

ANALYSING LAHIRI'S UNACCUSTOMED EARTH: A GLOCAL PORTRAYAL

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Abstract

*This paper aims to analyse the formation of diasporic identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Unaccustomed Earth* with a different perspective which can be called as anti-essentialist approach. Traditionally, in the post-colonial discourse, this phenomenon has been viewed as an outcome of the coercive practices faced by diaspora while the same are exercised by the dominating segment of the society resulting into mimicry, knowledge control, split identity and hybridity. This paper reviews the earlier founded notions of hybridity by contesting that hybrid identities portrayed in the diasporic community of the selected work are the product or natural outcome of conflation of cultures, which is in harmony with 'Glocalisation'. Keeping Ronald Robertson's concept of glocalisation, Safran's and Clifford's theorization of diaspora, Stuart Hall's conception of identity and Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity as anchor, this study employs close textual analysis of the selected work to cross-examine the evolving idea of hybrid identities, particularly through the frameworks of Robertson's glocalisation and Bhabha's hybridity. Bhabha's novel approach towards 'Hybridity' and the resultant creation of 'Third Space' has not only given the diasporic identity a totally different perspective but it has also set it free by breaking the shackles of fixed identity discourse. During the close textual analysis of the selected short story collection, it has been observed that most of the characters portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri, depict variable glocal adaptation within the host culture in consonance with hybridity discourse of Bhabha. These characters emit glocal cultural streaks, resulting from the amalgamation of host and homeland cultures, which enable them to adjust in the novel environs and assimilate in the host culture. These characters remain in a consistent struggle to attain a state of 'equilibrium' to reduce friction and attain smoothness in life which is in commensuration with the concept of fluid identities. This paper analyses Lahiri's work with the aforementioned perspective in order to reach the stated objective of portraying glocal personalities of migrants.*

Key Words: Glocalisation, Hybridity, Third Space, Identity

Introduction

In postcolonial studies hybridity has always been much talked about and is taken as a main argument to contest colonizers argument of enlightenment. Migration coupled with globalisation has further intensified this debate since the process involved have grown manifolds. The emergence of new and hybrid Indian identities in the immigrant lands resulting from cultural conflation, conflict resolution, adjustments, assimilation and hybridization gets highlighted in this paper. Using close textual analysis, this paper puts forward the findings from a qualitative research conducted to analyse the formation of hybrid identity in the diasporic community of the selected work of Jhumpa Lahiri. This paper proposes that the praxis of glocalisation can be instrumental in unearthing a different and better understanding of the identity issue which is much talked about in the post-colonial discourse. It foregrounds the ways in which the characters in the short stories, while in the diasporic state, experience the phenomena of hybridity and exhibit alteration of their identity. In postcolonial studies the concept of hybridity has been much debated about and it has been considered as a negative transformation resulting into alienation, loneliness and estrangement (Ramzan & Javaid, 2025).

With the development of science and technology, the means of communication and transportation have also under gone phenomenal changes, reducing the world into a global village. This ease has resulted into increased frequency of human movement from one place to another, triggered by various 'push' and 'pull' factors. These factors were also in action prior to the technological revolution but today this aspect of migration has grown manifold and so is the role of these factors. 'Push factors' are the reasons that initiate the move of people from the

place of their origin and these may be economic, political, social or environmental. These factors are powerful and pressing in nature that force the local people to displace or abandon a locale where they have been putting up. While on the other hand pull factors, which have become very conspicuous due to information technology, are those which denote better future prospects, benefits, ease of living and profits which a new locale or a country offers. These factors attract and motivate people to migrate into new lands with the sole aim of materializing their dreams and improving quality of life (Rosenberg, 2018). This upward surge in the trends of migration coupled with rapidly fading physical barriers has shuffled the human race into various groups based on their cultural affiliation formed in post globalization world. Since identity is closely linked with culture, therefore the individuals, groups and communities who migrate into new cultural environs generally face identity issues: they remain in a continuous struggle to sustain their original identity while constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing the same in the host society. This mass movement of people from one place to another and the resultant interaction between human beings results into mutation of existing cultural streaks which produces hybrid cultures. According to Peter Wade (1999) this recurrent movement and increasing interaction of human beings has resulted into 'globalisation' (p. 7). In his work *Cultural Identity: Solution or Problem?* he further opines that cultures have become 'deterritorialised' (p. 8). The vanishing borders have also diluted the idea of pure identity as Edward Said writes, "No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind" (Said, 1993).

In this globalised world physical displacement is no longer a compulsion for cultural conflation and change. In this fast-paced world, spatial gaps are no longer formidable in their conventional sense; rather they are rapidly losing grounds and lines are blurring. 'Glocalisation', 'Migration', 'Technoculture', 'Grobalisation', 'Globalisation', blurring boundaries and conflating social occurrences have converted this world into a single scape. The phenomena of Globalisation is not only restricted to trade as commonly understood; it also entails culture and society (Norris & Inglehart, 2009) since human interaction cannot be devoid of cultural and linguistic interaction. Due to these developments the nuances amongst varied cultures are fading and resulting into hybrid cultures and identities. The journey from Globalisation to Glocalisation is the process of mixing or hybridizing the cultural traits in order to adjust the local traits with the global or the global in accordance with the local needs. The process of glocalisation increases the situational relevance and removes the dichotomy by reducing the discordant elements and imbibing harmony. It also promotes cultural diversity while preserving the cultural essentials intact. Glocalisation, relatively a new theoretical concept, is still under the process of development and with its increasing relevance in the global world it is likely to establish hold in the near future (Roudometof, 2016).

Identity formation is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon which is heavily affected by the external environment and especially in case of migrants, there is an abrupt change in the external cultural milieu. Erik H. Erikson (1968), a psychologist in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, opines:

"In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation ... by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves ... while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them" (p. 22).

Asian diaspora presents itself as a very unique specimen for diasporic studies since they have lived under the colonizers and later migrated willingly to live under the same conditions. In this way, objectively speaking, migrants from Asia have experienced cultural glocalisation

twice; once in their homeland and secondly when they moved to host land. Such prolonged and rich cultural interaction has fairly glocalised their cultural heritage and practices. Jhumpa Lahiri's works and especially short stories portray formation and transformation of identities with these undertones. Her characters challenge the very notions of rigidity and fixity while exhibiting fluid personalities as they forge new identities by absorbing novel cultural patterns carved on the palimpsest of their previous cultural foundations. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*, a collection of eight stories, deals with Asian diaspora. All these stories relate to Bengali immigrants who have moved from India and are now living in America. Lahiri very artistically and aptly portrays their struggle to deal with the evolving cultural practices while they undergo glocalisation thereby negating the ideas about the immutability of cultures. This research paper has analysed only the first 5 stories of Jhumpa Lahiri, keeping Glocalisation and Hybridity as mainstay to posit that diasporic identity transformation is Glocalisation, which is a natural outcome of conflation of cultures. It is inevitable and this change is essential for smooth continuation of life. It is not a disorder that distorts human identity or split personality syndrome nor stagnation as propagated and understood earlier.

Literature Review

Postcolonial world is a globalized world where the communities are connected to each other by dint of modern technology (Held et al., 1999, p. 1; McGrew, 1998, p. 300; Appadurai, 2000, p. 5; Held & McGrew, 2000, pp. 54-55; Hirst & Thompson, 2002, p. 247; Held & McGrew, 2003, p. 186; Scholte in Ferguson & Mansbach, 2012, p. 18). Globalisation has influenced almost all spheres of human activity including cultural and economic spheres (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 2; Kendal et al., 2009, p. 2) where it has increased trade and interdependency (Hirst & Thompson, 2002, p. 256) thereby increasing cultural and capital flow and improving living conditions (Chanda & Froetschel, 2012, p. 15; Sen, 2012, p. 299; Stiglitz, 2012, p. 367). On the cultural front it has transformed interpersonal relations, self-identity perception and social structures (Kwok-bun, 2007, pp. 1-2; Haley, 2009, p. 165; Chanda & Froetschel, 2012, pp. 117-118).

Glocalisation, a recent phenomenon, for the purpose of this paper is the adaptation of the local cultural practices according to the needs of the international cultural trends and vice versa (Ramzan et al., 2023). According to Roland Robertson (1995), glocalisation evolved from the Japanese farming technique where the farming principles were adopted to the local conditions (p. 28). He further argues that glocalisation points to interdependence and interlinking of the local and the global rather than their oppositional relationship (Robertson, 2012, p. 437). According to James Tully 'glocalisation' can also be used to talk about citizenship, where the 'glocal' is used to talk about the global networking of diverse local citizenship practices, set against the more uniform notion of the 'global' in modern conceptions of citizenship (Tully, 2008, p. 246). In this sense Tully's concept revolves around the notions of diversity, interdependence and negotiation in order to avoid friction and non-violent existence between cultures and people (Tully, 2008, p. 247; 2014, pp. 7-9).

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity' is one of the most influential philosophical concepts of present times (Mizutani, 2013). This concept is in fact an attempt to 'return the gaze' and unearth the power politics of the colonizers. Before its introduction into the postcolonial discourse, hybridity was already a part of the western philosophical thought and that is also somewhat made it ambiguous and problematic. This term reflected the western racist mindset that wanted to create the 'other' in order to segregate themselves. Westerners classified the humans as they did animals with "African... placed at the bottom of the human family, next to the ape" (Young, 1995). Although, this term had been in use in a negative way but postcolonial theorists, by virtue of their approach, subverted the negative connotations associated with this term. In consonance with the postcolonial theorists, Papastergiadis also

questions the essentialists' point of view associated with this term in his essay, *Tracing Theory in Hybridity* as he questions the fixity of human linguistic memory. He inquires, "should we use only words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialists models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary" (Papastergiadis, 1997, p. 258). The meaning and connotations of this term changed with time and the discordant and incoherent constituent elements started getting reduced to a cohesive and single entity. The standard dictionary definition of hybridity talks of amalgamation of heterogeneous and incongruous elements resulting into one entity (Mitchell, 1997). This reduction of "heterogeneous sources" into one single entity is the result of interaction between them that results into something new. This peculiar approach toward hybridity is what brought the postcolonial theorists in the limelight. The postcolonial theorists rejected the idea of authentic or original culture and propagated the fluidity and ever-changing notion of culture and identity. Hybridity is "the creation of new transcultural forms" by conflation of cultures (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013, p. 108). Since hybridity is the result of conflation of cultures therefore according to Bhabha it effects both the colonizers and colonized. In this regard the concept of mimicry gets prime importance and plays an important role in understanding this concept. According to Bhabha the colonized imitates the colonizer which is 'partial' and not a perfect mimicking. He describes it as an urge on the part of colonized to be reformed in order to become recognized (Bhabha, 1994). This is not a slavish and exact representation of an existing identity, rather it is a kind of disruption that disturbs and blurs the lines of distinction and challenges the authority of colonizer. In this way mimicry is a site of resistance which provides the colonized a platform to generate counter discourse and unveil the uncertainty and hollowness of colonial discourse. According to Bhabha (1994), "The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing (Mir et al., 2021). For in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms" (p. 86). Thus mimicry produces something new which is different from both its cultural constituents. This something new is what lies in third space and makes the emergence of new identities possible. The greatest advantage which these new identities have is their ability to transcend the local cultural settings without fully adopting to the global and thus moving toward the glocal. "Those who occupy hybrid spaces benefit from having an understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism" (Iyall Smith & Leavy, 2008). In this paper I have used this perspective of hybrid identity that is the result of the conflation of local and global cultures to carry out the close textual analysis of Lahiri's selected work.

With the passage of time Indian diaspora in the United States has not only gained prominence but it has also come of age. This transformation is also evident in the writings of Indian diasporic writers, including Jhumpa Lahiri who have done away with sentimentality and nostalgia and opted for more realistic portrayal of the immigrant societies. Lahiri is in deep love with her Indianness, yet she also portrays an urge to merge in the American cultural melting pot (Chandorkar, 2017). A second generation immigrant, Lahiri does not reflect the same intensity of nostalgia as the first generation immigrants in her works do. Primarily, she is not a diasporic writer as she herself claimed in one of her interviews (Chandorkar, 2017), yet one of the majors issues that she touches in her literary works is the assimilation of the migrants. Her characters always remain connected with their past while at the same time they look forward toward the future to adjust and assimilate with the ever-changing environments. Her portrayal reflects a transience where conception of self depends and remains contingent upon the character's ability to handle and adjust with the locale (Kemper, 2011). In *Unaccustomed Earth*, she carries on with the tradition of depicting the immigrant experience with reference of the identity formation and the relationship of the characters amongst each other.

In postcolonial studies migration has always been the centre of discussion, since this process results in the presence of migrants in the host lands and transnational cultural interactions. In this connection migration becomes more important since it triggers hybridity by bringing divergent people with different cultures together.

“Migrancy [...] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour—becomes an impossibility.” (Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, 1994, p. 13)

Migrations moves people from one cultural zone to another where people come across each other and share and exchange their cultural heritage. Pragmatic and relevant usage of hybridity relates it to the ‘contact zone’ or ‘the edge’ of a diasporic living where this term refers to the cultural mixing. This duo, taking place in the migrated lands between the migrators and the host population, is the most fertile environment for hybridity. In “The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity”, Nikos Papastergiadis discusses this cross cultural interaction at a length. He argues that this contact of settlers and host results in the ‘twin processes of globalization and migration’ (Papastergiadis 2000, p. 3). Explicitly mentioning West with reference to this transformation, Papastergiadis argues that certain segments of diaspora that came to the fore and got highlighted ‘within the cultural and political circles of the dominant society’ were so transformed that they ‘began to argue in favour of new models of representing the process of cultural interaction, and to demonstrate the negative consequences of insisting upon the denial of the emergent forms of cultural identity’ (Papastergiadis 2000, p. 3). The interaction of migrants and the hosts in the contact zones resulted in the evolution of hybridity which was something in between. Robert Young while talking about the concept of hybridity in the technical sense opines that this very process involves and evokes the idea of two different species (Young, 1995, p. 10). This led to the evolution of negative connotations of this term as it contained the superiority notion of white race over the other who were black and uncivilized. This inherent notion of superior and inferior led to the development of miscegenation, which turned out to be another form of racial corruption for the white super race while hybrid was a symbol of demeaning whiteness (Farr 1864). Ania Loomba is of the view that, “Postcolonial studies have been preoccupied with issues of hybridity, creolisation, mestizaje, in-betweenness, diasporas and liminality, with the mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism” (Loomba 1998: 173). Hybridity is not limited to a single sphere of human life, when it effects the cultures it hybridizes all spheres of human life to varying degrees. Gilroy argues with reference of field of culture about the role which hybridity plays and insist that hybridity also plays its part where “the musical components of hip hop are a hybrid form nurtured by the social relations of the South Bronx where Jamaican sound system culture was transplanted during the 1970s” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 33). Gilroy’s argument of one segment of society is further deliberated upon by Hall who while talking about the influence of hybridity opines that this phenomenon engulfs the complete society but its intensity is varied. He suggests that hybridity has the potential to transform a society in totality and while talking about this cites the example of British society (Hall, 1995, p. 18). Hybridity is casting its shadow on all segments of the society, therefore it seeps into the human life and gradually takes over it. Chambers, in this connection, talks about the human traditions getting reframed and transformed by migration and he calls this as ‘traffic’ and the ‘sights, sounds and languages of hybridity’ (Chambers 1994, p. 82). According to Clifford hybridity is “a discourse that is travelling or hybridising in new global conditions” and he stresses ‘travel trajectories’ and ‘flow’ (Clifford 1994, pp. 304-306). He is of the view that jumping to hasty conclusions and asserting that difference amongst humans are signs of

resistance whether for ‘traditional survivals’ or mixed to form part of ‘new world of hybrid forms’ (Clifford 2000, p. 103) is naïve on part of critics. The concept of hybridity is not as simple as it appears or as some critics think it is. On the contrary it is a complicated and multi-layered phenomenon which has the ability to transform and evolve with the passage of time. According to Papastergiadis, “A quick glance at the history of hybridity reveals a bizarre array of ideas’ (Papastergiadis 2000, p. 169). The anthropologist agree that this term touches upon all the facets of human life and what make it unique and interesting is its varied impact in terms of intensity and outcome. There is no question about the hybrid nature of hybridity when it comes to the role that it plays in formation of identity.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature where close textual analysis is used to study the identity changes in the character of *Unaccustomed Earth* from varied angles. Generic Inductive approach is also employed owing to its practicality and flexibility in studying social phenomena. Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* is a postcolonial work by an immigrant depicting hybrid identity formation due to conflation of cultures. Homi K Bhabha’ theory of hybridity provides the theoretical framework with the underpinnings of Robertson’s concept to glocalisation to establish that the evolution of identity is not a negative phenomenon, rather it is natural outcome of cultural interaction in terms of global and local cultural interaction.

Unaccustomed Earth- A Glocal Portrayal

Unaccustomed Earth, nominated as the best book of 2008 by New York Times, depicts the lives of Indian immigrants struggling to assimilate themselves in the American society. This compilation of short stories is organized in two parts; part I is a series of five loosely connected stories while part II comprises three short stories that can be called as a novella. The collection depicts the intricacies of relationships and evolution of hybrid identities that take place due to cultural influence. In this paper, I will only explore the stories in the first part to establish the glocal portrayal by Jhumpa Lahiri.

The concept of third space (Bhabha 1994, p. 53) has reshaped the erstwhile concepts of rigidity and fixity of identity and culture. The title of Lahiri’s work refers to the new cultural environment, which confronts the immigrants when they try to assimilate in the new lands. As culture is always in a flux and all its related paraphernalia is fluid therefore the migrants evolve their identities in order to reduce friction and ease assimilation. ‘Third Space’, a seminal concept, refers to in-between, middle or interstitial space, which in words of Bhabha is a totally new situation leading to development of identity resulting from negotiation of cultural similarities and differences (Bhabha, 1994). Roudometof (2016) while arguing about glocal phenomenon ‘as the refraction of globalization through the local’, hints towards the same. Similarly, Robertson problematizes Glocalisation and argues that the formation of hybrid identity is the result of partial acceptance and rejection of both local and global cultural streaks. Resultantly, the hybrid identity is not negative or the result of some abnormal function but a natural product of assimilation.

The first short story titled as *Unaccustomed Earth* revolves around Ruma and her father. She is a second generation Bengali immigrant who is settled in Seattle and residing with her husband and a son. Her father has recently lost his wife and is alone but Ruma is reluctant and feels confused about inviting her father to live with her since inviting him does not commensurate with the new cultural settings and may infringe upon her independence. On the contrary, in her Bengali tradition she is supposed to invite her widowed father to live with them in order to look after him but her current cultural settings have made both options seem an impossibility. This tension and confusion that results from this cultural conditions creates hybrid space where Ruma’s identity negotiate to reduce friction and lower tension. Her reluctance and unease is not because of selection of a cultural tradition but because of the

ambivalence that has been created in the third space. She is trying to evolve an identity where she can carry on with a synthesis of both the Indian traditions and American cultural demands. In this story, Lahiri portrays that how the global (American) demands intersect the Bengali traditions to create hybrid identities. Both Ruma and her father are negotiating with the inherited cultural demands and American cultural expectations which results in glocal identities. The narrator describes the shifting relationship between the father and daughter as:

“After her mother’s death it was Ruma who assumed the duty of speaking to her father every evening, asking how his day had gone. The calls were less frequent now, normally once a week on Sunday afternoons. “You’re always welcome here, Baba,” she’d told her father on the phone. “You know you don’t have to ask.” Her mother would not have asked. “We’re coming to see you in July,” she would have informed Ruma, the plane tickets already in hand. There had been a time in her life when such presumptuousness would have angered Ruma. She missed it now” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 4-5).

In the above referred lines it can be observed that Ruma is not the same as she was once her mother passed away. Her identity with the passage of time is evolving into a hybrid identity which clearly shows streaks of the homeland and host land cultures. She is desirous of calling her father which reflects the Indian cultural aspect of her identity while at the same time she is distancing herself from him which is the result of her assimilation into the American culture reflecting her hybrid identity. In the above quoted lines, the description of her mother highlights and accentuates the cultural difference which is touched upon in the starting lines. Later, Lahiri writes:

“She knew her father did not need taking care of, and yet this very fact caused her to feel guilty; in India, there would have been no question of his not moving in with her. Her father had never mentioned the possibility, and after her mother’s death it hadn’t been feasible; their old apartment was too small. But in Seattle there were rooms to spare, rooms that stood empty and without purpose (Lahiri, 2008, p. 7).

Thus, the dilemma that bemuses her is the result of her hybrid identity stemming from her cultural diversity. She is no longer anchored in the Indian culture nor American in totality. She is in the third space that is part American and part Indian which is in consonance with the concept of glocalisation. Her hybrid personality is the result of conflation of the local and global cultural streaks. Her relation with Bengali culture was getting weak as “Her own Bengali was slipping from her. Her mother had been strict, so much so that Ruma had never spoken to her in English” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 12). Later, when her father arrives and Akash stomps his sandals on the floor to copy his grandfather the author’s description of Ruma vividly portrays her identity transformation. The narrator while talking about the habit of taking off the shoes, a typical Indian cultural habit, writes, “It was one of the many habits of her upbringing which she’d shed in her adult life, without knowing when or why” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 13). This breaking up and shedding the local cultural traits is the result of her mixing up with the global cultural environs. The process of glocalisation entails the mixing up of the global and local aspects to create a new hybrid identity which resides in the third space. Ruma is a glocalised character which is formed by the conflation of cultures.

Ruma’s father has also undergone identity evolution being in the new cultural environs. When he arrives to meet her Ruma and she moves to the door along with Akash to receive him they:

“...watched as her father opened the trunk of the car, lifting out a small black suitcase with wheels. He was wearing a baseball cap that said POMPEII, brown cotton pants and a sky-blue polo shirt, and a pair of white leather sneakers. She was struck by the degree to which her father resembled an American in his old age (Lahiri, 2008, p. 11).

It is not only the physical appearance of Ruma's father that has changed, it is in fact the identity evolution which is reflected through the physical outlook and his behavioural change. He had evolved into a hybrid personality that against the dictates of Indian culture had decided not to become a burden or to settle in Ruma's home for good. He opted for global mobility and started enjoying travelling. The writer describes him as, "Ruma's father retired from the pharmaceutical company where he had worked for many decades and began traveling in Europe, a continent he'd never seen" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 1). This transformation in his personality reflects the global cultural influence that has brought a tinge of independence and freedom while falsifying Ruma's fears of dependence. This change in his behaviour shows the assimilation of global cultural traits in the identity of Ruma's father.

Eventually, her father does turn up for a short stint and leaves with a promise to come back again for a visit. His short visit in which he plants a garden also points towards the glocalisation of the environs. His planting of garden in Ruma's home is a vivid display of how the local traditions negotiate in the foreign soil and germinate with new glocal implications and character. The write narrator while portraying this aspect of father's identity writes that he spent hours in the garden, turning the soil, planting flowers that would bloom long after he would leave. Lahiri writes:

"For the rest of the day, with Akash playing at his side in a growing mountain of soil, her father pushed the shovel into the ground, hacking away at grass with a soft, forceful sound, wearing his baseball cap to protect his head from the sun. He worked steadily, pausing briefly at midday to eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich along with Akash, coming in at dusk only because he said the mosquitoes were out" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 43).

His love for the soil links him to the Indian culture but he is exercising the Bengali cultural practices in global dwellings. Similarly, he loves to roam around and see the places which he had not seen earlier and while doing so he comes across a lady with whom he builds a bond of affiliation. When he visits his daughter he is again taken over by his Bengali sentimentality and he fails to disclose to her that he is dating and he is emotionally engaged with Bagchi. The narrator while depicting his mental state writes:

"It was an opportunity to tell Ruma. It was more difficult than he'd thought, being in his daughter's home, being around her all day. He felt pathetic deceiving her. But what would he say? That he had made a new friend? A girlfriend? The word was unknown to him, impossible to express; he had never had a girlfriend in his life" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 39).

This modesty exercised by Ruma's father is a clear reflection of his Indian heritage. The code switching between Bengali and English language also reflects the glocal aspect of Lahiri's portrayal. The intensity of glocality is more intense in Akash, as he never talks to his grandfather in Bengali. Ruma is also in the habit of talking to Akash in English despite her mother's effort that they should not give up on Bengali.

Lahiri in *Unaccustomed Earth* portrays glocal community through Ruma's enigma, her father's transformation and Akash's hybrid personality. The hybrid personalities of all three characters reflect glocal state with varying degree and intensity. This variation is due to the intensity and frequency of exposure the characters had with the global culture milieu. The characters are in a continuous struggle to strike a balance between the local and the global worlds. Through these characters Lahiri puts emphasis upon creating transnational identities to negotiate through the two realms. A close examination reveals that the pushing and pulling between the two cultures have dragged identity into third space where the glocalisation takes place.

The next story in this collection is *Hell-Heaven* which portrays another Bengali family undergoing the same transnational cultural experience. The story is narrated in first person by

Usha who is a daughter and grows up to be a lady while her mother negotiates the world of hell and heaven. Pranab, an MIT student show up at their home to find some company since in this new culture he was an alien and was haunted by the isolation that surrounded him. Usha's father and mother could not develop the love bond since her father married her mother under the cultural compulsions and according to her mother, her husband was married with his work. This dearth of passions and love diverted her mother's attention towards Pranab which later developed into a crush but could not be materialized as Deborah, an American lady, captured his heart and they got married.

Hell-Heaven depicts hybrid personalities resulting from transcultural interaction. Aparna's hybrid personality depicted by Lahiri is the result of her loneliness in the American culture which seems estranged to her. Pranab's early days in America brings him closer to this family but as interacts with the crosscurrents and undercurrents of American culture he finds strength to defy his parents and marry against their will. During the course of story Pranab's hybrid identity undergoes a transformation that swings him towards Deborah. Usha, the narrator, herself evolves a hybrid personality being a product of Bengali domestic culture while being raised in American freedom where nothing matched with her cultural heritage. She herself utter, "I was raised with one foot in each world" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 88). This depiction of being a denizen of two world hints towards Bhabha's third space that contains the remnants of both the constituting cultural domains. Her identity is not the product of one cultural realm, rather her hybrid identity is the result of her negotiation of cultural tracts. Aparna, Usha's mother, is also alienated and in a state of ambivalence. She feels estranged in America that is why she quickly gets attracted towards Pranab who brings along the Bengali cultural background. She is married to a husband who is married to his work and fails to find harmony with her.

Aparna, a traditional Bengali wife, engages in affair with Pranab who is a stranger and calls her *Boudi* (Auntie). This act on the part of mother is reflective of the American cultural influence where such romantic escapades are not prohibited nor discouraged. Mother under the influence of American culture while negotiating the cultural transnationalism engages with a stranger in order to gratify herself. Her current state is in line with Bhabha's third space where a conflation of cultures is framing the identity. Her amorous moves towards Pranab is reflective of her glocal personality that is an amalgamation of the two cultural worlds that she possesses. Her passion for the Bengali rituals in American setting is also an indicator of her glocalised identity. The narrator describes, "She prepared elaborate Bengali meals for him, as if feeding him could anchor him to us" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 105). She despite being in the global cultural milieu is unable to express her infatuation with Pranab whereas her love and passion both grow day by day until he breaks the news to the family of marrying an American girl. Usha while describing the change in her mother's identity narrates:

"I would return from school and find my mother with her purse in her lap and her trench coat on, desperate to escape the apartment where she had spent the day alone. But now I would find her in the kitchen, rolling out dough for luchis, which she normally made only on Sundays for my father and me, or putting up new curtains she'd bought at Woolworth's. I did not know, back then, that Pranab Kaku's visits were what my mother looked forward to all day" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 63)

As already discussed that glocalisation is the mixing of the local with the global in order to ease assimilation and acceptance in the new emerging cultural milieu. Pranab's relation with Deborah is a testament to hybrid glocal identity of Pranab. In the opening of the story he was searching for a Bengali homely environment that brought him to Usha's abode but later he falls in love with the American way of life and his selection of life partner which speaks of his hybrid transformation of personality that borrows segments of both local and global

cultural influences. Pranab's marriage turns out to be another glocal event where both cultural traditions conflate to complete the marriage ritual to suit the couple's hybrid identity. The writer says:

"A few weeks before the wedding, my parents invited Pranab Kaku to the house alone, and my mother prepared a special meal to mark the end of his bachelorhood. It would be the only Bengali aspect of the wedding; the rest of it would be strictly American, with a cake and a minister and Deborah in a long white dress and veil". (Lahiri, 2008, p. 72)

Later, when the couple invites guests at their new house for a gathering, there Usha is taken back when she sees her parents and especially her mother adhering to the western cultural traditions. Before they started with the food, Deborah's father got up to say the grace and Usha was stunned that her parents adhered to the western grace rituals:

"Deborah's father, Gene, got up to say grace, and asked everyone at the table to join hands. He bowed his head and closed his eyes. "Dear Lord, we thank you today for the food we are about to receive," he began. My parents were seated next to each other, and I was stunned to see that they complied, that my father's brown fingers lightly clasped my mother's pale ones." (Lahiri, 2008, p. 78)

This short story is a perfect portrayal of glocalised characters where all characters are an embodiment of local and global cultural traits. Usha, the narrator defines herself as somebody who was an American child at school and a Bengali daughter at home. This conflation of cultures and formation of hybrid identities is manifestation of glocalisation. This story shows that how Bengali traditions get tailored and re-enacted in global cultural environment producing cultural traits that are not purely Bengali nor American but hybrid. *Hell-Heaven* is a vivid portrayal of how migrant lives get shaped by hybridity and glocalisation which is not a negative transformation rather it is an evolution towards better settlement.

The next story which forms part of Lahiri's collection of stories is *A Choice of Accommodation* which again revolves around a Bengali American man Amit and his wife Megan. The couple is living a typical married life which lacks spark and teeming with boredom. During the story they travel to attend the wedding ceremony of Amit's former schoolmate Pam. The couple plans to reinvigorate their love life by making this trip a romantic getaway. For this purpose they leave their daughters back at home. Instead their insecurities surface during this trip and they both start feeling alienated and nostalgic. Lahiri uses Amit's trip back to his old school to highlight the process that get entangled in the lives of the migrants and forces them to evolve and transform in order to assimilate and reduce friction.

In *A Choice of Accommodation* Lahiri depicts Amit's life struggle which reflects Bhabha's hybridity and glocalisation. His journey back to his school shows how the life of an immigrant passes through various phases of transformation to survive in the new environs. Amit's South Asian identity makes him conspicuous at his school where he feels that he is part of the students and sometimes as if he is an outsider, Lahiri writes, "At Langford, Amit was the only Indian student, and people always assumed that he'd been born and raised in that country and not in Massachusetts" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 97). His physical outlook linked him to his ancestral cultural heritage whereas his personality and speech placed him in the global landscape. His friends at the college misjudged him on account of his physical appearance but later, "They complimented him on his accent, always telling him how good his English was. He'd arrived when he was fifteen, for sophomore year, which at Langford was called the fourth form, and by that time friendships and alliances among the boys of his class were already in place" (Lahiri, 2008, p. 97). This conflation of culture in the personality of Amit is the result of cultural amalgamation. He is a product of both the local and global culture. This

transformation is the result of glocalisation that has helped him in adapting and assimilating in the society as an immigrant.

Later in the story, Lahiri portrays further this process of gradual transformation leading to his glocalisation in terms of his anchor getting detached from his locus. Lahiri writes:

“After that first semester he had slipped as best as he could into this world, swimming competitively, calling boys by their last names, always wearing khakis because jeans were not allowed. He learned to live without his mother and father, as everyone else did, shedding his daily dependence on them even though he was still a boy, and even to enjoy it. Still, he refused to forgive them.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 98)

In the above quoted lines, Amit’s gradual disengagement from his parents and still his yearning to stick to them is again a glocal portrayal of the cultural conflation that has transformed his personality and resulted into a hybrid identity. He is sailing towards the beauties of American life while strings of his parental love still pulls him back to his parents. His identity is transformed into a hybrid identity that contains the remnants of the constituting cultures while it is in the third space representing glocal identity. Amit’s wedding with Megan is another example of glocal portrayal by Lahiri. Amit is an Indian who marries an American lady which again symbolises the amalgamation of two cultural traits resulting into glocalisation. This relationship clearly illustrates hybridity which has resulted from the migrant’s exposure to the global world. In such hybrid transformation, sometimes the assimilation does not result into elimination of difference in totality whereas they remain visible in certain cases. Amit’s personality is a clear reflection of hybrid identity which is caught between the American affluence and South Asian cultural heritage. The story depicts global community where the local cultural traits gets intersected by global ones resulting into glocalisation. Lahiri’s portrayal of Amit and his life amply exhibits the negotiation of cultures where hybridity and glocalisation shape human personality while they embrace the cultures to assimilate.

Only Goodness is the fourth story that appears in the series of short stories name *Unaccustomed Earth*. This story revolves around Sudha and her younger brother Rahul who is addicted to alcohol and drags his sister with him. Initially, Sudha herself helped her brother to taste beer in order make him feel the thrill of defiance but little she knew at that time that there is no coming back from this one way road. During his college life the intensity of his addiction continued to intensify and he could not control himself. This led to his being dropped out of the college and he moved in with his parents and started living with them. On the other hand his sister moves to London, marries and lives a happy life with an English man who gives her a sense of security and stability. Rahul tries to reconnect with his sister, claiming that he is sober now and he wants to visit her in London. He visits her and stays at her place while one day his sister and her husband plan to go to movies but due to Neel they are hesitant. Rahul volunteers to baby sit Neel so that his sister and her husband can have a day to themselves. When they come back they find Rahul passed out drunk while Neel is in the bath tub. Roger gets infuriated and bans his entry in the house while he scolds his wife for concealing facts about her brother.

This story depicts the struggle which immigrants have to face in order to survive in foreign lands. Sudha, in this story, is an ideal character which embodies both eastern and western cultural traits. Similarly, her brother is also the result of conflation of both American freedom and Bengali cultural expectations that fuse within his identity. Both the siblings are living in the global scapes but they are judged through Bengali societal standards of morality and success. Rahul gets admission in Ithaca, a new college, where he is exposed to the global culture unchecked and unprotected. On Christmas, when he comes back to visit his family, he is a person with changed identity. Sudha noticed that, “His hair had grown long enough to

conceal his neck and to tuck behind his ears. He wore a checked flannel shirt, and around his wrist, a knotted woven bracelet” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 131). This change in his personality is the result of hybrid identity which has evolved due to bicultural abode that he has to live in. He is not enthusiastic to visit his parents and he taunts his sister when she opposes his plans to go out late to the liquor store. Sudha is surprised at his audacity of planning late night trip to the liquor store, she says, ““Now?” she asked. “Do you have any other plans for the evening?” “Well, no. But Ma and Baba are going to think it’s weird if we go out all of a sudden.” He rolled his eyes. “Jesus, Didi. You’re almost twenty-four. Do you really still care what they think?””(Lahiri, 2008, p. 132). His concept of freedom from parental control links him to the Americanization of identity which is a slow but sure process in global cultural scape. Lahiri in this room has portrayed two different identities that have glocalised to various extents based on their exposure to the global cultural milieu. Sudha and Rahul, both are second generation immigrant but Rahul’s identity transformed more on account of his distance from home. Rahul from childhood was a boy with different identity, according to Sudha, “His face defied the family mold” (p. 138). Later as he grows he gets different treatment in comparison to his sister which, “Sudha supposed it was a combination of his being a boy and being younger, and her parents being more at ease with the way things worked in America by then” (p. 138). His approach toward life and his identity reflects hybridity. Even in case of his family he show lack of empathy and never considers helping them as his duty. Lahiri writes:

“Rahul never considered it his duty to help their parents in this way. While Sudha regarded her parents’ separation from India as an ailment that ebbed and flowed like a cancer, Rahul was impermeable to that aspect of their life as well. “No one dragged them here,” he would say. “Baba left India to get rich, and Ma married him because she had nothing else to do.” That was Rahul, always aware of the family’s weaknesses, never sparing Sudha from the things she least wanted to face.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 138)

Sudha on the other hand is a responsible daughter who is ready to move to London for her double major. When she moves to London and she marries Roger, a British, which again show fusion of global and local cultures. Sudha’s hybrid identity brings her closer to her parents as she manifests less intense glocal traits. She represents a successful diasporic hybrid identity which has not taken the toll of cultural transformations whereas her brother Rahul is an embodiment of glocal hybridity where his identity appears to be collapsing under the cultural influence. This story dramatizes how families who migrate tend to transplant their local values the global cultural settings which sometimes result in success like Sudha and sometimes in disaster like Rahul. This short story is a microcosm of global scape where Sudha’s regrets, Rahul’s collapse and their parents efforts portray how global and local forces mould and transform identity. *Only Goodness* is a vivid example and a stark reminder that hybridity and glocalisation are two inevitable processes in any migrant’s life and it is not essential that they must always be of celebratory nature. Lahiri’s portrayal of Rahul and Sudha exemplifies the glocal transformation of identities.

Nobody’s Business is the last story of first part of Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth*. This story deals with a thirty year old Bengali American woman named Sang who resides in Boston with her two roommates Paul and Heather. In this story Lahiri explores cultural identities and cross-cultural relationships by involving romantic entanglements. Sang becomes the focus of male segment of the society who keep on proposing her without seeking her consent since her parents were worried and on a look out for a good match. This makes Sang’s life difficult while she at the same time is trying to handle her relationship with a man named Farouk. In this story Lahiri explores the unrequited love, cultural bondages and complexities of human relationships. Sang’s roommates Paul and Heather can easily guess when Sang is on a phone with a suitor since her body language and tone would give them a clue. Paul who is also the

narrator of the story is also a secret admirer of Sang and loves her but feels shy of expressing it to her.

Sang considers Paul only as a friend while she is in a relationship with Farouk, an Egyptian who in turn ignores her and behaves indifferently. Paul while living with Sang and sharing the same apartment finds problems with her personality and warns her against Farouk while Farouk is busy in flirting with other girls. Sang's parents are not in favour of her relationship with Farouk and encourage her to marry someone from her own culture to which Sang is adverse. Paul, a secret admirer, finds himself at quandary when he sees Sang's love for Farouk getting deeper and intense. Paul gets a phone call from a woman who claims to be Farouk's fiancée and tells him that he is cheating on Sang. Paul informs Sang who confronts Farouk, who admits that it is true and he had been engaged for a long time. Sang feels heart broken and Paul tries to console her while admitting to his secret love for her. He proposes to her but she rejects him and leaves the place to go back to his old Bengali cultural life.

Sang's life is a perfect example of Bhabha's hybridity where she negotiates her ways between American cultural settings and Bengali cultural traditional demands. Whenever she is on the phone with a Bengali suitor she does code switching. This bilingual communication expresses Bhabha's hybridity where identity is formed in the third space borrowing the cultural elements from both cultural backgrounds. Sang's living with male roommates is again a global cultural tendency while she is getting proposals from the local cultural space that makes her a glocalised character. She is engaged in cross cultural relationship with Farouk while negotiating multi-cultural scapes. Her parents are insistent upon her getting a life partner from her parental heritage while living in American culture. Her apartment is a perfect example of glocalised settings as in this room Bengali traditions intersect the American social settings making it a hybrid room where the dwellers are in third space.

This story dramatizes how the local cultural traditions of marriage, relationship, expectations and parenthood get re-enacted with different tone and scheme of things in the global context. Sang's hybrid identity is a perfect example of a glocalised identity which reflects the streaks of both local and global heritage. This conflation of cultures takes place in global scapes with cultures intersect each other in various spheres.

The stories in part I of Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* exhibit the fact that identity and culture are never fixed or rigid as perceived earlier, rather traditions and cultures are dynamic leading to identity which is fluid and constantly evolving under the cultural influence. The characters in the stories discussed above exhibit and inhabit what Bhabha calls as hybrid identity or "third space". This is the space, according to Bhabha where identities are constantly negotiated between the local and global cultures. The characters in Lahiri's stories while reside in the third space negotiate between their cultural heritage and demands of the American freedom. These identities while being hybrid exhibit glocal cultural streaks that makes them suitable for residing in the hybrid world of the third space. Lahiri dramatizes these characters while portraying them in the glocal landscape: local Bengali practices of relationship, dinning habits, duty, family bonds and marriage get transplanted into global contexts—Seattle gardens, Cambridge kitchens, London households, Boston apartments—where these get hybridized according to the new cultural environments.

First five stories of Lahiri create a mosaic of hybrid lives who are residing in the third space: Ruma's filial hesitation, Aparna's unspoken longing, Amit's uneasy nostalgia, Sudha's guilt, and Sang's cross-cultural negotiations. A close analysis reveals that these characters manifest that identity is not fixed but fluid and is being transformed and evolved continuously under the influence and interplay of global and local cultural forces resulting into formation of glocal identities.

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