three chapters based on a child's relationship with his parents, his grandparents and amongst his own age group.

The socialisation process of a child as Nick Lee points out is complex:

...children are born in ignorance of social conventions. As children grow they are gradually informed about those social conventions. They receive instruction from their parents and other adults...that they should uphold and qualify as a cultural member. As this process of learning or 'internalization' proceeds, the child's emptiness is filled with knowledge they need to understand the conduct of others, to be comprehensible to others and, ultimately, to be recognized by others, through mutual comprehension, as a fully fledged member of its culture... (Lee, 39)

So, the first step of socialisation process of a child occurs in the midst of his parents and later on is influenced by the society in which he is growing up. But in the context of a diasporic space, a child faces problem in keeping pace with his internal and as well as external world. A child of Indian origin grows up with certain traditions which are followed by his Indian parents and he is naturally influenced by it. But, soon after he grows up and steps out into the world outside he realises the disjunction that prevails between his family and the world outside which have very little in common with each other and the more he feels his strangeness with the outside world, the more he become a stranger to his parents. The first chapter in this thesis brings into light this difference of outlook between the immigrant parents and their children.

The parent-child relationship appears to be a terrain of conflict within the domestic household. The parents before their emigration to America, had an Indian past that they lived and experienced for several years but the problem arises when they try to inculcate their own beliefs and traditions into their children without considering the fact that their children have had no real connection to India. To them India is as much an alien land as any other place on the globe. They are related to India only in terms of their parents. The children in the diasporic writings act "...as a trope to expose the confusions and double standards of the adult world..." (Vinoda, 19) The perplexity begins primarily with the language as it is found that most Indian parents especially the mothers prompt their children to speak in Indian languages. The situation is more or less similar to all the child characters in Jhumpa Lahiri like Usha, Gogol, and Sonia. Usha's mother strictly maintains that her daughter should speak only in Bengali in the house, and a similar situation is found in the Ganguli household where Gogol and Sonia are even sent to special Bengali training classes; however, these rules and restrictions are followed only up to certain stage during the early years of childhood but soon the child realises that English is the only language by which he can communicate with his American friends or his next door neighbours and so gradually the mother tongue is completely replaced by English. But the effort to teach an Indian language is mostly made by the mother figure. The mothers in this case are not professionally involved with the outside world and therefore they hardly need to interact with the American world where the primary language of communication is English. The need to give lessons in Indian languages is more out of the fear that their children might appear to be strangers to their own land of origin if they fail to understand their language but it is also to overcome the mothers' own weakness in English. But this cannot avoid uneasiness because as soon as the children start going to school, English becomes their first language and the only language by which they can interact with friends and peers. One of the reasons for Usha's distance from her mother is language and not generation for she feels comfortable to talk to Deborah as both of them use English as the common language of expression.

Moreover, the immediate influence of society and the cultural milieu stands in the way of formation of ideas especially in a young mind. It is the influence of western education which is responsible for creating an atmosphere of ignorance among the immigrant children coming from indigenous background. The curriculum is liable for Lilia's inability to point out India on the map but she is well conversant with the geographical locations in America as her school

curriculum never taught her anything outside America and Asia never come up as the subject of learning. This also brings out the fact that although America fosters the spirit of multiculturalism, in reality, it is a stratified society which allows inclusion in the mainstream society only to those who can successfully jacket himself with Americanness in their breath and spirit. “A multicultural society” as defined by Patricia L. Silver in her “Introduction” to *Race Ethnicity and Self: Identity in Multicultural Perspectives*:

...is composed of people of people of many different racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages. At its best, such a society and the individuals within it recognize, accept, and value the diversity that results from these cultures. The challenge for each of us as individuals and as members of society is to find ways to integrate the diverse threads of our identities into a consistent and workable whole without diminishing the identity of those different from ourselves. (Silver, 3)

A multicultural society according to Patricia L. Silver on one hand is a homogeneous space which creates a unique society that allows an individual to retain one’s own entity without creating conflicting paradigms of diversity. So, a multicultural society cannot offer an individual the comfort zone of a peaceful co-existence of cultural diversity instead one needs to occupy himself in the constant process of assimilation and rejection so as to exist in a multicultural society. However, to become a part of the multicultural society in America is always a cherished dream to many as it offers much more than it rejects, so a young girl like Sonil aspires to seek admission in the Radcliffe University although she was desolated by an America Richard and her bitter past with her American father whom she accepts quite unexpectedly without expressing any grudge against him for abandoning her when she was very young. Renu Krishnan too finally decides to return to her house in Long Island while her mother stays back in India at her parental house.

Nevertheless, there is another set of parental figures who have tried their best to adjust with their children as like Lilia’s mother who is proud of her immigrant status and believes that this will guarantee her daughter a safe and secure future. Her attitude is the result of her position in the American society where she has secured a job for herself as a bank teller. She even undergoes a makeover by cutting her hair short to make her appearance more suitable to her profession which is symbolic of her desire to assimilate with the American culture. She seems to

be equally enthusiastic about allowing her daughter to participate in the Halloween celebration with her American neighbours while Hema's mother never feels the need to celebrate any American festival. While the author has not shown any situation of argument between Lilia and her mother, several instances of disagreement are seen between Usha, Hema and their mothers respectively. So, it seems that to avoid unpleasantness in the parent-child relationships, it becomes necessary for the parents to compromise and to try to reconcile with their children and this might be the reason that the narratorial voice is given to the child in all most of these stories so as to bring out the "unbridgeable fault lines within a family" (Cardwell) from the perspective of a child and the parents must remember that "...children are integral to the wholesomeness of the picture of the home... In keeping with this idea, parents, both mother and father, have an important function to perform in the history of the child." (Bharat, 42)

The gap or the distance created between the parents and their children within a diasporic space is not what is commonly known as generation gap but is more than that. The parents within their immigrant space fail to comprehend their children fully and it is this incomprehension that calls for the need for grandparents in the life of a child. The need to discover one's roots is essential to a child as he grows up to give him some sort of anchorage and therefore the necessity to study a child in relation to his grandparents. This is done in the second chapter of the thesis. Although the grandparents mostly stayed back in the ancestral house but the bonding with their grandchildren is very intimate in most cases. Indira Ganesan, in both her novels, very poignantly develops the relationship of between grandparent and grandchild which reveals her own attachment towards her grandparents and she even dedicated her second novel *Inheritance* in memory of her grandmother. In this novel the protagonist Sonil is given as much importance as her grandmother Kamala. In fact, it is from her grandmother that she gets the inspiration to cross the continent. Here, the grandmother emerges as a substitute to her parents. She is bold enough to maintain the entire household full of female members and the only male member in the family is Sonil's great-uncle Raj but he is so insignificant that he is not worthy of consideration as a part of the family. In her first novel *The Journey*, Indira Ganesan also lays much emphasis on Renu's relation with her grandfather Das. However, the author too tries to bring out the feminist aspect in these grandparent figures. While Renu's grandfather is seen as an old man suffering from long ailments and wished to spend his last days on the holy land of Benares, he stands as a sharp contrast to Sonil's grandmother who takes care of the entire household from cooking to giving

lessons in drawing to her granddaughter and who also competent enough for managing the bank accounts. There is also another set of immigrant grandparents of the third generation immigrant child, like Ruma's father. Although he had retired, he is involved in a secret relationship with some Mrs. Bagchi which shows that his old age does not restrict his freedom to enjoy his life. He also completely negates the proposal of staying together with his daughter as he does not want to be a dependant on his daughter's family. It is his lively spirit that quickly arrests his grandson Akash's attention. Nevertheless, the grandchildren also help in bridging the gap between the parents and grandparents. It is for Akash that Ruma's mother felt the need to be with Ruma so that she can guide her as an experienced mother. To grandparents, their grandchild is a site of new hope on which they can shower their unrequited love and affection which help them to fill the distance created by their own children.

However, the subjectivity of a child can be realised only in terms of his individual experiences and this is what the third chapter has tried to analyse through the study of a child in relation to his own age. Within his diasporic space a child has to undergo various levels of transformation so that he could successfully integrate with the mainstream society. But, a child especially an adolescent passes through ambivalent experiences and is often subjected to anxious decisions of whether to assimilate and integrate with the host country, whether the choice is right or whether he should follow what most of the other people his age are doing. Gogol's parents never thought of him to be interested in girls specially American, but he shocked his parents when they come to know that he has American girlfriends. His relationship with Ruth and later on with the Massachusetts girl, Maxine, might be a defensive way to show to his American peers that he is no way different from other American boys of his age. Even young girls like Usha and Pam express their freedom by involving themselves in several illicit relations which their parents could not expect from them. Moreover, it was never found that these immigrant children whether a girl or a boy were ever interested in members of their own race and ethnicity and this shows that they bear silent loathing against their Indianness. They think that it is by developing an intimate relation with an American that they can achieve some sort stability as Americans which they otherwise cannot claim for themselves because of their visible makers like their Indian skin tone and Indian parentage. In this regard Stuart Hall says, "Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think instead, of identity as a

'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation." (Hall, 110) Hall's conception of identity is somewhat similar to Butler's theory of "performativity" which states that an identity is a social construct which needs to be performed every day. So, the identity of a child is a dynamic process constantly reiterated by various cultural signifiers and it is through the child characters that the novelists trying to show the process of assimilation, from *being* an Indian in America to *becoming* an Indian-American which their adult counterparts fail to achieve for themselves.

But, the findings of this thesis only deal with the child characters in general with respect to their diasporic belonging, and in the process they open up the scope for further research as my research completely excludes the whole range of diasporic male novelists. Furthermore, I have not attempted to make a separate analysis of children by segregating them on the basis of gender because it might deviate from the actual point I have tried to analyse. Moreover, there is also a major problem dealing with the child characters in the works of Indian North America women novelists as none of the authors I have dealt with are born in America although they came to America at their very young age, and that might be the reason for so much dearth of child characters in the diasporic writings. This is what Stephen H. Sumida in the "Afterword" of *Growing Up Asian American: An Anthology* rightly points out that,

...The Asian American authors avoid dealing with the child characters in particular because of their own inadequacy of personal experiences... mostly spent their childhood and adolescent age in India and came to America as grown up adults so their themes mostly reflect their own personal encounter with the "brave new world." (Sumida, 404)

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