

RESEARCH ARTICLE



LITERATURE AND IDENTITY ABROAD: LOVE, MARRIAGE, SEX AND FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

The study of this paper expands upon love, marriage, sex, and family of the Indian expatriates. I propose to look at the works of some leading women writers of the Indian diaspora in North America. I shall concentrate, in particular, on JhumpaLahiri, Meena Alexander, Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. According to the sociologist Gregory Lee's graphic census, there was an increase of the Indian immigrants in America from "361,544 in 1980 to 800,000 in 1990. Through this census it is found that the Asian Indians are the fast growing in America bring in their families. The institution of the family plays an important role in the identity formation of Indians.

During some of the interviews I conducted for my study, the participants stressed the point that the Asian Indians place a high value on the family. They say that marriage is a means of maintaining regional, caste and family identity. Marriage is not just between two individuals but rather the blending of two families. Generally, in India, love between the husband and wife was supposed to be the result of marriage rather than a prelude to it. But when we compare it with the marriage system in America, it is quite different. In American society, love and marriage are usually interrelated and the individual has freedom of choice in seeking a mate. The attitude of Indian immigrants towards love and marriage is quite opposite of that of Americans.

Keeping all these views in mind, let us move forward and take a detailed look at some of the literary texts written by the expatriate women writers of the Indian diaspora in North America. JhumpaLahiri, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction 2000 is such an expatriate writer. Her *Interpreter of Maladies* is a text of nine stories. In this book we find the characters, as the publisher's note indicates "navigating between the strict Indian tradition they've inherited and the baffling they must encounter everyday".

Key Words: Love, Marriage, Sex, and Family

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When we talk of the Indian women writers, Jhumpa Lahiri can be termed as one who is different from the others. It is so because she is an expatriate writer born and brought up in foreign countries. She belongs to the second generation of expatriates. Naturally, her connection with the motherland is seen to exist through books, newspapers, friends and relatives. Generally it may be seen that writers who e India and write about it seem to lack honesty and authenticity of experience. In this sense, Lahiri seems to be honest and different. She does not write about India that she is unfamiliar with. But she writes about Indians who have settled down in America. A.K. Mukherjee in his essay "Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies: A Study* (Dhawan R.K. Writers of the Indian Diaspora, 2001)" says that:

The Indians who have settled abroad feel themselves exiled, as they are in their consciousness unable to cut off completely their umbilical chords that still bind them in their emotional crisis. (109)

"*Temporary Matter*" is a story by Lahiri, of a young couple who exchange confessions each night as they struggle to cope with the loss of their baby and their failing marriage. The temporary matter is that their electricity is cut off for an hour for five days. The story is confirmed to those five days when there is no electricity. r. During this period Shukumar and Shoba come closer 'after the days busy schedules and in the darkness they play games such as telling each other a story from his or her own life. In the darkness they can speak out their minds to each other:

'Let's do that" she said suddenly. 'Do what?'"Say something to each other in the dark."
"Like what? I don't know any jokes." "No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before." (IOM: 12-13).

The beginning of the story employs the metaphors of construction. It is not only that the electricity supply lines that is being repaired but also the broken lives of Shoba and Shukumar. The temporary matter had helped them to drive away the disputes

and the misunderstandings between them. It removed the barriers between them and tightened their failing marriage. This matter not only brought lights into their house but also brought the lights into their lives.

Lahiri proves that the confessions proved a blessing in disguise a blessing that cleared their hearts and brought them together once again. The story reflects the alienation and the loneliness that the immigrants face in foreign land. Through this story the author tells us that there should be a proper understanding between the husband and wife, which is lacking in the present days. The hustle and bustle of the fact-paced world of today is not giving people a chance to sit and share their feelings with each other.

The marriage bond, which is still sacrosanct in India, is gradually breaking down under the pressure of new needs in different background. One always needs another's touch in an emotional crisis, which is realized by Shukumar and Shoba towards the end. And finally all mental doubts and apprehensions that cloud their life's guideposts are weeded and the marital life is strengthened again.

Interpreter of Maladies' is a story of the expatriates Mr. and Mrs. Das' family who come to visit their homeland, India. They meet Mr. Kapasi, a taxi driver, who takes them all around on a tour. He was an interpreter himself. Mrs. Das comes closer to Mr. Kapasi and relates her own life to him. She gives an account of her son Bobby to Mr. Kapasi. She tells him that Bobby was not Mr. Das's son nor was he a son from English or an American but from an Indian, a Punjab friend of Mr. Das who came to stay with them for a week.

She tells her problem to Mr. Kapasi because she needs a readymade answer, a cure for her malady. But the malady is deep rooted and Mr. Kapasi, the interpreter is no doctor to cure her. Mr. Kapasi himself is deep-rooted with the guilt of dreaming about Mr. Das, and his thoughts remained locked in his heart and mind, as he did not find a chance to convey his remedy to her.

Most immigrant Indians suffer from different types of maladies and as Indians they are unable to get rid of their Indian consciousness that they should be honest and true to their married life. The Indians residing in America say that American

society has had an impact on their views of marital relationships. They themselves halfway between the continuity of the traditional Indian values and the influence of 'progressive' American ones. The concept of chastity haunts them like a ghost at noon. They cannot be completely westernized in their thoughts and 'Sexy' is another story that is based on an extra-marital relationship. In the *'Interpreter of maladies'* Mrs. Das has an extra-marital affair with a Punjabi friend of her husband, whereas in 'Sexy', Dev has a relationship with Miranda, an American. Miranda gets herself involved with Dev in London. And Dev's frequent visits to Miranda bring them closer to each other. Once, when they go out into the city Dev compliments Miranda as "sexy." (IOM: 91)

The story concludes when Laxmi cousin's son, Rohin, stays with Miranda and eventually addresses her as "sexy". Miranda feels surprised when she hears him calling out "sexy" as Dev had addressed her. When she asks the meaning of the term 'sexy' he says it means loving someone.

"That's what my father did," Rohin continued, "He sat next to someone he didn't know, someone sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother." (IOM: 108)

This experience with the boy brought an end to her affair with Dev who was married. Love does not mean being sexy rather it means being in each other's thoughts. Indians living abroad generally try to be smarter than the natives are, although they forget that in basic 'emotion' there is hardly any difference between the East and the West.

Similarly, "The Blessed House" is a domestic story with a strong sense of isolation and the struggle of partners to attain an identity for themselves. The whole story is a transformation of identities. Sanjeev and Twinkle move into a new house and they plan a house-warming ceremony. When Twinkle finds some Christian statues in the house and puts them on prominent display, Sanjeev feels that they are isolated from Hinduism. He fears that they would lose their identity as Hindus with the Christian statues in their house.

Sanjeev is a person who is unable to transform his religion or tradition according to the new culture he has adopted. He is atypical expatriate who struggles with the problems of adjustment between the past and the New World. Sanjeev remembers the "ex" status of the past, whereas Twinkle tries to imitate the fast culture around her. She drinks and smokes according to the life she has adopted:

But when Twinkle had drunk four glasses of whisky in a nameless bar in... she insisted that they dance atango on the sidewalk in front of strangers (IOM: 140)

This would have been unthinkable in India, especially for a middle-class girl.

We find a difference in man-woman relationship in this story. According to the traditional norms the husband is the authority figure, whose 'will' should always dominate the family. The wife is his subordinate and is expected to regard him as his master and serve him faithfully. But in this story we find the opposite. Twinkle is just the opposite of Sanjeev's expectations. Thus, there is a clash of value systems. In the beginning and towards the end, we find reconciliation. The author shows the complex state of mind and emotion of an expatriate. All these stories support the view that the Indians are confronted with the conflict between maintaining one's identity, traditions, and customs and also the pull from the American society to assimilate themselves into the Western culture.

Meena Alexander is another diasporic writer who has written several works. Let us look at her fiction *Manhattan Music* and her autobiography *Faultlines*. *Manhattan Music* problematizes the issue of dislocation. Pain, violence and the possibility of re-location. The protagonist, Sandhya is initially in an unhappy and confused state of mind. She like Alexander herself is a "black woman married to a white man" (MM: 215-216) and mother of a small daughter Dora, suffering from the incompleteness of her marriage to Stephen who is totally baffled by her gradual withdrawal and alienation.

Some Indian women did not have any choice except to follow their husbands after marriage to stay in a New World. They say that they

felt very bad when they left their parents behind. Sandhya married Stephen and migrated to the United States to stay there as a resident of America. But even after marriage she could not forget her childhood, her days in Kerala and also her former Lover Gautham. Stephen tries hard to understand and grapple with the situation in order to help Sandhya and also to salvage the relationship. Sandhya looks at her own life with Stephen as a diminished reflection of her husband's image. She tries to escape from their unhappy situation through dreams of her homeland, Kerala and of her childhood and youth there. Neither the memories of the home in India nor an affair with Rashid offer any solace to her tormented self.

Sociologist, Sati. S.Dasgupta in her, *On the Trail of an Uncertain Dream: An immigrant experience in American*, (1989), says that, "the women spend most of their time in the company of other women before marriage as well after marriage". Thus their lives for the most part are spent within their female world. But an Indian immigrant woman after marriage has to leave her kin and friends to migrate to another world with her husband. She sees the whole in her male companion. And thus the female world and bonding are lost forever to the Indian immigrant woman. Marriage disrupts the world of interpersonal relationships of the immigrant woman instead of enriching them. Her whole time is spent within their family. She feels left out and cannot belong to the community around her. This nurtures a sense of loneliness and boredom. Men have contacts with the outside world through their jobs, and women mostly stay at home, building a cocoon around themselves, with the feeling of 'not belonging here'. Sandhya feels a sudden emptiness in her arms, nothing to hold onto, once she breaks up with Rashid. Stephen, who is comfortably ensconced in his safe status as first class citizen in the United States of America, does not fully understand the anxieties of people who have migrated, but he tries his best to help his wife Sandhya. Sandhya's world comprises Dora, Stephen and her house. Her life is unstable. As the narrator stresses:

Sandhya paid a then retreated, bartering sense for memory, her inner life so sensual,

unstable. This was the world Stephen had brought her to... (MM: 39)

Meena Alexander brings out the emotional insecurity in Sandhya, who starts an extramarital relationship with Rashid. She finds herself deviating from her customs and traditions and being drawn to the fast New World. Sandhya feels that marrying an Indian and flying off to the United States is far better than marrying an American. She feels that she is discarded by her community and religion. Here we notice the identity of woman undergoing crises after being married to a man from an alien country. The complication of two traditions and cultures is also a noticeable fact:

Now if only Sandhya had married an Indian, living in American would be easier on her... In her present state it was as if were cast out by the community. Where could she make a place for herself?... (MM: 133)

She finds chaos everywhere and cannot exit from it. But, she experiences a transformation towards the end. Meena Alexander links her protagonist to the other Indian immigrants in their of the past and the present. The very same reflections of the characters are brought out in the next novel *Fault Lines*.

Alexander's autobiography *Fault Lines* accommodates and discusses the questions of race, gender and ethnicity. In the beginning of the narrative, the author gives the details of her birth and the places they moved into. She can be called a postcolonial migrant because she was born in one continent, educated in another, living in a third one. There she says...

That's all I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations. Uprooted so many times. She can connect nothing with nothing... A book with the torn ends visible. Writing in search of homeland (FL: 3-4)

Her mother taught her that a woman's world is by the side of her family and a woman should not take up any job. When Meena marries David and leaves for the States, she compares herself with a cabbage packed up in two worlds, the past and the present.

Here we get to know the expatriate's feelings - of her, emigration to the New World:

My own soul seemed to me, then, a cabbage like thing, closed tight in a plastic cover. My two worlds, present and past, were torn apart, and I was the fault line, the crack that marked the dislocation (FL : 15)

While discussing racial discrimination. She recounts an incident in which a white man on a bike calling her a "black bitch"(FL:169). She was so shaken that she could not speak of this incident to her white American husband because she did not know if he would understand what it mean(s) to be 'Unwhite in America'. Instead, she relates the incident to an Indian friend. This incident etches, very implicitly, her fragile marital relationship with her white American husband. She is not even free enough to share her problems with her husband in an alien world.

I find a connection between the two works of Meena Alexander *FaultLines* and *ManhattanMusic*. The marital context in her autobiography *FaultLines* is discussed with the same fervor in *Manhattan Music*. The protagonists in both the works marry white men and consequently face the same problems and the Tensions of the New World. The interpersonal relationships of the immigrant women and their marital relationships are the same in the two texts.

The other novelist who belongs to the first generation of expatriate Writers is Bharathi Mukherjee, an Indian- born American novelist who is a familiar voice in the Indian literary diaspora. In her fiction, Mukherjee depicts the problems Faced by Indian who attempt to assimilate into the North American lifestyles. The author in her novel, *wife* very well brings this out.

Wife is the story of an Indian woman, Dimple Basu, who is timid and leaves her homeland after her marriage with Amit Basu. The young couple migrates to New York and Dimple is made to adjust to the whole new set of circumstances amidst violence. She does everything she can to obliterate her identity. She even induces a miscarriage so she does not have to bring a child conceived in India

into the New World. Amit, who is preoccupied with his economic interests, is of little comfort to her.

They meet other Indians who have adjusted themselves with the Americans. Her friends try to encourage her to take up various activities, but she is afraid to leave her apartment. She is represented as an expatriate who tries to hide in a self-ospun cocoon around her. She finds it difficult to adjust to the New World around her. Amit does not take it seriously. He thinks that she is having a culture shock. Dimple feels that all her dreams are shattered. Dimple lacks the inclination to face the reality around her and is never able to delve deep into an issue or seriously analyses a relationship. She lacks a real open communication with her husband and instead tries superficial tactics to please her husband.

... Dimple took to wearing bright colors..... she even tried to imitate way Mrs. Ghose laughed and left sentences half-finished. She gave up eating her favorite hot green chillies. (W:70)

Having no life apart from that of being a wife, Dimple is unable to be an individual. Her final protest the killing of her husband-is an unrealistic as the life she dreamed about. It is also with as little reason as her obsession with death of suicide. To kill her husband because "he always spilled sugar on the counter" (W: 80) is the final act of desperation. Finally, it is only the dram world of ads and T.V which gives her the confidence to kill because "women on Television got away with murder". (W: 81)

Sociologist, Ravindra. K. Jain in his book, *Indian Communities Abroad*.(1998) argues that " in a traditional society like India, where family structure is essentially patriarchal, marriages are arranged and the husband is the breadwinner and the supremacy of the husband is generally the norm". The wife is content supervising the household, maintaining close ties with the husband's family and heron relatives, by keeping herself busy with neighbours and friends within the community. Hence these phenomena in most .of the cases have contributed to loving and stable relationship between husbands and wives. But after migrating to North America,

both husband and wives, especially the wives, find themselves in a different environment. Many things that had kept the wives busy and contented in India are simply not present in the new environment. These elements lead to the deterioration of a stable, marital lives and the lack of communication between the spouses in most of the cases.

This is precisely what happened to the life of Dimple. She is helplessly caught in the quest for an identity as an American woman. She is frustrated with her married life. She murders her traditional Indian husband whom she has gradually outgrown. Thus, the 'wife' in the Indian tradition here becomes an ironic entity.

Television introduces Dimple to love, and she feels that her husband does not have the features of T.V heroes. She sees that Amit has betrayed her. In Calcutta he had been an emblem of strength and now he seems weak and vulnerable. The symbol of the cage that the novelist uses is quite relevant in the story. It stands as a symbol of a comfortable but restricted freedom. In the same way Dimple was given all the basic necessities she needed but her mobility and freedom of expression were restricted. It is only after watching a T.V program in which a birdcage figured prominently that she kills her husband. This delineates the insecurities of the Indian immigrant woman caught between the real and fantastical world of America.

Dimple's way of dressing confirms her as an Indian woman who has abandoned her modesty and adopted American attitudes towards sexuality:

Where we actually encounter her, she appears in dark glasses, white pants, and a knotted shirt, leaves her navel, exposed, the effect is "chillingly sexy" (W:74)

We find her husband Amit being irrational. Although he does not want Dimple to wear pants, he persuades her to drink beer and a force Dimple to go out and meet other Indians but does not permit her to accept a job offered by one. The marital life of Dimple and Amit turns out to be a failure resulting in the murder of Amit by Dimple.

Another work by Bharathi Mukherjee, *Darkness* is in a sense different from the other works of the novelist. Love, desire and romance as

experienced by the immigrant men and women from the Indian subcontinent in the New World appear as a recurring theme in her collection of short stories, *Darkness*. Unlike the expatriate who experiences nostalgia for the past, the immigrant lives in the present and adjusts herself with the environment around her.

Similarly, the "world according to Hsu" is a story based on a man — woman relationship. This story clearly gives the details that such relationships are based on equality in partnership and mutual understanding. The protagonist Ratna is of Indian origin and her husband Graeme Clayton is a Canadian Professor of Psychology at McGill University, Montreal. They are on an island off the coast of Africa. He persuades Ratna to move from what she describes as the 'French dominant-Montreal' to the 'English dominant Toronto'. Ratna prefers Montreal because in Toronto she would not be an Indian. She would lose her identity. Supporting her fear, the story reports three incidents of violence against Indians in Toronto. Graeme without giving any heed to Ratna's fear informs her that he has accepted the job in Toronto. He goes alone to Toronto leaving Ratna behind. This is a story viewed mainly from the expatriate's point of view.

Even though many changes take place in the psyche of Indians after their immigration; some remain the same as they were in their homeland. Wholesome changes are explicitly evident, they do not change in the basic attitudes towards family and marriage. The husband generally remains the sole authority and decision maker in many cases the immigrants' commitment to the institution of marriage remains strong and it is viewed as a lifelong commitment. Since the husbands and wives come to the United States as adults, their attitudes do not change.

Thus Ratna remains the same even after immigration. The mutual understanding, which is required for a happy married life, is lost in the fast-paced and fluctuating western culture. There is an incident towards the end in which the motley of tourists, confined to the seedy hotel dining room by curfews, dine listen to each other's conversations and even participate in them. "Ratna had ordered. The National Dish". (D:53)

For the first time she saw that label on the bottle read: cote de Cassandra. A superior red..... she poured herself another glass, feeling for the moment at home in that collection of Indians and Europeans... she Would never feel so at home again (D: 55-56).

Many women at the time marriage hoped to go back after few years to their own country but that remained a distant dream in many cases. Thus, they learnt to adjust themselves to the alien environment around them.

Iqbal and Nafeesa are immigrants in the story "*Lady from Luck now*". They both meet their friends and neighbours in the International meetings held by the IBM Iqbal does not like the international meetings because he thinks that looking back into the past and remembering it is waste of time. He always looks to the future even Nafeesa is of the same character but the difference is that she attends the meetings and plays the hostess to the new immigrants. Here she comes into contact with Dr James Beamish, a Palestinian. He is a man of sixty years. Nafeesa stars an affair with him. Towards the end she realizes that she had crossed her cultural bounds:

That half hour wait for the cab, as Kate related tales of the grandson to her distracted husband was the most painful... I have known all along that perfect love has to be fatal. I have survived on four of the five continents". (D:33)

Generally wives immigrate to the foreign land without sufficient knowledge of the foreign culture they are about to face. Therefore, the fast culture around her had been changing from time to had led her into a wrong path.

In India, in the traditional circle, the husband and wife lead their lives with others rather than spending them together. Men and women are engaged in different tasks and their intimacy is experienced only in the nights. This separatism between husband and wife gives us an insight into the traditional roles of marriage partners in the East. There is hardly any recognition of individual

interests or aspirations in the relationship between husband and wife. The wife's only concern is to perform properly all services needed by the husband whose satisfaction is her "joy" in life. On the other hand, the family has undergone a basic transformation. The patriarchal household ruled by the father has all but disappeared. Wives and mothers have achieved a considerable degree of economic independence. The family has become democratic in form, a free association of persons, bound together by ties of affection, and mutual help, in which the rights of each member are respected and the future of the individual is not sacrificed for the strength and solidarity of the family.

Mitali R. Pati in an article titled "Love and the Indian immigrant in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction states that" the sociologist finds that during the early 70's, Indian immigrant males began to bring in Indian brides. This import of brides shows the male immigrants desire to continue the 'convenient' practice of South Asian patriarchy amid the features of the new world". Thus, we find that Mukherjee's characterization of the Indian mentality is through "female "characters. The characters of Indian men are brought to life through the satiric narratives of immigrant women.

Jasmine is another novel of Barite Mukherjee in which she traces the sojourning of young South Asian women from the United States, but Jasmine does not focus on diasporic male/female relationship. Mukherjee brings in the marital relationship in her depiction of the Vadher as, the couple with whom Jasmine stayed in New York. She shows how the disempowerment of the male in the influences that form the female diasporic consciousness. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in India now lives in San Francisco. She is the author of *The Mistress of Spices*, a novel and *Arranged Marriage*, which comprises short stories. She has also written many volumes of poetry. *The Mistress of Spices* is the first novel by the author.

Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* is an immigrant from India who runs a spice shop in Oakland, California. She supplies the ingredients for curries and kormas and she also helps her customers get the commodities they desire most. Tilo is a mistress of spices, a priestess of the secret and

magical powers of spices. Therefore we will look into the lives of the Indian expatriate customers who visit the shop in connection with their marital relationships.

One such customer among them is Abuja's wife, Lalita, who is caught in an unhappy and abusive marriage. She comes to Tilo for a spice to avoid the harassment she receives from her husband and make her marital life successful. Lalita spent a happy life before marriage. Though she was not interested in marriage she **Jasmine** is another novel of Bahrain Mukherjee in which she traces the sojourning of young South Asian women from the United States, but Jasmine does not focus on diasporic male/female relationship. Mukherjee brings in the marital relationship in her depiction of the Vadher as, the couple with whom Jasmine stayed in New York. She shows how the disempowerment of the male in the influences that form the female diasporic consciousness.

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One such customer among them is Ahuja's wife, Lalita, who is caught in an unhappy and abusive marriage. She comes to Tilo for a spice to avoid the harassment she receives from her husband and make her marital life successful. Lalita spent a happy life before marriage. Though she was not interested in marriage she allowed herself to be married to Ahuja, an Indian immigrant. In American society love and marriage are usually interrelated and the individual has a freedom of choice in selecting a mate.

In India, the parents are morally obliged to find mates for their children, who in turn were obliged to accept their parent's choice. Lalita accepted to marry Ahuja but she could not accept him as her husband. But Ahuja grabs Lalita and forcibly has sex with her. With silent tears, she travels all the way over the seas to America. Even then she could not find any change in her new life. She thought that the New World changes her destiny but the past culture and traditions lingering in her mind would not leave her.

"I knew better, but still I hoped as women do. For what else is there for us? Here in America may be we could start again, away from those eyes, those mouths always telling us how a man should act, what is a woman's duty. But the voice we carried the whole way inside our heads". (TMOS: 102-103)

She also gives details of the harassment she faces from her husband. He also makes certain rules...

Recently the rules. No going out. No talking on the phone. Every penny I spend to be accounted for. He should read my letter before he mails them. And the calls. All day. Sometimes every twenty Minutes to check on what I'm doing. To make sure I'm there (TMOS: 103)

This incident makes it clear that Indian men in general wherever they are, remain the same, trying to rule over women.

Ahuja's wife pleads before Tilo to give her a spice that would put an end to all these problems. Tilo gives 'fennel' for Lalita to attain mental strength. It also helps her to clear away the disputes between the couple and to create a sense of individuality in Lalita. Later, Tilo receives a letter from Ahuja stating that she has left her husband and is trying to lead life of her own. Thus the spice 'fennel' had helped Lalita to maintain her individuality and drive away the problems she had faced.

The other text *Arranged Marriage*, a collection of short stories, comprises the lives of Indian-born women leading their new lives in

America with their old treasured beliefs and a desire to achieve success in the New World. And in their battle there arise a lot of conflicts. It might be useful to make a brief study of some of the stories, which deal with the immigrant man-woman relationship in America.

Clothes is a story of the protagonist Sunita who is married to Somesh who lives in California. After her marriage she leaves for the United States. Somesh works in a store along with a partner. The store is open for twenty-four hours a day here the author points out the busy lives of the people in America in contrast to the one back home.

It stayed open twenty-four hours, yet, all night, every night, not like the Indian stores which closed at dinnertime and sometimes in the hottest part of the afternoon.(A.M: 20-21)

This heavy load of work does not allow the couple to spend time together at nights. They longed to stay together which was impossible in the fast commercial world they are in.

"Only thing is," Somesh would say about the nightshifts, "I really miss you. I sit there, think of you a sleep in bed". (AM: 30)

And this moonlighting by Somesh becomes the cause of his death. When he stays in the store at night the thieves kill him.

Unlike traditional Indian women, Sunita does not lose her individuality. She gets ready to face the future with a strong mind. This would not have happened if Sunita were in India. She tried to be brave because she was in America. The fast-cultured world drove away the fear from her and molded the timid Indian woman into a brave one. We can see the same immigrants who faced problems in America reinforcing themselves during grave situations due to the influence of the fast culture as well as due to an instinct for survival.

"*The Disappearance*" is another story of a woman who disappears leaving her husband and her child. He files a complaint about her disappearance in the police station and also makes many efforts to search for his wife. But towards the end he finds out

that his wife had not disappeared suddenly but went away with a plan in sorting out her own life.

The next day he took the afternoon off from work, but he didn't go to the doctor. He went... he opened his safety deposit box to find that all the jewelry was gone (AM: 177)

According to Indian custom a wife has to live with her husband till his death, following him in all troubles and happiness. This concept has undergone a change in a new fast-paced country. Here we find that there is no proper understanding between the husband and the wife. Even though the husband provides everything he can to his wife, she is dissatisfied. She is very much influenced by the colorful world she is in and her confusion arising from this life destroys her marital life.

"*Doors*" is another story of Deepak and Preeti. Preeti is an Indian woman who settled down in America as child. She marries Deepak, her friend from the University she studies in. Her mother warns her to be careful because as an immigrant she has got Americanized and she is doubtful if her daughter can adjust to the Indian traditional life. Even Deepak's friends tease him during his marriage with Preeti, by generalizing the mannerisms of the Indian woman in America.

'American' women are, always bossing you always thinking about themselves..... "It's no wonder we call them ABCD s-American Born-confused Desi's", quipped another friend as he took a swallow of beer (AM: 185)

This gives an idea of the wrong assumptions of Indian men, about immigrant women.

Their marital life goes on smoothly, but Deepak's friend Raj who comes from India to do his Masters in America disturbs it. He stays in Deepak's house. Deepak and Raj are always found together and Preeti does not appreciate this.

In America the sole responsibility of running the family falls on the shoulders of Indian immigrant women, whereas in India, his or her kin could have shared it. Most Indian immigrant women

demand more independence, a larger share in controlling their family and taking more decision. Sometimes they tend to misuse this power, taking it as a way to rule over others.

Preeti, brought up in America and staying as an immigrant was unaware of degrees of the intimacy and affection of Indian people of the same sex, and she could not tolerate the relation of Deepak and Raj. She spoils her marital relations with her impulsiveness and bungles the responsibility of running the family. "Doors" is an ironic title for the story. Preeti is always found closing the doors behind her even though it is not needed. We can say that Preeti is not. Only found closing the doors of the room but also closing the doors of her heart against her marital relation.

The story "*The Ultra Sound*" Says that the fast cultured world of America is not all negative but can also prove to be positive in maintaining relations between husband and wife. It is a story of two friends Anju and Runu who are married. Anju leaves for the United States with Sunil after her marriage whereas Runa stays behind in India in a traditional Indian family, strongly bonded by Indian customs. Anju gets accustomed to the fast culture of America. She gets full support from her husband in every aspect of their marital life.

I feel additionally fortunate because in Sunil I've found a friend, someone to discuss the perplexities of America with....

Sunil was the one who urged me to go back to school to get a degree in who education... and stayed up with me those nights before exams when I was too nervous to sleep (AM:213-2214)

On the other hand, Runu stays under the control of her husband and in laws. Sometimes the decision making families in the traditional Indian context become a nagging nuisance to the wife and husband. One has to really get along well with the family. Even Runu who was staying in India faces the same problem. Unfortunately Runu's in-laws and her husband force her to get her baby aborted after knowing that the baby inside the womb is a girl. At this instance Anju is upset and Sunil defends, the female infanticide saying: its: a man's world in India. "(AM: 218) and he says that people coming to

America have to work only for each other and not for the extended family.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni also writes about the best facilities available in America through the character of Anju. Anju feels happy to stay in America at the time of delivery because she can have Sunil beside her during the labor pains, which is impossible in India.

In India they don't let husband into the labour room and I know that I'll need Sunil with me, holding my hand, sharing the pain and the triumph of our baby's birth. (AM: 214).

The whole story is nothing but the difference between the same Indian people staying in two different worlds, their ideas, their ideas, their way of thinking, etc.

"*Affair*" is another short story of the Indian expatriate women who stays in America. Meena is a woman who gets accustomed to the fast culture around her. She works and dresses in an America way whereas Abha remains the same. She engages herself by writing Indian recopies for the magazines. Meena starts an extra marital affair because she feels that she is not comfortable with Srikanth. She is not afraid of her in-laws in India. She says that she is not bound by the traditional rules and she wanted to live a life of her own. Though Abhad is agrees with Meena, she later on thinks about this matter and towards the end we find Abha changed. She also chalks out her life according to her wish.

The stories we have discussed so far make it clear that most Indian men in the Diaspora, according to these novelists, generally, remain the same. There is little change in their attitudes or manners. Men try to rule over their wives in most .cases. Very few women enjoy freedom after marriage in an alien country. Even the fast culture around them does not change the men in their attitude towards their wives. The practice of the husband and wife spending time together remains the same in today's context, says Kavita Murthy in her dissertation. *Inter Generational Comparison of Love and Marriage among Asian Indians: A Qualitative Inquiry.* (1997). Some women use the

profits. America provides while many misuse them and spoil their inter-personal relationships.

In this chapter, we have discussed the causes for immigration and the causes of the females outnumbering the males as evidenced in the writings of the chosen novelists. All the writers of the Indian diaspora we have analyzed so far offer the same picture of interpersonal relationships of immigrant women. They bring to light the vigorous changing status of women in America. In their stories, they have also given importance to love and romance.

Thus, it is seen that Indians even in an alien world are accustomed to the Indian culture despite their struggle between the old strict tradition and the challenge proved by their new life. Most of the stories we have discussed above, present the difficulties faced by the Indian wives in an alien culture without the company of friends or relatives, while struggling to cope with the new surroundings they cannot call their home.

Most Indian immigrants remain convinced that love is of great importance in sustaining marital relationship. Even the headstrong fantasy world of America does not change the marital relationships of the expatriates. Thus, my study attempts to analyze the man-women relationships paying particular attention to the above texts in reference to the male characters as lovers and husbands.

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