

Chapter 4

Altered Routes: A Journey from First Generation to Second Generation

On the basis of analysis in earlier two chapters i.e. extensive investigation of fictions by ‘first generation’ Indian diasporic writers in third chapter and wide-ranging investigation of fictions by ‘second generation’ Indian diasporic writers in fourth chapter, the present chapter in order to examine the ‘Altering Routes’ of post colonialism, compares at length the Indian diasporic fictions by writers of both the generations – first and second – in the context of post colonial characteristics and concludes the research.

After going through the extensive investigation of fictions by first and second generation Indian diasporic writers in earlier two chapters, it is observed that the diasporic writers deviate not only on the basis of the subject matter of the writing, but also on the basis of ages or generations. On one hand, most of the first generation diasporic writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Meena Alexander and Anita Desai have the settings of their home country as well as the settled country in their respective works – *The Nowhere Man*, *Manhattan Music* and *Bye-Bye Blackbird* - and their writing depicts their nostalgic feeling about their earlier life patterns, feeling of loneliness and alienation and gradual feeling of assimilation. Most of the second generation diasporic writers such as Neil Bissoondath, Jhumpa Lahiri and Hari Kunzru, on the other hand, willingly and expectedly adopt the land in which they are born and brought up as their own homeland. Consequently their works - *Digging Up the Mountains*, *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows*, *Interpreter of Maladies*, *Unaccustomed Earth* and *Transmission*- depict their discontentment with the way their parents lead their lives, which results into several kinds of misunderstandings between both generations.

The broad analysis of the fictions by first generation Indian diasporic writers witnesses the fact that the first generation diasporic population often experiences a sense of isolation, displacement, loneliness and sense of loss in the new land, as a result they cannot intermingle with the people of other community in the settled country. Whereas the second generation diasporic population willingly and expectedly adopt the land in which they are born and they are brought up as their own homeland and therefore there is lack of feelings like nostalgia for their land of origin and its culture as the connection they have with their country of origin is by virtue of their ancestral heritage or ethnic derivation.

In the first generation diasporic work, *The Nowhere Man* by Markandaya, the protagonist Srinivas deals with the existentialist problem of racial prejudice, loneliness, alienation, discrimination, adjustment and belonging. On one hand, he and his family disconnected from India, on the other hand they try to adjust with their England but the biased attitude of their neighbours like Mrs. Field and Mrs. Glass constantly makes them feel on an alien soil. In the company of Mrs. Pickering, Srinivas tries to assimilate with British identity, but for Britishers like Fred, he was a soulless 'black man', a trespasser with the mark of a devil, "transformed into a stranger, said the unwanted man" (Markandaya 248) and not allowed to be one of them. In the middle of such agitations, he often recollects the memories of past and finds immense contentment in looking into the box containing old stuff of his wife, Vasantha. He remembers a marked difference in the attitudes of himself and Vasantha, who always recognized herself with her deep-rooted native traditions and culture, and despite her long residence in London, she never detached from the Indian culture and continued its way of living. Vasantha was a constant source of survival for Srinivas. He desires to return to India but cannot do so but only make an expedition to visit his land of birth in his nostalgic imagination. He is completely disorientated as

to where he actually belongs and represents millions of first generation immigrants who, for some or other reason depart from their roots of origin, spend years on an alien soil, but still fail to strike their roots in it and die as rootless, restless individuals.

In Alexander's *Manhattan Music*, the central character of the novel Sandhya Rosenblum resembles Alexander herself, who constantly tries to discover herself as an immigrant and to realize the procedure of self-composition to sustain the self in an alien land. She feels terribly displaced and haunted by the memories of the life and people she had known when in India. In New York City, Sandhya undergoes the learning of English and Americanization, something similar to the dislocation that is the outcome of an imposed commitment towards the Indian inherited homeland. As a result of geographical and cultural dislocation, there emerges to figure a definite sense of cultural depression spreading through her psyche. It is even more complicated for a woman like Sandhya at times because being from a place where everything was under her own systems, she migrated to a land of new set of laws and systems. Memory bothers Sandhya for she carries the heavy load of memories from her life in India. What is notable is every now and then forceful memory breaks through nowhere to drag Sandhya from her present life in Manhattan to her past in India. As a result of the tussle between migration and her love and belongingness for the homeland, she feels trapped in the struggle of converting herself to become a part of the whole new scenario and gets many wounds.

In Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Dev is the prominent victim of the sense of dislocation. He takes England as "a land of death everlasting" (Desai 127). Maintaining distance from India made him feel intertwined trapped and suffocated. The novel also depicts the feelings of utter sadness, despair and frustration of the first generation Indian immigrants in Britain at being an Asian, through the character of Adit, who although adopt a lot of British lifestyle, attitudes and

cultural practices, think that their colour is a main setback. A foreign land is at last a foreign, never becomes one's own, this is quite apparent in Adit's opinion. He is annoyed, loses his control and develops such a hatred for England that he starts suspecting everything English to be abusive and discouraging. Out of depression and nostalgia for his homeland, he starts dining at shabby Indian restaurants with his wife, listening to Indian music etc. He suffers from a crisis of identity and his depression begins to affect his professional life and his efficiency. Like Adit, any immigrant at such moments would tend to retreat to his own culture and past in search of his lost individuality. The distance of years from his country of origin gives Adit a better perception and his disliking for his country recedes and replaced by nostalgia. The fascination towards England is over and his rootedness to the England is proved zero.

However, the second generation diasporic community undergoes a different kind of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity associated with being immigrants in the host land, the land which they feel they belong to. It is witnessed by Bissoondath in his stories such as "Digging Up the Mountains", "Insecurity", "There Are a Lot of Ways to Die", "On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows", etc. The title story "Digging Up the Mountains" depicts the life of the protagonist Hari Beharry, a second generation immigrant, who wants simply to tend his garden and die in his own house, leading a comfortable life on an alien land. "Insecurity" tells the story of a self-made businessman in the Caribbean - Alistair Ramgoolam, who is worried and confused about the spoilt situation of his inhabitant island by the substandard politics and corruption, and to protect his children from the insecurities of future, he starts investing his money in other countries. "There Are a Lot of Ways to Die" traces a reverse journey of an immigrant, who finds his own homeland misfit for him after his long residence in a host land. The story traces the sense of displacement of Joseph Heaven to his own home island, after making good fortune in Canada.

He sincerely intends to help his island economy, but is accused of exploitation and witnesses his illusions shattered one by one. The title story, “On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows” presents a range of characters, who are anxiously waiting in hope of a Canadian visa and all they want is a fighting chance.

Lahiri’s writings such as “A Temporary Matter”, “Interpreter of Maladies”, “The Third and Final Continent”, “Hema and Kaushik”, etc mainly focuses on the second generation, who believes to be American but always burdened by the Indian cultural past and has neglected so much of their inheritance by marrying or forming family with non-Indians. “A Temporary Matter” is about a second generation immigrant couple- Shukumar and Shoba, settled in USA, whose life was filled with joy until the death of their first-born baby. The major themes of the story are trauma and alienation, but migration is nowhere responsible for them. The title story, “Interpreter of Maladies” deals with the marital issues and cultural alienation of second generation Indian immigrants settled in the United States. Most of the Characters of the story are suffering from psychological or social emptiness. “The Third and Final Continent” is all about how the first generation immigrants stopped getting engrossed with their past, and try to strengthen their roots in an alien land. In the novella “Hema and Kaushik”, both the title characters undergo trauma due to their rootlessness in different senses, for Hema’s suffering is caused by her negotiation with her past, whereas Kaushik is unable to resist his loss in the past and becomes a person of melancholy and dies at last.

Kunzru’s *Transmission* is the example of contemporary migration novel, a novel of migration and beyond migration, set in an American city and offers very different images of not only of the city landscape but of the immigrant’s position in the contemporary world. While reading this novel, one can experience Kunzru’s dual identity, sense of displacement, whether

forced or self imposed, as a second and later generations of the diaspora writer. What the novel does have in common with the mainstream diaspora writings is the protagonist of the novel Arjun's living at the edge of two cultures, the mixing of languages and his experience of alienation in host country. Kunzru's *Transmission* is an imagined myth of successful resistance of the diasporic self, signified by the protagonist, who is frustrated his homing desire to create the home where one is, that is in the host culture.

For the first generation immigrants, sometimes it takes years to get assimilated with the new land and sometimes years of living in new land also make them consider it as another country and they prefer to strictly follow their own culture in this alien country. Most of the times, their own internal problems like isolation, alienation and loneliness cause more suffering to them than the outer problems like identity crisis, prejudice and discrimination. In the case of discrimination, the first generation progressively starts accepting it in a normal manner, but for the second and the subsequent generations it is a severe psychological torment. The reason is that the connection and bonding with the homeland, which is observed in first generation, gradually gets substituted by the adopted country from the second generation and further. It is obvious for the second generation to consider the adopted country as their own, as they born and brought up in that foreign atmosphere. Therefore, when they experience discrimination, it hurts them to the core and raises issues pertaining to their roots or backgrounds, parting them from their adopted country with bitter feelings.

In *The Nowhere Man*, the Indo-British conflict took place mainly from the economic anxiety confronted by Britain in awaken of the collapse of the British Empire. As a consequence, the post-War England with all its immigration problems is neither safe for first generation people like Srinivas nor second generation people like Laxman. According to Britishers, the immigrants

without money are like animals to snatch their rights and at no level is it possible to treat them as humans. As a result of such circumstances, immigrants like Srinivas becomes the victim of discrimination and labeled as 'The Other' by the young men of England like Fred Fletcher, Mike, Joe and Bill. Srinivas, no doubt, looks upon himself as an unwanted man and pathetically tells Mrs. Pickering "It is time ... when one is made to feel unwanted, and liable, as a leper, to be ostracized further, perhaps beyond the limit one can reasonably expect of oneself" (Markandaya 209). Srinivas's son, Laxman reciprocates to the issue of racialism in a quite different manner than his father, as the situation becomes even more perplexing for second generation migrants like Laxman, who have never identified themselves as Indians, are far removed from their family's place of origin and are strangers to their ancestral culture. However, they have their education in the Christian schools and engrossed themselves in the culture of their birth country; they had to undergo the antagonism and denial, which made them double strangers. The racial discrimination against the blacks shocks Laxman profoundly.

The same sense of otherness haunts the lives of Draupadi and Sakhi in *Manhattan Music*. Though born in New York, Draupadi, being a second generation of Indo-Caribbean diaspora, has not been able to get away from the racism of the White Americans. In her words: "I was trying to people the North American continent, but what sense did it make? I felt like a jolt of black pepper sneezed out by an irritated god, flung into the flat, burning present" (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 93). However, Sakhi thinks that she "had become an American" (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 132), some racist white youths ill-treats her and even throws stones on her in the marketplace. Such incidents indicate towards the depreciating position of diasporic community in foreign land that affects their lives physically and psychologically. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Dev is more often despondent by the way the whites treat the immigrants, who are frequently

subjected to racial discrimination. Such incidents leave a deep scar on him and he feels divided between the opportunity he has been offered by England and the feelings of putting up with suppression and prejudice. After bitter experience of discrimination and neglect from his in-laws, Adit, who loved mostly everything about England, starts feeling dislocated and realizes that he has to escape from England “and he began to tell Sarah of this nostalgia that had become an illness, an ache” (Desai 178).

However, the racism in “Dancing”, one of the short stories of *Digging Up the Mountains*, can be read as a diverse exposure. “Dancing” depicts the story of a black Caribbean servant woman migrating from Trinidad to Toronto for a better life, where she experiences racism as the underside of “ethnic separatism” (Toorn 84). However, the surprising part of the story is, it is not the Caribbean immigrants, who are victims of racism, but the dominant Canadian ethnicity undergoes the racialism by the Caribbean immigrants. “Dancing” deconstructs racism by presenting that racism is not solely relied upon by the dominant ethnicity. As Bissoondath has it, “this is a story that says: not only whites are racist. The fact is that non-whites can also be racist” (Srivastava 319). In “Dancing”, Racism is recorded in a slightly strategic manner of the immigrant community i.e. the Caribbean immigrants, who deliberately manipulates the dominant social community, i.e. Canadian ethnicity. In other words, “Dancing” depicts how racism can be employed to exploit a social system in which tolerance towards other communities is systematized and in which any limit can be crossed and any cost can be paid, even at the cost of humanity, to violate this system. While racism on the part of the Canadian ethnicity, which is the ethnic majority, is non-existent in this story, the supposedly marginalized community, here the Caribbean immigrants in the Western downtown, i.e. Toronto detect the financial prospective out of the “constant assertion of cultural difference” (Toorn 84). More precisely, the marginalized

community has learned to take benefit of this worn-out system of racism, which hardly subsists among the dominant community.

On one hand the first generation diaspora community troubles with identity crisis, because they try to mingle with the new culture and society of the settled country, but their close bonding with their homeland and culture does not allow them to follow the new land's culture completely. The second and later generations of the diasporic community, on the other hand, usually exhibit a twofold or dual identity, because they are tossed between two different cultures and societies. Though they believe the country in which they are born and brought up as their own country, the society still perceives them as foreigners and sometimes discriminates with them, which lead them to a hyphenated identity. Therefore, torn between two divergences, they starts developing a sense of in-betweenness, which consequences either into the loss of identity or hybrid identity, which means adopting both the cultures of home and host country in bits to their convenience. This has also been termed as plural identity. In other words, they basically suffer from double consciousness.

In *The Nowhere Man*, Srinivas, being an old man and who spend half a century in England, has no such choice except to stay in England. He has already started looking upon England as his own country. After getting settled in London, he has flourished his business and owns a house. With the passage of time he realized that upholding his Indian identity in England was neither easy nor convenient, so gradually he starts developing a kind of patriotic closeness with this adoptive land. He started recognizing himself as a Londoner and put every effort to assimilate within the local society. In the company of Mrs. Pickering, he tries to assimilate with British identity, but for Britishers like Fred, he was a soulless 'black man', a trespasser with the mark of a devil, "transformed into a stranger, said the unwanted man" (Markandaya 248) and not

allowed to be one of them. He is completely disorientated as to where he actually belongs and represents millions of first generation immigrants who, for some or other reason depart from their roots of origin, spend years on an alien soil, but still fail to strike their roots in it and die as rootless, restless individuals.

Sandhya's story in *Manhattan Music* ends with her restoration from a futile suicide attempt which compels her to reconsider how she has lead her life, both, in the land of her birth, India, and in the land to which she has migrated, America. In the diasporic context, it is obvious that the culture and the gender to which one belongs to, has a vital share in the formation and deformation of an identity, which tries to locate itself in the new cultural surrounding miles away from the known lands. Alexander finds herself a woman, "cracked by multiple migrations" (*Fault Lines* 3), depicts this idea through the character of Sandhya and articulates the phases of formation and deformation of an immigrant identity. However, the end of the novel presents the idea that for a woman like Sandhya, although the troubles were in abundance, her efforts do not go completely in vain and her traumas and damages due to migration have started healing. She was no longer fearful now, she thought there was a place for her in America and she would live out her life here. She gets up from the bench at Central Park, slips her sandals on and moves with firm steps towards the 'waiting city'. The word 'waiting' indicates that the wounds on an Sansdhya's identity as an immigrant have started healing now and a new world with enormous promises is lying before to be explored. It illuminates the idea that Sandhya has succeeded in creating a place for herself far from the cultural roots of her homeland.

The issue of identity is an issue to any member of diaspora community unless one connects oneself with any of the two lands, especially in host land for they have to undergo lot of prejudices, harassment, mental torture and sense of displacement out of cultural change, which

are well expressed by Desai in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* through the first generation Asian immigrants Adit and Dev. However, it is not only Adit and Dev, who experience the sense of displacement and identity crisis, even without getting relocated physically to another country; Sarah loses her identity in her own native land. For a girl, who marries in her own culture, it is easier for her to adjust in a new environment and people. However, interracial and intercultural marriage causes adjustment problem for a girl like Sarah, who married to an Indian, which are not easy to overcome. Sarah has to tolerate the conflict and attitudinal differences within her own community as she is the wife of an Asian. Her experiences are distressing and she feels an 'outsider' in the company of her own compatriots. She can neither give up her native culture nor completely adopt the Indian culture.

However, Lahiri's "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" depicts double consciousness of Lilia as an ethnic minority in the United States, who is trapped between the traditions and culture of her parents and America. She could never know the reason of her parents' complaints about "the supermarkets did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbors never dropped by without an invitation" (Lahiri, *Interpreter* 24). The second generation immigrants in US like Lilia generally study the history and geography of America in schools and have assimilated with American culture and celebrate American festivals like Halloween. However, they carry with them the knowledge of history and geography of the culture of origin of their parents, which reflects the relative marginalization of the second generation immigrants. Her father tries to explain the difference between Indian and Pakistani by showing her a world map but for Lilia it made no sense for she expresses: "Mr. Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language, laughed at the same joke, looked more or less the same...ate rice every night for supper with their hands...took off shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals

as a digestive, drank no alcohol...” (Lahiri, *Interpreter* 25). Her mother understands that Lilia has little knowledge about the geography and politics of India and Pakistan because she is the product of America and in fact she is proud of the fact that Lilia is an American.

In the story “Unaccustomed Earth”, the situation of Ruma, who is the representative of the second generation diaspora, is different from that of the first generation, because being born and brought up in America but in Bengali family, she is compelled to live in the Third Space all her life. Her life is an example of a consistent confusion and tension between her parents’ Bengali culture and the American culture. Consequently, She is neither able to identify herself with her country of origin India, nor with America, her homeland as she believes. Her sense of unbelonging is expressed in her movement - from Pennsylvania to New York and then to Seattle - on ‘routes’ rather than growing ‘roots’. The position of in-betweenness is more traumatized by the sudden death of Ruma’s mother. Unlike with her father, Ruma and her mother have very close relationship with each other so with her mother’s death; she feels that she has no way to return to traditional culture. Ruma feels that she has lost her Indian culture after being married to an American guy without her parents’ consent. She prefers western clothes instead of Indian saris that her mother left for her in abundance after her death. “She kept only three [saris], placing them in a quilted zippered bag at the back of her closet, telling her mother’s friends to divide up the rest. And she had remembered the many times her mother had predicted this very moment, lamenting the fact that her daughter preferred pants and skirts to the clothing she wore, that there would be no one to whom to pass on her things” (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed* 17). She finds herself poor in using her Bengali language now, which indicates that she has accepted the foreign ideologies by using the foreign language and became a stranger to her own culture by refusing to use her native language.

In another story “Hell-Heaven”, Lahiri has endeavoured to give voice to the theme of ‘double consciousness’. In the story, both, the narrator of the story, a young girl named Usha and her guest from India, a young man, Pranab Chakraborty are the Indian Americans, who live an exiled life also struggle with double consciousness. They feel that their identity is split into various segments and they are constantly striving for a unified identity by persistently trying to reunite the two cultures that constitute their identity. They recognize India as a country of their origin and America as a host country where they rediscover themselves in order to survive. In the host country, they begin to unconsciously assimilate with the prejudices and values against the minority communities and suffer from inferiority, which consequently develops into self-hatred and self degradation. In Usha’s case, the double conscious may be the consequence of the popular club culture, prevailing among the second generation Indian American youngsters or a reaction to the first generation immigrants’ imposing the ethnic culture on second generation immigrants, where sex is a moral taboo. After twenty three years of marriage, Pranab, as a minority living in a white community, has started suffering from inferiority complex, caused by double consciousness. He found himself under great pressure, which finally leads him towards an affair with a married Bengali woman and destruction of two families.

“The assimilation of the first generation with the host land is never complete, they are in an in-between state where they have already left their culture behind but have not integrated the new culture yet. On the other hand, the second generation tends to aim at total assimilation, by breaking away from the roots and traditions” (qtd. in Pataki 2). For them the process of assimilation results in hybridity, the confusion of cultural identity and loss of national traditions.

In *The Nowhere Man*, considering England as his own country, Srinivas pour his heart to adapt, adjust and assimilate to overcome the trauma of displacement and alienation on an alien

land. He is pouring his genuine efforts to incorporate in the prevailing culture of London. He is very careful not to upset or affront his hosts in any way and when Mrs. Pickering advises, "If one lives in a foreign country, it is best to fall in with the ways of the natives, as far as possible" (Markandaya 63), he even expresses to Mrs. Pickering with great conviction: "This is my country now ... My country. I feel at home in it, more so than I would in my own" (Markandaya 63). He shows similar feelings to his friend, Zanzibari Abdul bin Abdul, telling him that England is his country, "This is where I live in England" (Markandaya 80). He tells cheerfully to Abdul bin Abdul that he considers England as his own country now. In the company of Mrs. Pickering, Srinivas starts taking interest in the Christian religion, celebrates Christmas, helps Mrs. Pickering to decorate a Christmas tree, and deliberately places the tree in a window for the neighbors to notice. With Mrs. Pickering, Srinivas's mind begins to open up for the adopted country, which was blockade for years with his wife, Vasantha. Gradually, England and its weather begin to appear beautiful and Srinivas started sharing smiles and warmth greets with his English neighbors. However, at such point of time, a feeling also haunts him as if he were pretending to be part of England. He also feels that he cannot and should not act as if English, because his wife had never done that. He felt as if he was becoming more English than the English himself and felt more or less as if he could get into their skin. Srinivas was not agreeable with warning words of Abdul when he says that Britain would one day like to turn him out and he harbors the illusion that he is happy and contented in this foreign land.

In *Manhattan Music*, Sandhya's cousin Sakhi Karunakaran symbolizes a mode of self-discovery that defies assimilation as conformity and subordination to racial hierarchy and manifests a new way of claiming belonging in America, simultaneously maintaining her Indian identity. She happened to meet Draupadi, who sends her a book by Bernal Diaz Castillo (1492-

1585), a conquistador. She could gain more knowledge about racism and colonialism through reading the book. She is extremely provoked by the harsh racial prejudice in Diaz's book that considers herself devoting "to antiracist, antisexist work, as she put it" (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 136) and becomes a social worker. The further change is marked in her by her interactions with people from various backgrounds and simultaneously begins to have a sense of belonging in America. Even though Sakhi had decided to live and die here in America, "She was Indian, she would live and die that way. No one could change her skin, or say to her: your parents are not buried in the churchyard in Tiruvella ..." (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 132). In becoming an American while remaining Indian, Sakhi defies assimilation and claims a place for herself and others like Sandhya in America. Sakhi introduces Sandhya to a diasporic community of women in New York City, during her stay with Sakhi to recover after a suicide attempt following her break up with Rashid. On her going back to Manhattan, Sandhya felt that it gives her a new spirit to survive and find a focused life in America. She eventually makes a decision that she will "live out her life in America" and face the challenges of life because she realizes now that "There was a place for her here" (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 228). In pursuing the possibilities for assimilation, Draupadi herself is undergoing profound changes as she crosses multiple borders in her encounters with exiles and diasporans in New York City. She asks, "Why couldn't they have named me Dorothy? That name would have hung better on me" (Alexander, *Manhattan Music* 88). She is expressing here an anxiety of merging unassumingly into her new setting, but her name isolates her as 'different', while what she seeks is assimilation. Transformation of Draupadi, along with other Indian immigrants such as Sandhya and Sakhi in the novel, reveals Alexander's personal experience in the New York City.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Adit Sen, a young man from India lives in England with his English wife, working in England as a commoner at Blue skies, is happy with his job and feels a sense of cultural kinship with new land. Although, this intimacy with new land does not demolish the sense of own cultural identity, he admires England for its fertile, lavish and flourishing landscape. However, scenario changes in the last part of the novel after his visit to his wife's parents. He secretly starts being nostalgic about Indian food, music and friends. Even when he thinks of a brief visit to India, the images of Indian food, dress and music are predominant in his mind. Suddenly Adit started feeling himself as a stranger in England, and realizes alienated from the English people, as he frankly admits to be "a stranger, a non-belonger" (*Bye-Bye* 180) in England. He begins to compare with bitterness the colours of festivals and celebrations India with the thinness and drabness of celebrations in England. At last he takes a U-turn to return to India with his wife. Dev bitterly reacts to everything in England, the landscape and the habits of people, while in the beginning Adit defends and appreciates England. However, as the novel reaches at the edge of climax, Dev slowly and steadily adapts himself to the new environment and takes his final decision not to return to India and not to lead the way of the masses there.

On one hand, the first generation migrants like Srinivas, Sandhya, Dev and Adit are striving to assimilate with the foreign culture on the alien land, on the other hand, Mr. Alistair Ramgoolam's sons, now "Canadian to the point of strangeness" (Bissoondath, *On the Eve* 87) and although being Hindus, have become adapted to the Canadian culture, even eating pork and beef, in the stories "Insecurity" and "Security", Monica's three sons, blindly mimicking the Black Americas in the story "The Power of Reason", Mr. and Mrs. Das family in the story "Interpreter of Maladies", Lilia, a ten-year-old Indian American girl, on a foreign land, learning

American history and American geography in the story “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”, the narrator’s son, who attends Harvard University in the story “The Third and Final Continent”, a young girl named Usha and her guest from India, a young man, Pranab Chakraborty prove to be more Americans and less Indians in the story “Hell-Heaven”, Amit Sarkar in “A Choice of Accommodations”, Rahul and Sudha in the story “Only Goodness”, the rootless souls Hema and Kaushik in the novella “Hema and Kaushik”, Ruma and her younger brother Romi, the American children born to Bengali parents in the story “Unaccustomed Earth”, etc are the second generation migrant community members, who tend to aim at total assimilation, by breaking away from the roots and traditions and hence their process of assimilation results in hybridity, the confusion of cultural identity and loss of national traditions.

In the title story “Unaccustomed earth”, there is the loss of a national tradition by not only second generation immigrants but also first generation immigrants. The representatives of the loss of a national tradition by the first generation immigrants in the story are Ruma’s father and Mrs. Bagchi, whom Ruma’s father seeing after his wife’s death. The steady assimilation process of the immigrants is responsible for the loss of national tradition in both the cases of Ruma’s father and Mrs. Bagchi.

The second generation is discontented with the way their parents lead their lives, which results into several kinds of misunderstandings between both generations. When on one hand, they get cognizant about their cultural, religious and social identity and struggle to realize its space in the adopted country; on the other hand the people of first generation did not even bother about it. Compared to their parents, the situation of the second generation Indian Americans is more pathetic because their parents can always claim India as their homeland, but the second generation has no choice for their life and nowhere to claim as belonging. The first generation is

generally engrossed with making money and supposedly failed efforts of mimicking the white people, developing a type of confused dilemma towards their own culture and traditions. They fail in their efforts because it is not the difference of only language and culture but also of color and race, which give birth to further problems like tremendous generation gaps and differences of ideology between the first and second generation diasporic community.

In *The Nowhere Man*, through the characters of Laxman and Seshu, Markandaya depicts the satire of the circumstances is that not only Srinivas but even his eldest son, Laxman, is a nowhere man and gives an example of the second generation immigrants, who are neither here nor there, their alienation is complete in that their roots are completely cut off. Vasantha cannot bear Laxman's rude attitude and dies of shock, for Laxman marries without the knowledge of his parents and even does not invite his parents on the occasion of birth of his child.

In the earlier story "Insecurity", Ramgoolam was living in fear of harassment and death in the Caribbean and in "Security", he is an immigrant, no longer in fear of his life, but bored at home, suffering from loneliness, aimlessness and anxiety about his sons for despite being brought up as Hindus, they are being transformed into barbarians by living in Canada. This very reason results into the conflicts between two generations – Ramgoolam and his sons.

Bissoondath's "The Power of Reason" emphasizes the migrants' experience of gender specificity and the problem of equal opportunity for women by the West Indian protagonist of the story, Monica, a single mother with five children. At the end of the story, she overcomes the feeling of stagnation that has infected her life by correcting the sense of alienation that has developed between her and her three sons. Lahiri's "A Choice of Accommodations" illustrates about a married couple Amit Sarkar and his white wife Megan, which had displeased Amit's parents. "His parents had not even met her [Megan]. He was aware of what an insult it was to them. For

all their liberal Western ways he knew they wanted her to marry a Bengali girl, raised and educated as he had been” (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed* 112). The relationship between Amit and his parents has been deteriorated due to his marriage, resulting him into the miserable feeling towards both his family and his wife.

The similar theme of generational conflict can be encountered in another story, “Only Goodness”, in which the first generation immigrants are parents of Rahul and Sudha. In the story, Sudha’s mother plays an important role in transferring the Indian values to the next generation. She still endeavours to sustain Bengali culture in America, blaming America and its values and prevents her children from the drinking habits that the Americans usually do and the western values that Americans have, which according to her, are not suitable for the Asian Indian values. After living in America for years, Sudha’s parents still bifurcate the two worlds of India and America, creating contradictory situations: on one hand they think, “their children were immune from the hardships and injustices they had left behind in India, as if the inoculations the pediatrician had given Sudha and Rahul when they were babies guaranteed them an existence free of suffering” (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed* 144) and on the other hand, they celebrates the opportunities offered by America to their children for lavish life. According to Sudha’s views, her father never let his children forget that there had been no one to help him as he helped them. Being the child of America, on one hand, “Sudha had waited until college to disobey her parents. Before then she had lived according to their expectations, her persona scholarly, her social life limited to other demure girls in her class, if only to ensure that one day she would be set free” (Lahiri, *Unaccustomed* 129). On the other hand, Rahul, the more expectant child of his parents, abruptly becomes defiant to their dreams. He used to be handsome, intelligent, talented, the only boy and so pampered baby but now a hopeless alcoholic, the greatest pain and bewilderment of

the lives of his immigrant parents. He has distressed his parents and shattered their high hopes, being a dipsomaniac and arrested twice for driving being underage and completely drunk. With the passage of time his attitude towards his parents kept on becoming harsh and his grades in studies were gradually falling, eventually drops out of Cornell University. He is forced to live with his parents with little finances he could manage through a tedious job he gets of managing a Laundromat, which is certainly embarrassing for his parents. Rahul's failure and his alcoholism being a symbol of the conflict he has found himself indulged between two cultures. While he wants to sustain his American spirit of individualism, desire for freedom and self-fulfillment, his parents want him to preserve the Indian way of life, nevertheless take advantage of opportunities that America offers, such as excellent education and job.

In the context of gender perception, while quest for the identity and dealing with the identity crisis, the first generation immigrant women all go through a process of substantial liberation and westernization. They preserve a traditional pose with respect to marriage and family roles, and that the second generation seem to be questioning about the significance of traditional values in their lives. The first generation immigrant women initially tries to perform their duties in an arranged marriage, but their restricted connection with the outside world creates the issues like identity crisis and female inferiority. However, as time passes, they learn to balance between traditions and feminism, make their own decisions and control their lives, initially by revolting silently, then by making their voices heard. The second generation immigrant women however, finds themselves caught between two cultures – of their country of origin and that of the settled country, because they have been born, brought up and educated in the settled country, never visited their country of origin so never understand their parents' nostalgia for their own country and culture. They consider the customs and values of their

parents as old-fashioned, backward or suppressive. These circumstances generally results into the conflict of traditions, family crisis and domestic violence, throwing them into a sense of isolation and dislocation.

In *The Nowhere Man*, Srinivas's wife Vasantha prefers to stick to her Indianness entirely till her death. Even after settling down and spending years on the soil of London, Vasantha never find the middle ground for her conventional Indian traditions and culture and deep-rooted native ways of living. As a typical Indian woman, she holds on to her Indian lifestyle, dressing, eating, rich religious traditions and even dying. She always preferred to dress in her nine-yard sari, kept her hair in bun and wear vermilion along the parting of her hair. With deep adoration she treasured Ganges water, which she brought from India, for the rest of her life and wished that Ganges water to be sprinkled over her ashes after her death, which reflects her strong affection for the Indian milieu and her identity as an Indian. In *Manhattan Music*, Sandhya undergoes the learning of English and Americanization on a foreign land, which proves to be something similar to the dislocation in the starting, due to an imposed commitment towards the Indian inherited homeland. As a consequence of geographical and cultural dislocation, there emerges to figure a definite sense of cultural depression spreading through her psyche, because being from a place where everything was under her own systems, she migrated to a land of new set of laws and systems. As a result of the tussle between migration and her love and belongingness for the homeland, she feels trapped in the struggle of converting herself to become a part of the whole new scenario and gets many wounds. However, by the end of the novel, she was no longer fearful, thought there was a place for her in America and she would live out her life here and has succeeded in creating a place for herself far from the cultural roots of her homeland.

Whereas, in *Interpreter of Maladies*, the story “A Temporary Matter” depicts a young and financially independent woman’s revolutionary steps against her drained marriage through the character of Shoba. However, there is an exceptional story in Lahiri’s story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*. In the story, “Mrs. Sen”, Lahiri depicts the sense of alienation of a first generation Indian immigrant woman through the European point of view. The story presents the alienation, nostalgia and hardships experienced by the Indian wives on a new land, without friends and family, struggling to cope with the new environment, thousands of miles away from their homelands. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, the title story depicts the life of a second generation immigrant woman, Ruma, who being the American child never appreciated her mother’s traditional values. However, after her mother’s death, she often remembers and appreciates her mother for she holds many qualities of a traditional Indian woman like endurance, patience and hard work. In “Hell-Heaven”, Usha becomes a disobedient young woman, who started assimilating American values and ideologies, causing much anxiety to her mother, the conventional preserver of cultural purity. This story gives voice to schism that has been developing between first and second generations. Usha’s increasing anticipation and liking for Deborah, an American woman over her mother indicates her attachment towards the dominant culture of the country where she is born and brought up. Like any other American child, she demands privacy and freedom and dislikes her mother’s interference in her life. However, at the end of the story, she realizes the importance of balancing her native Indian culture and her prevailing American cultures, her past and present life and also learns to negotiate her relationship with her mother. In another story of the collection, “Only Goodness”, Sudha’s mother is just like Ruma’s mother in the story “Unaccustomed Earth”, who plays an important role in transferring the Indian values to the next generation. Sudha, being the child of America,

had eagerly waited until college to disobey her parents, so that one day she would be free from the restrictions of her mother. However, being a dutiful student, she obediently fulfils their parents' desires and attains her master's degree and decides to study further at the London School of Economics. In London she meets Roger, an Englishman, falls in love with him and gets married. As a minority community in host country, hard working and creating a new generation are essential values for first generation Asian Indians. However, in transferring these values to the new generation, there is bound to irrupt the conflict between both the generations and in most of the cases the first generation has to surrender to the circumstances as Sudha's parents accept her marriage with a non-Indian in at the end.

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