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Doctoral Dissertation

The Diasporic Sublime in the Works of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Foreword

This thesis is written for my doctoral degree in literary studies with the specialization in Indian American literature written by Indian descent authors Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The subject of this thesis is related to the struggles and challenges of migration of Indian women in the United States and observes the elevation of their status, power, and agency. The theory of the sublime as conceptualised by eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant helps to formulate the concept of the "Diasporic Sublime" due to its assumptions on freedom, sovereignty, and morality. The thesis is an innovative blend of the feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics and the postcolonial studies ranging from pure eighteenth century concepts to its manifestations in the lives of Indian migrant women.

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I. Introduction: The Diasporic Sublime

In this thesis, I showcase how the discourse of migration and diaspora studies is connected to the experience of sublime through Indian American literature. In attempting to establish the authority of reason and morality in the sublime, Immanuel Kant has disregarded the female involvement and ability to achieve the sublime (sovereign) state of self in his work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beauty and Sublime* (1764/2011). There is an absence of a particular theory in exile and migration studies that integrates aesthetics of the sublime concerning the subjectivity of postcolonial women. With the help of contemporary feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics, I use Kant's own theorisation of the sublime to prove that women are as capable of achieving the sublime as men. I investigate that the prolonged marginalised state and lack of freedom makes Indian women more vulnerable to the country change and how migration and resettlement triggers their intent for liberation.

Considering my research, the connection between migration and the sublime has been evaded so far in postcolonial studies. But the question is, how can we establish a connection between diasporic status and its sublimity and why this certain connection is needed? Even though Kant discusses the right to hospitality, there is little to no research on how women deal with that right as diaspora, or how we can relate it with the sublime. I am concerned with the mental and physical changes occurring due to migration giving the migrant women the opportunity to realise their innate nature, and moral abilities. It is extremely important to renegotiate the canon of the Kantian sublime for two reasons: firstly, the Kantian framework disproves his bias over female capability of the sublime experience, and secondly, it frames the function of reason, authority, and freedom in postcolonial literature.

The Kantian sublime, though seems outdated, still lends itself evolve into a mode of confrontation from just an awe response and avails itself to diverse interpretations. I discuss the element of fear and loss of culture and how Indian women face the collapse of their respect especially during the transition from one country to another. The possibility of reason's collapse is a crucial moment in the discourse of the postcolonial and I wish to employ the term 'the diasporic sublime' to understand the positioning of female immigrants within the contexts of border, conflict and self. This particular coinage is significant as the term attempts to bridge the gap between diasporic literature and aesthetical research contributing a new term to the genre studies of migration. There sublime has been considerably researched within the postcolonial discourse, and since migration is one of the by-products of postcolonial studies, it makes sense to discuss the sublime in diasporicity. I specifically choose to discuss feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics because Kant presumes the sublime as human freedom. Indian American

literature by female authors (Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni) discuss the state of immigrant women in the United States of America and how their selves are divided between traditions and cultures, struggling for their freedom.

To be cosmopolitan nowadays would mean acknowledging obligations for those who are not fellow citizens. To do so, it would "essentially include identifying the moral worth of individuals, as also disregarding the consequences of their nationality, religion, gender and so on over their worthiness" (Donaldson 1992, 142). Although existing theories of cosmopolitanism locate their origin in Immanuel Kant, "it would be relevant to note that Kant used the word 'cosmopolitanism' in a different sense" (Linden 2004, 805). According to Kant, "cosmopolitanism is a right to hospitality or a right not to be treated with hostility, especially when it comes to an individual who has reasonably fled a tyrannical," authoritarian power "structure in the hope of security, stability, and peace" (Mertens 1996, 331). Migration can be described as the practice of going from one country, region or place of native residence to settle down in another. The "duration of this new arrangement varies, individuals who relocate either semi-permanently or permanently to another country" (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 18). Some people migrate for economic or educational prospects on their own to be later joined by families, whereas some people move due to political reasons with or without their families.

In postcolonial negotiations, Kantian ethics point to the relationship between morality and migration. The importance of morality lies in the value or expectations that are ascribed to communal life and in the willingness to welcome new people in a particular society since Kant discusses the morality of migration in his *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1785/1991), it is apt to briefly touch upon his idea of migration and how it is possible to connect diaspora to his idea of the sublime. Migration discusses two moral and legal principles which are foundational in globalisation. On one hand, the human right of individuals to move across borders, whether for "economic, personal, and professional reasons or to seek asylum and refuge and on the other hand, the human will of self-governance" (Donaldson 1992, 143). Immanuel Kant, therefore, called the moral claim to seek refuge or respite in the lands of another, a "universal right of hospitality" (Donaldson 1992, 143). This provided that the intents of the "foreigner upon migrating to the foreign lands were nonviolent, a right that appropriately belongs to every human being that shares the planet with others" (Linden 2004, 806). According to Kant, morality is insisting on the equal dignity or humanity of all persons which directs him to highlight both "mutual respect and self-respect, and to criticise failures to acknowledge both our own and others' dignity" (Mertens 1996, 331).

Even though the right to "hospitality" is an individual claim, "the socio-economic and cultural triggers of migrations are largely collective" (Mertens 1996, 332). Under the conditions of morality and reason as delineated by Kant, I display how Indian immigrant women claim this individual right, and their dignity while facing the conflicts of the body, food, and home. Since the sublime presupposes human freedom, the theory reflects on the manoeuvred positions of women, their dominance and their resistance within the Indian diaspora in the United States of America. Bonnie Mann in her book, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (2006), observes that the feminist movement in the United States has been surprisingly quiet regarding the reshaping of America. Even though there have been individual attempts to stand against the marginalization of women within U.S. foreign policy, there has been no massive "public outcry in a feminist voice at home, even though the reconstruction of U.S. national identity is so blatantly masculinist in the form" (Mann 2006, 177). In constructing the female self, alongside the loss of familiar social structure and culture, there are added guilts of abandoning the homeland, being dependents as housewives and being undocumented labourers exploited for household chores. The experiences of violence, sexual abuse, gestation, pregnancy, abortion and experiences of murder and death incorporate anxiety, fear, and anger at her own subordinated self which emphasizes the importance of discussing the female self with migration and sublimity.

Diaspora and the sublime may exist in two different realms of theoretical research yet together as the 'diasporic sublime' it frames the conditions of life in a foreign land through triumph and rupture. Dominant narratives of the sublime, especially as theorized by Immanuel Kant return to the experiences of the mind, yet deny women their capabilities and participation in nature and society to experience the sublime feeling, which in a sense supposes freedom of the mind from an overwhelmingly powerful object or a situation. Since the right to hospitable conditions is a human right to freedom, then immigrant women may build their right to liberation in a foreign land, facing the loss of culture and social structure, and resisting the identity that was imposed on them. The diasporic sublime conceptualises the powerful presence of immigrant women redefining the idea of freedom through certain moments of disruption. The sublime in diasporicity requires a different kind of courage that can linger with "pain, loss, and grief swelling to uncontrollable proportions, overthrowing the pretentious societal and gendered roles to a grand power within that borders omnipotence" (Mann 2006, 177).

The diasporic sublime hence highlights the courage to face pain and vulnerability through social, cultural, economic, and political encounters and marks the sublime not in escape fantasies or fictions of freedom but in narratives of sovereignty through powerful, lived

experiences. The term "diaspora" describes the spread of religious or ethnic groups from their native land either forced or voluntarily (Sharma 2016, 30). Diaspora literature, naturally, is the work by authors who live outside their homeland, "addressing problems such as identity, culture, hybridity, nationality, home, homelessness, and binary categories like self and other, insider and outsider" (Sharma 2016, 30). To display the elevation of the female immigrant self against the odds of migration, alienation, and sense of belonging, I have chosen six novels from three renowned authors of Indian diaspora which are—Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), *Desirable Daughters* (2002); Jhumpa Lahiri's and *The Namesake* (2005), *The Lowland* (2013); and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices* (1998), *The Oleander Girl* (2013). These novels share the same elements that also theorize the sublime feeling, the elements of fear and power.

The sublime theory was used for political purposes by Brett Nicholls in 1999 which discussed British colonialism, coinciding with the height of the eighteenth-century interest in the sublime. It was again taken up by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) claiming the woman's position was "manoeuvred between indigenous patriarchy and colonial government" (Spivak 1999, 2). Pramod K. Nayar observes the sublime in his chapter "The Sublime Raj: English writing in India, 1750-1820" concerning the Indian landscape "characterised by emptiness, vastness, and excessive natural phenomena that threatens" (Nayar 2008, 30). While Brett Nicholls in his work, *The Postcolonial Sublime: the Politics of Excess from Kant to Rushdie* aimed to showcase how the postcolonial dismantles the "Enlightenment reason" as propagated by Kant, this thesis aims to use the postcolonial feminist theory to focus on the sublime as a faculty of mind, that "is forged in and through its mastery over the conscious" as "well as establishes the necessity of the sublime to process authority of power and reason" (Nicholls 1999, iii).

The conventional representation of the sublime refers to an aesthetic experience in which the subject encounters an object or a situation that appears too vast or powerful that cannot be mastered by humans yet does not create an immediate threat but makes the subject realise the intense power and terror of the unfamiliar experience. But Immanuel Kant uses the sublime feeling as a confrontation to showcase the relationship between self, morality, and freedom. The experience of the sublime presumes these ideas; "it reveals that the judging subject has practical freedom and a moral vocation, a calling to be moral" (Clewis 2009, 135). The "moralization" of the sublime can occur in several ways (135). The Kantian sublime continues to be an aesthetic judgement, but it has its "ground (meaning foundation) (Grundlage) in human nature (i.e., human freedom) (Kant 2000, 5:265, 280) and is based on a moral

predisposition (Anlage)" (Kant 2000, 5:265, 280). The aesthetical categorization of the sublime may provide a list of natural phenomena such as mountains, rains or thunderstorms, but the more contemporary research on the sublime (by authors such as Stuart Mill, Barbara Claire Freeman, Bonnie Mann, Emily Brady, Tom Cochrane, and Cornelia Klinger) recognises the consistent claim of fear and power within the experiences of sublime.

However, the element of fear is also mixed with the sense of attraction and pleasure, evoking a "visceral sort of excitement" (Kirwan 2005, 162). The diasporic sublime hence focuses on the phenomenon or overwhelming experiences occurring during intercountry migration or within diasporic communities that help to understand the comparative nature of the sublime. The (diasporic) self as a "mentally-physically composed subject" (Brady 2019, 198) experiences the aesthetic response and judgement of the element of fear and power brought on by the experiences of alienation, cultural appropriation, language constraints and sense of belonging. The diasporic sublime discusses the immigrant self "placed in a relation of comparative scale to something much greater in size or power" (Brady 2019, 199) and argues the greatness of one's exalted mind against the challenges of migration.

But why do we need the sublime in diasporic studies, or at large, in postcolonial studies? There are two ways to trace the sublime in postcolonial literature, which together reflect the doubleness of the sublime as a critical concept (Dickinson 2015, 152). On the one hand, the sublime is representational language, at least minimally conventional—in such cases, the sublime can only be expressed through intensity, vastness and obscurity. On the other hand, it is an aesthetical phenomenological experience that exceeds available (re)presentational languages or mediums that would process the situation, the experience or the sublime feeling (Dickinson 2015, 152). The sublime occurs exactly where predictable familiar "descriptors" fall away or fail (Dickinson 2015, 152). Let us concentrate on this point of failing of familiarity that connects the sublime with diasporic literature. Migration involves the loss of the familiar, including language (especially colloquial and dialect), attitudes, values, social structures, and support networks (Bhugra and Becker, 2005, 19). Grieving for this loss can be viewed as a healthy reaction and a natural consequence of migration, but certainly emotionally and physically challenging conditions may need psychiatric intervention which only emphasizes the research on migration and the state of immigrants (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 19). The complex interplay of the migration process, cultural bereavement, cultural identity, and cultural congruity, along with biological, psychological and social factors, is hypothesised as playing a major role in the construction of the self (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 19).

Women often migrate officially, being reliant on family members of other migrants or marrying someone in another country. Female migrants are, however, progressively more part of the movements of migrant workers, moving on their own to become the primary wage earners of their families. Most migrant women move "voluntarily, but women and girls are also forced migrants leaving their countries to flee conflict, persecution, environmental degradation, natural disasters" (UN 2005, 27) etc. that affect their security and livelihood in the larger scheme of things. The dissertation focuses on the incorporation of gender hierarchies and the condition of female immigration concerning the sublime to deliberate on some questions that have been previously disregarded. First, how do the prospects, relationships and hierarchies linked with being female effect the possibility of international migration and the development of migration itself? Second, how do gender inequalities and patriarchal constraints of particular societies (in the dissertation specific to Indian and Indian American societies) of both home and host destinations affect the experiences of migrant women? As a key organizing principle of society, gender is central to any discussion of the causes and consequences of international migration and the previous attempts to document and research international migration have often overlooked the migration of Indian women (UN 2005, 27).

Analytical frameworks denied the participation of migrant women and their contributions, assuming the consequences of their mobility as minor challenges (UN 2005, 28). Hence, not warranting critical and aesthetical research and avoids the investigation of the outcomes of migration differing by sex. Understanding the factors of gender inequality in migration as well as the treatment of women in both the public and private sphere helps to perpetuate gender disparities and address the specific challenges, needs and limitations women face when they migrate. The participation of women in migration determines their struggle against the imposed social roles as secondary citizens, as supporting spouses and nurturers, and their autonomy and capacity as decision-makers (UN 2005, 29). The equal opportunities and access to resources help them to realise their economic, political, and social aspirations in their countries of origin and destination. The display of agency and power in the face of overwhelming experiences helps to display own greatness and frees the self from the bounds of mediocrity that restricts the Indian migrant women creating the central argument for the diasporic sublime. Achieving the true female self beyond the imposed social and cultural limitations through migration and diasporicity aids to frame the theory of the sublime as a mode to challenge borders.

The immigrants suffer cultural shock and are anxious to establish their identity in a foreign land. That is why these novelists received substantial critical attention from all quarters

of the globe in a short period of just twenty-five years (Babu 2013, 40). These novelists represent the "voice of expatriate-immigrants" and their cultural sensibility through their works as well as display the geographical uniformity—those which showcase Indian women who travel to America and share their lives, habits and familiarity in their seeming individualist yet communal journey (Babu 2013, 41). Diasporic literature went through numerous shifts regarding interdisciplinary research. Indian diasporic literary works especially by Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have been discussed in terms of home, reworlding, decolonization and reformation of home and nation.

Cultural changes are intensely rooted and continue to influence the lives of Asian Indian immigrants living in Western culture. Mukherjee, Lahiri, and Divakaruni through their literature frame the powerful nature of traditions and cultures on the lives and mental and physical health of Asian Indian women. Currently, there are over three million Asian Americans in the US including Punjabis, Gujratis, Bengalis and Tamils. Although this swift increase is well documented, literature used to be lacking in giving attention to women and their acculturation. They face challenging issues in language proficiency, difficulty, navigating a new educational system, finding employment, adjusting minority status, labour exchange and discrimination (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 21). Some of the Asian Indian immigrant women are less educated than the model minority stereotype would suggest and have come to the US, many women find themselves confined to the home and their independence cease to exist in the land of opportunities. These women are expected to balance their devotion to their duties of home and husband, defending the family dignity along with the fear of social penalty, being disowned by their families, or even facing brutality and violence if their families recognized their actions to be improper—all of which contributes to their distress and subjugated living experiences as Asian Indian women (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 22).

The ambiguity of the word 'diaspora' hints at the immigrants who function as both refugees and representatives—as refugees, they seek security and economic prosperity in America, and as representatives, they seek to represent their culture and religious traditions and enhance its transparency (Ozan 2015, 362). For the Indian diaspora, there is a risk of losing self-identity and the pressure if the Americans would accept their otherness. Mainstream American culture is that considered and followed by the majority of Americans. Presumably, the "Western culture largely originated from the "societal traditions and values of White European immigrants" (Adams and Strother-Adams 2001, 5; Doran and Littrell 2013, 263). There are substantial impacts from many other foundations, such as the traditions and values of Black slaves brought from Africa (Holloway 2005, 32; Doran and Littrell 2013, 262). "Later

immigration from East Asia and frequent immigration from Latin America shaped mainstream culture" (Adams and Strother-Adams 2001 , 5; Doran and Littrell 2013, 262). The main "initial extensive impacts came from English and Irish settlers, where the mainstream culture is frequently described as 'Anglo-Saxon' Culture" (Adams and Strother-Adams 2001, 6). The 2000 US census uncovered that 75.1 % of the US population self-identified as 'White', and 72.4 % in the 2010 census (Adams and Strother-Adams 2001, 6).

While shifting over the years in the way they are perceived by the majority of Americans, the characteristics of sincerity, impartiality and self-reliance, amongst others, continue to be a part of the American cultural dialogue (Spindlers 1990, 26-32; Doran and Littrell 2013, 263). George and Louise Spindler argue that the cultural dialogue revolves around conflicts in the interpretations of what is characteristically thought of as American "ethniclass" (Doran and Littrell 2013, 263). Americans are transient people, able to substitute friends fairly easily. They seek "similar neighbourhood networks, peer groups and even to some" degree relatable "personal identities" when they get familiarized in a new community (Spindlers 1990, 34; Doran and Littrell 2013, 263). This transient quality of life does, nevertheless, have some outcomes. One's obligations to other people are unlikely to be retained at a deep level in these situations. One would assume also that one's interest in the conservation of the community would decline and there would be a propensity for more importance on one's self-interest (Doran and Littrell 2013, 263).

The perpetually transient quality of American life may therefore result in a kind of "marginalization that is reflected in one's relationships with virtually all social institutions, groups, other individuals and perhaps even work" (Doran and Littrell 2013, 263). Schwartz established the motivational type "self-direction" (Schwartz 1992, 7) was obtained from "organismic needs, needs for mastery, and from the interaction requirements of autonomy and independence" (Schwartz 2012, 2307). Alongside self-direction that highlights independent action creating opportunities for choosing, creating, and exploring, there are daring intent for novelty and challenge in life, focus on individual success compared to communal achievement, drive for power, social status, and prestige, dominance over people and resources; inclinations and desires likely to trouble or harm others and violate social opportunities or norms. In comparison to these, Indian immigrants have a strong sense of community, close-knit larger families with a patriarchal head and a designated nurturer. Indian diasporic community practices religious and casteist beliefs within their culture, where the interest of all takes over the sentiment of self-interest. As immigrants and expats, they have indirect ways to communicate to avoid conflicts and fear of social, religious, and political institutions.

In recent years, there has been a rise in experienced immigrants migrating to the US in large numbers. However, this immigration is seen as being "overwhelmingly male" (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 2). Female migrants are depicted either as "family migrants following in the path chosen by men or as victims of desperation, forced into the migrant trail due to social, political and economic exigencies" (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 3). The secondary status inclined to the narratives of women immigrants is not unique to the Indian immigrant experience. Women's immigrant experiences have a long history of being ignored globally. Studies on migration focused exclusively on men until the late 1970s, with the unconfirmed assumption that women migrants constituted exceedingly small numbers. With the increasing numbers of middle-class professionals arriving in the West, immigration is a self-imposed exile driven by economic and social aspirations (Rayaprol 1999, 5). However, in the modern world of transnational cultural interactions, the activities of people between nations, there is no longer an exile in any comprehensive sense. Identities and cultures get delocalized, but rarely detached from memories of past places and times. Immigration, in particular, tends to be viewed as a male preference in the selected novels where women are seldom left with little or no choice. Even though in some cases, women do choose to travel abroad, it rarely integrates their decisions regarding education and career.

Narratives about female migrants are usually restricted and focus on their presence as supporting characters, which serves as the basis for gender oppression in India. It can be accounted for largely by both Hinduism and Islam, the two major religious factions during British colonialism. According to Hindu doctrine, women were "created by the Brahman to provide company for the men, and to facilitate procreation, progeny and the continuation of the family lineage" (Char 1993, 42). The character of a woman, according to the Vedas, "was simply to support the man, and enable him to continue his family tradition" (42). Before and in the course of the rule of India by the British, India employed a hierarchal caste system, which authorized certain groups of people into various levels of status. (Char 1993, 43). The caste system was a heteropatriarchal construct through which males detected overarching power over the female population, specifically females belonging to a lower caste. (Betteille 1990, 490). The upper level of status signified by the specific caste of an Indian man was a part of providing him with the skill to neglect and violate women in lower castes without consequence (491). The women in the lower classes were subjected to violence, intimidation, and public humiliation to preserve gender inequality (Betteille 1990, 492).

While it may not be causal, the existence of rigid and compulsory heteronormative sexual attitudes coupled with trying to adhere to male myths has been found to promote

maintaining a sexually disturbing and oppressive idea of society decreasing women's status and active contribution (Clarke et al.2015, 328). The power of socially permitted constructions, including “heteronormative beliefs and assumptions, are not necessarily based in the personal knowledge,” understanding or identity of the person who subscribes to them, but instead are obtained from the social (Clark et al. 2015, 328). Breaking away from familial interdependency is the only way for women to achieve the freedom that allows them “to ‘be’, not to be used, but to be creative” (Clark et al. 2015, 329).

This is a difference between the passive ‘be’ and the active ‘being’. Rather than denying the creative and rational function in society, theorists such as Barbara Claire Freeman and Bonnie Mann focused on the female ability to transcend the decided paths and roles in society against the mere associations of beauty with women, lacking seriousness and morals (Shell 2014, 3). The sublime concerning female power and the ability to transcend gender roles is more of a journey to explore the creative functions of women and their differences that are not to be As Clarke observes, these are necessary polarities that are needed to aid the dialectics of a community as Clarke observes

> Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively ‘be’ in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (Clarke et al. 2015, 331)

Within the interdependence of mutual (non-dominant) variances lies that security which empowers women to descend into the chaos of understanding and reoccurrence with true “visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. The difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our power is forged” (Clarke et al. 2015, 330). Third World women seldom realize the difference between everyday “manifestations and dehumanizations of marital slavery and prostitution,” masked behind the roles of a dutiful daughter, wife, and mother (2015, 330). Gender discrimination in various forms is promoted in the family through the process of socialization, specifically preparing men for a “world of management and leadership characterized by competitiveness, aggressive, risk-taking, and long-term dependable commitment to the career” (Rosinsky 2021, 31).

Access to an arduous and long history of gender activism that has been introduced within Americanism post-1965, due to the integration of people of different cultures, religions, and traditions, made it possible for certain groups of Indian women to use immigration as a way to exchange and challenge ingrained expectations about women’s careers and life choices. Post-

migration, they continue to confront different but similarly deep-rooted standards of gendered patterns and expectations. Multi-layered glass ceilings of race and gender present new questions that must be traversed as Indian women realize that narrow impressions of women of colour in the US have implications for their ability to find voice and visibility. The diasporic sublime, on one hand, frames the subdued and long-oppressed status of Indian migrant women, and on the other hand, investigates different feminist perspectives of Immanuel Kant's archetypes on respect, morality, power, and more to reflect on the denial of the 'sublime' status of women.

In Kant's *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764/2011), the beautiful and the sublime are distinctive yet mutually dependent qualities that collectively bring into harmony the humility of nature and the elegance of the civilized. "Each alone is defective: sublimity without beauty exceeds the bounds of nature" and turns into "adventurous" or "grotesque" "while beauty without sublimity is lacking in seriousness" (Shell 2014, 7). The kind of finer feeling Kant classifies as "moral" similarly combines elements of beauty with ones of sublimity. Among such qualities, "[tlrue virtue alone is sublime" (Shell 2014, 116). Characteristics "like tender heartedness are beautiful, yet often also weak and blind" (Shell 2014, 117).

> true virtue can only be grafted onto principles, such that the more general they are, the more sublime and noble they become. Only if one were to subordinate one's own inclination to one so enlarged could our kindly [giitige] drives be used proportionately and bring about the noble bearing [Anstana'] that is the beauty of virtue. (Shell 2014, 118)

For Kant in *Observations*, "a kind of finer feeling that is accessible to all cultivated men and women supplements the speculative pleasures" by which human beings can accomplish the end for which they were designed or transcend themselves.

Kant's *Observations* aim toward the foundations of an "aesthetic education of the human race" (Shell 2014, 4). Indeed, "the most powerful impulses all derive from sexual desire" which makes such aesthetic learning especially relevant" (Shell 2014, 4). The "complementary drives" which "move some to beautiful actions even without principles," and give "greater impulse" and "impetus" to principles (Shell 2014, 5), themselves depend on finer emotions that are "Interwoven" with sexual attraction (Shell 2014, 5). The relation of the sexes is therefore significant, in Kant's present account, "for all education and instruction" and, indeed, as he puts it, for "all attempts at moral perfection" (Shell 2014, 6). On the one hand, Kant claims that sexual desire is the "source of all finer feelings between the sexes, especially as it bears on refining the feelings of men" (Shell 2014, 7). On the other hand, "such finer feelings and the

sexual mustn't come "too near" each other" (Shell 2014, 7). These tensions suggest that Kant remained unclear about the matter.

But according to Kim Hall, Kant seldom reminds us of the "aggregable nature of women who do not possess the principles of true kindness as a virtue that becomes sublime," as "nature seldom unites all noble and beautiful qualities in one human being," and "even more seldom brings that human being to one who would be worthy of them" (Shell 2014, 5).

> Kant claims that women possess a beautiful rather than a deep understanding. He provides further evidence for his belief that women are inferior. Because a woman's understanding is only beautiful, she "will 'learn no geometry; of the principle of sufficient reason or the monads[...]she will know only so much as is needed to perceive the salt in a satire which the insipid grubs of our sex have censured. The fair can leave Descartes his vortices to whirl forever without troubling themselves about them" (Hall 1997, 264). Kant further asserts that "[t]he content of women's great science, rather is humankind, and among humanity, men" (Shell 2014, 8).

One of the types of the sublime is the noble, a sense of virtuous principles. Moreover, Kant believes that various people's inclinations toward the sublime and the beautiful manifest from the viewpoint of morality (7). Going in the other direction, the treatise attracts interest in the sublime element of morality. It identifies "moral feeling in terms of dignity, which can be understood as implying the evocation of the feeling of sublimity" (8). Furthermore, Kant asserts that women make judgments about morality by employing a feeling for the beautiful, whereas men do so through "a feeling for the sublime and by sensing the sublimity of obligation and sacrifice" (8). Kant's ideas about magnificence are inspired by Rousseau's view that "women can and should constrain men by charming them" (Shell 2014, 116). Kant's linking of splendour with the power to "dissemble is reminiscent of Rousseau's notion of seemliness (decence) in social propriety" (Shell 2014, 116). Kant notes that a woman's "semblances, while not wholly desirable, can bring about certain social benefits and goods, ranging from marital harmony to ideal pleasures" (Shell 2014, 117).

Social propriety, a sense of decency that imitates what Kant understood as virtues or principles of the sublime rejects the association of agency and propagates a false sense of sublimity (Shell 2014, 116). Kant describes women in his *Observations* as pleasurable, aggregable subjects, weak against the overwhelming repulsiveness of nature:

> Women will avoid evil not because it is unjust but because it is ugly, and for them virtuous actions mean those that are ethically beautiful. Nothing of ought, nothing of must, nothing of obligation. To a woman anything by way of orders and sullen compulsion is insufferable. They do something only because they love to, and the art lies in making sure that they love only what is good. It is difficult for me to believe that the fair sex is capable of principles, and I hope not to give offense by this, for these are also extremely rare among the male sex. In place of these, however, providence has implanted goodly and

> benevolent sentiments in their bosom, a fine feeling for propriety and a complaisant soul. (Shell 2014, 153)

Since he indulges in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764/ 2011), that a woman's only purpose is to safeguard the pleasures of men, it immediately denies the sovereign existence of women without their male counterparts. The patriarchal Indian society has subdued women under the men of society in both public and private spheres, setting the purpose of women as dutybound, submissive, and domesticated subjects. For Kant, the sublime moment involves the elevation of reason over an arrangement of experience that cannot be characterized. Usually, the sublime entails a moment of obstruction followed by one of enhanced clarity in which reason defies the "blocking source by representing its very inability to represent the sublime object[…]" (Freeman 1995, 3). It thereby accomplishes sovereignty over an excess (4) that defies its power. Thus, the central moment of the sublime celebrates the self's newly augmented sense of identity; "a will to power drives its style, a mode that establishes and maintains the self's domination over its objects of rapture" (4).

I certainly do not wish to renegotiate the sublime by disregarding its philosophical and important connections to the "realms of power, conflict, and agency, or suggest that the feminine sublime is merely another, more intense version of the beautiful" (Freeman 1995, 4); but display women elevating as sublime beings in the face of excess, or an unrepresentable feeling just through the greatness of their mind. Just like the Kantian doctrine of human nature with beauty and the sublime and its delineation of beauty as a feminine weak entity as opposed to the sublime being a strong, masculine feeling, the gendered biases of Indian society push forward the subordination of women and their position as assistants to masculine establishments (7). Hence, the theory of the sublime perfectly fits as a methodology to work as a form of resistance towards the decided purpose in society and towards proving the female ability to transcend the attributes of beauty and be sublime subjects. The sublime hence is used to frame, counter and challenge the societal oppression of postcolonial migrant women, their confrontation of the private and public borders, and their eventual sublimity of selves. In this research, the term 'sublime' denotes not just elevation but the confrontation of the self as well.

Body, food and home-related experiences of Indian women who are empowered by their professional and educational abilities frame their independent migration choices and yet highlight the constraints of their gender in both countries, providing a unique perspective to the progressing notions of gender dynamics in both public and private spheres. It also facilitates an assessment of new ways in which the integration experiences of immigrants can be groups of "colours impact the gender, race and class dynamics in the United States" (Biswas 2017, 7). In

this case, in both India and the United States, the representation of the female body and the entailed experiences of food and domicile habits framing the micro-level negotiations to develop beyond the entrenched expectations for their gender and race are positioned within the larger macro-level movements for gender equality in both countries (Mannur 2009, 2).

To understand female subjectivity, it is important to understand the presence of the male-dominated construct of white male supremacy within Indian society, especially predominantly Hindu society as explored in the novels. As a foundation, body, food and home explores the cultural and religious implications that alter the basic instincts, habits and familiarity of individuals bringing intense conflict and change of self. The sense of familiarity and belonging also concentrates on the visibility of violence and absurd practices that surround Indian women and interfere with their psychological and sexual emancipation. The aesthetical reading of body, food and home may also hint at the performativity of the sublime theory when it comes to the exploration and display of immigrant behaviour and adaptability. When it comes to the aesthetical reading the thesis focuses on the judgments of the three sections and how deeply these are woven into the domains of female lives. The crossing culinary praxis with the broader immigrant history, including the physical voyages, the spiritual and religious negotiations and the rejection or acceptance of communities, all of which impact the post-migratory experience. I felt that the lateral points of contact between culinary practice, as well as the overall impact of migration on body and home, would shed considerable light on literary depictions of these three foundations.

The dissertation manifests in three sections focusing on representation, conceptualisation, and testing of the diasporic sublime, delineating its theorisation and expansion through a specific aesthetical foundation and contextual practice as evidenced through the novels by Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The first sub chapter, “The Sublime in Indian American Literature,” discusses the involvement of the sublime as a theory within Indian American literature, especially the effects of postcolonial migration. In the second sub chapter, titled “Mukherjee, Lahiri, and Divakaruni on the Postcolonial Subject”, the argument attends to the viability of the primary sources and how the selected works focus on the emergence of the postcolonial subject. The last chapter in this section, “The Female Subject and the Feminine Sublime,” briefly discusses the relationship between female postcolonial subjects and the theory of the feminine sublime, drawing upon the theorisations of female sublimity, terror, and power constructs.

The second section conceptualises aims to explain the introductory claims with theoretical and contextual relevance by reflecting on the transition of the feminine sublime and

its eventual application to the diasporic sublime. the chapter titled "Towards the Diasporic Sublime: Self, Migration, and Morality," focuses on a brief review of the eighteenth century theorization of the sublime. The chapter reflects on how historically Longinus, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant have laid down the sublime, in the terms of sensory feeling and aesthetical reflection of reason and morality and how the Kantian philosophy is relevant in modern day aesthetical research, especially in postcolonial studies. The last chapter on this section is titled "The Body, Food, and Home: The Aesthetic Foundation" specifically takes on the feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics showing the bias over female subjectivity, female involvement, and their active agency in the society. The sublime in this section initiates discussions on dismantling the Kantian bias showing the challenges and manipulations faced by migrant women. The severe effects of migration on a female body disrupts her relationship with her body, her concept of familiarity, and her sense of belonging. The concepts of body, food, and home do not strictly embody the diasporic subject and dominate the subject's decisiveness, reason, and moral judgment, yet domination, or the manipulation of one or more of these three concepts, regulates the power within the subject.

The dissertation finally divides the third section into six chapters based on six novels to bring in the theoretical concepts under the umbrella of literary contexts. The first two subchapters titled "Loss, Exploitation, and Cultural Bereavement in *Jasmine*" and "Pain, Pleasure, and Freedom in *Desirable Daughters*," evaluates the diasporic sublime in Bharati Mukherjee's novels *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002). The subchapters "The Shock of Arrival and Aspirations in *The Namesake*," and "The Voice of Reason and Womanhood in *The Lowland*" by Jhumpa Lahiri; and the sub chapters "Cry of Desire and the Spells in *The Mistress of Spices*, and "(In)Visibility of the Familiar in *The Oleander Girl*" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni also formulate the diasporic sublime through the development of female migrants in the novels. The diasporic sublime reflects on their aspirations and eventual freedom from social and gendered constraints. The narratives and the character arcs will not strictly adhere to the foundation of the body, food, and home but the foundation will analyze the narratives and the eventual constitution of the self collectively and coherently. The novels highlight the experiences in exile and internalization of certain abuse, trauma or accidents that represent life-changing momentums in their respective lives to evaluate and trace the sublime theory.

The conclusion "The Diasporic Sublime: Reclaiming the Self in Body, food, and Home" establishes the relationship between the diaspora and the theory of the sublime through the concepts of the body, food, and home. The journey of migrating and exiled women will

establish that diasporic literature becomes the scenario where one is challenged and strained to push beyond the limits of location, dislocation, culture, and gendered expectations where they become moral agents of society, perfectly capable of confronting boundaries to experience the sublime state of mind. The diasporic sublime, hence, by definition, traces the evolution of Indian American women into sovereign subjects from submissive objects of contemporary society.

I.1. The Sublime and Indian American Literature

The second question that is important in this dissertation, is why the construction of self relates to the sublime theory and how the sublime self is related to the identity of Indian American women. In 2006, when postmodern theorist Bonnie Mann started writing a feminist book titled *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (2006), she based her definition of the sublime "on a certain kind of terror"—that both overwhelms and elevates (xii). Nevertheless, the sublime has different faces, which take complicated turns using the element of fear. The sublime is an aesthetic experience in which the subject confronts an object that "appears too vast to be comprehended by the sensory imagined or too powerful to be mastered by human efforts," yet does not present "an immediate threat to observing subject" (Giles 2014, 226). For Kant, the sublime therefore entails the feeling of terror in encountering a world seemingly hostile to humans (Kant 1987, 99). Kant aimed to connect nature and freedom in a way to locate the "universal a priori conditions for thought in general" (Giles 2014, 226). Therefore, Kant contends that the "supersensible, or metaphysical, human freedom of the will is the only nonarbitrary purpose that is an end in itself because nature is contingent" (226).

In his *Critique of Judgement* (1793) although the "empirical imagination" collapses and is unable to capture the "totality of the sublime object in a single intuition, it is subsequently rescued from this failure by our ability to reason beyond our physical limitations," thus demonstrating that humans have a "supersensible moral being" (Kant 1987, 106). In the sublime, therefore, we "paradoxically experience pain resulting from the failure of the imagination and pleasure arising from reason's ability to supersede the world of sense" (Kant 1987, 114-15). In the dynamical sublime, a confrontation with something that appears "infinitely powerful, we think—or imagine—that we might be a match for the sublime object's seeming omnipotence" (Giles 2014, 227). Whether the object is infinitely powerful or impactful is not objectively known; for Kant, therefore, the sublime occurs in the individual's awareness rather than being an important element of the fear object itself (Kant 1987, 113) However, Kant's sublime is still considered ideologically partial. In fact, he declares that the sublime requires "proper" education for the understanding of moral ideas (Kant 1987, 124).

Kant in his *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764/ 2011) concentrated on the female inabilities to become the sublime being as their seductive "appearance" interferes with their reasoning and moral purpose (Moen 1997, 237). Female appearance, according to him, is the sole aspect of beauty and pleasure working against masculine sublimity. Their achievements relied on the obedient attitude toward their husbands and considered 'him' as the supreme subject in both domicile and society. These kinds of

masculine reservations toward women are quite prevalent in Indian patriarchal society, siphoning attention away from women's achievements and agency. Kant's ethnocentric conventions have been perceived by theorists such as Bonnie Mann, Barbara Claire Freeman, Christine Battersby etc., arguing that this education is disallowed to the "other" (Spivak 1999, 2-30) of hegemonic Western culture (which disregards the Third world/Eastern culture)and making the Kantian sublime an experience only available to the "White Western male" (limiting the proper conditions of morality and education for Third World women).

Consequently, the sublime was co-opted for political purposes during the rise of British colonialism, which coincided with the height of eighteenth-century interest in the sublime. Pramod K. Nayar observes that during the eighteenth century, the sublime Indian landscape "characterized by emptiness, vastness, ruins, and excessive natural phenomena, is one that threatens" (Giles 2014, 227). The feeling of the sublime sets us in touch with pain. The sublime feeling is not an inclination of good thought but the powers of thought in sublime feeling attract imbalance of the thought quite violently. This sense of imbalance drawn in by violence induces the feeling of pain as well as a sense of pleasure must be understood from two different angles; first, the pain in the sublime emotion is a judgment of the faculties of the mind that are related by their disproportionate or unpleasing existence (Kirwan 2005, 164). The sublime is then a catastrophe for an idea because it prevents it from conducting its desire which in the Kantian philosophical system is considered the rationality and morality of the "supersensibility of Man," which simply deems the masculine ability to reason and prefers moral deeds over desire supreme (Brady 20195, 205). Second, when it comes to fear and pain, both belong to bodies. Violence addressed to bodies may turn out to be a source of sublime feeling when that violence does not come too near to the subject.

That is, when the subject sustains while being threatened by pain, but is not obliterated by it, the subject's endurance and eventual liberation may become a cause of sublime sentiment (Kirwan 2005, 164). The association of terror, in its conventional manifestation, represents the seduction of the soul amid unique and bodily-threatening situations. But for Mann, this interpretation of the sublime was not enough, and the horizon of the sublime stretched towards feminist struggles and the idea of liberation. The sublime, as Immanuel Kant observes in its masculinist form as opposed to beauty (which is feminine and weak), moves away from solitary challenges of collective struggles for independence (Mann 2006, xi). The theory of sublime in this dissertation frames the societal norms of obedience, silence, and domesticity that Indian women have internalized over generations, learning to be docile and pleasurable (to men),

fearing penalties and ostracization for non-compliance and aids the argument of female capabilities as a moral and rational subject.

Through Bonnie Mann's book, this dissertation chooses to discern traces of the feminine sublime and the process of liberation through cultural and social struggle occurring in the lives of Indian American women due to exile and migration. The collapse of the known associations and coherence creates the space to focus on the notions of discrimination, polarization, and contestation over the sentiments of belonging, alienation and cultural bereavement. While the majority of the diaspora are born and raised in the United States and accustomed with the non-hyphenated American identity, many Indians brought with them their characteristics rooted in their ancestral homeland. Indian Americans while adjusting to the ideas of American individualism, civic and political engagements, and immigration policies, Indian women within their communities exhibit high rates of community marriages, closed group religious practices, self-ideations of being upper caste, partisan polarization as well as face discrimination against skin colour, accent, food and appearance. These descriptors suggest the anguish of diasporic women and their unfamiliarity, loss, and fear. The loss of one's social structure and culture, and the loss of language (both colloquial and dialect) hint at the experiences of an uprooted person continuing to live in the past.

While discerning and accepting Mann's claims on the feminine sublime and the sublime as a process of liberation propagated by the day-to-day activities and cultural appropriation, the current work will focus on how the diasporic conditions, effects of migration, and cultural dichotomy creates the path for women to become sovereign and sublime subjects. Alongside Mann's theorization, the dissertation leads with examples of feminine perspectives of the sublime notion as conceptualised by other theorists such as Barbara Claire Freeman (1995), Cornelia Klinger (1997), Christine Battersby (2007), Marcin Moen (1997), Kim Hall (1997) etc. Even without the Kantian categorization of the theory as masculine, the ethical and social implications divide the sublime in two—self (oppressed) and other (oppressor). The cultural politics and patriarchal setting of the selected works highlight women's dilemma and subjugation to masculine traditions of Indian society, which therefore justifies the use of the sublime theory as a confrontational method to decipher the selected works and observe incidents not as an isolated and momentary happenstance but an infinite process of self-elevation.

While "male philosophers have been" overtly writing about "the sublime experience for well over three hundred years, women seem to have" appeared in this debate only when feminist curiosity in the sublime surfaced explicitly around the early 19th century (Mann 2006, 42). This

curiosity leads feminist theorists to the claim that women are not aesthetical beings but only pertain to their superficial existence in society as they are incapable of experiencing the sublime (Mann 2006, 42). Here Mann turns to the Kantian sublime and observes the sublime functioning as the means of self-constitution, against what Kant meant by sublimity within male-dominated thinking. Mann asks the obvious questions as to just how the sublime is gendered and what constitutes the sublime subject that women are rendered incapable of experiencing the sublime; how are the subject's relationships to others implicated in and entangled with its practices of self-constitution? (Mann 2006, 42) In taking up these questions, Mann uses the observations of Luce Irigaray and Cornelia Klinger to observe the gendering of the notions of beauty and the sublime, the differentiation between imagination and reason. Mann looks at how gender works in the constitution in constructing the euro masculine identity but still considers that men are the autonomous subjects (Mann 2006, 49). While agreeing with Mann, I will observe in this dissertation that women are beyond their superficial existence and their life experiences come with challenges and struggles that turn them into sovereign subjects of society, capable of agency, power, and sublimity.

To indulge the discussion of the sublime in feminist contexts, it is necessary to briefly go over the history of the sublime theory, starting from its origin and its contextualisation through the centuries. The critical conversation on the sublime theory has gone through countless shifts till the twenty-first century. *Peri Hupsos* or *On Sublimity*, usually ascribed to the Greek critic Dionysius Longinus, is widely recognized to be the first appropriate theoretical debate on the sublime. Dating from around the first century CE, the definition of Sublimity is primarily focused on its rhetorical nature; it exemplifies the oratorical mechanisms that enable a speaker to move or persuade an audience (Shaw 2005, 12). Longinus, in his theorization of the sublime, puts the stress on novelty and invention of the speech and the orator's skill to manipulate the form of the speech to persuade the audience and eventually "tears everything up like a whirlwind [or 'pulverizes all the facts like a thunderbolt' (Longinus 1964, 62);" (Shaw 2005, 14).

Longinus associated sublime expression with excellence in language that raised the style of ordinary language (Ashfield and de Bolla 1998, 18). It does not only mark the loftiness of the composition but also moves the readers along with the effects of pleasure and persuasion. In this sense, the sublime is an exalted poetic creation with the power to entertain, persuade, and move the readers or listeners through the upliftment of their souls. The sublime is thus the aesthetic inspiring of the soul through the appeasement of the poetic muse and rhetorical prowess of the writers or the speakers (Ashfield and de Bolla 1998, 21). Longinus associated

sublime expression with excellence in language that raised the style of ordinary language (Ashfield and de Bolla 1998, 18). It does not only mark the loftiness of the composition but also moves the readers along with the effects of pleasure and persuasion. In this sense, the sublime is exalted poetic creation with the power to entertain, persuade, and move the readers or listeners through the upliftment of their souls. The sublime is thus the aesthetic inspiring of the soul through the appeasement of the poetic muse and the rhetorical prowess of the writers or speakers (Ashfield and de Bolla 1998, 21). Unlike typical public speech, therefore, the sublime is a discourse of domination; it seeks to enrapture and inebriate the audience so that a majestic concept may be implanted in the mind without any troublesome appeal to reason or justice. Following the idea of the sublime without its appeal to reason or justice, eighteenth-century philosophers such as John Dennis, Joseph Addison and Edmund Burke focused on sensory intervention to evoke sublimity within an individual (Shaw 2005, 17).

The eighteenth-century notion of the sublime resonates with the construction of lofty speech and the vehemence of passion. The eighteenth-century notion of the sublime resonates with the construction of lofty speech and vehemence of passion. While Addison focuses on the substance of the "human soul" in evoking a certain delight that is great (the sublime) and contemplates the supreme authority creating the ability in humans to pursue this grand delight (Erp 2011, 19). Burke searches for the source of the sublime in whatever is "terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (Erp 2011, 19). Through Edmund Burke, an uneven view of the sublime passion gained a well-rounded disposition from its status of being a fragmented phenomenon. The Burkean discussion on the sublime appreciated the sublime not only as a part of the eighteenth-century "Zeitgeist" (Nicholls 1999,17) but initiation of future debates that will form and influence the idea of the sublime.

Edmund Burke, in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757/ 2014), deals with pain and pleasure and treats them as constituents to invoke the concept of the sublime. Burke developed a new explanation in which the real object of nature becomes a source for sublime ambiences and stated that "the sublime is without clearness and thus forces our reasoning to establish an artificial clearness or compensation of the lack of clearness: causing the anxiety of terror" (Burke 2014, 127). But while Burke dealt with fear as the form of absolute passion that other passions revolve around, and the elements of astonishment, terror, obscurity, extracting the strongest emotion the human mind is capable of feeling, Immanuel Kant goes beyond the sensory upheaval of an individual due to an external occurrence but concentrates on the internalization of certain occurrences and the individual

recognizing its helplessness as well as the power of the mind while confronting an overwhelming incident. Immanuel Kant's theorization of the sublime leads us to the basics of human nature and the gendered nature of the sublime, where it is possible to perceive the sublimity of the human mind and conception.

Immanuel Kant starts with his central conception of human nature before theorizing the concepts of beauty and the sublime as he observes—

> each human being is an isolated, atomistic individual; (2) the natural motivation of the agent is egoism, prior to any moral understanding, and (3) the species is bifurcated into two genders, having different natures, capacities, and purposes. I shall not argue that the view of human nature following from these (Moene 1997, 127).

Kant observes the concepts of beauty and the sublime away from nature and the sensory revelation by reversing the natural order and order of dependence on the autonomous subject. By disintegrating reason from imagination, Kant delineates reason as the faculty of the rational subject, whereas imagination becomes part of the dependent object's psyche. Bonnie Mann reflects that the imagination's very collapse enhances the rational subject's achievement since reason can understand the might and enormity with which it is threatened (Mann 2006, 47).

The Kantian subject utilizes what estimates to be the sublime as a mirror, as in reflection, which permits 'him' to experience his power and magnitude as sublime. At "the moment of the imagination's overthrow, the subject's fate flashes out on the boundary between the nameable and the unnameable," known and the unknown (Merritt 2018, 25). Kant explains—

> Therefore the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation, which we attribute to an Object of nature by a certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the Object of nature in place of one for the idea of humanity in our own self—the Subject); and this feeling render, as it were, intuitable the supremacy of our cognitive faculties on the rational side over the greatest faculty of sensibility (Kant 2000, 5: 257 translation modified Merritt 2018, 25).

The development of the autonomous subject or as Kant observes, the "noble sex" continues in the *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime* (2011). "Man's very subjective life increases to contain the woman he marries" (Mann 2006, 51). In the first *Critique* it develops again to include the entire phenomenal world, and here the very might and magnitude of nature become properties of the inner life of the rational subject. By "acknowledging the 'subreption' that has ensued, the subject regains these powers for himself" (Mann 2006, 51). The "true subreption occurs, of course, as Kant observes when the subject cuts loose from the natural world and overturns the order of dependency" so that actions within "society are dependent on the autonomous subject" (Mann 2006, 51). It is a fiction that is constructed on a "violent rupture in the relation of reason to the imagination and the sublimity of the ideas of the reason is first felt

in that moment when imagination is broken" (Mann 2006, 52). Yet at this moment, the masculine subject discovers himself in the mirror, and by the law of reflection, discovers, on one hand, the helplessness of the self in front of the magnificence of nature, and on the other hand, realises the capability of violence, chaos, and resistance within, which are the rational parts of the subject (Kant 2007, 261). Breaching the imagination shatters the subject's association with that part still tied to sensual experience, which Burke declared needed to be overwhelming and seductive for the sublime experience to manifest. Thus to the natural world and giving rise to a heady experience of independence (Kant 1928, 262). This "salvific violence, gendered through and through, allows the subject to experience his vocation or destiny, that is, his freedom" (Mann 2006, 58). As Kant observes—

> it is ... for us a law (of reason), which goes to make us what we are, that we should esteem as small in comparison with ideas of reason everything which for us is great in nature as an object of sense; and that which makes us alive to the feeling of this super sensible side of our being harmonizes with that law (Kant 1928, 258).

In following this, though, the dissertation deals with the reversal of the "autonomous subject" from the masculine figure to the feminine figure. The "fair sex", or women, according to Kant are incapable of achieving the state of sovereignty, as well as the state of sublimity because they lack reason and morality (Mann 2006, 59). This dissertation focuses on how diasporic women highlight and justify all the conditions set by Kant to achieve the state of sublime through their journey and struggles as migrant women, not as submissive objects but as sovereign subjects of society.

In diasporic literature, with the application of the idea of the terror that Kant (in terms of women of the male-dominated society in the late 18th century) denies women are capable of feeling or experiencing because of the benefits of a beneficial position in society, reframes the question of reason and freedom on the concept of cultural inclusion and exclusion. Mann's inquiry into freedom is to consider the necessity of freedom as an essential element of human life and humans as "creatures" who are bound to a place, may it be homeland or hostland, through individual and communal dependence, "the question of necessity can tie the essentialism debate back into a concern with the places we inhabit" (Mann 2006, 19). Attending to the problem of freedom in postmodern literature, Mann encounters the concept of freedom as a necessity but also as the product of "discursive contingency"—freedom available to all subjects, especially for women, away from the masculinist construct of the said concept. The concept of freedom, therefore, links itself to the sublime (2006, 19). Immanuel Kant's exploration of freedom goes beyond textual practices and focuses on certain aesthetic

experiences in the changing ways of life. In Mann's conception of globalization, "practices of freedom reduced to consumer choice" yet the daily experience of struggle keeps on shaping and modifying to display a steady growth of female achievements against their existence as assistance to masculine laws and policies, making the aesthetic study of the sublime an appropriate site for the discussion of reason and freedom (Mann 2006, 20). The masculine traditions, as Luce Irigaray observes, represent "a mere detour" for women to reach their true potential and the sublimity of experience, in its seductive nature, ends the realm of subjugation (1974, 22). The realisation of the self, against the masculine other, situates Mann's concept of the feminine sublime, not as an immediate reaction to a powerful occurrence but as a process of liberation. The diasporic sublime, while working in Indian American literature, consider the feminist engagement in migration studies and the gendered struggles of Indian women in patriarchal narratives of their cultural ties. In the works of the said authors, the masculinist ideologies privileged a certain kind of aesthetic experience that subdued women, unable to confront the limitations of society.

The sublime theory here becomes problematic and gendered as it signifies the confrontation of the female self against the masculine other, the fight of the oppressed against the oppressor. Mann uses the male-dominated concept as a political term to efficiently enfold racialized and gendered aspects of the other against the female self (2006, 23). The term is not exclusively applied to the advent of white men of European descent but rather directs the argument to identities influence through colonial conquests and domination, in the colonies and broader subjugation of women in the colonies. In the postcolonial aspect, the diasporicity of Indian American women may be discussed in terms of the struggles against the masculine traditions, faced in both homeland and hostland and eventual freedom from the subservience thus challenging the generic notion of the sublime, confronting the universal subject, which is "masculine patriarchal, imperialistic" (Mann 2006, 24).

When Homi Bhabha introduced the term "mimicry" in the discourse of literary criticism to notice the suppressed identities, he observed that Asian, African, and Caribbean diasporas had to not only imitate the language, politics, and culture of their former colonizers (British or French) but also had to appropriate to their nationalistic ideals, their racial biases towards cross-cultural assimilation (Bhabha 1994, 88). The diasporic position was vulnerable in the host country since they had to reduce their communal and cultural propensities. Bhabha also sees mimicry as something straightforwardly subversive yet empowering, especially when it comes to adapting to Western social customs and laws. People of diaspora do expect, and advanced social customs compared to their homeland and that it is fair and unbiased but if that is not the

case, diasporas enter a state of defensive fear towards the host country as Naipaul states about his father, Seepersad Naipaul, "My father rejecting one world, came into contact with another. In him was played out the whole tragic drama of an ancient civilization coming into contact with a hideous colonial mimicry of another civilization" (Naipaul 1996, 13).

In the face of this defensive fear and cultural righteousness, diasporic literature stands as a bridge that connects the colonial tensions and reparations of the colonial past. "The animation of this desire, or at least the tools that work hand in hand with the logic of capital," which reveals that "colonial desire is both economic and cultural, can be found, as the sublime moment[…]The sublime thus emerges as a threat that favours the necessity of the myth of the nation" (Nicholls 1999, 12). The imminent threat regarding the destruction of the Western notion of cultural hierarchy evokes the disruptive qualities of the sublime and a sense of colonialist domination overpowers and dominates the other (diasporas from former colonies) and sets out to eliminate, through colonization, the confusion regarding ideas and desires. Since this subchapter discusses the Burkean sublime and the relationship between pain and pleasure, "in the context of Western rationalism" that can be "described as that necessary and distressing predicament that is an unpleasure for one part of the psyche and a pleasure for another" (Nicholls 1999, 13).

While looking at the feminist aspects of reframing the self and its sublimity, it's important to take a look at the relationship between the postcolonial self and the diasporic self. Since the dissertation discusses the struggles of Indian American women of migration and their subsequent elevation from a subdued existence within patriarchal conditioning, it is necessary to focus on the postcolonial aspect and how it influenced and propagated diasporic conditions till the late twentieth century. Alongside the disturbing accounts of the colonial past, "the struggle of the self in conscious spaces has become more uncertain, indeterminate, and transgressive" (Bera 2021, 45). This "stress upon unfamiliarity indicates that the referents of "postcolonialism"—the condition of postcoloniality, the political strategy of postcolonialism, and the postcolonial self—remain obscure" (Bera 2021, 46).

The turn postcolonial is "engaging" yet "unformed," so much so that its usage has become diverse and unstable, and it provokes "diasporic discussions signalling the social and political concerns of the late 20th century such as cultural elimination, alienation, and eventual loss of identity" (Bera 2021, 71). David Spurr goes forward to give a concise sense of postcolonial as a critical term:

> 'Postcolonial' is a word that engenders even more debate than 'colonial', partly because of the ambiguous relationship between those two and I shall refer to postcolonial in two

> ways: as a historical situation marked by the dismantling of traditional institutions of colonial power, and as a search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial the second is both an intellectual project and a transcultural condition that includes, along with the new possibilities, certain crises of identity and representation (Bera 2021, 46).

According to Spurr, "the word 'postcolonial' is twofold; "On one hand, it marks a historical trajectory, on the other, it proposes transcultural upheavals" (Bera 2021, 46). In the historical discussion of postcolonialism, cultural traditions of the diaspora "expand the umbrella term from colonial reparations to transcultural issues" (Bera 2021, 46). Therefore, "the diaspora has re-observed the cultural and national possibilities and embraced transnationality in both the public and private spheres" (Bera 2021, 46). Diasporicity concerns the life beyond the homeland, as Bhabha puts it, "Beyond' signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future but our inclinations of exceeding the barrier[…]that are unknowable, unpresentable, without a return to the 'present' which in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced" (Bhabha 1994, 4; Bera 2021, 46).

Homi Bhabha "while commenting on the process of transculturation, asserts "the borderline engagements of cultural difference which may challenge the normative expectations of a multicultural society" (Bera 2021, 46). In Indian American situation, there is a need to recognize "the conventional limitations between tradition and modernity (pertaining to one or more cultures) to conceive the creation of minority identities"— that act alienated to "personalities and formulates into a collective body or community" (Bera 2021, 46). Bhabha observes that "the political empowerment, and the enlargement of the multicultural cause, might as well be read as a rational approach to perceive community as an 'envisaged project'—going beyond the idea of individual desire to reflect and reconstruct a communal identity" (Bera 2021, 46). With this in mind, "the word beyond in the diaspora makes promises of an unknowable and unpresentable future and hence, it represents the sequentially of 'post' in postcoloniality and gestures constant existential transformation" (Bera 2021, 46).

This "idea of constant communal progression foregrounds the projects' fears, anxieties, and dominance within the dissonant voices of the colonial past" (Bera 2021, 47). If the sublime, "according to Jennifer Wawrzinek, "in its traditional form depends on hierarchies that (re)instate mechanisms of power and domination , then the mechanisms of power and domination are also observed in the politicized space of diasporic existence" (Bera 2021, 47). In the following chapter, hierarchical descriptions of the sublime varying on "the mechanisms of fear, power, and dominance highlight the transformation or elevation of one element over the other, such as mind over the body, and morality over desire" (Berea 2021, 47).

When Edward C. Casey delves into the notion of every woman's "physical and phenomenological" ways of feeling alienated in this world and sheer placelessness, which gives way to "unbearable emptiness," he focuses not only on the physical dislocation and charging into unknown territories but also being trapped in the desperate circumstances and intersubjective relationships in a new place and concentrating on sustenance (Casey 1993, xii). Yet the terror that accompanies the fear is paired with a hectic exhilaration of the self that can be called the sublime in its contemporary notion. According to Bonnie Mann, "the sublime experience names precisely that melting away of the real (in both its social and natural forms) that so marks our displacement[...]" and the aesthetic experience of terror or exhilaration emerges from the struggle of the women's movement (Mann 2006, ix).

The late twentieth-century research on the notion of the sublime involves not only intersubjective relations of terror and power as part of an incomprehensible natural catastrophe but also the mundane struggles of living, surviving, and progressing. The idea of liberation justifies the sublime and helps to contextualize its new form within the terror-exhilarating concerns of the Indian American exile. Bonnie Mann alludes to the notion of the sublime as a process of feminist journey and reformation and refers to the moment in the Kantian sublime that "entails the elevation of reason over an order of experience that cannot be represented" (Mann 2006, 2). According to Mann, "the modernist tradition in aesthetics gendered aesthetic experience most explicitly by dichotomizing the notions of the beautiful and the sublime" (Mann 2006, 25).

It is in Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764/2011) which deals with the expression of gender entanglements. Feminist work revolving around gendered notions in aesthetics has found a way to criticise the masculinist tradition through the discussion of liberty in response to Kantian aesthetics, Kant's work on the beautiful and the sublime holds an extremely important place in the dominant canon. This typical moment of self-elevation involves a moment of obstruction. The lucidity of the emotions is heightened due to an object that the mind's reasoning is unable to comprehend, and therefore exceeds the limitations of human categorization of objects or incidents and subsequent expressions. Thus, this moment that Kant calls the sublime moment marks itself as an enhanced and unexplainable occurrence within the realm of human emotions. The intention is not to "domesticate" the sublime by lessening the profound connections made by the act of the sublime about "power, conflict, and agency" (Mann 2006, 3) but to stray away from the traditional dominative tendencies of the eighteenth century sublime and highlight the feminine sublime as a model of emotional exaltation in the diasporic journey. It is possible to find another connotation of the

sublime within the Indian diasporic This dissertation intends to discuss that assumption in the North American setting, especially in the works of women writers in terms of their use of repressed sexuality (Timofeeva 2013, 1); cultural dualism, alienation and trauma; socio-political quality tensions and different gendered expectations; and this dissertation intends to tease that assumption.

The universality of the sublime emotion takes us on a journey from the picturesque (Jaqueline Labbe, Ashfield and de Bolla) to the tragic and pathos (Fredrick Schiller), or even the horrid and grotesqueness of the gothic sublime dealt by Vijay Mishra (Holmqvist and Płuciennik 2002, 723). Writers such as Raúl René, Villamil Uriarte, and Isabel Vitalith Maduro Rodríguez have devoted entire research to the power of the grotesque in artistic creation; this fascination (the sublime) with that which is frightening is still very pertinent in the minds of those "creating and consuming art in the present day" (Moen 1997, 210). The intense feeling of helplessness from sheer intimidation of something more powerful in nature manifests the power of the mind and helps the subject to break free from what is pleasing and going beyond something that appears repulsive. Starting in the eighteenth century with Immanuel Kant, he made a distinctive split between the sublime (repulsive) and the beautiful (pleasing).

Both of these concepts were to be deemed sources of pleasure, yet the kinds of pleasures provoked by the sublime versus the beautiful were quite different. Kant starts to evaluate the understanding of beauty, in order to ask as precisely as feasible the question if the judgements about beauty are possible (Kant 2011, 17). Kant's preliminary focus is on judgments about beauty in nature, as when we refer to a flower, a sunset, or an animal 'beautiful, which hints at pleasing acceptance of the object. The acceptability of the object or the incident does not cause disruption of repulsiveness in our minds. The purposiveness without purpose of something beautiful is to please us, within our understanding of tase and judgment. In the 21st century, it seems more ordinary to join the two together, yet Kant was very particular about separating them. The sublime, for Kant, was to be judged as a source of both pleasures and pain, while the beautiful was meant to instil beneficial or pleasing joy in the person experiencing it. Kant was influenced by Edmund Burke's treatise, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757/2014) where Burke defined the sublime as something that induces "terrible fear" in a person and overwhelms the senses while at the same time invoking pleasure once the viewer confirms the experience from a safe distance (Mendez 2015, 17).

In other words, both Burke and Kant spend quite a substantial amount of time expanding the notions of the sublime, focusing on the "unextraordinary, un-sublime nature of woman," yet at the same time, they each spend an equal amount of time concerned with the dark side of

the “feminine sphere” of “something which is supposed to be nothing more than pleasant, companionable, and full of joy” (Mendez 2015, 18). Both Burke and Kant posit the risky and volatile nature of femininity in society and questions the purposive objectiveness of the “fair sex” and how they seduce and charm the subject, the masculine, straying them away from their purpose of achieving sovereignty or freedom (Klinger 1997, 193). The pejorative ideologies towards women are limiting and subduing and theorists such as Barbara Claire Freeman, Bonnie Mann and Cornelia Klinger observe these imposed limitations on women as objects, assisting man’s purposes and the establishment and acknowledges the confrontation of women on the cultural and social level. This dissertation observes the arguments made by these theorists to highlight the gendered bias towards the Indian American diasporic women and how their struggles and confrontations with themselves turn them into sovereign subjects, aiding their own cause than the masculine establishment.

I.2. Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni on the Postcolonial Subject

In her chapter "Postcolonial Theory," Violet Lunga identifies postcolonial theory as "a complex field of study, encompassing an array of matters that include issues such as identity, gender, race, racism, and ethnicity" (2008, 193). Alongside postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Saïd as the "experts" that have done the theorizing in the field, Lunga claims: "These scholars have denounced Eurocentrism, promoted difference, and represented a postcolonial voice" (2008, 194). Lunga opines that a specific use of the word 'postcolonial' relates to literature that was authored by "people who were once colonized," and "focuses on the ways in which writers articulate and celebrate cultural identities and delve into questions of agency and resistance" (Lunga 2008, 192). Walking the fine line between decisiveness and contrariness seems to be especially troubling for Indian women, given the combination of gender and racial expectations. The question that is important here in this section is why these particular writers and the novels are chosen as the representatives to justify the categorization of the diasporic sublime.

In what way does the discussion of their agency and resistance contribute to the broader scope of postcolonial studies? The dissertation articulates the dilemma for Indian women quite bluntly, Indian women are raised to be meek, to be good listeners (Rayaprol 1999, 114). Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni embodied pioneering early Indian women and their journeys in the direction of education, social and sexual liberty to the US that led to an initial example of a universal, transnational feminist understanding (Rayaprol 1999, 115). The characters from the selected novels for this investigation not only focus on the gender restraints that limited the lives of Indian women in conventional upper-caste families but also how the Indian women in both succinct and long-term exposure to American society, embraced their rights to own body, mind and existence to emerge as a socially active agent.

Despite acknowledging the racial and cultural distinctions among communities, Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni tried to delve into the intimacies of internal discrimination within Indian communities born of variations in languages, cultural traditions and class and caste system. These authors also concentrate on the internal division of Indian communities and how women are raised differently in distinctive families depending on their social and economic standing (Helff 2013, 39). Gendered roles and biases in different families demonstrate disparate hierarchical circumstances of Hinduism. Discussing the circumstances women as well as their domesticity in Indian society investigates their formative participation and impact in the American society and the restoration of their status (Helff 2013, 50). Autonomous Indian immigrant women do not essentially find a "natural space" within the model minority picture

within the Indian patriarchal society where men are naturally considered the head of the household (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 76). That image further involves more traditional gender roles, “where the men are the professionals and the women are associational migrants whose primary responsibilities are within the household” (77). Within the context of plural identities and the mundane experiences of gender, diasporic women find a harmony of interests and interests that independent Indian women migrants can correlate to.

This is especially the case given the variations in urgencies and concerns of women in their post-migrant lives. Biswas further observes that “the micropolitics that immigrant women engage in prior to migration” are mostly involved with pressing the borders of gendered prospects outside the home that alters their identities. In reference to how borders effects identities, Réka M. Cristian in her chapter “Home(s) on Borderlands and Inter-American Identity in Sandra Cisneros’ Works” observes the identity construction in Cisneros’s “non-narrative” world operating in “pluralistic modes on manifold levels” that also creates “the extradiegetic shift” regarding different statuses of homes and homelands (Cristian 2015).

Migration often explores this kind of shift in identity, which is very much prevalent in Indian American identity, existing across spaces of culture. Independent migration signifies a substantial victory in the challenges of resettlement where Indian American women face the micropolitics within the home and in maintaining a balance between the home and world outside the home. This “micropolitics is common ground for most professional women in the US” and for the diasporic women, the rise of these concerns of a home life appears to come as a surprise, given their “intrepid pre-migration experience of rejecting gendered boundaries” (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 79). The diasporic sublime readdresses the premigration and postmigration experiences option of will and agency, the play of micropolitics of Indian immigrant women as investigated in the novels to change the issue of power and agency towards the asserting of female subjectivity. As postcolonial objects, Indian women and their journeys to escape the restrained secondary status and “rise above the glass ceiling”, rise to their sublime existence (2017, 79).

Data on international migration were not considered by gender till 1998 till United Nations Population Division declared the first gender “disaggregated” data evaluations for immigrant residents for the years 1965–90 (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 80). Using the assessments for foreign-born populations from country-level census evaluations, the UN estimations showed that women consist of approximately half (46.6 percent) of the total number of international migrants as early as 1960 (81). Women continue to correspond to nearly half of the migrant people were worldwide and prior to 1965, there is a long history of various overt racist laws

confined Indian immigration to the US. With the data undeniably underscoring the true gender developments, the misleading notion about migration being a primarily male interest had to certainly give way. The integration practices of immigrant women, the gendered structure of the post-immigrant self and the gender structures in immigrant work have gotten much-necessary attention in recent years (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 79). Yet the absence of opportunities for women migrants persists in different ways. In the case of Indian immigrants to the US, the commonly stated narrative that men make the choice while women go alongside as families or "associational migrants" is not backed by data (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 80).

For the intent of this research cis/heteronormativity defines a set of "societal assumptions and norms which are based on heterosexual, cisgender experiences, influenced by social biases, privilege and stereotyping" (Rosinsky 2021, 6). Therefore, cis/heteronormativity is not merely the freedom of heterosexuality or "cisgenderism, but a ubiquitous "force in which heteronomy is linked to social oppression" (2021, 6). Prevalent cis/heteronormative attitudes and practices saturate predominant cultural principles, affecting policies, practices, and individual beliefs. These principles presume the myth of binary gender identities and heterosexuality as the norms and extend into all areas of life including family structures, relationships, beauty standards, and ableist notions of worth and bodies (2021, 6). These mannerisms get internalised by Indian women and continue to impact their agency and rationality as diasporic subjects.

Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty has particularly pointed to the significance of developing narratives to better comprehend this micropolitics of change. Mohanty disagrees that the encounters of women from the third world are, in certain, very narrowly presented (Mohanty 1984, 333). As a result, we often fail to understand the "agency of the women themselves to effect change in their lives and in the larger socio-economic contexts globally" (Vijaya and Biswas 2017, 82). The perception of choice and agency is usually inclined to follow two intense narratives where women might be conditioned to expect that "prioritizing marriage and family over professional success is the right choice to make and will bring them the highest level of satisfaction" (83). By discounting Third World women's encounters altogether, the pre-1970s immigration research was deficient in its assessment of immigrant journeys and its impact on both the home and host countries. As comparatively empowered professional women from the who traverse ingrained expectations about gender roles in two distinct environments, their encounters can develop our knowledge of the way women use their own agency to increase their choices and influence change.

According to Mohanty, it is quite evident that white radical feminism was inclined to understand the connections between "race, class, and gender in the lives of Third World women" (1991, 315). Alongside the classist and racist influences, Mohanty acknowledges the religious and social constrain that the Third World woman faces in mundane events of life. The greatest radical feminist struggle that emerged in the 1960s United States was the African American movement against racism focusing on the postcolonial repercussions, double colonisations (being first oppressed by colonizers, then the men of the community) and female displacement. Agreeing with Evan Smith (1983), bell hooks (1984), and others Mohanty further observes "that it is in fact the involvement of Third World women, both within and outside the United States," that has described the "broadening definitions of feminism to incorporate race and class analysis" (1991, 315). The diasporic sublime, in any case, purposively frames the questions of female subjectivity to the sublime for two reasons: (1) to concern itself with the participation of "Third World women in defining feminism" and setting its agenda and terminological relationship with the foundation of the sublimity; and (2) to configure the sublime as a mode of feminine confrontation and elevation amid dislocation, alienation, and cultural appropriation (Mohanty 1991, 315).

Bharati Mukherjee an Indian-born Canadian/American novelist, has made a profound impression on the Asian American literary canvas as an investigative author, venturing into the terrains and experiences of Indian immigrant women. Mukherjee lays claim to an America that is both continuously transforming, and transformed by, new immigrants (Nelson 2018, 24). However, it is clear that Mukherjee's depiction of a fluid American (trans)national identity inspired by diversity is eventually centred on the foreground processing of differences (Nelson 2018, 24). Despite Mukherjee's call for America to move beyond multiculturalism in its treatment of new immigrants, her own postcolonial immigrant "subjectivity-inevitably shaped by her elite British and American educational background-remains associated with white hegemony," which persists to "hierarchize its immigrants on the basis of ethnicity, class, and gender" (UKEssays 2008, 1).

Feelings of isolation and homelessness provide an existential dilemma, whereas Bharati Mukherjee's women experience these emotions abroad. Mukherjee often deals with the predicaments and circumstances of immigrants and expatriates. In her novels, the difficulties of displacement and cultural disasters are the main effects of the misery of women. While devising a new India, she also needs to invent a more accurate metaphoric America. While doing so, in her own words, she makes use of "Hindu imagination; everything is a causeless, endless middle" (Mukherjee and Blaise 1977, 175). Indian migrated women's search for their

identity in the diverse land of America is uncovered through "the spaces of tradition, personal memories, different places and new ways of life in the altered sociocultural constraints" (Mukherjee 1993, 7). They tried to restructure themselves against the customs to which they belonged.

On the other hand, when it comes to Jhumpa Lahiri, Lavina Dhingra admits that the reception of her works are different than that of her immigrant predecessors. Dhingra positions Lahiri's work within the aesthetical and critical practice of bringing the diaspora under the umbrella of broader cultural and postcolonial studies, and Lahiri's representations of Bengali American male characters "demonstrates how Lahiri's work transcends and challenges the Asian American gender wars paradigm" of earlier "Woman Warrior" like Bengali American novelists such as Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Dhingra 2012, 14). Placing Lahiri's texts within various contexts—of "gendered Asian American literary critical debates, and of the British representations of Bengali colonial masculinity as effeminate", Dhingra observes Lahiri's "nuanced and empathic representation" of Bengali American femininity (Dhingra 2012, 14).

While Lavina Dhingra locates Lahiri's work in a bigger discussion on advancing immigrant "gender roles and gender-bending," Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt's chapter, "Gendered (Be)Longing: First- and Second-Generation Migrants in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri," Dutt-Ballerstadt "compares male and female characters of both the immigrant and second generations" in Lahiri's novels, noting that many are "gendered nomads" who must "work through complex negotiations of belonging and un-belonging, identity and non-identity, learning new words and entering new worlds" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2012, 14). Lahiri's contextual movements improve the perception of specific intercultural experiences. "Postcoloniality is an intrinsically intertextual construction that considers universality—the ambiguous story of "empire written on indigenous cultures around the globe, who write back in specific ways" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2012, 15). Lahiri's narratives infuse Indian female beauty with emotional abilities that reconstruct the semantic ideas of "exoticism, commodification, gendered nationalism, and transnational mobility" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2012, 15).

In Lahiri's stories, beauty works "not simply or even primarily as a mode of (feminine) objectification/exoticization" or as a kind of "neoliberal individualism, but as a deeply, if unevenly, socializing force within moments of cross-cultural and interracial encounter" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2012, 15). In constructing these confrontations, beauty creates impacts such as "estrangement, identification, and desire, which open onto articulations of citizenship and belonging" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2012, 16). Lahiri's idea of beauty reframes the questions of gender

roles as well as the imposed on females of seduction. This specific idea of beauty is an oppressive tendency that borrows from male dominated traditions to locate women as secondary, seductive, and superficial beings of society, producing feelings of inadequacy "about her own provincialized status as un-cosmopolitan," emotions that are also "inextricably tied to the story's illumination of the Indian (female) ethnic minority's lack of full belonging within the US nation" (16).

Representation of fractured identity is a thematic element powerfully present in the work of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Complicated, fragmented encounters of persons living in the Indian diaspora are often present in novels by Divakaruni along with constant employment of rupturing in terms of structure, imagery, and character. In 1976, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni left Calcutta, India as a young adult and settled in the United States; her experience of immigrating "caused Divakaruni to re-evaluate her homeland's culture, and specifically its treatment of women" (Softky 1997, 26). Beyond analysing the existence of "factorization," it becomes important to investigate how characters manoeuvre their lives and identity struggles. It is clear that "[a]s migrants cross borders, they also cross emotional and behavioural boundaries[...]One's life and roles change. With them, identities change as well" (Espín 1998, 241). According to an experimental study of the psychological problems of Indians in the diaspora, it becomes apparent that while Indian Americans are confronted in extreme ways, they are concurrently threatened with incidents that increase their self-awareness and a deeper sense of identity (Lamor 2015, 2). Therefore, the need to successfully redefine and locate their gendered and socio-political identities as a part of the migrant community becomes prominent. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni focus on the concerns of the diaspora as Lau suggests, finding themselves in a unique spot, with unique struggles (Lamor 2015, 7). As a result of (or within) those struggles, Divakaruni employs identity as a theme, evidently in her works, to showcase diasporic women under the impact of immigration, and a wide range of difficulties in relocation.

Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni together address the problems of the Indian diaspora, especially the subdued status of Indian women, both in their homeland (India) and hostland (United States of America), while considering the Western tendencies to depict Third World women as a homogeneous and oppressed group (Moolji and Chacko 2011, 4). Postcolonial feminist scholars repeatedly have pointed out the impact of European women and their social status and subjectivity have made the ways the colonials and Third World women were compared and judged against that. These three authors are marked separately from postcolonial authors due to their positioning as diasporas themselves as well as dealing with immigration and its side effects, dislocation, and sense of belonging (Moolji and Chacko 2011, 4). Their

novels explore the multiple angles that affect the decision of migrate such as class and casteist differences, gendered expectations and restrictive boundaries imposed on women to become assistants to masculine establishments. The euro masculine standards of society that Immanuel Kant constantly brought up in his *Observations on the Feelings of the Beauty and the Sublime* (1764/2011) kind of seeped into the mindset and the social practices of the patriarchal Indian society and the similarities of masculine domination and subjugation of women in the form of double colonization are remarkable. Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni, alongside proving the seriousness of migration, explore the evident trends of oppressive cultural and religious practices and the impact on female subjectivity. The religious and cultural stigmas of an Indian woman through the myths and customs such as 'sati', 'tree bride,' and 'sita' enforced the female seclusion in the Indian society and how Indian women internalised the masculine idea of the female body and perfection.

For instance, many European women travelled to the colonies to campaign against customs such as sati and female seclusion. Also, Third World women were projected as voiceless and silent objects in society. The campaigns on behalf of colonized women, however, were problematic as they often reproduced the relations of dominance by constructing colonized women as voiceless while simultaneously positioning white European women as empowered active agents. These authors, in their selected novels, are also concerned about the ways in which colonized subjects were produced in and through colonial texts and their Third World victimized subjectivity. While drawing attention to the hypersexualized and eroticized images of Hindu women in their novels, they focused on the representations and misrepresentations of Indian women in imperialist projects with the false sense of emancipation. Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni used the religious, socio-political and sexual tropes to highlight the status of Indian women, both at home country and abroad to map the construction and development as a sexualised and sovereign subject claiming the long denied power and agency. Financial independence as well as educational empowerment are subjected to thematic exploration due to the constraints on female sexuality in a repressed, male dominated society.

I.3. The Female Subject and the Feminine Sublime

When it comes to the feminine subject, the diasporic sublime discusses and theorizes the perspectives of violence, psychological, physical, and sexual offences, and the oppressive societal constraints that limit the movement of a woman. While "discussing the feminine sublime in relation to the female subject, the queries of vulnerabilities" and blurring the "boundaries between the selves come to light in the creation of the sovereign subject" (Mann 2006, 133). Yet, according to Bonnie Mann, the notion of the "sovereign subject" is also a "radical departure from other characterizations of sublime experience" that have been confronted so far since in this encounter, rather than a suspension of meaning, there is a "superabundance, an excess of meaning" (Mann 2006, 134). The "subject of the sublime experience related to intersubjectivity" does not "encounter an abyss or a void, but a relationship with an alterity that is unrepresentable in the sense" that its significance floods the borders of a conceptualization (Mann 2006, 134).

The "pleasure or exhilaration in Freeman's theorization of the sublime" has to do with a feeling of "rapture," "merger," or "identification" with the other that, while maintaining rather than colonizing distinction, "is also a resource of significance that is tremendously enthusiastic and abundant" (Mann 2006, 132). The theme of vulnerability as well as a journey to seek equality and power are the motifs of intersubjectivity and affirm the conditions of the sublime, both in old and modern contextualizations of the sublime theory. Embracing Freeman's "affirmation of female vulnerability in relation to patriarchal constructs of specific communities, which is, in some fundamental sense," as Mann observes, "the basis of the superabundance of meaning we encounter in "the feminine sublime" (Mann 2006, 132). In this dissertation, the importance of feminist philosophy in relation to subjectivity, vulnerability, and the sublime may well frame contemporary feminist think and the elevation of their political, social, and gendered status.

Mann's observation of Judith Butler in the context of her "politically informed psychoanalytic feminism" focuses on Butler's account of concerning political vulnerability as "the primary condition of human life that grounds the ethical, different philosophical traditions and political trajectories" (Mann 2006, 132). Freeman's characterization of an experience as the sublime is rooted in the foundation of exhilaration and the counter experience in relation to "dominant narratives of the sublime, emerging in these diverse contexts," formulated by feminists with various interests— which reframes "the notion of vulnerability in the face of alterity that is the foundation for Freeman's feminine sublime" (Mann 2006, 132).

This underlying "condition of human life is poignantly" discovered in encounters of loss, in which our dependency on others is both interrupted and made horribly visible (Mann 2006, 133). Butler observes, "maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are" (Butler 2004, 22). According to Mann's observations of Butler's notion of vulnerability, the connections,

> that are revealed are both absolutely particular (no one is constituted in their relation to this particular other in the way that I am) and universal (everyone is constituted in and by their ties to some other or others). What becomes undeniable in these experiences is that "we are, from the start, given over to the other ... even prior to individuation itself and, by virtue of bodily requirements, given over to some set of primary others" (Mann 2006, 166).

As in Freeman's account, for Butler "these powerful experiences of grief undo the boundaries of the self" (Mann 2006, 133). Here, the response to the alarming reality of our dependence on others "is not a fantasy that shores up the boundaries of the self and reasserts the sovereignty of the autonomous subject" (Mann 2006, 133).

The fantasy of "an autonomous and sovereign subject must be achieved through the entanglement of reason and emotions, with decision-making capacities" (Mann 2006, 134). In reference to Indian society, the absence of female subjectivity hints at the patriarchal oppressions that interfere with the growth of Indian women as sovereign subjects. Society restricts the ideation of female reason and disregards the moral and virtuous status of women, each embodying their own individual agency and terror (Mann 2006, 134). The sublime in their experiences as a migrant subject, in their relationship with both homeland and host land, and their reception of masculinity in their lives frames Freeman's account of sublimity as well as Bonnie Mann's observations on the sublime, which "evidently implies vulnerability as a quality that creates the scope for women to confront the overwhelming terror and subjugation" of society and embrace their sublime selves (Mann 2006, 134).

The diasporic sublime aims to challenge and reconfigure the hegemonic narratives of a patriarchal society as delineated in the novels focus on the relationship between the female subject and the sublime transcendence and individuation. The marginalisation, silence and domestic repression drew on the women's memories, expressed through memories of traumatic experiences regarding body and mind, dislocation and socio-political upheavals (Feldblyum 2017, 4). The idea of Kant's "subject's power" may be explained in terms of capacity and as the representation of the rational mind and the objective of self-determination (Feldblyum 2017, 4). The inquiry of the feminine subject's power determines the connection with her sublimity

of being. Barbara Claire Freeman's renowned contribution book *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (1995), in the field of the sublime theory, is just one part of a rising discourse of feminine inclusiveness. As a part of this movement, Freeman establishes a way for women in theory and criticism, where women are severely underrepresented (Faison 2013, 9). Though the portrayal of women in art has improved substantially during the past decades, the theory has remained to lack a depiction of women or femininity. Especially in the area of the sublime, "which has primarily been discussed from a patriarchal perspective, theory needs women's voices" and Freeman is designing a "space for women in theory with her book, and creating a space within the theory of the sublime for a feminine perspective" (Faison 2013, 10).

The conventional definitions of the sublime stated before Freeman's are principally patriarchal, but "with the long histories of discourse, manifestos, and treatises, they are tremendously varied in their classifications of the concept" (Faison 2013, 10). Many of these are concerned with "unrepresentable excess," a concept Freeman investigates concerning femininity (Faison 2013, 10). Specifically, Barbara Freeman's theory offers a rich field for evaluation because of her particularly female treatment of the sublime (Faison 2013, 11). Kant and Burke both distinguished between mere beauty and the greater order of the sublime, debating the finest ways to judge taste, according to quality, "quantity, and other concepts of empirical beauty" (11). Kant argues—

> that the beautiful might even be purposeless, and he leans in favor of sublimity as a preferred method of aesthetic code, maintaining that "the sublime does not lead to disinterested contemplation, as does the beautiful, but to deep feeling" . For Kant, while beauty is connected to form and boundary, "the sublime, on the other hand, is to be found in a formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it the boundlessness is represented, and yet its totality is also present to thought." (Kant 1992, 375-386)

Beauty is beautiful because it fits with "empirical" standards of structure and demonstration, while the sublime is the very notion of "formlessness, boundlessness," having no boundaries or limits: "the excess that is beyond form or boundary, that is the sublime" (386). Kant asserts that along with the "object of rapture causing the sublime, there is an excess that can't be understood or comprehended, prefiguring Freeman's later concept that this otherness might even be feminine" (Faison 2013, 13). The object of the rapture is too much to understand, preventing the mind, but after this obstacle comes heightened transparency. Thus, the sublime is linked to an excess that develops beyond understanding transcendence. The sublime is distinct and above beauty, terror, or quality—achieving a kind of intensity that might blend all of these. The most

crucial aspect of the sublime might be this theme of "excess": an extreme 'too-much-ness' that "categorizes an experience or an object as too much to represent or recreate" (Faison 2013, 14).

Barbara Freeman identifies the superiority and supremacy of "those who dominate the discourse of the sublime aesthetic as a perfect example of patriarchy, and so argues that the traditional sublime theory is a patriarchal one" (Freeman 1995, 9). Masculine domination in the sublime has traditionally designated the excess otherness to a feminine label; just as patriarchy "attempts to control femininity, so a patriarchal understanding of sublimity seeks to control the excess or otherness" (Freeman 1995, 9). This gendering of the sublime that divides the components of the sublime assigns gender to each component, leaving no place for femininity on the "dominant" side of sublimity. Freeman's project is to create a feminine sublime, to find a place for femininity in the sublime theory that is not merely other. Because Freeman's definition of "feminine" is a "formulation of an alternative position" (1995, 10) and that which contests binaries (1995, 9), her feminine sublime does not seek to dominate or control the excess that is othered by a traditional sublime theory, instead "embracing the excess that characterizes the sublime" (Freeman 1995, 10).

According to Freeman, the traditional sublime is a construction of the patriarchal subject, which maintains its borders by subordinating differences. If otherness characterizes the sublime, then the sublime is also characterized by the domestication of otherness that is designated as feminine. In her discussion, Freeman references Luce Irigaray's definition of excess, meaning an "unrepresentable difference" (Freeman 1995, 9), implying limitless and unknowable otherness. While those who wrote discourses on the traditional sublime (Kant; Burke; Longinus) try to master the object of rapture, the feminine sublime is a "reconfiguration of the sublime that tries to find otherness without mastering or domesticating it" (Freeman 1995, 10). What is hidden and repressed by traditional means of sublimity, the feminine sublime allows excess to remain, therefore remaining truly sublime. According to Freeman, the feminine sublime has a twofold meaning, comprised of the socially constructed category of woman that has endured universal and transhistorical oppression, which underscores the reality of women's suffering, as well as indicates a position of resistance with respect to patriarchal order (Freeman 1995, 10). This means that femininity is the woman's side of the man/woman binary, but femininity is also the position that opposes the patriarchal order. Freeman defines feminine as that which opposes binary. Thus, Freeman's femininity is more concerned with "moving boundaries," as Judith Butler phrases it, than with sexual differences. Freeman contends that "what is specifically feminine about the feminine sublime is not an assertion of innate sexual difference, but a radical re-articulation of the role gender plays" (Freeman 1995, 10).

To observe the relationship between the subject and sublimity, it is important to notice the manifestation of terror and traumatic experiences that overwhelmed or threatened the subject's life, well-being and to a certain extent, existence. In the case of diasporic women, it is necessary to observe the conditions and consequences of the transatlantic voyage and the subject's somewhat 'heroic' pursuit to change the decided fate of women in oppressive social groups. Moreover, for ease of measurement, satisfaction in this economic calculus is usually evaluated in monetary terms (Passar 2003, 20). Prioritizing marriage over a career might seem like a good monetary choice if women's wages are on an average lower than those of men. However, Passar observes, that this narrow focus on the monetary benefits again obscures the different societal structures facing men and women (2003, 21). It leaves little room for understanding the kinds of prolonged negotiations and intergenerational coalitions that women build in order to overcome entrenched gendered barriers to making independent life and career choices (Passar 2003, 21).

The possibilities of gaining greater voice and control over their decisions are explored only in their post-immigrant lives. Several gender and migration studies tend to look at what migration scholar Patricia R. Passar describes as the relationship between migration and emancipation (2003, 20). As traditional family As family structures change and families attempt to establish new post-immigration assimilation routines, immigrant women, particularly those with jobs, tend to gain more control over domestic decision-making and this stream of work highlights important dimensions of change in immigrant family structures and gender roles (Passar 2003, 21). Yet viewing the pre-migration experience as uniformly exploitative and emancipation as largely a post-migration phenomenon tends to obscure the considerable history of vocal feminism and women's movements in the Third World (Passar 2003, 23).

It also assumes a linear progression of women's empowerment from the Third World to the 'first world'. The sense of terror normally arises due to the dangerousness of the object evoking it and the sublime occurs due to being scared and drawn to the otherness of the danger at the same time. Our sense of curiosity, or the anticipated satisfaction of that curiosity, elicits a feeling of pleasure, especially if the danger is being observed from a safe distance (Crowther 1993, 210). The 21st-century notion of the sublime, however, along with the association of the feelings of fear and unfamiliarity focuses on these relations, physical and psychological dislocations, and cultural conflicts. Observing the sublime within the diasporic journey and living conditions in a foreign land and the conflict of these experiences move beyond the mere bodily demands and concerns and propels one into a transfigured state of being (Crowther 1993, 212). So the confrontation with the sublime is not merely an experience that happens to us but

can be the defining experience of our lives, ascertainable in our common culture, and can strengthen and redeem life by allowing us to live in promising consonance with the foreseeable difficulties of that life.

By cojoining the terms diaspora and sublime, the ‘diasporic sublime’ has the potential to emerge as a critical term that can identify the process of transformation where the sublime is taken away from its conservative trajectory and read the struggles of diasporicity. Interrupting Western tendencies to depict Third World women as a homogeneous and oppressed group, postcolonial feminist scholars point out the role of European women as handmaids of colonial rule. Nowhere is this more evident than in the attempts by European women to save their colonial counterparts from perceived oppressive cultural and religious practices. For instance, many European women travelled to the colonies to campaign against customs such as ‘sati’ and female seclusion. These campaigns on behalf of colonized women, however, were problematic as they often reproduced the relations of dominance by constructing colonized women as voiceless while simultaneously positioning white European women as empowered active agents.

II. Conceptualisations of the Diasporic Sublime

II.1. Towards the Diasporic Sublime: Self, Migration, and Morality

Freeman mentions Patricia Yaeger, who describes a female sublime as a certain mode of women's writing, a mode of "empowerment" through which the female writer can "invent, for women, a vocab of ecstasy and empowerment, a new way of reading female experience" (Freeman 1992, 150). However, Freeman contends against this, arguing that Yaeger, by observing the sublime solely as "a mode of writing or a narrative strategy," actually domesticates it—by turning the sublime into an arena for "subjective bliss" and "pleasures"—the sublime develops into "kinder, gentler, another version of beautiful, which is not sublime at all" (Faison 2013, 12). The feminine sublime, then, is not simply a mode of writing, but a "uniqueness and commonality of women's oppression" that affects women's articulation of sublimity (6).

The feminine sublime is "therefore is a woman's experience, including both beauty and oppression, resisting categorization because of the broadness of women's experience" (12). This resistance makes the feminine sublime a dicey definition, but ever more crucial to appreciate. The *Critique of Judgement* (1793/2000) recontextualizes Kant's former to critiques (*Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*) to observe the significant changes in the perception of self or subject. With the shifts in the concept of the subject and the concept of time changes as through the Kantian *Critiques* and the concept of the body changes also. In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), the body is simply a physical object like any other. In *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), it is the locus of desire (Moen 1997, 232). In *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, the body is the locus of pleasure and judgment (Moen 1997, 232); it contributes to the processes of nature as well as in the cultural process.

In *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1793), Kant makes the clear distinction between the masculine subject and the feminine object as the distinction specifies that the concept of a lower and of moral agent depends on the relationship with the known, which is the object, and eventually, the self evolves, or "becomes a reflective participant in a perceptual and cultural process" (219). It is a process of reflective first perceptions with "purposive objects (beauty/women) which feminist writers bring out within the epistemic activity" (Moene 1997, 219). So, between masculine subjects and feminine objects. "Autonomous reason should, as Kant says, be the sole determinant of our actions; appeals to emotions or feelings of another sort are womanly immature and morally irrelevant" (Moene 1997, 219).

Kant's gendered perception of human nature interferes with the idea of moral agency, which can't only be attributed to men, and his attempt for independence can't exclude women as higher subjects as he finds the finds women complacent and naturally beneficial, incapable of while understanding moral principles and how they represent just social virtues, the women are enmeshed in the independence of social life (Moen 1997, 233). The concept of human nature fails to account for the social dimensions of human beings. Bonnie Mann's work will primarily focus on revisioning of Kant's conception of human nature, a conception of agency and the dissertation while supporting the revisioning of the content fundamentals of the beauty and the sublime in the postmodern world will establish a relationship between Kant and fundamentals and the moral lives of embodied agents within Indian American women constructing the self of exercising reason and moral agency in the family is sublime as well as diasporic sublime recognises the tension between the masculine subject and the submissive female object an within the discussion of Indian American diasporic women the purpose is to show that women.

The ideas of the beautiful and also the sublime were unknown before the eighteenth-century but it is only then that they are developed into the foundations of an aesthetic through feminist theory; it is only in this period that aesthetics evolves as a full-fledged discipline in the canon of philosophy. Especially the concept of the sublime became very modish during the middle of the eighteenth century as "an almost obsessive interest in and proliferation of material about the sublime" (Klinger 1997, 191). Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller are brought up during the modernist and postmodernist discussions of the sublime in relation to the reflective status of morality and judgment constituting the relationship between subject and object. But the reflections of Edmund Burke, for example, are much more familiar and applied in interdisciplinary discourses. It is also more than a historical coincidence that the divergence of the sublime and beautiful and in particular, the escalation of the sublime as a theory take place at the same moment of "Western history when gender relations undergo, not a real revolution, but a considerable reshuffling in the wake of the Enlightenment" and "as a concomitant of the political and social revolutions that mark the beginning of the modern epoch" (Klinger 1997, 193).

The demonstration of the legitimacy of this argument would be to give an investigation of a work Kant published in 1764 titled *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. The third out of four sections that represent this work posits as well as defines "The distinction of the Beautiful and Sublime in the Interrelations of the Two Sexes" (Klinger 1997, 194). It is here that Kant unequivocally associates the beautiful with femininity and the sublime with masculinity. The emotion of the sublime that is stimulated by some phenomena of external

nature "the prospect of mountains ascending to heaven, deep ravines and torrents raging there, deep-shadowed solitudes" (Kant 2007, 121) is nothing but a reflection of man's sublimity in his autonomy from the imagined state of mind, nature as a rational, as a moral being:

> Sublimity . . . does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us (translation modified, Klinger 1997, 193).

Cornelia Klinger, as well as Bonnie Mann, are aware that the woman is alleged to be closer to nature than a man because of her explicit bodily functions and her connection through nature with the concept of nurture; moreover, the idea of femininity is envisioned in close analogy to the idea of nature and thus reveals both of nature's characteristics: contrasted to a man who aims to go beyond not only the boundaries of nature but of any given order (including the regulations of society) women are regarded as "benign and harmless, a creature subjected to nature" (Klinger 1997, 194) and existing without the will to revolt against her condition.

She is not resisting abuse or death because she be deficient in man's courageous intellect, his creativity, his desire or resolves to independence and power, his fortitude not to obey any but "self-given, autonomous laws" (Klinger 1997, 194). However submissive and therefore criticised the female image, she may be, there is a bias against her nature as a seductive object, with her charms affecting the process of man becoming the sovereign subject by appealing to his imagination, connection to his nature as well as his senses. The submissive "portrait of women enshrined in domesticity displays an equally important pejorative image that bodies are of sacrilegious entity" creating the scenario for conceptualising the process of "the female body turning into a sovereign subject by overcoming the societal restraints put on the body, mind, and habitual space in the home" (Klinger 1997, 201).

To investigate the relationship of femininity and the sublime and search for the independent female voice within the Indian American literature, there is a need to enter the realm of the immigrant experience, their ways of appropriation to the social and cultural demands of the host country (while keeping the traditions of the homeland in mind) and their language and literary practices, which directs as feminist practices within transnational communities. This discussion will lead to the assertion of their sexuality and a considerable gap and disparity in gendered diasporic experiences (Mann 2006, 131). Bonnie Mann gradually takes up the prime condition needed for the sublime occurrence, terror and connects its growing aestheticization to everyday life. In 1958, when Hannah Arendt mentions "the advent of a new yet unknown age", it is marked by an experience she calls "world-alienation," characterized by a "twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self" (Arendt

1958, 6). The state of exile, the diasporicity of migrated communities structured by a vast disarray of material and social circumstances, extremes of impoverishment, cultural and environmental destruction "that threatens all of us (but not equally), and the instantaneous networks of communication that are the taken-for-granted backdrop to some lives" (Mann 2006, vii). In this unfamiliar age, the sublime may be seen as the process of constructing and elevating the self in relation to various threats and terrifying situations one faces in the world. The idea of the "sovereign self" therefore manifests through the relationship with the self and the other, subsequently divides the sublime theory as of the oppressor and the oppressed (Timofeeva 2013, 1).

The female writers of the Indian diaspora express their "expatriate, migratory, disoriented, and imagined subjectivities and involvements through an incessant flow of ideas, feelings, and thoughts in a stream of consciousness" and their alert experiences, reflexions, and imitations "reoccur from their subconscious mind, memory, desire, menace, or apprehensions" (Singh 2017, 51). The authors articulate their own experiences as diasporas get disenchanted with the idea of one nation and one nationality. Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni explore their femininity, their multicultural upbringing, and their longing for Indian traditions through their novels. Their "dialogic perception and creative urges establish syllogism between the thinking readers" and the novelists' autobiographical experiences and consciousness (Singh 2017, 51). They "unleash such exposition through the art of characterization in the story" and create women characters such as Jasmine, Ashima, and Tilo (Singh 2017, 51). Feminine sublime stresses the idea of a woman and her femininity in "two ways: on the one hand, to refer to the socially constructed category of the woman that has endured universal and transhistorical oppression" and thus to underscore the reality of women's suffering (Mann 2006, 132). On the other hand, to indicate a "position of resistance concerning the patriarchal order, whether it is perpetuated and sustained by biological women or by men" (Mann 2006, 132). That refers to both the inner conflicts and the universalization of the problem that concerns diaspora women and their self-elevation process worldwide.

Dating back to Simon de Beauvoir's work (1952), feminism imparted the idea of women being made rather than born, and, of course, men are created as well. The realization that gender is a construct is more prominent in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. These writers probe into the uncomfortable and orthodox peripheries of Indian society, especially the Indian household which is extremely patriarchal. Indian families are strict regarding the classist and casteist divisions of society and cling to the old moral values that create a culturally, socially and sexually repressed space. Even though this space is ever-

changing and offers certain relaxations depending on a particular family's social status, the average Indian woman is part of the unhomely reality, restricting their physical, emotional, and psychological movement in a society that is made by and made for men. Hinduism's masculinist interpretation also contributes mostly to women's subjugation and relegates women as weaker beings than the male members of the family, and henceforth, we witness the rise of toxic masculinity. Bharati Mukherjee explores her paternalistic dominance with her characters, including life skills such as a positive self-image and emotional intimacy with their father. However, most of Mukherjee's protagonists share a distant, almost negative emotional relationship with their fathers. This emotional distance tends to create a complex with the patriarch and affects relationships in their marital life. Manisha Roy in *Bengali Woman* (1975) comments on the tolerance, control, and absenteeism of emotionally damaged characters with twisted father-daughter relationships in a Bengali family:

> The daughter must also obey the father and father figures who give her instruction in schoolwork, in music, and in introducing her to the world of literature, music, imagination, and introspection. In this case, she is permitted to ask for indulgence through their affection and she demands overt demonstration of their affection ... the cultural ideal in this case is supported by the religious ideal based on the Hindu myth of Durga who, as a little girl Uma, was loved and adored by her father, the king, and his subjects. Every girl in her father's home should be treated as Uma, soon to leave for her husband's home (Roy 1975, 157).

The sublime has been affiliated with a wide range of social and political notions, such as Burke's allusion to the sublime about the French Revolution or Pier Giuseppe Monateri's discussion in the *Dominus Mundi* (2018*)* and the sublime complexities of Medieval Jurist literature. Bonnie Mann tries to associate the sublime with the possibility of liberty and freedom, and this chapter intends to extend this idea of the liberatory sublime into the realm of Indian American works by selective female writers. The diasporic sublime is a phenomenon that intends to capture the diasporic intents, experiences, and gradual transcendence supported by the aesthetic approach to the sublime.

For the sublime to take upon this idea of unravelling the "consciousness-raising" propagated by Catherine Mackinnon and established as a feminist method (MacKinnon 1989, 106-25) the very idea of raised complies with the process of elevation or raising above the current state in relation to the sublime. Nevertheless, the question that is always introduced at this point is raised above what? Raised to what degree? And why? Since Beauvoir's time, it was made clear that women are not born but made, concerning how men and their masculinity are made. The sublime's masculinist traditions 'raised' the men and 'razed' the women, and the history of women's subjugation testifies to that. Indeed, if women are made, they can be

unmade, and the liberatory sublime alludes to that process. It is the daily struggles of women, their mundane tribunals and constant challenges in and out of their domestic sphere that unknots their consciousness, and reasoning and elevates them to a state of their exceeding the one relegated to them. Bonnie Mann correctly reflects on this:

> if feminist consciousness is raised above something, it is raised above the commonsense world it has just 'razed' to the ground. It is 'raised' above an everyday experience of the naturalness of certain relations of power, certain forms of authority, certain curtailments of expectations, certain corporeal habits[…] (Mann 2006, 152).

This idea of rising above the societal position relegated to women calls for the notion of liberation from the age-old beliefs, customs, and traditional bondages that women reject from time to time with their moments, experiences, and journey through the extraordinary living and "the aesthetics of this experience are sublime every bit as much as more classic experiences of terror-exhilaration, of necessity giving way to freedom, of an approach to a limit and a feeling for something beyond it" (Mann 2006, 153). When it comes to Indian American diasporic writings, the focus is on the female writers of Bengali descent who try to mobilize the process of liberation through their characters and display how these women find a balance between their Indian roots and the American dream. The self-transcendence regarding the otherness marks the migratory journey as an exclusive event with its share of terror, power display and uncertainties- the very domains needed for the sublime effect (2006, 153).

However we look at this, the process of acceptance is at play in the global socio-economic periphery when it comes to women and their rights, especially if they are of hyphenated identity. The "identarian binary" (Mishra 2007, 136) interferes with their process of freedom and, to a large extent, with the process of the liberatory sublime. Since the communities' collective unity is built around an illusory and imagined state regarding the origins, cultural and moral ties, and the patriarchal idea of the domicile, also builds a questionable identity of the feminine self. The feminist version of both the Indian communities and the sublime do describe a crucial aesthetic understanding of "terror and exhilaration that characterizes our material predicament" (Mann 2006, 156) and the Eurocentric masculinist traditions relay an unescapable idea of postcolonial feminist affirmation. The masculinist idea of freedom, since the eighteenth century, interpreted as the natural right, is a right to dominate and relegate position based on race, sex and ethnicity. The liberatory sublime focuses on freedom from this self-anointed, domineering masculine tradition (Mann 2006, 157). In the Indian diasporic context, breaking away from the domestic construction led by a patriarch and blatant display of toxic masculinity destroys a feasible option. In diasporic politics, the

aesthetics of the liberatory sublime acknowledges the pushing of boundaries and travelling beyond the relegated limits. It destroys, as Luce Irigaray will put it, the "I-centered" world where women appear as women rather than mere functions existing for men (Irigaray 1974, 22).

Mann's concept of the liberatory sublime is about opening worlds onto a space between women whose claims are heard and realized. It offers a safe space for the struggles to be recognized differently and not be generalized. In the diasporic context, it. Sublime experience is oriented toward feminism because it breaks open space for feminist practice across all kinds of differences. It is possible for that space to be a ground of protest and assert their dominance or, as Freeman suggests, as that structure of this sublime as the transfer of power or reconstruction of gendered structure and reversal of dominance. "Women's Liberation" as Mann observes, makes the "sealed worlds break open, over and over again, the space between re-asserts itself, and feminism, if it is to be a viable movement at all, will (re)orient itself, repeatedly, in place after place and time after time" (2006, 157). The liberatory sublime becomes a journey celebrating the idea of rising above the razed, victimized position and emerging triumphant (Mann 2006, 157).

Again, the history of the sublime, its 18th-century manifestations as well as the use of terror. How the sublime changed and morphed throughout genres and disciplines and how that opened an opportunity for the feminine sublime. With Burke and Kant, the traditions of the sublime took two distinct roads: imperialism and masculinity. Highlight the difference between beauty and the sublime and how it marks weakness and strength, femininity and masculinity. The Feminine sublime, as Freeman observed, is about the aesthetical subjugation of women within the terrain of consciousness and reason. In Mann's observation, the sublime transcends the temporal limitations of an external occurrence and turns into a process of elevation, a mode of confrontation (2006, 21). The aesthetic quality of the sublime often provides us with natural phenomena such as vast oceans, mountains, volcanoes, or starry skies. But with time, interdisciplinary observations of the sublime focused more on its emotional impact and the feelings caused by such objects.

Edmund Burke makes consistent claims on the fear of the mind caused by the object or the circumstance, and 21st-century research on the sublime is a further appreciation of that feeling of fear (Cochrane 2012, 125). However, there is also a sense of fear or moments of self-exhilaration when we witness races or fights. Even then, neither of these events can cause sublime emotion. Tom Cochrane observes that this kind of fear —

> is something that manifests itself as fear that can be located in our experiences of the sublime. This feeling, which comes in a few varieties, may be less physiologically intense than everyday instances of fear. But it has a certain psychological profundity that coheres well with our intuitions concerning the sublime. (Cochrane 2012, 130)

So, to follow Cochrane's description, we may observe the passion of fear, yet although we might accept that fear is a typical element of our response to the sublime, there are scenes traditionally so described that seem only joyful to experience, such as an expansive view of the surroundings from the top of a mountain or watching the sunrise (2012, 131). In these cases, it may still be possible to locate fear within the narrative of coming to have those experiences. One may feel fear when looking up at the mountain, or when climbing it, which is transformed into joy when one finally reaches the top and looks out.

Similarly, in the case of the sunrise, one may have a sense of having made it through the night, of having moved from fearful darkness to joyful light (132). Yet even if we accept this suggestion, the argument for the necessity of fear has become weakened. One may only recognize that fear would be an appropriate response to take towards the object, though one has managed to resist or overcome it in some fashion. However, we could also make the stronger claim that the intensity of the fear involved intensifies the experience of the sublime. The presence of a more intense emotion would obviously make the overall experience more intense. But more than that, it could make it more characteristically sublime, on the grounds that sublime experiences are particularly concerned with that tension between the negative and positive qualities of the experience (2012, 133).

The mind creates a haunting nostalgic space reminding one of the colonial pasts, where the postcolonial struggle in their self-conscious spaces that are "uncertain, indeterminate, and transgressive" (Bera 2021, 45). This accent upon unfamiliarity suggests the referents of diasporic anxieties such as "the condition of postcoloniality, the political strategy of postcolonialism," and the alienated self (Bera 2021, 45). The Burkean fear and sympathy that contribute to the feeling of sublime do not always demand a direct involvement in the act of memory. Through their transgenerational memories, the diasporic communities relive the cultural and social traumas on a loop, and generations of hyphenated existence heighten the fear of identity, ancestry, and homeland. There is a visible global presence of the Indian diasporic community in North America, and the shuffling of the Indians from their historical homeland has been going on for centuries. These communities were formed during the British reign on the Indian sub-continent that lasted until 1947. These communities were divided into two groups: expatriate and diaspora. The expatriates were undocumented immigrants who They

sought temporary asylum on American soil, whereas diasporic communities were permanent settlers. The Diasporas had access to American privileges and balanced their hyphenated existence as Indian Americans. While enjoying hyphenated status, the diasporic communities also faced grim challenges regarding their identity and national and cultural orientation, often leading to minor communal frenzy. Mishra observes,

> They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, a self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements. Diasporas are both celebrated (by late/postmodernity) and maligned (by early modernity). (Mishra 2007, 1)

However, these communities are not subjected to territorial nationality, yet their cultural loyalty thrives on India's ancestry's imagined ideal. The uncommonness of their existence and the duality of their socio-cultural stance give way to a democratic flexibility that keeps ethnicity and nation in balance. Argumentatively, these communities' social formations draw in a broad spectrum of unique experiences in terms of settlement and lifestyle, and I would like to observe these experiences aesthetically and firstly, with the Burkean approach to the sublime.

Indian diaspora is about the "dispersal" of people and their "eventual return," founded by an "imaginal memory," and the idea of return is continuing to preserve the much-neglected critical reality of nostalgia (Perlman 1988, 7). The tendency to look back at some notion of the "golden past" redefines itself throughout generations and reaffirms its position in the writings of many diaspora Indians (Rushdie 1982, 428). Salman Rushdie reminisces about his position as a postcolonial author, regarding exiles, emigrants, or expatriates, as he observes their stance as:

> haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt… which gives rise to profound uncertainties — that our physical alienation from India will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost… will create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible one, imaginary homelands, Indians of the mind (Rushdie 1982, 428).

With cautious steps, it is possible to parley on this notion of uncertainty that leads us to trauma. Diasporic writing often works in the recollection of a moment of trauma in the homeland—what lets us return to Hamlet's melancholia: "When we first meet him, he neurotically compares a dead father with the living uncle as "Hyperion to a satyr" and longs for the moment when his own very solid/sullied flesh would not only melt but indeed "thaw and resolve itself into a dew" (Nicholls 1999. 23). Diasporic melancholia, too, is a flashback statement to melancholia is "deeply tied to our historical realities" (Caruth 1996, 12). On the other hand, Burke argues that the sublime is caused by deprivation, darkness, solitude, silence, or vacuity. These feelings are

immensely connected to the traveling blues of the diasporic communities. The event of migration that causes the "untimely rip" from one's Due to socio-economic struggles and aspirations, the diasporic journey becomes traumatic only under its retrospectively endowed meaning (Mitchell 1998, 121).

According to Mann, the sublime's misogynist history took feminists by surprise for them to realize its aesthetical value and affirm its position as a counter sublime in women's lives and their creative vigour. Barbara Claire Freeman "finds what she calls a 'feminine sublime' at work in the writings of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Luce Irigaray, Gloria Anzaldúa and Toni Morrison, among others," and the feminine sublime strays away from the sublime experiences' masculinist traditions of the sublime experience and other dominant philosophical notions (Freeman 1995, 2). Freeman claims that each of these authors "makes explicit the female subject's encounter with an alterity that exceeds, limits, and defines her" (Freeman 1995, 2). This kind of confrontation with danger directly or indirectly shapes the female subjects, and the sublime experience transforms them in ways that cannot be categorized, predicted, or undone.

For Freeman, the implications of vulnerability are to "re-assert individual sovereignty, to shore up the boundaries of the subject" and to "dominate," "appropriate," "colonize," "consume," or "domesticate" the alterity one encounters in order to "demonstrate proficiency over the experience that had seemed overwhelming" (Freeman 1995, 8). Freeman's idea of the feminine sublime rejects a particular submission to masculinist ideas or, rather, the sublime's sexist fantasies and acknowledges struggle, crisis, and reformation. The female subject, according to Freeman, "enters into a relationship with an otherness—social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic—that is excessive" (Freeman 1995, 5) and unpleasant, which reduces her ability to categorize and reason, which leads to subsequent liberation of the self-concerning other.

The sublime realization is a mental state where one recognizes the separation between humans and nature and hence intensifies the fear of nature. In that instant realization, we realize that we have been overwhelmed by natural incidents and the curiosity leads us to identify nature as a fearful and obscure entity, which is a necessary insistence for the sublime. The sublime is the realization of our dominance, our power subjugated by the power of terror. This sense of fear further instigates the self to rise above it, amplify the means of self-elevation above nature, and according to Kant, our desire to prove existential superiority over nature as an act of self-preservation has always existed to preserve our existence in nature. The nexus of simultaneous reduction and elevation of the self, causes the aesthetic pleasure we know as the sublime (Huhn 1996, 273).

II.2. Body, Food and Home: The Aesthetic Foundation

> I'd like to begin with a common story, a tale of migration full of contradictions. The heart of it is so familiar that it seems more like an American cliche than a suggestive point of departure for an exploration of the poetics of dislocation (Friedman 2004, 190)

When Susan Stanford Friedman mentions the "poetics of dislocation," she questions the existence and condition of the human spirit stuck between worlds, "to desire and longing as they cross and recross geographical and cultural borders, to the domains of intimacy and family in migration, dislocation, and relocation" (Friedman 2004, 190). In her poem *Alphabets of Flesh* (1996), Meena Alexander writes, "assimilation translated into doing well, very well, not just making do. But the streets lined with gold are hard to walk and what happens with the heart can give one pause" (Alexander 1996, 15). Whether or not "the streets [are] lined with gold" and for most migrants, the diasporic status is unable to form intimacy. Intimacy starts in the body, depending on touch, sensation, feeling, and the body of speech (Friedman 2004, 191). When it comes to the social authority of a subject, the place of desire, pleasure, and the change on the body become deciding factors.

The effects of migration and subsequent dislocation can be both the site of pain and pleasure, "the place of resistance but also of mutilation and abjection" (Friedman 2004, 191). The female diasporic subject on one hand carries the struggles of cultural assimilation in terms of food and home, on the other hand, tries to adjust to the gaze as a foreign subject who differs in bodily signifiers among Americans. "The body is the home of the heart, flesh is the body of home" and food connects the body and home— These three concepts are the foundation of the diasporic and exiled self (Mannur 2009, 7). With bodies being in the move, the migrating women rediscover the relationship between body, food and home. But also what is home? writes Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), "I had to leave home so I could find myself, …I kept the ground of my own being[...]So yes, though 'home' permeates every sinew and cartilage in my body, I too am afraid of going home" (Anzaldúa 1987, 3).

Both home and elsewhere—wherever a migrant woman travels and relocates become sites of dislocation, closing the ways to connect with any place fully in terms of space, place and culture. The way in which the ideas of the beautiful and sublime are conceived of and how they resemble contrasting ideas is equivalent to the binary polarizations of "form and matter, mind and body, reason and emotion, public and private," (Moen 1997, 193). The universal denominator of these and other binary opponents lies in the dualism of culture and nature. In various ways and perceptions, man's relationship with nature is at the heart and Within the

framework of an exclusively male-dominated system in the Indian diaspora, the traditional, cultural and physical polarities can be seen as the challenges of the problematic nature that surrounds Indian migrant women, both in homeland and hostland and the dissertation conceptualises this problematic aspect in relation to the idea of subject, liberation and the sublimity of existence.

The term, patriarchal, does not mean that it is only men who are creating or contributing to the hostility towards women and their individualistic growth through social norms; the "patriarchal gaze" (Klinger 1997, 194) can also incorporate the techniques in which women recognize each other and themselves. The historical and cultural attitudes towards women, precisely when combined with the similarly troubling and mysterious, associations of death, abuse, silence, and guilt, have an immediate correlation with death, violence, and terror since it somewhat causes a mixture of terror and fascination to human beings and within human beings, in relation to their human nature, and it is something that has a greater force that cannot be entirely understood (Klinger 1997, 194). If we are to think in the same context as Kant and determine that the sublime and the beautiful are separate, then it would be beneficial in this context to recognize that in poetry as in other art forms, feminine imagery has begun to cross back and forth from beautiful to sublime, depending on the intentions of the artist.

Kant, on the other hand, was specific in his views towards how women were portrayed, describing them as beautiful beings that were also very aware of their own powers and of the control they wielded over men. Kant makes statements in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (2011) such as "Women will avoid the wicked not because it is unright, but because it is ugly" (Kant 1960, 81) while then continuing to devalue woman as her "ugliness" grows:

> Finally age, the great destroyer of beauty, threatens all of these charms; and if it proceeds according to the natural order of things, gradually the sublime and the noble qualities must take place of the beautiful, in order to make a person always worthy of a greater respect as she ceases to be attractive. (Kant 1960, 92).

Hence, in Kant's perspective, the attractiveness or beauty of a woman is extremely important to her being and when this changes, it is necessary for a woman to have an alternate sense of self, or else her value in society will no longer exist (Mendez 2015, 19). One cannot say that these fundamental ideas have reformed very much in mainstream culture today; the importance of a woman is very often connected with her physical beauty, in spite of many of the attempts of feminist theory and more recent artistic struggles at showing beauty and sexuality as part of the realities of ageing women (Mendez 2015, 19).

The body as a sight of cultural determination first marks someone as "the stranger"—it might be the skin, the eyes, the hair, the shape, the sex; it might be the walk, the posture, the angles of movement; it might be the clothes, the jewellery, the shoes, the decorations, adornments, and accoutrements of the body; it might be the sounds that come out of the mouth, off the pen or keyboard-the cultural materiality of speech, accent, rhythm, style, writing (Friedman 2004, 198). The strangeness of the body infuses more with "demographic implosions" and the U.S. has its own history of the "colour line as the demarcation of strangeness" (Friedman 2004, 198), the uneasy assimilation of Indian immigrants within the American society is visibly different in terms of "darkness" of body, bearing the trace, signs and symbols of foreignness (Friedman 2004, 198).

In his interview with BBC, Vikas Khanna was asked if his sense of hunger comes from India, to which he replied, "my sense of hunger didn't come from India so much because I was born and raised in Amritsar and we have a huge community kitchen where everyone gets fed. The entire city can eat there. But my sense of hunger came from New York when I was struggling here from the very bottom" (Khanna 2021). 'Sense of hunger' suggests desire as well as the trauma of hunger, in this case as an immigrant suffering dislocation and going through the phase of cultural pollination. Food, in the diasporic context, represents more than the mere need for physical sustenance but represents fear and discrimination. The immigrant identity faces the impact of traditions passed down in the form of culinary knowledge as well as the use of ingredients that are native to the homeland. Understanding food habits, ingredients, in terms of cultural retention and assimilation, as well as culturally defined notions of food in maintaining physical and psychological well-being, is the need of diasporic discussion in this dissertation. Spices, herbs that do not have just culinary relations to Indian society also appeal to spiritual and religious connections too. While interviewing Indian American families settled in southern California, Friedman finds out how the Indian herbs ae locally grown and spices are brought in from India signifying the carrying of pieces of the homeland and imagined recreation of the native familiarity within the bounds of hostland, America.

The connection of food and Indian American women also points at the patriarchal image of women deserving to be only part of the domicile, the kitchen, which also represents the hostile concept of home that subdues and objectifies women and makes the public and private sphere heavily gendered. The experiences of (re)producing home food in daily life and food practices involve the availability and limitation of ingredients that Indian relate to as 'food.' Stereotyping of cultures restricts them to appreciate the American food in wholesome way which makes Indians feel alienated. Moreover, from the perspective of social identity theory,

home and ethnic foods are important resources as well as references used by people in defining the ethnic borders that culturally differentiate between "us" and "others," (Kershen 2002, 2) since various ethnic groups have their own unique cuisine cultures and dietary habits. In this regard, for some people, consuming home and ethnic foods have become the strategy for presenting or achieving their ethnicity or social group identity. Indian women due to their need for close knit communal attachments (as opposed American idea of individualism) indulge in food sharing events or grow a cultural haven out of shared experiences of recipes and ingredients back from home land.

The Indian women construct a collective and social identity of being immigrant wives and mothers in a foreign land the association of emotional and ethnic meanings stand for a particular taste, a particular food habit vastly different from mainstream American society. The packet of "mixture" (in *The Namesake*), "Achaar" or "mouri" (in *The Mistress of Spices*) may seem easily available for all classes but are limited and expensive finds in the USA. The experiences of food explore the ethnonational identity and cultural markers critically reflecting on the socially constructed nature of home or ethnic foods in the migration context. The behaviour that food elicits out of an individual not only points to necessary nutrition but also feelings of nostalgia, the notion of comfort food (Mannur 2009, 26). We see in the novels, women who are pregnant, or victims of sexual and emotional violence or homesick constantly in search for certain smell and taste in food that reminds them of home, of safety and security amid loved ones. As migrants, Indian women struggle with the recreation of home as they are familiar with in their homeland due to the limitation of food (31). Their idea of self, home, and community changes due to their relationship with food which affects their identity and alters their sense of belonging.

The concept of initiation into adulthood is another way of perceiving the relationship between body, food, and home, and how domesticity confines the female image. It is mostly connected to the idea that a woman belongs to the community, to a man leading the household, and her sexuality is subjected to suppression, being hidden, and never being celebrated as a part of her individuality. The diasporic woman comes to recognize the arbitrary fragments of her life: how the violence manifest the s through the body, food and home in the lives of Indian women, both in homeland and hostland, echoed down through the generations of women who provide and service the needs of men. The Partition of India in 1947 compelled millions from their homes and unbridled massive communal blood-shedding. Thousands of women were violated, physically and psychologically, abducted, raped, mutilated and denied any type of shelter that can be termed as a home, to hurt the sentiments of particular communities, as

renowned Indian feminist and activist, Kamla Bhasin in her interview with actor Amir Khan, at *Satyameva Jayate* observed that a community's respect and order, a male lead family's honour depended on preserving the sexual and moral honour of women of the house (Bhasin 2014). The distinction between the two sexes, in this case, also shows how women are to maintain their secondary status in society to uphold the primary status of men. This distinction puts the idea of Indian women and their status within the home and suggests confinement within both the home and body. Lakshmi Kannan in her novel, *Going Home* (1999) righty observes the hostile, intertwined relationship between home and body and she reflects—

> A house. A receptacle that receives us. A chrysalis that contains. A house or this body that houses our being. It absorbs the vibrations of our mind and our heart. Together with time, it records these vibrations and we try to free ourselves from the fetters of its calculations. We struggle against them but fail in our efforts and return grudgingly to the shell of our body like disappointed tenants, to continue with our lives half-heartedly (Kannan 1999, 22).

The hostile idea of home and the confining of mind and body bring out the concept of "freedom" —how to get "free" from the imagined and emotional state of the female self as well as from the "mediocrity" that manipulates and restricts the growth of the self (Friedman 2007, 204). Every occurrence of violence, abuse or dislocation or association of death that leaves a scar on the female body and/or mind can be considered the turning point that shatters the image of a woman belonging to a home created by the man to keep her sheltered and tucked away and that specific moment where the woman gains moral agency to exercise the power within to resist the overwhelming cultural dilemma.

The body has always been linked with time, with the "finitude of time, since the body has an end: it develops, becomes decrepit, and dies" (Timofeeva 2013, 5). Every cultural change is signified through the body as well as food and home. Travel, migration, exile—these are the journeys of being as becoming, identity establishing in the movements through space, place, and time and the poetics of dislocation may start for some in acknowledging "home" as not a place where the heart may be, but a place that must be left to start fresh as Friedman observes—

> The poetics of shock-of rupture, dislocation-involves emotional, spiritual, and often physical partition-a severing from "home," however imaginary, as the muse that commands "write, write or die." Writing about the loss of home brings one home again. You can't go home again-except in writing home. The rapture of writing rupture (Friedman 2004, 47)

The society made of individuals with moral agency feed off contradiction and conflict and the space between familiar and unfamiliar stimulates the self as well as tears one apart. The feeling

of survival from this unnamed anguish or entrapment creates jarring juxtapositions—beads of longing, belonging, and dislocation.

The Diasporic sublime focuses on the concepts of conflict, disharmony, struggle, and violence that are essential parts in the lives of migrant and exiled women—all of which manifest through body, food and home. The constant image of a nurturer as a daughter, wife, and mother confines the woman within the bounds of home, to be hidden and subdued. The essence of a nurturer, though attributed as a noble trait, connected to nature, it also attracts the idea of a pejorative image of women as secondary members of society, placing the female body under the bounds of negative pleasure, limiting its movement as a subject. With the shifts in the concept of the subject and the concept of time, the Kantian *Critiques* and the concept of the body change also. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, the body is simply a physical object like any other. In, *Critique of Practical Reason*, it is the locus of desire. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment* the body is the locus of pleasure and judgment (Moen 1997, 232); it contributes to the processes of nature as well as the cultural process.

With beauty as a mechanism used against women to keep them in their place and the sublime used as a mechanism to aid the masculine thrive into becoming active agents of society, it is safe to say the dissertation enters the realm of Kantian sublime and its relation to gender, race, sex and oppression (Hall 1997, 258). The diasporic experiences shape the body as well as the mind of the women who have been treated and devalued as secondary citizens within the novels as portrayed by Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, confront the limitations and the pejorative ideologies pressed on them to reclaim their position as autonomous subjects capable of making rational decisions, beyond their emotions and natural desires. The female characters of the selected novels for this research, renegotiate "diasporic space is pressing on the space of the home country[...]the centre has shifted, only the margins have expanded to push the home cultures further to outer space" so the West can continue "to place for exhibition, recognition, and judgment" against its own philosophical traditions (Yadav 2017, 383).

A splitting of the subject, as well as recognition of Indian American women as the subjects, is essential in order to establish the sublime process of cultural confrontation and evolution of the self. By judging the contradictions, the internalization of traumatic struggles of diasporic women, the mould of male-dominated subject identity is shattered and the split between the primitive self and self will be evident. The subsequent multiplicity of the female subject from the low point of passiveness is a key component of how the temporalty challenging Kant's determination of the "paradox of space is built upon the expansion of the subject's

interior universe to include the object/woman/nature" (Hall 1997, 259). The dissertation, in the next sections, focuses on the novels to discuss the specific diasporic journey of Indian women belonging from different religious, class and cultural spectrums through their struggles and conflicts to become assertive and moral agents of contemporary society.

III. The Diasporic Sublime in Six Contemporary Indian American Novels

III.1. Loss, Exploitation, and Cultural Bereavement in *Jasmine*

> The fundamental question of the sublime: what happens when the stability of human consciousness, of a centred subjectivity, encounters the absolute power of the universe?
> Marie Shurkus, *The Sublime Event with Kant, Deleuze, and Lyotard*, p.14

According to Marie Shurkus, the notion of the sublime effectively relates to an emotive experience. Philosophical descriptions of the sublime tend to describe the experience of the holder, rather than the object eliciting the experience. In Immanuel Kant's notion of the dynamic sublime, the object of the experience is supposed to be something of such might that our resistance to its force would be futile, yet combined with the feeling of safety from that force (Kant 2007, 106). The object must arouse fear in the beholder (although not every object which we fear can be said to be sublime, as shall be shown). In this case, it is the recognition of superiority of power that is the source of the painful element of the sublime experience. It takes the painful experience of the other or the powerful object to assert that the subject position assigned to the female in Indian culture is bound up with conflicted ethics and frames of position does not involve or do not highlight the authentic ideation of "female" or "feminine subjectivity" (Battersby 2007, 101). But the diasporic sublime focuses on the confrontation of the powerful object that represents overwhelming terror and the possibility of existence beyond that life threatening fear.

The painful experience of realising one's futility of existence may also heighten the agency and power to thrive for a life beyond helplessness and vulnerability. Women's experiences are infinitely variable and the individual selves are comprised of different upbringings, cultural, and socio-economic factors. In terms of Indian culture, the repression and stigma surrounding the expression of sexuality contribute to the construction of the self as well as race, nation, religion, education, class, and casteism. However, "given that the traditions of the sublime are primary sites of exploration both of the borderline between self and not-self and also of materiality and transcendence" (Battersby 2007, 101), and that women are abnormally positioned within the studies of postcolonial migration in comparison to male immigrants, it will be interesting to discuss the sublime in respect to patterns of change, confrontation, and elevation of the female subject.

Jasmine, which was centered on a previous short story in *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988)tells the narrative of a seventeen-year-old girl widowed after her husband's assassination in a bomb attack by a guy named Sukhwinder. She and her husband originally planned to move to Florida, but as a result of his death Jasmine continues with the trip on her

own, in the name of "duty and honour" (Mukherjee 1989, 32). In her path she faces many obstacles as she travels from Florida to New York City to Iowa. She moves forward to her present life in Baden, Iowa where Jasmine is known as Jane is 24 years old, pregnant and residing with fifty three year old banker Bud Ripplemayer, and his adopted son Du.

Bud asserts on marrying Jane, who declines for unspecified reasons. She one day recounts her life in India where she is known as Jyoti in a village called Hasnapur, Punjab. Jasmine as the name was given by her late husband, Prakash, talks about her journey to the US and how. Half-Face, the captain of the ship she travelled in sexually assaulted her. Jasmine envisions killing herself but instead murders Half-Face. Jasmine meets Lillian Gordon, who takes her in calls Jasmine 'Jazzy,' and helps Jazzy get to New York to meet with Professor Vadhera(Sukumary 2015, 70). Lillian is shortly sent to jail for exploiting undocumented immigrants for non-salaried domestic chores. Jasmine starts working for Wylie and Taylor Hayes, She moves in with them in Manhattan to take care of their adopted daughter, Duff. Taylor calls her 'Jase' but she spots Sukhwinder, the man that killed Prakash and flees New York for Iowa. Taylor attempts to convince Jase to come with him to California. She is confused, thinking of Bud will have no one. Jasmine follows Taylor and Duff to the car, muttering "Watch me re-position the stars," to the psychic who prophesied her widowhood and exile (Mukherjee 1989, 240).

Progressing with the contextualisation of the diasporic sublime in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, *Jasmine* (1989) is a suitable choice to highlight the development of the theory. *Jasmine* reflects not only the struggles of identity of an undocumented immigrant but also representation of agency and power (in the face of terror) in the protagonist to reinvent herself. The protagonist (also named Jasmine) assumes different names throughout the novel to play different roles and expectations in life. The novel also revolves around two important motifs through which the sublime contextualises: body and home. Jasmine's journey from a small village in Hasnapur, Punjab to Florida in America highlighted bodily harm, grotesqueness, impurity, and ugliness, as well as powerlessness, violence, and hostility of home. Her experiences of migration focus on the idea of freedom accompanying potential insecurity (Sukumary 2015, 71).

Jasmine changes her names several times, from Jyoti to Jane to define different paths in her life that made her choose between devotion or duty and desire (Sukumary 2015, 71). In this chapter, the sublime manifests through the ideation of body and home in relation to migration and the gaining of an autonomous state of the immigrant woman through the arduous struggle as delineated by Mukherjee. The psychological challenges manifested through the stigmatization of body, impurification (such as rape) represent Jasmine's breaking away from

the societal mould that was decided for her in the patriarchal society. To transcend the submissive state within the religious and socio-economic limitations, the sublime becomes the process of confrontation and elevation, as Christine Battersby discusses the conditions of meaning for the term "sublime":

> …in the eighteenth century can be seen in James Beattie's fanciful genealogy of the word 'sublime' in his Dissertations Moral and Critical of 1783: 'Grammarians are not agreed about the etymology of the word sublime. The most probable opinion is, that it may be derived from supra and limus; and so denotes literally the circumstance of being raised above the slime, the mud, or the mould, of this world' (Battersby 2007, 105).

The way Battersby focuses on the new definition of the sublime as elevation from the lower state of life. it also provides an opportunity to discuss the term in reference to postcoloniality and the elevation of diasporic women. Even though, the terms postcolonial and diaspora are not seemingly synonymous, the status and involvement of migrating women in postcolonial studies focus on the preservation of cultures, the continuation of tradition and the past as well as breaking away from the obligations of religious and cultural constraints. Jasmine in her saga throughout the novel, propagates the notion of breaking away from the decided social and gendered expectations to move forward to a path of possibilities (Sukumary 2015, 72). Hence, migration, in Mukherjee's novels represent the freedom and agency of women in the United States.

Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel of the same name displaces herself from her life in India smashing all the social taboos and re-roots herself in pursuit of a new life and the identity in America. Though she confronts the system of patriarchy, the role of a submissive nurturer and the status of a secondary citizen in rural Punjab, she also struggles to create a balance between tradition and modernity. She tells her story as a twenty four year old Indian widow which is now pregnant and lives with her crippled American lover, Bud Rippelmeyer in Iowa (Sukumary 2015, 73). Jasmine recounts the past events that span the distance between her birth in Punjab and her adult life in America and her change of identity as well as her names from Jyoti to Jasmine, from Jazzy to Jane. The narrative rearranges between her past life in India and her present life in America. In a small rural village of Hasnapur in Punjab, Jasmine was born with a "ruby-red choker of bruise" around her throat and "sapphire fingerprints" on her collarbone (Mukherjee 1989, 40).

Being the fifth daughter and the seventh of nine children, she was completely undesired and only represented agony for her parents. To save her from the problems of marriage in a society where brides and their families suffer from oppression and death for dowry, she was almost strangled to death at birth by her own mother. She understands it as a manifestation of

her mother's intense love for her and says, "she tried to kill me, or she would have killed herself..." (51). Jasmine remembers her desire to become a doctor and establish her own clinic (50) was related to madness by her grandmother and blamed her mother for the madness: "Blame the mother. Insanity has to come from somewhere. It's the mother who is mad" (52). Fortunately, she survived, and from then onwards, Jasmine gained the capability to negotiate the conditions of her life on her own terms. The near experience with death as well as being termed a mad child for not behaving in the docile and subservient manner like the rest of the village girls highlights the patriarchal tyranny that is rampant in Indian culture which leads to maltreatment of Jasmine at the hands of both male and female members of the family. Jasmine's village Hasanpur as well as her household represents the hostility of homeland that Mukherjee focused on throughout the novel that makes a woman to different identities, moving on from the previous one as Jasmine reflects: "I survived the sniping. My grandmother may have named me Jyoti, light but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter" (Mukherjee 1989, 40).

Jasmine wanted to live beyond the cultural inscriptions of her home and away from the astrological prophecies that made villagers gullible. She re-interprets the prophecies that are made against her and accepts her bodily markings as a sign of power in life rather than a deformity. Mukherjee reflects on the use of myths and religious vulnerability in the rural Indian society to keep women domesticated and submissive. When Jasmine is seven, an astrologer prophesies widowhood and exile for her" (4). She slips and falls on hearing the astrologer's prophecy and appears with a permanent star-shaped wound etched on her forehead. But the astrologer as well as her family members shun her for having a scar on her face, which Jasmine confronts as "It's not a scar it's my third eye" (4).

The reference to the third eye brings with it inescapable alliances with Shiva, god of creation and destruction in Hinduism who, by concentrating his third eye on other gods and creatures, attains sporadic destruction of the universe, creating a way for successive periods of transformed life and development. The novel's instantaneous emphasis on the "third eye" thus sets the stage for the novel's cyclic narrative pattern of destruction and renewal, as well as the distinctive energy of Jasmine's own life: she becomes a force of both creation and destruction; encounters a succession of deaths and rebirths as her identity "evolves in her passage from life as Jyoti and the Punjabi villager to Jasmine the questing immigrant en route to California" (Kain 1993, 152). Keeping the image of the Hindu god, Shiva, as the sublime object, Jasmine's actions become symbolic and subjective expressions of the sublime: through the fundamentals of terror and power.

The religious image of the Hindu gods and ritualistic Hindu associations keep on appearing in the novel to justify Jasmine's different selves and her journey to becoming an autonomous subject. According to Paul Ricoeur, it is 'fundamental experiences' which lead the subjects to generate symbols (Ricoeur 1976, 65). Ricoeur's discrepancy between the literal and non-literal connotations of the symbol is important to the argument of Kant's description of the sublime and the association of power and religion (69). According to Kant, the sublime experience is an "encounter with something which exceeds our power, either to understand it or to resist it" How the subject finds a to survive through the excruciating experiences giving "us a sense of pleasure and excitement. In symbolizing the sublime, the experience has been absorbed by the religious expression" (Downie 2015, 2). The Hindu gods such as Shiva, Ganpati and Kali as well as the understanding of 'sati' and 'samsara' constantly become mechanisms that Jasmine uses to conceptualise her horrific, life-changing experiences in her journey as a woman in both India and in the United States. It is her husband Prakash who promotes her first transformation in identity, her first "rebirth" (Mukherjee 1989, 112).

Prakash embodying the beliefs of education and equality, tries to reconstruct Jyoti as Jasmine, who will embody an elevated mind. Jyoti, under the name of Jasmine, discards many of her village traditions and her feudal expectations about women, marriage, childbearing, and caste. This early experience of remaking the self creates the period for several ensuing reformulations and emphasis of the structure of the novel as enlightened by the Hindu concept of "samsara", the continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth (Mukherjee 1989, 113)—which Jasmine reflects equates:

> What if the human soul is eternal . . . what if it is like a giant long-playing record with millions of tracks, each of them a complete circle with only one diamond-sharp microscopic link to the next life, and the next, ...? I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit a life into a groove that was not prepared to receive it. (Mukherjee 1989, 113)

That "diamond-sharp microscopic link to the next life" (113) comes when she embarks on a sojourn to the United States to honour the memory and wishes of Prakash, who has been killed by a bomb planted by the Khalsa Lions, a radical Sikh fundamentalist group. To fulfil her husband's wish- -to emigrate together to the States- Jasmine obtains forged documents and begins a long, dangerous, clandestine journey to the U.S. During her travels, she discovers she is one among many:

> ... we are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges, you watch us unwrapping the last of our native foods, unrolling our prayer rugs, reading our holy books .... We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting

> outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks . . . dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of international vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue. (Mukherjee 1997, 90-91)

Jasmine persists in pushing further into the frontier, having come ashore on the Gulf coast of Florida. Before she can proceed toward Tampa, where she envisions herself building a pyre and burning Prakash's wedding suit, then dutifully throwing herself on top of it (performing 'sati' which is an ancient ritual), she is taken to a deserted hotel by Half- Face, the defaced captain of the trawler, and then was raped. Jasmine's assault by the monster Half-Face, and her response—to murder him as he sleeps—precisely expose two significant motifs in the novel as George Kain reflects, "One is the haunting sense of recurrence which permeates the narrative (permeates life)- the novel's energetic shuttling between past and present, present and future, dramatiz[es] ... the presence of the past (and the pastness of the present" (Kain 1993, 153).

Jasmine in her narration of the past, constantly refers to markings of the body, and disfigurement of the body and how it reflects on her psyche. Jasmine gets abused by the captain and the constant reference to his disfigured face heightens the grotesqueness of his actions. Through the non-linear narration of the story, Mukherjee connects the gruesome events of the past to her present circumstances as she recalls the mangled body of the dog during the rape and how her body felt like it would disintegrate to:

> I swam to where the river was a sungold haze. I kicked and paddled in a rage. Suddenly my fingers scraped the soft water-logged carcass of a small dog. The body was rotten, the eyes had been eaten. The moment I touched it, the body broke in two, as though the water had been glue. A stench leaked out of the broken body, and then both pieces quickly sank (Mukherjee 1989, 5).

Jasmine also felt ashamed from her body as only the thought of vengeance kept her mind and body integrated during the act of abuse, just like the "water" that functioned as "glue" to the rotten carcass (Mukherjee 1989, 5). She constantly hoped for death, even though this was death itself, she could not cheat it anymore, "He stared… but he was all hands and face in motion. I twisted, only delaying the inevitable, making it worse perhaps, more forced, more violent. I tried to keep my eyes on Ganpati and prayed for the strength to survive, long enough to kill myself" (Mukherjee 1989, 116).

But Jasmine does not accept the death of her personhood and decides to take the identity of Kali and return violence with violence. Jasmine's attack on Half-Face becomes a simulated repetition of the prior assault, Half-Face himself represents the atrocious reincarnation of that

deranged, violent beast. Jasmine "again responds violently, crushing the demon and ensuring her own survival" (Kain 1993, 153). In executing Half-Face Jasmine deliberately elevates herself to the image of the goddess Kali—the Hindu goddess embodying the feminist symbol of destruction and a new beginning as Mukherjee narrates through Jasmine:

> I extended my tongue, and sliced it. Hot blood dripped immediately in the sink…I drew close to the side of the bed, next to the nightstand, where I could study a good side of his face. My mouth had filled with blood…His eyes fluttered open even before I felt the metal touch his throat, and his smile and panic were nearly instantaneous…. He saw me above him as he had last seen me, naked, but now with my mouth open, pouring blood, my red tongue out. (Mukherjee 1989, 105-106)

The incarnation of Kali, goddess of destruction who is classically portrayed as naked, black-skinned, wearing a garland of skulls, and holding a sword or dagger while her bright red, "bloody tongue" protrudes from her mouth. Jasmine, in her form of vengeance, reincarnates herself with the image of Kali, to "[…]walking death. Death incarnate" (183). During a 1989 interview, Mukherjee highlighted the significance of Jasmine's role as Kali: "[Jasmine] becomes Kali, the goddess of destruction[...]She is the goddess of destruction, but not in a haphazard, random way. She is a destroyer of evil so that the world can be renewed" (Kain 1993, 154). Jasmine, as a "life force in some way" (Mukherjee 1989, 25), repeatedly effects creation or renewal through destruction, life through death-not only in her personal experience ("We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams") (Mukherjee 1989, 25), but also in the lives of those with whom she becomes involved.

In analysing Jasmine's religious account of her experiences with terror, death, and trauma of physical and psychological abuse as the sublime objects in her life, her emergence as an autonomous subject becomes quite relatable to the status of God. She muses as well as personifies Hindu gods in her experiences of animism. Her status as a diaspora renders her vulnerable and rootless in expressing herself as "death" or as "reincarnation" to create religious justification for her trials. Ricoeur affirms that basic human experiences create the space for the fundamental emotions to be heightened enough that they "presides over the most primitive metaphorical order" (Ricoeur 1976, 2). Although Ricoeur explored the order of fundamental emotions in three types; the religious, the poetic, and the psychoanalytic; Ricoeur describes that the immediate symbolism of the sublime in terms of human experience must have room for more basic experiences which disclose experiences and meanings outside of his three categories (Ricoeur 1976, 3). In accordance with this though, the basic human experiences also involve the body and home may count for the symbolism of the sublime and make the protagonist

"plunge their roots into the durable constellations of life, feeling and the universe" (Ricoeur 1976, 3).

Hence, Jasmine's experiences call for her religious associations in the time of her brutal experiences as a reassurance to gain power and agency over Half-Face and his actions. Her experience of the sublime was not in the moment of realising Half-Face has the power to destroy her purity, but in realising that the physical abuse was not enough to destroy her mental resolve to achieve a better future. Her constant association of rape with impurity, or the body's association with death, is to method to move away from the patriarchal association of the body. The diasporic sublime hence embraces Jasmine's claiming her body and her diasporicity away from its communal objectification.

Moving to New York and working as a caregiver for the professional couple Taylor and Wylie Hayes, becoming deeply attached to their adopted daughter Duff, Jasmine unintentionally causes problems in the marriage and falls in love with Taylor as he also represented the choice Jasmine could never have—to freely choose a man to love. But she soon realises that New York is not her place to feel at home and flees to Iowa where she gets acquainted with Bud Rippelmeyer. This acquaintance leads to a failed marriage of Bud and his wife Karen as Bud falls in love with Jasmine, who is now Jane. Bud's separated wife, Karen, observes the Kali-like qualities in Jasmine (now Jane), re-counting them in an idiosyncratic way within the Christian idiom of destruction and curse. Though Bud after his accident, became disabled, Jasmine nursed him back to health, Karen could only associate death and depression to Jasmine. Jasmine too sees herself as "death incarnate" and blames herself for Prakash's death and Bud's accident and decides to bring a new life as part of her agency that she was denied since birth. Alain Danielou points out,

> Kali, the power of destruction, has a dual aspect. She is, from the point of view of finite existence, the fearful destroyer of all that exists. As such, she is known as the Power of Time . . . but when all is destroyed and the Power of Time is appeased, the true nature of eternal night reveals itself as limitless joy [. . .] (Danielou 1964, 274).

Jasmine recognizes her own Kali-nature, and the perpetual cycle of destruction and creation within and without, with self and other, with self and ideation of body and power. Even though her journey from India to the US continues throughout the novel: the characters and situations change, but consistent patterns of experience recur. This sense of repetition is made manifest in numerous parallels and pervasive overlapping images.

Christine Battersby "develops the argument that women's anomalous position with regard to selfhood can be used to develop a model that no longer views women as an aberration from

the neutral male self" (Battersby 2007, 127). In contrast to the view of the self in the Kantian sublime, which strengthens its restrictions against its other (Battersby 2007, 127). Through the use of reason, this model rejects the image of the body as a responsive vessel, highlighting action and reaction to physical changes. In contrast to this argument, Mark Johnson observes the body as a container:

> Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. We are intimately aware of our bodies as three dimensional containers into which we put certain things (food, water, air) and out of which other things emerge (food and water wastes, air, blood etc.). (Battersby 2017, 341)

Johnson observes the self as part of the body, as "a room part of the house" but Battersby argues that the body is not the container for the self but body is the embodied self (Battersby 2017, 341). This leads her to discuss the relationality of the body and the self and the emergence of the sublime. She "distinguishes between the self that is viewed as a pre-existing unit—that can then be flexible and adapt to others"—and her model of a self that emerges with otherness through flux (Battersby 2017, 342). This also brings the argument back to the association of helplessness of the body and the self in front of overwhelming power.

The overwhelming power threatening the sustainability of the body negates the agency as well as forces the subject's agency to endure it to experience the sublime effect (Downie 2015, 12). The definite side to the experience, is accurately the negation of this danger, the survival of our being and our agency, and this though is an affirmation of the subject's own vitality, what Kant calls "this exciting liking" (Kant 1987, 121). This is in its own way a resistance to the force of the sublime object, as in the overwhelming and life-threatening experience. Even though it does not ensure safety from the experience, but the realization that the superiority of power can only destroy partly and ensures the rebirth of freedom. To experience the sublime in this form of confrontation with the superior, is while a part of the subject is affected by the danger, but the danger cannot subdue the existence of the independent self.

To describe the antinomies of change in the female body and mind, the chapter adopts from the Kantian sublime to play with the spatial contradictions that Kant draws in respect to human nature. Antinomies, in relation to the sublime, for W.B. Yeats are "about two states or feelings that exist in apparent contradiction, but which nevertheless fit together as necessary oppositions that occur within the parameters of a life" (Battersby 2007, 136). These conflicts arise when our sense of ourselves as "unique, autonomous, controlling agents breaks open in

the face of that which is infinitely great or mysteriously excessive and other" (136). In Kant, this "moment of breaking open occurs in the face of the sublime."

> but the fracture is healed over in that man must necessarily treat himself as if the self were free at a noumenal level—as if each self were a person—whilst simultaneously registering the merely bodily and deterministic reality of existing as a self at the level of the phenomenal. In Kant's philosophy 'man' is given a double positioning: as the idealised 'person' of the noumenal realm who is a self-determining freedom; and as the purely logical 'I' that must be supposed to persist as a substance through the time of experience. (Kant 1987, 137)

However, in relation to the female body and the feminine capacity to achieve the sublime state, in the Kantian sublime, women do not possess the personhood or the sense of free selves s (as noumenal selves), and the antinomies of the female subject status continue, to stay unsettled. Historically, according to Battersby, women have been treated both as if they were not bodily (as if the soul had no sex) and as if they were more bodily—then they remained less capable of transcendence due to the social objectivity to seduce and manipulate with their beauty—hence, they remained less capable of transcendence than males (2007, 137). As such, Battersby terms 'the female sublime' as the departing argument from the Kantian sublime, but in ways that it rejects the Romantic sublime which undervalues the flesh (2007, 137).

Battersby further reflects that in relation to Western culture, women are taught to view themselves equally with men but on the other hand, they are also trained to be nurturers and be bounded by bodily expressions and relationships (137). To take a cue from this, in the novel Jasmine, Mukherjee focuses on the living conditions of migrating women and their struggles. Indian women within the radical and repressive construct of society never enjoy the idea of being free, or as Kant observes, the state of the noumenal self. Diasporic women are also caught in a set of antinomies that are non-Kantian, somewhere between being treated as individual humans and treated as assistants to the patriarchal establishments. Jasmine, while growing up in Punjab, was once almost strangled by her mother, who saw her fourth daughter as a burden, needing a dowry to get married off. Her journey to the states was also to fulfil the dream of her dead husband, Prakash. She also wanted to self-immolate herself on his funeral pyre, as fulfilling her idea of wifely duty and devotion. Even at the end, she has an ambiguous relationship with Bude Rippelmeyer is part of her own idea of self-retribution. Positioned in between liberty and autonomy, on the one hand, as "embodied and thinglike passivity, on the other hand, the female subject either registers—or conceals from herself—the 'peculiarity' and 'singularity' of her own difference from the norm (which is male) and from other modes of deviation" (Battersby 2007, 137).

Jasmine in the novel, while engaging with herself, more in a display of agency and violence, also engages with the traditions of the sublime, repeatedly drawing attention to the embodiment in a variety of ways, such as space, time and embodiment. Even though Jasmine's actions place her as the subject in the centrality of her events, she is still displaced as the postcolonial woman in the United States, her constant struggles position her as an autonomous subject in control of her fate. The human difference that Kant talks about explicitly remarks that women are incapable of feeling the repulsive and going beyond the ugliness or the unappealing experience of the other. As Battersby further observes, there is a set of psychic or behavioural dispositions that are not associated with women compared to men, especially in terms of violence. The diversity of Jasmine's transformation from a subservient village girl, Jyoti to a person who unleashes vengeance on her rapist displays her use of the body and its violent characteristics to attain the personhood society has declined her, as Jasmine says:

> No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered. The room looked like a slaughterhouse. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts. What a monstrous thing, what an infinitesimal thing, is the taking of a human life; for the second time in three months, I was in a room with a slain man, my body bloodied. I was walking death. Death incarnate. (Mukherjee 1989, 119)

In various ways, the violence present in the novel (whether self-inflicted or inflicted upon others) is a physical manifestation of the movement toward the unknown, towards the obscurity of the future. It represents the cessation of Jasmine's past and Jane's new beginning. The image of Kali, the goddess of death through Jasmine, also represents the reconstruction of the feminine self as an initiation ritual to prepare the female body and mind for the worst in an unknown land. By contrast, the femininity of Jasmine is quite challenged in her killing Half-face, in a vivid and gruesome way, as Mukherjee narrates in detail. Jasmine's change in physiological characteristics from a docile woman to featuring a Kali-like or beast like female killing machine renegotiates the term feminine, quite in contrast to the Kantian usage of the term. In other words, the chapter negotiates the term sublime in terms of conventionally constructed socialized women to suggest the sublime theory as a zone of transformation of the borderline between self and not-self.

The sublime of the flesh has its ambiguities when it comes to the female body. The body has two implications—either "clothed" or "unclothed" (Battersby 2007, 150). The unclothed version of the body, it imposes the defenceless image. In reference to the naked image of the body, Anne Katrine Dolven's photographs show real-life temporalities of the female body. Her works pick up and reverse a view of nature and of femininity that is characteristic of Romantic

or Expressionist artists (especially the works of Edvard Munch), but then use temporal and spatial or behavioural incongruities:

> In one of her pictures, titled "between the morning and the handbag ii", the baldness and apparent self-composure of the young woman positions her in the temporality of the twenty-first century, in which the earlier conventions for presenting the unclothed female body are reconfigured. (Battersby 2007, 153)

Dolven manages to disturb the nature/cultural boundary which has been so integral to the image of beauty, femininity, and modernity. Dolven's female figures do not transcend expert nature in the manner of the Kantian sublime. But these pictures do reflect something more than mere beauty or pleasure elicited from the female body, as opposed to Kant's understanding of feminine nature. There is a play on the 'naked' imagery of the body, suggesting the vulnerability and rejection of societal expectations. This nakedness of the body also suggests an authentic connection of the female body with the self. The defenceless female body also frames the chaos and disorder of the self, as it does with Jasmine too, during and after her sexual abuse at the hands of Half-Face. Jasmine's forced unclothed state in the shabby motel room suggests her disintegration from society—no one to help her and no one to save her. Th e more she looked at her body, the more she felt disgusted and impure. She felt the marked connection with her flesh and herself and was driven by sexual trauma and tension:

> I determined to clean my body as it had never been cleaned, with the small wrapped bar of soap, and to purify my soul with all the prayers I could remember from my fathers and my husband's cremations. This would be a fitting place to die. I had left my earthly body and would soon be joining their souls…sharp blade through my throat I had not thought of any conclusion but the obvious one: to balance my defilement with my death. (Mukherjee 1997, 116)

In this regard, Jasmine's position as an immigrant woman is very fleshy and spatial, and her wish to destroy the raped body is a result of gendered and cultural expectations that treat the female body as an object only to be possessed, used, defiled, and discarded by men. Jasmine by killing Half-face manages to raise herself from these bodily limitations imposed on her and confronts the dangers of the fleshly and female antinomies. Hence, through Jasmine, the chapter reflects on the diasporic sublime as a site for bodily dislocation of the immigrant female subject, explored and made visible.

In the Kantian version of the sublime, the ego is, ultimately, strengthened by the encounter with, and the proficiency in, an infinite or indefinite otherness powerful enough to annihilate the self, or the 'I'. But as Battersby borrows Evelyn Williams' vision of the

apocalypse, she reflects on the displacement of the self rather than the disappearance of the self as Battersby discusses:

> It's not that the self disappears from Williams' images of the apocalyptic sublime, it is rather that the self is reconfigured so that it is portrayed as relational, fragile and dependent. Thus, in Whirlpool (1986, charcoal, ink and white on linen) the humans who have been sucked towards the centre of some great vortex are simultaneously divided into patterns and groups by the impact of the force that controls them. The whirlpool is simultaneously depicted as beautiful (with the humans functioning as individual petals of some great flower), but also as relentless and inhuman in its power. Some individual arms reach out desperately beyond the spiralling currents or clutch at other naked bodies in an attempt to gain comfort or some degree of control. (Battersby 2007, 139)

Like William's thinking, Battersby projects that the status of women are very much conflicted in relation to terror and power. Terror in the experience of the sublime moment is evoked and expressed from an angle that disintegrates human nature and moral imperative as lacking autonomy and power.

In terms of the societal background of *Jasmine* (1989), on the one hand, women are considered to be full representatives of this culture that takes individuality and autonomy as both ideal and norm. On the other hand, the entirely autonomous and individualised 'person' of the democratic state (bearer of legal and societal rights, carrier of duties, and centre of individual and domestic responsibility) is not female, but male. Indian Women find themselves wedged into two different logics of self/other relationships. In the culture that Jasmine was brought up in limited in their movement by appealing to their biological features. They placed the responsibility of domestic pride and respect on women and their role as docile nurturers. Jasmine felt her body was impure after rape, not for herself but for her family and community. On one hand, women are put on a pedestal where their virginity is celebrated akin to godliness, on the other hand, the woman is blamed for causing shame to her family and community if she is touched out of wedlock. The fleshliness of women are objectified in the patriarchal modernity of Indian society that stresses the purity and fragility of female existence by linking their bodies to communal guilt, as activist Kamala Bhasin reflects on the platform of *Satyameva Jayate*:

> When I'm raped, people say that I've lost my honour? My honour is not in my vagina. It is a patriarchal idea that my rape will defile the honour of my community. I'd like to tell everyone, why did you place your community's honour in a woman's vagina? We never did that. It is the rapist who loses his honour, we don't. (Kapoor 2020)

Hence the novel *Jasmine* (1989) focuses on going against the idea of purity and the notion of communal guilt that is placed on a woman's body from the day she is born. Jasmine during her various near death experiences, such as, being strangled by her mother, her husband's death by a bomb, being raped in a hotel, in her travels to Iowa and experiencing confrontation with her

husband's murderer, all contributed to her suffering more because of her consideration towards her identity as an Indian woman from a village.

Jasmine confronts this idea of chastity and purity and the "overpoweringness" of the communal expectations in every step of the novel, through every change of identity from Jyoti to Jasmine, from Jazzy to Jane to experience on one hand "the nothingness, and on the other hand, agency to invest in the power of the self beyond infinity" (Downie 2014, 21). The diasporic sublime, hence, in using the Western perspectives of the female sublime speak of women as visible subjects of the society that Kant denies in his Western perspective of female nature and their incapability of sublimity. The diasporic sublime disintegrates the popularised fundamental asymmetry in male-female power relations and highlights the possibilities of female subjectivity, especially under the daunting conditions of the postcolonial movement. By acknowledging the female subordination and their degraded position as secondary citizens in both host and homeland, the diasporic sublime focuses on their journey of enabling and elevation of their selves and achieving the sublime state as part of the identity constitution.

III.2. Pain, Pleasure, and Freedom in *Desirable Daughters*

The postcolonial experience, especially the diasporic experience, is often characterized by a co-existence of opposites, which is a feature of consciousness, "which exists along with other co-existence of silence and dynamism, singularity and multiplicity, manifest and unmanifest" (Grace 2007, 4). The "contradictory racialization of Indian Americans as foreign and racially particular yet residing in the United States expresses itself in dialecticism," which is to say, "the formal responses" of early Indian American writers and "artists to their racialization in their avant-garde work dialectically transform American universalism—a universalism that empirically fails because of racism and other social inequalities" in the United States (Grace 2007, 4). This co-existence of cultures carries, as Bharati Mukherjee observes in her novel, *Desirable Daughters* (2002) the extreme racial distinctions as the cause of division, revenge, and ruin, and thus, through their writing, they propose a world of unity in diversity.

Mukherjee not only showcases the current developments and indulgences of Western civilization but also considers the tenuous bridge of modernity that connects Eastern and Western lifestyles. The conflict of social status between natives and diasporas reinforces the cultural prejudices and remarks against women over the decades. In *Desirable Daughters* (2002), Bharati Mukherjee examines the colonized state of diasporic women suffering from racism, discrimination, and exploitation and showcases the liberation of women from their oppression under religious and cultural ties. Mukherjee treats the issues of home, cultural adaptation, and conflicts of socio-political origin as necessary constituents of self-transition that Indian diasporic women go through while adjusting to American expectations. She reconceptualizes these issues and focuses on female emancipation and inclusion in American universalism. The diasporic sublime reinvests in the notion of the reinvention of the human self through morality and vocation and the eventual assertion of agency and subjectivity.

Desirable Daughters is the narrative of three sisters, Tara, Parvati, and Padma, born and raised in Calcutta in the 1950s, and the distinct paths they journey from this nexus. The story is told from the point of view of Tara, the youngest sister who has moved to Oakland. Now divorced from her arranged marriage husband, Tara lives in San Francisco with her teenage son Rabi and lover Andy, an ex-biker/ hippie Buddhist carpenter. Tara views herself as an American, but is endlessly conscious of the India that is all the time with her. When a young man, Chris Dey, appears up at her front door and declares that she is his "mashi" (aunt) and he is the illegitimate son of her older sister Padma, Tara must re-evaluate. She is compelled to glance at her the relationships she shares with her sisters, and their past differently: three different people within a particular, strict, and elitist Bengali upbringing under quite rigid

cultural context. Mukherjee has often reflected in interviews on how she has been inspired by the Hindu epics and myths in which animals can transform into gods or gods can transform into people. She manifests this thought of altering forms to the mythology of America in which people are permitted to believe of themselves as American, experiencing their own sort of transformation. It is revealed that Chris Dey is not who he says he is, and essentially belongs to a large Indian coordinated crime ring that is after Tara's ex-husband's wealth. This appeared more of a means to mention upon associated issues of immigration and crime, to link up Tara and her ex-husband Bish, and to take Tara and Rabi back to India, instead than an occasion in the lives of the characters.

The Diasporic sublime in Mukherjee's novels locate and work with one's relationship with familiar roots and the paradigm of cross-cultural conflicts through body aesthetics. The conceptualisation of body, food, and home in *Desirable Daughters* through Tara and her sisters (Parvati and Padma) creates a dialogue between the effects of migration and female liberation as it resembles the symbolic overhaul of change in power, fear and domination. The body, food, and home as a foundation function as the imagery for race classifications and subordination, and the diasporic sublime challenges this secondary status of immigrant Indian women. To take a cue from the previous chapter, Bharati Mukherjee's women, such as Jasmine, or Tara express different ways of becoming American and integrating to the American dream that facilitates them to come to terms with their selves and understand their position in the world — not the one they were taught to go along but the one they created themselves.

The novel revolves around three sisters—Tara, Parvati, and Padma, born and brought up in Calcutta during the chaotic circumstances of post-independence Bengal and re-experiencing whatever was left of the Bengali traditions. The novel starts with a mythical telling of the tale of the "Tree Brides", who were married to a tree as child brides to re-establish their honour in society (Mukherjee 2002, 4). Among the three sisters, Tara and Padma are part of the Indian American community, whereas Parvati lives with her husband in Mumbai, India. The novel peaks when Tara faces confrontation by Padma's supposed illegitimate son, Christopher and she takes on the moral duty to find the truth of her sister's past as well as to confront her own (Bera 2021, 72). Even though the novel obtained mixed reviews over the unusual untangling of the plot, it brings out Mukherjee's standing as an Indian American citizen rather than an Indian American immigrant (Bera 2021, 72). Tara wishes to be part of the American stream, whereas Padma is aware of the Indian foundations and wants to maintain those in her Western environment. The conflict between the two sisters concerning the extent of possible Americanisation gives perspective on the tensions between expatriates and immigrants and their

journey through nostalgia and their guilt over abandoning their homeland as explored in the novel.

The notion of female subjectivity of diasporic women is a by-product of the guilt and ambition that can be prominently viewed with the surge of Hindu immigration in the United States of America. Immigration post-1965 prompted the communal discrepancies within the diaspora society in terms of language, class, and even caste (Mishra 2007, 32). Bharati Mukherjee tried to relate these inconsistencies growing up in foreign lands with the American way of life through body aesthetics and how habitual change brings in distinct changes in physical and psychological behaviour in the lives of immigrants, especially women who migrated to the US mainly as secondary spouses, with the willingness to assist the patriarchal establishment as propagated by the 'men' of the family. America represented hope of better opportunities not just for the men but also for the women who desired to have choice to lead a life other than a wife and nurturer to improve their financial and social standing to gain power and agency. Female subjectivity in this case can be equated to the elevated or sublime state of mind and body providing access to recreate home and identity.

Tara's home in American cities was an effort to reconstruct the home in Calcutta, as a beacon of light and recognizable warmth, as she reflects, "The city I knew was (and remains) the magnet hope for the world's third-largest population, the target of all their ambition. To be a native-born Calcuttan was (and is) to be a Londoner, a Parisian, a New Yorker, at the zenith" (Mukherjee 2002, 22). To her, California or San Francisco were no different than Calcutta, and she didn't want to create a new home devoid of her ancestral attachments but to create a space with old and new memories. Tara's decisions to be a divorcee and raise her son as a single mother reflect her desire to be bodily and economically independent. Since the body, food, and home function as a foundation to measure the diasporic conflicts and their manifestations, it also conclusively represents reinvention and repression; homeliness and unhomeliness; peace and trauma. This foundation is expressed through notions of reason, terror, and awe as prime faculties, on one hand, impact on elevation.

Bonnie Mann suggests to the liberatory sublime and on the other hand, deals with the hostility of the body and home due to conventional repression and can be dealt with through the discussions of bodily and unhomely challenges (2006, 143). In this chapter, the discussion of the diasporic sublime hinges on the aesthetics of the body and home mostly as it reconfigures the hostility of double colonization women and the emergence of the postcolonial self and sovereignty amidst unfamiliarity, terror, and repression.

The postcolonial feminist theory is “primarily concerned with the deplorable plight of women in the postcolonial environment” (Mishra 2013, 133). The prime objective of postcolonial feminists is to make differences (race, class, and setting) regarding women’s lives visible and recognizable in the eyes of Western feminists (133). They imagine a world where differences are not detested but instead, entertained and enjoyed, and moreover, they make space to thrive being immune to hierarchical structures of class, race, and sexual and gender power. The struggle for visibility and recognition starts at home and the representation of one’s own physical exploration within domesticity. With the use of familial rhetoric in relation to transatlantic/female subjectivity, Tara and her journey display a “heroic pursuit of racial solidarity” (Mishra 2013, 46). The novel problematises and addresses the question of diasporic identity by positioning Tara and her sisters within a seemingly perfect continuum of kinship and communal belonging. Through its reinvention of the individual subject and the collective consciousness of the diaspora, the paradigm of sublime and subjectivity in regard to female diaspora in the States challenges the Western idea of female agency and power constructs and its limitations.

In Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* (2002), Tara and her sisters are expected to use the privilege of their convent education, “pseudo-liberal family standards, and the ability to tolerate to create good homes in America—by speaking English, wearing American clothes but leading an Indian way of life” (Bera 2021, 71). They fashion a world within their reality they are neither Indians nor Americans; where it develops “increasingly difficult to attach human identity and meaning to a coherent culture or language” (Nicholls 1999, 10), and this complexity transforms the Indian American woman into a postcolonial woman, in this incomprehensible cultural confusion. Rather than an empirical problem, this bewildering cultural space, according to Brett Nicholls, “opens up questions concerning cultural authenticity and political legitimacy” (Nicholls 1999, 12). In the Third World, postcolonial women, such as Tara and Padma, grow out of their suppressed upbringing and forge a new path for their idea of ‘self’. The constant psychological vacillation that immigrants go through due to migration is traumatic, unstable, and volatile. On one hand, “exile brings the new home’s, on the other, sheer reminders of alienation” (Bera 2021, 72). Through rape, divorce, or death, Mukherjee stages that the migration journey can be brimmed with traumatic experiences, which further demonstrates the “cultural fragmentation, rupturing of individual familiarity and hybrid translation” (Bera 2021, 72).

For Mukherjee, the body and home work as a sacred combination where everything hinges on physical and temporal spatiality. The antiquity of the female body acts as a physical,

sexual, and maternal signifier as well as represents the troubling connection between Indian women and their domesticity and the power construct of the home with masculine supremacy. Indian women not only dealt with traditional yet urban expectations of their role as nurturers but also faced criticism in terms of their appearance and darker skin colour. The formation of double colonization within the domicile manifests racial supremacy, and women were demeaned if they were not lighter skinned, as it was the unspoken standard of beauty. This racialized and oppressive standard of beauty also maps the culture of arranged marriages, where the skin tone of a woman decides her adaptability as a supportive spouse to her husband. Body, hence, as a primary aesthetic concern with the presentability of the female body reduces her status as a moral and active agent of the society. The diasporic sublime focuses on the resistance of aspects of bodily perfection of appearance irrelevant to survival, and autonomy and celebrates the pursuit of bodily liberation from the suppressive body expectations of forced wife and motherhood and viewing of the female body as a prized position.

On the other hand, in the diasporic context, the mapping of the home is related to customs and 20th-century urbanism, where Bengali women are instructed to balance colonial probabilities and Bengali culture. When Tara recalls home, she reminisces both British Calcutta and Bengali Calcutta's nostalgia— a Christian convent-educated girl still following the path of Hinduism. In her memory, her home in Calcutta offers no peace to her soul but creates uncertainty regarding her identity. Her closeness with her sisters, who were named after Hindu gods, the story of her namesake, Taralata, "the Tree Bride" (Mukherjee 2002, 4), the religious rituals, the patriarchal tension, and the fear of not following the pre-decided path— all of these subsidise to the diasporic conflict of the self in relation to the home and the world (Bera 2021, 74). The early 90s San Francisco constitutes a late fifties fragment of Calcutta in America, and the Indian American immigrant Tara could only recall a "Dirtier…Crueller…Poorer" (Mukherjee 2002, 23) yet ambitious Calcutta—a true counterpart to San Francisco.

Tara considers her home in America to be a comparatively "simpler affair" than the socio-politically and sexually oppressed home in 1950s Calcutta. She is part of the mass in San Francisco, where she is "ethnically ambiguous" like many others, on friendly terms, yet still isolated from her neighbours, living with her "balding, red-bearded, former-biker, former bad-boy, Hungarian Buddhist contractor/yoga instructor" boyfriend Andy (Mukherjee 2002, 25). She has established a home in Upper Haight, San Francisco, with the nostalgia of the home in Calcutta—almost imagining the "chattering of monkeys, corn and peanuts, and Buddhist prayer wheels" only to find "cottages in an Etruscan landscape" overlooking the street with Victorian terrain and the smell of gingerbread (Mukherjee 2002, 24- 25). Mukherjee echoes the difference

between the two homes Tara had access to in her life — on the one hand, a 19-year-old Tara married off to a wealthy entrepreneur Bishwapriya Chatterjee and she is creating a home with him in Atherton, California; and on the other hand, 36-year old Tara is a divorced kindergarten teacher creating a home with her son Rabi and her partner, Andy (Bera 2021, 74). The contrast between these two homes suggests Tara's capacity to transport from a loveless, arranged marriage to a relationship where "love is having fun with someone...over a longer haul" (Mukherjee 2002, 27). Mukherjee perceives Tara's conversion from being an obedient Bengali woman to becoming a postcolonial woman as one who did not limit her possibilities to a provider but liberated herself from infinite opportunities. Even though she still has the inner conflict from the divorce and the modern woman paradox where self comes first and not family (Mishra 2007, 42) that apparently made her fail in her duties as a conventional Indian wife and perhaps mother, she decides to face these disputes seizing her own contentment through own action was her first act of rebellion.

Taking oneself beyond the imposed limits through the body, connects the tropes of supersensibility and sensual emotions with the sublime, and in another aspect, with diasporicity. To showcase the developments in aesthetics of the sublime, Longinus and Edmund Burke have to be acknowledged. The term "sublime" comes from Latin "peri hupsos" (Shaw 2005, 9) meaning elevation; to elevate listeners through speech, enchant the listeners to a different dimension. Sublime emotion depends on the correlation between three mental states: pain, indifference, and pleasure. A simple presentation or deduction of pain cannot generate sublime emotion. However, it can push the person to a state of indifference that may indicate an apathetic mind, and there is no possibility of self-elevation.

Cessation of pleasure, on the other hand, also does not signify the presence of pain. He uses the terms "joy" and "delight" to signify the symptom of pleasure beyond the state of disinterest. The simplistic "joy" that may occur, irrespective of indifference, is equated with the aesthetical concept of beauty and "delight," which is thus the "strongest emotion that the mind" can evoke (Irigaray 1985, 134). This strongest emotion of the mind in the case of female subjectivity is the recognition of identity in relation to the Other (masculine Other) and nature. Luce Irigaray focuses on how the male figure moves to manifest his excess, while a "woman counterbalances with the permanence of a (self)recollection which is unaware of itself as much" (Irigaray 1985, 134). Even though there is the struggle between the consciousness, especially within the private sphere, within the domicile, "the silent allegiance of one guarantees the auto sufficiency, the autonomy of the other as long as no questioning of the mutism as a symptom—of historical repression—is required" (135). But this unspoken bondage of authority and silence

is shattered when the objects start to speak and recognise the subject as the malicious Other. The female object hence pushes forth as the subject by taking control of her own body and mind, her nature, and her desires to resist the overwhelming and powerful masculine forms.

Mukherjee's novel *Desirable Daughters* (2002) as a feminist narrative starts the story with a comprehensive image of the masculine forms existing within a typical Indian household, creating domestic and communal harmony through the absolute silence and obedience of the women, expecting the women to establish harmony of the feminine reason and a plethora of possible vulnerabilities. Mukherjee narrates—

> The bride-to-be whispers the "Tulsi Brata," a hymn to the sacredness of marriage, a petition for a kind and generous husband:
> What do I hope for in worshipping you?
> That my father's wisdom be endless,
> …
> May my husband be as powerful as a king of gods.
> May my future son-in-law light up the royal court.
> Bestow on me a brother who is learned and intellectual,
> A son as handsome as the best-looking courtier,
> …
> Let my hair-part glow red with vermilion powder, as a wife's should. (Mukherjee 2002, 5)

The constant association of male supremacy hints at the fear of the female consciousness to desire for autonomy within the private and public sphere. Even though the story of Tara Lata is a mythical story of a thirteen year old bride married of to a tree, it also signifies how a woman's life revolves around marriage and child rearing in the Indian patriarchal system. Mukherjee weaves a connection between the two Tara's in the novel to assert that even though there is a difference of time, economy, and status, both women share a similar fate and repression of similar traditions that reject female autonomy in society. Tara Lata and Tara are inherently connected by a thread of wifehood, as the hymn concludes, "Reward my wifely virtue with a rice-filed granary/ These are the boons that this young virgin begs of thee" (Mukherjee 2002, 4).

Tara's reminiscence of Tree Bride's story also reminds her of her bodily connection with the myth as she constructs her identity as a bride as she reflects, "On this night, flesh-and-blood emerges from the unretrievable past" (5). Tara and her sisters, Padma and Parvati, begin their bodily journey as "sisters three are we…as like as blossoms on a tree" but not quite.

The relationship of fear and power within the domicile also develops the concept of body that "appears (or walks implicitly) differently in the changing contexts of Kant's three critiques" (Moen 1997, 232). Marcia Moen, in her chapter "Feminist Themes in Unlikely

Places: Re-Reading Kant's Critique of Judgement" discusses the supersensibility of the subject as delineated by Kant against the feminine subject and aesthetics of the body. According to the Kantian notion of subjectivity, the body is devalued due to feelings and as such, the body needs rethinking (Moen 1997, 234). The cultural dichotomies and patriarchal constructs of a community may express the embodiment of the body in two ways—as an individual organism and as materialised within a culture. The body as an expressive product in the novel is postulated as a substrate of nature and extends the possibility of being a transcendental part of the subject. The idea of the body in this novel is closely related to the notions of the female body, virginity, sexual emancipation, motherhood, and changes in geographical and social relocation. The body acts as the locus of desire, pleasure, and judgment, participating in the processes of nature and culture.

When a boy of Christian origin tracks Tara down in San Francisco, stating that he is her nephew, the son of the oldest "childless sister" Padma who was believed to be, "virginal until marriage," Tara draws in the image of virginity and its protectiveness that surrounds an Indian woman (Mukherjee 2002, 31). Tara and Padma live in America, they have distinct lives miles apart from each other. Though Tara is living an unconventional life for a Bengali woman, she still acts judgmental when she discovers that her elder sister Padma had a child out of wedlock with a Christian guy named Ronald Dey. She believes that American society's free lifestyle has obliterated the conventional boundaries in Padma, and that is against the "Hindu Virgin Protection," as Mukherjee puts it and views this as an act of transgression on Padma's part, a shameful act that confirms her status as a defiled Bengali woman who did not follow the teachings of her upbringing (2002, 32). The sexual interaction of the body is suggestive of enhancing a person's sense of flourishing.

The sexual subjectivity of the female body may be explored through both Luce Irigaray and Marcia Moen's perspectives on sexual difference and female subjectivity, which relate to the sublime state of diasporic women. Both Tara and Padma rise as sexual subjects away from their parental expectations of marriage and statuses owned by their husbands. Their sexual conformity belongs to their social and political identity in the United States, which acts against the idea of obedient assistants to their husbands and in-laws. Sexual emancipation, as Marcin Moen reflects, stands as their reason and morality to change the perpetual social structure of dominance a subordination (1997, 231). Padma's pre-marital relationship with Ronald (Indian name Swarup) Dey and begetting Chris out of wedlock may be interpreted as an act of love and rebellion before she was married off to a guy whom she never met, chosen and imposed by her father. On the other hand, Tara's divorcing the Bengali man who was a provider chosen by her

father and being in a live-in relationship with her Hungarian partner, Andy Koralyi can be seen as an incident of her exercising her power and will, allowing possibilities of transformation and transcendence beyond ethical concerns.

Robin Scott has argued that according to Kant, the only form of "sensibility that contributes to cognition and intuition, and that intuition," as goes for prompt apprehension of an object, "excludes feelings of fear, sensuous pleasure, desire, and bodily awareness" (1997, 212-213). Understanding the body and its sensibilities beyond bodily charm is essentially valuing the body as a practical and morally motivating element. Tara's experience with Andy goes beyond the experiential transaction between two beautiful objects and the charms of appearance to manifest the connection of empathy and respect. Tara, in comparison to Andy reflects on her relationship with her ex-husband Bish as, "Thousands of years of arranged marriages had somehow habituated us even before laying eyes on each other; there would be nothing in our sexuality that was, finally exotic" (Mukherjee 2002, 77).

But with Andy, Tara learns the order of violence and peace, the silence and resistance, and the need to seek approval from something superior as traditions and "hundreds of generations" of customs (2002, 76). Tara describes Andy's body in comparison to hers since bodies are the carriers of a country's social, cultural, and geographical features, as Tara reflects:

> We were exotics to each other, no familiar moves or rituals to fall back on. He interpreted my fear as shyness… but he was twice the mass of any man I'd ever known, a bear -man, red-bearded, woolly armed, hairy-chested, gently spoken but, I was sure, given to the violence… violence is a given:.. His search has been for softer ways, kinder speech, gentler company…the final version in a series of reinventions. (Mukherjee 2002, 77)

The association of beauty in Tara's description of an "exotic" relationship with Andy is a collective articulation and is properly called a "sense," is not sensation. It is a modulated experience of beauty through the body. According to Kant, a direct bodily feeling is "the furtherance of life" (Moen 1997, 235). The associations of the body connects to its aesthetic judgment of the sublime, as it denotes exhilaration, and a "stronger outflow" of "vital forces" (1997, 236). All interpretations, sensible or intellectual, are subjectively connected to "gratification and grief", because they "all affect the feeling of life" (1997, 236). Pleasure and anguish are eventually corporeal because life depends on the construction, relationship, and feeling of bodily organs. Hence, the connection of the sublime without bodily association would be simply "consciousness of existence without any feeling of well-being or the reverse, i.e., furthering or checking of the vital powers" (236). The mind, alongside bodily sensations, goes beyond the prejudice of the spiritual feeling or inclination of beauty but embraces respect for

moral ideas, which is not just mere gratification at all but rather an "esteem for self (for humanity in us), that raises us above the need of gratification" (237).

It is also quite astonishing how body imagery is used as a mark of self-confidence and agency in the novel. Mukherjee constantly draws a distinction between Bengali beauty and American beauty and how the physical and cultural dislocation wears the individual down and her body resembles the signs of decay and destruction, as Didi (Padma) reflects:

> She marched me to the bathroom and under a bank of lights of operating-room intensity, began the ritual, big sister dismantling of my self-confidence: my now-dry skin, ragged finger nails, crow's feet, eye-bags, and straggly hair. I was a fashion disaster calling for a complete Jackson Heights makeover. (Mukherjee 2002, 185)

The body implication of being "worn out and skinny" is a direct conflict with the Western standards of the female body and its pleasing aesthetics (2002, 185). Tara's elder sister only wants to sell her as an object of desire and get her remarried, where she will again accomplish the expectations that surround the Bengali woman, rather than facing her pasts and the responsibilities of her decision to abandon her child born out of wedlock, Padma has taken up the role of her father, a patriarch who decides the fate of her younger sister. Tara's presence without "shine, no labanya" only proves her disagreeability as an object for men to invest in as Padma further opines, "No one will believe you're six years younger. And let me tell you now, no man is going to flirt with such a bag of dried out bones!" (2002, 185). Tara's journey towards the elevation of her 'self' is the aesthetic reflection of the body where she transcends the mere desires of the body and the purpose of charming the masculine entity (as Kant perceives female societal roles) but uses the bodily emancipation to gain power and agency over her life and its gradual progression. Hence, the contextualisation of body aesthetics in relation to the sublime encompasses the ideas of reclaiming the subjective status in the journey as a female diaspora.

For the sublime to take upon this idea of disentanglement, the "consciousness-raising" generated by Catherine Mackinnon and recognised as a feminist method (MacKinnon 1989, 106-25), the very idea of "raised" conforms with the process of elevation or raised above the existing state regarding the sublime. Nevertheless, the question that is always presented at this point is raised above what? Raised to what degree? And why? The sublime's masculine traditions 'raised' the men and raped the women, and the history of women testifies to that (Mann 2006). Indeed, if women are made, they can be unmade, and the liberatory sublime suggests to that process. It is the daily strives of women, their mundane tribulations and endless challenges in and out of their domestic sphere that unravels their consciousness and reasoning and raises them to a state exceeding the one consigned to them. The liberatory sublime presents

a safe space for the efforts to be recognized differently and where they can find a balance between their inner conflicts and the outer world struggles. In this case, Tara even though culturally conflicted about Padma's illegitimate child, still remains supportive of her sister and defends her when confronted by the rest of the family. Tara leaves her husband, Biswarup as he failed to comply to his fatherly responsibilities. Tara chose her primary identity as a mother to Rabi, Rabindranath Chatterjee, so he can grow up without cultural and religious constraints. Tara's identity as a Bengali woman weighed on her life as she reflects:

> Our happy house on Ballygunge Park Road, the protective parents and loving daughters, the Brahmins' pride, the Bengali arrogance, the Calcutta sophistication—seemed now the darkest cave, and we, blind scrumbling creatures… "girls of good family," who put caste duty and family reputation before self-indulgence. (Mukherjee 2002, 133)

Tara recognised this oppression in her married life and in her son's upbringing. She tried to create a home where Rabi could grow up not under the shadow of the overachiever father who came to "America as a scholarship student and within ten years was employing five thousand workers and had a net worth of 700 billion dollars" (2002, 152). To provide a home that did not restrict Rabi's step in America, Tara decided to divorce Bish as to her just being the provider was not enough for a comprehensive idea of a husband and a father. Tara reflects on the home that she was forced to create with a man who was chosen for her:

> I cannot remember a night at home when Bish did not complain of Rabi's careless appearance, his sloppy penmanship, his slouching posture, his shuffling walk, his talk, his manners, and his limp handshake. (Mukherjee 2002, 153)

To Mukherjee's Tara and Padma, being Western is not being modern, and to follow traditions is not uncivilized or pitiful. The conflict between traditions and modernity is an essential part of a Bengali household. A home created by Tara's father with equal respect and freedom. However, a place where he demanded unquestioned respect. As Tara observes: "The qualities we associated with our father and with God were not quite divergent from the respect we accorded the president of the country, the premier of the state" (Mukherjee 2002, 29).

This home created a resting lodge where Tara and her sisters could access wealth, convent education, and enjoy years of innocent childhood until thrown into marriage "after reaching the age of marital consent" (Mukherjee 2002, 29). Mukherjee, through Tara, focuses explicitly on this 1950s wealthy, Brahmin home in Calcutta that does not contribute to the sense of belonging, and Tara and her sisters become increasingly alienated in their supposed familiar zone and eventually compelled to leave the country by marrying a stranger. Even though the 19-year-old Tara breaks free from her father and his rules, Tara submits to Bishwapriya's

rules—she is freed from being an obedient daughter only to submit as an obedient wife. She becomes confused and more estranged from herself.

The idea of home in this chapter concerns itself with unfamiliarity and alienation. It is an entity that is imbued with familiarity and comfort on one hand, and on the other hand, represents anxiety, hostility and dominance of the other. Julie Hakim Azzam observes different definitions of the home in *The Alien Within Postcolonial Gothic and the Politics of Home*:

> repetition, doubling, coincidence, or an eerie feeling of déjà vu. homelessness because, at its core, it is triggered by the revelation that at the heart of what we call home is not comfortable domesticity, but an estranging, foreign place. The word *Heimlich* means something homely, familiar, and at ease, so we may assume that the term unheimlich signifies the opposite—the unhomely, foreign, hidden, and concealed (Azzam 2007, 10).

Home, for the postcolonial woman represents a space where hostility and familiarity exists together. It is a space of systematic oppression where women suffer through domestic expectations as well the idea of duty and moral virtue. The transition of one country to another country, or one aspect of domestic oppression to another, does not elevate their status as docile and suppressive objects within the patriarchal family structure but further heightens the social and economic insecurities of a dependant woman in the United States and Uma Parameswaran feels that the first generation parents need to outgrow their nostalgia. She maintains, "Home is where the feet are and may the heart be there too" and this statement echoes the construction and trials of a pseudo-Bengali household, away from Bengal, away from India (Azzam 2007, 10).

The labels like Indian American/ Asian American stick to the diaspora and however hard they try to acculturate and do away with marginalization, they cannot and are not wholly part of the mainstream culture. The hyphenated identity is undeniable and the creation of a new identity, especially a cosmopolitan one seen in the Western metropolises brings in the connection of home within cosmopolitanism. Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* (2002) as a postcolonial fiction is, in many respects, represent a mixed version of Calcutta, Atherton and San Francisco. Tara's hypocritical and conservative mind stimulates the feeling of unhomely hostility one sister can express for another, trying to hide Padma's secret child's of identity as if it is something blasphemous or unthinkable. The idea of disgrace and a woman's chastity is so deeply entrenched in her that it corrupts her relationship with her sister Padma, who, of course, is a more enlightened woman. On the other hand, the misconception of Padma's enlightenment reveals itself when Tara visits her and her husband Harish Mehta. Even though Padma insists that she is proud of her choice of a partner against the wishes of her parents, she too is shackled with the idea of a "woman's" purpose, whereas Tara is appreciated for her "sexual parts", as

"new sources of profit" (Irigaray 1985, 145) for the glory of upright and virtuous Bhattacharjee family. On the one hand, the narrative is an effort to expose the predicament of women in a decidedly patriarchal Indian society; on the other hand, it is an attempt by Mukherjee to define her own multiple (dis)locations, examine her increasing discomfort with a variety of Indian cultural practices, and come to terms with her growing realization that the "real" India is vastly different from the imagined "home" of her expatriate nostalgia (Nelson 2018, 25). Venkateswaran points out that Mukherjee's failure to integrate the tradition of Shakti (female power) into her analysis of women's status in the Indian socio-culture renders her portrayal rather synecdochic (Nelson 2018, 25). Nevertheless, Mukherjee manages to weave in the lives of contemporary Indian women with postcolonial expatriation as well as the systematic oppression not without considerable personal anguish, the illusion of "home" in a bold attempt to forge a new home and a new identity in another country (Nelson 2018, xii).

Homi Bhabha, in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) examines the reality of postcolonial literature through the classification of the unhomely or unfamiliar Bhabha examines the crisis between the public and private realms as the genesis for the unhomely in postcolonial literature and how ordinary events get debated. From daily events being racialized or sexualized or to even the age-old process of en-gendering the society, the bewilderment of unhomeliness and alienation becomes a trait for diasporic communities. Tara processes this alienation when she subconsciously fears the presence of Padma's illegitimate son Christopher and nullifies his reality in the family of the Bhattacharjee sisters, as her son, Rabi, points out in disgust: "who's going to give Chris benefit of the doubt? He is the wrong religion… and the wrong caste for the great Bhattacharjee family" (Mukherjee 2002, 90). The unhomeliness of Indian traditions, the instilled limitations of the Calcutta life, and the patriarchal boundaries all contribute to the lack of freedom and question Tara and Padma's life options, associations, and judgments to love and how to love. The failure of the private space unto the public generates an impossible ring of gendered expectations and subjugation for Indian women inside and outside India. Indian American women carry the contradictory idea of an ideal, and they slowly materialize into unnerving and unhomely figures themselves.

Mukherjee grounds the idea of home not just within the aspects of familiarity and unfamiliarity but also as a space to breed morality within women instead of desire and agency. Mukherjee observes home as the same gendered space that Nicola Fisher observes in her translation of Sarah Kofman's "The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women" where women are only considered to be subjects exerting dominance over men through their "pleasing" nature, in using their sexual representation (Fisher 1997, 355). Fisher observes that

while explaining the "comparative sentiment respect" Kant implies "a measurable and appreciable distance between men," going "as far as an estimation that one man is susceptible of being a means for the other who is judged superior", and of "being treated as somehow a simple commodity having a certain price…" (Fisher 1997, 356). In this idea of "comparative respect" Kant bases the sense of equality only between men in both the private and public sphere, where one claims the upper hand (1997, 356). Due to Kant's bias toward the female sex and its weaknesses, women are left out of the equation of equal respect and morality as according to Kant, women learnt the art of using men at their will, to the end of their own desires (Fisher 1997, 358).

When Kant mentions the weakness of the female subject, he assigns a societal position to both men and women, based on their sexes. The institution of marriage that Kant mentions in keeping morality and respect relates to the "ardor which the sexual drive arouses must therefore be inhibited, curbed by the restrictive conditions" imposed by the reason and morality expected from both the sexes in marriage (Fisher 1997, 360). Kant explores the sexual economy of a relationship where:

> modesty imposes, the respect of women: let man hold them in respect, at a distance, let woman hold her sex in safekeeping from the importunities of man and dominate him thereby). 9 These restrictive conditions are found best realized in marriage, toward which one should not be skeptical, says Kant, since it is through marriage that "woman becomes free" although also "man loses his liberty therein." (Fisher 1997, 360)

Kant's idea of a woman's true freedom through marriage reinforces the idea where women are not respected and valued as moral agents and only viewed through the process of marriage as an institution that only requires a woman to be dutiful and respectful towards the decisions of men. Kant acknowledges the role of woman as nurturer and her pseudo status as a "queen" who dominates but she is rendered incapable due to her feelings and it is always "man, the minister, who governs through his understanding" (Fisher 1997, 360). This very idea of the institution of marriage and its patriarchal implications is the main foundation of Mukherjee's construct of the diasporic home where Tara, Padma, and Parvati are living trapped lives or delusional realities. Three of them were raised in an environment where the men married, had a son, provided for the family and provided well, and it was a happy marriage (Mukherjee 2002, 260). Their idea of home was rooted in nostalgia where fathers are strict and believed in the glorification and moral virtue of the family and mothers nurtured sons and disciplined their daughters (248).

Home as an aesthetic foundation of the diasporic sublime functions as a necessary structure for marriage and raising children and divorce is akin to "Americanism" (Mukherjee 2002, 174), which further illuminates psychological inferiority and the return of the child into

the adult's world as Tara says, “I had a long childhood until thrown into marriage” (Mukherjee 2002, 21). Tara’s obsession with the ancestral home in Mishtigunj and her failure to relate to the home she built in the States demonstrates her desire to return to the childhood protection she received from her family. She presumes her desire to have a life without a care where the whole lot was provided, and in America in a quite biased way as she says “Nafisa’s mother and I don't speak the same dialect. We don't even speak the same language. I am tired of explaining India to Americans. I am sick of feeling an alien” (Mukherjee 2002, 87). In her way, Tara was searching for the communal and religious distinctions she was brought up around in 1947 post-partition Bengal to make sense of her Bengaliness in America as an excuse for her Westernised self.

In *Desirable Daughters* (2002), home becomes unhomely due to its approach to the topics of home and history; illegitimacy and interracial relations; gender, the body, and trauma connecting women’s double colonization at the hands of the patriarchs as well as the construction of the female subjectivity built upon the rubbles of the colonial remnants. The root of the word home (Heim) frames the argument about the differences in power balance, respect and agency within homes and families depending on the imbalances of the sexes and women have always remained at their worse end (Ponzanezi 2004, 49). Their inner dwelling, their relationship with each other in private space and their relationship with the neighbouring surrounding as part of the public space — all function as the constituents of the familiar territory called home (Ponzanezi 2004, 53). Home is marked as something belonging to the house, not peculiar, not unfamiliar yet tame, marked by a pleasing domesticity, relaxed, [and] comfortable (Ponzanezi 2004, 56). Nevertheless, home as a place for past repression and horrifying nostalgia also signifies dread and gradual fear.

The three sisters related home with hostility and menacing to their individual growth, shown in Tara's relationship with her son. The failure of one definition of the home makes an ideal vehicle for an agreement marked by cultural ambiguity that acts as a continual reminder for both Mukherjee and her not-so-desirable daughters that they do not belong to the American society and creates an opportunity to create their desired home. The novel hints at the variations of home and rejects the idea of a singular notion that feeds a heterogenous construct of a marriage, a father and a mother. The emergence of the postcolonial woman through the tethering with the Indian cultural upbringing and Hindu heritage breaks the cycle of men as the decision maker and women as the silent followers. Tara in the novel challenges her position as a secondary citizen since she followed her husband and her duties as a wife to the United States and her divorce from Bishwarup Chatterjee frames her will and power to detach from the role

of a provider and a provided (for), from her role as a Brahmin (elite) woman, from a role that has been decided by her father. Tara's representation as the postcolonial woman in the novel, on one hand, displays the difficulties of transition from one country to another, and on the other hand, shows the construction of the selfhood and aesthetic journey of her as a diasporic subject. The diasporic sublime in this novel mitigates the traditional and social constraints of an Indian woman, dependent on the dominant male figures and eventually channelling her rights and desires to claim her sublime (liberated) self, against the objectification of pleasing female body and duties as delineated by different male-dominated institutions.

III.3. The Shock of Arrival and Aspirations in *The Namesake*

Barbara Claire Freeman formulates the relationship between femininity and the sublime with the declaration that the "feminine sublime":

> […] is not a discursive strategy, technique, or literary style the female writer invents, but rather a crisis in relation to language and representation that a certain subject undergoes. As such it is the site both of women's affective experiences and their encounters with the gendered mechanisms of power from the mid-eighteenth century (when the theory of the sublime first came to prominence) to the present, for it responds specifically to the diverse cultural configurations of women's oppression, passion, and resistance. (Freeman 1995, 2)

With focus on the distortion and extortion of the female self and recognizing the commodification of women in the present society, it makes sense to read the feminine sublime within the diasporicity of Indian American women. With the encounters of the border and the homeland, lies the dramatically distorted and exploited picture of domicile women who are expected to represent subservience or as Immanuel Kant terms it "beauty" (Kant 1764, 260). Kant's continuous strain on women's political and moral inabilities produces overwhelming fractures within his system and destabilizes its overall rationality (Battersby 2007, 61). Indian culture, in this sense, evinces an apparatus to facilitate the perpetuation of women's enclosed existence within the domestic periphery, especially delineated by Jhumpa Lahiri in her novel, *The Namesake* (2003) where the diasporic consciousness of Ashima challenges the Kantian notion of women's passive and immoral nature.

In Kant's precritical *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764/2011), it is the difficulty, challenging and overcoming of the obstacles that were most valued in recognising the sublime. But even though these are the characteristics that are assigned to the invocation of sublime, these are restricted to men. In Lahiri's diasporic setting, the devalued condition of women and the constant pressure of adhering to the cultural and gendered expectations of Indian traditions create the scenario for Ashima to challenge domesticity and liberate the self. The chapter draws on the point that beauty, is represented by domesticity and the subdued nature of women assisting a man's establishment and the sublime is the astute liberation of women from the imposed duties as a nurturer. By contextualizing Ashima's sublime journey through the confrontations of body and home, this chapter focuses on feminist constructions of the Kantian sublime and its patriarchal order in relation to the patriarchal order as Lahiri delineates in the novel.

Jhumpa Lahiri sets up a teleological narrative of liberation wherein "their female protagonists travel from an India that functions as the symbolic space of gender oppression"

and “old world dutifulness,” to an America that accomplishes its possibilities of advancement, individual freedom, and feminist self-enlightenment (Richards 2017, 67). Ashima, in *The Namesake* (2003), is not represented as a victim of a relationship centred on conventional grounds. Instead, she deviates from the trope of the typical immigrant South Asian woman who operates as the person demonstrating and maintaining traditional (and patriarchal) cultural norms. She traverses the new environment with “Mira Nair (in the movie) equates Ashima’s getting to know America with her getting to know her husband” (Richards 2017, 72). Richards further states in her chapter, “Love, Desi Style: Arranged Marriage and Transnational Mobility in Mira Nair’s *The Namesake*” (2006), that Ashima and Ashoke superficially constitute a marital relationship as transnational diasporic subjects where Ashima was allowed to explore their new world but not let it change her, as she existed to remind him of his ties India, his primary identity as a Bengali and Bengali traditions. They both share the domestic and public sphere, and Ashima is ‘allowed’ to live and experience New York beyond the private space.

Theirs is an arranged-love marriage, and their mutual experience of traversing living in New York and assimilation into a new culture is what brings them close together. “Over the years, their bond grows out of a deep understanding of being tugged by a longing for tradition and being yanked by the promise of new beginnings” (Richards, 2017, 73). Ashima also feels like an outcast in New York. Her discomfort is apparent when she ventures out to the laundromat and witnesses the brawl, common to big cities like New York, making her feel estranged; however, Ashoke’s constant presence works as an assurance for her, both as a husband and a guardian, within the Western framework.

Freeman observes that “the vast majority of theorists conceptualize it as a struggle for mastery between opposing powers,” as the self's effort to appropriate and include whatever would exceed, and thereby undermine it (1995, 3). Freeman observes the romantic aesthetics that sees the sublime:

> as the elevation of the self over an object or experience that threatens it, the sublime becomes a strategy of appropriation […] the central moment of the sublime marks the self's newly enhanced sense of identity; a will to power drives its style, a mode that establishes and maintains the self's domination over its objects of rapture. (Freeman 1995, 5)

Freeman does not attempt to domesticate the idea of the sublime and reduce its impact with the objects of the rapture but certainly concentrates on the surrounding nature where fear may not be represented through physical existence of something colossal but internalization of it. The exercising of power, agency of the mind, the female subject experiences sublimity through the attitude of awe or heightened respect overwhelming ego (4). Taking the cue Freeman’s notion

of the feminine sublime, this chapter focuses on the internalised fear of diasporic women, restricted space for self-elevation due to imposed domesticity and eventual liberation from the oppression of gender and traditions to embrace the "newly enhanced self of identity" (3).

The postulation that women are sheltered from the political and economic experience of relocation because they primarily managed the domestic space controlled most of the literature. However, gender is a significant influence on the act of moving into more industrialized nations. It remains a core principle of the process, such as integration into the new community, continued relations with the homeland, and opportunities and resources utilized at the new destination. Thus, migration is a gendered experience. The act of relocation, often seen as an outcome of individual decisions (taken by men), positions women outside of the economic sphere because their responsibilities as wives/mothers dictate their choices.

Quite simply, the female protagonists are often viewed either as exclusively passive as society's victims or as an accomplice of the economy that excludes them. Without minimizing the extent and importance to which woman exerts agency, even like confronting the limits. By focusing upon Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), the chapter concentrates on the specific aspect of diasporic women's choices, morality, power and agency to renegotiate the dominant ideology of misogyny that haunts established theories of the sublime. Analysing the novel and female protagonist, Ashima's journey from being an Indian girl to becoming an American woman, this chapter focuses on the unstable and disintegrated relation between self, world and others to suggest sublime's diasporic theorization.

In 1981, Mary Bralove coined the term "trailing spouse," which is principally used in relation to spouses who followed their partners in relocation due to work prospects and the specific trials that came along with it (Cooke 2001, 419). While it initially was not used solely for women, it has been gradually referenced in relation to them since female spouses are more expected to become the trailing spouse (420). However, it is debated that altering the emphasis from exclusively on women to gender as a predominant social construction that impacts the migration experience is more significant. As a diasporic woman, Ashima's experiences hint at her gendered positioning in the broader socio-political framework to recognize the impact migration has on redefining marriage and family life. Ashima as a diasporic subject explores questions such as How does migration work to change patriarchal hierarchies of power in marital and familial relationships? How does economic contribution in the new country shift women's authority within the family and contribute to their idea of control? How is the transmigrant agency impacted in the domestic and social sphere? And lastly, how does the

notion of arranged marriages, seen as an oppressive system against the Western notions of love and relationships, also alter the migration experience? (Cooke 2001, 422).

Historically, as Devika Chawla expresses, marriage can be seen as "a duty and a religious sacrament that [is] required of all human beings for the well-being of the community" (2007, 4). Originating from the "Dharmashastras," marriage in Hinduism is meant for the socio-economic well-being of the family, not for intimacy or love. Indeed, since the idea of love accentuates personal satisfaction rather than familial duty, Martha Nussbaum points out that "love is potentially understood as a threat to rather than a goal of [Hindu] marriage" (Chawla 2007, 5). The obedient wife is seen as a "sati-savitri" (reference to mythical women who saved their husbands from death and destruction by exercising devotion to wifehood) who must loyally serve her godlike husband, or "Parmeshwar" (Chawla 2007, 6). While both wedding couples must conform to the family's choice, the establishment is patriarchal, in that he can "reject" her, but she is not expected to reject him. In fact, embedded in the Sanskrit word for marriage is the comprehensive absence of choice for the bride, since "vivaha" that "translates into procuring/abducting a maiden from the house of her father to the house of her husband" (6).

Therefore, arranged marriage is usually characterized as a tyrannical system that, despite cultural alterations like urbanization, modernization, and now globalization, persists to subdue Hindu women in the homeland as well as in the global Indian diaspora. Given that Indian arranged marriages do not originate in love, these are regarded as obsolete or antiquated expressions of conventional custom in the diaspora in contrast to Western conceptions of love, creating an ostensibly "unbreachable ethnic chasm between Eastern and Western marital practices" (Richards 2017, 66). As Sandhya Shukla suggests, arranged marriage becomes the "descriptor of a struggle between the old and new worlds," rendering "immigrant communities, especially in Britain and the United States, unknowable, exotic, and mired in tradition" (Chawla 2007, 10). This depiction of arranged marriage as an effectively repressive cultural institution, in plain contrast to the liberatory marital traditions of the West, has become customary in recent Indian diasporic literature and film.

Rita Gircour's translation of Hannelore Schroder's chapter titled "Kant's Patriarchal Order" (1997) comments on Von Hippel's ideologies and ethics on women's nature and morality in society as a contemporary to Immanuel Kant's circle of acquaintances. From his arguments of legal right of women to maintain their human representation in society, Schroder challenges the differences of human nature in terms of masculinity and femininity and gives a broader perspective of how the legal system and legislation should be enforced in terms of and

respect Gircour (1997, 276). Von Hippel in his chapter “Uber die burgerliche Verbesserung de Weiber,” “Thank God there have always been women who feel that the state of humiliation is too big a test … and who do not bemoan their femininity hut rather the arbitrary way their sex is treated by our sex” (Gircour 1997, 276).

Von Hippel utilizes the terms “slavery” and “the iron pressure of despotism,” which take away from women their feeling of liberty and strangle the very notion of the human rights taken from them (275). “As prosecutor and judge in the same person,” men have positioned a yoke on “the other half of human creation” where women are not permitted rights but only have an alternative to the “Gnadenweg” whereby the mercy of men they are granted only so much as long as “she doesn't infringe on his royal rights and doesn't destroy his crown” (Girour 1997, 277). A wife, according to Kant, is under the “legal rule of the lord and master spouse and is a slave subjected to the power of someone else[...]only has grace to depend on” (277). Hippel explores that a “contractually based,” relationship which is expected to be equal should be replaced with the patriarchal marriage of master and slave, where the power of marriage can rest with both the spouses (278). Finally, Hippel opines “Let us look forward to the day of liberation for the fair sex, when people endowed with equal rights will no longer be thwarted…” (278).

Kant even uses the term “marriage contract” in relation to the unity of free beings and equality of ownership of mutual belongings, he also states the incapacity of women as equal subjects to men as they should be excluded from the legislative process as well as the social hierarchy (Kant 1987, 271). Kant is severe on women due to their emotional attachments and duties as both the seductress and nurturer, as the fair sex (as opposed to the men or noble sex). The patriarchal order of Kant’s contemporary society puts forward questions such as is a man's procurement of a woman is a thing, or is it subjected to mutual ownership, and how can persons mutually own each other from equal social status especially when women are attributed minimum personhood and be regulated and subjugated within a man’s establishment? the mutual use of each other’s sexual existence but the risks of pregnancy are born by women alone as well as the post-pregnancy complications and changes in body and mind. According to Hippel, Kant focuses on the legal aspect of men’s right to use women for any purpose, including sex yet he also views the social contract of marriage as a mutually exclusive deal for both spouses to equally benefit from it (Gicour 1997, 281). So Kant gets enmeshed in a confusion of self-contradictions. Kant defends the privileges of the patriarchs yet claims marriage is a contract between equal partners, “where a relationship based on privilege and lack of rights is supposed to be equal” (Gicour 1997, 281). Kant particularly seeks to protect the “one-sided

arbitrariness" that is the legal privilege of men to subject women to their rule, he defends patriarchal marriage. Oppression by contract is illegal, as he states invalid contracts in which one of the parties is forced to give up his freedom and personhood (Gicour 1997, 294).

In examining the body and its relation to the sublime, the novel observes childbirth. Even though a natural occurrence, the experience of every woman is different and it is not a shared universal experience. Sheila Lintott rather observes the sublime conceptualisation of these individualistic involvements, as:

> These experiences, with their odd mixtures of pain and pleasure, distance and intimacy, mortality and life, vulnerability and strength, fear and love, and selfishness and selflessness, are remarkably distinctive from virtually every other experience open to human beings. (Lintott 2013, 237)

This creates an opportunity to draw similarities with the sublime feeling through the act of labour and changing of the body as it affords space to discuss Ashima in a new light, through her gruelling and profound experience.

The complicated experiences and perceptions that can accompany gestating and giving birth, may be considered in the light of the sublime theory, especially, in terms of a diasporic woman. The central concern of body and the sublime, in this chapter, is to display how the experience of childbirth can invoke the sublime emotion and if its problematic theorization is due to being conceptualised only under masculine terms (Lintott 2013, 251). A feminist understanding of the sublime would be able to express the existential significance and importance of gestating and giving birth without decreasing the experience to one of domination which is commonly classical and masculinist (Lintott 2013, 251). The obvious and most commonly discussed:

> fears entertained by gestating women are those of the physical pain and physical damage of birth. Throughout pregnancy there is a constant, although not always consciously attended to, awareness that eventually and inevitably the process will end in intense pain. Women know their bodies will be ravaged during birth, not to mention the toll pregnancy takes on the body. (Lintott 2013, 251)

Many women are eternally "scarred through giving birth"; for instance, physical harm to "the birthing woman" can consist of "superficial to deep-rooted vaginal tearing and obstetric fistula" (Lintott 2013, 251). There also may be a constant fear about one's own safety as well as the children's. Hence, the process and action offer enough evidence of a mother's awareness of danger, pain, and terror which displays agency through reason and imagination heightening the beautiful aspect of childbirth, and the overwhelming sublime effect of labour. In an emotional account of the birth of her son, Karen Deavor (in an interview with Lintott) talks about the

personal experience of childbirth, her "deeper awareness of her mental and physical strength and resiliency and into a relationship more demanding and difficult" (Deavor 2009, 190):

> My world, too, was rocked on that snow-covered January day, the one we'll celebrate with candles for my son. His birth accomplished a radical shift in my terrain—in my ability to copy, mentally, and in my perception of my body's strength and resilience. It took me from my comfortable, cerebral approach to life and thrust me into my earthly, primal, mortal self—a door that, once opened, continually reveals depths of light and shadow. Birth's result, life itself, grew in me the fiercest visceral and emotional attachment possible, and with it layers of vulnerabilities and resolves I hadn't previously touched. (Deavor 2009, 190).

Deavor's experience of childbirth, kind of puts Ashima's experience into perspective. Along with the excruciating pain, the constant change in her body, the contractions and the seventy-two hours long labour, there was an added concern of raising her child in a land where she herself did not belong (2009, 189). Alongside the concern for the safety of her well-being as well as the child's, she was focused that a child of two Indian parents not being born in the land of their ancestors.

The order of arranged marriage within the patriarchal system of the Bengali Indian society is reflected through the novel *The Namesake* and Lahiri begins the novel by introducing Ashima Ganguli in labour and her struggles with the change of body due to pain and contractions. Lahiri started the novel with Ashima's struggle as a mother in a foreign land, amid foreign people to focus on Ashima's account as an immigrant and her tumultuous journey from a nurturer to a diasporic subject. the first few pages concentrate on her anxiety about giving birth in an unfamiliar place where she feels detached from her motherhood as the preparation of it was different from the women back in Kolkata experience— the Hindu rituals, the comfort from the care of her own parents and experiencing familiarity in terms of language, space, food and people. The traumatic process of childbirth that is taking over twenty four hours became more stifling due to being all alone as she reflects:

> Ashima thinks it's strange that her child will be born in a place most people enter either to suffer in a place most people enter either to suffer or to die. There is nothing to comfort her in the off-white tiles of the floor, the off-white panels of the ceiling, the white sheets tucked tightly into the bed. In India, she thinks to herself, women go home to their parents to give birth, away from husbands and in-laws and household cares, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives. (Lahiri 2003, 4)

Being the first generation immigrant, Ashima finds it overly complicated to get accustomed to the host culture. Motherhood is a glorified stage in a woman's life, glorified as an initiation to her role as a nurturer and further binds her to the domestic characteristics and roles traditionally imposed on her. From the onset of the novel, Ashima is shown as a woman who is prepared to

make sacrifices for her husband and for the seemingly brighter future of the children. Even though Ashima "is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare," she bears the feelings of loneliness and homelessness for Ashoke's ambitions (Lahiri 2003, 3). Life in the States has robbed her of her identity, and her sense of self. Even though she was raised to be the dutiful assistant to whomever is her husband and to follow him as someone next to god, her sacrifices for Ashoke and the family keep on pushing her to the edge.

In a masculinist understanding of the sublime, the response to danger or dissatisfaction is rational and focuses on the power of the mind over the body and all that is physical. Nevertheless, the sublimity suffered in the hours of labour and birth is not entirely rational or otherwise psychological. It is distinctly physical as well. Lintott observes that for Kant the sublime provides distinct evidence of his "supersensible self"—the self that can go beyond the threat or frustration displayed to the senses, Lintott offers and focuses "more on the bodily strength and physical sensations" (Lintott 2013, 252). Contrary to a masculinist sublime, Lintott describes that the "usual cerebral approach to life" was interrupted "in such a way as to disclose new truths" about one's "body and its strength" (Lintott 2013, 252). Unlike the supposed "realization that one is other than and higher than the physical world" that might be reached "through sublime experiences with natural disasters, giving birth can intensify a woman's experience" that she is of and in the physical world and that, as such, she "intimately aware of own embodied power" (Lintott 2013, 240).

However, while "dwelling on the physical pain, when that pain is days, weeks, even months off in the distance," might be a "defence mechanism used by the pregnant woman" (Lintott 2013, 240). In other words, Lintott observes:

> she may focus on the impending physical pain because it is easier to admit to and understand than it is to admit to and understand the threat of psychical pain and destruction that can loom persistently in the background. One reason a woman's worry over psychical destruction is less frequently acknowledged and discussed than that of the physical pain of giving birth is that acknowledging this worry calls into question the veracity of a deep cultural mythology of motherhood. The doubling of the pregnant subject conveys other aspects of gestation's magnitude as well. (Lintott 2013, 240)

For one, "while pregnant, an entire human being, once potentially and then actually, is embodied within a woman's person" (Lintott 2013, 242). The entire acknowledgement of this embodied magnitude involves a woman recognizing she represents not just a new life, but a whole new journey. This argument of the relationship between a pregnant woman and the being she bears also expresses of the possible ambiguity of the sublime (Lintott 2013, 242).

Subjectively, “the pregnant woman does not know where she begins and this other begins” (Lintott 2013, 242). Observing this discussion in Ashima’s life intensifies the relationship as a pregnant woman with the sublime, especially being an immigrant. Her diasporicity and concept of domicile constantly clashes as she finds herself baffled bringing a new life in a world that is unfamiliar for her too. When the doctor examines her during her labour and declares “everything is normal” (Lahiri 2003, 5), Ashima reflects:

> But nothing feels normal to Ashima. For the past eighteen months, ever since she’s arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all. It’s not so much the pain, which she knows, somehow, she will survive. It’s the consequence: motherhood in a foreign land. For it was one thing to be pregnant, to suffer the queasy mornings in bed, the sleepless nights, the dull throbbing in her back, the countless visits to bathroom…That it was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still (Lahiri 2003, 5).

A pregnant Ashima’s awareness of the ambiguous nature of the separation between herself and the “being she gestates can confront her with a difficult realization” (Lintott 2013, 246). In *Sticky Sublime*, Bill Beckley observes how this “ambiguity may have something to do with a woman’s sense of autonomy as well as anatomy” (Beckley 2001, 5). Beckley “appears to suggest that a woman’s sense of sovereignty is distinctive because her anatomy” is as well, “She quite literally has the possibility to experience a new self within the physicality of her own” (Beckley 2001, 5). However, this “encounter is not entirely unique, as the relationship between a pregnant woman and the child she gestates” are individualist and universal experiences at the same time (Beckley 2001, 5).

Ashima’s capacity to become a transnational diasporic subject is intimately tied to her culturally assigned gendered expectations living in central New York posits their financially affluent status as well as their capacity in affording travel back and forth to India. Their ability to transpose in and out of the US and Ashima's marital relationship redefined through migration is what allows her to build social connections outside of her domestic space. Furthermore, Ashima can maintain close family relations with those in Kolkata (Calcutta) due to her financial resources allowing her to travel to her nation-state. As Richards states, “[Nair] revises the role of the immigrant wife in the diaspora by giving her equal access to transnational mobility” (Richards, 2017, 69). However, I argue that in analysing Ashima's active participation in transnationalism, Richards does not consider how class, ethnicity, and educational credentials intersect to create Ashima's crossing of territorial borders much more accessible.

When Ashima recalls her memories from the first time she met Ashoke through the arranged marriage set up, Lahiri takes a peek to Ashima’s upbringing and how she was raised

to be a woman without agency. She never slept alone or occupied a space of her own— it was always shared, infringed space with either her parents or later with her husband. Her education, and her acquired skills such as cooking, knitting and singing were not for her but to attract better suitors. She was raised to be dependent and not self-reliant so she always remains tied to her provider, (either father, husband or son) and never aspires to be an equal of a man in his establishment. she had no right to reject a suitor as nineteen-year-old Ashima, who was in no rush to be a bride, reflects, "He was the third in many months. The first had been a widower with four children. The second, a news chapter cartoonist who knew her father, had been hit by a bus in Esplanade and lost his arm. To her great relief they had both rejected her" (Lahiri 2003, 7). She had no right to reject the men who came to see her. No matter how unappealing or unsuitable she thought they were, the decision always rested with her parents as getting her married off to a family where she will be provided for was the priority. While Ashoke was waiting for Ashima to enter the room, Ashima's slipping on his shoes also paradoxically appropriates the West's most charming tale of romance, the Cinderella's story, which in reality is about a young girl's entrance into womanhood in a patriarchal society.

Lahiri's appropriation provides as a reminder of how images and ideas "travel," to use Grewal's term, and here become "glocalized" in the form of an Indian Cinderella" (Richards 2017, 68). But Ashima's stealthy act rewrites the traditional way of thinking about "Cinderella as a pious maiden looking for her prince-saviour" (69), or rags-to-riches theme. Even though the "domestic requirements in bourgeois Christian society necessary for a young woman to make herself acceptable for marriage" (Zipes 2002, 28) seems similar to the contemporary Indian domestic traditions, Ashima unlike the charming prince from the fairy tale, is not swept off her feet by Ashoke, rather the marriage gives her some sort of agency to her needs from her partner, voicing a Hindu brides' desires and expectations from her marriage. With this idea, Ashima accepts her rootlessness in the United States, away from her homeland, her family and her friends, as long as she achieves true companionship with Ashoke.

She undergoes sleep deprivation in a house alone with her baby, depressed about being unable to give her son the name from her grandmother who has named all her great-grandchildren, as way to highlight blessing from the ancestors to the new lives. Even though she accepts the Americanisation of her children; she wore saree for over twenty years and kept on abiding the regulations set by her culture. She gives her children full liberty to move out and discover the world, teaches the culture of her own country but never force them to do or practice it yet she could not detach herself from it. Her marriage with Ashoke was the only way to create, connect and possess her bengalines in the hostland. The white and red bangles, the 'sindoor'

across her head and the red ‘bindi’ symbolised that she still remains a Hindu wife. On the other hand, Ashoke’s Bengaliness was not as deep and bonded with Ashima’s as his ties to Kolkata (Calcutta) only reminded him of the traumatic train accident that he barely survived. His entire life flashed before his eyes and reminded his of the last words of a fellow passenger, Ghosh, “you are still young. Free… Do yourself a favour. Before it is late” (Lahiri 2003, 15). The life in Bengali reminded him of his experience with death:

> He remembers the sound of people half-dead around him, moaning and taping on the walls of the train, whispering hoarsely for help, words that only those who were also trapped and injured could hear. Blood drenched his chest and the right arm of his shirt…He remembers the acrid odor of flames, the buzzing of flies, children crying, the taste of dust and blood on his tongue…He remembers believing that he was dying, that perhaps he was already dead. (Lahiri 2003, 18)

For Ashoke, the attachment to Kolkata only became about this accident and his helplessness. While he was recovering in Kolkata Medical College, he was bedridden for over a year due to a broken pelvis and shattered femur. Kolkata reminded him of his near brushing away from death and he could not look forward from there. This train accident symbolised Ashoke’s life in the novel as well as Ashima’s as it represented a past that Ashoke ran from along with his family. His career at the States, his marriage, his kids as well as his death from a heart attack in Cleveland— everything represented what came after the accident and because of that accident.

For Ashima, Ashoke’s death became a life-changing moment. This was not her first experience with the death of kin but with Ashoke dying, she lost her identity. For Ashoke the train accident and the almost-dead status made him envision a different future in his early twenties but for Ashima, his death only meant a helpless state of a Hindu widow in a foreign land. As soon Ashoke left for Cleveland, and her kids grew up and went their ways, she started living on her own. Even though she thought this was a skill she is too old for, she finally realised her son's words, “Everyone should live on their own at some point” (161). At forty-eight years old, for the first time, she experienced solitude, not needing to take care of things that mattered before. She learned the ways of a Hindu household really early on her in her life, from her grandmother and mother who kept the house neat and organised at all times, without a mistake, without a moment of respite. But Ashima, “no longer dusts, or notices dust, for that matter. She eats on the sofa, in front of the television, simple meals of buttered toast and dal, single pot lasting her a week” (162).

Till now, she lived in perfect harmony with her domestic identity as a wife and a mother but for the first time, she is learning to live for herself. Ashima’s first job in America as a librarian in her late forties displays the first instance of her agency as she receives her small pay

checks, the money that she earned and not given by Ashoke. Ashima's dependency on Ashoke was not just a wife's dependency on her husband but of a woman trained in a way to always needing an authoritative figure over her head to make decisions for her as she thinks, "Ashoke will do it" (163). When Ashima first learns about her husband's death, her whole world comes crashing down as Lahiri exposes Ashima's vulnerability of losing the person who was solely responsible for her existence as a diasporic woman in the United States:

> She listens to something about a heart attack, that it had been massive, that all attempts to revive him had failed. Dis she wish to have any of her husband's organs donated? She is asked…Instead of answering, Ashima hangs up the phone as the woman is still speaking, pressing down the receiver as hard as she can into the cradle,…as if to smother the words she's just heard. She begins to shiver violently, the house instantly feeling twenty degrees colder. She pulls her saree tightly, like a shawl…in the red envelopes it had pleased her so much to buy, most of them ready to be dropped in the mailbox. Her husband's name is on all of them. (Lahiri 2003, 169).

Ashoke's death was more than a husband's loss to a wife but the concept of a husband symbolised roof over her head, her sense of security and represented the whole idea of home. She wanted to return to Kolkata all her life in the US, but once Ashoke died, Ashima had no desire to escape to Kolkata (Calcutta), she "refuses to be so far from the place where her husband made his life, the country in which he died" (183). Women in Indian English fiction is depicted as silent martyr and upholder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society as Ashima tried to do when she departed with Ashoke from Calcutta Ashima as per her name "…will be without borders, without a home of her, a resident everywhere and nowhere" and Ashima finally understands the meaning of finding the self beyond the familiarity of body and home as she says, "Now I know why he went to Cleveland," she tells people, refusing, even in death, to utter her husband's name "He was teaching me how to live alone" (183).

Ashima like many immigrants Bengali women is not culturally immunized by America's multicultural perspectives and highlights strong affiliation to her Indian family values and duties of a woman as a wife and a mother. The fear of losing her Bengali culture and of her children's abandonment of their unique culture secretly torments her. Through the existential struggle of Ashima, Jhumpa Lahiri introduces the pain of a woman living in an alien land, caused by a sense of isolation. This sense of isolation heightened within the limitations, challenges and changes of the body and home at the end, Ashima could break free from the patriarchal expectations and set herself from the life that Ashoke chose for her throughout their marriage and return to Kolkata (Calcutta) and gain sovereignty. This constant mode of struggle within oneself and facing the terror and power of the unknown and unfamiliar as a diasporic woman helps Ashima to confront the self and gain agency to reach her sublime state.

Ashima is representative of a woman internally traumatised and shackled due to her patriarchal upbringing as well as of diasporic women who of familial expectations and similar hidden trauma. Like a traditional Indian wife in appearance and in ideologies, her life revolves around her husband and children and sacrifices all her comforts for the sake of her family. She is true to her rule designated to her as a daughter, granddaughter, wife, and mother and emerges as her only identity. The Bengali household in as shown in the novel invests on the idea of a woman as a homemaker and staying true to the role of a nurturer as well as the men of the family are treated differently, with more respect and in charge of overall workings of the household. From Ashima's father to her husband Ashoke to her son Gogol—all the men are shown as the decision making characters who were expected not just be the financial provider but also be rational and more reasonable so that the women could depend on them and exist within the walls of the ancestral traditions.

The men represented decisiveness as the women represented passivity as Klinger also observes in Western traditions while explaining Kant's observation on gender:

> […]the dualism of gender. Or, put the other way around, the great dualisms of the Western philosophical tradition are attributed to what is considered to be the character of the two sexes. Every person socialized in our culture infallibly classifies reason and rationality as male, emotions and sentimentality as female; the gender connotations of activity and passivity are just as evident; we all know that women belong in the private sphere while the public is man's domain, and finally the association of man with culture and woman with nature also finds various direct expressions." (Klinger 1997, 192)

Freedom and may consequently have a coherent disposition, but still there cannot be scepticism that woman is thus degraded to a secondary status: "Among moral attributes true virtue alone is sublime. There are ... good moral qualities that are amiable and beautiful", but "they cannot properly be included within the virtuous disposition" (Kant 1960, 57). Women's beautiful virtues are discriminated against as "adoptive virtues" (Kant 1960, 61) in opposition to man's sublime virtues which are "genuine virtue" (Kant 1960, 61). As the woman is excepted from the moral law, she is prohibited from the full status of humanity; in Kant's position the true sense of being human is described by the capacity for moral principles as he observes:

> Not only woman's rational but also her moral capacity is cast in aesthetic terms by Kant: "The virtue of a woman is a beautiful virtue. That of the male sex should be a noble virtue. Women will avoid the wicked not because it is unright, but because it is ugly; and virtuous actions mean to them such as are morally beautiful. Nothing of duty, nothing of compulsion, nothing of obligation! Woman is intolerant of all commands and all morose constraint." (Klinger 1997, 193)

Without going into a detailed discussion of Kant's *Observations* hut there are inquiries that merit as how Kant's general observation of human nature and the disparity of noble and fair sex in achieving the sublime state as t a focal point of the discussion of the beautiful and sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*. Since the sublime virtues were ascribed higher than the beautiful to represent power, morality and reason over the faculties of emotions and imagination in the third Critique, the question arises that how to move from beautiful to the sublime state of self. Kant, however, asserts the contrary: as beautiful virtues are a natural inclination, almost a kind of compulsion that benevolent prudence has placed into the hearts of men, they are a "much more common and less defective source of moral behaviour and action" (Kant 2007, 74).

So, obviously, it is not an argument of moral expediency or utility that justifies the precedence of the sublime virtues over the beautiful as Klinger observes,

> the distinctive and decisive feature lies in Kant's assertion that the sublime virtues are independent of a benevolent providence; they are not given by nature as a kind of instinct but result from human freedom and are an accomplishment of reason." (Klinger 1997, 201)

With this significant difference that Kant points out, Klinger explains that all that differentiates man from nature, makes him autonomous of and sets him above nature, "is of itself noble or sublime and hence ennobles man" (Klinger 2001, 201). This assessment involves a gender hierarchy: the female principle is characterized as a concentration in nature whereas it is a male entitlement to surmount nature's confines and to attain the autonomous moral law.

The gendered implications of t'e beautiful and sublime that were explicit in Kant's Observations will become invisible in the *Critique of Judgment* (1764/2011). While following this observation, alongside the masculine prerogative to achieve the sovereign self, there is also the feminine agency that goes beyond the assigned nature and its confinements to break away from a lifelong passivity in society, both in the public and private sphere. With respect to the novel, Klinger's reading of the Kantian sublime may help shed some light on the domestic conceptualisation of the beautiful and the rejection of domesticity as the sublime state. Alongside the intense bodily effects and changes of Ashima's body during labour and childbirth, the changed, unfamiliar dimensions of home show Ashima's transcendence from her imagined state within the peripheries of diaspora and domicile, decided by men to freedom of her 'self' in her homeland. Ashima Ganguli in *The Namesake* has an extraordinarily strong sense of the community feeling of Kolkata in comparison to the highly individualized American society. Even while working the daily chores she imagines what it would be like doing the same work back home (i.e. Kolkata).

She yearns for fresh fish of various kinds, and the familiar smells and tastes of food, especially as a pregnant woman living on her own most of the time in an apartment for two. Ashoke's ambitions in the hostland, take Ashima away from her familiarity and sense of security. For Ashima, the feeling of being away from home at the time of her delivery, and the deficiency of her dear ones is very much disturbing. She cannot absorb the idea of delivery in a hospital, away from her parents and home. Whenever Ashima is keenly reminded of her home, she resorts to reading an old copy of a Bengali magazine, repeatedly the same stories to imagine herself again on the streets of the city, lost in the bustle and the business. The spatial aspect is manifested "through deterritorialization and re-territorialization. These phenomena are both, geographical as well as cultural" (Prabhune 2014, 63). However, the degree to which they thrive in the undertaking varies upon the levels of education, age, background and socio-political situations in both home and host land, as Jasbir Jain adds, "Yet this multiplicity of 'homes' does not bridge the gap between 'home'- the culture of origin; and 'world'- the culture of adoption" (Prabhune 2014, 63). Such nostalgic immigrants who tend to "downgrade and denigrate all things North American, can never be happy anywhere," says Uma Parameswaran. She adds, "Within the Diaspora community, the concepts of "home" continue to aggravate inter-generational frictions that…exist everywhere" (Prabhune 2014, 64). Thus, the second generation immigrants moving away from "the constricting ghetto experience" (65). They commence many survival methods like moderating the stings of racism and appropriating clothing and food habits like the Americans to remain unnoticed, somewhat invisible. In this way the socio-cultural differences of both countries display the inevitable juxtaposition of hierarchy in the hostland and the more immigrants appropriate, they assume the role of oppressed with the Westernised outlook as the foreign, hostile and oppressor.

In the Kantian sublime, reason is elevated over the imagination and understanding, in the service of a moral framework. This recourse to an ethical and moral framework is of interest to twentieth century (re)formulations of the sublime that attempt to use its force and power as a means for enabling the abject and the subaltern. Moreover, the tension in the sublime, between the faculties of imagination and reason, as the power of representation and that of the idea, opens a space within which transcendence can be reconfigured. In its Kantian formulation, however, the sublime remains vertical: reason rises above the imagination, and the sensible world of the body is negated in favour of transcendent principles and realities. The "two faculties, empathy and reason," are not only unique in character but:

> also the relations in which they enter with imagination are of completely different kinds. The relation of imagination and understanding is a harmonious one; a feeling of the

> beautiful arises when our understanding is in harmony with nature, when the form of a natural object is corresponding to our rational capacity and conveys to us the impression of a meaningful whole or totality. (Klinger 1997, 197)

In Kant's wording: "in the estimate of the beautiful imagination and understanding by their concert generate subjective finality of the mental faculties" (Klinger 1997, 197). The beautiful "is directly attended with a feeling of the furtherance of life and is thus compatible with charms and a playful imagination" (Klinger 1997, 197). By contrast, the relation of imagination and reason is established on conflict and therefore is complemented by a feeling of "displeasure" (Klinger 1997, 197). This discomfort, to a degree of ugliness or repulsiveness, is "arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude" (Klinger 1997, 198). In harmony with other contemporary theories of the sublime, Kant distinguishes between the mathematical and the dynamical sublime.

The mathematical sublime stands for the magnitude of the objects that overwhelms the observer from a safe distance but in an awe-inspiring way depending on the subject's proximity; whereas the dynamic sublime rests on the feelings man is capable of realising in his own mind overwhelmed by nature yet comprehending the power of the mind having the ability to rewrite the internalised fear.; "it is either the quantum (numerical magnitude) of a phenomenon or the might of nature that, exceeds the imagination":

> the feeling of the sublime, may appear ... in point of form to contravene the ends of our power of judgement, to be ill adapted to our faculty of presentation, and to be ... an outrage on the imagination…Conflict, disharmony, struggle, and violence are the pre-dominant features of the sublime and yet, there is also a strange kind of attraction, a "negative pleasure" connected to it. (Klinger 1997, 197)

Klinger hence observes that, in the same manner as the subject horribly experiences the inability of own imagination one discovers or are reminiscent of the individual capacity of reason as independent from and superior to the senses and to nature. The "feeling of our possessing a pure and self-sufficient reason is at the foundation of the category of the sublime" (Klinger 1997, 198). The pleasure of reason results from the downfall of imagination. The mind thus incites to discard emotional response and employ itself upon ideas requiring higher conclusiveness. The fundamental idea of elevation of transcendence of the self is the moral law. The feeling of the sublime that is stimulated by some occurrences of external nature such as what Kant mentions as the potential of "mountains ascending to heaven, deep ravines and torrents raging there, deep-shadowed solitudes" (Klinger 1997, 200).

This feeling is unknown but a manifestation of man's own sublimity that comprises in his independence from nature as a rational, as a moral being, "Sublimity [. . .] does not reside in

any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us (as exerting influence upon us)" (Kant 2014,16). In the case of the novel, Lahiri's text provides an understanding of diasporic subjectivity that extends beyond a bipolar construction of identity, which is to say beyond a notion of the diaspora as always and only part home and part host country. The novel denotes, instead, migrant life as a dialogic arena that, though the result of the communication between home and host, is a distinctive space with highlights unique to the eventualities of migrant life. Further, Lahiri typifies this space as being fairly fixed and consistent, thus confounding the typical involvement of heterogeneous personalities with shifting or mobile ones. Ashima, unlike Ashoke, is not deeply fascinated by the West and the Americanization of the society she lives in. The domestic values she held onto were fading from her children's lives as well as her but finally, she recognises the meaning of community and marriage. Ashima regretted leaving India and living her life out in a foreign land but she had to do it because of Ashoke—a marriage, even wanted, she could not forsake. Even though Lahiri (and Nair in the movie adaptation) shows Ashima and Ashoke as a compatible couple but Ashima had to adjust her desires, needs, and reason to Ashoke's needs and had to stay in a marriage that was not entirely happy for her.

Ashima, being trapped in a marriage where she never got to make choices for her own self, finally understands why her son Gogol got divorced from his Bengali descent wife, Moushumi. Lahiri points out that ethnical, cultural and religious similarities are not enough for a relationship to last as Ashima says:

> But fortunately they have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima's generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their idea happiness. That pressure has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, o American common sense. (Lahiri 2003, 276)

Although Lahiri presents Ashima and Ashoke within the larger socio-historical narrative of American immigration, she does not render the West as simply a liberatory space in opposition to the confines of traditional Indian society. The access to freedom appears quite alien to them.

Alongside a more popular opinion on the definition of the sublime, it might be argued that the agony of childbirth is so extreme and the consequences involved so real that the calm, reasoned contemplation necessary for understanding the sublimity of the encounter is impossible. Most theorists on the sublime have insisted that the subject facing the sublime must be positioned at a safe space from the threat and separated from imminent danger (Kant 2007, 144). In his "critical investigation of the sublime," Kant demands that the "subject be effectively

removed from the threat so as to be able to judge the "object fearful without being afraid of it" (2007, 144). To determine the pain and probability of death in childbirth not including terror of it may seem an impractical or extremely implausible task for a woman in the woes of labour, although Ashima seems to attain this estrangement. Connected to the strong determination and fortitude thought to be necessary to invoke the sublime and the delicate simplicity and delight with which it is understood one describes beauty, it is the powerfully gendered nature of these two aesthetic phenomena (Lintott 2013, 238). Kant's idea of the sublime as a purely a male phenomenon, which is associated with paternal power and disconnected from anything feminine has a pejorative association to human nature in general, especially in literary representation of diaspora and narratives of postcolonial immigration.

Kant's precritical text, *Observations of the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764/2011) highlights inadvertent fashion of the sublime realisation is construed as confronting in areas of life that are—or were—entirely reserved for men. We find illustrations of this sort of treatment of the sublime in both Burke and Kant, who share an inclination to pinpoint the sublime in stereotypically masculine endeavours like war or adventure (Lintott 2013, 247). Not only are sublime encounters usually thought to be exemplified by stereotypically male behaviour, but women also are typically associated with beauty. Women are supposed to be beautiful and seen as being fascinated to beauty, not to be thoroughly involved with the "self-originating idea of the sublime" (2013, 249).

In his pre-critical texts Kant is most clear on this prejudice, as his discussion of the fading beauty of ageing women as shows in *Observations* (1960). Even when she is said to develop her "noble and sublime qualities," Kant sees this merely as a concession for her lost beauty:

> Finally age, the great destroyer of beauty, threatens all those charms; and if it proceeds according to the natural order of things, gradually the sublime and noble qualities must take the place of the beautiful, in order to make a person always worthy of a greater respect as she ceases to be attractive. In my opinion, the whole perfection of the fair sex in the bloom of years should consist in the beautiful simplicity that has been brought to its height by a refined feeling toward all that is charming and noble. Gradually, as the claims upon charms diminish the reading of books and the broadening of insight could refill unnoticed the vacant place of the Graces with the Muses, and the husband should be the first instructor. (Kant 1960, 92)

Kant's conviction here is that women are able to (if at all) experience the sublime in a restricted manner and always in a way that demands male supervision; she does not define and chase for herself her own perception of the sublime. Rather, she is beautiful until she is altered by age, which variation opens up the probability of a broadening of vision (Lintott 2013, 249). Along with age, pregnancy and birth likewise have the tendency to diminish a woman's charms, as

well as her youthful appearance that Kant observes as seduction. In this way, the experiences of gestating and giving birth demonstrates women's capacity for the sublime and offer an indication that women throughout history have always had a profound knowledge of the sublime. However, Lintott observes:

> the sublimity known through maternal experiences is less distanced and more visceral than is the sublimity found in examples favoured by philosophers such as Burke and Kant. Their stock examples of the sublime include powerful thunderstorms, grand mountains, tumultuous seas, and the massiveness of space; in these examples, the stimulus that prompts an experience of the sublime is in a clearer sense external to the agent. (Lintott 2013, 251)

Despite "this gulf between the stimulus and the appreciator," philosophers such as Kant have demanded that the sublime is truly discovered in the appreciator (Lintott 2013, 251). A feminist sublime illustrates how some women might find such a personal connection during gestation and birth to feel the connection between the self and the sublime. It is also remarkable that with this perception of a feminist sublime we fully attained due to a collapse between "stimulus and appreciator"; in fact, as Lintott observes that:

> the maternal examples of the sublime in gestation and birth take the collapse of the dichotomy of subject and object as a starting point. The feminist sublime is embodied and decidedly not abstract. It does not enjoy the safety or the "disinterestedness" demanded by more traditional conceptions of the sublime." (Lintott 2013, 252).

Thus, not only does this observation and analysis Lintott show that there is a need to reconsider gendered aspects of the sublime but also highlights how the gendered notions of the sublime can be negotiated in respect of diasporicity of immigrant women. The maternal experience of a diasporic woman is much different from the women giving birth in their own land, amid the comfort of familiarity in terms of people, language, food and culture. The "feminist construction of the sublime hence effectively problematizes many implicit and explicit peculiarities of classical notions of the sublime, including, most pointedly, the gender hierarchy it assumes and endorses" (Lintott 2013, 252).

The Namesake (2003) disarticulates Ashima in order to ground her in various locations. She becomes an admirable poststructuralist subject who, is not a "fixed essence" or embodies only one sort of identity as the fair sex as Kant observed but someone who lives with and through, not despite, difference. This is how the immigrant wife comes to symbolize the significance of her own given name, for Ashima means "boundless" or "without borders" (Ponzanezi 2004, 62). Like her transformed marriage, which has become a new hybrid entity through the blending of modern love with traditional customs, Ashima comes to fully exemplify

transnational mobility. In the final scene of Nair's movie adaptation, Ashima returns to Kolkata (Calcutta) to embrace the life of a Bengali woman that she left behind for Ashoke. She is shown to practise her sitar, reconnecting with her aspirations and trying to make up for the lost time she was indebted to herself. Deepika Bahri reminds us that, in the novel, Ashima "is given no music or space of bliss to return to" (45). Ashima remains in between worlds— mobile, not fixed, still pulled by tradition and pulled by the possibility of new beginnings. Away from the patriarchal expectations that constructed Ashima's borders and limited her idea of the self, finally, she could realise the self away from her gendered and traditional responsibilities. Her journey back to being Ashima from Ashima Ganguli marks the liberation from domesticity from beautiful to the sublime.

III.4. The Voice of Reason and Womanhood in *The Lowland*

The reading of Kant's third *Critique* in regard to this dissertation informs and unifies feminist and postcolonial theories, which investigate the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality in their analyses of oppression. In particular', this reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1793/2000) will focus on specific examples where he engages in his discussion of beautiful objects to represent femininity and how the work of fiction embodies the female object as the sovereign and sublime subject, against Kant's primary observations of human nature and its sublimity. Reflections on Kant's examples can enlighten the attitudes about gender and race that renegotiate his analysis of the beautiful and the sublime. In addressing these issues, the novel *The Lowland* (2013) becomes the setting to discuss the basic motifs that shape and reshape lives: body and home. The politically challenged environment of 1970s Calcutta heightened the tendencies of migration among the Bengalis and Lahiri recaptures these years of anxieties, terror and life threats through Gauri and her journey to the United States.

In addition to this, Gauri's journey on one hand, regards to her existential confrontation with the male domination of the Bengali community and on the other hand, it deals with self-preservation and mastering the self-capacity against the patriarchal and religious dominance on women to keep them domesticated. According to Freeman, in n the feminine sublime, the components are the same as in the traditional sublime: "there is a subject who encounters a terrifying other that threatens their sense of self with its sheer vastness or obscurity" (Carr 2017, 24). However, the outcome of the feminine sublime equation is different. Where the traditional sublime has domination as an equal part of the sublime equation, the feminine sublime removes domination altogether. The female experience, then, is not a struggle between opposing powers of the self and other, but a conscious choice to experience and become part of the obscurity or terror that the subject encounters, and in this chapter, the subject, Gauri's encounters involve political murder, gestation and pregnancy and unwanted motherhood.

The chapter applies a twofold theoretical framework. On the one hand, it draws on the theories of postcolonial literature with the works of key authors such as Homi Bhabha and Vijay Mishra concentrating in the ideas of otherness and displacement. On the other hand, it uses a specific aspect of the feminine sublime focused on re-reading of Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764/2011), female utilization of fear, agency and power in the society to turn into an autonomous subject. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013) in this dissertation is taken up in relation to the Kantian readings of the sublime, specifically concentrating on Kant's ideas on human nature and the defining the beautiful as feminine and

the masculine as the sublime. This chapter relies largely on Bonnie Mann's re-reading of the feminine sublime and how the sublime has two dimensions in feminist rethinking— the sublime belonging to bother the oppressor and the oppressed. While introducing the political crisis of the 1970's Calcutta, the sublime will manifest within the dehumanized, passive condition of women within the patriarchal society, a continuation of traumatic experiences through internalised fear as a diasporic subject and their eventual liberation. The aim of this chapter is to focus on three key concepts to contextualise the sublime within diaspora—victimization and traumatic memories due to political paradox, an association of agency, reason and power and the concept of liberation and the sublime self.

The novel was issued as a post-9/11 discussion of American nationalism and citizenship. Even though the novel describes the Naxalite movement of 1970s Calcutta, it also restructures the idea of the unmanageable subject, as the racial other and the novel evinces governmental distrust of his citizens and paramilitary massacre in Calcutta. The novel explores the effects of the Naxalite movement on the life of two Bengali siblings, Subhash and Udayan Mitra, who grow to be in stark differences in their character. As an idealistic college student in the Presidency university, Calcutta, Udayan actively participates in the Maoist-inspired revolutionary politics of the 1960s that was waged to eliminate injustice and poverty (Lahiri 2013, 2). The first half of the novel is dominated by Udayan's involvement in the movement that eventually leads to his violent, unheroic death by the police. In the second half, the novel reflects on Subhash, who has already moved to America for higher studies, returns home and falls in love with Gauri, Udayan's pregnant widow and marries her and they settle down in Rhodes Island (Lahiri 2013, 1). Haunted by memories of Udayan and indulged in nostalgia, Gauri makes extraordinarily little effort to adapt to her new family and fails to develop an intimate relationship with Subhash.

Gauri unable to accept her relationship with both Subhash and Bella leaves them to pursue her own dream of studying philosophy and generating alternative versions of herself. Lahiri reimagines the effects of the 1967 Communist Naxalbari uprising in West Bengal India, representing the pro-Communist uprising in a particular discursive regime that establishes a particular way of nostalgia. The communist inspired Naxalbari movement in postcolonial India emerged, when "West Bengal police opened fire at some local agricultural labourers who had been protesting against the landowners for their unjust distribution of the harvest" (Lahiri 2013, 4). This movement soon spread across Bengal, with Kolkata (Calcutta) as it's centre of armed rebellion against the neo-liberal, democratic Indian society. Lahiri revisits this movement nearly a decade later to tell the stories of women whose experiences were ignored. It

reconstructs a gendered history of the Naxalbari movement in which women's narrative of conflict in the country's most formidable anti-establishment rebellion is spatiotemporally expunged and redeveloped.

In the novel, Gauri, the immigrant female protagonist is systematically domesticated and excluded from social structures of power. Lahiri depicts the "Naxalite resistance as purely masculine propaganda to use women through private and domestic manipulation to assert masculine agency" (Pourya Asl 2018, 385). Every time a woman rejected the traditional bounds of belonging as a dutiful wife or mother, her agency was depicted as monstrous, like Gauri's. Gauri changed her appearance in America as well as despised hanging out with Indian women as they reminded her of the trapped existence in India and the traditions of the widow such as only wearing white, never consuming meat and not thinking of a second marriage (Pourya Asl 2018, 385). Gauri's Americanization in appearance and ambition shocked Subhash as he still wanted her to be his wife, the way Indian wives are—submissive, pious and domesticated to represent a part of India in the United states of America. The novel in this case, embraces Gauri's so-called monstrosity to leave her forced notion of a family, the indoctrination with labels of religion, norms, and customs to challenge and her ambitions as well as her sexuality.

The diasporic sublime rethinks the idea of the sovereignty of the 'self' as the final, sublime state of the human mind achieved through challenging conditions of gender, migration, and ethnicity. The coining of the term diasporic sublime comes from the need to observe the experiences of immigrants aesthetically. The Indian girl choosing to be the American woman by migrating to a different country usually is propagated by the key concepts: fear, power and agency—fear from what happened and what will happen during or after the change of location; power to realise the dominance of the mind against the hostility of nature (in this case the institutionalisation of society, religion and gender) and agency, to rationalise the situation and act in the society change one's status or position. All of these key points, that Immanuel Kant reflects are missing in a woman as she represents the "fair sex" (as opposed to man being the "noble sex") and exists to be 'beautiful' and an object of seduction to assist man's establishment. Kant observes women are exempted from moral law hence excluded from the full status as humans.

Even though, Immanuel Kant gives a misleading account of woman's position in society, all the while denying her right to agency, reason and minimum personhood, it may also reflect in his novel, that society remains the same with the traditional constraints over women for their nature to be driven by inclination than reason. So as Marcia Baron in her essay, *the Kantian Ethics and Claims of Detachment* (1997) observes, that Women exercising agency and power

to attain "autonomy and identity as a moral subject are made to depend on severing ties with community and relationships, because these are thought to endanger capacity of self-determination and interferes with the ability to be impartial in the face of competing self-interest" (Baron 1997, 146). Hence in this novel, Gauri constantly detaches herself from her traumatic past to construct her present until she severs her ties with all of her that reminded her of her existence, her silences, her passivity and as a Naxalite woman—even if it took abandoning Subhash and Bela. To explain in one quote that what mainly contributes Gauri's trauma and continues to manifest in her life, to display the drastic changes in her character and choices:

> They saw one of the soldiers undoing the rope around his wrists. They saw Udayan walking across the field, away from the paramilitary... Gauri remembered all the times she'd watched him from her grandparents' balcony in North Calcutta, crossing the busy street, coming to visit her... But then a gun was fired, the bullet aimed at his back. The sound of the shot was brief, unambiguous. There was a second shot, then a third. She watched his arms flapping, his body leaping forward, seizing up before falling to the ground. There was the clean sound of the shots, followed by sound of rows, coarsely calling, scattering... The soldiers dragged his body by the legs, then tossed him into the back of the van. (Lahiri 2013, 105)

Apart from watching her husband being murdered by the paramilitary, there are other incidents that contributed to her warped, confused idea of self and in every stage of her life that promised a new beginning, it felt guilty, needless as if she didn't belong: In childhood, aware of her accidental arrival, she had not known who she was, where or to whom she belonged...she had not been able to define herself in relation to her siblings[...]she believed she was not significant enough to cast a shadow of her own" (Lahiri 2013, 59).

During the first few months with her newborn daughter Bela, her fear of death, and violence manifested through grotesque visions. Even though she wanted to love and cherish her, Bela's existence was a reminder of her stunted existence as Udayan's wife, subjugated daughter in law and a young pregnant widow struggling to survive in both challenging private and public sphere—struggling with her in-laws and hiding in fear from the government anti-Naxal military. Bela reminds her of her existence as a failure of a wife who could not live up to the religious and cultural expectations and broke away from her existence as a terrorist's widow. Her only constant emotional agency was with violence and hence: "she began to imagine scenarios, unbidden but persistent. Grotesque images of Bela's head snaping back, her neck breaking[...]she loosened her grip ever so slightly behind[...]But Bela's instinct for survival was reflexive[...]she stirred from a deep sleep, protesting" (Lahiri 2013, 145). Finally, she decides to end it all and leave Subhash and Bela, the reminders of violence and death during Naxalite

movement in Kolkata to release herself from the anguished past as well as the existential agony as we see her reflect, “She had married Subhash, she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself, she had insisted on brutal cost on these conversions. Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end” (Lahiri 2013, 240).

This is the part where Gauri, after years of struggling with her trauma refuses to be delusional and stays within the bounds of wifehood and motherhood as the comfortable captive within man’s establishment. Her life became a “mere detour” as Luce Irigaray observes within the realm of imagination to balance relationships with men— as a daughter-in-law, sister, wife and mother. Bonnie Mann uses the Kantian definition of the sublime, which sublimity is in recognising the power over nature in one’s mind, to establish the relationship between women and the sublime. Jean P. Rumsey in her article “Revisions of Agency in Kant’s Moral Theory” questions the key features of Kant’s moral theory in terms of human nature, and rationality of humans in social, and cultural contexts. The Kantian moral theory focuses on a system of “laws or precepts binding upon tortional creatures as such, the content of which is ascertainable by human race” (1997, 125). Rumsey negotiates the Kantian idea of human nature to revise Kant’s conception of agency (1997, 126) which will also support the cultural and social structure of postcoloniality and autonomous subjectivity of the female protagonist of Lahiri’s novel.

In general, the feminist ethics focuses on the notion of an embodied agent or the embodied body, emotional as well as rational, socially and culturally specific. For this reason, Kant’s groundwork on human nature as well as morality creates the discussion on the relationship between women and their state of sublimity. Kant claim in his *Observations* that women’s “nature” and “purpose” are vulnerable to critical thoughts (Kant 2011, 68). He further claims that women are naturally beneficent and complaisant, that they are incapable of understanding principles and that their typical ‘virtues’ are merely social rather than moral excellence. Kant’s focus to separate women from the aesthetics of the sublime subdues women’s involvement in the societal construct. Women are degenerated as immoral beings. One of the three assumptions of Kant’s human nature, according to Rumsey, is that “the species is bifurcated into two genders, having different natures, capacities and purposes” (Rumsey 1997, 127).

The feminists such as Kim Hall, and Christine Battersby criticise the gendered notion of female nature because it focuses on social egoism and male-centric morality rather than individuality and autonomy of sexes. In describing the feminine nature Kant ignores the propensity for cooperation and affiliation with human nature. Kant also considers morality or dutybound activities of humans that can be considered sublime should be not in cooperation with society but should be an isolated act of selflessness solely dependent of the morality of the

man. This sense of absolute duty in the Kantian sense is a man's true moral imperative as Philippa Foot observes:

> … there are some ends humans might simply possess. Did those who endured the siege of Leningrad do so solely from the thought of duty, or from their loyalty and devotion to the city? She argues that persons may just care about the sufferings of others, and want to help if they can, and implies that the thought of duty in such cases might be one thought too many. She claims that Kant cannot understand this, because of his psychological hedonism, "and this faulty theory of human nature was one of the things preventing him from seeing that moral virtue might be compatible with the rejection of the categorical imperative. (Foot 1978, 129)

The idea of loyalty and devotion which Kant explores as emotional or social impulses contrasts alongside the non-rational impulses, 'self-love' is connected to individual's happiness which might have 'reason' but mixed with shrewdness and egoism. This is the kind of reason that Kant claims women that renders then anthropologically ineligible for the sublime state of body and mind (Kant 1978, 306/169), marking the disparity between male and female morality.

In accordance with the Kantian terms, Gauri's struggles as an immigrant woman, who suffered from political killings, murder of husband, escaping India to survive as a pregnant woman by being in an unwanted marriage fails to evince categorical moral imperative of duty as a woman in the Indian society but rather shows desire and yearning for self-respect and survival. But her actions for survival in Kantian terms may be seen as "unjustifiable craving" to gain superiority over other. Rumsey argues against this notion by connecting agency with female morality as the standard foundation duty towards the self, hence elevating the woman's sense of personhood (1997, 128). Straying away from the gendered expectations and duties of a nurturer also means escaping moral liabilities in exchange of utilising agency and power for self-emancipation. Gauri knew the consequences of living alone instead of living in fear: "She had married Subhash; she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself, she had insisted at brutal cost on these conversions. Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end" (Lahiri 2013, 240). Gauri, like other Indian women in their civil tutelage to their husbands, dependent, timorous, without political standing. Gauri did not enjoy the full status of moral agents such as her brother, her husband, Udayan and Subhash, but rather existed as the second/inferior sex to male.

In terms of home and Gauri's hostile relationship to it refers to the political murders, domestic violence, pregnancy and immigration are part of feminine growth and transcendence. The violence represented in the novel heightens her body association three ways—to murder, to gestation and to death. The socio-political representation of violence by the Bengal police,

infringement of privacy and the domestic torture on her body and mind for being a widow constantly detaches her from the idea of home and the notion of domestic safety (Lahiri 2013, 242). The constant process to diminish Gauri's existence as an individual in her own right to live and prosper without a man by her side (let it be either Udayan or Subhash) detaches her from the sense of belonging to the Bengali community and abiding the traditions which bring out the topic of violence in relation to "sensus communis" (Kant 2011, 172). Sensus communis in Kant's third critique "is the moment of judgment that opens the way in which human beings, in so far as we are moral beings, belong together in community" (Hall 1997, 258). This belonging together, finding oneself part of a community, or the contemplation of oneself as a member of a particular group constitutes the moment of beautiful as it shapes "the universal communicability of the beautiful" (Hall 1997, 261).

There is also a sort of violence at the heart of this explicit communal contract of "sensus communis" and this hidden violence is part of the current discussion (Hall 1997, 255). Jhumpa Lahiri, considering the postcolonial existence of the diasporic communities all over the world highlights the aggression of these communities, which are even though built on superficial similarities of traditions, culture, and language also has the hostile constructions of pseudo-traditions of seventy's Marxist Bengali society (Pourya Asl 2018, 383). Gauri, in her resistance to these traditions of a wife, mother and a widow, also challenges the idea of belonging to the "beautiful" community. Gauri has observed the intellectual expansion of Marxism as well as the political killing and terming of young revolutionaries as anti-nationals or terrorists. She has experienced the wholesomeness of the Bengali community crumbling in the face of political invasion (Pourya Asl 2018, 384).

In her home, she was kept away by the male members of her family as women do not belong in politics and only way they can assist men in revolution by being passive agents. In the face of violence done by West Bengal police, the illegal searches and the infringement of privacy, her silence was the only sense of community that remained with her (Pourya Asl 2018, 384). As a pregnant, widow of a terrorist, her identity was marked and her desires to break free and gain autonomy over her life was getting subdued by the idea of communal morality. She did not have power over her body nor her desire for a future due man's superiority (both Udayan's and Subhash's) who in Kantian terms, "that man in rightful lord of nature" (Hall 1997, 263). Hence, Gauri's escape from the hostility of home and violence of the homeland can be considered an act of self-love—an act of loyalty and devotion to her 'self' rather than the ancient, degrading customs of a community. She kept on rejecting the conventional figures of women, clothing, and food habit and even gained the courage to explore her sexual orientation

to display the rejection of the all-pleasing image of beauty (Pourya Asl 2018, 383). Her chopping her hair, changing to Western clothes from saree, and focusing on her studies in the States rather than family life with Subhash and Bela—all contribute to the in her elevated status, and evolution of her 'self' from the submissive object to free subject of the society and Gauri understands she has no similarity with other Indian in the states.

Exploring the ideologies of race and gender in Kant's conception of "sensus communis" reveals the nationalised, patriarchal dominance over women in nineteenth-century Europe (Hall 1997, 261). The discussions on the degrading status of women are also reflected in the current times, in different spectrums of traditions, races, and cultures. The Indian immigrant women who migrated as dependent spouses are undervalued in the diasporic community. They hold only to the submissive, dutybound nurturer identity to keep the together image of communal morality. Communist Naxalbari reform of gender bias and seek to unload the way the Naxalite endurance is portrayed inside completely middle-class, masculine and urban contexts. The fallacy of this depiction of the fundamental capitalist ideology of the nation-state and pursuit to emphasis on the way this misleading version of the extremist Communist movement operates to encourage an ideal perception of civil society within the predominant speech of American liberal values.

The novel investigates the principles of the metropolitan –the middle-class – male philosophy of Naxalism but in the "heteronormative capitalist ideology of the United States wherein the novel is generated, distributed and exoticized" (Pourya Asl 2018, 385) . Hence, fascinated by the suggestive passivity of women in Lahiri's representation of the "peasant revolution," (Lahiri 2013, 5). The chapter also explores "the Naxalbari revolt, in juxtaposition to an ideal conception of civil society, is delegitimized and deployed to shift the politics of deliverance" to that of "Foucauldian 'ungovernability;' and how, in a similar way, the transformation of the immigrant female protagonist from passivity to activity is equated with monstrosity, which relates to the sublime elevation of female self with power and agency" (Pourya Asl 2018, 385). Gauri as "a free woman with danger to the structure of the family sphere and thus raises herself against the heteronormative ideology of the patriarchal capitalist culture" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). By "locating *The Lowland* in its historical context, therefore, the chapter explores to Gauri's evolution from a submissive object to the active participant amid sexual, social and political paranoia" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). The communist revolutionaries and Naxalite murders highlight the problems of internal security in India since its independence in 1947. The profound ramification since the in societal structure alongside global imperialist capitalism focuses on the class conflicts of the society, which affected the general well- being

of families (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). West Bengal took an active part due to the influence of Chinese Marxist party aiming to transform the "existing class structure to carry a critical blow to the political, economic and social system of the country, are raising" a substitute idea for society that defies "bourgeois political and economic norms that are dominant across the global capitalist system led by the United States" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386) .

In order to "mobilize themselves to be American and thus protect themselves against such violent racism and demonization," these immigrants had to indicate "their allegiance to the States and being American by first conforming to the normative white, male, heterosexual Anglo-American citizenship" – attributes "which were claimed as central to the US state and then by denouncing any form of "barbarism" and "madness" of the fanatical against the civilized" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). Within this context, the virtual image the lowland presents of the Communist Naxalbari movement is in some measures in keeping with the officially recorded images of grotesque brutality and barbaric ungovernability of the movement, a noticeable trope in the provincial government's discourse that "refers to instances of popular dissent that noticeably disrupt the routine flow of a country still characterized by an extremely segmented social and infrastructural landscape" (Selmeczi 2015, 53).

This "revolutionary strategy that Udayan and his male comrades were enamoured with was initiated" by one of the Bengali leaders of the movement, Charu Majumdar, "a Marxist-Leninist theoretician that is called by his allies as a madman" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). In his essays, Majumdar accuses "India of turning to the United States to solve its problems," and by appealing the example of Communist China suggests that if one can recognize "the truth that the Indian revolution will invariably take the form of civil war, the tactic of area-wise seizure of power can be the only tactic" (Pourya Asl 2018, 387). Following Majumdar's doctrine, the communist activists thus organized 'guerrilla warfare' against the Indian state as the enemy of the people and began to ruthlessly ransack schools, colleges and other public places across the city (Lahiri 2013, 103). Members of the rival party, the CPI(M) went in with the "political killings that were sadistic, gruesome, intended to shock. The wife of the French consul was murdered in her sleep" (Pourya Asl 2018, 387). They dominated certain neighbourhoods, terming those "Red Zones" (Lahiri 2013, 131). They "set up makeshift hospitals, and safe houses. People began avoiding these neighbourhoods" (Pourya Asl 2018, 388). Though the warfare would be "headquartered in the villages of India, the activists envisioned to 'celebrate the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought' by the year 2000 and liberate the people of the whole world from all kinds of exploitation" (Pourya Asl 2018, 389). In the novel, the Naxalites deploy this strategy to make Kolkata "province, as the symbol of

state power and modernity, ungovernable" (Pourya Asl 2018, 389) . However, "by 1970, after Udayan and his comrades of the metropolitan intelligentsia accompanied peasants to demonstrate" their frustration over "the deprived living circumstances in the rural areas by creating the urban ungovernable," things had taken a turn and "the movement had ignited off public controversy – both nationally and internationally" (Pourya Asl 2018, 390).

Gauri's choices create a path from imagination to reason where she understands the repercussions of the prolonged silence, her "delusion to be domesticated to please the men in her an 'othered' relationship with Subhash and Bela as the female subject" (Pourya Asl 2018, 386). The female subject, according to Freeman, "enters into a relationship with an otherness—social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic — that is excessive" and unpleasant that reduces her ability to categorize and "reason that leads to subsequent liberation of the self-concerning other" (Freeman 1995, 5). Her own expectations of a happy, conjugal life were betrayed by Udayan, and his selfish involvement. Her silence indicates the manner in the emancipatory discourse of Naxalbari being male canonized movement and with the death of her husband, breaks the first boundary of her 'othered' existence, which may be referred here as 'subreption' as Kant observed—

> The true subreption occurs, of course, as Kant observes, when the subject cuts loose from the natural world and overturns the order of dependency so that actions within society are dependent on the autonomous subject. It is a fiction that is constructed on a "violent rupture in the relation of reason to the imagination and the sublimity of the ideas of reason is first felt in that moment when imagination is broken. (Mann 2006, 52)

Gauri's journey to the states, and eventually refusing to live a life a trapped in dissatisfying marriage, and unwanted motherhood represents her final detachment from her surrounding "patriarchal prism and her: sovereignty represents the disenchantment from nature or imagination"; hence the diasporic sublime projects the idea of "women breaking away from their association with the private sphere, rise as the sublime subject in charge of reason and action" (Mann 2006, 59).

Gauri's breaking away from the essence of a nurturer as well as the pejorative image of women as secondary, non-relevant persons of the society contextualised diasporic sublime in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. All sublime experiences involve a subject's confrontation with a terror-inducing object. The object is too excessive, or too overpowering to be comprehended by the subject, in its full aspect, and it is this specific confrontation, being face-to-face with something that endangers the subject—from which the sublime emotions are conjured. Although the specific source of pleasure in this exchange is open for deliberation, at its essence,

the sublime experience is distinct by an encounter with an unfathomable 'other' that cannot be fully characterised or understood, and because of this impenetrability is intrinsically more powerful than the subject. It is "worthwhile that the opposite of power or knowledge is not powerlessness or ignorance" and that "those excluded or marginalized in the discursive practices that produce certain epistemic and power effects" are not "simply subjects without any knowledge and any power, quasi-non-agents;" rather, a more precise definition "would be the one that describes oppressed groups as those whose powers and knowledge have been demeaned and obstructed" (Mann 2007, 71). Both Freeman and Mann take up the postmodern oppression of women as degraded subjects of society and intend to liberate them by interviewing and excavating epistemic hegemonies and masculine perspectives (Mann 2006, 72). Hence, it is the political implications of the spatiotemporally disjunctive recollection images of the Naxalbari movement produced in the novel that confronts the problem of denying female involvement and struggles during political and social revolution.

Gauri's restricted involvement in the uprisings imposes on her a serious psychological wound, disrupting her daily life by traumatic memories. The terrifying experiences of grotesque violence – the brutal stabbing of a police officer called Nirmal Dey— perpetrated by Udayan and his fellow male comrades, and of course enabled by the intelligence provided by Gauri's unintentional observations of the man, are irreversibly reflected in her present feelings of guilt-ridden and cosseted life. Indeed, Gauri's unbending silence as well as her self-banishment suggests on the one hand the movement had nothing worthwhile to remember, and on the other, if it did, the reminiscences are so traumatic that she is reluctant to revisit the unbearable pain she endured. Naxalite woman explained "the period of her involvement as one of entranced emancipation, a phase that even though was complete with despair and fears" that were "unimaginable in those women's normal lives, was accompanied by an incredible sense of self-worth" (Roy 2009, 206).

Unlike other historiographies of the Naxalbari movement, in Lahiri's novel, the explanations of the Naxalism as a social movement, and women's significant influence is neglected (Roy 2009, 207). Whereas "in reality, as it is accessible in the academic historiography of the movement, women played an essential role in the very first rebellion at Naxalbari" and were some of "the first victims of police firing—where seven peasant women were killed, during a mass gathering of the armed peasants in Naxalbari in 1967' in *The Lowland*, women's substantial role in their strategy of agrarian revolution is not acknowledged" (Roy 2009, 207). And the only instance in which Gauri is inadvertently engaged is punished by a lifelong exile to an abnormal and wretched life with the stigma of being an accessory in the

murder of a police officer back in India as well as that of an outsider in America. Through this alternative account of the history of Naxalbari, wherein the domestic woman is acknowledged and her entry into the public sphere is complemented by her becoming the subject of multiple points of exploitation, subordination and oppression, the novel consolidates patriarchy Gauri's progression wither life and use of agency are seen as the rejection of domesticity and progression into the structures of power is demonized and is associated with Communist threat.

Unlike Ashima (Lahiri: *The Namesake*, 2003), Gauri likes the tranquil and secluded life in a foreign country. She spends most of her time watching boring American TV programmes. She isolates herself from the outer world and starts living alone in her bedroom as Americans do. "Isolation offered its own form of companionship: the reliable silence of her rooms, the steadfast tranquillity of the evenings" (237). It shows that she has started to settle in America just after her arrival. She wants to be like other American women as she thinks of herself to be "like a woman Udayan had never seen" (134). This is her inner urge to assimilate herself into the new culture to escape from her past and to produce a transformed American woman. She rejects her Indian dress Sari, a unique and specific symbol of Indian Identity, without informing Subhash about it.

Subhash finds a "transformed Gauri; In one corner of the floor, all of her saris, and the rest of her petticoats and blouses were lying in ribbons and scraps of various shapes and sizes, as if an animal had shredded the fabric with its teeth and claws" (122). Her hair hung bluntly along her jawbone, dramatically altering her face. The change in her dress indicates Gauri's transition from an Indian woman to a Western lady. Gauri has a negative attitude towards the baby in her womb and compares it with a ghost. She takes motherhood as a burden. "She felt as if she contained a ghost, as Udayan was. The child was a version of him, in that it was both present and absent. Both within her and remote" (124). Gauri, even after giving birth to her daughter Bela, (Udayan's child) is unable to bring herself to love and care for her own child as much as a mother would. This happens not only because of her delivery or that she still loves and mourns for Udayan but it is her inner urge for her ambition of higher academic pursuit and escapes from the responsibilities of mother and wife as well. That's why she fails to attach herself to Subhash and Bela and to be a mother in a real sense. Even she finds pleasure in separation from her daughter and her husband Subhash. She follows the American concept of freedom for her career and advancement for her own life. She absorbs herself in a new culture to such an extent that she becomes careless and unresponsive towards real life, love, and familial relationship. Her carelessness can be noted when she leaves Bela, a six years old baby alone in

the apartment when she herself goes for a walk alone. Her torture towards Bela increases day by day as she isolates herself in her bedroom, living her daughter outside alone.

Lahiri has designed Gauri's character with the thin and entangled threads of ambition, whereas Subash only observes her cold behaviour towards Bela and reminds Gauri that her priority is to take care of her daughter and motherhood is the prime duty of an Indian woman, even in the United States. He then recalls his mother's observation of Gauri "She is too withdrawn, too aloof to be a mother" (114). Obsessed by her ambition, and first reflections of her own agency, she even neglects the role of a wife and a mother. She even tries to adopt numerous ways to accomplish that are quite unfamiliar to any Indian woman. T. Pius in his journal "Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*: A Critical Analysis", lays some questions regarding Gauri's determination to leave Bela and Subhash as Lahiri observes,"[…]Why would Gauri regard motherhood and career as an either/ or choice? Why make no effort to stay in touch with Bela or explain her decision to move to California? Why not discuss her need to leave her marriage and her child with her husband?" (Pius 2014, 112).

Even though questions posed by Pius are valid points, but Lahiri through Gauri destroyed the predestined role of a nurturer and put motherhood as a choice than a gendered duty. Subhash ó, even though has been living in the United States, could not do away with the traditional Bengali upbringing and the ways of his conservative parents that highlighted women as a product of domesticity, only toiling for the benefit of men and the establishment of the family. Bela and Gauri had a different relationship other than of simple mother and her child but Bela contradicted all the death and suffering Gauri has witnessed during the Naxalite terrorism in Calcutta. Bela also constantly reminded of Gauri and Udayan's marriage, Udayan's murder, the unlawful search by the police invading her body and privacy, and her constant fear of death all the while she was in Calcutta. Gauri could not submit to the responsibilities of being a mother that Subhash wanted.

Suzan Lewis defines motherhood in her journal: "Mothers' a primary child-rearing role and the more marginal role of fathers, except in terms of economic provision, and is frequently taken for granted as natural and right, despite the lack of evidence that children need exclusive maternal care" (Tizard 1991, 41). Gauri, through her journey from a terrorist's wife to a life of a Californian woman displays the postcolonial discourse of political and social legitimacy and agency. Gauri even after being mother rejects the basic concept of motherhood and sacrifices the so-called joys of motherhood and rejects her twelve years old daughter forever for her teaching job in California. She imagines California as her home: "She had wanted California to swallow her; she had wanted to disappear" (233). In the words of Radhakrishnan,

"…postcolonials of the diaspora to reject patronage, containment, and ghettoization and to insist rigorously that their internal perspective is equally an intervention in the general scheme of things" (Radhakrishnan 1996, 178). In her constant disapproval of the Indian traditions, Gauri hence rigorously rejected the Indian idea of a righteous woman and rather wanted to clutch on the freedom in Rhodes Island as her identity. Caught between the possibility of constituting a politically legitimate speaking subject and the necessary disavowal of such a constitution, diasporic sublime engulfs critical strategies that inhabit a problematic that entails a productive failure.

Here, her motherhood may be observed as the productive failure and going against the sense of community, morality and pleasurable beauty as Kant expected from female nature, but her ambitions that marked her journey and her struggles to achieve human status in her life, to make her own decisions, benefitting herself, evinces the uses of reason and imperative morality one has towards own body and self. Gauri crosses the boundaries twice, for the first time when she left India for the USA and the second time, when she crosses the threshold of her house in the USA, leaving her daughter and her husband forever when both of them were in India. In both scenarios, the reason behind was her over ambitiousness for higher studies and her dream of success in life at any cost. Her act of self-righteousness goes beyond her fear terror and helplessness in facing the overwhelming patriarchal structure and traditions of the Hindu community. Her rejection of gender commitments that feminists stands against the aesthetic privilege site for the self-constitution of the male-dominated subject in the West, as well as within the Indian constitution of masculinity, marking it a site for women's exclusion and subordination. The diasporic sublime, through Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* (2013) challenges the masculinism of traditional aesthetics as well as the gendered construction of female nature to create a safe and productive space for female selves to experience the liberty of a sublime subject in society.

III.5. Cry of Desire and the Spells in *The Mistress of Spices*

According to Jennifer Wawrzinek, "To inhabit the sublime is to confront one's borders and boundaries" (Wawrzinek 2008, 13). The conflict of boundaries in literature has been debated from a variety of angles, including "agency, cultural supremacy, and even decolonization as a means of countering the imperialist construct" (Bera 2021, 44). But, as Mann observes at the heart of the confrontation is "a special kind of terror" (Bera 2021, 44) that on the one hand intimidates an individual's borders and, on the other, pushes the individual to threaten familiar conditions and, eventually, raise the self. This fear may plague an individual's life, as a result of "intense occurrences such as war, communal riot, catastrophic accidents, and sexual abuse," and the individual suppresses this feeling of terror and struggles to survive "beyond the societally imposed limitations" (Bera 2021, 44). The sublime is described as the "elevation of the self amid difficult realities in order to create a self-aggrandizing identity" (2021, 44). The chapter will develop the definition in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) to discuss the sublime theory and "its correlation with women, their subjugation, and eventual emergence as a sovereign subject in the context of exile and dislocation" (2021. 44).

To construct the sublime in the novel, one must recognize the existence of an obvious kind of terror strange under the prefix of the 'post' stated by Bhabha in his *Locations of Culture* (1994). As Bhabha cites, a "tenebrous sense of survival" (Bhabha 1994, 1) "entails a sense of fear, anxiety, and disorientation within people living beyond the borders—of both location and the self" (Bera 2021, 45). This sense of "fear in diasporic literature may not be the kind of fear that is usually associated with the aesthetic notion", but "it is a more pedestrian emotion: the mundane, daily fear" that seizes an individual dependent on its sphere for survival, yet incapable to wield control over itself or anyone else's contribution to its disruption (Bera 2021, 45). It is natural "to pursue a force or power that one encounters and then feels out of control, thus insignificant and alienated" (2021, 45). The sublime exhibits in diaspora in three phases: the violent occurrence, the altercation with the self, and the consequent disruption and reform. Since the eighteenth century, the sublime theory's plausibility and its repeated change through shifting theories, political, and cultural events have continued (Bera 2021, 45).

The aesthetic "experience of terror in its materialization highlights the need for the sublime and its association with describing the process of destroying oneself;" it feels uncomfortable yet stimulating to provoke that "process of disruption, as well as the exhilaration from the power to destroy" (Bera 2021, 45). The process requires recognizing the conflict, its instants of illusion and restrained form under a "violent power, eventually invoking the sense of this confrontation in both the characters and the readers" (Bera 2021, 45). The "impact of

fictionalized terror manifests and seduces the readers' passions" (Bera 2021, 45). On the basis of the experiences, this chapter examines the notions of terror, power, reason, and freedom with sublimity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *Mistress of Spices* (1997). The chapter turns to the argument on "Immanuel Kant's theorization of the sublime and aesthetic judgment by selecting these specific elements" (Bera 2021, 45). In contrast to Kant's sublime, Mann determines the authority of reason and aims on both "self-deconstruction and achieving the sublime by confronting patriarchal and masculinist traditions in society at large" (Bera 2021, 45).

The relationship between the postcolonial and the sublime is an unattractive excess that remains after the unity of reason has done its job. To ground the authority of reason, Kant's "idealism" states that "reason, as a faculty of mind, is forged in and through its mastery over the conscious excesses that characterise the sublime" (Bera 2021, 45). The necessity of the sublime in the process of establishing the authority of reason shows that reason is both dominant and vulnerable in its conscious realm. There is always an unexplained excess in the sanity practice discourse that opens up the politics of chaos and reconstruction. This added excess suggests a connection between diasporicity (and its postcolonial manifestations) and the sublime.

The processes of territorialization and deterritorialization combine the concepts of deculture and acculturation, conveying the idea that create migrant images and new cultural experiences through politicized cultural combinations. Transculturation thus presents an ambiguity in time and space inhabited by immigrants structured by massive disruptions in their material and social conditions, leaving individuals in desperate act and challenge oneself to act in relation to other places (Bera 2021, 45). Key elements of the Sublime, such as fear, power, and joy, through the magician Tilottyoma and her relationship with God, reveal the need for sublime people to explain and analyze the immigrant image and her "dialectic of self-consciousness, desire, and morality to reasoning" in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "fabricated world of terror" (Bera 2021, 46).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is Known among Indian American writers for her innovative style, boundless curiosity, and unconventional response to the effects of diaspora and cultural shifts. Divakaruni's novels contextualize her immigration experience not only in terms of geographical migration, but also in terms of the plots of her novels, which are set against the backdrop of magic, dreams, fantasy and myth. *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *Palace of Illusions* (2008), and *The Oleander Girl* (2013) are among her notable novels (Bera 2021, 47). She also builds a female-centric

perception on immigration and exile in the framework of cultural displacement, failure of personal relationships, otherhood, and disturbing connections with the homeland. In America, Divakaruni established an uncommon type of diaspora writing in which female protagonists happen to be stuck between two worlds. Their efforts in the development of assimilation include troubles about "motherhood, female sexuality, marital harmony dynamics," and "the poetics of 'exile,' 'aloofness,' 'nostalgia,' 'nationalism,' and the quest for the familial and personal relationship" (Abirami and Nirmala 2016, 256; Bera 2021, 47). The sense of achievement and anticipation of self-liberation comes from evading life-threatening circumstances. Treating the phenomenon of breaking free from restrictions through the sublime is critical to realizing the pain or terror that the limitations entailed, and may justify Tilo's relationship with nature through her rational and determination. "[…]in which the mind can make palpable [fühlbar] to itself the sublimity of its vocation over nature" (Bera 2021, 47).

This comparison and association with the Divakaruni's text enhances the aesthetic qualities of the main sublime elements explored in migration and exile. All diasporic novelists have expressed concern about the dilemmas women face in bicultural spaces. In addition to the illusion of emancipation, diaspora Indian women face racial orders in both their home and host countries. Divakaruni's book argues that "the diaspora" is not just dispersion or dispersal, but an "experience of collectivity and multiple journeys" (Khandagale 2017, 1). Aspects of culture, conflict and fear of survival, a sense of belonging with a dash of schizophrenia. Her protagonist's trials and tribulations regarding self-preservation and self-realization involve a constant alternation of memories between past and present, her homeland and host country, the unfamiliar charm of the West and the familiarity of the East. increase. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the main character, Tilottyoma, not only represents a state of nostalgia and alienation by Spice, but also exerts an overwhelming force that surrounds her and helps reshape the subject of the diaspora, immigration. It represents a natural area that enhances movement (Bera 2021, 48). Divakaruni's magical realism seeks to renegotiate the elements of fear and power over human subjects, and how Tilo will thrive after redemption. It embraces the complex realm of hegemonic power by depicting women in the American East trading for virtuous power. claims to transform within a world of terror, developing itself against all possibilities and frightening experiences.

In portraying the main character Tilottyoma or Tilo, the novel probably combines three 'other' elements: desireless female body, Eastern origins and diasporic identity, a sense of spice. The texture, scent or taste of every spice she sells has the power to heal or satisfy people's different needs and desires (Bera 2021, 49). Tilo must follow strict rules from her ancestors.

She must remain within the confines of her own store and must not touch any of her customers. This is a code of conduct that reflects the forced femininity and marginalization of women who are only allowed to handle spice. But her subsequent physical intimacy with Raven, Tilo's American lover, and above all her penchant for spices, frees her from her submission and chooses her own identity (Bera 2021, 49). can do. The plot of the novel contains several magical elements inserted into the realistic events of everyday life. Divakaruni teaches us the existence of overwhelming power—through the "Mistress of Spices" as Tilo reflects, "I am a Mistress of Spices. I can work the others too. Mineral, metal, earth and sand, and stone. The gems with their cold clear light. The liquids that burn their hues into your eyes till you see nothing else" (Divakaruni 1997, 3). The supernatural aspect of Tilo's existence, namely her ability to manipulate the elements, reinforces the impending "otherness" of the impending migrant crisis. Her often-overlooked mongrelness, her contorted body in a white saree, and her constant avoidance of physical human contact can only be explained by the possibility of confusion. As a diaspora woman and psychic, she epitomizes cross-cultural fear and threat.

Essential examples of the diasporic way of life, the fear of change, the fear of destruction, the fear of progress, always hint at the concept of sanity, and how the concepts of will and self-realization sublime the concept of sanity. It implies whether to strengthen with. As part of the essence of the human spirit, the greatness of humanity. Immanuel Kant's first attempt to formulate a theory of the sublime can be seen in his pre-critical reflections on the feelings of beauty and the sublime, published in 1764. In this work, Kant expresses his concerns about the relationship between emotion and morality. Werkmeister asserts that Kant's dilemma made him "to take a closer look at the nature of feelings" (Werkmeister 1980, 36). The introduction to Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" (Kant 2000, 23) moves further than what is believed to be the cause of sublimity. It states greater importance on the reflective evaluation obtained from the object itself. Consequently, the liking that includes decisions about the sublime is different from the "categorised liking of an object (the beauty)" and "is a satisfaction in the amenability of sensible representation to the 'faculty of concepts' – where this is specified as the faculty of concepts of reason" (Merritt 2018, 15; Bera 2021, 50). Divakaruni produces "Tilo within the diasporic boundaries with the ability to have a cognitive approach to her powers and presents her as a rational being in constant conflict with her spices" (Bera 2021, 50). It could be linked to the Kantian examination of sublimity as a consequence of our minds, a rational capability of self-determination—

> …sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside

> us (insofar as it influences us). Everything that arouses this feeling in us, which includes the powers of nature that calls forth our own powers, is thus (although improperly) called sublime. (Kant 2000, 145 translation modified Merritt 2018, 21)

Even though the Kantian concept of the sublime as "absolutely great" cannot be established in nature, both in terms of size and power, when Tilo describes her spice shop as "[...]there is no other place quite like this" (Divakaruni 1997, 4). It establishes the existence of an uncontrollable force to which Tilo submits, feeling insignificant yet revelling in the pleasure the power gives her. Yet, given her imposing size, "evoking" her unique resilience, Spice reveals two kinds of reflections in the form of magical powers (Bera 2021, 51). It is the realization of the unique presence of omnipotent power and the discovery of the human limits and morality of understanding that power. We acquire virtue through our daily struggle to find our 'determination' and 'mission' to discover (Merritt 2018, 22). The characters then create a terrifying world made up of incidents that do not seem life-changing or epiphany, but throughout the routine of their lives they witness the horrors that come with diasporicity which belong to the concept of "Constructed, Power and Freedom, and the Sublime Theory" (Bera 2021, 49).

Divakaruni "establishes the mood by displaying the elements of power and fear through Tilo and her spices, establishing that such power exists to reveal the secrets of human lives" that come into contact with the "mistress" and that the spices control the present, past, and future with their "hidden properties" and "magical powers" (Bera 2021, 52). As Tilo reminds us, from "amchur to Zafran," all spices have the ability to both heal and harm, to both create and destroy:

> Ah. You have forgotten the old secrets your mother's mother knew[…]Vanilla beans soaked soft in goat's milk and rubbed on the wrist-bone can guard against the evil eye[…]A measure of pepper at the foot of the bed, shaped into a crescent, cures you of nightmare (Divakaruni 1997, 3).

Even though the power of spices is depicted as fearsome, it still motivates the power of the imagination. The divine powers' supernatural presence can only be demonstrated through the human mind's notion. Here, Divakaruni aims to play with the reader's imagination by inspiring them to delve into the world of mysticism and be fearful of ancestry and traditions "that have become mechanisms of power and dominance" (Bera 2021, 49). Kant focuses his description of the sublime away from Anglophone practices, but he still builds aesthetic magnitude or the "absolutely great" (Kant 2000, 5:245, 240) on "the greatness of nature, amidst the overwhelming godliness of creation" (Bera 2021, 49). Yet "for Kant, the feeling of greatness or insignificance in the face of awe-inspiring power is both inbound and outbound" (Bera 2021,

49). In German traditions, "sublimity was more focused on rationalism and reason," which was rooted in the difference between sensitive and intellectual cognition— "away from subjectivism, sensory stimuli, and finding the sublime in human nature" (Bera 2021, 49). While examining the reflective turn, Kant accentuates returning to the object, envisioning all necessary information from the object itself, and "returning the judgment (which he refers to as aesthetic judgment) to transcend sensory affiliation" (Mann 2006, 141).

Henceforth, the Kantian sublime "emphases more on moral virtue, reason, the cognitive capacity of human nature, and intellectual rationalism, and the sublime effect is the capability" to have a "cognitive approach, challenge and rationalize restrictions based on intellectual ability, and challenge such limitations" (Bera 2021, 50). The objective ability as Kant observes, "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judge, not in the object in nature, the judging, not in the natural object that is better conceived of as a mere provoking stimulus" (Kant 2000, 5: 256, 139). Tilottyoma's "struggle began with her birth as another girl child in a family where girls are burdens too costly and embarrassing to bear" (Bera 2021, 50). Her birth brought nothing but concern to her parents and embarrassment and worry to the villagers. The "dark girl's" rising rage was caused by her isolation and her parents' secret wish for her death, and she evolved from "Nayantara" to "Star-seer" (Divakaruni 1997, 8). She "resembled a priestess in that she could see the future, had the ability to predict or discover the truth with a touch," and made "[…]grown men tremble," throwing themselves at her feet, which seemed "natural" to her (Divakaruni 1997, 9; Bera 2021, 50).

Tilo's "deep solitude laced with fear and melancholy" induces "the power that will attract the attention of the people who disowned her in the past" (Bera 2021, 50). Her power made the men speechless and rigid. By projecting the past and "unforeseeable future" through her powers, she manifests terror, and transfixed admiration within nature, and establishes herself as absolute and omnipotent amidst the insignificance, invoking transcendence (Bera 2021, 50). This same pride, wilfulness, and admiration are evident throughout Tilo's journey as the 'Mistress of spices'—her spices, whether 'Turmeric', 'Ginger', or 'Red Chillies,' all have magical and divine associations as Tilo chants their otherworldliness to assert the infinite workings in shaping the human existence, such as "ointment for death, hope for rebirth" (Divakaruni 1997, 13; Bera 2021, 50). When Tilo observes the universe's effects on reality and dream, she notes, "[...] if there is a such a thing as reality, an objective and untouched nature off being. Or if all that we encounter has already been changed by what we had imagined it to be. If we have dreamed it into being" (Divakaruni 1997, 16).

The inexplicability of real-life experiences alludes to the Kantian observation of "Natural sublimity," which bequeaths its origin to unfathomable workings, formless and bewildering, requires "a formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it" and "which assaults and surpasses our capacity to comprehend it" (Merritt 2018, 16).In her novel, Divakaruni creates these cramped but tragic situations in which Tilo constantly challenges her limits, because desire is human nature and determines their actions (Khurana 2017, 1). Her desire for more attention revealed her desire to belong and be typical. As a child, the priestess' majestic and divine stature lost purpose when she longed for affection, and late at night, yearned for the pirates to tell stories of "somewhere out in the great ocean they stood, tall and resolute at the prows of their ships, arms crossed, granite faces turned toward our village, hair tousled by the salt wind" (Divakaruni 1997, 17). The more she wanted, the more she expressed her own desire to "summon enemies at her feet...[raise] the soul from a human body, raw and vibrant, into the palm of her hand" (Bera 2021, 51). Tilo tells how pirates attacked her family, raped her sisters for "evil pleasures", killed her parents in front of him, and was powerless despite having the power of a god. Throughout her life she recreates associations of her phobias in the form of magical powers to which she was exposed.

She maintained her pretence, but remained insignificant and frightened in the face of the overwhelming power that controlled her life. Always captured in her private and public spaces, she hints at her desires, her moral commitment to spice, and her practical understanding of what is right and what is wrong. She chooses to cling to the Spices, giving her the ability to help and heal, predict and guide, and forgive sins based on self-determination and reasoning, as opposed to the selfish pleasures, her desires facilitated. In the "Doctrine of Virtue in the Metaphysics of Morals" (1997), Kant divided "duties of virtue into what one owes oneself and what one owes others"; these divisions result from the free adoption of two morally obligatory ends: self-perfection and the happiness of others (Bera 2021, 51). Self-perfection "evokes the cultivation of one's abilities and actions, the highest of which is the understanding as the faculty of concepts" —which is again interpreted broadly to include "concepts pertaining to duty" (Bera 2021, 52).

To make "oneself suitable for one's essential rationality is a moral obligation and a virtue" (Bera 2021, 51). While this is "initially a matter of cultivating one's cognitive abilities, it is ultimately a matter of cultivating one's will or moral way of thinking" (Bera 2021, 51). In harmony with the moral law's virtue standard, moral virtue, according to Kant, presumes a sentiment of affection for humanity and is demonstrated through actions; however, this emotion acquires its exceptional moral character when it results in "objective principles of conduct, as

opposed to advocating superficial sympathetic responses" (Bera 2021, 51). As Kant explains, "as soon as this feeling of affection for humanity has reached its proper universality, it has become sublime" (Kant 2007, 48). Kant defines the sublime passion as a disposition demonstrated in three distinct aspects: "enjoyment of horror, quiet awe, and a sense of the magnificent" (Bera 2021, 51).

However, "this will also steer the argument toward morality and the sublime, focusing on Tilo's relationship with her body, home, and identity, as well as her moral awareness" (Bera 2021, 52). This direction "will demonstrate not only Kant's justification for the connection between morality and the sublime, but also the significance of certain aspects of aesthetic judgment in human nature that are distinctive enough to merit the term sublime" (Bera 2021, 52). The sublime is deeply concerned with how we perceive "the world and its other inhabitants, comprehend and represent the relationship between self and world, or between self and other(s)" (Ozan 2017, 215). It is possible to say that the "sublime permeates contemporary society, culture, and politics" (Bera 2021, 52). It is invoked whenever "there is a call for the overthrow of a powerful individual or group, or whenever a minority group claims the right to political autonomy or self-determination" (Bera 2021, 52). When "silences are invoked as evidence of the suppression of difference, of multiple communities, or of the legitimate place of the other, we go back to the sublime" (Wawrzinek 2009, 16). The dynamical sublime contains the repulsive, but it is prompted by an encounter with a "power which is superior to great hindrances" that is potentially lethal (Kant 2007, 109; Bera 2021, 51).

Therefore, "fear is the first emotion evoked by the dynamical sublime. It is futile to attempt to resist this superior force" (Bera 2021, 52). As a result, the subject becomes intensely aware of his physical constraints. This understanding of physical powerlessness is, however, merely a overture to an encounter in which the "forces of the soul [enable us to rise] above the height of the vulgar commonplace... [so that] we discover within ourselves a different kind of resistance, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent impotence of nature" (Kant 2007, 111; Bera 2021, 52). Despite the "natural or human forces arrayed against us, this power of resistance is evident in our capacity to act ethically" (Bera 2021, 52). The physical impotence experienced in the face of natural power highlights "an ability to judge ourselves independently of nature," revealing the "basis of a self-preservation quite distinct from the one that can be attacked and endangered by nature outside of us" (Kant 2007, 120-121; Bera 2021, 52).

The dynamic sublime emphasizes the independence of moral sense as an inner freedom that transcends the physical limitations of the perceiving subject. In the "confrontation with

nature's power, the protagonist discovers a superior sense of inner humanity and morality" (Ozan 2017, 218). Again, this experience provides substantial evidence of the subject's supersensible destiny. Although Kant "differentiates between the mathematical and dynamic sublimes, in both cases the sublime works negatively" (Bera 2021, 52). In other words, a lack of "imagination or physical limitations negatively characterizes what cannot be represented" (2021, 53). Kant connects the sublime with respect for the moral law as the work of reason, arguing that aesthetic pleasure resulting from the sublime operates negatively: "The object of a pure and unconditioned intellectual delight is the moral law" employing an overall "antecedent motive of the mind" (Bera 2021, 53).The procedure of the sublime understanding is predicated on the distinguishing subject's capacity to value and respect that which occasionally conflicts with the subject's rational concerns.

Lack of imagination and the resulting pain transform the power of moral law into aesthetic pleasure. Since moral and ethical frameworks prescribe or prohibit actions that often conflict with those that arise from pure desire and reason. In Kant's view, "a power of infusing a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the fulfilment of duty, and consequently a causality by which it can determine sensibility in accordance with rational principles" (Kant 1960, 144). In "service of a moral framework, the reason is elevated over imagination and comprehension in Kant's sublime" (Bera 2021, 53). The use of ethical and moral frameworks is of interest to the (re)formulation of the 20th century sublime, seeking to reinforce the abject through violence and power. Moreover, the tension between the sublime, the imaginative and the rational (as expressive and imaginative) creates space for transcendence. But in its Kantian formulation the sublime remains vertical, where reason reigns and the physical world is denied in favor of transcendent principles and reality (Bera 2021, 53).

"Dynamical Sublime" depicts "awe-inspiring natural power that challenges our preconceived notions of what is worth pursuing and what is valuable" (Crowther 1989, 108). The "ultimate explanation for our appreciation of natural sublimity is our inherent interest in a standard of goodness as rational beings" (Crowther 1989, 108). This transition occurs in the subsequent:

> [I]n our aesthetic judgment nature is appreciated [beurtheilt] as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power [Kraft] (which is not part of nature) to regard these things about which we are concerned (worldly goods, 73 health and life) as trivial [Klein], and hence to regard its might [Macht] (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment.(CJ 5:262; translation modified, Merritt 2018, 32)

One's wealth, health and life can be lost in an instant by the forces of nature. In the end, we can do nothing about it. We will die and return to dust. Moreover, how much we will achieve the material and social goods we seek, as well as the survival of health and life. , is completely out of our control, as Divakaruni reflects in the *Mistress of Spices* "Most mundane, as this is the nature of magic[…]If only we had the eyes to see the magic that lies at the core of our everyday lives, like a flickering flame" (Divakaruni 1997, 51). We must recognize another level of importance, "a unit in comparison to which everything in nature is insignificant" (Kant 2007, 261). This requirement must be our freedom from the "dominance nature exercises over us as mere animals. With this, Kant shifts the discussion from absolute greatness of size and power," which can only be obvious, to "a principle of unconditioned value that is supposed to be inherent in us" (Bera 2021, 53).

The knife under Tilo's pillow represents a need to prevent him from daydreaming and craving mundane aspects of life that First Mother and the Spices disapprove of. The knife symbolizes the danger of cutting through the "anchors of past and future" for "constant drift" (Bera 2021, 53). Tilo's nature is flawed, and the reference to the knife is unnecessary to break the ties with his human form. The High Priestess, the first mother who introduced Tilo to the world of spices and the magical powers of the old land, said that Tilo was "shiny but flawed with the cracks running through it" (Divakaruni 1997, 83). The Spice Shop, which serves as the "Mistress's natural habitat, makes Tilo powerful, but also an uncontrollable, awe-inspiring and terrifying creature that makes her feel vulnerable and longs for the world beyond the shop's door" (Bera 2021, 53). Similar to the Spices, she is touched, tempted and desired, making her own choices and suffering her own consequences. Raven's introduction made her realize that she, too, was a woman who deserved to thrive despite her past, her survivor's guilt, and her star-blessed abilities. Aspiration of a humble village girl (craving love) to become the 'Lady of Spice' (who could only be won by fear), banishing the human form, is constantly fuelled by the conflict between man and nature, power and submission, fear and peace. Her exile from a village to a magical hidden land and later to the United States by the "Fire of Shampati" traces her journey as an immigrant with no affiliation and pushed by the tide of homelessness. (Bera 2021, 53).

The safe but cursed distance in which she witnessed the looting of the village, the murder of her parents, and the rape of her sisters made her limited existence and unfathomable violence, both of the pirates and of herself where I am making a comparison. We have the power to keep them safe, but at the cost of moral compromise, guilt-ridden lives, and unattainable freedom where "empirical causality is 'a priori', a set of intentions influenced by pre-rounded

information and judgments" (Kant 2007, 261; Bera 2021, 53). Human beings should see themselves as moral agents and should use their reason and understanding freely to make judgments without the interference of natural causality, or transcendent beings. However, is she free to attain the state of the transcendent being? Helping Jagjit, "an Indian immigrant, to survive better in school from the bullies because of his cultural signifiers," or supporting Haroun in forgetting his "traumatic past during the war in Kashmir," or even helping the American lover, Raven, "with his wounds, all contribute to the fact that she has preconditioned trauma and guilt-driven desires" (Bera 2021, 53). In her case, spices are a part of the natural law that regulates her desires. No one is a free and independent moral agent in the Kantian sense if they act out of desire. Divakaruni plays explicitly with the motif of desire in *The Mistress of Spices,* where "desires are natural forces that we passively endure; they control and 'enslave' us" (Ortiz-Millán 2008, 321).

Kant states, "inclination is blind and servile, regardless of whether it is motivated by kindness, and when morality is at stake, reason must not act as a guardian over desires or inclination, but must disregard it entirely" (Ortiz-Millán 2008, 328). The "earthly paradise" of her everyday life, which she yearns for, is comprised of her desires (Bera 2021, 54). But if, on the one hand, "her desperate and rebellious desire for a normal life is a desire, then the reasoning and comprehension behind her self-immolation in 'Shampati's fire' is her pure practical reasoning, her moral agency" (Bera 2021, 55). The unruly reasoning she employs reduces both herself and the authority that should not happen in the first place over the lives, destinies, desires, and subsequent freedom of other beings. Her rational is to escape the pledges of enslavement and ruin the powerhouse in order to free the lives of the spices held in servitude and to free her spirit of human desires (Bera 2021, 55). As evidence of self-governance, her final disenchantment from all her desires, longing, and guilt as she steps into the fire is the essence of her rational autonomy. This act of altruism is not motivated by prudence or self-love, but by morality, a virtue that evokes the sublime.

This "method of reasoning can be expanded upon when discussing a second Kantian concept, the Dynamic Sublime" (Bera 2021, 55). Kant, in the introduction to the *Analytic of the Sublime* (Kant 2007, 23), "moves from what is generally true about the aesthetic judgement of reflection to what is specifically true about the sublime judgments" (Merritt 2018, 16). Kant then "divides his discussion of sublime judgments into those that express satisfaction in the greatness of size and those that express satisfaction in greatness of power, dubbing them, respectively, the "mathematical" and "dynamical" sublime" (Bera 2021, 55). As we shall see, this "division corresponds to the various roles that concepts of reason play in theoretical and

practical cognition, respectively" (Kant 2007, 247; Bera 2021, 55). According to Kant, "the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so long as it immediately involves or provokes by its presence a representation of limitlessness, but with a superadded thought of its totality" (Merritt 2018, 90). It exists in the mind's "capacity to create concepts of quantity or numerical perception while attempting to conceive the totality of infinity, as in a pyramid, a starry sky, or an endless field of daffodils" (Bera 2021, 55).

The dynamic sublime, "on the other hand, emphasizes the realization that humans have control over nature and its awe-inspiring elements" (Bera 2021, 55). Due to "their fragile understanding of their own insignificance, humans are also conscious of the natural forces that threaten physical boundaries" (Bera 2021, 55). The dynamic sublime, however, is defined by the recognition of cognitive superiority over nature. For instance, "a tornado can deliberately hurt humans, and its limitless, overwhelming stature is conceived by humans in their minds" (Bera 2021, 55). Eventually, from a safe distance, even seeing its enormous power provides the satisfaction of control over the "fear" it symbolizes. Kant observes, therefore, "that the dynamic sublime occurs in the process of this confrontation with nature, reasoning, and achieving dominion over natural power and obstacles" (Bera 2021, 56)—

> If we are to estimate nature as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as a source of fear (though the converse that every object that is a source of fear is, in our aesthetic judgment, sublime does not hold). For in forming an aesthetic estimate (no concept being present) the superiority to hindrances can only be estimated according to the greatness of the resistance. Now that which we strive to resist is an evil, and, if we do not find our powers commensurate to the task, an object of fear. (Kant 2007, 109-110).

The Mistress of Spices by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1997) focuses on the concept of fear and the dynamic process of countering it. Tilo's presence as a "witch woman" at the beginning of the novel only wins fear, but not love, and explodes the story of immigration (1997, 52). With her magical journey and her mystical powers bestowed by the spice, she is imbued with realism and magical realism. Tilo's imaginative and memory depictions of terror give form to internalized abstract fears, such as the "darkness of twilight" and the looming shadow of terror that surrounds us and feeds us with anxiety and despair. Tilo believes in this fear in America, a country of "silver glass skyscrapers over lakes as great as the sea... stench of hatred that overwhelms like burnt flesh and is also the stench of terror" (Divakaruni 1997, 53). The dynamic grandeur shows an immense force of nature that challenges our standard notions of what is worth pursuing and what is worth. Our delight in the magnificence of nature can be explained by our interest in proper standards of goodness as rational beings. Tilo's "inner conflict and the imbalance between himself and the spice should be presented as a source of

fear" (although the converse conclusion that the object that is the source of fear is sublime does not apply) (Bera 2021, 56). Kant says: "If we regard an object as terrifying, but simply imagine that we want to offer it some resistance, and recognize that all such resistance is utterly futile, we regard it as terrifying. may not be afraid" (Bera 2021, 56). In nature, according to him, there are two kinds of fear: real fear and imaginary fear (Bera 2021, 56). Safety and physical boundaries are threatened when fear becomes real.

The sublime is therefore no longer evident in the emotion influenced or permeated by desire, the desire to stop terrible events. On the one hand, anxiety also produces two kinds of negative consequences. A desire not to face specific situations that have caused fear or anxiety in the past, and a desire not to remember the events that caused the fear. In his exploration of Tilo's identity, Divakaruni interweaves the negative effects of fear with conflict with moral determination. Tilo's horrifying past regarding fortune-telling, pirates who destroyed her home and murdered her family, her kidnapping, and her brutal training as a sorceress by her first mother all contributed to her fear and desire to escape. Tilo's determination is not to relive the horrors of her helpless existence (Bera 2021, 56). Through the realization of this insignificance, the sublime is evoked by the memories of actual pain and fear. Away from the horrors, pirates and old homeland of Village, her Spice Shop takes Tilo to safety. It helps them re-express their past fears, is not violent or life-threatening, but is "exhilarating, and depicts a state of constant inner turmoil" (Bera 2021, 56). In Dynamic Sublime, Kant, while agreeing with Burke (on the concept of sublime as cessation of fear), explains in "more detail (in agreement with Burke) why the sublime is the result of the cessation of fear" (Bera 2021, 57). But if our own position is secure, her side is more attractive to his cowardice (Kant 1960, 110).

He also "explains why apprehension is attractive, the irresistibleness of power in nature forces humans to understand their physical limitations and helplessness" (Bera 2021, 57). But at the same time, the irrelevance provides a chance to find meaning in existence independent of nature as Kant explains—

> …reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discovers a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self-preservation of quite another kind . . . it challenges our power (one not of nature) to regard as small those things of which we are wont to be solicitous (worldly goods, health, and life), and hence to regard its might . . . as exercising over us and our personality no such rude dominion that we should bow down before it ...Therefore nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make itself sensible of the appropriate sublimity of the sphere of its own being, even above nature. (Kant 1960, 112-113).

In contrast, in the case of the dynamical sublime, understanding our moral survival plays a more direct role. When "witnessing the robust structure of natural objects from the viewpoint of safety," fear is accepted, but it "also challenges the ability to imagine situations in which one remains courageous in the face of imminent destruction at the hands of the powerful object" (Bera 2021, 57).

When confronted with irreversible destruction in the presence of unbridled force in nature, individuals react differently. "On the one hand, one can be astonished by worries about physical health and safety" (Bera 2021, 58). On the other hand, one can, "contrary to natural inclinations, transcend fear and countenance of destruction based on moral determination" and virtue, thereby "acting in accordance with moral conduct standards that demonstrate the true calling of rational 'supersensible' beings" (Bera 2021, 57). The pleasure in the sublime cannot be "explained in terms of the balance of pain or dread; rather, an alternative examination of how the terrifying nature of the powerful natural object is transformed into a positive account is required" (Bera 2021, 58). The pleasure "in the harmful object is justifiable because it leads the self to its imagined state as an extension of determination, virtue, and moral bearing, confronting that specific power," fulfilling the basics of reason and freedom, and challenging nature's dominance (Bera 2021, 58).

Under the guidance of the "First Mother", Nayantara changes her name to Tilottyoma. It means "provider of life, health and hope" (Aruna 2016, 99). Tilo is a sesame seed that represents the golden yellow hue caused by Venus. Grinding 'til' with sandalwood into a paste cures heart and liver diseases. When fried in oil, it restores the lustre of those who have lost the will to live. Tilottyoma is also a harlot or 'apsara' in the court of Indra. Tilo passed the ablution ritual of entering the "fire of Shampati" (Bera 2021, 58). She felt no burns or pain, but she awoke in her body freed from eternal bondage. Like the dancers of Indra's court, the mistresses were born to provide spices. She cried out for fire to consume them, knowing that it would carry her soul to the afterlife instead of killing her (Aruna 2016, 99). It just shows its edge over customers in Oakland, California, who are attached to the spices and its store. Her decision was to destroy the divine Tilo, even if it meant sacrificing her allegiance to the store, the first Mother, the customers, and Raven.

In the end, "Shampati's fire" summoned an earthquake to obliterate all traces of the sorceress, granting Tilo the opportunity to live without guilt and without the past (Aruna 2016, 99). In Divakaruni's novel, "Shampati's fire takes on two distinct forms: on the one hand, it resembles the path of reform through destruction," and on the other, "it represents the overwhelming force that hides in nature, among mundane objects, such as spices, and waits to

rewrite the lives of those around it, to reformat and recreate" (Bera 2021, 58). But Shampati's fire, with its painless, unscarring flames, represents the awe-inspiring natural object that demands absolute submission and fear from Tilo, "which she rejects out of her determination and which evokes the power within her to confront nature— to use the power and not be used by it" (Bera 2021, 58). Her rational and moral strength, devoid of desire and worldly inclinations, asserts her identity's transcendence over spices, fire, and earthquake, as well as nature (Bera 2021, 59). Gita Rajan considers *The Mistress of Spices* to be a complex narrative rather than a direct account of the diaspora. The application of mysticism in the novel looks like a sketch of magical elements on the canvas of realism, but Divakaruni's realistic scheme of magic shows that Tilo's fictional mechanism gives her manifest.

The diasporic sublime is a kind of sublime experience that, unlike the Kantian sublime, emphasizes mankind's ability or "determination" to be free from nature, rather than emphasizing mankind's "infinite superiority" over nature to emphasize its overwhelming superiority" (Bera 2021, 59). Tilo's "magical abilities may indicate that she has the ability to transcend her conquered identities. and dominance, and the continuation of the desire to be free from the spice given to her" (Bera 2021, 59). It is a patriarchal structure represented by a magical empire that signifies patriarchal prospects of women. and their alienation from conventional society. Thus, the paradoxical comparison of Tilo's apparent mystical transcendence and her physical incarceration mirrors the convent confinement of women (Ponzanezi 2004, 13). The communication with spices also suggests the sensuous and religious rituals that women perform in monasteries and homes. Tilo's spiritual ascent allows her to renegotiate her restricted 'other' identities. It seems to metaphorically imply that it is also due to her lack of attempt to break out from the psychological bondage inflicted on her by repressive forces. Describing two crucial conditions for human survival in power, alluding to Kant's sublime foundation: "the bounty of earth, air, water, and what we make of them" (Mann 2006, 168). However, in the novel's postcolonial existence, the natural aspects appear in the form of fourteen spices. "Gale", "neem", "red pepper", "makaradwaj", "lotus root", "sesame" (Divakaruni 1997, 7). Bonnie Mann says: "Rather, we weave them more tightly until we choke on our own faults" (Mann 2006, 167). The "notion is characterized by several attributes", and these are "mind, reason, purpose, goodwill, supreme power, unity, ego" (Downey 2015, 16). The "functioning of the mind is out of harmony and the absence of forms and established symbols undermines general acceptance" (Downie 2015, 16). Fear associated with the vast is simply "fear of something unfathomable, beyond nature and boundless" (Downey 2015, 17). "There are innumerable objects of religious terror that are beyond our comprehension as objects

of our fear" (Downey 2015, 17). What characterizes this awe-inspiring element of the celestial body is a mix of "uncanny and indescribable with feelings of extreme terror" (Downey 2015, 17). Her sublime experience is her fight against the mistress of spices, not as Tilottyoma, but Nayantara, against the submission as a woman to mere fear. She overcomes her dominion over the elements of nature, or the suspense of what happens to her. The sublime directions here are fear, guilt, grief, and responsibility. The blend of these emotions unlocks self-limitations and achieves a state of sovereignty.

III.6. (In)Visibility of the Familiar in *The Oleander Girl*

> Quite simply, the sublime involves the perceiving subject's encounter with a power that simultaneously exceeds and defines the self.
> (Jennifer Wawrzinek 2009, 15)

According to Wawrzinek, "the sublime in its traditional form depends on hierarchies that (re)instate mechanisms of power and domination" and the explanations of borders, boundaries and cultural contradiction of diasporicity thus facilitates the formation of the sovereign subject aiding in providing the balance of power among nations, communities and individuals (2009, 16). In the present society, the male dominated rituals of ascribing beauty to women have represented their status to subordinate objects, not admirable of justice or respect, hence not apt to be the impartial or transcendent subject of the society to accomplish the state of sublime. Since the sublime anxieties the relationship between the sovereign subject and object, it is safe to indulge in the discourse of the understanding of the feminine self in relation to the masculinist customs and display of power and authority and eventual emergence of women as the autonomous subjects through the exercise of reason, morality and justice.

Discussing the sublime self, in relation to the female protagonist of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel, *Oleander Girl* (2013) will accentuate the gap between the female subject and the masculine object within the Indian American diaspora. The chapter performs on the theory of transculturality—on one hand, the recognition or rejection of the diversified world, on the other hand, it indicates the worlding of the colonized space. Though the focus of this chapter here is on the notion of the sublime and its association to diasporicity and transculturality with Indian American literature it is not feasible to discuss the sublime, as opposed to masculine other without some respect to its foil: beauty. In reality, beauty will appear a number of times throughout the chapter, in relation to both Kantian analogies as well as feminist deliberations and will become a crucial notion aiding the conversations on liberatory sublime—highlighting the conversion of a diasporic woman from a subservient object to a sovereign subject. A few brief explanations of the concept of beauty and feminist commitment will set the stage for outlining the notion of the sublime through diaspora, femininity and elevation of the transcultural woman.

It is reasonable to reflect on the perceptions of multiplicity and otherness as significant characters, not only of any community but also of any individual self. Formation of the self is a continual procedure of creation of, correspondingly, "the self" and "the other," and as such it is anything but a homogeneous entity (Mann 2006, 71). Within the continuum of diasporic contexts, diversity and otherness have been negotiated in relation to specific socio-cultural

aspects, to process. the change of an individual's ordinariness rolling into an outstanding event of elevation. The diversity of the feminine self and the other starts with cultural othering, where the Bengali culture and traditions claim superiority over the Western impacts (Vaidivu 2019, 2324). The alienness of American culture, in both its sovereignty and limitations, is deemed unfit and unknown to the Bengali community in India. Despite of severe anglicization due to decades of British rule, the Bengali community imposes dual stances of women within the society—on one hand, women obtain an education, and on the other hand, they receive the education to assist men in fulfilling their possibilities (Vaidivu 2019, 2324). Domestic dogmas are pushed on women for decades in preserving the balance of the home so that male members can rationally contribute to the welfare of society.

The feminine sublime is about encountering the masculine subject, especially the Kantian arc of women being the supporting tools to men's establishment, accomplished only by imagination and beauty instead of rationality and moral justice. The Kantian concept of the gender-based division of men and women promotes men and their societal position as the "noble sex" while providing women to a superficial status as "fair sex" (Mann 2006, 47). Through the invocation of the silences, the indication of the repression, or of the difference demonstrates the mistrials on women and their relentless effort to balance the self within the hostile limits of home, traditions and religious expectations and eventually these restrictions manifest within the Indian American diasporic women. The shift of country, and space increases the stress and inconsistencies between familiar and unfamiliar, own and unknown and diasporic women embark on a journey to find their place. Positioning the patriarchal and controlling aspect of a traditional Bengali home of the Roy's, Divakaruni through Korobi and her associations with her mixed-race identity, societal limitations, and death steps in the realm of the sublime. In order to display the diasporic woman increasing into a modern, political subject beyond the masculine and imperialist constraints, the protagonist Korobi Roy in the novel *The Oleander Girl* (2013) is shown as an orphaned girl, living with her grandparents Bimal Roy and Sarojini. She settles her life yielding to the traditions and the philosophies of the strict Bengali household, within both its privileges and restraints. On the night of Korobi's engagement party, "her grandfather dies of sudden cardiac arrest, and consequently, the secret past of her life exposes itself"—the secret of her father being alive and of her mixed-race origin (Vadivu 2019, 2324).

This secret crushes Korobi's sense of self and she understands the reasons behind her oppressed upbringing, the endless reminders of her mother, Anu's mistakes during her life in the United States of America and the apparitions of her dead mother. She chooses to leave the

boundary and travel to the unknown, for America in search of her father. In the meantime, her fiancé Rajat Bose and his family deal with financial troubles due to Hindu-Muslim riots in their factory. Korobi grows between her phase in America, looking for her estranged father, physical abuse, and the constant fear for her fiancé and his family during the religious riots and "Godhra Kand" (Divakaruni 2013, 118). She understands that like her mother, Anu, she too, lived her life in a lie created by her grandfather to protect and maintain the family pride. The overly protected life symbolized the communal repression of the Bengali traditions, placing a family's respect and image on females. One of her dreams concerning her dead mother features the repressed background of Korobi as well as signals her dislocation within the space she calls 'home' as she reflects, "I can glimpse the ocean through her tattered body, waves breaking apart on rocks. An urgent sorrow radiates from her disappearing form. Then she is gone, and I am finally awake, blinking in the first rays of the Sun entering the room through the bars" (Divakaruni 2013, 5).

Korobi's constant involvement with her mother's death and seeing her mother's silenced mouth in her dreams, her "tattered body" indicates the development of appropriation—a woman appropriating the gendered and cultural expectations as an object. Anu too, like Korobi endured being actively muted within the masculine standards of her society. "I am sick with the fear because of how dangerous America is especially for you. You don't know much about surviving in the world on your own—you've never had to do it" (89). The conditioning of never having to subsist or struggle on her own displays the harsh reality of women being treated as objects, transferred at the hands of men, shifting from one patriarch to the other under the natural means of transferring of power, females are born as equals, women are created to serve, or assist a man's establishment. America also signifies the 'dangerous,' wild or unfamiliar territory that on one hand, stages the adventurous side of life, on the other, shows the cultural imbalance between natives and immigrants and how the difference in racial traditions keeps the society separated. The bias towards the Western world that continues outside the control of the traditional Bengali upbringing, remains outside the limitations of gendered expectations that one way liberates a woman, but also cuts her off the ties to her origins.

Korobi's home becomes an association of death and depression where secrets are nurtured to keep her away from fate same as her mother. Korobi confronts the border of home for the first time when she challenges her grandfather and his archaic preconceptions regarding keeping women in their places. Korobi's grandfather believed that his wife Sarojini has "spoiled the girls" and done him a "disservice" as she reflects, "girls have to be toughened so they can survive a world that presses harder on women," (6). The problem of agency and the deliberate

avoiding the term 'woman' displays females not only as objects but also as naïve girls who need shielding at the hands of a male figure, or the "noble sex" throughout their lives (Mann 2006, 49). Sarojini, like Korobi had to endure Bimal Roy's autocratic judgments in order keep on living with him, even though she knew her husband's archaic methods and limitations were responsible for her daughter Anu's death. Korobi, also, realises that while confronting her grandfather,

> It's always what you want that's important—do you ever think of what might make other people happy? Like moving the wedding day forward—did you even think to ask me before you made such a big decision? I was going to beg you to reconsider. But now I'm actually glad. This way I can get away quicker from you! (Divakaruni 2013, 28).

Divakaruni raises the question of agency and authority within the patriarchal restrictions of the Bengali community where a woman and her choices still came secondary to the decisions made by the superior male figure of the family. Neither Sarojini nor Anu could exercise their right as an individual but was part of the masculine independence. Bonnie Mann observes, "masculine independence is not to be assured through the subject acting on an external Other, however, but through the assimilation of the object into the very interior world of the subject" (Mann 2006, 43). Even though the chapter agrees with Mann's critical argument of Kant evaluating femininity as beautiful and masculinity as the sublime, it also reflects a new potential in the argument. The chapter concludes that the sublime stages the elevation of diasporic women from objects and to the state of the noble sex or the sovereign subject, capable of taking rational and moral decisions against the irrational and emotional objectivism of men in the novel.

Bonnie Mann uses the Kantian concept of man's knowledge of himself, and also implies a connection between humans and nature, men and women-somehow inhibit the woman to reach her true ability, true equilibrium with her power to reason, her knowledge. She is unable to cross her borders and will function as man's guiding thread in his relations with the world. Women function as a driving force, aiding a man's establishment, through their own suppression. Hence, the reflection of the liberation or autonomy to end the realm of subjugation, as Mann observes, "A liberatory sublime…is the feminist assault on masculinist politics and policies that insists on a woman's standing as a person rather than as a function in a masculinist system" (Mann 2006, 157).

This perception of the liberatory sublime within the novel, can be contextualised in three ways- firstly, Bimal Roy with in overshielding and raising Korobi as a woman bound to her gendered role of a dutiful daughter, wife and mother; secondly, Rajat Bose and his family continually trying to accommodate her within their modern society to suit his professional

benefits, and thirdly, her father who totally gave up on her and disappointed her-all of this proposes Korobi's misplaced hope, expectations on the men in her life who betrayed her for their benefit and formed an enclosed space for her to live in-stunting her growth, hindering her relationship with herself and the world as she expresses her frustration to Vic—

> No one cares that I didn't find my father… All the troubles I went through, searching, the dangers I faced— no one even wants to know about it. All they want —even Grandmother—is for me to go back, pull the blanket of status quo over myself, and dwindle into a wife (Divakaruni 2013, 216)

Reading the cross-cultural quandaries of the social settings, set in both Indian and America as well as Korobi's transcultural self and its struggle leads the chapter to the sublime. Immanuel Kant's treatise on the subject of women's proper place in society in terms of her placating mannerisms and education clearly puts women as secondary beings to men, existing to practice inconsequential ideations of the world and nature. Of the two aesthetic feelings, the beauty and the sublime, Kant suggests, that the sublime is the superior and the authority of the man who is not "subject to the inconstancy of external things" (Kant 1960, 65). In the natural world, those things that provoke a sense of eternity, and magnificence are sublime; those that conjure a sense of inconstancy, superficial sensations and delicacy are beautiful:

> Tall oaks and lonely shadows in a sacred grove are sublime; flower beds, low hedges and trees trimmed in figures are beautiful. Night is sublime, day is beautiful Temperaments that possess a feeling for the sublime are drawn gradually, by the quiet stillness of a summer evening as the shimmering light of the stars breaks through the brown shadows of night and the lonely moon rises into view, into high feelings of friendship, of disdain for the world, of eternity. The shining day stimulates busy fervor and a feeling of gaiety. The sublime moves, the beautiful charms (Kant 1960, 47).

Kant considered women deficient in the quality of being rational and they will reject evil on its moral repulsiveness but not because it is unjust (Dussel 1985, 211).

While Kant states that all rational human nature possesses the capability to be determined by practical reason, women are incompetent of logical reasoning as the sovereign subject but exists to be the submissive object. In Kantian aesthetics as in the stronger masculine tradition, "woman will constitute the imaginary sub-basement that shores up the mine, will act as man's guiding thread in his various relationships with the many faces of the sensible world" (Dussel 1985, 212). This "imaginary sub-basement" shores up the mine out of which the resources to produce the phantom we know as the free, autonomous, and sovereign subjects are continually prospected (Mann 2006, 33). Kant's observation of women as the "fair sex" showcases a sexist triumph of women over women through "unconstrained charms" that show women as superficial objects (Mann 2006, 34). The "main object of women as fair sex (capable of evoking

only beauty), to support the noble subject, men in their establishment to propagate into reaching their full potential and evoke the sublime" (Bera 2022, 72). Mann's understanding of the Kantian sublime hence takes the tendency towards instituting women as sovereign subjects or the noble sex. Hence, the women are efficient in using their education, morality and rationale of their own volition, regardless of societal constraints and can exercise the "stern duty of justice" while "subduing one's passion through principles" (Mann 2006, 57).

Kant's aesthetical yet normative discourse on gender relations, makes more or less explicit the racialization of sublime experience. In Kant's later work in aesthetic philosophy, gender assumes great, foundation in explaining the difference between the aesthetical developments and constituting the definitions of the beauty and the sublime. The evidence of what Carolyn Korsmeyer describes to as "deep gender" in the relation "between humans and nature and between the faculties of imagination, understanding and reason" (Mann 2006, 61). Whereas the "feeling for the beautiful is provoked by nature tamed, the sublime feeling builds on the event of a clash with nature at its fiercest and most unformed" (Mann 2006, 61). Whatever most values the sublime in nature as the infinite in both "magnitude and power— allows the Kantian 'subject' to investigate 'his' own might and significance (Mann 2006, 61). In *Oleander Girl*, the subject is a woman who is confronted with the dichotomies of nature that surrounds us, in both magnitude and power. Her nature characterizes both the external and internal conflicts, Korobi journeyed to the United States of America to find her estranged father Rob and for the first time in her life, she felt free as well terrified. The radical change of known habitat is one of the disputes of migration studies that generates and transmits an individual and his or her global knowledge. Korobi internalises the impressive structures, the view of the Empire State building, view of the city from the top, the crowd and the chaos of New York streets and considers her own position as an autonomous Bengali woman aware of her roots, her city Kolkata as she tells Vic—

> I've never looked down upon Kolkata from up high, So I had no idea how far the city sprawled, which shape it took. On the ground, I knew its contradictions: lavish wedding halls behind which beggars waited for leftovers; red bannered, slogan-shouting protestors marching by a house where a musician practiced classical flute. But Kolkata's spirit, at once vibrant and desperate— I had no words to describe it to someone who has never lived there (Divakaruni 2013, 149).

The sublime creates in a feeling of "astonishment mounting almost to terror, the awe and thrill of devout feeling, that takes hold of one when gazing upon the prospect of mountains ascending to heaven, deep ravines and torrents raging there" (Mann 2006, 46).

Korobi's voyage to the States reminds her of her own irrelevance and powerlessness amid her surrounding, let it be in the "vibrant and desperate" city of Kolkata or the splendid crowd of the New York city. Nature "as anarchy, disorder, and threat phases the understanding of the sublime," (Mann 2006, 46) as Kant observes—

> …bold, overhanging, ... threatening thunderclouds piled up in the vault of heaven, borne along with flashes and peals, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction, hurricanes leaving desolation in their track, the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river (Mann 2006, 46).

While the sense of beauty in nature is pleasing and calls on the subject, (men in the Kantian sense) "back into relation with the natural world from which he has been disgruntled the experience of the sublime is a call to war" (Kant 2007, 257). Korobi too, as the subject kept herself indifferent and docile in the known and agreeable surroundings created first by her grandfather Bimal Roy, then her fiancé Rajat Bose, and then indirectly by her estranged father, Rob. In the cultural context of the novel, the safe and riskless prism of Bengali ancestry and customs stunted Korobi's development as an individual, not leaving much space for reason and virtue.

The shock of her father being alive as well as him belonging to African American ethnicity destroys the mould of Bengaliness, she was raised to be a dutiful daughter and wife. The truth of her identity and "the shock of betrayal" (52) from her own grandparents smashed her imagination but as Kant observed, "the imagination's very failure becomes the rational subject's success. since reason can comprehend the might and magnitude with which it is confronted" (Mann 2006, 52). The sheer weight shift in her known world creates the "wildest and most irregular disorder and desolation" (246) giving the imagination to the limitations of an excess that is "like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself" (258). The imagination shakes before the power of forced changes of her identity, her migration, and also the rape attempt that Korobi endures while searching for her father, makes her recognise her absolute helplessness and her diminished status as a mere object only created and protected to be used at the expediency of man-made regulations. The helplessness in front of the tremendous power of culture and traditions jeopardizes her sovereignty and she struggles to experience her own "might and magnitude as sublime" (254). Therefore, Korobi's reality and struggle in both her homeland and hostland helps her emerge as of the noble sex, the dynamic existence being accomplished of the feeling of the sublime leading in regard to her own mind and inclination, changing the chosen path as an object towards her constructing her self—as the sovereign subject.

Traumatic encounters that threaten bodily boundaries such as physical relocation, the shift of home, violence over the body and its consequent reflection on the mind. The cultural signifiers in the altercation of the body and how that influences Korobi's journey from imagination to rationality is one of the points leading towards the sublime self. The incident of sexual abuse also acts as a major signifier as well as the shocking experience as she reflects, "Oh, Vic, I feel so dirty, inside and out. I don't want to do this anymore. I've never come cross anyone who hated me so much" (Divakaruni 2013, 205). This incident with real estate businessman, Rob Mariner made her realise the dangers she has invited into her life while looking for a past that was closed off to her. The look of "dark amusement" and "contempt" while he was pushing himself on her, made her see the contrast between the guarded and sheltered life in Kolkata and the „unbounded and bristling" possibilities that could turn her into "new Korobi" (218). Her lack of judgment here, shows her lack of experience in the world and the overflow of emotions and imagination clouding her moral sense and reason. She, at first, through her deceased mother's past life, tried to take look into a life she could have had if she were born and raised in an affluent family in America. This conflict within showcases her own acceptance of deeply political and social undermining of her sex and conventionally attributed, as Kant did, "minimum personhood" (Mann 2006, 36).

In women's writings, the reinforcement of mythical patterns to demonstrate self-empowerment and individual growth pervade a number of novels from various cultural experiences. Regardless of the necessary discrepancies in the narratives, style, language or topics, similar occurrences continue to materialize. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni challenges to portray the cross-pollination of cultures through Korobi, constantly starting off with the ritualistic inclinations of prayer, 'Kumkum', 'Haldi', Goddess in the Durga temple. Depiction of the goddess and her continuous references underlines the religious intrusions that create the protagonist and the characters around her as well as the symbol of forbearance and patience. The colossal figure of a goddess, the mythical intensity of a superbeing with ten hands and the strength to kill demons to bring peace in the world brings about the stark realization of the failing strength of humans, on one hand, and on the other hand, lets the humans conjure power from within. The goddess and her and cultural rituals related to her bring out the sublimity in the novel. The immense presence of Durga in the novel is to reawaken the same image through the protagonist, Korobi, into a goddess, "while taking the freedom to render this character's psyche and her quest much closer to the modern perception of self-affirmation" (Zupancˇicˇ 2016, 34).

Kant desires the establishment of women to represent absolute submission based on the faculties of "fair sex" to the subject's (man's) aid (Mann 2006, 61). Mann argues these conditions of submission on three diverse levels—firstly, the woman confronting the man-made an image of women with reason and forbearance, secondly, synthesizing of women's multiplicity and becoming a "unitary phenomenal object" (Mann 2006, 61). Lastly, even though, women reach this stage through submission, but eventually expand the interiors within. In the case of Korobi, she confronts her limitations of culture, traditions, body and home and transformed her status as the knower. Goddess Durga hence represents more than a religious figure and re-affirmation of Hinduism but rather as a feminist symbol. Durga becomes the representative of the "fair sex" as Kant would comment who are capable of unrestrained "charms" or "sexual prowess" to enchant over men only to evince the magnitude of strength, power and dominance as the knower, as the sovereign, as the transcendental— all of the statuses that Korobi experiences throughout the narrative (Mann 2006, 62).

In her essay on Kant's third Critique, *Critique of Judgment* (1793/2000), Irigaray finds that "the sublime experience, an encounter with a powerful and overwhelming nature becomes a mere detour on the path to a securely sovereign subject" (Irigaray 1985, 209). Kant's use of the "outer world" of things, just as he strongly bolts away the things-in-themselves from experience and wisdom, means for Irigaray that "the paradox of a kind of symmetry has been evaded. One kind of difference, inverted in the mirror, will never be analysed" (1985, 210). It "is the reformulation of this kind of variation (between humans and nature, men and women) into an ordinary occasion for man's knowledge of himself that is the very institution of Euro-masculinist subjectivity" (Irigaray 1985, 211). In the development of this reworking, Irigaray asserts, sexual difference is essential reinforcing the Kantian aesthetics as in the wider masculine tradition, "woman will constitute the imaginary sub-basement that shores up the mine, will function as man's guiding thread in his various relationships with the many faces of the sensible world" (1985, 212). This "imaginary sub-basement" props up the properties to yield the spirit as the "free, autonomous, and sovereign male dominated subject are continually prospected" (Mann 2006, 149). While the Euro masculine subject's entanglement in associations of reliance and power in relation to the outer world, women as the sovereign subject seek the elevation and the sublime feeling within, through the internalization of rational tough and strict decorum of morality and justice, devoid of desire and emotional dependency making the fantasy of true independence a reality. Korobi hearing the roars that lay within her mother or grandmother's lives, decided to confront those silences, Korobi confronts the inhabited border and transcends the limitations of a Bengali woman with mixed race identities, class,

sexuality and defines the concept of a "woman" not as "a shared fantasy of sexual identity", but in a manner that challenges any perception of the essence, the female subject's confrontation with and reaction to an alterity that limits her as Cornelia Klinger observes,

> The two faculties, understanding and reason, are not only different in character but also the relations in which they enter with imagination are of completely different kinds. The relation of imagination and understanding is a harmonious one; a feeling of the beautiful arises when our understanding is in harmony with nature, when the form of a natural object is corresponding to our rational capacity and conveys to us the impression of a meaningful whole or totality. ... By contrast, the relation of imagination and reason is based on conflict and therefore is accompanied by a feeling of "displeasure." ... Conflict, disharmony, struggle, and violence are the predominant features of the sublime and yet, there is also a strange kind of attraction, a "negative pleasure" connected to it (Klinger 1997, 197).

The mysterious pleasure in the sublime comes with the subject's familiarity of the "infinite superiority" of reason over the imagination, which is still corrupted by sense, thus attached to nature. It is a sense of reason's independence from and control over nature (Klinger 1997, 198). Reason has been gendered in Kant's third critique within his declaration of Man being the capable of the sexes to be sovereign and independent of emotion in his treatment of an incident or experience. In that regard, the reason is autonomous of the sensual experiences, hence losing its connection to nature. In reading the concept of reason within diasporic literature, reason becomes a process of liberation, existing regardless of the sexualities, only to attain the highest form of self-affirmation, hence the sublime self.

Meena Alexander considers that it is accurately the act of crossing national boundaries that raises the sense of ethnicity in an individual as she recalls, "If I were living in Kerala, I wouldn't need to be Indian, I wouldn't need to be Asian. You exist as that ethnic category only [. . .] in a public sphere, where it's under challenge, where you're marked" (Alexander 2000, 6). Korobi's mixed race identity, her grandparents never divulging information on her father, and never letting her know of her deceased mother, and Anu's life in Berkeley— all gradually contributed to her anxiety about her birth, her origin and her identity.

Even though she already had a sense of self and belonging, she was not sure of the race she was supposed to belong to. As alexander reflects, Korobi too, was "under challenge" of public recognition and suffered in between the confusion of her roots, as if she were "marked" at the right place. Amid all chaos and anguish, Korobi clasps her purpose of finding her father tightly which demonstrates her survival instinct. Regarding the calibre of woman, Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevalier, who translated Simone De Beauvoir excerpts from *The Second Sex* (2011) observes, "The system based on her dependence collapses as soon as she

ceases to be a parasite; there is no longer need for a masculine mediator between her and the universe" (Beauvoir 1958, 25). To follow this train of thought, the Kantian context to explain the male- dominated the relationship between dependency and nature explains:

> While the Euro-masculine subject's entanglement in relationships of dependency and power with these others is the key factor in his movement toward the possibility of freedom, autonomy, and sovereignty (since the very possibility of such noble things rests on the material benefits he reaps from these relationships), his dependency on these Others must also be ''forgotten'' in order to secure his fantasy of independence (Mann 2006, 34).

Much in accordance with Beauvoir's observation and Kant's social commentary, while Korobi faces a financial catastrophe in America, she discovers another aspect of self-reliance. She doesn't want to seek help from others, even from her fiancé Rajat, so she sells her hair to control her expenses. She exclaims, "The woman calls me into the back room. The cold of her scissors burns the nape of my neck[…]I now have enough for California, and I've done without having to beg anyone" (Divakaruni 2013, 177). Having confronted all these problems, finally she happens to meet her father, Robin Lacey. But she is taken aback by knowing that her father is racially African American and Anu and Rob never got married which means Korobi is an illegitimate child. In exhaustion she says, "Some kinds of success are worse than failure. It would have been better not to have found my father than to live this profound shame. I'm furious with everyone—my mother, my father, my grandfather" (Divakaruni 2013, 246).

These certainties though destroyed Korobi's sense of pride and self, it also helped her to emerge as a new person with strong determination. She finally gathers the courage and her power to face her past, confront her present and prepare for a future by understanding the meaning of her name that her mother gave her on her deathbed, "because the oleander was beautiful—but also tough. It knew how to protect itself from predators. Anu wanted that toughness for you because she didn't have enough of it herself" (Divakaruni 2013, 253). By the time Korobi realizes the intention of her mother, she entirely transforms into a confident being, in all toughness and sublimity, away from the beautiful damsel of an existence as Korobi thinks, "I'm Korobi, Oleander capable of surviving drought and frost and the loss of love" (Divakaruni 2013, 275).

To conclude, Korobi Roy's journey highlights the elevation of the mind in its confrontation with challenging political and social constructs, undoing the terror and eventual triumph of reason. The awe-inspiring realisation of desires and inclinations, trauma and fear internally constitutes the image of a self-aggrandizing space. This confrontation with this internally constituted dominance is the sublime experience.

> …sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us (insofar as it influences us). Everything that arouses this feeling in us, which includes the powers of nature that calls forth our own powers, is thus, called sublime. (Kant 2000, 147 translation modified Merritt 2018, 15)

Consciousness and moral cultivation, Against the masculine construct and elevation as the sovereign subject. Divakaruni ends the novel with William Blake's poem *Eternity* (1863) marking both the end and the start of Korobi Roy's journey as a sovereign, self-governing subject which reads: "He who binds to himself a joy/Does the wing'd life destroy/But he who kisses the joy as it flies, /Lives in eternity's sunrise" (Blake 1863) (Divakaruni 2013, 319). Consequently, to continue the thought, the winged life with its challenges reveals Korobi's true potential as a sovereign subject, reveals their capabilities and conjures the power of confrontation by shattering the prism of culture, traditions, and expectations in order for him to become a free, autonomous subject living under "eternity's sunrise."

IV. The Diasporic Sublime: Reclaiming the Self in Body, Food, and Home

Considering my research, the conclusion of the dissertation establishes a connection between migration and the sublime that has been evaded so far in postcolonial studies. The mental and physical alterations occurring due to migration giving the migrant women the opportunity to realise their innate nature, and moral abilities is an intentional concern of this research. It is very crucial to renegotiate the canon of the Kantian sublime for two reasons: firstly, the Kantian framework refutes his bias over female ability of the sublime encounter, and secondly, it supports the function of reason, authority, and freedom in postcolonial literature. The Kantian sublime, though seemingly outdated, it gives itself the opportunity to evolve into a mode of confrontation from just an awe response and avails itself to diverse interpretations. I discuss the element of fear and loss of culture and how Indian women face the collapse of their respect and reason from time to time, especially during the transition from one country to another.

But the question is, how can we establish a connection between diasporic status and its sublimity and why this certain connection is needed? Even though Kant examines the right to hospitality, not much research is available on how women deal with that right as diaspora, or how we can relate it with the sublime. There sublime has been considerably researched within the postcolonial discourse and since migration is one of the by-products of postcolonial studies, it makes sense to discuss the sublime in diasporicity. I specifically choose to discuss feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics because Kant presumes the sublime as human freedom. Indian American literature by female authors (Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni) discuss the state of immigrant women in the United States of America and how their selves are divided between traditions and cultures.

Migratory movements are sites of imperfect justice in that they bring into play the individual right to freedom of movement, and the universal right to hospitable living conditions. The subtext of the conclusion, “fashioning the sovereign self” is the research statement of the dissertation that engulfs all the argumentation regarding the discourse of the feminine sublime and its manifestation in Indian American female literature. The diasporic sublime draws a large part of its discussion from the discourse on the feminine sublime that was established around the early twentieth century with the arrival of feminist discourse and creates a unified category for all ‘women’ when this unity is constantly undermined by divisions of race, nation, ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc.

The works of Virginia Woolf, Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Barbara Claire Freeman and many other theorists contributed immensely to the notions of femininity, the gendered

construction of the female body, the raising of the female consciousness and the male gaze. The dissertation defends the coherence of the feminist debate on the female nature, woman's incapability of being the sublime individual and the concepts of morality and self-transcendence in the Kantian sublime with examples from Indian American female literature. Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in their novels focus on the intellectual inquiry into female nature and their experiences.

These novels counter the 'implicit and explicit masculinity' of the modern body politics, habitual familiar life, and conflicts of the border which serve to deny an autonomous political or ethical representation to the female embodiment, to assert "a certain homogeneity in the specific situations of women in order to make political space for themselves" (Gatens 1991, 56). As Judith Butler comments women remain a social signifier, that is, "something that is always already constrained by the system of language and its necessary exclusions" (Gedalof 1999, 192). This signifier can be disrupted to some extent and its "necessary injuries' can be reworked to subvert dominant social and symbolic systems to some extent" (1999, 193). In this symbolic identity, women challenge their selves and their conditions to reconsider their position in society not as submissive beings but as embodied autonomous subjects.

Presently, how to balance the conflict between postcolonialism (the politics of freedom) and the sublime may appear to be at an impasse yet the framework posits important questions on the relationship between the migrant self and sublimity, socio-political position of migrants in a foreign land. The ultimate objective of moral rules, Kant argued, is to create possibilities to construct an ideal society, the "realm of ends", "which has two main aspects: All its members respect one another as self-determining agents who pursue different individual ends, and they seek to promote one another's ends" (Mertens 1996, 334). Other than the psychoanalytic, religious and poetic categories, the sublime also manifests within basic impulses and experiences of life depending imperative categorical state of human nature and in the case of diasporic women, migration brings direct changes to familiar existence in terms of body, food and home. The Indian woman in her journey to the states is challenged either in her national or racial/religious communal identity that has been carefully constructed within the patriarchal constraints or through their bodies as gendered or sexed identities, or social relations structured by gender or sexual difference.

The female existence in postcolonial migration invokes new queries in terms of socio-political change and in the idea of liberty, morality and transcendence. Jane Forsey observes the resuscitation of the sublime and reflects that the theory cannot be conceptualised beyond its Male dominated context and a further inquiry into the sublime will lead to an "incoherent,

contradictory or limited" perspective (Forsey 2007, 382). Even though connecting the sublime theory with diasporicity and immigration possess an immense challenge but nonetheless, the sublime has been discussed in different antinomies (387). Hence to defend the coherency of the sublime theory, the dissertation cojoins the male-dominated aesthetics of the term with its postcolonial terror and power constructions of the globalised society.

In a sublime experience, women are threatened with an object that resists theirs "conceptual grasp" (Hanauer 2018, 2) which may indicate the possibility of a life threatening situation that goes beyond human comprehension. Even though the association of death may seem like a natural prevalence to the concept of existence, the ways death and destruction are introduced in life may showcase terror and astonishment as John Dennis described terror as

> a Disturbance of Mind, proceeding from an Apprehension of an approaching Evil, threatening Destruction of very great Trouble either to us or to ours … Things that are powerful, and likely to hurt, are the Causes of Common Terror, and the more they are powerful, and likely to hurt, the more they become the cause of Terror; which Terror, the greater it is, the more it is joined with Wonder, and the earlier it comes to Astonishment" (Monk 1960, 52).

The emphasis on terror already has been a central topic in both Burkean and Kantian aspects of the sublime theory. Burke's theory itself is primarily concerned with the emotion of terror and the qualities that, he claims, tend to evoke it: vastness, obscurity, privations, darkness, power, and where terror is the "ruling principle" of the sublime (Burke 1990, 54). Kant's sublime, on the other hand, focused on the mathematical and dynamic sublime, where one focused on the "aesthetic estimation of the size" of the object, and the later theorised the "aesthetic estimation of power" (193). The novels present life-threatening events that may seem comprehensible but they render the victims powerless, especially with their already reduced confidence and agency as a secondary citizen only created to assist man's establishment. The experience of dynamical sublimity does not (necessarily or primarily) involve "cognitive failure, but rather a certain kind of physical failure" instead involves (in part) "a sense of fearfulness, terror, powerlessness in facing an irresistible force" (Burke 2014, 53).

The women in their increasingly dominating social sphere, domesticity and roles as dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers become aware of the limitations of their physical and psychological presence. The incomprehensibility of these objects or situations may present ideas of something powerful, fearful, threatening, and terrifying, but they are not (completely) "incomprehensible or epistemically inaccessible—they do not resist and humiliate us as knowers but, rather, as embodied actors" (Hanauer 2018, 4). This powerlessness or incompetency in front of an overwhelming force helps the women raise themselves within the

challenging conditions to experience the liberty of an autonomous subject. The diasporic sublime rather than an individual journey of a woman focuses on the dislocated communal identity by categorising Indian immigrant women as one and infinite selves.

Far from being separated from the sphere of interest, then, "art and aesthetic taste are powerful framers of self-image, social identity, and public values" (Korsmeyer 2004, 1) and the aesthetic principles are "attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in" (Lauter 1990, 102). They are also attached to and expressive of deeply gendered interests. The feminist theory, according to Mann, claims that the male gaze has played a considerable role in bringing in the gendered interest in relation to aesthetics and the gendered power manifest first within the construct of home and later through religious and cultural productions. also, the nudity of the female body as well as the representation of motherhood (through gestation, pregnancy and labour) are aesthetic ideologies that would inscribe female agency and reinforce power relations. These newly emphasized power relations of the female existence in society also turn her into a political being and orient the discussion to female exclusion from the societal and cultural evolution just to maintain the legitimacy and centralised idea of power in the hands of men.

Feminist aesthetics works to identify daily actions as an art which remained embedded in the mundanity of life rather than a separate discipline aiming at decoration (Lauter 1990, 98). By valorising the art of body, food and home, the diasporic sublime focuses on the "beauty and ontological intensity" of life making "the mundane workaday world all the more profane and providing aesthetic illumination" (Donovan 1993, 53–54). The manner in which one conducts an action is often considered to be a matter of etiquette, civility, and courtesy. Compared to the issues of justice and rights that have grave social consequences, manners are considered superficial and trivial, not worthy of the same kind of attention. manners and etiquette often raise the "questions of social hierarchy and identity politics" and they have historically been used as a gender- or class-specific means of discrimination and exclusion, as well as constructing gender stereotypes (Laverty 2009, 229).

According to Emily Brady, eighteenth-century accounts that place importance on the more constructive and positive effects of the sublime also refer to the role of the body. Rachel Zuckert in her chapter "The Associative Sublime: Gerard, Kames, Alison and Stewart" points to a kind of projective imagination, "'[the mind] sometimes imagines itself present in every part of the scene it contemplates" (Brady 2019, 211). Zuckert further observes, that Kames writes that the "'spectator's body reflects such identification. . .we expand the chest or stand taller while appreciating the sublime" (Brady 2019, 211). The amazement ascribed to the sublime

reaction in certain situations create "stillness or tranquillity rather than the negative aesthetics of shock. Sublime effects on the body indicate a "physical, embodied dimension in addition to the cognitive aspects of sublime experience" (211). But it is also worth highlighting how the enormity of a mountain or the power of a storm drives the body to feel under threat, thus giving the opportunity to find internal greatness of mind as a match up to magnitude of the external world.

However, these seemingly trivial aspects of our daily lives go a long way toward determining the quality of life as well as the quality of society. As Karen Stohr observes, "rules of polite behaviour play a far more important role in helping us live out our moral commitments than most people realize" (2012, 166) and "morality is incomplete unless we deal with its manifestation in ordinary human interaction" (2012, 167). In this discussion of the body as an aesthetic art contemplates on the ways or mannerisms, which can be termed as "aesthetic factors" (Saito 2016, 226), such as handling of objects, tone of voice, facial expressions, and bodily movements. The term "aesthetic" not in the honorific sense usually associated with beauty or artistic excellence rather focuses on bodily experiences beyond the sensory perception or bodily limitations. According to Sherman, the list of what constitutes the "aesthetic of character" (2005, 272) or the "aesthetic of morals" (2005, 281) includes "how we appear to others as conveyed through formal manners and decorum, as well as the manner in the wider sense of personal bearing and outward attitude" (2005, 272), specifically "voices, faces, and gestures" (2005, 281).

The aesthetic character of the Indian diasporic women depends not just on their mannerisms and bodily interactions brought in from their home country, India but also develops certain angles in their journey to the States as well as during their appropriation of Western customs and mannerisms. Kant, like all philosophers, instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem from the point of view of the female protagonist, considered art and the beautiful purely from that of the 'spectator'" (1968, 539, emphasis added). On body aesthetics, Sherri Irvin argues for the aesthetic dimension of ordinary experiences including travelling, sexual relationships, motherhood etc. The benefit of cultivating "aesthetic sensibility toward these mundane acts of daily life," she observes, "is enriching one's life: insofar as we are led to ignore [everyday experience] or regard it as unworthy of attention" (228). Indian women were deprived of their agency as well as any sort of social, traditional and educational gratification, and the conceptualisation of the diasporic sublime through body focus on aesthetic aspects of everyday experience and challenges of a female body in the hostland. Indian women are

expected to appeal to their beauty and power of seduction to maintain the aesthetical appeal of an elegant body movement such as being docile and untouched.

The aesthetic effect of the body heightens both the sensuous display of one's other regarding a potential danger in accounting for the value of "practicing aesthetic mindfulness as self-improvement, self-enrichment, and acting as an artist of one's own life, unless its social ramifications are also taken into account" (Irvin 2016, 230). Particularly with respect to practicing aesthetics through specific body movements, the emphasis is on the social and interpersonal dimensions such as politically tense environment, identity crisis due to hyphenated birth, religious limitations, bodily abuse and manipulation, etc. One may not achieve a perfectly virtuous self, but that does not nullify the ideal of cultivating moral virtues through bodily engagement both within and outside of bodily training and expectations. This moral virtue of women is further cultivated into the being of an autonomous subject, going beyond the bodily expectations in a masculine society and achieving the moral transcendence of sublimity.

Food, in terms of the mundanity of life, exposes the artistic vigour of "beauty the sense which applies to paintings, sculptures, plays, films, poems, and works of music" but not to all those other activities (deception, fermentation, programming, war, etc.) which can be characterized as arts. Food can be beautiful, but not everything beautiful is art so this does not seem to get at what we are after either. Self is only the well-known of many present artworks made with blood, and "blood is only one of the bodily fluids that have been used in contemporary art production" (reference). Food moves as well as constructs the self, and rather has a functional constitution that can be aesthetically considered—in terms of religious and political art. Even though food does not invoke awe or relate to the sense of power directly but it associates the idea of sustenance, safety and health. Habit of food depending on a political, social and cultural sphere "may still not be able to speak to different generations…because the nature of ingredients changes," and ingredients of recipes are carriers of cultural tensions, terror and age old practices. Deresiewicz, for example, argues that food is not art because it is "not narrative or representational, does not express ideas or organize emotions." Like Deresciewicz, Telfer argues that food can neither represent nor express emotion. Now narrative is surely irrelevant.

Many major art forms (music, architecture) and genres (haiku, abstract expressionism) are non-narrative. So Deresiewicz's claim that food is non-narrative is beside the point. And strictly speaking, both are wrong that food is not representational. Carolyn Korsmeyer, in her *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (1993), tackles the question of food and meaning

head-on and makes a robust case that food often functions symbolically. Of particular interest is Korsmeyer's argument that foods often traffic in a specific form of symbolization which, following the American philosopher Nelson Goodman, she calls "exemplification" (1993, 201). In exemplification, an object both refers to a property and possesses it. Similarly, an item of food may do more than simply possess a property (saltiness, a hint of sage); it may call our attention to that property.

Food may function expressively (i.e., be appropriately described in broadly emotional terms) in virtue of the metaphoric exemplification of various properties. Food hence exhibits the aesthetical aspect of traditions and ritualistic ideas of the Indian culture and ancestry and on the other hand, the familiarity of food that constructs the identity of Indian women. Kant himself uses the term "aesthetic" broadly so as to include judgments of the agreeable (including judgments of wine) which are not disinterested. But authors after Kant tended to use the term "aesthetic" more narrowly to refer to those disinterested pleasures and judgments. And the alleged disinterestedness of proper aesthetic pleasure and judgment has surely been one of the reasons that tastes and smells of food have been excluded from the sphere of the aesthetic. For nothing seems more connected to desire than the pleasures we take in tasting and smelling delicious food.

The diasporic sublime borrows a broader section of its argument from the relationship between diasporicity and domesticity. The troubled relationships of gendered role in the domestic realm is also a way to make feminist sense out of "experiences of embodied perception, spatiality, and temporality" (Mann 2006, 178). On the other hand, the domestic sphere as understood in Indian culture also creates possibilities to engage with extreme forms of misogyny through traditions and religion. The sublime experience consists of an exhilarating kind of "negative pleasure" (Kant 2000, 5:245, 23) that is felt upon a (safe) encounter with objects in nature that are "overwhelmingly powerful, terrifying, formless, vast, or incomprehensible: the starry heavens, erupting volcanoes, a stormy ocean, and so on" (178). For Kant, these pieces are especially well-suited for producing that anxiety-laden altitude of the soul that signifies the feeling of the sublime. The justification for this is that these sorts of ideas require us with a kind of insinuation or feeling of the rational "vocation" of the mind (2007, 5:262, 275). Kant writes, nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forward our power (which is not part of nature) to respect those things about which we are concerned (goods, health, and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power as not the sort of authority over ourselves and our power to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest standards and their assertion or desertion (2007, 5:262, 275).

In the novels of Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni, what seems at first sight to be an easy echo of the private space, with men's space defined as 'outer' and women's 'inner', turns out to be more complicated. Conceptions of innerness and outerness are compliant and changing. The 'inner', as women's space, can, varying on perspectives, mean the village, the combined space of kinship or caste group, or the household; women's existence in the domestic idea of belonging "lends an inner-ness each time to a distinct arrangement of relations" (Niranjana 1994, 14-15). What continues perpetually is that female sexuality and its regulation continue both the objective of and the medium through which not only female identity, but also the limitations of community space, come to be negotiated (Niranjana 1994, 14-15). The diasporic sublime suggests an intricate "discursive and strategic positioning for women" (15).

The conversational concepts of women and women's activities are seen as productive of, and often central to, the emergence of national, race, and community identities. 'Woman' and 'women' become "necessary to the emergence of these identities through acknowledging and appropriating the privileged access to origins that the female capacity of birth represents" (Niranjana 1994, 16). The stability of these communal identities of Indian women in the States identities relies on locating 'Woman' and 'women' as "pure origin, as timeless tradition and the fixed place of home" (16). By contrast, "when women name themselves as women, and contend for the right to name their activities as women, this is perceived as dangerous incitement" (Chakravarti 1983, 73). This indicates not only that the expression of distinct gender concerns by women is deemed dangerous to the permanence of community identities, but also that "women's access to an individual sense of self is seen as threatening" (Chakravarti 1983, 73). Uma Chakravarti argues that, in these narratives, women may be empowered with the power to conserve and regenerate the nation or the community, but that power often depends on a synchronized obliteration of the self (Chakravarti 1983, 73). The Kantian doctrine where Kant rendered women only capable of beauty, obliterates the idea of women in their individual space, as an equal to men in society. His focus on the imperative nature of women as pleasurable to society in a subservient and obliging manner.

The dissertation challenges the male-dominated construct of this idea and evinces the rising of Indian diasporic women through the aesthetical challenges manifested through their habits of body, food and home. The theory of the sublime stayed out of reach with respect to South Asian studies as well as the involvement of postcolonial women. The status of secondary personhood has reduced women to subdued beings and the diasporic sublime reorients the discussion in terms of the novels to indulge in an inquiry into how women through their survival in threatening events such as killing, death, pregnancy and labour, rape, domestic abuse etc. If

the diasporic sublime can be attempted, then not just Indian American community but other hyphenated communities can use the theoretical paradigm of the diasporic sublime to explore the categories of terror, agency and power and questions of identity. This dissertation hence submits an inquiry into the discourse of postcoloniality, and femininity in relation to the aesthetical observation of the sublime that can be expanded beyond the Indian American identity. The diasporic sublime hence studies the enabling of the individuals' in-betweenness of cultures and conflicts to create space for newer possibilities and new realities for displaced communities.

Even though in this dissertation, I conceptualise the diasporic sublime in relation to the struggles and lived experiences of Indian women in the United States, the theorization and application of the term does not end here. In my research, I have come across plethora of works that explored the sublime theory in environmental studies, game studies, and even in digital humanities. To consider the most recent theorisation of the sublime, I find Lyotard's postmodern version proposes the most philosophically meticulous and applicable paradigm for revisioning the aesthetics of the sublime as motivating the possibility of "mutual respect in a postcolonial context" (Giles 2014, 228). The diasporic sublime heavily relies on the Kantian sublime's dependence on "supersensible reason" that reduces nature to a conduit for "man's teleology rather than being for itself" (Giles 2014, 228). Hence, the theory can instead rely on Lyotard's concept of the sublime, and his theorisation of the "differend", the incommensurability between experience and idea (Giles 2014, 229). Since Lyotard's sublime retrieves nature from its Kantian exile, the value of embodied experience gets reintroduced into aesthetics in which the foundation of body and home can be useful.

The diasporic sublime has the scope not only in the Indian American studies but can be applied as a framework to analyze diverse diasporic and ethnic communities such as Asian Americans, Latin Americans, Indo-Japanese communities, and many more. To understand the severity of immigration, and its implications, impact, and long term effects on the global culture, the diasporic sublime might turn out to be an effective method. The closeness of the 'self' and 'other' (other represented by any opposing, overwhelming power or resistance), or the domestic and foreign, fits current "definitions of American Orientalism and American Empire as discussed by critics Colleen Lye and Amy Kaplan" (Wu Clark 2015, 2). The theorisation of diasporic sublime also opens a door to the discussions on "U.S. diplomatic ventures into the Asia Pacific triggering the domestic legal exclusions, beginning in 1882" (Wu Clark 2015, 2). Since the sublime gets established as a method to showcase morality and freedom, it has the potential to reflect on the inclusion or exclusion of the Asian laborers who

began to enter the United States as a result of capital expansion. As part of the migration genre studies, diasporic sublime initiates new discussions on Asia American avant-garde, Spanish American conflicts, and other important territorial conflicts.

I intend to further this research into discussing the "new U.S. territories such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico that were legally declared as both 'belonging to' but 'not part' of the United States" And how that affects the ideas of citizenship, cosmopolitanism, and sense of belonging (Wu Clark 2015, 2). The diasporic sublime may venture into postmodern aesthetics to highlight "the social imaginary of the East as West that motivated U.S. foreign policy in the East during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century" (Wu Clark 2015, 3). My purpose will be to observe the works of contemporary Asian American writers, such as "Sui Sin Far, Sadakichi Hartmann, Yone Noguchi, Younghill Kang, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, and Carlos Bulosan," and trace the sublime within the orientalising of the East, the American interface in the lives of Asian Americans (Wu Clark 2015, 3). The diasporic sublime can further showcase the mobility of movement of migrant bodies between the domestic, Western and Eastern identities.

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