METAPHORS IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S FICTION: A STUDY

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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GUWAHATI, INDIA

August 2011

We have all come out of Gogol's Overcoat

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TH-1053_06614105

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"Metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction: A Study"** is the result of investigation carried out by me at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, under the supervision of Dr Liza Das and Prof Krishna Barua. The work has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university / institution for a research degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Md Sohail Ahmed has prepared the thesis entitled **"Metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction: A Study"** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. The work was carried out under our general supervision and in strict conformity with the rules laid down for the purpose. It is the result of his investigation and has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university / institution for a research degree.

Liza Das
Supervisor

Krishna Barua
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August 2011
IIT Guwahati

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The elegant, chiselled and to an extent tempered and understated prose through which Jhumpa Lahiri mostly paints varied shades of gray over her Bengali-American story worlds, has already earned her much popular and critical acclaim. Adept in delineating well crafted scenes, it is the distinct tenor of lapping waves of feelings and emotions which permeate the fabric of her stories. While certain aspects of Lahiri's language recall nineteenth century great prose stylists like Nikolai Gogol, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Thomas Hardy, certain others highlight its contemporary elements. She speaks and writes effusively about compelling twentieth century story tellers like R. K. Narayan, Mavis Gallant, William Trevor and James Salter. Just as all these prose stylists from various parts of the world had worked carved out their own fictionscapes like Narayan's Malgudi, for Jhumpa Lahiri the lives of the distinctive middle class, academically bright Bengali-Americans surrounded mostly by the New England landscape of the USA act as her "two inches of ivory." However, two of her seventeen stories – "The Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" – express her ability to vividly portray miseries and pains associated with the lives of two marginalised women belonging to the broader Bengali cultural landscapes. With one full length fiction, two story collections and a decade long publication career as writer of fiction and stories, Jhumpa Lahiri, has successfully carved a niche for herself as a powerful prose stylist.

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As far as my personal initiation into the metaphorically ambient stories of Jhumpa Lahiri is concerned, it all started first through my reading of the *Interpreter of Maladies* a number of times around the year 2001. It was followed not by the reading experience of *The Namesake* but by watching the beautiful eponymous movie made by Mira Nair in April, 2008. Though the movie differs from the realistic fictional portrayal, a few excellent shots captured by Frederic Elmes remained firmly etched in my mindscape. Within a couple of weeks, I went through the novel trying to scrape through its fabric for listing out metaphors as I wished to present a seminar paper around names and naming as a part of my ongoing PhD Course Work at the Humanities and Social Sciences Department at IIT Guwahati. My simultaneous exposure to the nuances of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory under the guidance of my supervisor Dr. Liza Das was instrumental in my decision to undertake this study. I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervisor for her sustained support and encouragement at every stage of this study. At this juncture, I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my co-supervisor Prof. Krishna Barua for her valuable suggestions and encouragement all along.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the suggestions and ideas given by the members of my Doctoral Committee — Prof. Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, Prof. Archana Barua and Prof. S. Borbora. I would also like to sincerely acknowledge and thank Dr. Sambit Mallick for helping and encouraging me in various possible ways. I would also like to express my thanks to Dr. Arupjyoti Saikia, Dr. Mrinal Kanti Dutta and Dr. Sawmya Roy for their interest in my work over several semesters. Among my peers I

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would especially like to thank Jitu Tamuli and Gopal Sarma for helping me in many ways. I would also like to thank Dr. Merry Baruah Bora and Papori Rani Barooah for their good wishes all through my research. Among the departmental staff I would like to offer my thanks to Surendra Mohan Saloi, Dasarath Das, Tilak Das and Afzal Hussain. I would also like to thank the Library staff at IIT Guwahati and The Central Library, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, the Jawaharla Nehru University Library, the University of Delhi Library, the Jamia Millia University Library, for extending cooperation and possible help.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Altafur Rahman, Chairman of the Governing Body and Sri Utpalmoni Phukan, Principal of Jagiroad College, Assam, for assisting me by granting me leave for my research and encouraging me at various junctures of my study. I would also like to express thanks to my colleagues especially Dr. Raju Barua, Dr. I.C. Mahanta, Sri Tulsi Bordoloi, Manoranjan Moulick and Habibur Rahman.

Among my family members I would like to note and express my heartiest thanks to my affectionate wife Malabika Dihingia Baruah for her unstinted support and encouragement all along. For my loving daughter Khushi very special thanks are overdue for her understanding and love towards me. For my little boy Rehan special thanks for your love always. For my parents Md. Habib Ullah and Mrs. Mofida Ahmed I acknowledge my sincerest gratitude. For my octogenarian mother-in-law Mrs. Kanan Kamala Dihingia Baruah I pay my respect for her good wishes. Very special thanks to my

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dear brothers Safi, Rafi and sister Maina for their love and wishes. I thank friends Anwar, Bahar, Farida, Majaz, Deeba and Bina for all their keen interest in the progress of my work. My thanks to my brother-in-law Alakesh (Bhaiti) and my sisters-in-law Arundhati, Monalisha and Madhusmita (Dihingia Baruahs all) for their good wishes throughout these years.

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IIT Guwahati
August, 2011

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Chapter I

Introduction: The Metaphorical Imperative, Jhumpa Lahiri and Writing

> *Metaphor [is] a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind. So conceived metaphor is not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather, it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organise our more abstract understanding.*
>
> Mark Johnson

Jhumpa Lahiri (born Nilanjana Sudeshna) shot to prominence with the publication of her very first collection of short stories entitled *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999. *The Namesake* (2003), her first and lone full-length fiction so far, further confirmed her reputation as a master story teller (see Bala). The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000 made her a popular name. With these two books, she came to be appreciated as an Indian-American writer who had vividly captured the diasporic experience of the Bengali-American community through her translucent and poetic prose. With the publication of the cycle of stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) she has been seen as a sensitive writer. What distinguishes her from her predecessors like Bharati Mukherjee and others is that despite the obvious label of "diaspora" (see Banerjee; Das 2010; Dubey; Kaur; Nityanandam; for diaspora-related analyses), she has managed to slip through that

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definitional framework. Jhumpa Lahiri usually takes up the realist framework of nineteenth century greats to depict the human predicament – capturing the nuances of human relationships in their varied manifestations. There are candid revelations of her devoted readings of nineteenth-century great stylists of fiction ranging from Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Hawthorne to Thomas Hardy and an overt acknowledgement of being influenced by her readings apart from discussing the immediate impulses behind the composition of *The Namesake*. Referring to Nikoloi Gogol, the Russian writer, Lahiri remarks in an interview:

> … I admire [Gogol's] work enormously and reread a lot of it as I was working on [*The Namesake*], in addition to reading biographical material. "The Overcoat" is such a superb story. It really does haunt me the way it haunts the character of Ashoke in the novel. I like to think that every writer I admire influences me in some way, by teaching me something about writing. Of course, without the inspiration of Nikolai Gogol, without his name and without his writing, my novel would never have been conceived. In that respect, this book came out of Gogol's overcoat, quite literally. (Interview with about.com)

Jhumpa Lahiri is adept in sketching the subterranean channels of emotions, passions, achievements, failures, and an overbearing sense of loss so integrally associated with the lives of the Indian-American and especially the doubly hyphenated 'Bengali-Indian-American' diaspora. Marriage, family, love, intra- and inter-generational relations act as hinges on which her stories are constructed and delicately poised. Carving out memorable scenes with a distilled, powerful yet deceptively lucid prose is Jhumpa Lahiri's forte as a narrative artist. Also noteworthy is her 'cosy' fitting

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into both the male and female perspectives of narration – especially noteworthy as her only full-length novel has been written from the perspective of a boy/man. Besides, a number of her stories have been written from the perspective of children (e.g., "When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine").

Above all, as this present study will argue, it is the use of *a web of metaphors* which plays a key role in her fiction. "We have all come out of Gogol's overcoat"– is a key statement that holds the seam in the enmeshed struggle for identity for the protagonist Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake*. It is shadowed by the philosophy of frugality, the immaterial philosophy of Ashok – the 'Marxist' mystic – who leaves his foot (shoe) prints all over the story. This statement could be read as a basic conceptual metaphor that navigates smoothly over the overt terrains of India and America and the symbolic Russian backdrop. In "The Third and Final Continent" (in *Interpreter of Maladies*) the title of the story acts as the key metaphor. The unnamed Bengali-American immigrant has finally a sense of 'arrival' after completing a long journey spanning three continents. Incidentally, his arrival in America coincides with the American astronauts' landing in moon. His old land lady in Boston stresses that it is a "splendid" achievement that the American flag has been unfurled over moon's surface. The first-person narrator in a humble tenor adds that his long and arduous journey too can be compared with the astronauts' achievement.

In the first story of *Interpreter of Maladies* entitled "A Temporary Matter" the author examines the chasm and lack of communication between a young husband and his wife who are grappling with a trauma in the wake of the loss of their first child at its moment of birth. Both detect that their lives have changed drastically. Shoba, the wife,

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devises a 'candle lit' confession game during a 'temporary' power-cut in the locality while secretly preparing for a separation. The knowledge that they share at the end makes their grief and sense of loss sublimated which is powerfully conveyed through the metaphor of thawing snows outside. The title story uses the metaphor of a 'malady' as the core one as Mr. Kapasi finds it difficult to handle the confession of Mrs. Das, the Indian-American lady towards whom he sensually gravitates during the trip to the Sun Temple at Konark.

"When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" is the first story of Lahiri told from a child's perspective. It describes how the young girl strikes a bond with a family visitor to their Boston during the early 1970s. The visitor Mr. Pirzada is an ethnically East Bengali but is on a scholarship from the erstwhile Pakistan government. Liliah, the young girl curiously observes how her parents welcome this unknown person and they become friends as they share the TV images of the *'Muktijuddha'* (freedom struggle) of the emerging nation to be called Bangladesh later. "Mrs. Sen's" is another story told from the perspective of an American young boy who is looked after by a homesick and lonely wife of an academic in the USA who introduces him to vignettes of the sights and sounds of Calcutta which she misses very much.

It is with the publication of *The Namesake* that Jhumpa Lahiri carved out a significant space in the narrative of diasporic existence. Told from a third-person perspective the novel is a gripping tale about a family that meets a 'string of accidents' and discovers that they too had charted out their own course. The novel foregrounds the journey of a young academic, Ashoke, his wedding, loss of parents and relatives, birth of the children , their upbringing, the son's rebellion against his *daknam* (literally "calling-

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name," closest translation perhaps would be "pet-name") and finally his tragic and sudden death.

With the publication of her latest collection of stories *Unaccustomed Earth,* Jhumpa Lahiri appears to be more concerned with the choices, opportunities and decisions of the second-generation migrants who are less afraid and better placed to travel freely across the globe as compared to their parents. These travels are often half reverse-journeys that were undertaken by their parents to various destinations and places of Europe.

In the title story the images and metaphors associated with gardening by Ruma in her palpable sadness is a feeling that is carried through to the story "Only Goodness," in which Sudha weathers the realities of her brother Rahul's alcoholism as it tears up her childhood family. When Sudha's son is born, her parents have a second chance, "their tiny grandson plugging up the monstrous hole Rahul left behind in his wake" (159). The second part having three stories could be termed as a "story cycle' having the two characters at the centre. The author has remarked that these two characters incubated almost for a decade in her mind and finally she has been relieved.

The first story of this section entitled "Once in a Lifetime" is narrated from Hema's perspective who recalls the episodes that fatefully connected her to Kaushik- the nine year old boy of a family known to her parents who left for India around 1974 and suddenly came back to the US after a gap of seven years. After the 'second coming' of the Chaudhuris, Hema and Kaushik's meet as teenagers – with Hema developing a crush on him. The focus of the story is finding a tomb stone near their house one snowy morning where Kaushik shares the secret of his mother's fatal cancer. After they shift

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their house the two families drift apart –as Kaushik's parents gives a 'cold shoulder' to their friends.

The mystery though unresolved has a secret sharer within Hema. The second story –"Year's End" – told from Kaushik's perspective about his father's second marriage to a widow with two grown up daughters. Kaushik recollects his mother's deteriorating condition, her death, his occasional remembrance of Hema, his graduation and then the decision to drift apart as his father is ensconced in happiness. The last story "Going Ashore" is told from a third-person narrative. Kaushik – by now a roving photo-journalist meets Hema, (already an academic) and at Rome enroute to India for her imminent marriage with a prospective MIT teacher. They had a torrid affair as all the 'floodgates' opened for Hema. She was in a moral bind-ultimately preferring an arranged marriage to a non-Bengali named Navin. Kaushik dies in a Tsunami at a resort in Thailand. The end part of the story recalled by Hema reveals the poignancies, the circularity of life.

There have been a few published and unpublished critical studies (including dissertations) on Jhumpa Lahiri's fictional oeuvre. But most of these studies like Suman Bala's *Jhumpa Lahiri –The Master Storyteller* (2002) and Nigamananda Das's edited volumes *Jhumpa Lahiri: Critical Perspectives* (2008) and *Dynamics of Culture and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri* (2009), have been primarily driven by the discourse of diaspora, examining her fictional work as a representation of the Indian-American diasporic experience. Das's perceptively edited volumes contain collections of articles primarily focusing on Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories and novel barring, of course, the

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latest one. Among the essays Himadri Lahiri's "Family as Space in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Stories" explores the fissures and gaps in relationships and how bonding in the family space collapses. However, the study is restricted to the title story. Binda Sah in the two articles entitled "Matrix of Sexuality in *Interpreter of Maladies*" and "Trauma of Diasporic Existence in *The Namesake*" connects diasporic existence with a sense of history and analyses various traumatic incidents and accidents that have a bearing on the family's unseen fate. The only article on metaphor in this critical anthology is that of Buddhadeb Roy Choudhury's study on the metaphor of pain entitled "The Metaphor of Pain: Reflections on *Interpreter of Maladies*." Roy Choudhury has undertaken an analysis of the short story collection through a close study of the stories barring "The Third and Final Continent." A few of the perceptive studies are focused on the dissonance of perspectives of the first and second generation Indian immigrants, formal structure of the short story genre and story cycles, sexual symbolism, food as metaphor, trauma of immigrant experience, children as narrators and feminist analyses. Indira Nityanandam's Jhumpa *Lahiri: The Tale of the Diaspora* (2005), as the title suggests, is also an attempt to read Lahiri's first two works in the light of the discourse of diaspora. Noelle Brada-Williams in "Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* as a Short Story Cycle" (2004) argues for considering some of the stories of Lahiri as having inherent thematic connections and reading them as clusters of 'story cycles.' Rudiger Heinze's "A Diasporic Overcoat?" (2007) argues that in *The Namesake* naming has been undertaken under the emotional matrix of affection and affect which also questions the theoretical framework of diaspora. Judith Caesar's article "American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri" (2005) is primarily a comparative study of Lahiri's two

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stories “The Third and the Final Continent” and “Nobody’s Business.” Caesar explores the veneer of the depiction of “American virtues” as both edifying and corrupting. Describing the characters as living in an imaginary space, Caesar opines that the space inhabited by the old American lady named Mrs. Croft is edifying unlike the selfish characters occupying a see through space in “Nobody’s Business” has been corrupted by some of the characters due to their lack of self-examination . Another article by Caesar, “Beyond Cultural Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’” (2003) discusses the subterranean channels of love and gratitude expressed through the relationship between a father whose five daughters have been caught up in a political turmoil in a distant land, and the child narrator. Ashutosh Dubey in “Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri” (2002) examines and explores how the lives of the first generation immigrant Indian-American characters of Lahiri’s stories are shaped by their interactions with an ‘alien culture’ from a postcolonial perspective. In her essay entitled “Food Metaphor in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies,*” (2001) Asha Choubey terms food as a significant cultural marker of both diasporic and transcultural identity and interaction. Choubey examines the stories of *Interpreter of Maladies* in this one of the early studies of Lahiri’s fiction.

Among other articles and essays on Lahiri’s work, mention may be made of a few, including Basudeb Chakraborti and Agana Chakraborti’s “Context: A comparative study of Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘ATemporary Matter’ and Shubodh Ghosh’s ‘Jatugriha’” (2002); Jennifer Bess’s “Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*” (2004); Michael W. Cox’s “Interpreters of Cultural Difference: The Use of Children in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Fiction” (2003); Geetha Ganapathy Dore’s, “The Narrator as a Global Soul in Jhumpa

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Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*" (2002), Parmanad Jha's "Home and abroad: Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies.*" (2001); Tejinder Kaur's "Cultural dilemmas and displacements of immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" (2004); and "Portrayal of Diaspora Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*," (2002); Simon Lewis's "Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*'" (2001); Bill McCarron's "The Color Blue in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'This Blessed House'" (2004), Ragini Ramachandra's "Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*" (2001); Mandira Sen's "Names and Nicknames" (2004); and Eva Tettenborn's "Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*: Colonial Fantasies in 'Sexy'" (2002).

The present study also looks into critical studies of diaspora and multiculturalism. Roger Bromley's *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions* (2000) is a broad survey of migrant fiction and movies of a range of diaspora communities covering authors like Amy Tan, Hanif Qureshi, Bharati Mukherjee, Syed Manzurul Islam, Gurinder Chadha and others. It is a significant contribution in the analyses of diaspora fiction. The author applies a cultural framework and regards 1989 as a breakthrough year that saw the beginning of the process of globalization. Under this context he argues that an analysis avoiding the pitfalls of oversimplification of binaries like either/or, self/other, black/white, would enable the voice of 'double exiled' women writers to be fully appreciated. Though the book is not a study of Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction per se it contains invaluable interpretation regarding cultural constructs like identity, displacement, and hyphenation. Alison Amend in *Multicultural Voices: Asian-American Writers* (2010) has made a broad survey of contemporary Asian-American writers like Amy Tan, Maxine Kingston and Jhumpa Lahiri. However, her assessment of Jhumpa

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Lahiri's oeuvre has been done from the assimiliationist perspective. She stresses that the characters of Lahiri's fiction strive for striking a root in the American culture. Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk's *Diaspora and Hybridity* (2005), Joel Knortlli and Rajeshwar Mittapalli's edited volume *Indian Women's Short Fiction* (2007) are among other works relevant to this study.

The study of metaphors and their role in conceptualization necessitates looking at theoretical work done in the interstices of literature and cognition. In this regard, Patrick Colm Hogan's *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts* (2003) gives a fair idea of the directions metaphorical analyses are moving to – newer areas like neuroscience – and how new interpretative theories like blending, emergentism have evolved.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) is an invaluably pioneering book on metaphors which gave a radically new spin to the theory of metaphor. Situating at the crisscross of cognitive development and everyday language, the book is now renowned for some path breaking formulations like orientational, conduit and ontological metaphors etc. as a part of the overall discourse of metaphor. This seminal book brought far reaching and wide ranging implications for not only in fields of studies like linguistics and cognitive science but also in areas like literary studies, law, clinical psychology, politics, religion, mathematics and the philosophy of science. It is credited with bringing metaphorical thought into the limelight. Some of the most fundamental ideas in the study of mind – meaning, truth, the nature of thought, and the role of body in the shaping of mind – are discussed in an absorbing manner which a lay reader may follow with relative ease. The moot question

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posed is how we think metaphorically and how it is crucial to formation of concepts. The radical idea that Lakoff introduces is the pervasiveness of metaphors and our everyday reality being structured by concepts that are metaphorical in nature. For instance, if we think about the concept of 'argument' and conceptual metaphor or a metaphorical schema ARGUMENT IS WAR we would discover that it leads us to a wide variety of expressions in our everyday language filled with terminologies and expressions around war. Besides this structural metaphors are orientational metaphors like HAPPY IS UP. Such metaphors are also culture specific and related closely to cultural perceptions of space and they have an internal systematicity. Again, for dealing rationally with our experiences like referring, quantifying or identifying we use another category of metaphors which could be called ontological metaphors. In critical and linguistic discourses, metaphor studies received a new direction from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson with the publication of their seminal book entitled *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In the preface Lakoff and Johnson outline their chief concern to bridge the wide chasm between what people in their everyday lives perceive as 'meaningful' on the one hand and the dominant views circulated in discourses of Western philosophy and linguistics. In other words, their aim was to reverse the periphery/centre binary with respect to the 'situatedness' of metaphor in the discourses:

> Within a week we discovered that certain assumptions of contemporary philosophy and linguistics that have been taken for granted within the Western tradition since the Greeks precluded us from even raising the kind of issues we wanted to address. The problem was not one of extending or patching up some

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existing theory of meaning but of revising central assumptions in the Western philosophical tradition. (ix-x)

Johnson and Lakoff have succinctly presented their thesis of metaphorical concepts in the following terms: Metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language. Most of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors. There is an internal systematicity to each spatialization metaphor. For example, HAPPY IS UP defines a coherent system rather than a number of isolated and random cases. There is also an overall systematicity among the various spatialization metaphors. For example GOOD IS UP gives an UP orientation to general well-being. This orientation is coherent with special cases like HAPPY IS UP, ALIVE IS UP, HEALTH IS UP. The resultant revision of the earlier theories from a cognitive angle produces newer categories of metaphors like conduit, ontological, emergent and container metaphors. The conceptual systems of cultures and religions are metaphorical in nature. Symbolic metonymies are critical links between every day and the coherent metaphorical systems that characterize religions and cultures. Spatialization metaphors are rooted in physical and cultural experience. Our physical and cultural experience provides many possible bases for spatialization metaphors. Which ones are chosen, and which ones are major may vary from culture to culture. In some cases spatialization is so essential a part of a concept that it is difficult for us to imagine any alternative metaphor that might structure the concept. The replacement of the vehicle/ frame/tensive formulation with the cognitive discourse of ‘source’. It means the replacement of earlier schema of vehicle / tenor/ ground or locus/ frame / filter with

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a new schema of ‘source domain’, ‘target domain’ and ‘mapping’ of the target. As regards ‘metaphorical truth’ it is based on ‘understanding’ – one might explore it either through a ‘direct’ or an ‘indirect’ understanding through various structures, experience, interactive properties and types like – entity structure, orientational structure, dimensions of structure, experiential gestalts, background, highlighting and prototypes. It means that adequate account of meaning and truth can only be based on understanding. They challenge the ‘myth of objectivism’ in western Philosophy and linguistics and argue for giving new meaning to the old myths (see also Johnson). Further, in *More Than Cool Reason* (1989) Lakoff and Turner remark:

> “Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children, we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor. It is conventional: metaphor is an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. And it is irreplaceable: metaphor allows us to understand our selves and our world in ways that no other modes of thought can.” (xi)

The entire book is devoted to showing how poets extend, elaborate, question and make composite the ordinary metaphors we use. The contributions of Lakoff and Turner and Lakoff and Johnson are important because they have argued convincingly that metaphor is not simply ornamentation or poetic embellishment. Metaphor is ubiquitous. This however does not mean that there is no difference between everyday speech and poetic composition. What is problematised – and rather severely – is the neat Formalist

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formulation of the divide between poetic and everyday language. Now the very fact that everyday language is metaphorical at the root (see Lakoff and Johnson on ontological and orientational metaphors) is a pointer to why we experience aesthetic delight in poetry: the metaphorical nature of our thought processes allows us in the first place to identify the extensions and elaborations of everyday metaphors in poetry (see Lakoff and Turner). The present study is also an attempt to explore how conceptual metaphors are extended and elaborated by Jhumpa Lahiri in her fiction by variations on core metaphors and megametaphors.

David Punter's *Metaphor* (2007) is a perceptive book which includes quite a few bright analyses of poems and stories and explains the nuances of metaphoric explorations of literary texts. In the monumental work *The Rule of Metaphor* (2003) Paul Ricouer displays his insight from a hermeneutic philosophical angle. He revises and remoulds the concept of metaphors. Ricoeur analyses the crossroads of poetics and rhetoric with obvious reference to Aristotle and adds his insight into the taxonomic evolution of metaphor. Ricoeur sketches two lines of thought that are to be found in the works of Aristotle. Firstly, Aristotle's choice of the *word* as the 'locus' of metaphor is the seed of the rhetorical tradition. On the other hand, Aristotle developed a theory of poetics as a way of redescribing the reality of man by means of mythical mimesis, and gave a place to metaphor in this mythic-poetical discourse. It is from this model of poetic function that the new concept of metaphorical truth germinates. This marks the beginning of Ricoeur's urge to stem clear of the 'substitution' model towards the semantic model. Zoltan Kovecses in *Metaphor and Culture: universality and variation* (2005) takes the notion of metaphor further in exploring particularly the cultural

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perceptions of basic human emotions like love, anger and friendship. He makes a detailed discussion about how in the contemporary American society these emotions are undergoing transformations - for instance the conception of love oscillates between the older schema of LOVE IS UNION to LOVE IS AN EXCHANGE – the latter having brought a whole new sets of values shaped by dominant economic forces. Within a particular culture as people realign their social mores and values so are the conceptualizations realigned around them.

In his classic study *The Literary Mind* (1996) Mark Turner takes forward the new developments in metaphor theory and with his earlier associations with both George Lakoff and Giles Fauconnier, evolved the highly creative notion of metaphoric blends which lie behind the narratives of fables. As a narrative takes the form of a parable, its mental patterns could be analysed through the concepts of prediction, evaluation, planning, explanation, objects and events, actors, stories, projection, metonymy, image schemas, and conceptual blends. Dirk Geeraerts's edited volume *Cognitive Lingusitics: Basic Readings* (2006) raises a key question - in what sense could we interpret the 'cognitive' aspect of cognitive linguistics? He explains that it simply does not denote that language is a psychologically real phenomenon and that linguistics is a part of the cognitive sciences. What is imperative is that the very processing and storage of information is a crucial aspect of the design feature of language. It entails that language itself is a form of knowledge which has to be analysed with a focus on meaning. This focus on meaning gain does not make it the only linguistic approach to the study of meaning. He gives four basic premises of cognitive linguistics' meaning orientation: Linguistic meaning is a) perspectival b) dynamic and flexible c) encyclopedic and non-

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autonomous, and d) based on usage and perspective. The book is a broad survey of cognitive linguistics and deals with subjects ranging from cognitive grammar, grammatical construal, radial network, prototype theory, schematic network, conceptual metaphor, image schema, metonymy, mental spaces, frame semantics, construction grammar, and usage-based linguistics. George Lakoff, in *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (1987), takes a cue from Eleanor Rosch's case studies on the theory of prototypes and basic level categories. Lakoff proposes a conceptually grounded categorization which he terms as experiential realism. The main issue, according to the author is whether meaningful thought and reason concern merely the manipulation of abstract symbols and their correspondence to an objective reality, independent of any embodiment. Jerome Feldman in *From Molecules to Metaphor: A Neural Theory of Language* (2006) holds that there is now very strong evidence that essentially all of our cultural, abstract, and theoretical concepts derive their meanings by mapping, through metaphor, to the embodied experiential concepts. Feldman also observes that primary metaphors can be seen as natural consequences of associative learning.

As the review above has shown, several critical studies on Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction have been attempted from the purview of diasporic lives and cultural studies. For the present study a survey of the books, articles, reviews and interviews has propelled its direction towards a full length critical appreciation of the metaphors as hinted by a few reviews and articles in the review of literature.

An obvious question that arises here is – why metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri's work, if metaphors are ubiquitous not only in literature but in everyday language as

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well? The argument of the present work is that metaphors not only act as an essential process and product of thought in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction and are a shaping force in the weaving of her interiorized narrative threads, but they also map the existential scenario of the lived experience of the characters and it is the variegated and wide ranging metaphors and their entailments manifested through an inventory of *names and naming, relationships* and *landscapes* which inform and shape her narrative powerfully. The inner grid of her narrative is entwined and 'overcoated' with a host of conceptual and blended metaphors which are integrally hewn and sewn into the fabric of the narrative through which the author appears to 'map' their interactions with the social, cultural, spatial and temporal domains they inhabit.

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Preface and Acknowledgments

Chapter I: Introduction: The Metaphorical Imperative, Jhumpa Lahiri and Writing

Chapter II: *Bhalonam* and *Daknam*: Metaphors, Names and Naming

Chapter III: "Love begins with a Metaphor": Mapping Relationships

Chapter IV: At Water's Edge: Metaphors of Land and Waterscapes

Chapter V: In Lieu of a Conclusion: Interpreter of Metaphors

Selected Bibliography

The introductory chapter also examines the various theories and perspectives on metaphor: from Aristotle to I.A. Richards, largely called the rhetoric approach; the interactionist perspectives of Max Black; the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricouer; and

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the backdrop of the emergence of the highly influential cognitive and conceptual theory elaborated by George Lakoff, Michael Reddy, Mark Johnson, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. Following recent findings, it argues that metaphor is a cognitive 'imperative.' Wayne C. Booth - while participating in a colloquium in 1978 at the University of Chicago reflected on the exponential growth and interest on studies of metaphor and remarked in jest that by the turn of the next century there would be more studies on metaphor than any bibliography could show. Aristotle opened a discourse on metaphor in his treatise *Poetics,* and since the middle of the twentieth century the tide of animated discussions, debates and publications around metaphor continues unabated. Aristotle, indeed, gave a more or less formal definition at *Poetics* 21, 1457b 6-7: "Metaphora is the epiphora of the name (onoma) of something [to something else]." By the term "onoma" too he wishes to include parts of speeches other than proper nouns, especially adjectives and verbs. It is pertinent here to note that Aristotle stressed on the aptness of application of metaphors and regarded it as a prerogative on the part of poets to employ this rhetorical device. Aristotle's theory is largely read under the 'similarity' thesis as he stressed the likenesses.

It was I. A. Richards who attempted to recast the concept of metaphor and to give a 'centrality' to it. He introduced the terms 'vehicle' and 'tenor.' By 'vehicle' Richards referred to the metaphorical word and by 'tenor' he meant the subject to which the metaphorical word is applied. For instance, in the sentence 'The knight is a lion' – 'the knight' acts as the tenor and the metaphoric expression 'lion' acts as the vehicle that is capable of transporting the idea of ferocity, courage or aggressiveness to a 'ground'. He proposed that a metaphor works by bringing together the disparate "thoughts" of the

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vehicle and tenor so that the meaning that emerges ‘is a resultant of their interaction’. The meaning that comes out of such an interaction can not be duplicated by literal assertions of a similarity between the two elements. He also emphasized that metaphor can not be viewed simply as a rhetorical or poetic departure from ordinary language.

In 1954 came an influential essay entitled “Metaphor” by Max Black in which he thoroughly revised and expanded Richards’ model. Black tries to dispel the long held apprehensions by philosophers and analyses the entire gamut of metaphor by taking up seven sentences as ‘clear cases’. Instead of ‘vehicle’ and ‘tenor’ he comes up with ‘focus’ and ‘frame’. The meaning emerges through an inter-play of the ‘focus’ and the ‘frame’. For instance, in the sentence like ‘The chairman ploughed through the discussion” the word ‘ploughed’ could be regarded as the focus of a metaphor and the rest of the sentence as the ‘frame’. He also categorically ‘located’ metaphor within the domain of semantics and pragmatics depending either on the ‘meaning’ or ‘sense’ centricity. Terming the attempt to trace the literal meaning in metaphors as a ‘substitutive view’ Black remarks that in some cases ‘catachresis’ – adding a new meaning to an old word – might be constitute a metaphor. But in most cases, he points out that the aim of a metaphor is to ‘entertain’ and ‘divert’. He comes up with his alternative model to the ‘substitutive view’ and terms it as the ‘comparison view’. He terms Richards’s model as an ‘interaction view’ and attempts to improve upon it by treating a ‘metaphor’ as a ‘filter’ and opines that a ‘system of associated commonplaces’ helps the readers to discover latent meanings in a sentence or expression like ‘Man is a wolf.’ The major ‘breakthrough’ that Black achieves is the formulation of seven basic principles or claims of the ‘interactionist view’.

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Jonathan Culler in his book *The Pursuits of Signs* (1981) too argues in favour of a semiotic model where the metaphor/metonymy binary occupies the centre. He refers to Paul de Man and Umberto Eco as especially the latter as a proponent of a 'semiotic model'. Paul de Man formulated his symbol/discourse binary in the line of the metaphor/metonymy model and it is at the centre of his interpretative theory. This view, obviously, runs in opposition to the arguments of Max Black where the field of semantics has been primarily identified as the domain of metaphors. Christopher Norris in *Deconstruction* (2002) stresses that there is a distinction between a 'vulgar' deconstructionist view that all concepts ultimately 'come down' to the level of metaphors and Derrida's line of argument here. He points out that despite the possibility of having aporias or blind-spots it is philosophical investigation that must be undertaken carefully in examination of tropes like metaphors. Moving from Derrida it would be relevant to discuss Paul Ricoeur's ambitious survey *The Rule of Metaphor* (2003). Taking a cue from Leibniz, he terms the definition of Aristotle as 'nominal' as he had emphasized the 'identification' of tropes that are metaphors. He attempts a kind of genealogical model by moving towards a 'disjunctive' terrain between the semiotic and the semantic interpretations of metaphor. The ultimate aim, he declares is to connect it to the 'interactive' theory evolved and indicated by Richards and Black earlier. Delving deeper in to the debate between the semiotics and semantics Ricoeur works out six pairs of statements towards mapping out the 'disjunctive' field. The first pair is the statement that discourse 'always occurs as an event, but is to be understood as meaning'. The second pair distinguishes between identifying function and predicative function. The third pair relates to the 'structure of acts' of discourse. Sense and reference concerns the fourth one.

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The fifth one differentiates to reality from reference to the speaker. The last pair which he regards as very important from his study of metaphor concerns the redistribution of the spheres of the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. In the fourth study he interestingly brings up Wittgenstein's notion of 'language-game' especially in relation to 'name-gaming' and arrives at a tentative conclusion that metaphor is the outcome of a debate between predication and naming and its place in language too secured between words and sentences. In the fifth study, Ricoeur talks about a 'new rhetoric' or a *rhetorique generale*. Ricoeur also points out that Roman Jakobson bypasses the distinction between signs and sentences or semiotics and semantics and gravitates towards a semiotic formulation that he terms as a 'monoism.'

It was Lakoff and Johnson succeeded in changing the entire gamut of discourses around metaphors in a new direction. *Metaphors We Live By*, thus, became a pivot for spiraling the theorisation of metaphors especially in the cognitive or neural domains and charting out a new route of synthesis of multidisciplinary exploration. These developments consequently had an impact on literary studies as well and numerous studies on literary genres have come up shedding fresh lights on narrative strategies and remapping narrative models based on explorations of metaphors.

Taking a clue from Lakoff and Johnson, if we analyse metaphors from Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction we realize that they throw up interesting and a range of associative expressions and in the process generate newer sets of meanings. For instance, in *The Namesake* one of the climactic points in the narrative is Gogol Ganguli's recollection of his father's emphatic evocation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's remark o the powerfully transcendental impact of Nikolai Gogol's depiction of Akaky Akakyeivich's existential

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condition: “We have all come out of Gogol’s overcoat.” This metaphoric schema could be further read and expressed from the protagonist’s perspective in a number of ways-each generating a new set of meanings:

> MY FATHER ALSO CAME OUT OF GOGOL’S OVERCOAT.
>
> ALL HIS LIFE HE WORE THE OVERCOAT.
>
> MY FATHER’S LIFE WAS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE OVERCOAT.
>
> AFTER HIS DEATH IT IS MY TURN TO DON THE CLOAK NOW.

Each of these sentences, here, gives rise to polysemy and fresh perspectives are inaugurated and the ‘decidedly undecided’ aspect of his future becomes clear to him. They also add meanings in the symbolization process of the overcoat – connecting various transcendental inter and intra textual narrative threads – loops of which become perceptual chunks again and all set to become a concept.

The second chapter entitled “*Bhalonam* and *Daknam*: Metaphors, Names and Naming” focuses primarily on Lahiri’s sole novel *The Namesake*. The foregrounding of an inventory of names of characters, books, authors, singers, musical albums, food items, acronyms, articles and brands of everyday use, bridges and terminals, towns and cities has lent the novel a ‘power’ associated with names. The incredible collection of names has also generated a wide range of signs. Starting in 1968 the thirty-two years ‘string of accidents’ that beset the Gangulis – an educated middle-class Bengali immigrant family in the US – finally achieves a sense of ‘arrival’ by the turn of the twenty-first century while travelling through the contested terrains of diasporic identity,

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exile and departure. Ashoke Ganguli, the protagonist's father, is an aficionado of the nineteenth century Russian great masters of fiction especially of Nikolai Gogol. Their son has also been named 'Gogol' not by default but under circumstances. He develops an anathema against it-particularly generated by the graphic and nauseating details of Nikolai Gogol's last days by his teacher in the school and his inability to comprehend its cultural or symbolic nuances. He feels relieved only by his 'Second Baptism'- as he changes it to 'Nikhil' despite his father's objection owing to the 'hassles' involved. Gogol now changed to Nikhil grows up as a typical American youth, studying architecture in institutions disliked by his father. He has a series of affairs and is enamoured and absorbed in the lives of the Ratliffs – a wealthy family. His father shifts to Ohio and suddenly dies there alone. It is his father's death that changes the course of his life. A hurried wedding with an Indian descent Moushumi ends in a divorce. His mother Ashima disposes of their 'home' in the suburbs of Boston - deciding to divide her time between US and India for the rest of her life as the youngest member of the family Sonia is also married and assimilated in the American cultural milieu. At thirty-two Gogol Ganguli's life is evenly poised as he realizes that he has stepped in to his father's shoes and pays his 'tribute' to his namesake by reading the untouched collection of Nikolai Gogol's stories gifted by his father long back on the eve of his mother's departure.

It is under the dynamic diaspora framework that the triad of the Indian, the American and the Russian cultural crisscross in *The Namesake* could be analysed through a close examination of the metaphors of naming and names, dress and food, travel and nature. For these metaphors play a significant function in peeling off the outer layers of both the

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narrative strategies of the author and the variety of perspectives from which she has looked at the diasporic situation. For instance, the metaphors of naming specifically recall similar situations in “The Overcoat” and similarities of narrative strategies of both Nikolai Gogol and Lahiri – especially their use of puns and irony. It is under this backdrop that this chapter aims to explore the symbolic and nuanced roles of these metaphors in exploring the deep structures and patterns of diasporic self, exile, identity and consciousness. It shows that names operate at various levels as semantically pregnant signs, the connotative meanings throw new lights on relationships, names also become powerful metaphors that unravel the dynamics of the real and the symbolic, and they foreground the immanent narrative and thematic levels. Though rivetting around the dyadic Bengali-American diasporic experience *The Namesake* has a subterranean Russian dimension that adds its somber colours, moods and striations – through the loaded signs inherent in names. Firstly, the *daknam/bhalonam* binary reveals the tension that Gogol Ganguli underwent as a teenager and as a youth with which he is reconciled only after his father’s death. The cultural nuance of this pairing itself has been commented upon in the novel:

> Pet names are a persistent remnant of childhood, a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people. Every pet name is paired with a good name, a *bhalonam*, for identification in the outside world (26).

Even after his divorce from Moushumi, Gogol revaluates his life with her as a name: “As if that time were a name, he’d ceased to use” (284).

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The ambit of the present study is further broadened by taking into consideration the signs associated with food and garment systems as depicted in the novel. The play with name, in fact, has a recurring metaphorical resonance felt in the story collections *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth* as well. The very first story "A Temporary Matter" has a young couple Shoba and Shukumar having phonemic echoes in their names. Shukumar has been described as a young man with long artistic fingers befitting the meaning domain of his name. Shoba, on the other hand is close to 'Shova'- the dissonance of which could be observed from her slightly slovenly and casual dress and appearance in the beginning. In "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" the visitor witnessing a violent transitional phase in East Pakistan from the cosy warmth of Lilia's family has a title-"Pirzada" that contains elements of a "Peer (a mystic)" which boosts his 'protector' image for the young girl. The name of Lilia too contains Lily-the beautiful flower that captures the curiosity and the innocence of the child. Both the names here thus act as container metaphors from an inferential perspective argued by George Lakoff in his book *Metaphors We Live By*. The capaciousness of the interpreter expected by Mrs. Das in "Interpreter of Maladies" is also similarly expressed through the title "Kapasi". The name of the young mistress in "Sexy" as Miranda has a bipolar trajectory of references and inferences. On the one hand Miranda is conscious about the connotation with the beloved of Ferdinand in *The Tempest*. However, Dev- her lover sizes up her name to "Mira" thereby bringing up the image of the *Sanyasin*-beloved of Lord Krishna. It can be noted here that Miranda's sole interaction with the Indian spiritual domain has been her encounter with the 'fearsome' image of Goddess Kali. The dissonance between the images of Mira and Kali would also be later reflected in

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Miranda's attempt to decipher the meaning of 'sexy'. There too, she would discover a similar lack of harmony between Dev's haunting utterance of the word in the mapparium and young Rohin's interpretation of it as 'loving someone you do not know'. In "The Blessed House" Sanjeev introduces his newly wed wife as Tanima to his friend Douglas and his wife Nora. But, the bride insists that she should be called by her nickname "Twinkle". When Nora calls it an 'unusual name' Twinkle explains that it has a hidden link with the Bombay film industry via an actress named Dimple Kapadia who incidentally also has a sister named 'Simple'. It might be mentioned here that Dimple's daughter too is named Twinkle who later joined her mother's industry. In "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" the epileptic young protagonist who yearns to get married is also interestingly named 'Bibi'. In the title story of *Unaccustomed Earth* the protagonist Ruma has a roving brother aptly named 'Romi'.

Chapter III entitled "'Love begins with a Metaphor': Mapping Relationships" explores how the overcoat occupies a key figurative and conceptual space in the entire opus of Jhumpa Lahiri. From the perspective of relationship trajectories the overcoat metaphor seamlessly moves underneath the narrative and leaves shadows of multiple hues, angularities and shapes simultaneously generating subtle yet moving emotionscapes.Infact, the overcoat operates as a powerful and salient "megametaphor" (see Werth) It gives rise to litanies of conceptual metaphors that generate a whole range of new meanings as we move along the inferential cruxes. Simultaneously, they indicate the latent relationships among the prime movers of stories belonging to Lahiri's entire opus. They reveal how the author has created "inner circles'' of these characters that are linked metaphorically as far as the sharing, inheritance and passing the overcoat is

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concerned. Secondly, they indicate how the shadows of birth, life and death inform these relationships. The *emotionscapes*of these prime movers consequently are coloured with striations of gray. Further a whole range of "micro-metaphors'' like photographs and photography, shoes and stepping in to shoes, architecture, furniture etc. get subsumed under the umbrella of the overcoat metaphor. Beyond the overcoat metaphor is the subtle interplay with confessions which in effect act as metaphors through which relationship curves could be explained.

Chapter IV entitled "At Water's Edge: Metaphors of Land and Waterscapes" argues how water and water bodies like seas, oceans, lakes, rivers function as metaphors which imbue the *emotionscapes* of the characters as potent forces of nature. Beautifully crafted scenes of sea sides for instance, act as backdrops to the evolution of certain thoughts, introspections, temperaments and moods of the key players of the stories. These sea side explorations also act as sites of memories which later flash as moments of realisations for Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake*. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, the sojourns Kaushik along coasts of various seas and oceans poignantly link his fatedness with his mother's death. Snow and snowfall too act as metaphorical backdrops that help us interpret the relationship hinges of some of the actors. Above all the very title and epigraph of *Unaccustomed Earth* function as key metaphors of the implications of striking roots in alien and distant lands by first-generation immigrants belonging to communities like the Bengali-Americans. It has incipient connection with the prominently foregrounded garden metaphor in the title story of the collection.

The final chapter entitled **"**In Lieu of a Conclusion: Interpreter of Metaphors" combines the gamut of variegated trajectories of metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction

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discussed in the previous chapters, appreciating the potential of generating a wide range of referential and inferential meanings. The objective of the present study is to probe the nuances and niches of metaphors and metaphorical entailments in Lahiri's fiction and to consequently explore how it might lead towards an enriched understanding of both narratological and thematic concerns of the author's opus.

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Chapter II

Bhalonam and *Daknam*: Metaphors, Names and Naming

> *I wanted to write about the pet name / good name distinction for a long time, and I knew I needed the space of a novel to explore the idea. It's almost too perfect a metaphor for the experience of growing up as the child of immigrants, having a divided identity, divided loyalties, etc.*
>
> Jhumpa Lahiri

This chapter focuses primarily on *The Namesake* and explores the metaphors of names involving naming and identity, naming as narrative ploy and parody, among others. *The Namesake* – Lahiri's maiden novel – has left a deep imprint on its readers surprising especially those who expected it to be a 'typical' diasporic exploration of the two 'worlds' – with its profundity, translucent prose and a number of masterfully etched out scenes that linger long after one has finished it. Not surprisingly, the film based on the novel – which captured quite a few scenes wonderfully by the cinematographer Frederick Elmes and backed by some stellar performances of some seasoned artistes under the directorial venture of Mira Nair -- had a similar after-effect on the audiences. The novel has also drawn much critical acclaim (see for instance Barthakur, Batra, Caesar, Cox, Kaur, Khalilulla, Lynn, Metcalf, Mishra, Munson, Sah, Sahai, Sen, Shariff) following its publication in 2003. Mandira Sen in her review entitled "Names and Nicknames" (2004) remarks:

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> Jhumpa Lahiri's beautifully crafted and elegantly written novel will speak to many. It is as different as it can be from the exotic outpourings of Indian immigrants writing in English for whom the home country provides a canvas for magical interpretations. (10)

The realism that Mandira Sen attributes here to Jhumpa Lahiri's depiction of the Bengali-American lives is also entwined with an allegorical portrayal connecting it to Nikolai Gogol's classic story "The Overcoat." Judith Caesar in her article "Gogol's Namesake: Identity and Relationships in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" (2007) notes this succinctly: "And as in Nikolai Gogol's short story, the meaning of Lahiri's novel seems to lie not so much in the plotline as in the style" (114).

Jhumpa Lahiri states in an interview that her personal link to the fictional universe was the Russian pet name of one her cousins' friends. Apart from it she has also candidly acknowledged that the novel 'literally' came out of Nikolai Gogol's memorable short-story:

> "The Overcoat" is such a superb story. It really does haunt me the way it haunts the character of Ashoke in the novel. I like to think that every writer I admire influences me in some way, by teaching me something about writing. Of course, without the inspiration of Nikolai Gogol, without his name and without his writing, my novel would never have been conceived. In that respect, this book came out of Gogol's overcoat, quite literally. (Interview with About.com)

Another important aspect that binds the novel with Nikolai Gogol's classic story is the epigraph which acts as a haunting reminder of the naming of Akaky Akakyevich:

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> The reader should realize himself that it could not have happened otherwise and that to give him any other name was quite out of question. ("The Overcoat")

What however also strikes the readers is the tail that Lahiri strategically adds to the names of her husband and son while dedicating the book to them—"whom I call by other names." This "other name" obviously is not to be revealed or commented upon. Further, it is also significant that the author's name "Jhumpa" itself is a pet name which literally means nothing in Bengali. In an interview with John Glassie she reveals:

> Jhumpa has no meaning. It always upset me. It's like Jhuma, which refers to the sound of a child's rattle, but with a "p." In this country, you'd never name your child Rattle. I actually have two good names, Nilanjana and Sudeshna. My mother couldn't decide. All three are on the birth certificate. I never knew how to write my name.

In an interview in the *Times of India* she further adds:

> But when I was enrolled in school the teachers decided that Jhumpa was the easiest of my names to pronounce and that was that. To this day many of my relatives think that it's both odd and inappropriate that I'm known as Jhumpa in an official, public context.

Nilanjana means "the blue eyed" and Sudeshna is the mythical wife of King Virata and a harbinger of good news and knowledge as well. For an author, thus, bestowed with two formal names which remained at the sideline always, while the pet name became the operative and functional crux of her identity, naturally *The Namesake* would also bear a stamp of this fact. Secondly, the circumstances under which she lost her good name are uncannily similar to the fact that Gogol's parents could not record their chosen name in

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the novel. As also noted by a number of reviewers and critics (Heinze, Lynn, Sen, Singh, Sinha, et al.) names and naming lie at the core of this novel. At the centre of course is the very title of the book tied up with both the protagonist of the novel and the nineteenth century Russian author Nikolai Gogol.

Secondly, all the names with which Gogol Ganguli in the novel is connected to in some way or other have names that are intricately bound up with the webs of narration. Again, the inventory of names of books, authors, singers, musical albums, food items, acronyms, articles and brands of objects of everyday use, bridges and terminals, towns and cities etc. also contributes towards building up this compelling atmosphere associated with names and naming.

It is, however, the dexterous blending of the *daknam/bhalonam* binary within the fabric of names and naming that create in the process dynamic and flexible metaphoric nuances as well. Ashoke's long reverie at the hospital that takes him across to India is coloured by powerful flashes of moving episodes of his past life and is culminated in feeling a "dark, grainy, blurry presence" of him while looking at his just born son (*The Namesake* 24). The accidental loss of Ashima's grandmother's letter bearing their son's name does not worry them much as "Names can wait" (25). They decide to wait for the letter as there are pet names to "tide over." The narrator elaborates:

> In Bengali the word for pet name is *daknam,* meaning, literally the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a persistent reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people. They all have pet names. Ashima's pet name is Monu,

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> Ashoke's Mithu, and even as adults, these are the names by which they are known in their respective families, the names by which one is adored and scolded and missed and loved." (25-26)

Daknams, thus, reside in the spatiality of intimacy, informality and care of a family and friends which always irradiate warmth and affection. Along with the mention of the *daknams* of Ashoke and Ashima it is also implied that in Boston there is no one to call them by those names. By virtue of their exiled existence it is also one important aspect of their life that lies unused, unheard, which brings with it associated feelings and sense of loss. As opposed to this attachment and closeness of a *daknam* comes its 'Other'—the *bhalonam*:

> Every pet name is paired with a good name, a *bhalonam*, for identification in the outside world. Consequently, good names appear on envelopes, on diplomas, in telephone directories, and in all other public places. (For this reason, letters from Ashima's mother say "Ashima" on the outside, "Monu" on the inside.) Good names tend to represent dignified and enlightened qualities. Ashima means "she who is limitless without borders." Ashoke, the name of an emperor, means "he who transcends grief." Pet names have no such aspirations. Pet names are never recorded officially, only uttered and remembered. Unlike good names, pet names are frequently meaningless, deliberately silly, ironic, even onomatopoetic. Often in one's infancy, one answers unwittingly to dozens of pet names until one eventually sticks." (26)

Inside/outside, unrecorded/recorded, warmth/cold, literal/ironic, comic/dignified are thus some dichotomies through which we can understand the gamut of differentiation of

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daknam/bhalonam. Further, it is also the multiplicity of *daknams* which indicates a special attachment with the infant by friends and relatives. For instance, Mr. Nandi, one of the family friends, coos the yet-to-be named son of Ashoke and Ashima calling him "Buro" which in Bengali means "old man" (26). Patty, a nurse attending to Ashima, hears it and asks if it is the name of the baby. It metaphorically brings to the fore both the plurality and the inside/outside duality associated with *daknams.* Simultaneously, looking from the perspective of metaphorical concepts as envisaged by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) we can here evolve a series of metaphors which either in isolation or in combination indicates the correspondences between the source and target domains through which meanings about names and naming with respect to *The Namesake* can be generated (6). The set of metaphors and entailments that can be developed here are—DAKNAMS AND BHALONAMS ARE TWINS, A DAKNAM MAY BECOME A BHALONAM, CALLING BY DAKNAMS CONVEYS INTIMACY, DAKNAMS CONVEY WARMTH AND AFFECTION, BHALONAM IS ONE AND UNIQUE, BHALONAM IS FORMAL AND OFFICIALLY RECORDED THROUGH DOCUMENTS, ALL OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND COVERS OF LETTERS BEAR THE BHALONAM, DAKNAMS MAY BE MORE THAN ONE, EACH DAKNAM CONNECTS THE CALLER WITH THE CHILD, ONE DAKNAM STAYS FINALLY, OTHER DAKNAMS WEAR OUT, ONE MAY DISLIKE A DAKNAM AND BHALONAM BOTH, and BOTH DAKNAM AND BHALONAM MAY BE CHANGED. As stated, it is through the interaction of both the source and target domains of these metaphors that names and naming narrative strategies adopted by Jhumpa Lahiri in her maiden full length fiction could be attempted.

As opposed to the earlier situation that "names can wait" the situation soon alters to a scenario of "names can't wait" as the Hospital compiler of birth-certificates informs the parents that as per the law of the land they cannot go home without registering the baby's name in the record book. In order to escape being recorded as "baby Boy

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Ganguli" and face the red tape later, Mr. Wilcox sympathetically enquires whether they do not have any "back up." While informing them that his real name is Howard Wilcox III, he tips them of the western tradition of naming someone after a forefather as an alternative way. But Ashima and Ashoke realize that to do so would mean being ridiculed in Calcutta as in Bengali traditions individual names are something "sacred, inviolable" (28). Finally, he exhausts his suggestions by telling the couple that they could name the baby after someone they "greatly admire." Caught in a moral bind suddenly there is a flash of light for the father of the baby:

> The door shuts, which is when, with a slight quiver of recognition, as he'd known it all along, the perfect pet name for his son occurs to Ashoke. He remembers the page crumpled tightly in his fingers, the sudden shock of the lantern's glare in his eyes. But for the first time he thinks of that moment not with terror but with gratitude. "Hello, Gogol," he whispers, leaning over his son's haughty face, his tightly bundled body. "Gogol," he repeats, satisfied. The baby turns his head with an expression of extreme consternation and yawns. (28)

The image that lurks at the background is the nearly fatal train accident that Ashok Ganguli had way back in 1961 while visiting his nearly blind grandfather in Jamshedpur to collect a box of nineteenth century Russian classics of which he had already become an afficianado. Incidentally, moments before the accident he was reading his favourite story "The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol. Lying in a severely injured condition he was rescued by a team one of whom observed his hand holding the page of the story move. The accident left a permanent scar as owing to it primarily he felt all charged up to migrate to a far off land similar to the icy landscapes of St. Petersburg depicted in "The

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Overcoat." But, at the moment of calling his son by the unique *daknam* he is filled with a sense of gratitude, not of trauma. His wife Ashima, who is a privy to this information and a witness to his continued claustrophobia in crowded places, is sympathetic to his decision to give their son a *daknam* that resonates with the name of her husband's favourite story teller. Besides it is only the *daknam* that they have been forced to give in order to get discharged from the hospital, Ashima avers. But, the comic declamation evident in the narration of the baby's reaction to his father's words has a subterranean link with the manner Nikolai Gogol narrates the circumstances leading to the naming of Akaky Akakyevich, the protagonist of "The Overcoat":

> They offered the mother her choice of three names, Mokiya, Sossiya, or that the child should be called after the martyr Khozdazat. "No," said the good woman, "all those names are poor." In order to please her they opened the calendar to another place; three more names appeared, Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy. "This is a judgment," said the old woman. "What names! I truly never heard the like. Varada or Varukh might have been borne, but not Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!" They turned to another page and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy. "Now I see," said the old woman, "that it is plainly fate. And since such is the case, it will be better to name him after his father. His father's name was Akakiy, so let his son's be Akakiy too." In this manner he became Akakiy Akakievitch. They christened the child, whereat he wept and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor. (Gogol, *Taras Bulba* 147)

The underlying parallel between the two situations is the *fatedness* of one being given a particular name under a particular situation. Secondly, and more strikingly is the

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similarity of the tenor of the comic narration of the reactions of the two babies. If the infant Akaky 'grimaced' then the baby Gogol 'yawned,' both expressing the same sense of ennui regarding the noise around them. This mock-comic tone is a stylistic and narrative strategy that has been employed by Lahiri throughout her novel. During his *annaprasan* (rice-initiation) ceremony held in the presence of a crowd of Bengali-Americans, a ritual is observed when the child has to choose one thing from a plate of diverse offerings:

> To predict his future path in life, Gogol is offered a plate holding a clump of cold Cambridge soil dug from the backyard, a ballpoint pen, and a dollar bill, to see if he will be a landowner, a scholar, or a businessman. Most children will grab at one of them, sometimes all of them, but Gogol touches nothing. He shows no interest in the plate, instead turning away, briefly burying his face in his honorary uncle's shoulder.
>
> "Put the money in his hand!" someone in the group calls out. "An American boy must be rich!"
>
> "No!" his father protests. "The pen. Gogol take the pen."
>
> Gogol regards the plate doubtfully. Dozens of dark heads hover expectantly. The material of the Punjabi pajama set begins to scratch his skin.
>
> "Go on, Gogol, take something," Dilip Nandy says, drawing the plate close. Gogol frowns, and his lower lip trembles. Only then, forced at six months to confront his destiny, does he begin to cry. (40)

The narration in the half-comic and ironic tone about the crying of baby Gogol again echoes the weeping of Akaky. The name however continues to stick to him, as Ashima's

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grandmother's letter never arrives and the old woman dies in between. The sudden death of Ashima's father, by time baby Gogol is barely a year old, necessitates also an express passport and his name is recorded as "Gogol Ganguli" as his parents have little time to think. He is now accustomed to be called by that name. It is by the time he is five and all set to join his new kindergarten school that Gogol feels upset learning that he would have a new name at the school:

> His parents have told him that at school, instead of being called Gogol, he will be called by a new name, a good name, which his parents have finally decided on, just in time for him to begin his formal education. The name Nikhil, is artfully connected to the old. Not only is it a perfectly respectable Bengali good name, meaning "he who is entire, encompassing all," but it also bears a satisfying resemblance to Nikolai, the first name of Russian Gogol. (56)

Though the *bhalonam* still has its latent connection with his *daknam* the young child is afraid and often in tears as Nikhil for him is "someone he doesn't know" (57). His parents reassure that he will never be anyone but Gogol to them. In the school, however, the Principal does not listen to the parents and asks the young Gogol whether he would like to be called by another name. His negative reply at that moment seals the fate of his *bhalonam* which remains suspended in the air. Though his parents get a letter from the school Principal stating their son's preference and seeking their opinion again, this time Ashoke and Ashima decide not to press the matter further. Quick to learn from this mistake his parents are ready with both *daknams* and *bhalonam* when Gogol's sister is born. Though they decide upon a single name "Sonali" – meaning "she who is golden" – it soon changes from Sonu, Sona and finally the Russian inflected Sonia thereby having

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at least two *daknams* and a *daknam* that also becomes her *bhalonam* while the first name gradually wears out.

A significant aspect of *The Namesake* as mentioned earlier is the incredible inventory of names that Jhumpa Lahiri employs throughout. The namesake has created a powerful aura around which Gogol Ganguli grows up and interacts with the outside world. In a somewhat similar way to Nikolai Gogol's pun and play with names as evident in the naming episode of Akaky, Jhumpa Lahiri's adoption of a half-comic play with the names of some of the principal characters of the novel is evident from a glance at the table given below :

Daknam-cum-*Bhalonam*	Gogol Ganguli
Daknam--Gogol	Go Left, Go Right, Go Slow/Go Gogol/ Giggle/Gargle/Goggles/ Google /Gogol G
Changed *Bhalonam*	Nikhil/Nikolai/Nick /"Me llamo Nikhil" ("I am Nikhil")
Wife-(Moushumi)	Monsoon/Moosomi/Mouse/Moose/Mo/Moe/Toe/Mazoom
Ashoke(*Bhalonam)*	Mithu (*daknam*)/ Professor Ganguli//Gangopadhya/
Bhalonam–Ashima	Monu*(Daknam)l* One who is limitless/Jell-O-Ice –Cream
Bhalonam and Daknam— Sonali (She who is golden)	*Daknams*—Sonu, Sona/ *Bhalonam-cum-Daknam*—Sonia/ Sonia of *Crime and Punishment*/ Sonia Gandhi
Authorities	Howard Wilcox III, Candace Lapidus, Mr. Lawson, the unnamed Judge
Second Baptism(famous	Bob Dylan(Robert Zimmerman)/Moliere (Jean-Baptiste

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people who changed names)	Poquelin)/Leon Trotsky(Lev Davidovich Bronstein)/Gerald Ford(Leslie Lynch King, Jr./ Engelbert Humperdinck(Arnold George Dorsey)
Gogol Ganguli Unaware about Nikolai Gogol's Change of names	Gogol-Yanovsky to Gogol/ Yanov(published once)/ OOOO(Once signed in this fashion to honour the four o's in his name")
Family Friends Vs. Neighbours	Mitras/ Banerjees/Nandis …... the Johnsons/the Mertons/ the Aspris/the Hills
Bengali kinship terms that Gogol and Sonia uses in Calcutta	*Mashi/Pishi/Mama/Maima/Kaku/Jethu*
Moushumi's Circle of	Edith/Colin/ Louise/Blake/ Olivia /Astrid/Donald
Baby's name suggested at Donald and Astrid's mock-	John/Paul/Innocent/Clement/Jet/Tipper/ Zachary (dog)
Books tossed by	Finding the Perfect Name/Alternative Baby Names/The
Gogol's Friends	Colin/Jason/ Marc/ Brandon/Jonathan
Gogol's Girl Friends/ Flings	Kim/ Ruth/ Maxine(Max)/ Bridget/Moushumi
Puritan "Spirits"	Abijah Craven/Anguish Mather/Peregrine Wotton/Ezekiel and Uriah Lockwood
Gogol's Musicians	Paul/Ringo/ John/ Garfunkel/Neil Young/ Cat Stevens/Dylan/Clapton/Abbey Road

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Gogol and Ashima'sTV Shows	The Price is Right/Guiding Light/The $10,000 Pyramid/Sesame Street/The Electric Company/Live Boat/Fantasy Island/ The Big Chill
Gogol's Books	The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy/The Hobbit Comics/Eathan Frome/ The Great Gatsby/ The Good
Gogol's Education/Profession	Architecture/ Yale /Columbia
Gogol's Favourite Architects Schools	Brian Eno/Elvis Costello/Charlie Parker/Mantegna/Gropius/ Le Corbusier ….Doric/ Mughal/Greek revival/Renaissance Italian
Acronyms	NYU/LSAT/Y2K/ABCD/MIT/BOAC/PMLA/WQXR/ID/ MTV/AM/NPR/ CD/AAA/CVS/FDR/ATM/TV/ABD/AC/BBC/MLA/AIA
Magazines/journals	*Desh*/ Times/National Geographic/globe/reader's digest/The New Yorker/Architectural Digest/Vogue/Der Spiegel/Critical Inquiry/Food and Wine/The Statesman/Times of India/
Brands/Labels	Charlie Brown/Skippy/Hood/Bumble bee/Land O'Lakes/Ezra Stiles/Tribeca loft/Lapsang Souchang/Tiffany/De Luca/Lipton/Bata/Favre Leuba/Peek Freans/Windex/Dunhill/McDonalds/Filene/Double Tree/Chardonny/Chablis/

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	Bloody Mary/Chianti/Bendel/Balducci/Perry Como/Nikon/Lopchu
Festivals/Rituals	Durga Pujo/Anna Prasan/ Rabindra Jayanti/ Christmas/Easter/Thanksgiving
Airports/Terminals/Train Stations/Bridges	Dum Dum/ Logan/ Howrah/Howrah Bridge/Ghatshila/Dalbumgarh/ North Station/Lachmere/Manhattan/the Strand/Brooklyn Bridge/Cleveland
Streets/Roads/Public circles and squares	Pemberton Road/ the Common/ Public Garden/Amherst Street/New Market/Morningside/Lexington Avenue/Central Square/ Times Square/Chelsea/Chinatown/Brooklyn Heights/Murray Hill/Amsterdam Avenue/the Plaza/Fifth Avenue/West 164th Street/Alipore
Colleges/ Academia	Silliman/ Yale/Columbia/Presidency College /Harvard/ MIT/ /Heidelberg/Williams College/Princeton/St. Xavier’s
Historical Figures	Martin Luther King Jr./Robert Kennedy/ Dr. Benjamin Spock/MalcomX/ Lord Mountbatten/ Akbar/ Shahjahan/ Jahangir/Aurangzeb/Salim Chisti

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The above table at first sight gives the impression of a veritable collage of names. It also reveals how nuances of naming such as *daknams* and bhalonams create their distinctive spaces which often move in collaborative, interactive, overlapping and tensive axes adding distinctive hues to the identity of a Bengali-American like Gogol Ganguli. Further, its also evokes a feeling of being overwhelmed by a sense of 'power' associated with names and naming that a young Bengali-American boy like Gogol Ganguli has to encounter in order to smoothly navigate through the outside world. The narrator comments that as a young boy, Gogol "doesn't mind his name" (66). While on the way to school he takes pleasure at times by reading his name through the traffic signs: "Go Left, Go Right, Go Slow." His father, too shows him the university library stack of the volumes of Nikolai Gogol's story which he cannot reach assuring him that "within a few years" he would be able to read them (66). He is also not deterred when his class teacher always pauses at his name and some of his classmates who earlier used to tease him by saying "giggle" or "gargle" have stopped the practice much to his relief. Teachers year after year write on his report card mentioning his name that he is a diligent and curious student. While running on sprint races his friends cheer him as "Go Gogol." By the time he is ten, he also learns from his three trips to India the respectability with which his last name is etched in his ancestral house. He is surprised to see six full pages of the telephone directory of Calcutta filled with his surname. It is only one of his cousin's laughter that dissuades his temptation to tear apart the pages as a souvenir.

It is only on a particular day after he attains the age of eleven and in his sixth grade of school that the "peculiarity" of his name becomes "apparent" to Gogol (68). On a school field-trip of some "historical intent" they first visit a textile mill, then a poet's

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house in Rhode Island and finally stop by a graveyard where the poet lies buried. Gogol observes that it is an old graveyard where the plain black and gray arched stones are "caked with linen and moss" (68). The accompanying teachers suddenly line them up and give them a project while distributing sheets of newsprints and colour crayons. They are asked not to draw but to rub the surfaces of the graves. Some students shout in joy when they find a grave with names related to their own. However, Gogol is mature enough to feel that there would not be any Ganguli buried as he has already had glimpses of bodies being carried to crematoriums in Calcutta for burning. It is during this project work that he comes across a host of names of "Puritan spirits" –some of them being early immigrants to America. Names like Abijah Craven for instance, attract him in a peculiar way as he is not aware that "names die over some time" rather feeling the bearers of these names "speaking" to him (70-71).

Jhumpa Lahiri here metaphorically blends a connection between the names of the early immigrants of the USA to those of a second-generation Bengali-American immigrant like Gogol Ganguli who has become a by-product of his father's decision to strike root in an unfamiliar terrain and soil. Secondly, while attempting to pronounce these names it is natural that young Gogol would have to stutter and halt in between. Though he does not introspect as a young boy a shadow of his own Russian name looms here in the background too. A parallel connection to Nikolai Gogol's story "The Overcoat" is evident. David Sloane in his article "The Name as a Phonetic Icon in Gogol's "Overcoat" (1991) suggests that the acoustic meaning of Akaky Akakyevich functions as "an icon of the disjointed utterance" that transcends " the textual manifestation of his own speech" and adds: "In fact, the name embodies one of the

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story's main themes and structuring principles" (481). It is thus, the embodiment of Gogol Ganguli's name also that he interacts about its uniqueness in the graveyard as he finds him under the spell of the names of the "Puritan spirits" in the Rhode Island graveyard that afternoon. A creative metaphorical entailment that emerges here could be expressed as NAMES OF PURITAN SPIRITS SPEAK TO THE UNACCUSTOMED DAKNAM OF A NEW IMMIGRANT'S SON. As a young boy of fourteen immersed in the world of contemporary American teenage comics, music and TV shows he is not able to appreciate why his father gifts a collection of Nikolai Gogol's stories on his birthday because he already has discovered disjointedness between his name and the world around him:

> He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that he has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. (*The Namesake* 76)

He is naturally not able to decipher Dostoevsky's prophetic statement that "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat" and Ashoke who believes in an intellectual self-exploration tells him that "one day" he would be able to make sense of it (78). Judith Caesar in "Gogol's Namesake" criticises Gogol Ganguli's inability not only as a teenager but also as a grown up for not being sensitive enough to his father:

> Throughout the novel, many of the most significant conversations between Gogol Ganguli and Ashoke begin with Nikolai Gogol, as Ashoke attempts to connect with his son through Gogol the same way that the Russian writer connected him to his grandfather. But Gogol Ganguli rejects these gestures, not recognizing them for what they are. (112)

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However, one important distinction that Caesar does not invoke here though she has made an oblique reference to it, is that Ashoke's tutelage as a teenager took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s ambience of Bengal and Calcutta when India and the then USSR had a close relationship. Affordable English and other Indian language translations of publishing houses like the Raduga Publishers of Moscow were easily available in book shops and a number of young Bengali students like Ashoke were drawn especially to prose stylists like Chekhov, Sholokov, Turgenev, Gorky, Gogol and of course Dostoevsky. Jhumpa Lahiri's fictional imaginary in this regard tallies with the historical ambience of Bengal of those decades. Gogol Ganguli's identity and spatiality as a typical Bengali-American boy of the 1970s acts as a buffer in this regard. Secondly, Caesar also refers to a dissonance between Gogol Ganguli's aspiration to be an architect and his own 'lack' of aesthetics. She blames him for his inability to move beyond designing "staircases" (113). But a glance at the list of architects that Gogol seriously studies reveals that he does possess sensibilities as far his profession is concerned. During their longest vacation in India, an eight months stay, the highlight of the trip for Gogol is also their journey to Agra. The beauty and grandeur of the architectural design of the Tajmahal moves him powerfully:

> No other building has affected him so powerfully. Their second day at the Taj he attempts to sketch the dome and a portion of the façade, but the building's grace eludes him and he throws the attempt away. (*The Namesake* 85)

It is only natural on the part of a young aspiring twentieth century student of Architecture groomed in the formal Western discourses of his profession to have an awe-inspiring experience in his exploration of the grandness of a medieval Indian architectural marvel

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which contains within it a blending of diverse cultural ethos. Though on their return journey has its share of "bad luck" in the form of a burglary and stabbing incident in another train, Gogol is yet to learn the metaphoric significance that such accidents has in relation to his father's past life in Bengal.

Another important metaphorical aspect of the narrative of *The Namesake* that has escaped the attention of most critics is the names of the three persons linked with Gogol Ganguli's contrary negotiations with his name. The Boston hospital staff Howard Wilcox III, the Principal of Gogol's school Candace Lapidus and his High School teacher Mr. Lawson who teaches them *Divided Soul,* a biography of Nikolai Gogol—a commonness that binds these names is that all their names sound authoritative. David Sloane comments that a common strain of all the Petersburg tales of Nikolai Gogol is the metaphorical dismemberment of the human physiognomy like the limp that remains as a permanent scar of the accident within Ashoke in *The Namesake*. Secondly, the very repetition of Akaky Akakyevich's name in "The Overcoat" with "extraordinary frequency" implies "a phonetic icon of deficiency" as his speech is marked by a continuous jar and a stuttering before representatives of authority like Petrovich, the tailor and the Very Important Personage in the story (Sloane 485). This is not to state that in the same sense there is a "physical dismemberment" or Gogol Ganguli is diffident due to that. But, there is a subtle shade of "The Overcoat" in the way Jhumpa Lahiri too plays with these names. Gogol's conscious decision to change his name by the time he is eighteen is metaphorically linked up with Mr. Lawson's teaching of the *Divided Soul* as delineated by the narrator. Mr. Lawson whose name could be conceptually and

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metaphorically inferred as the "Son of Law" creates an ambience of crassness that naturally affects the young Gogol Ganguli in the classroom:

> "Not your ordinary guy, Nikolai Gogol," Mr. Lawson says. "He is celebrated today as one of Russia's most brilliant writers. But during his lifetime he was understood by no one, least of all himself. One might say he typified the phrase 'eccentric genius.' Gogol's life, in a nutshell, was a steady decline into madness. The writer Ivan Turgenev described him as an intelligent, queer, and sickly creature. He was reputed to be a hypochondriac and a deeply paranoid, frustrated man. He was, in addition, by all accounts, morbidly melancholic, given to fits of severe depression. He had trouble making friends. He never married, fathered no children. It's commonly believed he died a virgin." (*The Namesake* 91)

Mr. Lawson does not stop at this but goes on to read an excerpt from the book that graphically captures the painful details of how the doctors administered chemicals as per the wish of Nikolai Gogol to die—a kind of euthanasia the detailed narration of which evokes moans from all the students of the class barring Gogol Ganguli. He thinks about the story gifted by his father, but not taught by his teacher critically, now with a mixed feeling:

> To read the story, he believes would mean paying tribute to his namesake, accepting it somehow. Still, listening to his classmates complain, he feels perversely responsible, as if his own work is being attacked. (92)

As Gogol Ganguli loses himself in to the world of his American friends, one day, before Kim—the first girl whom he kisses, he innocuously announces that he is "Nikhil." Striking in this reformulation of his name also Gogol does not create a new name for

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himself but banks on his parents' old choice. Still, his face "tingles", whether for "triumph or fear" he is not sure (96). By the time he is eighteen and out of High School, Gogol has also transformed into a nearly six foot frame with a lean, intelligent and handsome face with interestingly "a slight bump at the very top of his nose" (98). Like his father's limping feet this bump in his nose becomes a permanent sign of his embodiment which uncannily recalls the strategy adopted by Nikolai Gogol in his Petersburg tales. It is with this physiognomic change that he enters an American court premises to apply for a change of his name. The idea of changing his name seriously enters his mind after he reads an article entitled "Second Baptisms" in an issue of *Reader's Digest*. The article began with a question of identifying some famous personalities who changed their names. He guesses only the real name of Bob Dylan as Robert Zimmerman correctly. When he brings the matter up before his parents at dinner table, he argues that he cannot envision his *daknam* turned *bhalonam* on the top of his Bachelor degree certificate or an academic resume. Ashoke objects citing "hassles" that he and his wife have already encountered. Ashima too explains that a *daknam* is a Bengali tradition. But their son tells him about his classroom experience to which Ashoke reacts saying "he was also a genius" (100). When Gogol tells him that nobody takes him "seriously" owing to his strange name, Ashoke asks him to reveal who exactly does not do so. Gogol lies to his parents incoherently uttering the answer as "people". Ashoke relents finally adding that "In America everything is possible" (100). But, everything in America is not possible always. For instance, though Ashoke and his group of friends often debate about contemporary American politics Ashima observes ironically that they are yet to become voters of their adopted land. This expression is sometimes expressed in

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the form of expressions like "Only in America it is possible" with an emphasis on *only* and repeated in the novel several times .The scene in the court room again, is delineated with an air of formality associated with the authority:

> At the appointed time, his case is called. He enters a room and sits on an empty wooden bench at the back. The judge, a middle-aged, heavyset black woman wearing half-moon glasses, sits opposite, on a dais. The clerk, a thin young woman with bobbed hair, asks for his application, reviewing it before handing it to the judge. There is nothing decorating the room apart from the Massachusetts state and American flags and an oil portrait of a judge. "Gogol Ganguli," the clerk says, motioning for Gogol to approach the dais, as eager as he is to go through with it, he is aware, with a twinge of sadness, that this is the last time in his life he will hear that name uttered in an official context. In spite of his parents' sanction he feels that he is overstepping them, correcting a mistake they've made. (101)

The first thing to be observed here is the creation of the formal air of an authoritative ambience as a subtle shadow of the narrative strategy earlier employed by the nineteenth century Russian prose stylist Nikolai Gogol. The replacement of the proper noun with a pronoun conveys that contrite and taut binding of an authoritative agency in a metaphorical sense. Secondly, it is remarkable to get the "inside" view of the agency that is about to undergo a sort of identity transition which he perceives as completely "Russian", "quaint" or "strange" to one that he perceives that would lean more towards his "American" identity and fit in to the everyday world that he is more familiar with. Again, the unnamed judge here conveys more authoritativeness in a subtle way than a named one. The "unnaming" again could be perceived as an intelligent narrative and

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conceptually metaphorical strategy that Jhumpa Lahiri employs not only here but also in her other stories. For instance, in "The Third and the Final Continent" Mala's husband is not named as the character is based on the author's father—thus something close to her experiential immediacy. Similarly, she does not name the parents of Ruma in the title story of her later story collection *Unaccustomed Earth* as per her own admission this story too relates to her own approach to the consequences loss of her parents. Again, this "story" enables us to conveniently work out another set of metaphors and entailments such as CHANGING A NAME IS OVERSTEPPING THE GIVER OF THE NAME, CHANGING A NAME IS CORRECTING A MISTAKE, CHANGING A NAME AFFECTS THE HOLDER OF THE NAME, NAME IS CHANGED THROUGH THE SANCTION AND STAMP OF AN AUTHORITY, UNNAMED PERSONS MAKES A VEILED AND POWERFUL PRESENCE. These set of metaphors combined together conveys the truth that Gogol Ganguli at every stage of his "conversion" has serious ethical concerns about the propriety of his action. It is this aspect of his personality that as discussed above slips through the explorations of some critics such as Judith Caesar and Raju Barthakur. They share a view that Gogol Ganguli's conscious "conversion" of his name indicates"inferior" aesthetic and intellectual senses in comparison to both his father Ashoke Ganguli and his wife Moushumi Mazoomdar. Barthakur too opines that his final ability towards a sort of "filiation" is marked by his freedom from a "cocoon of intense psychological conundrum (114). But if we examine the above passage itself carefully, we discover that this thought of ignoring his parents' wishes is not something that fills him with a sense of complete freedom. Further, the narrator notes there is still a hitch as "he doesn't feel Nikhil" (*The Namesake* 105). The metaphors listed above too inferentially convey the uneasiness that marks this decision.

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During his girlfriend Ruth's stay in England and his imminent separation with her, Gogol attends a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English. It is here that he learns that the term ABCD stands for "American-born confused deshi":

> He knows that *deshi*, a generic word for "countryman,' means "Indian," knows that his parents and all their friends always refer to India simply as *desh*. But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India. (118)

The metaphoric play with the word "desh" here again reflects the pattern of repetition of the word "America" which stands for *videsh* for the first-generation Bengali-Americans like Ashoke and Ashima. They perceive India and Bengal as *desh*. As Indian-Bengali-Americans they also inhabit a stabilized spatiality in the interstices of the two sides of the hyphen of *desh-videsh*. In an article on her hyphenated identity Jhumpa Lahiri formulates how both sides of her Indian-American identity make her realise that the hyphen perfectly balances the two valences attached to it while simultaneously making it clear that this expression was not a part of her childhood and teenage life:

> The traditions on either side of the hyphen dwell in me like siblings, still occasionally sparring, one outshining the other depending on the day. But like siblings they are intimately familiar with one another, forgiving and intertwined. (Interview with *Newsweek*)

What is significant here is that the author too perceives her identity in terms of a metaphor – a pair of siblings are bound by their empathy for each other ready to forgive the mistakes committed by either side. In the functional and everyday world she adds that one might "outshine" the other depending on "the day." Thus, the hyphenated identity

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that relates to Bengali-American *bhalonams* also acts as a blended space which has two input spaces in the forms of America and India/Bengal. From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory too, *bhalonams* thus acting as metaphors of diasporic identity again reflect a coherent cultural variation as mentioned by Zoltan Kovesces in his study *Metaphor and Culture: Universality and Variation* (2005):

> Universal body leads to universal embodiment – a collective of universal metaphors. First, the environment, the socio-cultural context, and the communicative situation of groups of people or individuals provide these groups and individuals with experiences that are specific to them. In addition to the body, the metaphors we produce are also created by a certain history: either a history of the contexts (environment, society-culture, communicative situation) or the history of an individual. The histories of contexts and individuals vary across time, and these variations in history produce variation in metaphor. Third, the kinds of metaphors that we have also depend on the diverse concerns and interests that govern our life. Our concerns and interests may be general, that is, "built into" the culture, or personal. Both influence significantly the metaphors we employ to understand the world around us. (286)

Here, it can be explained that the twinning of metaphorical nuances of *daknams* and *bhalonams* are perfectly coherent within the Bengali context of naming. However, it results in a rich and complex blended situation when a Bengali father decides to name his son with his favourite nineteenth century Russian literary icon Nikolai Gogol while living in America in late 1960s. Added to this is the virtual embodiment of an accidental affair that closely links up both the father's reading of a story at the moment of the accident and

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his rescue connected with it. It is again connected with the disjointedness that Ashoke experiences in the wake of the accident, as the words of a co-passenger haunts him. So, during the course of the seminar Gogol Ganguli under the temporary influence of his changed *bhalonam* only perceives India from a purely American perspective. Under the garb of his *daknam* turned *bhalonam* Gogol he could not clearly comprehend its rich and complex metaphoric nuances that of course cohere with his intellectually inherited cultural context. But, it is equally significant that he always looks back at it feeling a compelling attraction. Again, the word *desh* is further metaphorically blended with *Desh* – the name of a prestigious and popular cultural magazine of Bengal. The yellowing, faded and well-thumbed old issues of the magazine links Ashima not only with the *culturescape* of Bengal but also her illustrator father whose paintings often act as the cover pages of the magazine. It is his sudden death that makes her dither even in the airport terminal about facing her rest of her family members in Calcutta. The shawl-wrapping, pipe-smoking intent painter figure of her middle-aged father narrated in *The Namesake* has an uncannily dark shadow of late Bikash Bhattacharjee, a renowned Bengali painter whose water colour and oil paintings Bengalis habitually recognized in the covers of *Desh* for years together— especially during the last three decades of the twentieth century.

The initial euphoria that makes Nikhil say "*Me Ilamo Nikhil*" in his Spanish classes, fades out barely within three years, re-linking him with his early childhood when he did not mind his *daknam*:

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> These days he is called Gogol so seldom that the sound of it no longer upsets him as it used to. After three years of being Nikhil the vast majority of time, he no longer minds. (*The Namesake* 122)

Just after his break up with his England returned girlfriend Ruth and by the time he is in his twenties, Gogol travels home back one day when his father is staying alone while both Sonia and Ashima are away in India, and habitually comes to receive him at the station. The journey that evening is marked by a mishap as a passenger commits suicide in a track and there is a delay. Still, Gogol finds his father patiently waiting for him in his trench coat. Ashoke Ganguli, during that windy and snowy night, while driving home back gives a graphic narration of the train accident that nearly killed him way back in 1961 in India while reading his favourite story of Nikolai Gogol. Gogol Ganguli listens to the entire story with a stunned silence, struggling to picture the distant West Bengal scenario simultaneously thinking about a life and world without his father. He asks his father why he was not told the episode earlier. His father in his characteristic manner makes it light by saying that he did not wish to upset him. He is also curious to know if his name still reminds him only about the accident to which Ashoke tells him that it no longer holds him that way and he is more reminded of the years after his birth in America. Gogol Ganguli feels a uniquely unaccustomed resonance the way his father utters his abandoned *bhalonam* now marginalised only as a *daknam* shared and known by very few in America:

> And suddenly the sound of his pet name, uttered by his father as he has been accustomed to hear it all his life, means something completely new, bound up with a catastrophe he has unwittingly embodied for years. (124)

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For the first time Gogol Ganguli feels the intertwining of his father's near death experience with his *daknam* and remains etched in his memory as a poignantly illuminative moment of his life.

The building metaphor also highlights a parallel between his growth as a professional and a person in quest of his identity through his negotiation with his unique *daknam.* Consequent to his graduation from Columbia and stay in his favorite city New York, Gogol discovers a pleasure in being part of a team of designers. Though his contributions in designs of hotels and museums are not that remarkable he also understands that "each component of a building, however small, is nevertheless essential" (125). As a young man he has his moments as he is found compellingly attractive by young American peers like Maxine. In Maxine's case, of course, there is a palpable case of his constant feeling of being "seduced":

> They speak in that slightly strained, silly way that he associates now with flirtation—the exchange feels desperately arbitrary, fleeting. It is the sort of conversation he might have had with anybody, but Maxine has a way of focusing her attention on him completely, her pale, watchful eyes holding his gaze, making him feel, for those brief minutes, the absolute centre of her world. (129)

This trance-like feeling continues and absorbs young Gogol Ganguli to the world of the Ratliffs through Maxine. The architectural design of their Greek Revival sprawling house in Chelsea, Maxine's assortments of objects, books, paintings, the sophisticated mannerisms, intimacy of her parents, food, drinks, and their partially bohemian lifestyle move him powerfully and before long he is integrated in to their world. Their curiosity about India hovers to discussion on Calcutta:

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> "What's Calcutta like? Is it beautiful?"
>
> The question surprises him. He is accustomed to people asking about the poverty, about the beggars and the heat. "Parts of it are beautiful," he tells her. "There's a lot of lovely Victorian architecture left over from the British. But most of it is decaying."
>
> "That sounds like Venice," Gerald says. "Are there canals?"
>
> "Only during monsoons. That's when the streets flood. I guess that's the closest it comes to resembling Venice."
>
> "I want to go to Calcutta," Maxine says, as if this has been a thing denied to her all her life. (135)

The parallel between the half-comic and mock-serious tone of both Gogol and the narrator reveals a narrative style that again bears an unmistaken and subtle shadow of Nikolai Gogol's mocking and ironic style in "The Overcoat." Within this world, Gogol does not mind his *bhalonam* being further abbreviated to "Nick" to sound more American. The Ratliffs attribute his physical features as "Mediterranean" and introduce him as "the architect that Max brought" to family members in their New Hampshire farm. Gogol on the other hand, appreciates the freedom enjoyed by Maxine, and her urge to "emulate" her parents in her way. Ashima hears Maxine's shortened pet name "Max" exclaiming that it sounds like the name of a boy. When they visit Gogol's parents on their way to their family farm Maxine perceives the Gangulis as a "single afternoon's challenge, an anomaly never to be repeated" (146). But Ashima feels aghast as she calls her "Ashima." Gogol observes that Maxine manages to engage in conversation with his slightly diffident parents:

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> But Maxine is immune to their awkwardness, drawing them out, devoting her attention to them fully, and Gogol is reminded of the first time he'd met her, when she'd seduced him in the same way. (149)

The metaphor of seduction mentioned here tallies with Maxine's reaction to his revelation of Nikhil's *daknam* as something "cute." Though the three months in his life he has wavered into the life of the Ratliffs often missing his parents in between, it proves costly to him as he suddenly receives the news of the death of his father. His stay at Cleveland, receiving his father's body, emptying the rooms where he stayed, makes Gogol exhausted and he is imbued with the profundity of loss. He tonsures his head much like his father, observes the Bengali Hindu rituals and remains beside his 'diminished' family. Maxine's attempts to make him get away from the ambience of mourning to the picturesque getaway of their family farm becomes futile and soon a rift ensues. He often recapitulates the moments that he spent with his father, especially the trips to the sea sides.

After a long gap, at his mother's suggestion Gogol meets Moushumi and following a tempestuous affair they marry. Their life in a new apartment in New York soon shows the price of acting under the same impulse. Unlike his mother, she does not adopt his surname saying that her title Mazoomdar is already mouthful. She keeps the garment bag containing her wedding dress from her previous engagement with Graham. It is however Moushumi who knows him by his *daknam* and it is with her that Gogol shares his regret of changing his *daknam* with her. However, he is totally unprepared to the way she reveals this private information before her circle of friends in a party hosted by her friends Astrid and Donald. This "half incestuous" group of yuppie scholars are the

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people Moushumi turns to her choices of food, dress and everyday items. They start playing a mock-comic game of finding a name for Astrid's baby as she is in a conceived state. Proceeding with the intent to find a completely unique name and passing name books with funny titles, flips through the pages and start throwing up names. The first name suggested is Zachary to which another says that he has seen a dog named so. Oliver, one of the group members asks what Moushumi means, to which she replies that it conveys "a damp southwesterly breeze" Astrid remarks that she always knew that Moushumi is a "force of nature" (240). Gogol, little interested in the discussion goes to the kitchen and talks to Donald. It is during the conversation that he learns for the first time that Moushumi had stayed with the couple for months after her break up with Graham. Donald explains that too much likeness with each other as the reason behind their eventual rift. As they move back to the hall they find the group throwing up "virtuous" names like Patience, Prudence, Faith, Chastity, Silence. Donald suggests Prudence. Louise says that anyway one can change names like their college mate who was once Joe Chapman but now identifies as Joanne. Edith says that he would never change his name given by his grandmother. It is just at that moment Moushumi suddenly tells that Nikhil changed his name. The room becomes suddenly quiet and Gogol is agitated and angry at her:

> He stares at her, stunned. He has never told her not to tell anyone. He simply assumed she never would. His expression is lost on her; she smiles back at him, unaware of what she's done. The dinner guests regard him, their mouths hanging open in confused smiles. (243)

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Astrid asks him his earlier name. Gogol reveals it. Donald enquires why his parents kept that name. Deep inside Gogol regrets telling Moushumi about his father's accident and his own regret of changing the name that his father gave him. As Gogol informs that his father was a fan of the author, Donald suggests Verdi as a name for their baby. The petulant and jest tone of Astrid and Donald makes him feel that they are not an impulsive couple. At the suggestion of finding a perfect name, Gogol declares with chagrin that there is no perfect name in this world. He further suggests that all children should be left unnamed till eighteen and till then only pronouns should be used. At this even in her drunken stupor Moushumi shoots a glance at him which he ignores. But Gogol remembers an English translation of a French fiction that he had found in Moushumi's bedside narrating and referring to the two principal characters as just he and she which ran to hundreds of pages like that:

> He had read it in a matter of hours, oddly relieved that the names of the characters were not revealed. It had been an unhappy love story. If only his own life were so simple. (245)

This entire episode is a subtle metaphorical "reconstruction" of the naming episode of Akaky in Nikolai Gogol's story. Firstly, it reveals the breach of confidence that Gogol had on Moushumi. A fissure in their relationship is symbolically indicated here. Secondly, the play with names of babies is another significant instance of the narrative ploy that Nikolai Gogol adopted. Jhumpa Lahiri obviously gives it a different twist by mapping the gap between Gogol and Moushumi on the episode. Further, the whole episode is laden with an irony which on the one hand exposes the hollowness of

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Moushumi's circle of friends' lifestyle and on the other hand, Gogol senses ahead an ironical twist to his own life.

The twist appears in the form of a clandestine affair of Moushumi with Dmitri Desjardins, a man on whom she had a teenage crush—seeing whose name in an envelope is enough for her to lead her thought to sex: "The name alone, when she'd first learned it, had been enough to seduce her" (256). When she calls him she identifies herself as "mouse," a nickname given to her by Dmitri long back:

> "How in the world do you spell that?" he'd asked, and when she told him, he mispronounced it, as most people did. She corrected him, saying that "Mou" rhymed with "toe," but he took his head and said, "I'll just call you Mouse."
>
> The nickname had irritated and pleased her at the same time. It made her feel foolish, but she was aware that in renaming her he had claimed her somehow, already made her his own. (258)

The inability of Dmitri to pronounce her *daknam* here results in giving a quaint nickname to Moushumi. Mouse is not a squirrel. It is not like "Mickey Mouse" either. A mouse is often trapped with a device. However, Moushumi's freedom inheres within it a compelling natural force like destroying the present if it is not good and making a clean start of everything however painful its entailments might be. She has already done that twice – first by making a shift to Paris to study French literature. Along with her studies she translates her freedom in bodily terms by having a series of purely amorous relations with men of all hues and ages. Secondly, she breaks off her engagement in a whiff hurt by a single remark adverse remark of Graham about the large number of her family relations in Calcutta. The Bangla *bhalonam* that she inherits links it with an increase in

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humidity and formation of clouds especially during the summers which follows torrential rains for days and months. Again, etymologically it is a borrowed word from Arabic *Mausam* conveying a wind which again in the *Hindustani* parlance simply stands for weather. Thus, Moushumi's *bhalonam* contains within rich and suggestive metaphoric nuances of climatic change, while the nickname "Mouse" conveys a sense of being normally holed up, search for a granary, a food for cats or being trapped by people to be killed. The negotiation among her *daknam* that Dmitri cannot pronounce, her *bhalonam* and the nickname of Moushumi is complex and the result is unpredictable as there is little indication of a blending. But, it does enable us to make a sense of why she has a casual approach in interpreting the meaning of her *bhalonam* earlier as simply as a damp southwesterly breeze. Unlike Astrid, her friend, she does not see herself as a force of nature. The same casual approach is also prominent in the way she blurts out Gogol's change of name. In contrast, she has retained the same tenor of attraction associated with her nickname which is evident from the way she contacts Dmitri over phone with a loaded impulse of sensuality while uttering it in a husky tone. In her teens she was rejected by Dmitri who predicted that she would break hearts in future. Her crush is fulfilled much later as a married Bengali-American woman. Her Mondays and Wednesdays became structured in visiting him while Gogol remains clueless. This affair, for Moushumi leads her to feel upset while simultaneously she has sense of being "strangely at peace, the complication of it calming her, structuring her day" (266). Gogol gets to know about it only on their journey to Pemberton Road house to celebrate Christmas:

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> He'd felt the chill of her secrecy, numbing him like a poison spreading quickly through his veins. He'd felt this way on only one other occasion, the night he had sat in the car with his father and learned the reason of his name. That night he'd experienced the same bewilderment, was sickened in the same way. But he felt none of the tenderness that he had felt for his father, only the anger, the humiliation of having been deceived. And yet, at the same time, he was strangely calm—in the moment that his marriage was effectively severed he was on solid ground with her for the first time in months. (282)

It is interesting, here, to note how the narrative displays a metaphoric mapping or projection of understanding one particular state of emotional experience in terms of another. The common elements between the two experiences are the feelings of astonishment and sickness. However, in the first experience the revelation of his father's story was followed by a feeling of warmth and tenderness. In the second instance, it has been replaced by the feelings of anger and humiliation. Again, these feelings of anger and humiliation in Gogol's case and feeling upset in Moushumi's case are followed by their mutual arrival at an emotional plateau of calmness. Gogol's feeling of being in a "solid ground" only now implies that he was in a "slippery and choppy ground" with Moushumi during their wedded life. David H. Lynn in his review of The *Namesake* comments about the implications of the deception of this relationship:

> Lahiri allows the instability, self-deception, and simple deception of this marriage to undermine what might have been a certain kind of happy ending. It turns out that this is not the fictional universe of Austen, but of the darker Balzac and Dickens. The ending is more mediated, more ironic: we don't have the marriage of

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the perfect twain, but an isolated individual who, through his experience of the world and some suffering, has achieved a moral identity. Gogol-educated, scarred, tested-is now ready to read. (165)

Before discovering and reading Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat", of course, Gogol Ganguli arrives home to bid his mother adieu and is warmly hugged by his sister Sonia calling him "Goggles" as usual. During this final get-together party before Ashima decides to leave for India, Gogol evaluates the thirty-two year long sojourn of the Gangulis in America as a "string of accidents, unforeseen, one incident begetting another" (*The Namesake* 286). Starting with his father's accident, the loss of his grandmother's letter, his naming both defining and distressing him for years, the inability of his complete reinvention after the change of his name, his broken marriage and above all his father's sudden departure the metaphoric rehearsal of which was made long back—all these events that seemed "out of place and wrong, these were what prevailed, what endured, in the end" (287). Thus, we can work out metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY DOTTED WITH ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS and PAINS OF DEATH AND ACCIDENTS ARE NOTATIONS IN THE JOURNEY OF LIFE, which have got inferential linkage to the super ordinate LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Gogol's ability to make such powerful metaphoric evaluation following his father's death, his divorce, Sonia's engagement and Ashima's decision to sell the Pemberton Road house and move to India has been ignored by critics like Bromwich and Caesar. Shahnawaz Begum, however, in her article on perspectives of child characters in Lahiri's stories makes a passing remark that as a tale of two generations, *The Namesake* is also a "bildungsroman of a second generation immigrant, Gogol" (107). On the other hand, Farha Shariff in her article "Made in the USA: Second

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Generation South Asian Identity Interpreted through a Lacanian Lens" (2010) posits an oppositionality between Gogol's *daknam* and his shortened *bhalonam* Nick through the distinctions between an "ideal ego" and "ego ideal" notions of Slavoj Zizek. But she mixes up the three notions of forenames, nicknames and *daknams* and consequently stylyses the pains associated with Gogol's *daknam* as "phantom pains" (11). As evident in the above passage, the "tensive" character of his daknam and bhalonam can not be seen in terms of oppositionality but a negotiation in multiplicity of spaces and movement of time. That is why also, we discover here, that the "accident" metaphor is integrally connected with both the namesake of Gogol Ganguli and his *daknam* and it is crucial from several angles. It indicates Gogol Ganguli's cognitively creative and metaphoric discernment of a pattern in the form of accidents and incidents that structure the sojourn of his family as immigrants in America. It connects him with the threads of his recurring recollections of his outings with his father and prepares him to face the reality through transcendence of grief as suggested by his father's *bhalonam.* It makes him also realise that his father played multiple roles behind the veneer of his austere, brooding yet affectionate self. Further, a sense of the aesthetic and intellectual inner ordering that Ashoke covered with his overcoat is also indicated by his sudden discovery of his fourteenth birthday gift from his father—the *Collected Stories of Nikolai Gogol* . As he opens the book he finds his father's writing in the front end paper:

> "The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave you your name" is written within quotation marks….The name he had so detested, here hidden and preserved—that was the first thing his father had given him.

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> The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now. One dead. Another, a widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure, in order to dwell as his father does, in a separate world…. Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (*The Namesake* 288-89)

Giving and keeping are both acts of nothing but true love. The passage highlights this with increasing shades of gray borders. His *daknam* which has already lost significant parts of sheen would fade further and one day and then die out one day from this world altogether. Just like the journey of his family's life in America, the journey of his *daknam* too is dotted with accidents and incidents. Gogol's *daknam* and namesake both here become a powerful, evocative and poignant "megametaphor" that weaves the narrative of the entire novel. It is the hinge around which Jhumpa Lahiri has metaphorically and symbolically weaved the loops of the narrative threads and creatively designs the "architectonics" of the Bengali-American identity for second-generation immigrants like Gogol Ganguli. The irony evident in the above passage is also a part of Lahiri's larger frame of names and naming. It is not wry and distant but affective, compassionate and poignant. Again, it is about the final passages like these that have made David H. Lynn note the "ironical and mediated" end of the book reminding him about the streak of a Dickensian vision here. Though the act of reading Nikolai Gogol's story, finally, Gogol Ganguli veers closer to his father's aesthetic and intellectual ordering of his identity through a successful symbolic triangular negotiation of his cognitive spatiality—the

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Bengali-Indian, the Russian and the American. Through this act of reading, Gogol also allegorically pays his long postponed act of paying a “tribute” to his namesake.

That names and naming are an integral facet of Jhumpa Lahiri’s prose style vis-à-vis her oeuvre is also evident from a glance at the list of names given below:

Children (*Bhalonam and Daknam*)	Liliah/Rohin/Eliott/Akash/ Neel/Srabani and Sabitiri(Bonny and Sara)/ Maya and Monika/ Amber/Clover/ Usha/ Hema/ Rupa/Piu
Yet to be born… yet to be named	Adam and Ruma’s second child/ Navin and Hema’s child
Death Mourned(First/Second Generation Bengali-Americans and Americans)	Ashoke/ Shoba and Shukumar’ infant/Mrs.Croft/Ruma’s mother/Kaushik’s mother Parul/ Kaushik
Names as titles of stories	Mrs. Sen (“Mrs. Sen’s”)/ Mr. Pirzada (“When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”)/ “Hema and Kaushik” (trilogy of stories— “Once in a Life time”/ “Year’s End” / “Going Ashore”)
Characters from other writer’s	Julian (“Going Ashore”) –son of Nathaniel

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works/family	Hawthorne/ Franca (“Going Ashore”)—from David Salter’s fiction *Light Years*
‘Shubha’ (auspicious)/ artistic	*Bhalonams*---Shoba and Shukumar(“A Temporary Matter”)
“Mixed”Marriages—Couples (Bhalonams)	Ruma and Adam/ Pranab kaku and Deborah/ Amit and Megan/ Sudha and Roger/Sonia and Ben
First Generation Bengali-American Married Couples	Liliah’s unnamed parents/ Mala and unnamed Husband/ Ashoke and Ashima/ Ruma’s unnamed parents/ Dr. Chadhuri and Parul(later Chitra)/Shibani and her husband/ Amit’s unnamed parents/Sudha’s unnamed parents/ Shyamal and Aparna/Mrs. and Mr. Sen
Clandestine Relationships/Crushes	Dev..Miranda/ Ruma’s father…Mrs. Bagchi/ Hema…Julian/ Mrs. Das...her husband’s Punjabi friend from London/ Moushumi…Dmitri/Pranab... unnamed married Bengali woman/ Bibi…her lover/Mr. Kapasi’s crush for Mrs. Das/ Aparna’s crush for Pranab/Gogol..Bridget/Sang...Farouk...Dierdre

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	/Amit's crush for Pam/Paul's crush for Sang
Second Generation Bengali-American Married Couples	Shoba and Shukumar/ Gogol and Moushumi/Hema and Navin (Non-Bengali Indian-American)/Dev and his unnamed wife/ Twinkle and Sanjib
Siblings (Bhalonams and Daknams)	Gogol and Sonia/ Ruma and Romi/ Sudha and Rahul
Second Generation Love Affairs	Gogol(as Nikhil) and Ruth/Gogol(as Nikhil) and Maxine/ Gogol and Moushumi/Sonia and Ben/ Moushumi and Graham/Hema and Kaushik/
"Mixed"Marriages—Couples (Bhalo nams)	Ruma and Adam/ Pranab kaku and Deborah/ Amit and Megan/ Sudha and Roger/Sonia and Ben
First Generation Bengali-American Married Couples	Liliah's unnamed parents/ Mala and unnamed Husband/ Ashoke and Ashima/ Ruma's unnamed parents/ Dr. Chadhuri and Parul(later Chitra)/Shibani and her husband/ Amit's unnamed parents/Sudha's unnamed parents/ Shyamal and Aparna/Mrs. and Mr. Sen

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The above list of names reveals not only the author's selection of names with an introspection but also the pattern of either pairing them as couples or groups such as children, siblings or names that she preserves for using in the title of the stories. She displays a special sensitivity not only in her choice of names of children but also in the manner she places them in their interactions with the adult around them. Firstly, she very often places these children in a space of inter-ethnic boundaries or fissures and employs them as enabling agents of comprehending the differences and commonness in a dynamic way. For instance Lilia in "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" metaphorically mediates the troubled relations of Muslims and Hindus in Bengal through her own innocent understandings of the war in East Bengal between India and Pakistan, her own school learning of American history and geography and concentrates her efforts in understanding of the evolving bond between her parents and Mr. Pirzada. It is also interesting that Mr. Pirzada through his gracious and unmistakable Muslim gentry's culture always addresses her as a "lady" and for he always remains "Mr. Pirzada" and a subtle bond of trust and affection evolves between the two. In *The Namesake* also young Gogol one day sees that someone has distorted the title of his father's name Ganguli to "Gangreen." Though the sight fills him with fear at the same in his way he interprets that such distortion is "targeted" more towards her parents than second-generation descendents of the family like his sister Sonia and he himself (67). This experience on the part of Gogol in a way answers back to critics like Mandira Sen who in her review expresses her surprise that Jhumpa Lahiri has "shielded her characters from racial discrimination" (9). In "Sexy" too it is the young Rohin's intervention through his interpretation of the word sexy as "loving someone you do not know" that acts for

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Miranda—the American mistress of Dev as an "eye opener" enabling her to see her fault and creatively terminate the relationship. Again in "Mrs. Sen's," Eliott becomes a privy to the inner world of pains undergone by lonely Bengali-American house wife, an experience that makes him "brave" enough to later stay in their seaside house all alone while his mother is away in her office. In "Hell-Heaven" it is the young Usha who understands the relationship between her Pranab "Kaku" and Deborah "Kakima" better than her jealous mother Aparna and later she understands the feelings of her mother and Deborah while she stands in a similar threshold of her life. Bobby—the child who is born of a particular afternoon's clandestine sex, in the title story of *Interpreter of Maladies* is also the child who is attacked by ferocious monkeys in the Udaygiri hills, just after his mother Mrs. Das reveals the secret of his birth to the tour guide Mr. Kapasi whom she perceives to be a true interpreter of all maladies like that of hers. Though Mr. Kapasi is able to rescue Bobby from the clutches of the monkeys he fails to make a prognosis of his mother's malady. In a similar way, it is the sight of a scary drowning of her son Neel in a bath tub caused by his addicted uncle Rahul's negligence that creates an unpredictable fissure in Sudha's domestic bliss in "Only Goodness." On the other hand while observing her father's close bonding with her son Akash, Ruma in the title story of *Unaccustomed Earth* wrongly perceives it to be her father's "falling in love." She later discovers that her father has in fact gravitated towards another woman. Thus, the apparent innocence of the names of the children of the second-generation Bengali-American and their American counterparts in Jhumpa Lahiri's stories make them enabling agents of encountering their bi-cultural experiences in a dynamic way, indicating that such experiences also add

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"richness" to their lives. Secondly, they also function as sites through which chasms and fissures in the surrounding adult's lives could be metaphorically mapped.

The above list also indicates how Jhumpa Lahiri not only employs names from her inherited cultural inventory but also from her readings of fiction of both nineteenth and twentieth century prose stylists of diverse genre. On the one hand she for instance uses the name of a Russian fiction writer, a nineteenth century American story writer's son's name too enters her story world in "Going Ashore" of the Hema and Kaushik section of *Unaccustomed Earth*. The same story also has an Italian character named Franca which the author admittedly borrows from her favourite author James Salter's fiction *Light Years*.

The play with names is also evident in Jhumpa Lahiri's story "This Blessed House" where Twinkle prefers herself to be called by her *daknam* associated with the world of children which incidentally rhymes with the names of actress siblings of the world of "Bollywood." Her *bhalonam* Tanima is relegated to the background. In "Nobody's Business" Sangita the *bhalonam* is also shortened to a nickname of sort Sang—that makes it closer neither to the Bengali nor the American cultural world but to Chinese names. It is also a proper noun that has the past form of the verb "sing" in English again. Similar strategy is also evident as Dev in "Sexy" tries to give an Indian nuance to his mistress Miranda's name as "Mira". "Mira" incidentally is the name of the medieval Indian singer-minstrel devotee of Lord Krishna. Though Dev uses it as a paramour's name the irony is unmistakable as he is engaged in a clandestine relationship which is physical in nature. For Miranda, the metaphysical association with the Indian cultural world is shadowed by her haunting image of Goddess Kali that she encountered in the

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childhood. Though she is enamoured by the huskiness of Dev's voice while uttering the word "Sexy" in a mapparium akin to experiencing the echo of whispering like that of *bhulbhuliya* in India. This "Bhulbhuliya" kind of echo listening creates a false trance as it artificially removes the distance between the speaker and the listener. It is the effect of this trance of listening that is shattered by Rohin when Miranda listens to his innocent experiential interpretation of the child of the word that has a false and sensual hold over her, in the intimate space of her room. In "A Temporary Matter" too Shukumar's name indicates the refined aesthetic sensibility of an artist who is incidentally endowed with "long fingers." His tall and beautiful wife Shoba metaphorically inclined towards *Shova* in Bengali used to keep the house in good order which is now marked by a clear sign of neglect owing to a traumatic incident of loss of a child. Ruma's sibling in *Unaccustomed Earth* is too aptly named as Romi because he becomes a roving cinematographer and does not undergo the trauma of loss of their mother as his sister does.

The two other names markedly different are Boori Ma in "The Real Durwan" and Bibi in "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar." The name Boori Ma is almost a generic Bengali name through which people call a marginalised, poor old woman often serving as a domestic help or cook in many Bengali or Indian households. In Jhumpa Lahiri's story too she is a refugee from erstwhile East Bengal who is compelled to take shelter in an old city building inhabited by middle class families having the usual bickering and jealousies. Thus, the collective and generic naming of Boori Ma which does not stands for neither a *daknam* nor a *bhalonam*, is indicative of the deprived and marginalised refugee figure in this moving tale where she loses even that shade of shelter. Though Bibi looks quaint in Bengali—this Hindustani word standing for one's wife too has made in roads to the East

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Indian language as historically Bengal did have its long medieval encounter with the Urdu and Persian culture during the days of the *Nawabs* especially. There are quite a few instances of this name being used as a *bhalonam* for city bred middle class Bengali girls. But, in Jhumpa Lahiri's story it becomes a powerful metaphor for a poor girl longing to have a husband but ridden with epilepsy and forced to live in the margins of lives of her relatives in a city suburb. This girl whose woes are collectively narrated by a medley of voices of women of the neighbourhood sympathetic to her plight, gets conceived and the birth of her child empowers and emboldens her in a new way to face the challenges of her life. Bibi, thus becomes a name that metamorphoses in to the life of this marginalised woman who through her motherhood feels empowered in a new way.

To sum up, names and naming function as powerful "megametaphors" and extended metaphors throughout Jhumpa Lahiri's oeuvre. It is not simply a part of her literary style but a locus that drives the curves and determines the webs that the author spins through her narrative. As we move on to the next chapter that focuses on metaphors of relationships along the relationship of names listed in the table given above, references to names and naming would be inevitable while analyzing the loops of these relationships.

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Chapter III

"Love begins with a Metaphor": Mapping Relationships

Though the Czech writer Milan Kundera remarks in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1999) that the emotion of love begins with a metaphor (5.12.9), a close reading of the delineation of relationships in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction allows us to argue that several strands of feelings and emotions that colour human relationships are also intimately related to metaphors in the sense of these being both understood through and expressed in terms of metaphors. Intra- and inter-generational relationships, friendship, love, marital and extra-marital relationships, children, racial and ethnic relationships all lend themselves to metaphorical roots of cognitive understanding and creative expression. Relationships are the key to understanding an individual's *weltanschauung* or world-view. Relationships in the stories and novels of Jhumpa Lahiri have diverse hinges and cruxes – encompassing both intra- and inter-generational linkages and ties. A litany of metaphors occupies a narrative centrality which maps the web and trajectories of relationships in a powerful manner. These metaphors in her stories and novels map the trajectories of the relationships of the major characters in a conceptual manner, giving vital clues about the latent connections among them.

"We have all come out of Gogol's Overcoat," said Fyodor Dostoyevsky (*The Namesake* 78) while referring to the powerful impact of the delineation of a tragic

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disorder of life and its attendant sombre, grey emotionscape on aspiring story writers like him. The shadow of the overcoat in its varied shapes, dimensions and concentrations has left its imprint in varied and different ways on the relationship hinges in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction. Firstly, there is the obvious perception of an immigrant's (in this case the members of the Bengali-American, upper-middle class highly educated families) life as a hooded figure covered with the material, mass, weight and volume of an overcoat. The author first introduced it in the story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine". Lilia – the little hostess – had the job of taking it from the visitor and putting it in a particular place:

> Mr. Pirzada handed me his coat, for it was my job to hang it on the rack at the bottom of the stairs. It was made of checkered gray-and-blue wool, with a striped lining and horn buttons, and carried in its weave the faint smell of limes. There were no recognizable tags inside, only a hand-stitched label with the phrase "Z.Sayeed, Suitors" embroidered on it in cursive with glossy black thread. On certain days a birch or maple leaf was tucked into a pocket. (28)

Here, the lack of a 'recognisable tag' inside the coat does not hide the identity of the tailor and thereby it indicates a long journey for the coat itself which might be realised through the following metaphorical suggestions:

AN OVERCOAT MOVES THROUGH SPACE AND TIME.

A COAT IS HANDED OVER TO A CUSTODIAN.

INSIDE A COAT LIES WARMTH.

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It is only under the new spatial terrain of America that the owner – an ex-Pakistani national from Dacca has handed over his coat to Lilia to watch the painful emergence of a new nation called Bangladesh live on television. Though the passage of the emergence of the new nation obviously is interspersed with many violent incidents, it is the fate of Mr. Pirzada's family, especially that of his five young daughters, which has affected the members of the host Bengali-American family. Lilia, the young school-going child, is affected by the twists and turns of history in South Asia around 1971 also comes to know about the partition riots and the division of India into two separate geo-political units. Her father is concerned that she has little knowledge about the history of her 'homeland.' It is the history and culture of the 'adopted land' that she is rather well versed with through the school education. Once when she tries to have a glance at a book on Pakistan the teacher asks her curtly to keep the book back on the shelves as it was not a book of reference for her prescribed course. Shahnawaz Begum in her article entitled "Generations in Diaspora: Perspectives of Child Characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's Stories" (2008) refers to Lilia's perception of her parents' country through the filter of maps that they had unravelled to her impressionable mind:

> Having visited Calcutta only once at a very young age, she has very little memory of the city. That is why India which her parents, like other first generation immigrants imagine and re-imagine as their homeland, means no more than an orange-colour space on the map that once her mother told her "resembled a woman wearing a sari with her left arm extended." (26)
>
> ... ...

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> Here the image of the cartography is employed as a metaphor for the unknown space. Different colours on the map give rise to the artificial sense of difference which takes time to register in Lilia's consciousness. (108)

Along this curve Begum perceives that Lilia's relationship with Mr. Pirzada is a natural consequence of her 'filial' interest in her parents' homeland. But the subtle shade of the overcoat is overlooked by her. The mutual bond of trust and protectiveness is further elucidated by the Halloween episode where Mr. Pirzada displays a genuine concern for the 'lady of the house'. Lilia is supposed to walk through the neighbourhood to collect toffees and sweets with a friend. He offers himself to accompany them and it is only Lilia's assurance that makes him give way:

> "Perhaps I should accompany them?" Mr. Pirzada suggested. He looked suddenly tired and small, standing there in his splayed, stockinged feet, and his eyes contained a panic I had never seen before. In spite of the cold I began to sweat inside my pillowcase. "Really, Mr. Pirzada," my mother said, "Lilia will be perfectly safe with her friend." "But if it rains? If they lose their way?" "Don't worry," I said. It was the first time I had uttered those words to Mr. Pirzada, two simple words I had tried but failed to tell him for weeks, had said only in my prayers. It shamed me now that I had said them for my own sake. ("Pirzada" 38)

Here the simple words of assurance – "Don't Worry" – play a polysemous role from the point of view of expressing empathy for someone missing his dear ones in a faraway land. It also expresses a filial relationship of warmth from a young girl who sees herself in a proxy position. It was during her walk with her friend Dora that Lilia reveals Pirzada's worries:

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> "Why did that man want to come with us?" Dora asked.
>
> "His daughters are missing." As soon as I said it, I wished I had not. I felt that my saying it made it true, that Mr. Pirzada's daughters really were missing, and that he would never see them again.
>
> "You mean they were kidnapped?" Dora continued. "From a park or something?"
>
> ''I didn't mean they were missing. I meant, he misses them. They live in a different country, and he hasn't seen them in a while, that's all." (39)

The conversation reveals Lilia's understanding of the grief and pain of Mr. Pirzada as an 'insider' which she slightly regrets for revealing it to an 'outsider' like Dora – which she skilfully covers up by not describing the whole story of the civil war in East Pakistan. She plays with the word "miss" intelligently to give a 'white-washed' version of the story. This might also be explained by noting that the shade of the coat has fallen on Lilia only which is realised by the metaphor THE RECIPIENT OF THE COAT IS PRIVY TO PARTICULAR WARMTH. As they moved from house to house walking along the pathways and collecting candies Lilia felt thrilled at the collection of their plunder. But when she arrived back home she was pained to see the pumpkin which was carved by Mr. Pirzada and her father to act as a "jack-o'-lantern" has been smashed by someone. As she entered the house Lilia was surprised by the sombre atmosphere and specially seeing the television switched off:

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> I opened the door, expecting the three of them to be standing in the foyer, waiting to receive me, and to grieve for our ruined pumpkin, but there was no one. In the living room Mr. Pirzada, my father, and mother were sitting side by side on the sofa. The television was turned off, and Mr. Pirzada had his head in his hands. (40)

She was informed that the developments in East Pakistan had taken a worse turn as a war between India and Pakistan was drawing near amidst killings and massacres of civilians, teachers and students. All those developments and information appeared like a "remote mystery with haphazard clues" (40) to the young girl whom she later realised after she grew up. She only recalled Mr. Pirzada's stay at their home like a refugee, the simple meals served by her mother and frenetic high-pitched phone calls to Calcutta to get the latest news. What moved the young girl was the fusion among the three adults in the house over a common cause, a common concern and a common fear: "Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear" (41).

Reetamoni Narzary has hypothesised that this bonding among the Bengalis during the early 1970s was based on the proposition that an "enemy's-enemy-as- friend" (70). She has also surmised that the mood of the Bengali community had a common thread of regret over the elderly leaders' failure to prevent partition of Bengali along communal lines and the story of Jhumpa Lahiri implicitly expressing a similar tenor. What she has perhaps ignored is the strong regeneration of linguistic nationalism especially in East Bengal from around 1954. On the other hand one needs to acknowledge Jhumpa Lahiri's distinctiveness in using the 1971 liberation of Bangladesh

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as a backdrop to a story revolving around the relationship of a child belonging to a Hindu Bengali-American family and a Muslim ex-Pakistani Dacca based botanist on a fellowship. It has to be observed that language here obviously becomes the common thread to forge relationships and the overcoat also might be reconceptualised in terms of language. Therefore, LANGUAGE COAT OVERLAPS BORDERS, LANGUAGE COAT FORGES UNITY AMONG EXILES could be regarded as such metaphors which might better explain the nuances of this relationship.

Madhuparna Mitra in her article entitled "Lahiri's 'Mrs. Sen's'" (2006), while analysing the relationship between Mrs. Sen's symbolic relationship with the *bonti* (machete) and the fish as her way of approximation for the loneliness as a housewife in America, refers to the experience encountered in a bus journey with Eliot, the American kid looked after by her during his mother's working hours, as an encounter with an 'alien' nation:

> Uncomfortable with driving, Mrs. Sen figures out how to take the bus, which runs on an hourly schedule, to the seaside. With Eliot in tow, she acquires her bag of fish, but has to endure the suspicious stares of other passengers: "On the way home an old woman on the bus kept watching them, her eyes shifting from Mrs. Sen to Eliot to the blood-lined bag between their feet" (132). We can imagine the woman conjuring up kidnap and murder scenarios. She complains to the bus driver, who interrogates Mrs. Sen about "what's in the bag," ostensibly because the smell "bothers the other passengers" (133). It would be too easy to call the old woman in the bus intolerant, but the episode does underscore the cultural chasm that separates the old woman from Mrs. Sen. (195)

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The emphasis here is between the dissonance of relationship between an unknown American woman and Mrs. Sen. However, while examining the cultural chasm Mitra ignores the next sentence which contains a metaphoric marker of colour and colourlessness: "She wore a black overcoat, and in her lap she held, with gnarled, colourless hands, a crisp white bag from the drugstore" ("Mrs Sen's" 132). It is the contrast between the black overcoat and the crisp white bag and the mediation by the 'colourless' hands creates a sombre aura of malady which later translates in to the woman's complaint to the bus conductor. It is also the gaze at the contrastive features of Eliot and Mrs. Sen and the red blood oozing from the bag of fish which aroused panic within the woman. Lahiri is adept in creating such scenes, in this case the black overcoat lending its colour to the situation. It is the effect of the exclusiveness of the external colour spilling over the interior which gives us the metaphor AN OVERCOAT IS A POTENT CONTAINER OF IRRADIATING PLEASANT/SOMBRE COLOUR and map the nuances of cultural misinterpretation in a diasporic situation. This episode is crucial as it impels Mrs. Sen to drive the car despite her phobia of driving ultimately leading to the fateful accident. Eliot's mother decides that she cannot keep the young boy at her custody and he has to learn to stay alone in the seaside house.

While alluding to her novel *The Namesake* and on being asked about the influence of the nineteenth-century Russian prose-stylist and story-teller Nikolai Gogol, Jhumpa Lahiri reveals the extent to which she was attracted and inspired by his writings, especially by his short story "The Overcoat":

> I'm not sure influence is the right word. I don't turn to Gogol as consistently as I do to certain other writers when I'm struggling with character or language. His

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> writing is more overtly comic, more antic and absurd than mine tends to be. But I admire his work enormously and reread a lot of it as I was working on the novel, in addition to reading biographical material. "The Overcoat" is such a superb story. It really does haunt me the way it haunts the character of Ashoke in the novel. I like to think that every writer I admire influences me in some way, by teaching me something about writing. Of course, without the inspiration of Nikolai Gogol, without his name and without his writing, my novel would never have been conceived. In that respect, this book came out of Gogol's overcoat, quite literally. (Interview with *Readers' Read*)

In *The Namesake* Ashoke Ganguli, a quiet and bespectacled scholar of fibre optics in the Cambridge of late 1960s, while waiting for the news of the birth of his first child in the hospital lobby, goes on a long reverie as flashes of his childhood and youth spent in far away Calcutta zoom in a train of images and sounds. That he had an uncommon teenage thanks to his grandfather, a retired professor of European literature, Ashoke vividly reminisces:

> Each day at tea time, as his brothers and sisters played kabadi and cricket outside, Ashoke would go to his grandfather's room, and for an hour his grandfather would read supine on the bed, his ankles crossed and the book propped open on his chest, Ashoke curled at his side. For that hour Ashoke was deaf and blind to the world around him. He did not hear his brothers and sisters laughing on the rooftop, or see the tiny, dusty, cluttered room in which his grandfather read. "Read all the Russians, and then reread them," his grandfather had said. "They would never fail you." (12)

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This heady fascination for Russian literature seized Ashoke and continued to grip him in the prime of his youth though he got admitted to the prestigious Engineering college at Shibpur during the early sixties of the twentieth century. One of his favourite authors was Nikolai Gogol and it was the enigmatically tragic tale of Akaky Akakyevich, the protagonist of "The Overcoat", which cast a spell on him just like it had on the author herself:

> His heart went out to poor Akaky, a humble clerk just as Ashoke's father had been at the start of his career. Each time reading the account of Akaky's christening, and the series of his queer names his mother had rejected, Ashoke laughed aloud. He shuddered at the description at the tailor Petrovich's big toe, "with its deformed nail as thick and hard as the shell of a tortoise." His mouth watered at the cold veal and cream pastries and champagne Akaky consumed the night his precious coat was stolen, in spite of the fact that Ashoke had never tasted these things himself. Ashoke was always devastated when Akaky was robbed in "a square that looked to him like a dreadful desert," leaving him cold and vulnerable, and Akaky's death, some pages later, never failed to bring tears to his eyes. In some ways the story made less sense each time he read it, the scenes so he pictured so vividly, and absorbed so fully, growing more elusive and profound. Just Akaky's ghost haunted the final pages, so did it haunt a place deep in Ashoke's soul, shedding light on all that was irrational, all that was inevitable about the world. (14)

"The Overcoat" thus has been woven through the fabric of *The Namesake* as a *mega-metaphor* following the inferential trajectories of which we can work out a host of

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metaphors and entailments using both Nikolai Gogol's story and the garment as cruxes in the same line:

THE OVERCOAT IS A STORY

THE OVERCOAT IS AN ENIGMATIC TALE

THE OVERCOAT HAS PRODUCED INEXHAUSTIVE CRITIQUES

THE OVERCOAT IS A TEXT

THE OVERCOAT HAS UNDERLYING SUB TEXTS

THE OVERCOAT IS A METAPHOR

LIFE IS DECIDEDLY UNDECIDED

THE INEVITABLE ALWAYS HAPPENS

THE OVERCOAT IS A GRIPPING STORY

THE OVERCOAT CASTS A SPELL

THE OVERCOAT IS A HAUNTING TALE

THE OVERCOAT PORTRAYS A TRAGIC DISORDER OF HUMAN LIFE

A HUMAN BEING MIGHT POSSESS AN OVERCOAT

AN EXILED PERSON IS AN OVERCOATED BEING

WEARING AN OVERCOAT GIVES A FEELING

INSIDE AN OVERCOAT LIES WARMTH

AN OVERCOAT IS A SHIELD AGAINST COLD

ONE MIGHT INHERIT AN OVERCOAT

A TATTERED OVERCOAT NEEDS REPAIR

AN OVERCOAT MIGHT BE REPLACED

ONE MIGHT BE ROBBED OFF ONE'S OVERCOAT

LOSS OF AN OVERCOAT IS EXPOSURE TO COLD

LOSS OF AN OVERCOAT IS A TRAGEDY

ONE MIGHT REJECT AN INHERITED OVERCOAT

ONE MIGHT LOVE AND BE AFFECTED BY AN INHERITED OVERCOAT

AN OVERCOAT IS MADE OF DIFFERENT MATERIALS

OVERCOATS MIGHT HAVE DIFFERENT COLOURS

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First, each of these metaphors envisages a mapping between the source and the target domains. Secondly, there are possibilities of fusions, mediations and blends if we work out them in terms of spatial domains. These metaphors and blends also capture a wide gamut of nuances of relationships in *The Namesake*. The first set of relationship takes place between Jhumpa Lahiri and the story who in the process of dextrously employing "We Have All Come Out Of Gogol's Overcoat" metaphor – leaning on the statement by another nineteenth century Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky. It has acted as a subterranean thread indicating about the tangential shadows of Akaky falling on Ashoke Ganguli. Charles C. Bernheimer in his article entitled "Cloaking the Self: The Literary Space of Gogol's 'The Overcoat'" (1975) has explained how the story by Nikolai Gogol has employed a linguistic free play of language that leaves the readers confused faced with a dense litany of metamorphic force:

> What is ontological insecurity from the point of view of being-in-this-world is liberating free play from the point of view of linguistic structure. Whereas Shakespeare ends his comedies by returning us to a world whose stability has been reaffirmed through the seemingly chaotic play of magical forces – think of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Gogol ends his comic story by plunging his reader into the thick of metamorphic forces whose chaos remains unresolved. We feel ourselves to be inside a labyrinth of mirrors, some concave, some flat, some convex, unable to test the accuracy of the reflected images against any original reality. Despite the dynamic interplay of reflections, a silence surrounds us. Hence the fear, the bewilderment, and the anxiety. (60)

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Like Akaky's discovery of the tattered and battered condition of the old overcoat, Ashoke Ganguli too meets a fateful train accident while visiting his grandfather to collect a pile of his favourite books. It was during the journey that he meets a companion named Mr. Ghosh who suddenly brings up a discussion about the need to travel and stay away in a far off land:

> "Seen much of the world?" Ghosh asked Ashoke untying his shoes and settling himself cross-legged on the birth.... "Once to Delhi," Ashoke replied.... "Not this world," he said ... "England. America"... "Have you considered going there?"... "You are still young. Free,"... "Do yourself a favor. Before it's too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see much of the world as you can. You will not regret it. One day it will be too late." (15-16)

There is a strong tenor of resemblance here between Ashoke's grandfather's earlier recommendation to read all the Russians as they would 'never fail' him in life and Mr. Ghosh's advice that he 'will not regret' if he migrates abroad. However, immersed in his reading of "The Overcoat" Ashoke replies that one could acquire the experience of life in distant lands through one's readings:

> The steam engine puffed reassuringly, powerfully. Deep in his chest he felt a rough jostle of the wheels. Sparks from the smokestack passed by his window. A fine layer of sticky soot dotted on one side of his face, his eyelid, his arm, his neck; his grandmother would insist that he scrub himself with a cake of Margo soap as soon as he arrived. Immersed in the sartorial plight of Akaky Akakyevich, lost in the wide, snow-white, windy avenues of St. Petersburg, unaware that one

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day he was to dwell in a snowy place himself. (17)

Moments later, the accident occurs. Mr. Ghosh, his co-passenger, dies and he miraculously escapes though seriously injured and is perceived dead by the rescue team:

> He remembers believing that he was dying, that perhaps he was already dead. He could not feel the lower half of his body, and was so unaware that the mangled limbs of Ghosh were draped over his legs. Eventually he saw the blue of earliest morning, the moon and a few stars still lingering in the sky. The pages of his book, which had been tossed from his hand, fluttered in two sections a few feet away from the train... "Nothing here," Ashoke heard someone say. "Let's keep going."... But the lantern's light lingered, just long enough for Ashoke to raise his hand, a gesture that he believed would consume the small fragment of life left in him. He was still clutching a single page of "The Overcoat," crumpled tightly **in** his fist, and when he raised his hand the wad of paper dropped from his fingers. "Wait!" he heard a voice cry out. "The fellow by that book. I saw him move." (18)

Remaining bound to bed for months, the 'ghost' of Mr. Ghosh begins to haunt him. He starts secretly preparing for carving out a different destiny for himself just as Akaky decided to have a new overcoat stitched for him:

> Eventually, in an attempt to avoid his nightmares he began to read ... Yet he refused to read the Russians his grandfather had brought to his bedside, or any novels, for that matter. Those books, set in countries he had never seen, reminded him only of his confinement. Instead he read his engineering books, trying his

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> best to keep up with his courses, solving equations by flashlight. In those silent hours, he thought often of Ghosh. "Pack a pillow and a blanket," he heard Ghosh say. He remembered the address Ghosh had written on a page of his diary, somewhere behind the tram depot in Tollygunge. Now it was the home of a widow, a fatherless son. Each day, to bolster his spirits, his family reminded him of the future, the day he would walk unassisted, walk across the room. It was for this, each day that his father and mother prayed. For this that his mother gave up meat on Wednesdays. But as the months passed, Ashoke began to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking, but walking away, as far as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died. (20)

The physical impact of the accident remained in the form of a limp but mentally he still felt claustrophobic in crowded places especially in stations and terminals. What haunted Ashoke was not death per se but the lurking fear that he might not have been rescued at all: "It is not the memory of pain that haunts him; he has no memory of that. It is the memory of waiting before he was rescued, and the persistent fear, rising up in his throat, that he might not have been rescued at all." While waiting in the hospital lobby for the good news of the birth of his child Ashoke felt that he has already undergone through a cycle of births and deaths like Akaky's experience of the loss of the new overcoat" "Although it is Ashima who carries the child, he, too, feels heavy, with the thought of life, of his life and the life about to come from it ... He was born twice in India, and then a third time, in America" (21).

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Jhumpa Lahiri delineates the intimate relationship between Ashoke and his son Gogol in metaphorical terms right from the moment the father holds his son for the first time:

> When he looks back to the child, the eyes are open, staring at him, unblinking, as dark hair on its head. The face is transformed; Ashoke has never seen a more perfect thing. He imagines himself as a dark, grainy, blurry presence. As a father to his son. Again he thinks of the night he was nearly killed, the memory of those hours that have forever marked him flickering and fading in his mind. Being rescued from that shattered train had been the first miracle of his life. But here, now, reposing in his arms, weighing next to nothing but changing everything, is the second. (24)

He names his son Gogol under a situation a kin to Akaky's naming. As he grows up as a child Ashoke takes him around the beaches in the evenings under the gaze of his wife Ashima from a distance:

> On the beach Gogol collects rocks, digs tunnels in the sand. He and his father wander barefoot, their pant legs rolled halfway up their calves. He watches his father raise a kite within minutes in to the wind, so high that Gogol must tip his head back in order to see, a rippling speck against the sky. (53)

He prepares his son's food as his wife is pregnant again. The son refuses to eat much and gets chided by him in a beautifully etched scene:

> "Finish," his father says, glancing up from his magazine.
>
> "Don't play with food that way."
>
> "I'm full, Baba."

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"There's still some food left on your plate."

"Baba, I can't."...

"Finish it, Gogol. At your age I ate tin." (55)

Slowly as his son takes the centre-stage of the story Ashoke recedes to the 'background' remaining a strong presence in metaphoric terms. On his son's fourteenth birthday he gives a gift of Nikolai Gogol's collection of stories. He is tempted to tell his son about the fateful accident while reading "The Overcoat":

> "I took the liberty of reading it first. It has been many years since I have read these stories. I hope you don't mind."
>
> "No problem," Gogol says.
>
> "I feel a special kinship with Gogol," Ashoke says, "more than with any other writer. Do you know why?"
>
> "You like his stories."
>
> "Apart from that. He spent most of his adult life outside his homeland. Like me."
>
> Gogol nods. "Right."
>
> "And there is another reason."..."What's that?" Gogol says, a bit impatiently.
>
> Ashoke looks around the room. He notices the Lennon obituary pinned to the bulletin board, and then a cassette of classical Indian music he'd bought for Gogol months ago, after a concert at Kresge, still sealed in its wrapper. He sees the pile of cards scattered on the carpet, and remembers a hot August day fourteen years ago in Cambridge when he held his son for the first time. Ever since that day, the day he became a father, the memory of his accident receded, diminishing over the years. Though he would never forget that night, it no longer lurks persistently in

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> his mind, stalking him in the same way. It no longer looms over his life, darkening it without warning as it used to do. Instead, it is affixed firmly to a distant time, to a place far from the Pemberton Road. Today, his son's birthday, is a day to honor his life, not brushes with death. (77-78)

As he becomes eighteen Gogol Ganguli changes his name to Nikhil, developing a strong dislike for Nikolai Gogol after listening to the 'sickening' biographical details of the Russian writer's last days from one of his teachers. Though his mother mildly protests, Ashoke does not make much out of it. Once when Ashima and Gogol's sister Sonia are on a trip are away to India, his father was waiting alone in the railway station to receive him. The train journey had a ring of accident to it as a person committed suicide and it was quite late. But the son found his father still waiting for him:

> Across the aisle a gray-haired woman reads, a coat clutched like a blanket to her chest.... At the station he sees his father waiting on the darkened platform, wearing sneakers and corduroys, anxiousness in his face. A trench coat is belted around his waist, a scarf knitted by Ashima wrapped at his throat, a tweed cap on his head. (121)

That evening Ashoke reveals to his son the fateful train accident that he had around 1961. It is for the first time that the son learns the reason of his father's limp and he feels ashamed. Gogol asks his father inquisitively whether seeing him he still recollects the accident. Ashoke replies: "You remind me of everything that followed" (124). By the time Gogol graduates in architecture and starts his career he drifts apart to the family of his girlfriend Maxine – the tie with his parents apparently becoming weaker. On the way to tour Maxine's family ranch at New Hampshire, Gogol drops in his home and meets

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them after a long gap. It was during that brief halt that he is informed that his father is preparing to shift to faraway Cleveland in Ohio as a visiting faculty. It was while remaining absorbed in the lives of the Ratliffs and after celebrating his twenty-seventh birthday in that farm house that Gogol gets the shocking news of his father's sudden death. He flies immediately to Cleveland and experiences the chill and sees a thick layer of snow. While waiting at the hospital he sees a cart of food and realises his hunger and wistfully remembers his last meal the previous evening:

> His last meal had been at the restaurant the night before, a bright, bustling place in Chinatown. They had waited nearly an hour on the sidewalk of their table and then feasted on flowering chives and salted squid and the clams in black bean sauce that Maxine loved best. They were already drunk from the book party, lazily sipping their beers, their cold cups of jasmine tea. All that time, his father was in the hospital, already dead. (171)

He looks at his father's body covered by a sheet feeling ashamed realising that he is unclothed and for a moment turns away. Then he closely observes the yellow visage, the colourless lips set in a haughty posture feeling unfamiliar to his 'bloated' image. He peers at his father's face again to check whether it is a mirage that he is watching. It is the moustache, the excess hair on his shaved face that he strikes a sense of familiarity yet he is terrified to touch him: "Eventually, with his index finger, he grazes his father's mustache, an eyebrow, a bit of the hair on his head, those parts of him, he knows, that are still quietly living" (172). Gogol is handed over the dress and the articles that his father donned the previous day while coming to the hospital – a trench coat, a pair of dark

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brown socks and light brown shoes, a copy of *The Comedians* by Graham Greene with yellow pages and small prints. Metaphorically, Gogol Ganguli steps into his father's shoes and dons his father's overcoat at this juncture. He informs the hospital authorities that no religious services are necessary and is told in turn that they would receive the ashes in a few days. As he arrives at Baron's Court, the temporary place of residence during the last few months, he is struck by the uniformity of the architectural design of the house. As he enters his father's flat Gogol finds the apartment and the countertop of the kitchen virtually empty. Articles like a bottle of Windex, a box of trash bags, a jar of Pond's cold cream, a rice cooker, a tin of evaporated milk packet, an issue of Time magazine, a rice sack, a few books, tape, are the only thing he has to pack. He saves a family photograph on the fridge. The work of packing these articles leaves him exhausted. The austere and spare life of Ashoke at Cleveland bears an uncanny resemblance with the description of Akaky Akakyevich's heirless room at St. Petersburg after his death:

> At length poor Akaky Akakyevich breathed his last. They sealed up neither his room nor his effects, because, in the first place, there were no heirs, and, in the second, there was very little to inherit beyond a bundle of goosequills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons which had burst off his trousers, and the mantle already known to the reader. (170)

Gogol is thus deeply affected by his father's death and transformations happen deep inside. He fully understands the duty of a Bengali son, shaves his head, observes the ten-day mourning with his mother and his sister, arranges the eleventh day feast. Though Maxine arrives at the function she discovers an altered persona as he thoroughly refuses

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to 'get away' from his home despite her reminder about the earlier planned post-Christmas getaway to New Hampshire. During early January, on a journey to New York Gogol recollects another episode from his childhood – they day he along with his father visited a watch tower at Cape Cod beside the ocean on a windy day. After walking a long way from Ashima and the baby Sonia the father and the son reached a spot from where there was nowhere to go. They forgot the camera that day and Ashoke asked his son to remember the day always:

> "Try to remember it always," he said once Gogol had reached him, leading him slowly back across the breakwater, to where his mother and Sonia stood waiting. "Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go." (187)

On the next birthday and on his father's death anniversary it becomes a ritual of sort for the three living members of the family to stand in silence before Ashoke's framed photograph on the upstairs hallway of their house:

> It is the photograph more than anything that draws Gogol back to the house again and again, and one day, stepping out of the bathroom on his way to bed and glancing at his father's smiling face, he realizes that this is the closest thing his father has to grave. (189)

The image of the grave in the form of a photograph also serves as an extended image schema connecting it to the crayon rubbings done as a part of a school assignment over the graves of the first generation Afro-American immigrants. In other words, the photograph here also acts as a blended space through the mappings between the childhood rubbings and the death of Gogol's father. Secondly, it is under the shadow of

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his father's death Gogol breaks up with Maxine and marries his family acquaintance Moushumi later. Though Moushumi and Gogol belong to the same diasporic background, cracks become visible soon as Moushumi is more inflected by her fascination for the French culture and hence could not relate to the 'overcoated' persona of Gogol. By the time his sister Sonia is engaged to his Chinese-American boyfriend named Ben, he is divorced from his wife. Ashima decides to sell their house at Pemberton Road and throws one last party during the course of which Gogol rediscovers the collected story of Nikolai Gogol the unread volume that his father gifted him on his fourteenth birthday. He starts to read the book with an excitement followed by the accidental discovery: "Until moments ago it was destined to disappear from his life altogether, but he salvaged it by chance, as his father was pulled from the crushed train forty years ago" (290-91).

Thus, throughout the narrative substratum of *The Namesake* runs a deeply moving portrait of the relationship of a father and son the delineation of which is perfected through the powerful and strategically conceptualised use of the overcoat metaphor. It is the hinge –the dynamics of which is captured by the inferential range and depth of a host of metaphors and entailments like THE OVERCOAT IS A METAPHOR, LIFE IS DECIDEDLY UNDECIDED, ASHOKE INHERITS THE OVERCOAT THROUGH HIS READINGS, THE OVERCOAT IS A SHIELD, LOSS OF AN OVERCOAT IS EXPOSURE TO COLD, LOSS OF AN OVERCOAT IS A TRAGEDY, ONE MIGHT REJECT AN INHERITED OVERCOAT, GOGOL IS HANDED OVER ASHOKE'S OVERCOAT, GOGOL GANGULI IS AFFECTED BY THE INHERITED OVERCOAT OF ASHOKE GANGULI, etc. As explained above it is the inferential and blended correspondences between the source and target domains of these metaphors and the mappings throw adequate light on the ups and downs of this relationship which acts as a narrative locus in *The Namesake.*

Secondly, we see a subtle weaving together of the "accident" metaphor within the

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overcoat mega-metaphor as well. Towards the end of the novel Gogol, looks back at the thirty-two year family saga of the Gangulis' sojourn—perceiving their lives as LIFE AS A JOURNEY and sums up their journey as a string of accidents. For the Gangulis, thus, life could be interpreted in terms of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A STRING OF ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS. It could be explained and understood in terms of inferences like the powerful influence of the nineteenth-century Russian prose stylists like Nikolai Gogol on Ashoke via his grandfather, the fateful accident and meeting Mr. Ghosh, his rescue through the leafs of "The Overcoat", his migration to the USA, his marriage with Ashima, the birth of Gogol, the fateful loss of Ashima's grandmother's letter bearing the name of their child, Gogol's love-and-hate relationship with his *daknam*, his affairs and break ups with Ruth and Maxine, and Gogol's wedding with and divorce from Moushumi. The range and depth of this accident metaphor also subsumes under the overcoat megametaphor. The overcoat spans the subterranean relationship along the Ashoke-Nikolai Gogol-Akaky Akakyevic-Gogol Ganguli latent and potent curve. Thereby, it evokes a symbolic triburo of Indian-Russian-American backdrop adding a dense and rich stylistic texture to the novel. It is this distinctive aspect of *The Namesake* which has further implications in terms of the very 'positionality' of Jhumpa Lahiri as a creative writer of the Indian-American diaspora as well.

At the same time, it is the conjugal and love relationship of Ashima and Ashoke, the first generation Bengali-American couple, which could again be explained from the perspective of the highly evocative and nuanced overcoat metaphor. The question arises that if the relationship of the father and the son be adequately interpreted through the overcoat metaphor in the novel then what sort of implication does it have for the

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relationship between the husband and the wife? Forged by an arranged marriage by virtue of their belonging to the same race and caste, love gradually evolves between the two in an alien land. Before going to examine the Ashoke-Ashima relationship metaphor, it would be apt to recollect the relationship between the narrator in the short story "The Third and Final Continent" and his wife Mala as they are symbolic predecessors in this regard. Mala, the daughter of a school teacher of Belghata who could cook, knit, embroider, sketch landscapes and recite poems by Rabindranath Tagore (181) was not married till the age of twenty seven – quite late by the lower middle class Bengali standards of 1960s – though she had all the requisite qualities of a 'marriageable' daughter. When the proposal of a prospective groom employed in the library of MIT was brought by the young man's elder brother, her parents overlooked the matter that their only child would be so far away soon. The narrator who assumed his marriage as a sort of duty, did not have words to console his bride when she wept missing her parents. He was too absorbed — reading guidebooks on America by flashlights just like Ashoke preparing for his Engineering exams and looking forward to his life in America. Just as Ashoke thought about the death of his co-passenger Mr. Ghosh, the narrator of the story thought about the death of his depressive mother six years back, before his departure to England on a ship. The narrator perceived his mother's death as a freedom from a tormenting existence and developed a bonding with Mrs. Croft – his one hundred and three years old landlady in Cambridge, USA who shut out the changes of the American society barring describing an American's sojourn to the moon as splendid. Though he moved out of the Victorian ambience of Mrs. Croft's house, he often thought about the old lady. One day, he saw an Indian woman pushing a toddler in the footpath being suddenly attacked by a

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dog carried by an American woman. The woman had to adjust the ends of her sari while simultaneously consoling her crying baby. He watched the scene avidly and felt that very soon he would have the duty to protect his wife Mala who might feel similarly distraught in an alien land. He remembered that he would have to buy a pair of snow boots and a winter coat for Mala. Though, he had become accustomed to Mrs. Croft's nineteenth century sensibilities, her middle-aged daughter Helen, he perceived that after his wife's arrival he would have to attune himself to the expectations of a married existence amidst the cold atmosphere of Cambridge. After his wife's arrival, he observes that gradually change has come to his life as his wife has taken over the kitchen and arranged everything in the small flat in a neat manner: "Although we were not yet fully in love, I like to think of the months that followed as a honeymoon of sorts" (196).

This relationship among first-generation Bengali-American couples has a distinctive tenor as it formally begins in Bengal but evolves in the American soil in an understated manner which is not fully perceived by their America-born children. For the first generation couple like Mala and her husband the relationship is a gradual process of discovery which normally goes unnoticed. Their cautious and often frugal beginnings temper and shape their world. Further, that the 'overcoat' would be one day inherited by their son is also indicated:

> We are American citizens now, so that we can collect social security when it is time. Though we visit Calcutta every few years, and bring back more drawstring pajamas and Darjeeling tea, we have decided to grow old here. I work in a small college library. We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer

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> drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. (215)

Here, we can thus see an inferential rendering of the metaphor THE OVERCOAT HAS A NEW CLAIMANT in the form of its transference to the son. Soon after the closure of the amazing journey through the three continents that the narrator of "The Third and Final Continent" had, the relationship crux among the parents and the son is metaphorically extended in *The Namesake* with two strands, one between the father and the son and the other between the husband and the wife.

Here it would be apt to note how Jhumpa Lahiri has employed the metaphor of shoes in consonant and rather as a part of the overcoat metaphor. A resemblance to Nikolai Gogol's use of the shoe metaphor in "The Overcoat" comes spontaneously:

> His family name was Bashmatchkin. This name is evidently derived from "bashmak" (shoe); but when, at what time, and in what manner, is not known. His father and grandfather, and all the Bashmatchkins, always wore boots, which only had new heels two or three times a year. (146)

Lahiri, has, however, skilfully recast the shoe metaphor by adding a sensual perspective to the future closeness of Ashima and Ashoke. The day Ashoke came with his father to see her before their wedding in their Calcutta house Ashima is attracted to the unfamiliar pair of shoes left on the footstep by him and steps into it:

> Glancing at the floor where visitors customarily removed their slippers, she noticed, beside two sets of chappals, a pair of men's shoes that were not like any she'd ever seen on the streets and tram and buses of Calcutta, or even in the

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> windows of Bata. They were brown shoes with black heels and off-white laces and stitching. There was a band of lentil-sized holes embossed on either side of each shoe, and at the tips was a pretty pattern pricked into the leather as if with a needle. Looking more closely, she saw the shoemaker's name written on the insides, in gold lettering that had all but faded: something and sons, it said. She saw the size, eight and a half, and the initials U.S.A. And as her mother continued to sing her praises, Ashima, unable to resist a sudden and overwhelming urge, stepped into the shoes at her feet. Lingering sweat from the owner's feet mingled with hers, causing her heart to race; it was the closest thing she had ever experienced to the touch of a man. The leather was creased, heavy, and still warm. On the left shoe she had noticed that one of the crisscrossing laces missed a hole, and this oversight set at her at ease. (8)

This whole experience indicates the future relationship curve along which Ashima's journey with Ashoke was all set. It is captured by the metaphor STEPPING INTO SHOES IS FEELING A TRANSGRESSIVE SENSUAL PLEASURE and the metonym 'stepping into shoes'. The gamut of this passion is so intensely private for Ashima that though she is reminded of it often by the sight of Ashoke's careful polishing of his shoes later, she could not come out of the shell of shyness associated with it:

> The sight of him cross-legged on newspapers spread on the floor, intensely whisking a brush over the leather, always reminds of her of her indiscretion in her parent's corridor. It is a moment that shocks her still, and that she prefers, in spite of all she tells him at night about the life they now share, to keep to herself. (10)

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Like Mala in "The Third and Final Continent," Ashima too shares with her husband every night at bed the experiences of roaming around the Cambridge streets alone buying essential items mostly for cooking. Like other Bengali-American housewives her everyday life is first measured by her taking care of her husband, then her children Gogol and Sonia amidst which she continually experiences the life of an immigrant as a state of perpetual pregnancy or an overcoated being. In between comes the shocking deaths of her grandmother, the painter father with whom she was particularly attached and finally her mother. Ashoke too is similarly orphaned losing them to fatal diseases. To Gogol and Sonia's gradual evolution to a different generation of youth and different relationships with young American girls and boys too she handles with the traditional wisdom and warmth of a Bengali mother. As Ashoke shifts to Cleveland when both Gogol and Sonia too are away Ashima adapts herself to living alone. Still he could not come to terms with her existence as a Bengali-American. Like in Gogol's case it is the shocking death of Ashoke that alters everything. The uncanny resemblance between Gogol's birth and Ashoke's death binds Ashima with a feeling of emptiness that could be explained again in terms of her unique feeling of sharing the overcoat: "When it is all over she begins to shiver profoundly, as if beset with an acute fever. For half an hour she trembles, in a daze, covered by a blanket, her insides empty, her outsides misshapen" (22). The news of receiving the death of Ashoke while all alone in the house at Pemberton Road sends her shivering and trembling similarly: "She begins to shiver violently, the house instantly feeling twenty degrees colder. She pulls her sari tightly around her shoulders, like a shawl" (169).

The quaint similarity between the two bodily experiences to two bi-polar defining

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incidents of Ashima's life could be seen in terms of remapping the overcoat metaphor as THE LOSS OR TAKING OFF AN OVERCOAT MEANS EXPOSURE TO COLD. It is after Ashoke's death that she interpreted his sudden decision to work in a faraway place in terms of hinting to her about the need of one's preparedness to learn to live alone. After many years Ashima joins a part-time job in a library, arranges her daughter's wedding, accepts her son's divorce with equanimity, and finally sells their house deciding to divide her time between India and America. Just as Gogol inherits his overcoat from his father, Ashima too dons a new one obviously tinged with the attachment of her husband.

After a gap of five years and in between Jhumpa Lahiri's experience of having an oblique approach to the loss of her parents via the deaths of her father-in-law and mother-in-law and the birth of her two children, the overcoat changes its texture and warmth as we meet it in *Unaccustomed Earth*. In the second section of the book entitled "Hema and Kaushik" Jhumpa Lahiri weaves the entwined fate of two second-generation Bengali-American youths. In the first story "Once in a Lifetime" we see the narrative starting off in 1981 with the news of the coming back of the Chaudhuris – a couple to whom Hema's parents were indebted in many ways for their help in the past. Hema's family have for years used the utensils and clothes passed over by the affluent Chaudhuris before their departure to India. She vividly remembers the way she was compelled to wear the coat of their son Kaushik:

> One winter I had to wear your coat, which I hated so much that it caused me to hate you as a result. It was blue-black with an orange lining and a scratchy grayish-brown trim around the hood. I never got used to having to hook the zipper

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> on the right side, to looking so different from the other girls in my class with their puffy pink and purple jackets. When I asked my parents if I could have a new coat they said no. A coat was a coat, they said. I wanted desperately to get rid of it. I wanted it to be lost. (*Unaccustomed Earth* 226)

The explanation that A COAT WAS A COAT like George Bernard Shaw's description of German boots as "a boot is a boot" by Hema's parents indicates the exigency of typical middle-class parents who could not afford the 'extravagance' of the Chaudhuris. But for Hema it was an inherited piece of clothing which she was almost compelled to wear despite much consternation and could be expressed in terms of the metaphor ONE MIGHT REJECT AN INHERITED OVERCOAT. She tried to 'lose' it often thinking that boys with identical coat would pick it up accidentally from the narrow alcove where they put their things at the end of each day at school. However, her austere and careful mother went so far as to stitch a label firmly inside the coat. Once, Hema left the coat deliberately on the school bus. But, that venture too proved fruitless:

> When the bus neared my stop I stood up, and when I reached the front the driver reminded me to be careful crossing the street. She pulled back the lever that opened the door, letting fragrant air onto the bus. I was about to step off, coatless, but then someone cried out, "Hey, Hema, you forgot this!" I was startled that anyone on that bus knew my name; I had forgotten about the name tag. (226-227)

It was the name tag that became the name of the coat itself – firmly attaching it to her identity in some way and could be conceptually reformulated as A TAGGED OVERCOAT IS NOT EASILY LOST. It was as a thirteen year teenager, the age in which some of her peers invariably develop crush for an American boy or a teacher that Hema was totally smitten

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by the brooding and indifferent sixteen-year old Kaushik . Her strong liking for him went on amidst intense jealousy aroused especially by the extravagant spending of Parul-Kaushik's mother. Mr. Chaudhuri spent a huge amount to satisfy Parul's urge to travel first class, an act that was considered as unnecessary luxury and exhibitionism by Hema's parents. Further, the costly wines that they drank every evening, the way they splurged money on marketing, the big houses in posh localities that they scouted and the manner in which they rejected some of the houses even for a minor aberration of architectural design, created an unseen rift among the two families. The host couple completely forgot all the good words that they had spoken about the other's generosity and helpful attitude before their arrival. But for her part Hema liked Kaushik's mother for her beauty, elegance and vivacious nature, all the things she found lacking in her own mother. Parul also doted on Hema — all the while appreciating her ability to prepare her tiffin and keep things tidy and in order. It was she with whom Parul shared the 'little secret' of her smoking habit. Though she was surprised by the way Kaushik's mother went 'topless' before her in the changing room of Jordan Marsh – the shop where she took Hema to buy her first pair of bras, Hema's admiration for her only grew. She felt slightly jealous for their life in Bombay — a city that she could only romanticise about. For Hema from whose memory the story is reminisced — both the mother and the son left a lasting impression as she episodically remembered the bits and pieces of their stay. She craved for the touch of Kaushik and imagined kissing him. For all the love that swelled within her tender heart, however, Kaushik remained indifferent and displayed an attitude and treated her as if she was still a child. He told Hema that though he had an 'American' childhood even in Bombay, he missed the cold of America and was looking forward

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desperately for a snowfall. Kaushik moved out of the house on his own and exploring the roads and the backyard woods little bothered by the fear expressed by Hema's parents. Hema vividly remembered the fateful morning when there was a heavy spell of snowfall and she had the opportunity to accompany Kaushik to the backyard of their house. Unexpectedly, Kaushik showed her a tombstone long buried. They discovered the tombstones of a family of six members youngest of whom was named Emma whose year of death was inscribed as 1923. Hema felt disturbed by the echo of her name within that unknown American girl. It was suddenly then that Kaushik made the shocking revelation of his mother's suffering from breast cancer and explained that it was the very reason that they had come back to America as Parul wanted to die alone. In Bombay his mother would have felt suffocated by the gathering of relatives at their apartment trying to shield her from something she could not escape. They often visited the Massachusetts General Hospital secretly under the pretext of searching for houses as they did not wish to let the host family be unduly concerned and stressed by it. Kaushik also remarked that he wished they were Christians so that she could have been buried somewhere and informed the shell-shocked Hema about the assurance that Parul had obtained from her husband and son that after her death her ashes would strewn in the Atlantic and not in any river in India:

> The information fell between us, as shocking as if you'd struck me in the face, and I began to cry. At first the tears fell silently, sliding over my nearly frozen face, but then I started sobbing, becoming ugly in front of you, my nose running in the cold, my eyes turning red. I stood there, my hands wedged up under my cheekbones to catch the tears, mortified that you were witnessing such a pathetic

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> display. Though you had never taken a picture of me in your life, I was afraid that you would lift the camera and capture me that way. Of course, you did nothing, you said nothing; you had said enough. You remained where you were, looking down at the tombstone of Emma Simonds, and eventually, when I calmed down, you began to walk back to our yard. I followed you along the path you had discovered, and then we parted, neither of us a comfort to the other, you shoveling the driveway, I going inside for a hot shower, my red puffy face assumed by our mothers to be a consequence of the cold. Perhaps you believed that I was crying for you, or for your mother, but I was not. I was too young, that day, to feel sorrow or sympathy. I felt only the enormous fear of having a dying woman in our home. I remembered standing beside your mother, both of us topless in the fitting room where I tried on my first bra, disturbed that I had been in such close proximity to her disease. I was furious that you had told me, and that you had not told me, feeling at once burdened and betrayed, hating you all over again. (250-51)

Here we have a set of metaphors like DEATH IS EXPOSURE TO COLD, COMPULSION TO TAKE OFF AN OVERCOAT SIGNALS IMMINENT DEATH, PROXIMITY TO A FATAL MALADY IS FEELING NEARNESS TO DEATH, FEELING NEARNESS TO DEATH IS PAINFUL. Though temporarily Hema was lightened by her attachment with Kaushik she felt the heavy burden of the coat inherited from him again. It metaphorically captures the fatedness of their union and separation. In the last story of the series titled "Going Ashore", Hema and Kaushik's paths criss-cross again at Rome, a place that Kaushik's father had recommended that 'one must visit before one's death.' Meanwhile, Hema has become a thirty seven old teacher

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in Bryn Mawr, Wellesley and Kaushik- a globetrotting photo journalist. Both have tasted love in different forms and hues. Hema, after long years of remaining a mistress to an American having family of his own and hopelessly waiting that he would divorce his wife, has accepted an arranged marriage to a non-Bengali-American named Navin. She has landed in Rome exploring materials for research on the Etruscans enroute to Calcutta where her wedding is all set to take place. On the other hand, Kaushik had a few flings with fellow professionals and followed Franca to Rome - his girlfriend from Milan who was disheartened by his 'betrayal'. It is under this backdrop that Hema has been remembering the freezing weather at Wellesly while ruminating off and on about her decision to meet Navin in between her study tour in Italy. Somehow, she gathers that her heart does not belong to Navin the way it should have. The ancient statue of a couple in a museum reminds her painfully about the prospects of the wedding:

> But this time, looking at the giant sarcophagus of the bride and groom enclosed in a box of glass, she found herself in tears. She couldn't help but think of Navin. Like the young smiling couple sitting affectionately on top of a shared casket, there was something dead about the marriage she was about to enter into. And though she knew it had every chance, over the years, of coming to life, on her way home, in the yellow light of evening, she was conscious only of its deadness. (301)

Her fateful meeting with Kaushik at Giovanni's place fills this emptiness with a surge of passion and both of them probe each other's bodies with an intimacy, thereby in some way making up for her unrequited teenage crush. It is with Kaushik that she travels all the places associated with the architectural ruins of the Etruscans— Ostia, Tivoli, Cerveteri –

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and finally goes up the Tuscan hill to Volterra. The metaphoric visits to the netherlands of the Etruscans forbear the shadow of death on the couple's fate. It is at Volterra that she again puts up with the burden of Kaushik's overcoat:

> It was colder than Rome, a cold that emanated from stone, and instead of her leather jacket Hema now wore a peacoat of Kaushik's, grateful for the weight over her shoulders, remembering that other coat of Kaushik's she'd so hated wearing when she was a girl, back when they were nothing but already something to each other. (319)

This experience of redonning Kaushik's overcoat indicates the metaphor REDONNING AN OLD OVERCOAT ENLIVENS THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST BURDEN. The past feeling of weightiness and dislike in a sense pursues Hema still and there is no indication that the present experience would give her a new sense of warmth and protection. At the Guarnacci Museum she has a feeling of deja vu while re-encountering the sarcophagus of a carved out couple serving as a contrast to her earlier experience: "In the museum there was another sarcophagus of a husband and wife. But they were nothing like the languid, loving pair Hema had seen in Rome. Here they were older, cruder, still bristling after years of marriage, ill at ease (320)."

While the experience of the earlier look at the sarcophagus was an emotional one and at least momentarily Hema had felt swayed towards Navin, the present one has aroused the feeling of being 'ill at ease' in terms of her relationship with Kaushik. Another thing that catches the sight of Hema is *La Ombra della Serra* - a bronze sculpture of a severely lean and elongated body of a boy. It metaphorically captures the

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shadow of not the morning but the evening in terms of their relationship—serving as a backdrop of their imminent separation. While eating and moving around the Piazza de Priori at Volterra they look at passersby and local residents engrossed and enjoying their life:

> "An office holiday party," Kaushik explained, after listening for a while to the conversation. "They work in the bank." He continued listening, then said, "They have lived here, in each other's company, all their lives. They will die here."
>
> "I envy them that," Hema said.
>
> "Do you?"
>
> "I've never belonged to any place that way."
>
> Kaushik laughed. "You're complaining to the wrong person." (320)

This conversation acts as a close-up of Kaushik and Hema's divergent mindscapes. While Hema through her travels craves for a mooring, a stabilised form of being-in-the-world, Kaushik on the other hand has refashioned his life as a 'nomad' who feels uncomfortable at any suggestion of attaching relationship strings. On the drive down from Volterra, Kaushik advises her not to marry Navin adding that he has reached an end in Italy and would soon fly to Hong Kong to join a new assignment - a desk job in contrast to his earlier challenging assignments in the forests of Latin America and Palestine. He sees that their paths do not have any prospects of meeting point in future. Still, as Hema declines his suggestion Kaushik is hurt and inflicts pain on Hema by scolding her as a 'coward' in a way similar to his treatment of her during their teens in Cambridge. Hema

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is struck by his behaviour—feeling hurt that he has not offered her to marry in return. On her part, at least, she leaves an open suggestion that they might meet even after her wedding. If Kaushik calls her timid then she finds him 'selfish' in a way:

> Then he said, "You're a coward." She began to cry, unable to control herself, aware that he would never forgive her for refusing him, that even if she were to change her mind he had already retracted his invitation. He had told her not to marry Navin, but he had not asked her to marry him, and Hema knew that it was not a fair trade. As she cried he sat there, unmoved, as he must have been when he took his pictures, as he'd been that morning when she was thirteen and he had uncovered graves in the snow. (323)

The dissonance in their relationship could be further understood through the metaphor THE WARMTH OF AN OVERCOAT MIGHT GIVE WARMTH OF LOVE which is fusion of a metaphor and a metonym - AN OVERCOAT GIVES WARMTH and WARMTH STANDS FOR LOVE. However, this conceptual metaphor hides the aspect of 'dislike' by the actor involved which is true indeed in Hema's case. Secondly, the aesthetic and artistic aspect of love is foregrounded by the author through the images of the sarcophagus of the married couple and the bronze carving of the young boy's body referring to the shadows of the evening. Evening does here stand for the setting sun and indicate a separation between Kaushik and Hema. If we consider the conceptual metaphors LOVE IS AN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE we find that it suits both Hema and Kaushik's attitude to love. Simultaneously, if we add the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS WORK we discover the dissonance between Hema and Kaushik. For, Kaushik work means only his profession and hobby-photography. That he does not want any string of relationship attached and his reaching an end in Rome has been clearly

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stated by Kaushik already. On the other hand, Hema has already crossed the phase of disillusionment of remaining beside Julian as a mistress for a long time. At thirty seven years of age she feels "wooed like a young girl" by Navin's proposal. She naturally foresees that she could not expect a person like Kaushik to do so. Still, the separation even after the rendezvous in Italy has its entailments of pains especially since it conveys a recreation of the scene of the past like the shadow of Kaushik's overcoat looming large.

If we consider the example LOVE IS A COLLABORRATIVE WORK OF ART cited by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their article "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language" (1980) then also we discover that it suits Hema's temperament and attitude more as she has attempted to come out of Kaushik's overcoat. However, after Kaushik's death the overcoat returns as a haunting spirit. Hema felt the force of the metaphorical force of the autumnal wind like a gust with which Navin 'pulled away' her from Kaushik which indicates her 'survival strategy' to hold on tightly with the overcoat. Hema now feels impregnated within it while carrying her baby in her womb. Though the narrative mentions that Navin is the biological father of the yet to be born baby—but it is the weight and rather the overweight of the overcoat inherited through Kaushik's death that fills the chilly days of Hema in the Myn Brawr campus as the story cycle ends within the timeline of early 2005. Moments before his death Kaushik sees the vision of the bronze statue and the image of his mother gives him the confidence to dive deep in to the sea. In a situation akin to Gogol Ganguli's after Ashoke's death the overcoat alongwith its entailment of love reiterates the opposite of Hema's assertion that Kaushik had not left any trace. Thus, we have the metaphor DEATH AFFIRMS THE INHERITANCE OF AN OVERCOAT and the earlier consternation and apprehensions of wearing the overcoat for Hema is

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permanently erased as the overcoat has changed its hues and gained a permanent extension.

Thirdly, in both *The Namesake* and "Hema and Kaushik" we have a triangular crux — the first one involving Ashoke—Ashima—Gogol and the second one involving Parul—Kaushik—Hema with regard to the inheritance/passing over of the overcoat and the consequent striations and shades of journeys undertaken by the second-generation actors. Both these relationship strands throw further light on an 'inner circle' of actors who only share and experience the consequences of either wearing or inheriting the overcoat. The trace and pain of death that imbues the "Hema and Kaushik" section of *Unaccustomed Earth* could thus be linked up with the overwhelming changes in the lives of the Gangulis consequent to Ashoke's death. Another common strand between both *The Namesake* and the trilogy of stories in *Unaccustomed* Earth is the uncannily similar and overlapping timelines of narrative imagining. *The Namesake* begins in 1968 at the moment of Gogol's birth with flashbacks to the fateful train accident of Ashoke in 1961 and ends with Gogol's reading the collected stories of Nikolai Gogol after his father's death, and his own marriage and divorce. "Once Upon a Lifetime" begins in 1981 as Hema narrates the Chaudhuris 'second coming' in 1981 with flash backs to the 1974 farewell party while "Year's End" captures Kaushik's recalling the changes that came to his life as a consequence of his mother's death. "Going Ashore" as stated ends with the chilly reminiscence of Hema recalling the 'Roman Holiday' with Kaushik and his death. The common thread that binds both the stories is the projection and embedded nature of the overcoat metaphor which leaves its shadows all over—especially affecting the relationships of the 'inner circle' of the actors in both the cases. While in *The Namesake*

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there is a powerful projection of the story “The Overcoat” itself which informs Ashoke’s mindscape, in “Hema and Kaushik” one feels traces of the ‘complete worlds’ of Thomas Hardy’s Wessex novels, besides Hawthorne’s stories.

A. J. Sebastian’s article entitled “Hema and Kaushik in Emotional Tangle : Probing Jhumpa Lahiri’s “Once in a Lifetime”, “Year’s End” and “Going Ashore” (2010) is focussed on the trilogy of the stories which perceives the trilogy as “intense studies of individuals caught in emotional tangles.” It is the missing thread of the overcoat metaphor unforeseen in the mentioned article which could have led to untangling the relationship hinges. Bidisha Banerjee in her article entitled “Diaspora’s “Dark Room”: Photography and the Vision of Loss in Jhumpa Lahiri’s “Hema and Kaushik” probes the recurrent trope of photographs and photography terming the loss of homeland for second-generation immigrants like Kaushik as “a phantom loss”, and argues that photography allows him to counter his “unrootedness” making him feel a sense of presence. Banerjee observes that Kaushik ultimately falters in his attempt leading to a trauma that only makes him feel the sense of loss in a sharper way. However, by focussing on the metaphor of photographs only and ignoring the larger shade of the overcoat as a megametaphor the study is restricted to the “dark room” diasporic existential scenario. In delineating the poignancy of the existential scenario of the actors involved in the story cycle Lahiri has employed the much wider and powerful metaphor of the overcoat simultaneously subsuming other metaphors like shoes, photographs and sculptures within it. Further, the overcoat metaphor enables the author in highlighting what might happen in the recesses of “half reverse journies” undertaken by a section of the second-generation Bengali-American immigrants as their own ways of ‘emulating’ the sojourns

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of their parents and charting out their "possible worlds". In both the cases the overcoat is spacious and warm enough to absorb the pains and sense of loss and acts as a potent seed-bed of raising newer plants.

As the overcoat metaphor indicates, Jhumpa Lahiri has evolved a complex narrative style through her deceptively translucent and elegant prose to delineate relationships through the empathy of an emic eye. In case of inter-generational relationships, too, the metaphors serve as vital cues in unravelling the hidden loops tangled in a variety of knots. Barring the overcoat and the garden metaphors she employs other metaphors in "A Choice of Accommodations", "Hell-Heaven" and "Only Goodness." In "Hell-Heaven" though the focus of the story is along the Pranab-Aparna-Deborah relationship strand, it is also the realignment of relationship between a daughter and a mother that occupies a significant space in the story. Just as Ashima in *The Namesake* perceived her daughter Sonia's increasingly 'liberated' tastes and flavours as 'transgressive' of a typical young Bengali girl's initiation to adulthood, Aparna too strongly resists Usha's growing affiliation towards Deborah-the American student loved by Pranab. Usha, who as a child found her mother's urge to control and guide her as too restrictive, was fascinated by the ways Deborah and Pranab pampered and doted her. It was she who continued to accompany the couple in their outings once her mother deliberately slipped out of the way. In gatherings of Bengali families, it was she with whom Deborah felt at ease and spent her time. Though the couple gravitated to a different and distant course in the wake of their wedding, as a teenager Usha was again fascinated by the prospect of meeting them during the Thanksgiving dinner at their Marblehead house after a gap of seven years. There, she abandons her Indian dress forced by her

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mother, enjoys flirting with Matty - Deborah's brother – and shares her first joint with him- a sign of typical American teenager's travail to adulthood. As she went on her path, completely ignoring her mother's expectations, Usha later sympathetically recollects her mother's dull life especially being doubly cornered in the house by her father's apathy and her own drifting apart:

> I began to pity my mother; the older I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led. She had never worked, and during the day she watched soap operas to pass the time. Her only job, every day, was to clean and cook for my father and me. We rarely went to restaurants, my father always pointing out, even in cheap ones, how expensive they were compared with eating at home. When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. "If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta," he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other. I began to take my cues from my father in dealing with her, isolating her doubly. (76)

Later, during her college vacation visits, she is piqued to see a sense of communion and companionship evolving between her parents. She attributes this to the emptiness resulted by her absence and Pranab's drifting away. Usha had her share of string of affairs mostly with American boys and ultimately meets her mother's fate of bearing the pain of separation and disenchantment in love as the relationship with a man she expected to marry breaks down suddenly. The metaphor of " Hell-Heaven" or *Akash-Patal* through which her mother attempted to express Pranab's pre and post-wedded life with Deborah while hiding her own psychological and emotional turmoil at which she laughed earlier

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due to its inaptness is now perceived by the daughter with an added insight. Here the c metaphors AKASH (THE SKY) IS THE CLOSENESS OF THE SELF WITH THE LOVER while PATAL (NETHERSCAPE) IS THE CLOSENESS OF THE OTHER WITH THE LOVER. The common elements of the emotional 'inscapes' of both the mother and the daughter at last place both of them in a familiar terrain from where both of them now could appreciate and share each other's feelings of disenchantment in love. It is the daughter's following of the emotional journey of her mother that plays a crucial role of her being qualified as a "secret sharer" which can be explained through the metaphor ONE MUST BE UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO BECOME A SECRET SHARER. In the title story of *Unaccustomed Earth* the relationship between a daughter and a father has been probed under the looming dark shadows of the mother's death. The story begins with the narration of a father's inadequacy of 'penmanship'- the terse, impersonal lines that he wrote to his daughter in the postcards vividly express the wryness of the relationship. The postcards with photographs and the father's slanted handwriting evokes the memory of Ruma's mother—her Bengali orthographic symbols flash in her mind's eye. In the event of her mother's death she has given up her professional commitment-choosing instead to be a housewife and thereby takes the garb of her mother. Her father is surprised to note the changes that have enwrapped Ruma- a striking similarity with her mother almost startles him.

Jhumpa Lahiri's stories are replete with careful and detailed delineation of the designs and architecture of houses. Houses, apartments, buildings, condominiums inhabited and frequented by the members of the Bengali-American diaspora in her stories act as significant container and spatial metaphors while functioning as sites of entanglement of emotional and love relationships. Through these houses we can infer

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the relationships of the inhabitants with home and homeland. As regards houses, it is the neat division of the exterior/interior, rooms, the illumination/fading of light and the minute observations on ceilings, floors, panels, doors, windows, eaves, cornices, carvings, staircases, mantelpiece also become a part of Lahiri's larger framing of the houses and relationships of the people staying there. For instance, the apartment that Ashima Ganguli had encountered after first landing in America and the one where Gogol spent his early childhood was visited much later by him with his girlfriend Ruth:

> He shows her the American professor's house where he and his parents once lived, a time before Sonia was born, years that he has no memory of. He's seen the house in pictures, knows from his parents the name of the street. Whoever lives there now appears to be away; the snow hasn't been cleared from the porch steps, and a number of rolled-up newspapers have collected on the doormat. "I wish we could go inside," he says. "I wish we could be alone together." Looking at the house now, with Ruth at his side, her mittened hand in his, he feels strangely helpless. Though he was only an infant at the time, he feels nevertheless betrayed by his inability to know then that one day, years later, he would return to the house under such different circumstances, and that he would be so happy. (*The Namesake*, 116)

The old house which evokes happiness to the son of the family due to his closeness with his girlfriend, however, was not similarly associated by his mother—who felt desolate in the house:

> The apartment consists of three rooms all in a row without a corridor. There is a

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> living room at the front with a three-sided window overlooking the street, a pass-through bedroom in the middle, a kitchen at the back. It is not what she had at all expected. Not at all like the houses in *Gone with the Wind* or *The Seven Year Itch*, movies she'd seen with her brother and cousins at the Lighthouse and the Metro. The apartment is drafty during winter, and in summer, intolerably hot. The thick glass windowpanes are covered by dreary dark brown curtains. (*The Namesake* 30)

It is thus, the circumstances and situations which altered the moods and added colours to the emotionscapes of the inhabitants. After spending two years in an "overheated university-apartment" (50) the Gangulis finally own a modest house at Pemberton street in a suburb where the "the Johnsons, the Mertons, the Aspris, the Hills" (51) are their neighbours:

> There are four modest bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, seven-foot ceilings, a one car garage. In the living room is a brick fireplace and a bay window overlooking the yard. In the kitchen there are yellow appliances, a lazy Susan, linoleum made to look alike tiles. A water colour by Ashima's father, of a caravan of camels in a desert in Rajasthan, is framed at the local print shop and hung on the living room wall. Gogol has a room of his own, a bed with a built-in drawer in its base, metal shelves that hold Tinkertoys, Lincoln Logs, a View-Master, an Etch-a-Sketch. (52)

It is this particular house at Pemberton Street which Gogol and Sonia learn to associate as "home" as they grew up unlike their mother for whom home meant the sights, sounds

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and smells of Calcutta. For Ashoke, interestingly the notion of "home" is nowhere. Everywhere, he is satisfied with his bare essentials like his staying in the "empty" flat that he resides in Cleveland during the last few months of his life. For Gogol Ganguli, on the other hand the notion of home shifted from one architectural design to another. One day after staying only for three months at Yale he calls his room as his "home" and Ashima reacts that after twenty years she "cannot bring herself to refer to Pemberton Road as home"(108). But, for her son the 'solidity' of his room, the Gothic Architecture of the Yale campus and feels rooted to the campus life. His loss of virginity amidst the 'powdery floral smell' in the Siliman campus room of Ruth in an 'unmade bed' is contrasted with the double bedded room in a hotel where he takes her after her return from England. By the time, he is twenty-six and graduated from Columbia in Architecture Gogol had shifted to New York the place that he begins to love most. He works in a farm and contributes partially to designs for hotels and museums abroad: "a stairwell, a skylight, a corridor, an air-conditioning duct" (125). The boy who was mesmerised by the architectural grandeur of the Tajmahal of Agra is equally stunned by the house of the Ratliffs - a Greek Revival while admiring the lintels, the Doric pilasters, the emblature and the cast-iron railings. He feels like a tourist as Maxine takes him on a guided tour of the house:

> The plan of the house is simple, two immense rooms per floor, each of which he is certain, is larger, is larger than his own apartment. Politely he admires the plaster cove moldings, the ceiling medallions, the marble mantelpieces, things he knows how to speak intelligently and at length about. (131)

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It is the aura of both the interior/exterior of this house which smoothens Gogol's temporary integration with the lives of the Ratliffs. The spell which the family's lifestyle and Maxine's love casts over him is aptly coloured by his appreciation for the house. The 'trance' breaks only after he encounters the bare flat in which his father died and Gogol takes shelter in the 'cocoon' of his 'home' at Pemberton Road from where he flatly denies to 'go away' anywhere when he is reminded of the imminent holiday plan by Maxine . Judith Caesar in a perceptive study entitled "American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri" (2005) analyses Jhumpa Lahiri's two stories "Third and the Final Continent" and "Nobody's Business" from a spatial perspective:

> Mrs Croft sees that Mala is a lady just as she has understood that the narrator is a gentleman. Her understanding is simple, but it leads him to an understanding that is far deeper. Mrs Croft, herself unchanged, is the catalyst. This can only happen in Mrs Croft's domain, the narrator's imagined America, a space of loneliness and self-reliance, a space that for the narrator is empty of memories but not empty of meaning. (Caesar 56)

If we take up the very first story of *Interpreter of Maladies* entitled "A Temporary Matter" itself we encounter that something in the relationship of Shoba and Shukumar is amiss. The author, in fact, plays with the very title of the story itself whether the dissonance in the relationship would be of temporary/permanent nature. Introducing a young Indian couple facing the trauma of loss of their first child in its birth Lahiri employs the darkness/light metaphor in an ingenuous manner to reveal the atmosphere in

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the verge of 'explosion'. First of all the very notice of power outage or 'load shedding' for five successive nights reminds one of the plausible situations in a typical Indian town. Secondly, the slovenly appearance of both Shoba and Shukumar indicates something amiss in the entire atmosphere. It is clear that in their conjugal journey as husband and wife an unquiet plateau has been reached which could be broken through only a creative and innovative channeling of eruptions of feelings. They have failed to move beyond the trauma of the loss of their child. Shukumar' attempts to communicate with her has been met with an impenetrable rebuff by Shoba pointing out his absence during the event. Shukumar remained a mute spectator as he saw Shoba methodically destroying things from the shelves of the house soon after her release from the hospital. It was only the notice of power outage that rekindled Shoba to an extent and she devised the idea of a candle-lit 'confession game' during dinners. For four successive nights both of them admit and share something which they had hidden from each other during their married life. Shukumar too agrees foreseeing probably this as a chance to move ahead in their relationships:

> "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." (12-13).

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The things which they admit before each other to understand the implications of the range of the 'confession' metaphor dexterously employed by Lahiri to reveal a retinue of 'little ways' through which they hurt or disappointed her:

Before their wedding she secretly looked at Shukumar's address book to confirm whether he had 'promoted' her from the 'margins' of the newspapers.	Once while having dinner in a restaurant before their marriage Shukumar forgot to tip the bearer. He traveled back all the way to offer the tip. He explains that he forgot—'distracted' by the idea that he might marry Shoba.
One night during a visit by Shukumar's mother she phoned him informing that she would be late from work. She actually went out with her friend Gillian for a martini.	His mother came after his father's death and Shoba indeed found her mourning 'touchy.' He imagined that Shoba shared with her friend the stifling visits by in laws and her friend consoling her. He also remembered that it was Gillian who took Shoba to the hospital for their baby's delivery as he was away in a conference.
Shukumar admitted that he once cheated in his Oriental Civilization examination in the college. He could not identify a few verses and he looked at the answer sheet of a	Shoba said that he need not tell her the reason why he copied.

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fellow American student and copied them.	
On the third night he told Shoba that the sweater gifted by her on their third anniversary depressed him and he got it exchanged in a shop for cash.	Shoba did not react to what Shukumar said. Instead she said that she let him talk to the chairman of the department without telling him that he had a 'dab of pate' in his chin. She had been irritated with him for some reason so she let Shukumar to speak on and
On the fourth night Shukumar revealed that he had ripped apart a photograph of a woman from a fashion magazine when Shoba was pregnant. For about a week he looked at the photograph secretly. It was the closest that he came to experience infidelity.	She told him that she did not like the only poem which he composed on her published in a literary magazine. She found the tone sentimental.

It is this 'exchange of confessions' which interestingly renewed the channels of communication. They discovered that they could talk to each other in an intimate and free manner particularly whenever darkness descended amidst them. At the end of four nights however, Shukumar received a notice that the electric line had been repaired before schedule. The dénouement of the drama was set on the fifth evening as Shoba suggested that they could have candle-lit dinner. Suddenly, Shoba blew of the candle and switched

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on the light—informing him that she had booked an apartment for herself and wished to move out. The information struck Shukumar as he now interpreted the game of confession only as a stratagem on Shoba's part:

> It *sickened* Shukumar, knowing that she had spent the past evenings preparing for a life without him. He was relieved and yet he was *sickened.* This was what she'd been trying to tell him for the past four evenings. This was the point of her game. (21, italics for emphasis)

As Shukumar's turn was to speak now he suddenly recollected a long buried scrap of information pertaining to the traumatic event of the death of their child. He wanted to strike back with a similar sickening force as he spoke:

> "Our baby was boy," he said. "His skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds. His fingers curled shut, just like yours in the night." (22)

Normally this piece of information should not have evoked a strong reaction from the wife. But for Shoba the sex of the baby was 'one thing in her life' that she 'wanted to be a surprise'. She had assumed that her husband arrived too late from Baltimore to see or hold the baby. It now seemed to her a violation or transgression of an emotional code that both of them earlier shared. She had to now again turn off the light before both of them cried together while outside the evening was warm and an aged couple walked arm in arm. Himadri Lahiri, in his article entitled "Family as Space in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Stories" (2008) refers to Michel Foucault's 'heterotopias' and Edward W. Soja's 'habitus of social practices' moving over to James Cliffords's notions of roots/routes in relation to

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diasporic existential framework while examining how in Lahiri's stories individuals "act out their roles in the interactionist space called family" (46). While restricting his study within the ambit of "A Temporary Matter" and "Interpreter of Maladies", Himadri Lahiri analyses the delineation of family as a "game-board" where "expectations and fulfillments or lack of them" in "A Temporary Matter" as an "interactionist space" through the fissures of which "maladies find a fertile ground" (49). He also points out "a quiet violence" that permeates the fabric of the story—which "underscores the malady" in the family (51). On the other hand, in "Interpreter of Maladies" Himadri Lahiri focuses on "a lack of communication" as the source of the malady in the family space. What the critique misses out is the key conceptual metaphor that CONFESSION IS A REFLECTION OF A MALADY which has been subtly weaved by the story teller. The confession game metaphor in "A Temporary Matter", thus, reveals the potent emotional trajectories to their fullness and help us to understand the dynamics of the nature of 'deadlock' in which Shoba and Shukumar have been bound and how the loosening of the knot has led to a gush of emotions acting as a pool of reservoir which again have the potency to take the relationship curvature through another route. Going back to the inferential paths mentioned in the beginning of this discussion, a re-interpretation of the title story of *Interpreter of Maladies* could be undertaken to examine the relationship along the arc: Mrs. Das-Mr. Kapasi (the interpreter) – Bobby (the child) - Mr. Raj Das. The story's emotional core lies in the suffused sense of guilt-under whose heavy weight Mrs. Das is reeling silently and her choice of Mr. Kapasi—the interpreter-cum- tour guide whom they meet in a trip to Konark as the *confessant* who is also supposed to act as an *interpreter* of the peculiar nature of her 'malady'. It might be pertinent to recall here Jhumpa Lahiri's

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revelation of the writing process of this story-the core of which was a family trip to Mussorie and meeting a taxi driver who narrated how he once lost his washed clothes to monkeys. “The monkey took away the driver’s clothes” was the ‘scrap’ from which the author took a ‘leap of faith’ in writing the story (Interview in *Desh*, March 2011). Like in “A Temporary Matter” here also the author seams up the narrative threads in a lapidary manner. The elaborate description of the middle-aged Mr. Kapasi’s appearance, attire, and his attempts to remain young are narrated in a half-comic and partially mocking tone. The description of three kids - Ronny, Tina and Bobby – and their parents are partially given through Kapasi’s capacious eyes-which often hover around the revealing dress of Mrs. Das. The way Mrs. Das enquires and takes interests in his other vocation of an interpreter and remarks it as a ‘romantic’ job makes him spirited especially as he considered it against his wife’s assessment of his abilities and the job:

> Mr. Kapasi knew that his wife had little regard for his career as an interpreter. He knew it reminded her of the son she’d lost, and that she resented the other lives he helped, in his own small way, to save. If ever she referred to his position, he used the phrase “doctor’s assistant” as if the process of interpretation were equal to taking someone’s temperature, or changing a bedpan. She never asked him about the patients who came to the doctor’s office, or said that his job was a big responsibility. (53)

In a half-comic tone Lahiri draws the undulating graph of Mr. Kapasi’s heart-beats at the compliments passed by Mrs. Das-absorbing him with a tingling impulse of an *intoxicated* person:

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> Her sudden interest in him, an interest she did not express in either her husband or her children, was mildly *intoxicating*. When Mr. Kapasi thought once again about how she had said “romantic,” the feeling of *intoxication* grew. (53)

The rush of adrenalin and the aura of mild sensuality continued to have a hold on the tour guide:

> Mr. Das placed the camera to his face and squeezed one eye shut, his tongue exposed at one corner of his mouth. “This looks funny. Mina, you need to lean in closer to Mr. Kapasi.” She did. He could smell a scent on her skin, like a mixture of whiskey and rosewater. He worried suddenly that she could smell his perspiration, which he knew had collected beneath the synthetic material of his shirt. He polished off his mango juice in one gulp and smoothed his silver hair with his hands. A bit of the juice dripped onto his chin. He wondered if Mrs. Das had noticed. (54-55)

The feeling continued as Mrs. Das asked him to write down his address, which he did assuming and anticipating that it would be a point of beginning for starting a long chain of correspondence with her. His mind raced and he imagined scenes of intimacy with Mrs. Das-the feeling bringing with him closeness to his past ecstasies of sudden discovery of an apt meaning of a foreign word:

> In time she would reveal the disappointment of her marriage, and he his. In this way their friendship would grow, and flourish. He would possess a picture of the two of them, eating lined onions under a magenta umbrella, which he would keep, he decided, safely tucked between the pages of his Russian grammar. As his mind

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> raced, Mr. Kapasi experienced a mild and pleasant shock. It was similar to a feeling he used to experience long ago when, after months of translating with the aid of a dictionary, he would finally read a passage from a French novel, or an Italian sonnet, and understand the words, one after another, unencumbered by his own efforts. In those moments Mr. Kapasi used to think that all was right with the world, that all struggles were rewarded, that all of life's mistakes made sense in the end. (55-56)

During their long walks through the passages of the massive Sun Temple of Konark that Mr. Kapasi further explained the nuances of the architectural designs of the friezes of entwined love making couples, statues of the *Nagamithunas*—the mythical half-human, half-serpent figures, the Astachala Surya—seeing which Mrs. Das perceptively remarked that the sun would set there within a short while. All the while as he walked side by side with her as Mr. Das took rest, Mr. Kapasi was observing the radiance in the face of Mrs. Das and thinking about the future chain associations with her. After a brief halt at a hotel while he drove them back—Mr. Kapasi suddenly mentioning the Udayagiri and the Khandagiri caves in nearby hills. As they reached Khandagiri Mrs. Das felt tired while Mr. Kapasi proposed to accompany Mr. Das and the kids as he perceived he had much to explain about the caves. But, Mrs. Das asked Mr. Kapasi to stay for a while. They observed that Bobby the younger boy was playing with a group of monkeys with a stick. Mr. Das remarked that he was a brave boy. It was just then Mrs. Das revealed that Bobby was not the biological child of her husband. Mr. Kapasi tried to hide his uneasiness and surprise. Mrs. Das continued to narrate how she and her husband married very young as per the expectations of their respective families and how boredom gripped her especially

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after the birth of her first child. Amidst the quotidian life a housewife she cut off links with her friends and stopped socializing. One day, a tall and athletic Punjabi friend of Mr. Das paid a brief visit to their house that touched her while she was standing near a sofa. Mrs. Das gave the silent Mr. Kapasi a graphic how in a sudden physical contact with the visitor the child was conceived. As Mr. Kapasi expressed his wonder why he was chosen for this confession on her part she replied that it was his vocation that made her expect some ingenious interpretation:

> "I told you because of your talents." She put the packet of puffed rice back into her bag without folding over the top.
>
> "I don't understand." Mr. Kapasi said.
>
> "Don't you see? For eight years I haven't been able to express this to anybody, not to friends, certainly not to Raj. He doesn't even suspect it. He thinks I'm still in love
>
> with him. Well, don't you have anything to say?"(65)

After much wrestling within the self and being so suddenly surprised with this highly secretive information Mr. Kapasi feebly asked Mrs. Das whether she felt a sense of guilt or pain. This question itself led to the conclusion of the session and Mrs. Das looked at Mr. Kapasi with an expression of pity. Mr. Kapasi felt so down that he felt he was not even 'fit enough to be properly insulted' (66). Thus, the role of the interpreter which Mr. Kapasi had associated a sense of respectability and prestige after the appreciation of Mrs. Das now appeared close to a farcical one. He has a feeling a deflation followed by a sense of equanimity as he saw the piece of paper in which he jotted down his address carelessly

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dropped and drifting in the air. This confessional sharing between Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi also brings up the elements of exchange. Mr. Kapasi appears “crushed” because he had been emotionally charged beyond limit by the prospects of his correspondence with Mrs. Das. On the other hand, Mrs. Das has had a palliative solution to her sufferings without much trial by making the interpreter an *interpretant.*

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Chapter IV

At Water’s Edge: Metaphors of Land and Waterscapes

> *Now and again I saw the water, little islands and striped lighthouses and tiny spits of land. It was too brutally cold to get out of the car, but occasionally I did, to look at the ocean or explore a bit of trail. It was like no other place I’d seen, nothing like the North Shore of Massachusetts. The sky was different, without color, taut and unforgiving. But the water was the most unforgiving thing, nearly black at times, cold enough, I knew, to kill me, violent enough to break me apart. The waves were immense, battering rocky beaches without sand. The farther I went, the more desolate it became, more than any place I’d been, but for this very reason the landscape drew me, claimed me as nothing had in a long time.*
>
> Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*

In an interview with Christopher Taylor in 2008, Jhumpa Lahiri mentions her ease and freedom as a writer whenever the narratives of her stories rivet to the edges of water:

> The part of the earth that I've always felt most at ease with is not the ground, but sort of the water's edge … [the sea represents] a cleansing and an absence of so many of the things that came to bring me down in the everyday world: people's behaviour, people's attitudes, people's looks, people's curiosity about us and my parents. The sea's . . . everyone's equal in the face of something like that.

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A close study of Jhumpa Lahiri's stories and novels, too, reveals the recurrent portrayal of nature in their varied forms and hues - forming a rich domain of metaphor that binds the varied narratives of arrivals, births, departures and deaths of the Bengali-American diaspora depicted by her. If we take the first story of her collection *Interpreter of Maladies* entitled "A Temporary Matter", we find a young couple trying to grapple with the vacuity following the death of their first baby soon after its birth and playing a 'revelation game' of episodes of hidden past lives amidst power cuts while outside ice was thawing by the sides of the roads. The eponymous title story of the collection also reaches its climactic moments at Konark where Mr. Kapasi – the interpreter and the guide informs that The Chandravaga river once flowed beside the temple site. It metaphorically gives a clue to the arid state of Mrs. Das haunted by a desert-like guilt the burden of which wished to be liberated by divulging it to an apt 'interpreter of diseases' like Mr. Kapasi. The stories entitled "The Real Durwan" and "A Choice of Accommodation" depicts two different types of rains affecting the protagonists in different ways. Melting of snow too is associated with the understanding of moments of truth for Miranda's pain as a mistress in "Sexy".

The final story "The Third and Final Continent" depicts the journey of the protagonist across seas and oceans comparing it with the voyage of the first man to moon. In *The Namesake* snowfall and melting, lakes, rivers and seas play key metaphoric roles in the narrative. Bridges and terminals become significant as joining or crossing the shores across water bodies and gulfs. In the title story of Lahiri's latest collection of stories *Unaccustomed Earth* the key metaphor of gardening is associated with spray of water, pools with the lake in Seattle act as the background frame of things

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happening to Ruma's family. The Atlantic ocean remains the spectator to Eliott's loneliness in "Mrs. Sen's", the setting for the Thanksgiving drama in "Hell Heaven", Ashoke and Gogol's sojourn to a 'point of no return', Kaushik's burial of his mother's photograph in "Year's End" – events which have significant metaphoric associations in the narratives of the stories.

What makes it interesting are the very perceptions and conceptualization processes of water and water bodies as a set of powerful, evocative, transformative metaphors and indicate possibilities of generation of a wide range of meanings out of its interaction with the characters of the stories like waters of love, devotion, pain, arrivals, departures, loss and death etc. They, thus, connote the possibilities of explorations from the cognitive perspectives and thereby might result in fresh lights on both the carefully etched lives of the Bengali-American diasporic lives on the one hand and would enable us in unearthing underlying conceptually integrative narrative threads on the other.

The trilogy of stories entitled "Hema and Kaushik" in *The Unaccustomed Earth* too is filled with the incidents and accidents that both Hema and Kaushik's Fate could have avoided. The trauma of his mother's death and father's shocking remarriage silences Kaushik. In turn, he becomes a globetrotting photojournalist meeting Hema in Rome only finding her standing at another junction of her life – her engagement and wedding with Navin. His watery death in Phuket reconnects with his mother's last days of gazing at The Atlantic. Though Hema assumes that her tempestuous love affair with Kaushik has left no 'trace' in the physical sense, she has undergone now radically altered with the prospect of her stable teaching career in the US and an equally stable husband. An echo of the chain of events affecting the Gangulis could be said to have

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been replicated albeit along different tangents and curvatures for the Chaudhuris. Hema here steps in to the shoes of Gogol to continue another sojourn by the second-generation Indian-Americans. The saga for the Bengali-Indian-American protagonists would probably share the same 'root' taking different 'routes' along this curvature through profounder and newer metaphors.

Water, water bodies and varied forms of water act as hinges of the emotionscape of the actors in Lahiri's stories. A snow-storm results in the power-outage that acts as the natural backdrop to the emotional oscillations and interplay of light/darkness in the story "A Temporary Matter":

> It was seven-thirty. Through the window he saw the sky, like soft black pitch. Uneven banks of snow still lined the sidewalks, though it was warm enough for people to walk about without hats or gloves. Nearly three feet had fallen in the last storm, so that for a week people had to walk single file, in narrow trenches. For a week that was Shukumar's excuse for not leaving the house. But now the trenches were widening, and water drained steadily into grates in the pavement. (5)

The metaphor of snow-storm here has been the narrative ploy for devising the power outage on the one hand and the confinement of Shukumar whose days have already been structured through a lazing around. Secondly, it evocatively captures the emotionscape of the inhabitants of the house-the young couple who have been trying to weather the recent storm in their lives in the form of the death of their baby. The interior of the house is marked not only by the absence of light but also a break in the channel of communication

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between the husband and the wife. Again, the thawing of the ice too and water steadily flowing conveys the gradual movement for the "confession-game" in the wake of which the line of communication between the two is "restored" albeit temporarily at least. The image of the melting snow through which their neighbour Badfords move forth and back, often waving at them— too indicates that the confession-game is leading towards an emotional point of entropy that is poised to affect the relationship of the couple either way:

> Outside the evening was still warm, and the Bradfords were walking arm in arm. As he watched the couple the room went dark, and he spun around. Shoba had turned the lights off. She came back to the table and sat down, and after a moment Shukumar joined her. They wept together, for the things they now knew. (24)

The act of weeping as sublimation was not possible in the pre-storm scenario. It is in the wake of the natural backdrop of the snow storm and the gradual process of the thawing that lends a powerful impact to Lahiri's narrative style and delineation of a sense of loss. From this powerful projection we can develop metaphors like SNOWSTORM BURIES THE EARTH, THE EARTH CONTAINS THE TREE LINED HOUSE, SNOWSTORM OFFSHOOTS POWER OUTAGE, DARKNESS ENVELOPS DUE TO SNOWSTORM, CANDLELIGHT INDICATES THAWING OF HEAPS OF EMOTIONS, EMOTIONS THAWS AND BREAKS THE STALEMATE OF COMMUNICATION, THAWING OF ICE INDICATES COMING TO TERMS OF GRIEF LADEN EMOTION etc. Each of these metaphors adds up to meanings associated with the onset, continuance and finally opening a channel of communication through the 'confession game' strategy vis-à-vis the relationship between Shoba and Shukumar. The snow-storm is again partially personified through the tall, debonair and intellectual figure of Pranab in "Hell-Heaven." The arrival of the

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stormy and charismatic character of Pranab is indicative of the way incidents of future in the story:

> He had arrived in January, in the middle of a snowstorm, and at the end of a week he had packed his bags and gone to Logan, prepared to abandon the opportunity he'd worked toward all his life, only to change his mind at the last minute. (64)

Here, we can say that Pranab is fated to become a "snow storm" which he tries to avoid initially but could not. The metaphors that could be evolved inferentially are-SOMEONE IS AFFECTED BY SNOWSTORM, THE SNOWSTORM IS A FIGURE, IT PASSES SOME OF ITS FEATURES TO A HUMAN BEING etc. Though Pranab remained oblivious to Usha's mother- Aparna's crush on him and the devastating effect that his marriage with Deborah on her, it was he who 'destroyed' the happy family life with two beautiful grown up daughters by his association with another married Bengali-American lady—opposite to what Aparna had predicted. Deborah's frank admission of being jealous to her for having a cultural intimacy with Pranab somehow balanced the jealousy that Aparna had for her. Usha, after experiencing a heart-break akin to her mother's and Deborah's gets an intimate view how her mother had methodically prepared for committing suicide—incidentally saved by their neighbour—with whom she shared little rapport. In a powerfully evocative and scary scene Lahiri delineates how the victim of the "storm" is 'rescued' by an observer of the setting sun:

> It was not I who saved her or my father, but our next-door neighbor, Mrs. Holcomb, with whom my mother had never been particularly friendly. She came out to rake the leaves in her yard, calling out to my mother and remarking how

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> beautiful the sunset was. "I see you've been admiring it for a while now," she said. My mother agreed, and then she went back into the house. (83)

We can note here that "raking the leaves" is associated with someone's habit of keeping the back garden clean and trim. Thus, beside the sunset view, it is also Mrs. Holcomb's urge to rake the leaves that connects Aparna's fatedness to be rescued. The metaphor THE SUNSET AND GARDENING RESCUE A VICTIM OF A SNOWSTORM could be aptly evolved to delineate Aparna's incidental coming back from the brink of death. Further, the metaphorical strand of the "storm-sunset" is also linked up with the title of the story "Hell-Heaven" as it is this feeling that primarily motivates in formation of a nether land in Aparna's mind and drives her to suicide. Interestingly, the coinage of this expression meant to highlight the chasm between Pranab's life as a bachelor and the post-marriage life with Deborah is again a by-product of cultural slippage on Aparna's part who probably wished to convey *Akash-Patal (*Sky-Netherland*)* in Bengali as indicated by Aju Mukhopadhyay in his article entitled "Short Stories of Cultural Mix and Clash" (2010)

> The title of the story is "Hell-Heaven" but I prefer to make it Heaven-Hell for the Bangla term is *Akash-Patal* as in *akash patal tafat*. *Akash* is the sky for heaven and *Patal* is the nether world or hell, so heaven-hell difference. It is a real love story; not only love of the Bengalis for Bengali culture, Bangla language and Bengali women as other communities too usually feel the same way, but unexpected, shameless and triangular love between men and women resulting in ties of love broken, broken family bonds. (88)

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Though Mukhopadhyay recreates the formulation of "Hell-Heaven" as *Akash-Patal* his painstaking argumentation that "other communities too feel the same way" and dubbing such relationships as "unexpected, shameless and triangular" is an essentialisation of sort which also ignores textual cues as describing the presence of Pranab as a source of "pure happiness" for Aparna by her daughter Usha. In contrast, Tanushree Singh in her article entitled "Diasporic Indian Women in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*" hints that such a situation is often depicted in Bengali literature as done by Rabindranath Tagore in "Nasta Nirh": "Rabindranath Tagore, too, has many stories about the close relationship between a sister-in-law and brother-in-law, most notably in "Nashta Neer" ("The Broken Nest") (192). Here lies the latent link of Aparna's infatuation with the nineteenth century Bengali middle-class housewife Charulata— the protagonist of Rabindranath Tagore's story "Nastanirh" ("The Broken Nest"). Just as Pranab's presence ignites the dour life that Aparna is forced to share with the insensitive Shyamal, Charulata too was tired of her husband Bhupati's untiring mission of spreading the tenets of Western liberalism through publication of newspapers. For Charulata, the presence of Amal—Bhupati's cousin, with his youthful exuberance and poetic idealism becomes an attraction too powerful to resist. Both the stories end in a different way- "Hell-Heaven" has its underlying ironical inversion in the form of Pranab's faltering the trace of the scars are shared later in their own ways by the three women. Aparna obviously comes to terms to her fate and gradually a companionship evolves between her and her husband which piques Usha slightly. She gathers enough emotional strength to be sympathetic to both Deborah and her daughter's sufferings. The "nest" that is damaged is ultimately due to the forceful blowing of the metaphorical "snow storm." Thus, in reference to "Nasta Nirh" we can say

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that THE NEST WAS BROKEN BY THE STORM while in reference to “Hell-Heaven” we can say that THE NEST WAS DAMAGED BY THE SNOW STORM.

Dripping, falling and burial of earth’s surfaces of snow falls of varied dimensions powerfully affect the spatiality, everyday experience and colour the mental and emotion moods of the characters of Jhumpa Lahiri’s stories and fiction as discussed above. In “The Third and Final Continent” we come across the narrator reading his wife’s letter. The letter written in English for the first time by a young Bengali wife to her expatriate husband records her typical concern about the coldness and snow as it was an exotic thing in those days when electronic media was absent to imagine the phenomenon. The letter though hides any expression of emotion was written with a coyness and distance expected from a newly married girl then. As noted by the narrator he had spent only couple of weeks with her after their wedding and they shared their living space with their relatives as was the custom. Secondly the letter’s impassive tone echoes within the mind of the narrator which had been buried with coldness towards his wife: “I write in English in preparation for the journey. Here I am very much lonely. Is it very cold there. Is there snow. Yours, Mala.” (207).

The extreme cold atmosphere and the snowy environment is a common concern for the family members when they visit a prospective bride’s house to fix an engagement for their sons like Ashoke who have settled abroad. Ashoke’s parents enquire and ask Ashima if she would find it difficult to adapt with the adverse weather conditions in Cambridge. To this Ashima simply points out to Ashoke ask whether he would not be there to give him company. Such situations in the mid sixties of Bengal decided the fate

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of brides like Ashima, Mala and Aparna compelling them to devise ways to adapt with the environment. However, such scenarios do not have a deterring effect on Ashoke. One of the key aspects of *The Namesake* is indeed the manner in which Jhumpa Lahiri links the experiential reality of Ashoke Ganguly with the snowy landscape. The narrative is weaved through this metaphor in such a powerful manner that it invokes an aura of haunting through the narrative fabric of the novel. While anticipating the news of the birth of his first child alone in the lobby of the hospital Ashoke goes on a stream of reminiscence about the fateful intertwining of his youth with Russian classics such as Nikolai Gogol's story "The Overcoat." He is still haunted by the fateful train accident way back in 1961 which consequently changed the trajectory of his life. The narrator records the ironic fatedness of his fascination for the snowcapped fictional landscape evoked by Gogol:

> A fine layer of sticky soot dotted one side of his face, his eyelid, his arm, his neck; his grandmother would insist that he scrub himself with a cake of Margo soap as soon as he arrived. Immersed in the sartorial plight of Akaky Akakyevich, lost in the wide, snow-white, windy avenues of St. Petersburg, unaware that one day he was to dwell in a snowy place himself, Ashok was still reading at two-thirty in the morning, one of the few passengers on the train was awake, when the locomotive engine and seven bogies derailed from the broad-gauge line. (17)

The incipient connection of the two landscapes—one belonging to the nineteenth century Russia, the other relating to the late 1960s of the USA, thus, invokes a metaphorical blending informing and structuring Ashoke's life and via his marriage to Ashima it is fated to be passed to the next generation. There are three "mental spaces" operating here.

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The first one pertains to the fictional landscape sketched by Nikolai Gogol in his story. The second one is the contrastive condition of Ashoke on train-the “soot laden” face about to soap. The third one is where the snowy landscape of St. Petersburg is mapped on to the Cambridge scenario where Ashoke would be fated, as per the narrative expression of future time. Thus, past and future are blended through this snow metaphor. The close relationship between the son and the father later enables his son Gogol Ganguly to recollect the landscape that would have pleased his now dead father in a poignant manner:

> Snow covers the straw-coloured ground. Trees stand like spears, dried copper leaves from the previous season still clinging to a few of the branches. He sees the back of houses made of brick and wood. Small snowy lawns. A solid shelf of winter clouds stops just sort of the horizon. (184)

Here, we find the fourth dimension where again the son while looking at the moving sight on board from a train after his father’s death is looking at the sight to recollect that such a sight would have touched Ashoke . Further, the metaphor here has an affective edge as it highlights the poignancy associated with the sense of loss of his father. This kind of creative and dynamic blending of the time-past, present and future on the hand and on the other the spontaneous movement from the fictional to the “real” spatiality cutting across geographical boundaries add a powerful impact on Jhumpa Lahiri’s realistic framework through which she weaves the narrative.

Though Ashoke and Gogol Ganguly do not pray for snowfall, Hema in the novella section of the Unaccustomed Earth aptly entitled “Hema and Kaushik” recollected later

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while Kaushik's urge for seeing a heavy snowfall during their comeback to the USA and stay with her family:

> Your wish for snow had not been granted since you'd arrived. There were brief flurries now and again, but nothing stuck to the ground. Then one day snow began to fall, barely visible at first, gathering force as the afternoon passed, an inch or so coating the streets by the time I rode the bus home from school. It was not a dangerous storm, but significant enough to break up the monotony of winter. (247)

Crucial to the criss cross of Hema and Kaushik's paths is this scene of the snowfall in "Once Upon a Lifetime"-the first story of the trilogy depicting the tragic saga of this young second-generation Bengali-American couple. The recollection here brings out the common desire of the two as Usha too perceived this snowfall as welcoming due to breaking the monotony of the American winter of Cambridge in 1981. Hema remembered that her mother even prepared *khichuri* befitting the weather. The next morning, as their parents remained busy in clearing the snow gathered along the driveway, the two teenagers started making snow statues and playing at the backyard which was close to wood. The wood had a haunting portent for the neighbourhood and especially for Hema's family as a young boy got lost and was found dead later. But, Kaushik regularly violated this sanction and made forays in to the area walking alone all the time much to the consternation of the host family. The discovery of a family graveyard long buried under the snow sets Kaushik the young photographer busy, while Hema-the thirteen year old girl is perplexed:

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Covered in snow on that bright blue-skied day, the bare branches of the trees concealing so little, it seemed safe. I did not think of the boy, lost there and never found. From time to time you stopped, focusing your camera on something, never asking me to pose. We walked a long way, until I no longer heard the sounds of snow being shoveled, no longer saw our house. I didn't realize at first what you were doing, getting on your knees and pushing away the snow. Underneath was a rock of some sort. And then I saw that it was a tombstone. You uncovered a row of them, flat on the ground. I began to help you, unburying the buried, using my mittened hands at first, then my whole arm. They belonged to people named Simonds, a family of six. They belonged to people named Simonds, a family of six. "They're all here together," you said. "Mother, father, four children."

"I never knew this was here."

"I doubt anyone does. It was buried under leaves when I first found it. The last one, Emma, died in 1923." (249)

From this scene it can be assumed about the burial aspect of snow can be understood through the interaction of the source and target domains of a set of metaphors that can be evolved:

SNOW BURIES THE PAST

OLD GRAVES SOMETIMES LIE BURIED UNDER SNOW

DIGGING THE SNOW ENABLES THE DISCOVERY OF THE GRAVEYARD

THE PAST IS A GRAVEYARD

THE HEAVY SNOW OF THE PRESENT BURIES THE PAST

BURIAL IS RESTING

BURIAL IS AN ACT OF ENABLING TO REST THE DEAD

THE DYING ARE INCHING TOWARDS THE GRAVE

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Through these interactions a litany of meanings emerge which connect to the reason why Kaushik's mother was looking for a new house which has a water view. As discussed in the earlier chapter it is this scene which indicates also the hidden link between the fatedness of three characters—Parul, her son Kaushik and Hema. The intimate knowledge that Kaushik and Hema share about the advanced stage of cancer afflicting Parul enables Hema to have a different perspective not a kin to the jealous views of her parents. She shares the tone of regret that on Kaushik's voice that they could not bury his mother owing to cultural barrier. The closest approximation and alternative that has been chosen primarily at Parul's behest is a watery grave—she made them promise that after her death her ashes would be strewn over the Atlantic. The conception of the watery grave here acts as another symbolic coating over the conception of the earthly grave. This watery grave bears immense symbolic function for the trilogy. Kaushik as a professional photographer shifts and continually moves across the world along the water's edge till he meets his fate at a sea side resort in Khao Lak of South East Asia. On Hema's part on the other hand this incident leaves a permanent trace, an unfulfilled teenage crush, as her life too moves along a different road. A close comparison that strikes us is the scene in *The Namesake* where Gogol Ganguly as a teenager also is taken on a school project in the Rhode Island area to make "rubbings" of old graves especially that of a poet.

> He walks over to a slim, blackened stone with a pleasing shape, rounded at the top before rising into a cross. He kneels on the grass and holds up the newsprint, then begins to rub gently with the side of his crayon. The sun is already sinking and his

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> fingers are stiff with cold…At first nothing appears apart from a grainy, featureless wash of midnight blue. But then, suddenly, the crayon meets with slight resistance, and letters, one after another, emerge magically on the page: ABIJAH CRAVEN, 1701-45. (69)

There is a striking similarity here between the "mittened hands" of Hema and Gogol's frozen hands involved in similar activity of retrieving the buried in different ways though. The dissimilarity lies between Kaushik—the photographer and Gogol—the scrubber. Ashima is horrified and makes her objection clear to Gogol's school project by declaring "Death is not a pastime" (70). She refuses to display the rubbings in the kitchen alongside his other sketches. Gogol, however, is attached to them for reasons not known to him but uncannily felt by him as a young boy:

> For reasons he can not explain or necessarily understand, these ancient Puritan spirits, these very first immigrants to America, these bearers of unthinkable, obsolete names, have spoken to him, so much that in spite of his mother's disgust he refuses to throw the rubbings away. He rolls them up, takes them upstairs, and puts them in his room, behind his chest of drawers, where he knows his mother will never bother to look, and where they will remain, ignored but protected, gathering dust for years to come. (71)

In case of Gogol as we see the "Puritan spirits" have "spoken" to him in a strange, mysterious manner as representatives of the first generation of immigrants to the USA. He justifies in his own way of paying homage to them by preserving the rubbings in a secret place which metaphorically becomes another graveyard for them to be covered with dust. As far as the "Puritan" spirit of these early settlers is concerned, Nathaniel

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Hawthorne's "The Custom House" talks about the narrator's "sensuous sympathy of dust for dust (*The Scarlett Letter* 8)." The author-narrator brings this up while speaking about his intimate connection with his ancestors buried in Salem—his old native town. He goes on to narrate one of his soldier and "persecuting" ancestor involved in a severity to a woman belonging of the same Quaker sect. The involvement of son of that man in "martyrdom of witches" like wise makes the narrator to refer to a pulsating and haunting "stain" of their atrocities even in their graves while simultaneously stressing his own act of bearing the lineage:

> So deep a stain, indeed, that this old dry bones, in the Charter Street burial ground, must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust!.. Doubtless, however, either of these stern black-browed Puritans would have thought it a quite sufficient retribution for his sins, that after so long a lapse of years, the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, at its topmost bough, an idler like myself. (*The Scarlet Letter* 8-9)

Apart from the haunting self-referentiality of this passage, it metaphorically links up with the narrator's voice of empathy towards the Puritan spirits in the referred passage of *The Namesake*. Gogol Ganguly, after his own sojourn as a second-generation Bengali-American deliberately assumes the role of the bearer of the family lineage after his father's shocking death. The rubbings that he hid from his mother are metaphorically foregrounded as he starts relating to his father's favourite snowsacapes along with the forceful reiteration of his mother's words that DEATH IS NOT PASTIME.

Snowfall and melting of the snow and then to sunshine delineates the gradual yet determined emotional trajectory of Miranda in "Sexy" who herself has learnt and adapted

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to the self abandonment of her association with Dev after the powerful illumination that she had through the innocent revelations of Rohin. The falling of heavy snow here acts as a buffer between her and Dev- with whom she decides to severe the tie:

> It was cold but sunny, and so she walked all the way down Commonwealth Avenue, past the restaurants where Dev had kissed her, and then she walked all the way to the Christian Science center. The Mapparium was closed, but she bought a cup of coffee nearby and sat on one of the benches in the plaza outside the church, gazing at its giant pillars and its massive dome, and at the clear blue sky spread over the city. (121-22)

It is the backdrop of the 'clear blue sky' that gives the readers an inside-view of Miranda's mental cape informed by her discovery of a vital truth through the innocent interpretation of the term 'sexy' by young Rohin as 'loving someone you do not know.' It is this incidental discovery that assists Miranda in creative management of her clandestine relationship with Dev as she foresees that such relationship is bereft of any meaning. Though the utterance of "Sexy" in Dev's husky tone earlier functioned as a loaded and haunting expression that made her to attach special meaning in her infatuation for the married Bengali-American man, through Rohin's revelation she has been able to structure her life without Dev. The snowfall followed by the clear weather sets the pattern for her realigned life. Though Miranda revisits the Christian Science Centre mapparium to revisit the site of origin of her attraction for Dev, Lahiri portrays the weather as a perfect metaphor of her emotional 'inscape' indicating that Miranda has the ability to transcend the aura of both the esoteric "Mira" and the innocence of "Miranda" of *The Tempest*.

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Again, during the visit to the mapparium in the Christian Science Centre, Dev not only utters the haunting word "sexy" to Miranda but also takes a guided tour of the map of the world displayed through coloured contours. This particular description is integral to the understanding of the intimate voice through which Dev almost hypnotises Miranda. It causes an aura of enchantment to the vortex of which she is drawn powerfully until Rohin breaks the spell. While pointing out at the "deepest spot" it is not only a geographic exploration for Miranda but it is also the sensuality of the description that vividly captures her passionate involvement with Dev:

> The ocean, as blue as a peacock's breast, appeared in two shades, depending on the depth of the water. He showed her the deepest spot on earth, seven miles deep, above the Mariana Islands. They peered over the bridge and saw the Antarctic archipelago at their feet, craned their necks and saw a giant metal star overhead. (100)

The predominance of blueness here -one related to the peacock's breast and the other connected to the surface of the ocean lends a powerful impact to the nuances of the seductiveness that grips Miranda vis-à-vis her relationship with Dev. It indicates that Miranda's temporary fascination with the colours and depths of the oceans are all exotic cartographic representations which cannot accurately capture the nuances of the seascapes. She becomes aware of it only aware after the twist that takes place following the game of country-capital with young Rohin.

One of the recurring features of Jhumpa Lahiri's prose style, as discussed, is the early foregrounding of a metaphor in her stories which also acts as a sort of visual locus.

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This metaphor is often a segment of a powerfully etched scene which binds the narrative through an invisible loop. In "Mrs. Sen's" the Atlantic ocean acts as the site of production of cold/warm and presence/absence of a caretaker from the perspective of Eliot, the young American boy kept by his mother in custody of Mrs. Sen, the Bengali-American housewife . The reason is commented upon by the omniscient narrator:

> The beach was barren and dull to play on alone; the only neighbors who stayed on past Labor Day, a young married couple, had no children, and Eliot no longer found it interesting to gather broken mussel shells in his bucket, or to stroke the seaweed, strewn like strips of emerald lasagna on the sand. Mrs. Sen's apartment was warm, sometimes too warm; the radiators continuously hissed like a pressure cooker.

The delineation of the coldness and barrenness of the beach is contrasted with the warm company and interiors of Mrs. Sen's house. The warmth of an intimate company thoroughly imbued in her cultural past makes offers Eliot rare glimpses of the emotional pains of Mrs. Sen whose company he has learnt to like .Following the fateful car accident however, Eliot's mother takes leave of Mrs. Sen and makes him spend his time all alone in the house. Perhaps having an intimate view of the pains of a woman distanced from the centre of gravity of her life has 'wisened' him to handle the affairs of his life:

> From then on his mother gave him a key, which he wore on a string around his neck. He was to call the neighbors in case of an emergency, and to let himself into the beach house after school. The first day, just as he was taking off his coat, the phone rang. It was his mother calling from her office. "You're a big boy now,

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> Eliot," she told him. "You okay?" Eliot looked out the kitchen window, at gray waves receding from the shore, and said that he was fine. (147)

If it is the ocean that stabilises Eliot's life in this way, Lahiri chooses the dry desert-like Konark Sun temple setting for building up the emotional tempo of Mr. Kapasi, the tour guide to the Bengali-American Das family, towards imagining a clandestine romantic relationship with Mrs. Mina Das. The giant 13th century architectural marvel erected by the Kalinga king Narshimhadeva the First was constructed in a natural ambience with a river flowing beside it and at a place close to the Bay of Bengal. But, over the passage of time the relic stands in a dry and parched land. This dryness metaphorically captures the vivid barrenness that Mr. Kapasi feels in his married life—especially brought to the fore through the appreciation and interest evinced by Mrs. Das to his profession as an interpreter as opposed to his wife's lack of interest. He is besotted by her beauty, her voice and imagines a 'romantic' tie with her. However, the dryness of the river Chandrabhaga and the desertification of the place are indicative of not only the aridity of his life but also the volcanic emotional surge experienced by Mrs. Das in consequent to her secret conception of a child outside her conjugal partnership with Raj :

> "It says the temple occupies about a hundred and seventy acres of land," Mr. Das said reading from his book. "It's like a desert," Ronnie said, his eyes wandering across the sand that stretched on all sides beyond the temple. "The Candrabhaga river once flowed one mile north of here. It is dry now," Mr. Kapasi said, turning off the engine. (63)

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Himadri Lahiri in his article entitled "Family as Space in Jhumpa Lahiri's Stories" aptly points out this aspect of Mrs. Das's malady:

> The present condition of the river corresponds to the present condition of Mrs. Das who refuses to participate in the family and social life around her. The present of her is parched, devoid as it is of the waters of love, devotion and spiritual depth. (53)

Other than the once flowing the Chandrabhaga there are a number of rivers like the Charles, the Tiber, the Hooghly which act as backdrops to the fictional oeuvre of Jhumpa Lahiri. The journeys undertaken by the characters across and nearby these rivers fatefully connect the events of the lives of the characters. The Charles acts and functions as a cultural backdrop of the Cambridge locale at the centre of Jhumpa Lahiri's fictionscape. For first-generation Bengali-American couples like Mala and her husband walks along the river symbolized a gradual yet significant process of affiliation with the host country on the one hand and as an interregnum before the birth of their children during the course of which they tried to know each other: "In the evenings we walked to the Charles River to watch sailboats drift across the water, or had ice cream cones in Harvard Yard" (214).

For instance, when Ashima was admitted in the hospital before Gogol's birth she goes on a reverie imagining what might have been happening inside their ancestral home in Calcutta, the scene like a montage flies another thousand miles and dissolves in the water of the river:

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> For an instant the weight of the baby vanishes, replaced by the scene that that passes before her eyes, only to be replaced once more by a blue strip of the Charles river, thick with green treetops, cars gliding down Memorial Drive. (5)

"Running/walking along the Charles" thus enters as a familiar epithet for the community so much that it is also employed by Dev ingenuously to cheat on his wife and visiting his mistress Miranda in "Sexy":

> But the next Sunday it snowed, so much so that Dev couldn't tell his wife he was going running along the Charles. (121)

It is the sight of the Charles through the hospital window that stabilizes her view while acting as the final frames of the scene. In "Hema and Kaushik" section of the *Unaccustomed Earth* too, Dr. Chaudhuri takes his second wife Chitra around the streets of Cambridge with the Charles acting as a backdrop while Kaushik imagines the frequent trips to the Mass General hospital to visit his ailing mother:

> I had thought we would get out of the car at various points and walk around, but Chitra said it was too cold and my father agreed. After circling around Kendall Square he drove over the Mass Avenue Bridge and turned onto Commonwealth Avenue, which was decorated with lights and wreaths, and then drove around the Public Garden and the Common. He pointed out the golden dome of the State House, and the beautiful homes that lined the steep streets of Beacon Hill. (281)

For Gogol Ganguly also the river acts as a familiar sight during his growth though he later moved to the Hudson Bay area settling in New York-his favourite city. Besides the Charles other rivers like the Hooghly, the Siene and the Tiber inform the actors' transcontinental sojourns. While Ashima and Ashoke easily mixed with the family crowd

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as the plane descended on the banks of the Hooghly, for their wards on the other hand, it is the beaches of the Atlantic and the shores of the Hudson and the Charles which powerfully affect, determine and shape the trajectories of their lives. The ease with which the first-generation Bengali-American slipped through the banks of the Hooghly is subtly indicated through the whispers among the siblings sharing their alienness though surrounded by a retinue of relatives. While the sight of the cantilever bridge over the Hooghly mean certain things for their parents, for Gogol it is a distant sight to be observed from the roof of the ancestral house dispassionately while trying the flavour of a *bidi*- the poor man's cigarette. The Buriganga and the Subarnarekha comes as a backdrop of the fateful train accident in 1961 that nearly killed Ashoke. Ghatshila the station near which the accident took place is situated beside the 'old' river. The Tiber and its bridges are regularly crossed by Hema and Kaushik both during their sojourns in Rome.

Again it is the liquid form of snow- water and waterscapes that continue to metaphorically bind the sojourn of Kaushik after his severance of ties with Hema. In "Year's End", it is Kaushik who assumes the narratorial voice, as the story of his family post his mother's demise unravels. Much before the grief of his mother's death seems to wane, his father shocks him by remarrying a Bengali woman named Chitra who had also lost her husband in an illness and had two young daughters. As he visits the house that his late mother filled with her choicest furniture and cutlery, Kaushik discovers a dissonance as Chitra does not share even a semblance of his mother's cultural sophistication. Further, it is his father's gravitation towards a typical Bengali household norm that upsets the young boy more. Though he tries to be sympathetic with Rupa and Piu- the young girls, he could not control his emotions as he one day finds them peering through a hidden box

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of his mother's photographs. Displaying an unusually aggressive behaviour by scolding the two girls he abandons them and leaves the house in a fit of rage with the box of photograph. His driving under such a mental state results in him an unconscious exploration of the seacoast of North America, the waterscapes gradually absorbing him:

> I had no idea where to go, but I got on the highway and started driving north. I quickly left Massachusetts, driving through a small piece of New Hampshire and over the bridge into Maine. As I approached Portland, I turned onto a smaller, two-lane road that occasionally hugged the sea. I drove down dark, empty stretches punctuated now and then by a cluster of churches and restaurants and homes. I could not see the ocean but detected its salty smell and the jerking sound of the wind, a sound like that of a fire burning, penetrating the closed doors and windows of my car. I thought at first that I would drive through the night, but eventually I began to feel tired and looked for a place to sleep. Most of the hotels and motels were shut for the season, and the ones that looked open were closed because it was so late. I was considering pulling onto the shoulder to nap when I spotted a motel with a twenty-four-hour sign glowing in the parking lot. (287)

Though he could not see the ocean and the doors and the windows of his car was closed Kaushik felt the pulsating waves and the currents of the ocean within his veins. His experience here could be contrasted here with Gogol Ganguly's exploration of the same area with his girlfriend Maxine while visiting their family farm in New Hampshire:

> It's a relief to be back in her world, heading north across the state border. For a while it's nothing different, the same expanse of sky, the same strip of highway, large liquor stores and fast-food chains on either side. Maxine knows the way, so

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> there is no need to consult the map. He has been to New Hampshire once or twice with his family, to see the leaves, driving for the day to places one could pull off the road and take pictures of and admire the view. But he's never been so far north. They pass farms, spotted cows grazing in fields, red silos, white wooden churches, barns with rusted tin roofs. Small, scattered towns. The names of the towns mean nothing to him. They leave the highway behind and drive on steep, slender, two-lane ribbons of road, the mountains appearing like enormous milky waves suspended against the sky. Wisps of cloud hang low over the summits, like smoke rising from the trees. Other clouds cast broad shadows across the valley. Eventually there are a few cars on the road, no signs for tourist facilities or camp-grounds, just more farms and woods, the roadsides full of blue and purple flowers. He has no idea where he is, or how far they've traveled. Maxine tells him they aren't far from Canada, that if they're motivated they could drive into Montreal for the day. (150-51)

The contrast between the two passages not only reflects the natural setting but the crucial difference in their emotionscapes colouring the seascapes. For Gogol the clouds and the sky too brighten up his mood, aware that he was journeying in to a secured nature's lap waiting to offer him warm hospitality. On the other hand, for Kaushik it is primarily the oceanscape that colours his moods and his moods colouring the oceanscape hovering around him—giving him both an escape route from the claustrophobic feeling that he had back home and discovering a sense of freedom not felt ever since his mother was afflicted with the dreaded disease. The overnight stay in the motel provided him a refuge

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unlike his home and in the morning he discovered the choppy waters of the Penobscot Bay:

> The next day I was woken by the calls of sea birds. I sat up in a sagging brass bed and saw the water for the first time, outside my window. I remember that the window was disproportionately small for the room, as if the motel itself were a ship. The water was choppy, a gray a shade or two darker than the sky, its nearness and activity unknown to me as I'd slept. The room was dank and clammy, wallpapered with small blue anchors against a white ground, and the empty medicine cabinet in the bathroom was edged with rust. The desk clerk told me that there was a restaurant a few miles down the road, and that I was somewhere on Penobscot Bay. (287-88)

The dank and clammy room and the choppy waters of the sea also relate to the viscosity of Kaushik's mindscape, preparing him gradually towards finding a sequestered place of solace while moving onward along the coast further north:

> The next morning I got back in my car, and for days I did the same thing: driving up the coast, eating in restaurants when I was hungry, finding motels when I was tired, paying for it with the money my father had given me for Christmas. I didn't bother getting a map. A gas station attendant told me that eventually I would hit Canada. Now and again I saw the water, little islands and striped lighthouses and tiny spits of land. It was too brutally cold to get out of the car, but occasionally I did, to look at the ocean or explore a bit of trail. It was like no other place I'd seen, nothing like the North Shore of Massachusetts. The sky was different, without color, taut and unforgiving. But the water was the most unforgiving thing,

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> nearly black at times, cold enough, I knew, to kill me, violent enough to break me apart. The waves were immense, battering rocky beaches without sand. The farther I went, the more desolate it became, more than any place I'd been, but for this very reason the landscape drew me, claimed me as nothing had in a long time. (289-90)

The black, cold, 'killing', 'violent' and 'unforgiving' sea water is all poised to 'break apart' Kaushik as he claims here. Besides the adjectives employed here to describe the water the verbs 'draw' and 'claim' are crucial here for understanding the inner urge of Kaushik to sublimate and relate to the "tremendous power" that his mother has achieved through her death. The anonymity of his spatiality backed up by the powerful sea waves he feels is in a way aiding him to experience closeness with his mother. This entire metaphor of the ocean is shaded with even more gray hues than the one where Gogol remembers the trip to Cape Cod seaside with his father. The poignancy is sharper, piercing almost biting like the cold dark water of the sea. One common element between both the scenes is the absence of camera and photography. Though Kaushik is a photography buff carrying the box of his mother's photographs he absorbs everything through his bare eyes like Ashoke reminding Gogol to remember the day the father and son reached a point "from where there was nowhere left to go" :

> Finally they stood by the lighthouse, exhausted, surrounded by water on three sides, pale green in the harbor, azure behind. Overheated from the exertion, they unzipped their coats. His father stepped away to urinate. He heard his father cry out—they had left the camera with his mother. "All this way, and no picture,"

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> he'd said, shaking his head. He reached into his pocket and began to throw striped stones into the water. "We will have to remember it, then."(186)

As for Kaushik, however, he finds that point as he scuttles along the Bay of Funday reaching almost the easternmost tip of America. A particular spot along the coast strikes him the most and he returns there the next night when moonlight adds up to the sombre atmosphere:

> The trail was not easy, falling through rich smelling pine forests. The tops of the trees were spindly, their lower boughs dusted with snow. The wind ripped and chewed through everything, and the water was a sheer drop down. I crossed paths with no one. For a long time I watched the approach and retreat of the waves, their thick caps crashing apart against the rocks, that eternally restless motion having an inversely calming effect on me. The following day I returned to the same spot, this time bringing with me the shoebox of my mother's photographs. I sat on the ground, opened the box, and began going through the pictures one by one, as if they were pieces of mail that I was quickly scanning and would read later on. But there were too many pictures, and after a few I, like my father, could no longer bear their sight. A slight lessening in the pressure of my fingertips and the ones I was holding would have blown away into that wild sea, scattering down to where my mother's ashes already resided. But I could not bear that either, and so I put them back in the box and began to break the hardened ground. I only had a stick and a sharp edged rock to work with and the hole was not impressive, but it was deep enough to conceal the box. I covered it with dirt and stones. The

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> moon's first light was shining down when I was done, and I walked back, aided by that same beam of light, to my car. (291-92)

The approach and retreat of the sea waves, the tearing wind and the crashing of the waves against the rock here has inverted effect on Kaushik as he feels calmed long after his restless sojourn along the long seacoast of Eastern America. It naturally becomes an ideal spot for him where decides to bury the box of photographs of his mother –a powerfully poignant moment that sees the metaphorical fulfillment of his urge to bury his mother within the earth. There are in fact two graves here- the watery one where Kaushik fears that the photographs might land up through the strong winds and the second one the earthly grave of his mother's photographs that he alone accomplished. It is a moment of insight for understanding Kaushik's relationship with his father. Dr. Chaudhuri who devoted his heart and mind in nursing his ailing wife, had little time to sympathise with his son's trauma as he is driven more by his concerns for his newly wed wife and her daughters. Gavin M. Spence in his dissertation entitled "Until the Thousand and First Generation: Generational Consciousness in the Contemporary Novel" studies the "generational intentionality" in relation to Jhumpa Lahiri's "Hema and Kaushik" treating this section of *Unaccustomed Earth* as a novella in itself. Employing the perspectives of object-relations theory and phenomenology Spence critiques Kaushik's inability to adapt with Chitra and her daughters. While depicting as a "lost boy" and stressing the different orientation that Kaushik had towards "domestic space" Spence remarks that Hema and Kaushik " forge a generational consciousness about each other, their parents and objects-in-the-world" (86). Secondly, Spence says that Kaushik in his "aleatory encounters" with

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external objects such as the snowscapes never "reflect upon these objects adequately enough to assimilate them (97) and misapprehends his mother Parul as "the thing in itself" (102). Consequently he has a sort of fixation while feeling "his mother's presence in idealized, imaginary terms" (100). Further Spence says that the ocean "holds his mother's death in all its inchoate, destructive, and disintegrative potentiality" (109). Firstly, Spence ignores the psychic disruption of a young boy whose parents shifted their homes twice first in the wake of his father's change of job and secondly following his mother's death. Kaushik does relate to the snowscape as the metaphor of burial is revealed even though it is unlike Gogol who was ensconced in the happy space of domesticity then. Spence also partially misconstrues the incompatibility that Kaushik finds within Chitra which stems from his inability comprehend the traditional conceptualization of a Bengali *Mashima* (a step-mother) a trace of which might also be there in the young boy who is yet to recover from the trauma of his mother's loss. Secondly, Spence ignores the fact that Kaushik is more hurt by the change in his father's attitude-the companionship that he had with his father in the past. Further, he never tries to be sympathetic towards his son's sufferings. Kaushik later recollects the manner in which his father passes down the information of his sudden decision to marry a woman twenty years younger to him:

> He offered these details as if responding diligently to questions I was not asking. "I don't ask you to care for her, even to like her," my father said. "You are a grown man, you have no need for her in your life as I do. I only ask, eventually, that you understand my decision." It was clear to me that he had prepared himself for my outrage—harsh words, accusations, the slamming down of the phone. But

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no turbulent emotion passed through me as he spoke, only a diluted version of the nauseating sensation that had taken hold the day in Bombay that I learned my mother was dying, a sensation that had dropped anchor in me and never fully left. (254)

It is inner change in the culture of the domestic space brought about by his father's gradual gravitation towards a "traditional and proper" Bengali culture all of a sudden that marginalizes Kaushik further. Therefore the oceanscape does not only display its inchoate and destructive aspects to Kaushik but it also finally brings a soothing and embalming effect on him. The metaphoric significance of the burial of the box of his mother's photograph has not been appreciated Spence in his otherwise illuminative study. In this regard his study is not able to bring out the latent connection of Kaushik's photographic vocation to the diasporic existential phenomenon as done by Bidisha Banerjee in her article entitled "Diaspora's "Dark Room": Photography and the Vision of Loss in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Hema and Kaushik." Arunima Banerji in her review of *Interpreter of Maladies* too concurs that in contrast to the *etic* vision commonly prevalent in depictions of South Asian diasporic lives, Jhumpa Lahiri has substituted it with "the more intimate emic eye, the thread of compassion is never lost" (37).

Going back to Kaushik's sojourn as a globetrotting photojournalist the role which he assumes suddenly by virtue of a powerful image of death and violence in Latin America that he witnessed, one important thing that uncannily characterizes the locale of his shifting work places is that in all the places he is always close to a sea or an ocean. Beginning with Tijuana in Mexico he roamed around parts of Guatemala and El Salvador, Buenos Aires, Gaza strip in the Middle East Asia, and Rome and finally

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deciding to settle down at a comparatively comfortable desk job in Hong Kong. It is in Rome that he suddenly comes across Hema after years and takes her around to Ostia, Tivoli, Cerveteri and finally to the Tuscan hill station of Volterra. From the heights of Volterra Kaushik snaps photos of the blue sea of Maremma. After the Roman interlude, following which Hema leaves for Calcutta to marry Navin, Kaushik leaves for a layover on the turquoise sea resort of Khao Lak in Thailand before joining his new assignment in Hong Kong. From Khao Lak he imagines the other end of the sea touching Calcutta where Hema is all set to get married. Though he learns about the midnight earthquake later in the morning he sets sail with Henrik a fellow traveler to innocuously and gets down at the sea:

> When he looked up, he saw that the boy had guided them close to shore. Henrik emerged from the water, waded clumsily toward the deserted cove. The white sand was spotless, limestone cliffs looming behind. Kaushik lifted the camera to his face, took a picture, and set the camera down at his feet. He dipped his hands into the water, cooling off his neck and face, not expecting its salty taste. Then he unbuttoned his shirt, felt the sun strike his skin. He wanted to swim to the cove as Henrik had, to show his mother he was not afraid. He took off his sunglasses, leaving them in the boat next to his camera. The speck in his vision rose and fell, erasing its random trail. He held on to the edge of the boat, swinging his legs over the side, lowering himself. The sea was as warm and welcoming as a bath. His feet touched the bottom, and so he let go. (331)

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Integral to his photography has been the speck that appeared in Kaushik's eye which he termed as a sign of age. Moments before his death the speck is undulating conveying the coming of the giant sea waves of the Tsunami that would engulf them all. The warmth and the welcoming nature of the sea water and feeling the sensation on his half-naked body here conveys the completion of the cycle that Kaushik long back yearned beside the cold coast of the Bay of Funday. After a few days of Hema opens up his website to see the last photos that Kaushik posted from Khao Lak. She got the signs of his death in the wind after undergoing the feeling of herself being "pulled away" by Navin like a strong autumnal wind.

Other than the rivers and oceans lake views too structure the emotionscapes of characters of Jhumpa Lahiri's imaginative world. For instance, it is the family farm in New Hampshire a visit to which make Gogol realize that it is a world that has been for the WASP family like the Ratliffs for generations. Their roots are tied to that place unlike his parents or theirs. Though the idea of vacationing in a family ranch appear exotic to Gogol he also gradually understands that spending the rest of life with Maxine would mean an absorption to that world and a rejection of the world created by his parents through their industry and toil. After the spell of the onward journey to the farm is over Gogol becomes familiar with the patterns of life there. On nights though he suddenly remembers that he was supposed to call his father who has recently joined his assignment as a Visiting Fellow in far away Cleveland. He also remembers his father's parting words to keep an occasional touch with his mother who is also living alone in the Pemberton Road house. But, it's the charm of the farm life with Maxine that keeps him temporarily tied to the place. He spends time by swimming and paddling with her in the lake, making

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love in the nature's love in-between in nature's lap and occasionally visiting Maxine's grandparents. It was during one such boating expedition that Maxine revealed to him how much she felt attached to that place:

> One day they canoe across the lake. Maxine teaches him how to paddle properly, angling the oar and drawing it back through the still, gray water. She speaks reverently of her summers here. This is her favorite place in the world, she tells him, and he understands that this landscape, the water of this particular lake in which she first learned to swim, is an essential part of her, even more so than the house in Chelsea…He realizes that this is a place that will always be here for her. It makes it easy to imagine her past, and her future, to picture her growing old. (156)

Though some critics have cited such sojourns as symbolic of Gogol's attempt of complete merger with Maxine's world, a close reading of the passage reveals that Gogol does not imagine himself here as a part of Maxine's world. The lake is indeed the heritage of the Ratliffs and through them Maxine's. The subtle dissonance is visible here as Gogol Ganguly does not imagine his parents ever being a part of this landscape. Nathaniel Hawthorne in "The Custom House" also makes an apt comment about such close attachments to a particular place by generations of a particular family tree:

> This long connection of a family with one spot, as its place of birth and burial, creates a kindred between the human being and the locality, quite independent of any charm in the scenery or moral circumstances that surround him. It is not love, but instinct. (*The Scarlet Letter* 10)

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For Gogol Ganguly thus there is no instinctive linkage with the New Hampshire farm and lake. Despite celebrating his twenty-seventh birthday with them he, therefore, wakes up suddenly at midnight feeling that his parents have called him to wish and tiptoeing outside through the grassy surface only he realizes that it has been an instinctive feeling that he has been remembered by his parents. Very unlike this enjoyable stay partly as a tourist, Gogol Ganguly does not feel the same when he glances at the man-made pond near his father's place of stay at Cleveland:

> He gazes at the man-made pond, which his father had told Gogol during a phone conversation, he walked around twenty times each evening before eating his dinner, that it equaled a distance of two miles. A few people are out there now, walking their dogs, couples exercising side by side, swinging their arms, thick fleece bands covering their ears. (178)

This poignant gaze is marked by the feeling that his father was otherwise a healthy man living in the colony of retired personnel but who ultimately departed without giving them the slightest clue. He vividly remembered that he was busy enjoying a evening book party with Maxine. Unlike him it was his mother Ashima who was looking at the changing hues of the sky and eagerly anticipating a call from the hospital that her suddenly ill husband is alright:

> From time to time, she looks out of the window, at the lilac sky of early evening, vividly tinged with two parallel stripes of pink….At twilight the sky turns a pale but intense blue, and the trees on the lawn and the shapes of the neighbouring houses become silhouettes, solidly black. (167-68)

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It is through the transition of the colour of the sky and the emergence of the black silhouettes of the neighbouring houses that Ashima ultimately learns the shocking "expiry" of her husband. Later she told family friends that her husband had foreboding about his death and his shifting to Cleveland was his ploy to "teach her to live alone."

A contrast to the New Hampshire Lake is also the lake view metaphorically "purchased" by Ruma and her husband Adam in Seattle:

> There was a large window in the living room framing the water, and beyond the dining room was a screened-in porch with an even more spectacular view: the Seattle skyline to the left, and, straight ahead, the Olympic Mountains, whose snowy peaks seemed hewn from the same billowing white of the clouds drifting above them. Ruma and Adam hadn't planned on living in a suburb, but after five years in an apartment that faced the backs of other buildings, a home so close to a lake, from which they could sit and watch the sun set, was impossible to resist. (14)

Ironically, the view that was once impossible to resist no longer provides her any cheerfulness. Though, Lake Washington continues to serve as a backdrop of this Victorian mansion living inside it Ruma does not discover any joy. The shadow of death again looms large all over the spacious and beautiful house. It is the sudden demise of her mother during a minor surgery that has created pallor of bereavement all around. She is not even particularly optimistic about her father's imminent visit to the house.

Quite in that kind of strain is the pains of abandonment and separation of a child when he wants the protectiveness of parents all the more but is compelled to stay in a boarding school is depicted vividly in "A Choice of Accommodation." As Amit Sarkar

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takes his wife back to the school for a wedding reception of a childhood buddy who is also the Headmaster's daughter he chooses to stay in a hotel nearby. Incidentally, during the course of the reception they drift apart especially owing to Amit's heavy drinking. As he walks back to the hotel along the wetland near his school his childhood fear lurks back to his mind:

> There were no lights apart from the stars and he was unsure which direction the hotel was in. And then again he stopped, to listen to the serenade of the frogs that lived around the lake, like the repeated, random plucking of a bowed instrument in an orchestra, endlessly tuning itself before a performance. It was a sound he had forgotten, one that had haunted him and kept him awake his first nights in a Langford dormitory, at the end of another August when he was fifteen years old. All the incoming students heard it as they slept in their new rooms, in their strange beds, missing their parents, their homes; they were told at their first assembly that the frogs were calling for their mates, defending their territory by the water's edge before burying themselves under mud for the winter. (117)

This auditory metaphor of the serenade of frogs in the lake acts through multiple trajectories revealing layers of meanings associated with the past and present of the protagonist. Firstly, it delineates the fear that gripped the young hostellers of the boarding school. In a way, thus, it justifies why Amit still holds that his parents do not deserve any forgiveness for their 'crime' to put a teenager in the boarding school without heeding to his views. It also makes him a determined person that at least he is not going to be such a parent to his daughters. Secondly, the metaphor immediately relates to Amit's 'crime' that he committed first by abandoning his wife Megan, whom he was supposed to cover

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due to her revealing spot in her skirt. He also shared to Felicia, one of the wedding guests that their marriage "disappeared" after the birth of their second child Monika, forgetting that it was he not Megan who insisted on the second child. Felicia who was herself engaged to Jared, another young guest of the evening, found Amit's remark as too negative or critical that is not befitting enough to be expressed in such terms especially in an auspicious occasion like a wedding reception. Amit met Megan under a drunken stupor and assured her that he would be back after calling their daughters and then dance with her in the wedding and watch the sunrise together. But, this scene metaphorically implies how Amit would 'make up' for his 'crime' of divulging a secret of their wedded life which he should have censored at least. The call of the frogs for mating here in a way foresees Amit and Megan's lack of intimacy and Amit trying to structure the call of the frogs in his own way. This scene thus foresees the physical craving that both Amit and Megan has for each other but could not materialize regularly owing to their different work places. The intense and intimate sex that the couple shares in the nursery dormitories of the school is thus metaphorically conveyed through the Amit's own way of responding to the "deafening thrum" of the frogs. Thirdly, 'water's edge' is a liminal space that also captures the creativity and dynamism inherent within the framework of diasporic space like the one occupied by Bengali-American second-generation couples. Fourthly, this scene also subtly refers to William Trevor, the renowned Irish story teller, also wrote a story on the boarding high school life. In an interview with Isaac Chotiner Jhumpa Lahiri talks about her artistic view as an outsider/insider dichotomy in relation to her depictions of arranged marriage of first generation/ second-generation married lives.

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While specifically asked about Amit and Megan's portrayal she opines that she feels closer to this couple and could imagine Amit's sharing of his "dynamic" with Megan:

> I am an outsider for that generation, but with this couple I could put myself into that character with greater ease. Though invented, I could imagine being married to that woman, having that particular chemistry and dynamic.

Thus, this metaphor of the call of mating by the "water's edge" is something that Jhumpa Lahiri skillfully weaves in to the evolution of the "chemistry and dynamic" of Amit and Megan's relationship.

Another image that affects Amit while going for the "brunch" with Megan to Langford Academy campus the day after the reception is that of the drizzle that falls and a man swimming in the lake even in that weather :

> They were halfway there when the rain started. It was an undramatic drizzle, filling the air with the faintest sound, but by the time they reached the edge of campus their hair was damp, their feet drenched and cold. At one point they paused to take in a view of the lake. In spite of the rain, a man swam in the dark gray water, quite far out. (121)

From the edge of the school campus while Amit looked back at the edge of the lake the sight of the man swimming in the gray water of the lake evokes sensuality and parallels with his bodily hunger. Though Megan thought that it was important for Amit to eat something before the long drive back home it is in fact the sublimation of this craving with which Lahiri laps up her story –giving another "open ended" end to her story. Another connecting thread to this depiction of rain in "A Choice of Accommodations"

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could be found in "Unaccustomed Earth" where Ruma recollects with a scare how rain could have fizzled out all the gaiety of her wedding reception as her father opined:

> As it turned out the weather was perfect, the sun beating brilliantly on the ocean as they exchanged their vows. And yet, even to this day, Ruma suffered from nightmares of the white tent and folding chairs and hundreds of guests soaked by rain. (37)

The persistent fear of Ruma of a rain soaked wedding reception did happen in an inverted way in Pam and Ryan's wedding at Langford Academy, giving Amit a scope of mending his relationship with Megan in an instinctive and creative fulfillment of their bodily urges.

Against this temperate rain however, Jhumpa Lahiri also gives the picture of a heavy tropical and torrential rain in "A Real Durwan" where the downpour in Calcutta means another shifting of the place of shelter for Boori Ma as her bed of newspapers is completely soaked and destroyed:

> More rains came. Below the dripping awning, a newspaper pressed over her head, Boori Ma squatted and watched the monsoon ants as they marched along the clothesline, carrying eggs in their mouths. Damper winds soothed her back. Her newspapers were running low. (89)

An old, lonely and pauper refugee who has migrated from East Bengal and taken shelter in that old building of Calcutta, Boori Ma tries her level best to sustain herself even in these circumstances. But, the residents of the building busy in their gossip and inter-family feuds centring material possessions throw this already dispossessed old woman out of the building. The metaphor of rain here moves along a poignant curve that vividly

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captures the pains of a destitute refugee. Such parallel of refugee life indeed acts as a parallel to Lahiri's depiction of the upper-middle class educated Bengali- Americans, enabling her to project a balanced view about the pains associated with exile and immigration.

In the core of *Unaccustomed Earth*, thus, lies Jhumpa Lahiri's sensitive probing of a sense of loss associated with the death of a dear one and its powerful impact on the remaining members of the family which are invariably foregrounded through a litany of metaphors. The metaphor of plantation, transplantation associated with gardening plays a key role in this exploration of hers. For the first-generation Bengali-Americans like Mala and her husband, Ashoke and Ashima and Ruma's parents the possession of a house with a small patch of land to grow vegetables and flowers provide an added sense of achievement as described by the narrator of "The Third and Final Continent" :

> Mala and I live in a town about twenty miles from Boston, on a tree-lined street much like Mrs. Croft's, in a house we own, with a garden that saves us from buying tomatoes in summer, and room for guests.(215)

The avid gardener that Ruma's father is, he suddenly disappears one day from their Seattle house leaving her anxious. On return he informs her that he has been to a nursery of plants that he spotted earlier. The small patch of land that lay unattended is transformed in to a garden through her father's labour who is alo enthusiastically supported by her son Akash. The grandfather-grandson duo is so absorbed in the gardening activity that Ruma, like her mother in the past waits for both of them to have their food. She sees her son too uses a small patch especially marked out for him :

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> She followed him outside, where she saw that her father had created a small plot for Akash, hardly larger than a spread open newspaper, with shallow holes dug out at intervals. She watched as Akash buried things into the soil, crouching over the ground just as her father was. Into the soil went a pink rubber ball, a few pieces of Lego stuck together, a wooden block etched with a star. (44)

In a review by Liesl Schillinger notes about this aspect of gardening by Akash under the guidance of his grandfather:

> While tending Ruma's neglected garden, her father shows his grandson how to sow seeds. The boy digs holes, but plants Legos in them, along with a plastic dinosaur and a wooden block with a star. Emblems of the international, the prehistoric and the celestial, they are buried in one garden plot, auguries of an ideal future, a utopia that could be anywhere or nowhere. How can it grow?

As Schillinger elucidates the emblems of the international, the prehistoric and the celestial can not grow in one patch of land, the cue in this regard comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, a text that Lahiri acknowledges to have read during the course of writing the story collection, in the form of epigraph:

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth. ("The Custom House")

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As discussed earlier in reference to Maxine's attachment with the New Hampshire farm and Gogol Ganguly's thought about it, Hawthorne here imagines his descendents "striking root" in "unaccustomed earth" for imbibing qualities through "natural manures" of unexplored lands on this earth. The garden of which Akash represents as a third-generation Bengali-American "plant" would 'flourish' in its own way. "Unaccustomed Earth" itself acts as a powerful metaphor for the hinges of relationships that these Bengali-Americans would evolve each through their unique journeys like each distinctive plant grown in the garden. For Ruma's family, the journey or the "transplantation" process started with her father's decision to migrate from far way India and settle down in the USA. While engaged in the developing the garden in Ruma's house he vividly recollects the "other garden" in their house in Pennsylvania :

> It was a modest planting, some slow-growing myrtle and phlox under the trees, two azalea bushes, a row of hostas, a clematis to climb one of the posts of the porch, and in honor of his wife, a small hydrangea. In a plot behind the kitchen, unable to resist, he also put in a few tomatoes, along with some marigolds and impatiens; there was just time for a small harvest to come in by the fall. He spaced out the delphiniums, tied them to stalks, stuck some gladiola bulbs into the ground. He missed working outside, the solid feeling of dirt under his knees, getting into his nails, the smell of it lingering on his skin even after he'd scrubbed himself in the shower. It was the one thing he missed about the old house, and when he thought about his garden was when he missed his wife most keenly. She had taken that from him. For years, after the children had grown, it had just been

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the two of them, but she managed to use up all the vegetables, putting them into dishes he did not know how to prepare himself. In addition, when she was alive, they regularly entertained, their guests marveling that the potatoes were from their own backyard, taking away bagfuls at the evening's end. (48-49)

Between the interstices of the two gardens the shadow of death looms large over the new garden. The act of planting a small hydrangea in honour of his wife is his way of paying a tribute to her. The woman who caringly used all the vegetables grown in the house and prepared relishing meals for them is absent. Ruma is not aware that her father has developed an intimacy with a middle-aged Bengali-American widow named Mrs. Bagchi during his Europe trip and is looking forward to meet her again on another trip. She believes that her father has fallen in love of his grandfather and this bond would tie him to her house as she now desires. Her father too is struck by the way her daughter has radically transformed almost in to hues of her mother. Still, all this enough to bind his father as he perceives that his daughter is interested to keep him only as she needs now and staying permanently in their house would mean living in the "margin" of her daughter's family. Ruma inattentively listens to the instructions that her father offers before his daughter about ways of up keeping the garden:

"The hydrangea won't bloom much this year. The flowers will be pink or blue depending on the acidity of your soil. You'll have to prune it back, eventually." showing her with his hand the height she could anticipate by next summer. He told her how often to water, and for how long, to wait until the sun had gone down. He showed her the bottle of fertilizer he'd bought, and told her when to add it to the watering. She nodded.

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> "They were always your mother's favorite," her father added. "In this country, that is." (51-52)

It is the heightened sense of loss and pathos that ultimately absorbs Ruma with gloominess after she accidentally discovers the postcard that her father wrote to Mrs. Bagchi but left it in their house. Her gaze at the back garden that her father diligently makes her painfully realize that the planting of the blue hydrangea was his own of way of "honouring" his departed wife:

> She walked back outside, across the grass and looked at the hydrangea her father had planted, that was to bloom pink or blue depending on the soil. It did not prove to Ruma that her father had loved her mother, or even that he missed her. And yet he had put it there, honored her before turning to another woman. (59)

To sum up, Jhumpa Lahiri employs a litany of metaphors associated with "water's edge" as stated in her interview. It is the incidents, actions taking place by the side of the water which powerfully structure the relationship curves of the Bengali-American "actors" involved. Gardening and its associated assemblage of activities like planting, watering, transplanting is another metaphor that the author effectively employs to bring out the melancholic shadows associated with a sense of loss.

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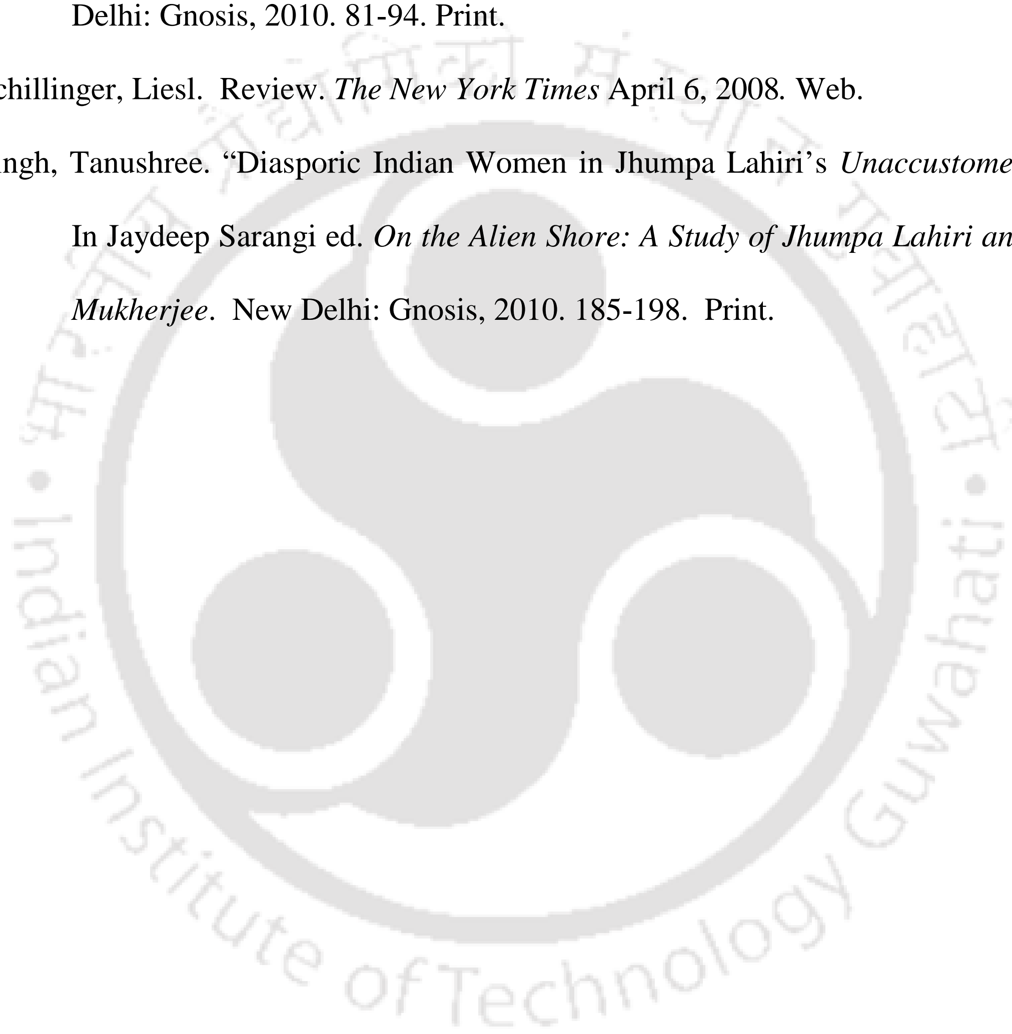

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Chapter V

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Interpreter of Metaphors

> *It is not enough to say […] that metaphors simply cluster. The fact that metaphors can also be sustained, as a kind of 'undercurrent', over an extended text allows extremely subtle conceptual effects to be achieved. I will refer to the sustained metaphorical undercurrent discussed above as megametaphors.*
>
> Paul Werth

In her interviews Jhumpa Lahiri has often talked about how through her parents' lives she has endeavoured to make sense of the immigrant lives of the Bengali-Americans living in America. In one of them she explains her parents' dilemmas through a metaphor of trying to make a journey on two boats at the same time with their legs straddled in them:

> The way my parents explain it to me is that they have spent their immigrant lives feeling as if they are on a river with a foot in two different boats. Each boat wants to pull them in a separate direction, and my parents are always torn between the two. They are always hovering, literally straddling two worlds, and I have always thought of that idea, that metaphor, for how they feel, how they live. (about.com)

This apt metaphor captures the undercurrents of lives of first-generation Bengali Americans maps the bi-polar trajectories of the existential dilemmas of couples like Mala and her husband, Ruma's parents, Ashima and Ashoke and Sudha's parents .Secondly, this metaphor in its turn again metaphorically corresponds to a popular Bengali saying –

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"*dui naukai dui pao*" (two legs on two boats) which expresses the feelings of being pulled from two opposite forces and impulses at the same time. Secondly, this proverb also inheres within it a conceptual structure of a image schema of travel from source to a goal through a path. It is the difficulties of the "path" that is described here. Thirdly, the pulls and pressures of these opposite cultural domains of India and America have a varied and nuanced set of entailments of pain, joy, tranquility and equanimity. For instance, in "The Third and Final Continent," a story that immediately precedes *The Namesake*, the narrator's sense of arrival through his tri-continental sojourn is metaphorically mapped on to the voyage of the American astronauts who landed on the shores of the "Sea of Tranquility" on moon. He finds that as compared to the moon voyage of the astronauts his sojourn as an immigrant too is no mean achievement:

> While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. (216)

In a very low and understated tone the narrator here maps the moon voyage in to his own tri-continental journey. There are two clear conceptual domains here-the first one pertaining to that of the astronauts and the second one pertaining to the unnamed Bengali-American immigrant narrator's. It is through the ontological correspondence of the first

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one or the source domain with the second or target domain that we get the metaphor THE BENGALI NARRATOR'S ARRIVAL IN AMERICA VIA ENGLAND IS SIMILAR TO THE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT'S ONE ON MOON'S SURFACE.

The immigrant who has successfully negotiated his journey through the alien and distant terrains and cultural landscapes of both the European and American continents with his Asian background always hovering around, thus, does make him feel of a sense of "arrival" after such an arduous journey. It is also not necessary that the beginning of such a journey should be marked by a mourning of only one's kith and kin in far away Bengal. For the narrator soon after his arrival in America, he develops a close bond with an old lady who virtually still lives in the spirits of the late nineteenth century American cultural mores and practices shutting out the changes that has occurred in between. It is this "Puritan" spirit of the old woman that makes the narrator to feel the impulses of a bond and trying to understand the implications of his metaphoric striking his roots in a distant land. After already losing his mentally unstable mother in India, the narrator within the parameters of communication with this old lady feels a stirring of emotion, an attachment with this new land in a very different way. It is the death of this grand old lady named Mrs. Croft that he tries to interpret his own family's life in America being aware that his grown up son's life in this soil would give rise newer senses of association which would always be different from his own. The nuances of departure and arrival would hover around the identity of his son in some ways having resemblance with his own but in many other ways it would be different. One of the ways of course would start with pregnant and metaphorical cultural practices like names and naming itself. Jhumpa

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Lahiri, in *The Namesake* complicates it further as she simultaneously foregrounds the intellectual framework of the first –generation Bengali-American immigrant initiating this huge step of migration to a far of place. Secondly, she adds an overcoat of an inventory of names and objects that surround especially the plant that springs up from the American soil—the son who is named after his father's favourite author whose story again played a signifying role in the rescue of the man from a near fatal experience. Parallel to this is the obvious effect of the author's reading the story and it casting its shadows over her and strategic interpolation of the *daknam/bhalonam* binary over it. The question that the author tries to explore here is the implications of first a child being born in distant land cut off from all the attention and enthusiasm of close relatives and friends and simultaneously the aftermath of the son being a *daknam*. The author herself notes that one of the immediate impulses of the novel is the name of a cousin's friend. This quaint Russian name in the backdrop of Bengali cultural landscape in India obviously has its associated entailments for that person.

By placing Ashoke Ganguli's readings of Russian and continental fiction of the nineteenth century as an aspiring Bengali youth of the early 1960s at the metaphoric core of the novel also,Lahiri problematises the threads of the narrative. For instance, the novel begins with a digression like Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat." It talks about Ashima's endeavour towards curving a proximity to a Bengali pregnant woman's urge to eat *jhalmoori*. From there it moves to the hospital where she is admitted to give birth to her first child. Ashoke, her husband, all these while a bystander, gets the opportunity to ramble while waiting for the moment of his son's birth. In this long, lapidary and

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insightful train of reminiscence running over ten pages of novel, the narrator reveals Ashoke Ganguli's teenage days in Calcutta-when he could read and walk along the halls and stairs with faltering. His inculcation of a taste for Continental literature especially nineteenth century Russian prose stylists like Nikolai Gogol. While giving the inside view of Ashoke's special liking for "The Overcoat" the narrator also notes how the young Bengali reader was "captivated" by the tragic and "oddly inspiring" story of a humble copying clerk who "meekly" copies any official document given to him day after day and is often a subject of ridicule of his colleagues (*The Namesake*14). The narrator captures how the young reader's mind "went out to poor Akaky" as the sufferings of Akaky reminds the tedious job that his own father too experienced while working as a clerk in the mid-twentieth century Bengal. Equally, he feels "devastated" every time he comes across the passage that describes the robbing of Akaky's new overcoat while coming back happily from a party in the deserted streets of St. Petersburg leaving him "cold and vulnerable . While reading the final pages Ashoke is filled with a "haunting" sense "deep in his soul." He often ruminates on life's decidedly undecided nature after finishing the story each time. The narrator here describes not only a mere recollection of Ashoke's Ganguli's literary interests but also throws light on the way such readings elicited a range of feelings. What the author does is here is an intricate narrative webbing to convey the nuances of affective reading of literary texts as well. In an article entitled "A Feeling for Fiction: Becoming what we Behold" David S. Miall and Don Kuiken give a synoptic view about different types of feelings associated with literary reading while proposing that "aesthetic and narrative feelings interact to produce metaphors of personal

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identification that modify self-understanding" (221). Miall and Kuiken note that in terms of literary response such feelings could be categorized in to four domains: evaluative, narrative, aesthetic and self-modifying feelings. Evaluative feelings "concern the text as a whole, they often entail feelings about feelings" (223). Narrative feelings are on the other hand are "fiction emotions," prompted by "imagined world of the text" (223). Aesthetic feelings are what the readers find as "so striking that they capture and hold their attention" (223). Aesthetic feelings are something that are prompted by the "formal (generic, narrative, stylistic) features of a text" and may also hint something more than the formal aspects as they "may initiate changes in the reader's grasp of the text's meaning" (224-25). While experiencing a fresh or a new emotion during reading a fiction a reader might "realise" something that she or he has not earlier experienced at least in the form that has been presented by the text. Miall and Kuiken further suggest that "aesthetic feeling (feeling struck, captured, held) in response to foregrounding provides the reading experience a diffusedly heightened feeling tone" (227). In other words, in response to a highly foregrounded text, "feelings are more likely to elicit recollections that are not conventionally but, rather affectively related to the text." A reader's such feelings associated reading might lead to sort of boundary crossing that would be linked up with an "anticipatory reading" challenging sometimes even the reader's sense of self indicating again an implication of the self that might generate metaphors. Based on their empirical studies, Miall and Kuiken emphasise that such studies temporarily unfold "experience" of a text.

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Thus, it is this experiential aspects of literary reading that is also unfolded by Jhumpa Lahiri while giving an inside view of the immediate emotional responses that Nikolai Gogol's story elicits within Ashoke Ganguli in *The Namesake*. Further, this narration of the aesthetic feelings of Ashoke is followed by the description of his encounter with a co-passenger- Mr. Ghosh who advises him to see around the world and while explaining his own regret of coming back to his country from abroad. This brief meeting with the co-passenger is followed by the narration of the near fatal train accident, Ashoke's miraculous rescue, and his firm decision to migrate to the USA against the wishes of all his family members. We have to recollect that this entire narration is what makes Ashoke ultimately to feel "heavy with the thought of life, his life, and the life to come about" (21) and broods over his three births before the hospital nurse brings the good news of the birth of his son:

> He was born twice in India, and then a third time, in America. Three lives by thirty. For this he thanks his parents, and the parents of their parents. He does not thank God; he openly reveres Marx, and quietly refuses religion. But there is one more dead soul to thank…. Instead of thanking God, he thanks Gogol, the Russian writer who had saved his life when Patty enters the room. (21)

Jhumpa Lahiri, here, skillfully weaves a narrative pattern based on the metaphoric foregrounding of a cycle of life, death and re-birth. This cycle, as evident, from the above discussion is also intimately linked with Ashoke's literary attachment with Gogol and "The Overcoat" indicating an entailment of narrative and aesthetic feelings that prepare

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him to chart out a "self-modifying" way of expressing his indebtedness to his favourite author. Thus, Ashoke Ganguli's naming his son as Gogol brings up its retinue of narrative ploys and threads as the *daknam* itself is poised to functions as a powerful "megametaphor" generating layers of meanings. Gogol Ganguli, as a second-generation Bengali-American, naturally, does not understand the nuances of meanings associated with his *daknam*. His father, the minimalist 'critical Marxist' with a highly sensitive literary orientation, refashions his life as a Bengali-American Professor of the Physical Sciences. But, his teaching fellowship in Cleveland, and living in a sparsely furnished flat among retired people, the almost empty rooms clearing which after his death makes his son feel exhausted, uncannily creates the image of a "mystic." In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) Yi-Fi Tuan, the eminent geographer, explains the archetypal life of a modern mystic:

> Mysticism likewise disdains clutter, material and mental. It declares historical time to be an illusion. Man's essential being belongs to eternity. A mystic frees himself from the burden of material things. He lives in a hermit's cell or by Walden Pond. He is disencumbered of his past. (188)

Though Ashoke Ganguli does not fit in to this archetypal pattern of a mystic yet there are traces of it that can be discerned amidst his professional and family responsibilities which he dutifully renders. As an extraordinarily affectionate father, he gives freedom to Gogol and thereby manifests a belief that his son too has to evolve his own mechanism of exploring life's varied nuances in his own ways. His *daknam* is the metaphorical gift to

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his son that would always function as the hinge to search, comprehend and sublimate within the distinctiveness of his Bengali-American identity. Ultimately, it enables Gogol Ganguli to perceive the journey of his family as one that is dotted by a series of accidents and incidents and prepares himself for the phase of his life beyond thirty two by paying a metaphoric tribute to his namesake. Jhumpa Lahiri here delineates a powerfully poignant and touching relationship between a father and a son which consequently is positioned at the core of the metaphorically overarching overcoat and naming frames. It is through the undulation of this relationship that the author metaphorically unravels the cycle of birth, death, departure and arrival for the Gangulis as Bengali-Americans. Apart from the relationship cruxes a very significant parallel that can be drawn between *The Namesake* and "The Overcoat" is Jhumpa Lahiri's blending of the aesthetic rendering of representatives of authorities connected to Gogol Ganguli's naming as a shadow of Akaky Akakyevich's "epic" encounters with authorial characters like Petrovich, the taylor, and the "Very Important Personage." Though in Nikolai Gogol's story there is a marked impact of loss of words and verbal stuttering on the part of Akaky, Lahiri adds her own twists to her depiction of such scenes. For instance, Candace Lapidus, the Principal of Gogol's Kindergarten school authoritatively moulds her question in negative terms while asking the young boy regarding his choice of recorded name. She quizzes the parents whether their choice of the new name is a first name or middle name or a title in a way that makes the spirits of the Gangulis peter down. Similarly, the court room scene where Gogol goes to change his name is narrated in manner that conveys bareness, impersonality and a tacit sternness. It is the visual aura with an implicit half-comic tenor

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that makes depiction of such scenes recall resemblances from "The Overcoat." It is in such metaphorical recreations that Lahiri displays her subtle and deft play of prose. The subterranean mock-comic tenor of her language creates a teasing implicit irony that aids further in creation of the overall metaphorical ambience of such scenes. The play with names is another 'borrowed' narrative strategy that the author employs skillfully that not only highlights the salient metaphoricity but also serve vital narrative purposes. For instance, through the play with Moushumi's name she brings to the dissonance between the husband and the wife to the fore. The half-mocking naming episode with which Nikolai Gogol starts "The Overcoat" is skillfully recreated and blended by Jhumpa Lahiri to create a perfect atmosphere of giving vent to the latent anger and passion of Gogol Ganguli towards his wife and her friend circle's lifestyle. It would also be apt to point out that names and naming is employed as a device to digress in "The Overcoat." Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake* makes it a powerful and salient feature of her narrative style unlike Nikolai Gogol. It is the metaphoric stylization of her prose that in effect becomes an integral aspect of the author's realistic and vivid portrayal of the sojourns of the Gangulis in the novel. *The Namesake* indeed leaves its imprint as an innovative and skilful fictional representation of Bengali-American diasporic lives which also signifies a metaphorical sense of "arrival" for Jhumpa Lahiri as a story teller.

The tenor of this *metaphoricity* is also implicit in the narrative strategies adopted by Jhumpa Lahiri in both the story collections that preceded and followed *The Namesake*. Names and naming continues as an abiding interest for her in both *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. For instance, in the title story of *Interpreter of*

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Maladies the narrator places Mr. Kapasi, the tour guide-cum-interpreter of diseases, in a situation of facing a "litmus test" of his "capaciousness" as an interpreter of a different kind of malady. Though, he apparently "fails" in the test, the very process ironically heals his own malady of imagining a romantic association with Mrs. Das. In "A Temporary Matter" again, the aesthetic connotations inherent within Shoba and Shukumar's names indicating order and vibrancy is marred by the trauma of loss of their child so much that a game of confession through an intricate play of light and darkness has to be devised to enable them to open up blocked channels of communication between them. Against this lies the ambient innocence and purity in Liliah's name in "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine." It is the affection and purity inherent within her name that enables her to negotiate a difficult terrain of historical conflicts of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal from the pre-independence times to the emergence of Bangladesh, which is made possible by her keen observation of the nuances of friendship among her parents and a visitor named Mr. Pirzada. It is this keenness that empowers her also in deciphering cartographic metaphors associated with the two partitions of Bengal in the twentieth century on the hand and later in intimately relating to the emotions of Mr. Pirzada might while worrying about the fate of his daughters caught up in a war from the distant living room of Liliah's family in America. The visitor-hostess relationship is seen through the metaphoric transition of drawing and re-drawing the map of a cultural landscape equally shared by both the two communities in India which again could be interpreted in terms of a gain. A similar encounter between a child and an adult is again foregrounded in "Mrs. Sen's" where Eliott, the American child put under the care of the lonely housewife of a Bengali-

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American academic, gets an exposure of the intensity of sufferings of a housewife who spends her time impregnated with the sights, sounds and smells of Bengal in an alien land. Though an accident cuts short the relationship, Eliott's mindscape has an additional coating of an insight in to a lonely immigrant housewife's pain. It's another Bengali-American child caught up in the middle of his parents' divorce over his father's decision to move in with a different woman about whom his mother questions whether the other woman is sexier. This innocent attainment of knowledge about the concept of "sexy" and its melancholic impact on his mother, however, is powerful enough to break up the trance like infatuation of Miranda, an American young girl who accepts her fatedness of being involved in a passionate affair with a married Bengali-American man named Dev. Miranda has been unable to shake herself off from haunting effect of its utterance by her boyfriend. But Rohin's interpretation of the word as "loving someone you do not know" becomes her moment of realisation. In the two stories set in Calcutta, however, the author refers to the nuances of a communitarian and generic naming practice of the Bengalis for two women—one an old refugee widow, the other a marginalised young girl afflicted with epilepsy. For Bibi, however, the subtle inversion of traditional romanticism associated with marriage plays the role of her empowerment as she transcends the stigma around her disease through giving birth to a child out of wedlock. The employment of a medley of voices of Bengali wives as the narrator gives an ironical background to the story. Boori Ma, however acquires a subaltern positionality as the residents of the city building where she took shelter disbelieve her innocent assertions that she has no connections with a small theft. The renovation and plastering of windows of the rickety

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building done under jealous competition of its middle class occupants has acquired a "façade" that needs a "real" *durwan*, one of the occupants says. The selfless service rendered by the destitute old woman does not count any longer as she has become a "faceless" person. The title or name of the story here again metaphorically connotes the selfishness and utter heartlessness of its residents. In "This Blessed House" also there is an aura of "blessedness" connected with the serendipity of Sanjib's vivacious wife Twinkle of discovering murals and statues associated with Christianity. Though initially Sanjib tries to rebuff Twinkle's passionate involvement in it, later the relationship metaphorically "tilts" in the instinctive wife's favour. Again, the sense of arrival is achieved by a Bengali-American immigrant through his negotiation of a tri-continental voyage in "The Third and Final Continent." The unnamed narrator traveller now understands the implications of raising a family as a Bengali-American immigrant and simultaneously sees himself as a specimen for his son to emulate. The unnamed narrator partially based on Jhumpa Lahiri's own father's experience as an immigrant in the early 1970s in America, thus, acts as a perfect metaphoric forerunner of Ashoke and Gogol.

Taken together, much like Ashoke and Ashima's arranged marriage and Gogol's love relationships and his brief wedded life, in *Interpreter of Maladies* too, we discover Lahiri's probing examinations of relationships of couples belonging to both first and second generation Bengali Americans and marginalised Bengali woman like Bibi. In one of her interviews, she articulates her sense of abiding interest around arranged marriages in the context of Bengali-American diasporic lives:

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> I don't know why, but the older I get the more interested I get in my parents' marriage. And it's interesting to be married yourself, too, because there is an inevitable comparison. I do think it's a question that has preoccupied me in all the books I've written. My parents had an arranged marriage, as did so many other people when I was growing up. My father came and had a life in the United States one way and my mother had a different one, and I was very aware of those things. I continue to wonder about it, and I will continue to write about it. (Interview with Isaac Chotiner)

From the perspective of arranged marriage the three couples in *Interpreter of Maladies* – Mrs. Mina Das and Raj Das, Mr. and Mrs. Sen, and Mala and her husband – narrate three "tropological" examinations of the same issue. For Mina and Raj, their wedding at an in the prime of their youth is a "semi-arranged" one like that of Gogol and Moushumi. Egged on by the support of their respective families the early marriage followed by the birth of their first child soon gives way to a tedium in which the woman finds trapped:

> After marrying so young she was overwhelmed by it all, having a child so quickly, and nursing, and warming up bottles of milk and testing their temperature against her wrist while Raj was at work, dressed in sweaters and corduroy pants, teaching his students about rocks and dinosaurs. Raj never looked cross or harried, or plump as she had become after the first baby. ("Interpreter of Maladies" 70)

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We can evolve a relation here - EARLY MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD ARE OVERWHELMING. It can be inferred from this metaphor that the woman might seek channels for a breakthrough. Ironically, the opening for Mina takes place through an incident of clandestine sex and birth of another child with its entailments of suffused guilt. On the other hand Eliott has glimpse of Mrs. Sen's pains as her husband can not even afford to give some time to take her out to the market to buy fish:

> Eliot followed her, walking for the first time in his sneakers across the pear-colored carpet. She stared at him. Her lower eyelids were swollen into thin pink crests. "Tell me, Eliot, is it too much to ask?" (136)

A conversion of Mrs. Sen's question to a statement would offer a clue to the nature of the lonely Bengali-American house wife's ordeal in a distant land. In her own desperation she opens her heart to a young American child realizing little as to how the boy would perceive her pain. The pain is further exacerbated by her husband's apathy to her small desires like giving her opportunities to wear her scores of saris and buying fish occasionally together. On the other hand, Mala's husband can comprehend the nature of problems that might occur soon in his life well ahead of another Mrs. Sen's arrival in America:

> A few days after receiving the letter, as I was walking to work in the morning, I saw an Indian woman on the other side of the Massachusetts Avenue, wearing a sari with its free end nearly dragging on the footpath, and pushing a child in a stroller. An American woman with a small black dog on a leash was walking to

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> one side of her. Suddenly the dog began barking. From the other side of the street I watched as the Indian woman, startled, stopped in her path, at which point the dog leapt up and seized the end of the sari between its teeth. (207)

Merely by watching a sari wearing Indian-American woman's plight on a Cambridge street , the narrator could sense the responsibility that he has to have after his wife Mala's arrival in America. It is this feeling that fuels the relationship. Though he had no perception of love towards his wife, gradually there is a bond of companionship as they find solace in each other in moment's of mourning like the death of Mrs. Croft. These three different versions of arranged marriage of both the first and second generation Bengali-American lives metaphorically indicate the nature of maladies that might afflict such relationships or lead towards a companionship and mutual understanding. The simple and basic premise through which such relationships have undergone a "prognosis" by the author again highlight the presence/absence of warmth/cold as the hinges on which such relationships either succeed or complicate. These two binaries again connect the depiction of arranged marriage with the experiential feeling conveyed through the overcoat megametaphor. A post-traumatic deep seated psychic "malady" that threatens the marriage of Shoba and Shukumar too could be understood through the constant interplay of light/darkness in "A Temporary Matter." The very requirement of devising a game of confession further highlights the explosive margins of the relationship. In a narrative strategy adopted a kin to *The Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri through her enormous power of empathy for the plight of characters, employs spatiality of a married couple as a

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“container space” of latent trajectories of emotions which either bind them or threaten to tear them apart.

Another seminal metaphoric crux through which Jhumpa Lahiri delineates the relationships of these couples in *Interpreter of Maladies* is through the overarching framework of care/neglect. For instance in “A Temporary Matter” the contrastive atmospheres of past and present as reflecting the metaphorical nuances associated with care/neglect. The disorderly and slovenly appearance of the dresses worn by Shoba and Shukumar and the furnishing of the house indicates the low emotional amplitude connecting them. Similarly, the apathy of Mrs. Sen is also gleaned through this same tendency of either ordering the domestic space or neglecting it. The distinct shades of sense of loss that weighs down such relationships reinforce the overarching metaphor of “malady” through such micro-level cruxes of care/neglect and warmth/cold. These distinct commonalities of thematic concerns like grappling with a sense of loss, balancing a relationship, pains associated with navigating the terrains of alien cultural landscapes as immigrants all again are a part of the inventory of metaphors that the author seamlessly weaves through the narrative frames of each story.

Just like names and naming, care and neglect, it is the dynamic interplay of the overcoat as a megametaphor that sweeps through a number of her stories along with *The Namesake*. In Nikolai Gogol’s story it is only the garment that acts as the overbearing metaphor. Jhumpa Lahiri, however, successfully experiments a narrative device of mapping the cross domains of the title of the story, the title of the author’s Russian Name

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and the overcoat as a dress to delineate the cycle of birth, death and arrival across stories. If it is the inner cycle of aesthetic and intellectual framing and ordering of literariness that lies at the core of *The Namesake*, the overcoat as a dress subsumes other prime movers in both *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. Our earlier discussion in Chapter III throws adequate light on how the author has subtly employed an "inner circle" of prime movers as far as the passing and inheritance of the overcoat is concerned. The megametaphor captures all the implications of relationship curves and bends associated with such sharing or inheritance of the overcoat. Another, striking feature is the subsuming of a host of "micro-metaphors" like shoes, stepping in to shoes, dress, food etc. within the gamut of megametaphor of the overcoat. The litanies of metaphors worked out and examined in details earlier too indicate the inferential paths and correspondences along which the relationships evolve or dissolve after a certain time. Coupled with this is obviously the implication of "haunting" as a revenant becoming a part of Lahiri's *fictionscape*. Just as Akaky's loss of overcoat haunts Ashoke, Ashoke's death pursues Gogol Ganguli, Parul's death haunts Kaushik and Hema differently, Ruma's mother's death adds a shade of gray around her and even Hema's forced inheritance of Kaushik's overcoat creates its attendant chain of emotions. It is this invisible series of associations that either makes them feel possessed/dispossessed, cold/warm, exposed/covered in accordance with the situations of life that they encounter. These experiences for the actors again play vital role in imbuing their emotionscapes with varied hues. There is an inversion of the bond of love shared between Ashoke and Gogol in *The Namesake* through Parul and her son Kaushik's relationship in "Hema and Kaushik" in

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Unaccustomed Earth with obvious differences in their delineation. Unlike Gogol's attachment with the American soil and the small town house at Pemberton Road, Kaushik fails to "strike root" any where in the world. Hema appreciates this aspect of his personality. It is because only she has an insight to his relationship with his mother Parul. Though she wears the overcoat of Kaushik again in Volterra, this wearing does not make her feel connected to him as expected by him. Her experience of being an expectant mistress for Julian has taught her that it would be a mistake for her to call off her scheduled arranged marriage with Navin. Kaushik's new overcoat, of course, does not connect her in a new way.

Following the perceptive threads of the metaphoricity of names and naming in Lahiri's fiction we can finally see how the author has made an *advance* in the strategy adopted by Nikolai Gogol especially in "The Overcoat" in the sense that she has been able to expand the range by employing them in a full length work of fiction while simultaneously probing and unfolding both the emotional and cultural layers of names and naming. For Lahiri, names and naming is not only a sense of gaining an identity but also a sense of weathering and loss that happens due to fateful twists and turns in one's destiny. Similarly, the metaphors associated with relationships too link the invisible strands inherent in the *emotionscapes* of the characters and explore the matrix of a subterranean sense of loss in the midst of the achievements and journeys undertaken by the characters of her fictional universe. The metaphors associated with the quotidian lives of the characters also bring out the intra and inter generational fissures and gaps along with the attachments and closeness which binds the family members. The grey

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shade of death amidst conception of the new born- looming large over the horizon has been vividly captured by the metaphors as well. The metaphors associated with water and its edges, gardening and the sky too act as befitting backdrops to the subtle waves and ripples in the emotional and relationship strands.

Jhumpa Lahiri is indeed an *interpreter of metaphors* par excellence. It is not only the ubiquity of a disjointed plethora of metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri's fictional oeuvre that has acted as the primary impulse behind undertaking the present study. There is no doubt, as the study has attempted to show, that litanies of metaphors abound within the "text worlds" of her stories. Partially visible and mostly latent narrative loops are innovatively woven through these hosts of metaphors – which also become a distinctive trait of her misleadingly uncluttered and plain prose style. The study has focused on metaphors of names and naming, relationships and natural manifestations like water, snow, sky, seas, garden and wilderness that all create a salient force which determines the narrative movement and twists inherent within them. The perspective of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory has aided the present study's aim to explore, decipher and re-interpret the meanings which again emerge from the entailments of ontological cross-domain correspondences. Secondly, based on the perspectives of the theory of extended metaphors as proposed by Paul Werth, this study has also explored the gamut of megametaphors like the overcoat and names. It has also shown that a host of "micro-metaphors" are coherently subsumed within the megametaphors. These not only reveal

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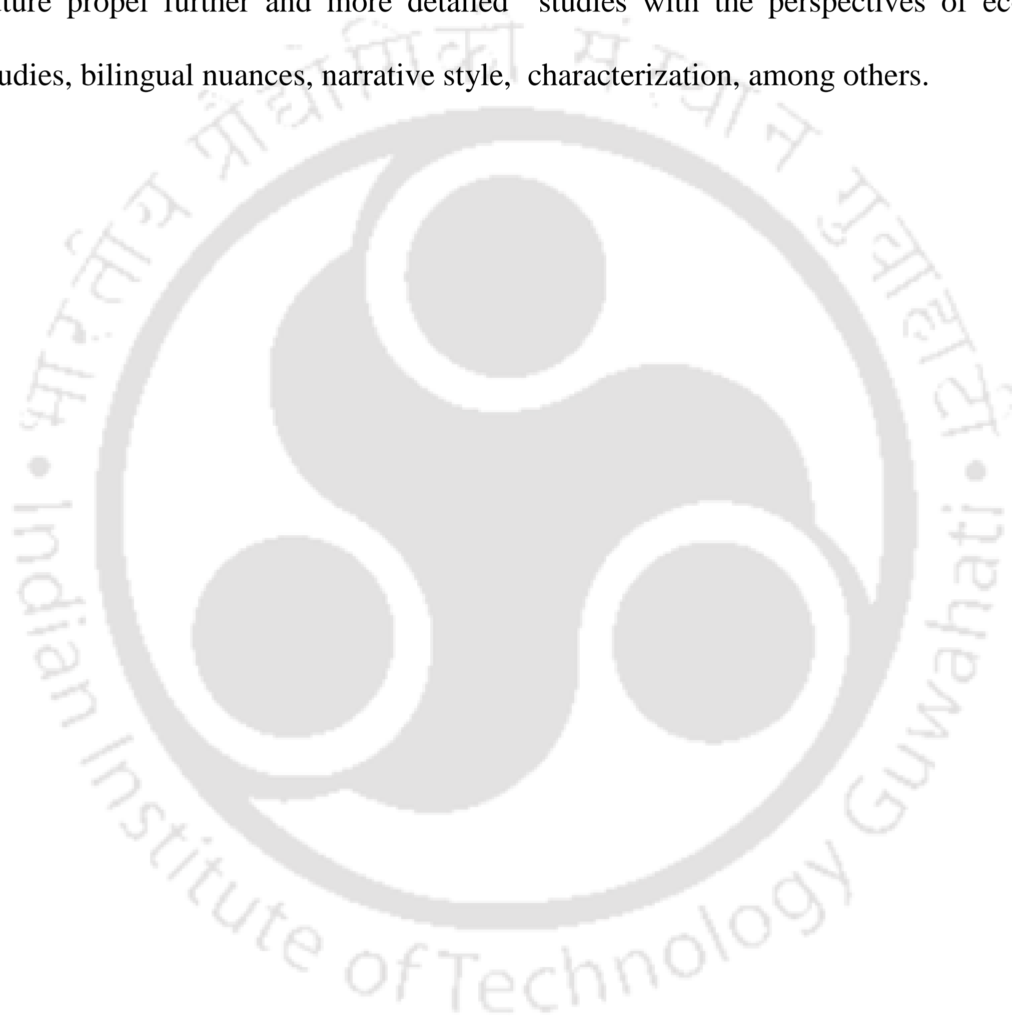
latent narrative threads but in the process generate meanings which enrich our understanding about the larger and overbearing thematic concerns of the author.

Since only a few perceptive full length critical studies of Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction has so far been completed it is hoped that the relative freshness of her oeuvre would in future propel further and more detailed studies with the perspectives of ecocritical studies, bilingual nuances, narrative style, characterization, among others.



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