

TRANSCULTURAL DISPLACEMENTS: A STUDY OF CULTURAL DICHOTOMIES AND SPATIOTEMPORALITY IN SELECT SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT LITERATURE

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Thesis entitled “**Transcultural Displacements: A Study of Cultural Dichotomies and Spatiotemporality in Select South Asian Migrant Literature**” which is being submitted to the National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **English Literature** is a bonafide report of the research work carried out by me. The material contained in this research thesis has not been submitted to any University or Institution for the award of any degree.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the research thesis entitled “**Transcultural Displacements: A Study of Cultural Dichotomies and Spatiotemporality in Select South Asian Migrant Literature**” submitted by **Bibhudatta Dash** (Register Number: 138024HM13F04) as the record of the research work carried out by him, is accepted as the Research Thesis submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **English Literature**.

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to investigate the existing studies on culture and migration by examining select South Asian female migrant narratives. It also aims to examine the occurrence of cultural dichotomies in the narratives. The research further aims to explore the field of migration as a system of negotiation between past and present. Furthermore, it aims to analyze migration as a tool for seeking and shaping identity.

The methods that are used in this research include, analysis and interpretation of primary, secondary, and tertiary resources in the fields of Cultural Studies, Migrant Literature, Geography, and Sociology. The research analyses the select texts to determine narrative paradigms. It further employs the interpretation of spatial, temporal, cultural, and differential elements through critical analysis of literary theories in the concerned areas.

The research finds that migration accounts to transcultural shift through various stages that include, geographical displacement, cultural dichotomy, negotiation between past and present, and hyphenated identity. It also brings out the interpretation of migration beyond the established norms of gender and spotlights the impact of migration on women. It further highlights the cultural similarities between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

The research concludes that migration is a precursor to transcultural displacement. It further deduces that, in the process of migration and resettlement, migrants travel beyond the limits of their own culture and evolve from cultural to transcultural beings through various stages.

Key Words: Transcultural Displacement, Migrant Literature, South Asian Study, Cultural Dichotomy, Spatiotemporality, Hyphenated Identity, Female Migration.

CONTENTS

		Page No.
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1-14
1.1	Transcultural Displacement	1
1.2	Understanding Migration	3
1.3	History of Indian Emigration	6
1.4	Comprehending Diaspora	8
1.5	Migration and its Implications on Literature	10
1.6	Contemporary Female Migrant Writers	11
1.7	Works Selected	11
1.8	Scope of the Research	13
CHAPTER 2	DECIPHERING GEOGRAPHICAL DISPLACEMENTS IN MIGRANT NARRATIVES	15-40
2.1	Migration and Geographical Displacement	15
2.2	Tangible Factors of Migration	22
2.3	Geographical Distance and Differences	23
2.4	Tackling Cultural Syndromes	26
2.5	Space and Migration	28
2.6	Nostalgic Associations and Migration	30
2.7	Exile and Migration	34
2.8	Forced Migration	36
2.9	Effect of Migration on Women	39

CHAPTER 3	IDENTIFYING CULTURAL DICHOTOMIES IN MIGRANT LITERATURE	41-68
3.1	Cultural Relativism and Migration	42
3.2	Contrasting Notions of Individual Freedom	46
3.3	Interpersonal Interaction and Migration	48
3.4	Lifestyle and Cultural Dichotomies	50
3.5	Religious Beliefs and Traditions across Cultures	51
3.6	Dichotomous Language and Migration	54
3.7	Food Cultures and Migration	56
3.8	Dressing Mannerisms across Cultures	58
3.9	Socioeconomic Factors across Cultures	60
3.10	Gender and Cultural Dichotomies	63
CHAPTER 4	ANALYSIS OF TEMPORAL ELEMENTS IN MIGRANT NARRATIVES	69-90
4.1	Nostalgic Temporality	71
4.2	Migration and Migrant Memories	72
4.3	Relating Memory and Place	74
4.4	Deferring Cultures	76
4.5	Effects of Migration on Individual Evolution and Relationships	80
4.6	Gender and Migration	86
CHAPTER 5	INTERPRETATION OF HYPHENATED IDENTITIES IN MIGRANT LITERATURE	91-116
5.1	Interpreting Multiple Identities	91
5.2	Hyphenated Identities	93
5.3	Contested National Identities	96

5.4	Linguistic Hyphens	99
5.5	Hyphenated Economic Identity	101
5.6	Contesting Racial Identity	102
5.7	Gendered Hyphens	103
5.8	Hyphenated Connotations	107
5.9	Spatial Identities	110
5.10	Hyphenated Relations	113
5.11	Cultural Grafting and Hyphenated Identities	115
CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSION	117-120
6.1	Research Findings	117
6.2	Specific Contributions	118
6.3	Summary of the Work	118
6.4	Scope for Further Research	120
REFERENCES		121-133
BIBLIOGRAPHY		134-164
BRIEF BIO-DATA		165-167

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Transcultural Displacement

Culture is an evolutionary process. According to cultural critic Jeff Lewis, culture is “transitional, transformative, open, and unstable” (23). Hence, there is no such thing as “pure or unique culture” (Cuccioletta 3). Thus, in the words of Russian Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, culture contains the capability of “transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries” (135) and becoming transcultural with the openness to “extending through all human cultures” (WordNet). In the chapter “From Culturology to Transculture,” literary theorist Mikhail Epstein mentions:

The essential element and merit of culture is its capacity to free humans from the dictates of nature, its physical restrictions and necessities; but it is the capacity of transculture to free humans from the determinations of culture itself. Culture, by releasing us from physical limitations, imposes new limitations, of symbolic order, and transculture is the next step in the ongoing human quest for freedom . . . (Berry and Mikhail 25).

Hence, “transculturalism is rooted in the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders” (Slimbach 204).

Transcultural displacement means the geographical and cultural relocation of people across national borders by “involving, encompassing, or combining elements of more than one culture” (Webster). According to social critic Donald Cuccioletta, one starts to become a transcultural “cosmopolitan” citizen (9) where “one’s identity is not strictly one dimensional...but is...defined and more importantly recognized in rapport with the other” (8). Transculture is thus, “a way for each individual to overcome the determinations of his or her’s own culture” (Dimas), while living on the

borders of one's own cultural identity and promoting "openness of cultures" (ibid) across nations.

Mikhail Epstein, in an interview conducted during the 2007 ISUD Congress in Hiroshima, said: "Transculturalism is an alternative to globalism which presents the unified growth with one's culture." He further remarked that making individuals live beyond the limits of their own culture is what makes transculturalism different from multiculturalism which rather insists on being part and representative of one's own culture (Kuczynski). In the present world, "we exist as part of multiple intersecting "microcultures" of gender, race, social class, and ethnicity, offering particular experiences, values, and perspectives.... This matter is further complicated in the case of migrants, refugees, exiles, and nomads who grow up in several cultures, or in the spaces between them" (Slimbach 211).

In the sociocultural context of migration, diaspora, and transculturalism, one is left with a variety of dichotomies in the present. These dichotomies range from being social, to psychological, to cultural. The geographical shifts have made people come across situations which deprive and enrich them at parallel paradigms as social relations are both constituted through and constrained by space, giving rise in the process to a socio-spatial dialectic (Guha). These shifts are not just displacements of place but also displacements of space and culture on a temporal scale of past and present that contributes to cultural dichotomies.

Such dichotomies become more poignant due to the parent nation and the host nation. The parent nation holds one's roots and the host nation gives one the opportunity of job, education, and much more. These places contribute to one's collective memory and become powerful emotional and cultural symbols (Knox) thereby compelling one to remain obliged to both; neither can one leave the host nation nor can one stop being nostalgic about the parent nation that includes a collective memory or myth about the homeland including its location, history, and achievements (Cohen 26).

Migration being the primary cause of such a conflict needs to be discussed, ramified, and understood in detail.

1.2. Understanding Migration

In the context of migration, Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore mentions:

To study a banyan tree, you not only must know its main stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality. (Tinker, *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, iii)

Migration which is “the physical movement of people from one place to another” has become “the most visible face of globalization” (Turner). “Mobility of individuals, groups and peoples has been intertwined in the history of mankind since time immemorial” (Singh and Irudaya xv). There are two major types of migration – the “internal migration and the “international migration” (ibid). Internal migration is the migration within the borders of a country and international migration is the migration outside the borders of the country to another country. The second one is termed as “emigration” (ibid) and is the focus of this research. However, this thesis will include parallel terms like “migration”, “immigration”, and “emigration” at required places to determine the perspectives associated with migration as per the context. All these movements are seen as a natural part of human evolution. But the question arises, whether such movements are entirely natural?

Even though Migration is a natural and continuous phenomenon, the notions of migration keep changing with time. In the ancient times, migration for many communities was the way of life determined by geographic and social conditions, whereas in the modern times, after “industrialisation and urbanisation” (Thapan), when people migrated willingly for individual betterment of their lives irrespective of geographical and social conditions, the concept of migration has become more dynamic (Singh and Irudaya 145). According to Sociologist N. Jayaram, migration does not mean the mere physical movement of people as migrants carry with them a socio-cultural baggage that consists of “a predefined social identity, a set old religious beliefs and practices, a framework of norms and values governing family and kinship...food habits and language” (Jayaram 16). Some of these elements disappear;

some survive; others experience assimilation, syncretism or change and a few elements get revived with time and social interaction (Jayaram 27).

“Migration theory has undergone fundamental change, moving from the classic “individual relocation” genre initiated by Ravenstein a century ago, to a variety of new approaches” (Zolberg). The processes of globalization have undergone a dynamic change from barter exchange and silent trade over centuries through international trade to a free flow of capital and culture spanning across the globe (Safran et al. x-xi). Migration is thus the social outcome of this process of globalization catalysed by global structural inequalities varying over time and space.

There are several factors that make people migrate. These factors help in determining whether the act of migration is “voluntary (i.e., by choice) or involuntary (i.e., due to necessity)”, thereby providing a bench mark for “comparing diasporic communities with their ‘remembered past’” (Jayaram 24). Geographer Ernst Georg Ravenstein determined a set of ‘push-pull’ factors that drive migration. That is, a set of factors that ‘pushed’ migrants from one region and a set of factors that ‘pulled’ migrants from one region (Samers, Hare). “Push factors are those factors at the source that force people to move.... Pull factors are factors in the target country that encourage people to move” (Singh and Irudaya xv). Lack of jobs and quality education, lack of food, high cost of living, environmental problems, religious prosecutions, civil wars in the parent nation and so on, can act as ‘push factors’; whereas the opportunity for higher education and quality research, good climate, fertile land, better employment opportunities, political and religious freedom, presence of friends and relatives, lesser crimes, marriage, lower risk of natural hazards, and political stability in the host nation can work as the ‘pull factor’ for the migrants (Jain).

The magnitude of emigrating people and their destinations have varied in different periods of time. Apart from the ‘push’ and the ‘pull’ factors, “the policy framework governing movement of population both in homeland and in the recipient country” also determine the magnitude of these migrations (Jayaram 24). The

economic, political, religious, and social changes taking place in the host country are important determiners in influencing migration.

Migration brings with it several advantages as well as disadvantages for the host nation. The disadvantages can be issues like national security problem due to the advances of the migrants; migration can at times end up being a burden on the national economy of the host country; the fear of loss of national identity may also occur with the increasing number of migrants belonging to different countries; and at the same time there is always the possibility of migrant exploitation at several junctures in the process of migration and in the period of residence in the host country. Migration also gives way to several advantages for the host nation by bringing in economic development due to increase in commerce; by helping in the growth of tourism industry and rise of international trade; and by catering to better educational opportunities through multicultural interactions and exchanges.

Apart from the above factors, migration involves four ‘strategies’ of acculturation – assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These strategies established by Psychologists John W. Berry and D. Sam are significant to the understanding of Transcultural Displacement. ‘Assimilation’ takes place efficiently when an individual is open to the differences in the present culture. When an individual holds on to the original culture and become closed to the new culture, ‘separation’ is observed. When an individual accepts both the ethnic as well as the dominant culture, in everyday life, ‘integration’ takes place. When an individual loses “cultural and psychological contact with traditional culture and larger society”, ‘marginalization’ occurs (Berry 119).

The acculturation strategies of migrants come to picture when one understands the psychological journey that they undertake while adapting to the ‘new’ found culture. Psychological processes such as ‘behavioural shifts’, ‘culture shedding’, ‘culture shock’, and ‘acculturative stress’ are also experienced in varying degrees by individuals undergoing acculturation (Safran et al. 21). Although the improvement of wellbeing is one of the basic reason of human migration, “the process of migration is nonetheless characterised by impediments, susceptible not only to structural and even

cultural constraints affecting the choices available to would-be migrants, but also to the emotional and psychological distress associated with it (Bhatt 87).

Migration constructs a stressful situation for the migrants and their families which involve physical, social, and cultural mutations. The process of abandoning old values and adopting new ones, contribute to the experience of disorientations in migrants (Shuval, Sluzki). The existing workers give a tough competition to the migrants for jobs and salaries, leave migrants with the option of choosing lower paid jobs in junior positions (Romans). These circumstances upset the personal and social harmony in the lives of the migrants resulting in crisis in their family lives (Sluzki) and at times force the migrants to return to their homeland. The process of return of migrants from the host country permanently to their home country is called reverse or return migration. Return migration is a heterogeneous concept within the disparate field of migration studies. It is heterogeneous as it takes many forms. Variations in return migration are caused by “differences in length of stay, distance travelled, and institutional constraints on the migratory process” (Gregory and Victor 169). Migrants return mostly due to unavoidable circumstances in the host nation. Both in colonial and postcolonial phases of Indian diaspora, emigrants returned home for various reasons. “The return of Indians from Burma (now Myanmar) on the eve of the Japanese invasion of that country during World War II and from Kuwait during the Gulf War” (Jayaram 23) to the return of Indian migrants from Sudan in 2016, are some historical examples.

Thus, migration originates from different socio-political standpoints and philosophical foundations (Sammers 106). As this research takes into account the migrant narratives of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi novelists, the history of Indian emigration (migration from the undivided India that includes the present India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) needs to be understood.

1.3. History of Indian Emigration

Based on historical contexts and causes, migrations are of several types characterised by level of education, place of origin, caste, gender, religion, and language (Safran et al. xv). Ranging from the historical to the present time, Landy et

al.(203-4) have categorized the Indian emigration (emigration from the undivided India), into six phases: merchants who went to East Africa or Southeast Asia before the 16th century; migration of various groups (traders, farmers) to neighbouring countries (Sri Lanka, Nepal); migration of indentured labourers to colonial empires like Caribbean, Fiji, Mauritius or Natal; migration through middle man to Southeast Asia; migration of skilled workers after the Second World War towards the Gulf countries; and recent migration of knowledge workers to developed countries.

To be more specific, Indian migration can be classified into three phases: ancient, colonial, and modern. “During the ancient period, migration was mainly intended to promote trade, conquer and spread the teachings of Buddha” (Singh and Irudaya 7) through “the Buddhist *bhikkus* who travelled into remote corners of Central and Eastern Asia” (Jayaram 19). “In that period, traders from India crossed the seas to the Persian Gulf region and the east coast of Africa and over land to Central and West Asia and South East Asia in search of fame and fortune” (Singh and Irudaya 7).

The colonial phase began with the “overseas emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” where “much of the migration to other colonies was as ‘indentured labour’ for plantations and mines in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions” (Singh and Irudaya 7). The European colonisation was the most important phase in Indian diaspora. “Large-scale emigration of Indians into far-off lands was facilitated by the integration of peripheral economies” and “by the onset of a revolution in transportation and communication and the opening of the Suez Canal” (Jayaram 20). According to British historian Hugh Tinker, the emigration of Indian labour during colonial period is marked by three distinct patterns. They are the ‘indentured’ labour emigration (emigration on the basis of contract), ‘kangani’ and ‘maistry’ labour emigration (emigration of overseers and supervisors) and ‘passage’ or ‘free’ emigration (labour emigration by free will, without any contract) (Jayaram 20).

The modern phase of Indian migration began after the Second World War when India gained independence and people from the subcontinent began to move,

“to participate in the modern mercantile and industrial world” (Singh and Irudaya 7).

Post-independence Indian emigration can be divided into three broad categories –

the emigration of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England, the emigration of professionals and semi-professionals to the industrially advanced countries like the United States of America, England and Canada, and the emigration of skilled and unskilled labourers to West Asia (Jayaram 21).

Thus, the history of emigration from the Indian subcontinent can be broadly patterned into four categories – “pre-colonial migration”, “colonial migration”, “post-colonial migration”, and “recent migration” (Safran et al. xv). This chapter intends to understand migration not just from the point of view of the history of Indian migration, but also as a social and cultural process from a global view, which makes it necessary to understand the concept of diaspora as a global phenomenon.

1.4. Comprehending Diaspora

The phenomena surrounding “human migration are best conceptualised under the rubric *diaspora*” (Jayaram 16). In order to understand ‘migration’ on a wider dimension, one must elucidate the concept of ‘diaspora’. According to Anthropologist Sandhya Shukla: “Where do people come from? Where do they pause, rest, live? What routes have they traveled?” are the basic questions of origin and location central to the understanding of diaspora (551).

“The word ‘diaspora’ is derived from the Greek verb *Speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over)” (Cohen ix). The ancient Greeks thought of diaspora as migration and colonization whereas for Jews, Africans, Palestinians, and Armenians the term holds a more sinister and brutal meaning – “a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile” (ibid). Whereas people who live abroad and maintain strong collective identity with the homeland, also define themselves as diaspora, “though they were neither active agents of colonization nor passive victims of persecution” (ibid). Hence, the concept of ‘diaspora’ varies to a great extent over times and spaces (ibid). In the words of N. Jayaram –

diasporic situations enable us to trace and analyse certain key social processes like the formation of ethnic identity, the shaping of ethnic relations, the reconstitution of institutions, the reconstruction of life-worlds, etc. Since, diasporic situations require interaction of cultures, they provide unique avenues for understanding the dynamics of culture (33).

The term ‘diaspora’ has evolved with time and has been heavily criticized. The six characteristics of diaspora laid by William Safran, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder, sums up all the essential traits of diaspora. They are as follows:

- 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions;
- 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements;
- 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
- 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate;
- 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity;
- and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship (Safran 83-84).

The above characteristics laid down by Safran define ‘diaspora’ on the basis of its origin, memory, alienation, return, and identity. In today’s world, the term ‘diaspora’ is used to describe any population which is considered ‘deterritorialised’ or ‘transnational’, that is, whose land of residence is different from their land of origin’;

and whose social, economic, and political networks spread across the nation-states (Tiwari 1). In the multiplicity and simultaneity of the present world, the term 'diaspora' enables us to experience many places at a single point of time thereby effectively compressing time and space (Sassen). Thus, migration is the process of relocation and when migrants settle down in the foreign land they become the diaspora. The concepts of "homeland", "land of settlement", "space for travel" – all undergo significant reworking through the concept and object of 'diaspora' (Shukla 551).

1.5. Migration and its Implications on Literature

"Creativity lies in states of fluidity, conflict, and instability" (Sharma xiii). When migrant writers pen their lives and experiences, the contexts of fluidity, conflict, and instability arising from them form the basis of their writing. The writings that showcase these features are called 'Migrant Literature'. According to Diana Holmes, Professor of French at University of Leeds, the imaginary world of fiction offers its readers the pleasure of imaginary travel in time and space while discovering alternative realities and wider horizons. Exile and displacement due to migration are significant contemporary realities that have influenced the imaginary world of fiction. Its influence could be seen in literatures written by both male and female authors.

However, there is a noticeable pattern in the manner that exile is depicted by women writers, who are living outside their country of origin, and writing in English as a second language. What their representations of exile have in common is an "emphasis on its intense ambiguity" (ibid). Representation of 'exile' is at once positive and life-affirming as it gives one the sense of 'self' and 'creative freedom', at the same time it is acutely painful where "the pain of exile signifies that the place left behind remains part of the self and must be recognized, come to terms with" (ibid). Hence, female writings on migration imbibe a strong sense of intensity in them that gets reflected in the representation of migrants in general and migrant women in particular.

1.6. Contemporary Female Migrant Writers

‘Migration’ for the women writers is not just a change of geographical location but the “refusal of a woman's expected destiny” where the woman escapes family expectations of leading a domestic life and follows her mother’s footsteps. Thus, migration is not only a forced socio-economic phenomenon, but also a chosen exile that caters to the need of women to achieve some distance from “taken for granted values and readymade destinies” (ibid). Literature born out of the frequency of exile as female experience – whether imposed, or chosen, or determined by the tension in identity – represents the opportunity for self-invention in women (ibid).

However, women in most cases are the worst sufferers of migration. The conditions of women migrants are often miserable and hazardous, as they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and gender violence, in addition to all other problem of relocation (Ghosh 20). Women endure pain and grief, face humiliation and suffering and above all, are left with – the nostalgia for their lost homeland, and a divided heart (Umar). Thus, the pleasure of exile for women is overshadowed by the pain that it results in; and ironically ‘exile’ itself becomes the only vantage point by being a source of creative freedom for women writers.

Anita Desai, Bapsi Sidhwa, Bharti Kirchner, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Sara Suleri, Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Monica Ali, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shahida Rahman, Kiran Desai, Anjana Appachana, and Kamila Shamsie are some well known contemporary South Asian female writers who have left their countries of origin and settled in the West.

1.7. Works Selected

Keeping the uniformity of gender and themes, diversity of milieu, and experience of South Asian migration in view, writers have been selected for this research, specifically from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. They are, Bapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Monica Ali, and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Bapsi Sidhwa (b 1938-) is a Pakistani American writer. Her prominent works include *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *Ice Candy Man* (1988), *Pakistani Bride* (1990), *An*

American Brat (1993), *Bapsi Sidhwa Omnibus* (2001), *Water: A Novel* (2006), *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* (2005), and *Their Language of Love* (2013). Homelessness, transgression, betrayal, migration, marginality, and materiality are some of the traits that get reflected in her work. *Ice Candy Man* and *An American Brat* have been selected for this research. The former captures the partition and migration during the British colonialism. In its soul, it is a portrayal of betrayal, revenge and migration during the socio-political turmoil of 1947 India. Capturing the migrant experience and cultural clash at its best, the latter portrays the life of a young conservative Pakistani girl rediscovering herself in America.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (b 1956-) is an Indian American writer. *Arranged Marriage: Stories* (1995), *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), *Neela: Victory Song* (2002), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), and *Oleander Girl: A Novel* (2013), *Before We Visit the Goddess* (2016) are her major works. Her writing traits include mythology, exile, displacement, magic realism, migration, and identity crisis. *The Mistress of Spices* and *Oleander Girl: A Novel* are selected for this study. The former narrative, based on the lives of immigrant Indians in America, is the magic realistic account of Tilo, her customers, her falling in love, and her reincarnation in the backdrop of sociocultural clashes. The latter is the narrative of migration of Korobi to post 9/11 America in search for her father and her true identity.

Monica Ali (b 1967-) is a Bangladeshi British writer. *Brick Lane* (2003), *Alentejo Blue* (2006), *In the Kitchen* (2009), and *Untold Story* (2011) are her noteworthy contributions to English Literature. Self identification, global feminism, migration, urban space, gender identity, and marriage are some of the distinguished themes seen in her work. *Brick Lane* and *In the Kitchen* are chosen for this study. *Brick Lane* is the account of journey, migration, survival, transformation, self discovery, and acceptance of a young Bangladeshi girl Nazneen among social and cultural conflicts in the city of London and *In the Kitchen* portrays the conflicts of identity, language, family, and relocation alongside the changing lives of migrant

workers and the misfortunes of Chef Gabriel Lightfoot at a multicultural kitchen setup in the Imperial Hotel, London.

Jhumpa Lahiri (b 1967-) is an Indian American writer. Her notable works include *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), and *The Lowland* (2013), *Only Goodness: Family Snapshots* (2013), and *In Other Words* (2016). Migration, identity, cultural assimilation, hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity are some of the themes that get mirrored in her writing. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* are selected to be a part of this research. *The Namesake* is the narrative of Ashima and Ashoke, and their migration from Calcutta to New York. It is also the story of their son Gogol's coming in terms with his name. Moving between India and America, the novel represents contrasting cultures and conflicting identities across two generations. *The Lowland* is the account of two brothers Subhash and Udayan, and their wife Gauri. The novel shows how death and migration affect relationships over times and spaces. At the intersection of history and life across mental and physical geographies, it essentially speaks about the consequences of choice, will, exile, and return.

1.8. Scope of the Research

After a review of primary, secondary, and tertiary resources in the fields of Cultural Studies, Migrant Literature, Geography, and Sociology, the following research gaps have been identified: vivid depiction of the journey of migrants from culture to transculture was not visible; subtle aspects of cultural dichotomy and hyphenated identity were found to remain scattered; social reflections of spatiotemporal elements were found indistinct; and the depictions of South Asian female migrant experiences were found in fragments. This research intends to mend the above gaps through research methods that include – investigation and discussion of select migrant narratives; analysis of the texts to determine narrative paradigms; interpretations of spatial, temporal, cultural, and differential elements; and critical analysis of literary theories in the concerned areas.

The research aims to investigate the existing studies on culture and migration by examining select South Asian female migrant narratives. It also aims to examine

the occurrence of cultural dichotomies in the narratives. The research further aims to explore the field of migration as a system of negotiation between past and present. Furthermore, it aims to analyze migration as a tool for seeking and shaping identity.

This research has a set of constraints, though sincere efforts have been made to achieve the aims by not letting the constraints hinder the research. The study is restricted to South Asian diaspora – to be more specific, the diaspora from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh – hence, migrant literature across the world has not been considered; it is further restricted to select female migrant narratives of Bapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Monica Ali, and Jhumpa Lahiri; it is confined to Cultural and Migration theories; it is further confined to the writings from 1988 to 2013.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters, including introduction and conclusion. The upcoming second chapter would decipher geographical displacement and its after effects. Chapter three would identify cultural dichotomies of the migrants. Chapter four would analyse the temporal elements involved in the process of migration and chapter five would interpret the hyphenated identities of the migrants leading to the conclusion of this research.

CHAPTER 2

DECIPHERING GEOGRAPHICAL DISPLACEMENTS IN MIGRANT NARRATIVES

Human migration can be viewed as a part of general evolutionary process (Pryor 35). The evolution of each new culture roots back to the assimilation of spatially displaced individuals (migrants) who shared a particular space at a particular juncture of time. Thus, every new culture is a constructive by-product of the process of migration. Hence, culture as a “strategy of survival” is transnational by nature (Tiwari 19-21). The contemporary cultural discourses, thus, are rooted in the spatiotemporal histories of cultural displacements.

2.1. Migration and Geographical Displacement

‘Geographical displacement’ is the phenomenon of relocation of one’s place of living across a physical boundary thereby making one a deterritorialized or transnational being. It can be voluntary or involuntary, the latter accounts to forced displacement (Gagnon and Marcelo 467-472). As discussed in the first chapter, forced displacement happens when migration is governed by the push factors. According to Anthropologists Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith: “Forced migration is distinguished from voluntary migration by the diminished power of decision in the former, sometimes reaching an extreme in which the forced migrants are totally powerless” (4).

‘Geographical displacement’ as a term, does not only mean geographical shift; rather when one migrates from one’s country, one carries one’s culture, traditions, “language” as well as one’s entire way of life to the place of resettlement (Goozé and Lander 101-120). In the process of expatriation, a migrant crosses political, social, and cultural boundaries along with the geographical ones; due to which the migrant

faces psychological and cultural disintegration. On the contrary, when considered from a constructive point of view, displacement can bring together societies and cultures thereby strengthening cross-cultural and transnational bonds towards a peaceful co-existence of human beings beyond differences and diversities.

Displacement is not a novel episteme since most of its aspects have been drawn from “Migration Studies”, “Population Studies”, “Refugee Studies” and “Human Geography”. Anthropologist Seteney Shami defines ‘displacement’ as “the process of collective dislocation and/or settlement of people away from their normal habitat by a superior force” (4-33). This study of displacement as a process means that dislocation and resettlement must be seen as twin facets, rather than as distinct successive phases, of the process.

Recent times have seen a global increase in the collective displacement of population for a variety of reasons. While the importance of the issue of displacement and its corollary process like resettlement has been noted by governmental and nongovernmental agencies around the world, the social implications of such movements are not yet fully explored, nor is there a truly comparative theoretical framework available in the migrant literature (Shami and McCann 425-430). Instead of being considered as a phase of social evolution, political event, or natural force, geographical displacement should be seen as a phenomenon in its own right that needs direct investigation and explanation.

According to Viney Kirpal, Professor of English at IIT Bombay, expatriation is not only a physical or geographical journey out of one’s land to another where the migrant believes to find greater satisfaction, but it means rather a severing of the migrant’s spiritual and symbolic ties with his motherland (45). Expatriation from a geographical point of view, examines social refractions most centrally in relation to “spatialities of power” (Leitner 123-144). So, geographical displacement is not just the displacement of place, it is also the dislocation of cultural space in the lives of the migrants. Hence, there is always the possibility of rejection, confusion, and conflict when displaced people from different cultural roots co-exist.

Space and time are two important elements which help in understanding geographical displacement. Shami mentions:

Population displacement and resettlement needs to be seen as a process, conditioned by historically shaped social, economic and political forces, and not as a single event taking place at a moment in time. The investigation of the social implications of this process must take into account its spatial and temporal dimensions. (4-33).

Along with spatiotemporal aspects it is also important to understand that, the repercussions of displacement and resettlement are different for men, women and children. These differences range on social and geographical parameters like culture and climate depending on the type and locus of displacement.

Geographical displacement can account to changes in the physical and mental health of an individual due to the inability to deal with the socio-cultural and “climate change displacement” (Hugo and Douglas 238-262) which may result in frustration, despair, disease, and depression. Displacement, as social anthropologist Scudder points out, results in "multi-dimensional stress" (4) which includes physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural stress; per contra, it may also propel the enrichment of one's living conditions by providing one with healthier space and atmosphere, thereby promoting one's growth as a multicultural being.

Displacement and resettlement depends on a number of factors such as, the reason of displacement, the differences between the displaced people and the people in the host nation, as well as the carried pre-displacement relations of the displaced individuals or groups. Keeping these aspects of displacement and resettlement in view, Julius Holt of the International Disaster Institute comments, “Displacement itself may create a feeling of group solidarity and a sense of common victimization. Resettlement may subsequently reinforce this by placing the displaced group in a common situation vis-a-vis the host community” (176-179).

Just like displacement and resettlement, ‘displacement’ and ‘literature’ share a relation; as every literature principally brings one closer to one’s perceptions, where one experiences displacements in their emotion and awareness levels. Apart from initiating this spatial aspect of displacement, literature also serves us the delight of discovering peoples, places, cultures, and lifestyles by making us “travel without moving an inch” (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 16). Specifically, in one’s interaction with migrant literature one experiences ‘displacement’ not just from spatial but also from temporal and geographical paradigms, where the quintessential facets of human migration include – the migrant dreams, living and overcoming them; fitting into the new place, climate, culture; dealing with the differences; coping with the distance; existing between times and spaces; fighting nostalgia; the desire to escape; return migration; forced migration; exile; and understanding that there is no escape. This chapter studies all these dimensions of human migration with examples from the writings of the selected authors.

When individuals or a group of individuals willingly migrate to settle in another part of the globe, they choose the geographical displacement with a purpose that fosters dreams in their minds -- dreams of a better life, dreams of a place that would magically change their state of survival and give them a better identity. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni showcases this migrant dream in her magic realistic novel *The Mistress of Spices*, where several immigrant characters come to her protagonist *Tilo* - the “architect of the immigrant dream” (28), for magical recipes in the form of blend of spices that promise to heal their worries and help them fulfil their dreams. These dreams have a lot to do with the perception of the migrants about the host country. Their fantasies and imaginations emerge from the lack of the prospects and opportunities in their parent country.

With Feroza, an eighteen year old Pakistani girl in *An American Brat*, Bapsi Sidhwa subjects the excitement of the Eastern people for ‘life in the West’ when she tells to herself, “I’m going to America, I’m going to America! . . . To the land of glossy magazines, of “Bewitched” and “Star Trek,” of rock stars and jeans. . .” (27). When migrants set for the journey to their destined lands, the uncertainties do not matter, neither do matter the failures; all that matters is ‘a change’ in their current

lives – the change for better. Like Feroza, Divakaruni’s character Seema also expects to live a life of dreams in America with her husband. She “was thrilled and relieved... at the prospect of living in America, of having the chance to walk the magical streets that had popped up so many times on her screen in the call center” (Divakaruni, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 96).

Migrants not only seek a better lifestyle but also to explore new geographies and cultures. The curiosity of knowing the world, the interest of discovering people and places also serves as one of the important reasons for geographical displacement. Sidhwa’s character Feroza’s exposure to the multicultural atmosphere in America makes her discover the curious explorer within her:

Her melancholy and fear flew out of the window, and her lightened heart thrilled to the rhythm of the garish lights, to the sight of Japanese tourists taking photographs, the vendors displaying jewellery, scarves, tacky T-shirts, and buttons. Feroza felt it all represented a rich slice of the life and experience she had come to America to explore (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 83).

These dreams are not limited to the migrants of the first generation but get carried forward by the second generation migrants as well. For them, migration is not an act of choice; it is luck that happened to them. They have to live that luck and remain in the inbetweenness thrust upon them by fate from before their birth like Gauri’s child in *The Lowland* who “was stirring and shifting... unaware of its new surroundings, and of the astonishing distance it had travelled...” (Lahiri 124). Monica Ali, in a similar way, through her character Nikolai shows the way in which human beings are powerless in the hands of destiny:

Do you believe, for example, that we are free to choose the most important things about our lives? To be born in the West in the twentieth century is the most enormous stroke of luck. After that, the parents we are given are the most significant factors to take into account. Would you not agree that the biggest events in our

lives are things that happen to us, rather than things that we decided to do? (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 288).

Hence, every geographical displacement is backed by the migrant dream. But, once the migrants start falling into places in the host nation, only then do they realise that the dreams which they saw, are not as fanciful and promising as they seemed to be, they come with their own price tags, the debt of which becomes heavy for them to pay.

Geographical distance makes migrants rediscover themselves in the newness in order to find a mental space to settle in. In the words of Geographers Kenneth D Madsen and Ton van Naerssen: “In this type of multiethnic and multi-cultural society, the idea that state borders constitute membership and loyalty to a “national” community clashes with an indigenous sense of belonging to communities that cross those borders” (65). Hence, the feeling of being an outsider is one of the major setbacks that migrants face in the initial phase of resettlement. Sidhwa describes her character Feroza’s experience with the immigrant officers at the airport in America where she is grilled up to the level of humiliation with questions regarding her identity: “It was Feroza’s first moment of realization – she was in a strange country amidst strangers” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 54-55). These kinds of experiences slow down the process of cultural assimilation as the migrants feel as if they are in a transit, disconnected from their lives. In *The Namesake*, Ganguly family also feels the same when they come back to America: “Though they are home they are disconcerted by the space, by the uncompromising silence that surrounds them. They still feel somehow in transit, still disconnected from their lives, bound up in an alternative schedule, an intimacy only the four of them can share” (Lahiri 87). Hence, it takes time for migrants to fit in to a ‘new’ culture.

Absence of people with whom one grows up makes one feel the distance even more at times. When people migrate alone, without their near and dear ones, it takes a long time for them to come in terms with the distances that they have travelled. Nazneen always misses her sister Hashina with whom she grew up, but her circumstances do not allow her to go back, or bring her sister to London. The

following lines from *Brick Lane* show how Nazneen got misbehaved by her husband for wishing to bring her sister to London: “‘My sister, I would like to bring her here.’ Chanu waved his thin arms. ‘Bring her. Bring them all. Make a little village here.’ He shook his delicate shoulders in a show of laughter. ‘Get a box and sow rice. Make a paddy on the windowsill. Everyone will feel at home’” (Ali 183).

Even though the process of settling is a never ending one, still in between standing tall and falling apart, migrants live through different mental spaces and gradually become the place. May it be Lahiri’s character Ashima or Sidhwa’s character Feroza, they all go through the similar phase of mental deconstruction and reconstruction through their journeys – “It took a few moments for the difference to register, and when it did, Feroza’s native curiosity became at once alert. She absorbed the sleazy atmosphere, rife with titillation and novelty, through all her excited and amplified senses” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 78).

The process of ‘settling’ is a long one for migrants. In *Brick Lane*, even months after coming to London, Chanu says: “My wife is just settling here.” (Ali 32). Migrants tend to incur fears about their survival in the ‘new’ unfamiliar land. In *The Namesake*, Ashima takes a great deal of struggle especially in accepting the fact that she will have to give birth to her first child, in the absence of her parents and family: “She 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” (Lahiri 6). In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen also faces the dungeon of living with her husband Chanu who is almost her father’s age. All that she wishes is to go back, but she has to settle with the reality in London far away from her wishes, far away from her village, far away from her sister Hashina, far away from life: “Every morning before she opened her eyes she thought, *if I were wishing type, I know what I would wish*. And then she opened her eyes and saw Chanu’s puffy face on the pillow next to her...” (Ali 18). Geographical displacement is accompanied with uncertainties. The new climate to which the migrants get introduced to, takes time to get friendly with them. In *The Lowland*, when Holly asks Subhash, “And you’ve settled in? Made some friends?” he replies: “A few” and when Holly asks whether he is able to tolerate the cold, all that he says is

“So far.” (Lahiri 37). With short yet epigrammatic dialogues like “A few” and “So far”, Lahiri projects the uncertainties that become a part of a migrant’s life.

2.2. Tangible Factors of Migration

Apart from the intangible aspects like the feeling of being an outsider, time, fear, and weather, tangible factors such as money and food also affect the process of settling down of migrants. Mostly people migrate for better economic prospects. They arrive poor, with dreams of gathering riches from the foreign land and sending back home. During the phase of settling down, their economic condition stands as a burden before their survival. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi, like any other migrant, finds it difficult to spare away money on her arrival at America and starts “thinking in terms of survival, like an immigrant” (Divakaruni 94).

Among tangible factors of survival, food appears to be of greater relevance to a migrant’s life. Food not just serves hunger but also serves as a significant part of one’s lifestyle and culture. Food habits vary from place to place, from culture to culture and from time to time. Hence, unlike all other aspects of resettlement, it takes a significant amount of time for the migrants to cope with the taste of the host country.

Migrants often try to find a suitable alternative for their favourite dishes. This trait could be seen in *The Lowland*, when Holly asks Subhash- “You’re staying at the International House?” He replies – “I preferred a place with a kitchen. I wanted to make my own meals” (Lahiri 37). On the other hand, the first passage of *The Namesake* shows Ashima during the days of her pregnancy, unable to find her favourite snack, preparing “a humble approximation” (Lahiri 1) of it with the available ingredients to satisfy her Bengali palate:

ON A STICKY AUGUST EVENING two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chilli pepper, wishing there were some mustard oil

to pour into the mix. Ashima had been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones (ibid) [Block letters in the original text].

Since, food acts as a major emotional factor and a necessity for human survival it forms a stronger connection between displaced people and their homelands.

2.3. Geographical Distance and Differences

According to Geographer Andrew Jones: “Differences between places shape how the nature of how things develop” (3). When people migrate through that geographical distance, the first thing they feel is the geographical difference between the locations of the host country and their own. When the protagonist Feroza’s mother Zareen sees the aerial view of America from the aeroplane before landing, she realises how different the scene was “from the crowded vistas of her flights over Lahore and Rawalpindi . . . Even from the sky, she could see that this was an extraordinarily clean part of the planet” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 273). Whereas, in *The Lowland*, Shubash finds startling geographical similarities between Rhode Island and Calcutta, which helps him to come in terms with his displacement:

Certain physical aspects of the Rhode Island—a state so small within the context of America that on some maps its landmass was indicated only by a narrow pointing to its location—corresponded roughly to those of Calcutta, within India. Mountains to the north, an ocean to the east, the majority of land to the south and west. Both places were close to the sea level, with estuaries where fresh and salt water combined. As Tollygunge, in a previous era, had been flooded by the sea, all of Rhode Island, he learned, had once been covered with sheets of ice (Lahiri 34).

The aspect of geographical displacement is evident not just in the differences and similarities between the geographical arrangement of places but also in the plants, animals, and birds the migrants see in the new land. When Lahiri's character Subhash arrives at Rhode Island, he finds the cultivated grass on his college fields "nicer" than the grass back in "Calcutta":

The university had begun as an agricultural school. A land grant college still surrounded by greenhouses, orchards, fields of corn. On the outskirts were lush pastures of scientifically cultivated grass, routinely irrigated and fertilized and trimmed. Nicer than the grass that grew inside the walls of the Tolly Club. But he was no longer in Tollygunge. He had stepped out of it as he had stepped so many mornings out of dreams, its reality and its particular logic rendered meaningless in the light of day (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 34).

In *An American Brat*, "Zareen found the quiet in her strange surroundings in Denver eerie" (Sidhwa 282). She compared it with the pitch dark night in Lahore that would be "alive with a cacophony of insect and mammal noises" (ibid). In a similar way, Subhash, in *The Lowland*, also discovers the shrill of crickets and chirps of new birds during his stay at Rhode Island: "At night he heard the precise ticking of an alarm clock at the side of his bed. And in the background, like an ongoing alarm itself, the shrill thrum of crickets. New birds woke him in the morning, small birds with delicate chirps that ruptured sleep nevertheless" (Lahiri 35).

The geographical differences make migrants feel their displacement in a stronger manner. The change in lifestyles makes them feel that they 'don't belong'. The feeling of being an outsider remains with them even after they migrate back to their homelands. In *The Namesake*, when Gogol and Shonali go to India for a short visit, "their cousins and aunts and uncles ask them about their life in America, about what they eat for breakfast, about their friends at school. They look at pictures of their house on Pemberton Road" and are surprised to see "carpets in the bathroom" (Lahiri 83). When the Gangulis visit Agra, it feels 'foreign' to them. Like tourists they stay in

a “hotel with a swimming pool, sipping bottled water, eating in restaurants with forks and spoons, paying by credit card” and are surprised to find a mini America inside the hotel and restaurants where “they are the only Indians apart from the serving staff” (Lahiri 84-85). This experience of cultural difference makes them stand in between belongingness and unbelongingness in their own country.

As migration is “the permanent or semi-permanent change of residence of an individual or group of people over a significant distance” (Husain 150); along with the differences, the distance which migrants travel, both geographical and psychological, make migrants isolated. With time, they find the distance in every aspect of their present lives, so much so that even in the lecture on ‘bridge construction’ Lahiri’s character Subhash finds relations to distance between India and America: “He had learned from one of his professors about the bridge’s construction. End to end, he was told, the wires of all the suspended cables would span just over eight thousand miles. It was the distance between America and India; the distance that now separated him from his family” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 65). Just as ‘distance’ becomes a significant factor of association in human mind; similarly, mind also has the tendency of associating melodies with memories.

Music has a vital role to play in the construction of remembrance. Migrants often get reminded of the distance when they listen to certain melodies from homeland which their brains are associated with. Divakaruni and Sidhwa very clearly state this aspect in their novels:

Noise from the karaoke bar below hits me in sudden blasts as guests enter and exit. Bollywood songs, nostalgic old favourites, the immigrant’s longing to capture home. In india, I never cared for this kind of music, but now as I hear it, homesickness twists my insides...I am far from my loved ones as it is possible to be while still remaining on this planet. Loneliness falls on me like snow over an empty field (Divakaruni, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 97).

May it be the characters Korobi or Feroza, every migrant occasionally goes through this experience in the process of accepting the distance, while staying in a foreign land. Lahiri's character Korobi feels homesick and lonely after listening to Bollywood songs which she did not pay a heed to in India; and Sidhwa's character Feroza is moved by the blow of trumpet, a commonly used musical instrument in India and Pakistan: "A trumpet note, loud and pure, spun into the air to greet the fading light, committing the evening to pleasure and beauty. The guitar, in a subtle transition, carried the note where the trumpet left off. Feroza had never expected the melody of an alien music to move her so deeply" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 106).

Apart from music, languages play a significant part in the formation of one's identity for they are the bearers of thought. They serve as one of the significant carriers of culture. In a foreign land, when someone looks at anything written in their mother tongue, they feel the touch of homeland that lingers in their hearts. Ashima just like any other migrant, finds herself at comfort in America when she touches the printed alphabets in her mother tongue – "The printed pages of Bengali type, slightly rough to touch, are a perpetual comfort to her" (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 6).

2.4. Tackling Cultural Syndromes

People so much become part of the 'place' where they grow up that their psychology refuses to accept their presence in another country. They still, in their subconscious, do not accept the distance, and believe that they have never left, which gets reflected as Freudian slips when they speak. *In the Kitchen* accounts one such case: "'In Moldova...' began Victor. 'Fuck Moldova.' Time to cut the steak. 'You're in London now'" (Ali 467). The refusal of distance, makes migrants live in their own world of imagination where they still live with their dear ones. The character Subhash, though lives in Rhode Island, believes in his subconscious that his parents are with him, and are watching him: "Until now he had worked through evenings and week-end without a break. As if his parents were watching him, monitoring his progress, and he was proving to them that he was not wasting his time" (Lahiri 2013: 67). Like Ali's character Victor, and Lahiri's character Subhash, migrants become so much infused into the memories of homeland that at times their psyche refuses to

accept the distance whereas at other times, the pangs of loneliness make them feel the distance in every incident of life in the foreign land: “Sailing even slightly east reminded Subhash of how far he was from his family. He thought of the time it took to cross even a tiny portion of the earth’s surface” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 62).

This sense of distance becomes more inward and the migrants develop ‘cultural syndromes’ when they start losing touch with their cultural motifs -- their traditions and festivals. Lahiri accounts the feelings of Ashima and Shubash in America which presents this aspect of geographical and cultural distance:

She wonders if she is the only Indian person in the hospital, but a gentle twitch from the baby reminds her that she is, technically speaking, not alone. Ashima thinks it’s strange that her child will be born 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, *The Namesake*, 4).

In India, traditionally, women visit their parents for a child birth. Hence, it feels strange and out of place to the pregnant Ashima lying on the cosier bed of the American hospital. What she is distanced from, is what she needs the most. For her, delivering her baby in America is not just giving birth to a child, but moving away from the tradition of generations; and she has no choice; neither does Subhash in *The Lowland* has any, but of receiving gifts from home during Durga Puja – the most celebrated festival of Bengalis (Lahiri 83).

As geographical shift is often accompanied by shifts of culture, lifestyles, and situations in the lives of the migrants; the interstitial spaces between past and present result in the shift of mental space of migrants. According to Brandt: “Mental spaces are not, strictly speaking, possible worlds; but they may be some sort of ‘worlds’

anyway, depending on the notion of *world* chosen” (1580). Hence, the world between the ‘real space’ and the ‘imaginary space’ where the migrants have to live in creates a space in their minds.

When children move to foreign lands, they generally hide from their parents about their mishappenings in the ‘new’ land. A certain space develops between them that prohibit the migrants from giving the details of their problems to their parents back in homeland to make sure that they live their lives independently and at the same time save their parents from unnecessary worries about situations in which they cannot help. Manek, like many other migrants does not mention about his accident to his parents: “This had happened almost a year ago, but he had not written home about it.” It was “an assertion of his fierce need for independence – the challenge to cope. . . .” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 102). Thus, the space that is created between parent and child due to geographical displacement gets hard to fill. In *The Lowland*, after the death of Udayan, when Shubash returns to Kolkata, the reaction and behaviour of his parents surprise him: “Through one of the grilles he saw his parents, sitting on the top floor. He strained to see their expressions but could make out nothing. . . . He wanted to tell the driver to take him somewhere else... His parents asked no questions about America. Inches away, they avoided looking Subhash in the eye” (Lahiri 90-95). Circumstances contribute towards broadening the space between parents and children to a degree that parents even lose interest in knowing about their children.

2.5. Space and Migration

At times ‘space’ exists in the perception of the relatives of the migrants towards the foreign land. Lack of exposure to the other culture and misinterpretation of the available information make them draw wrong conclusions about the migrant’s lifestyle in the foreign land. In *An American Brat*, Kutlibai says: “. . . mark my words, the child will be lost to us! God knows what kind of people she’ll mix with. Drunks, seducers, drug addicts...” (Sidhwa 121). Kutlibai’s getting worried about her granddaughter Feroza going astray in the foreign land is an example of misinterpretation of the foreign culture.

In *Brick Lane*, Chanu's relatives live in a constructed world in which every Londoner's life is full of wealth and happiness. In this process of false imagination, the relatives of the migrants forget the obstacles and hardships the migrants go through in the process of displacement and resettlement, thereby creating a space in their perception that affects their relationship in the long run. The following passage from *Brick Lane* showcases this situation:

'The begging letters still come,' said Chanu. 'From old servants, from the children of servants. Even from my own family, although they are not in need. All they can think of is money. They think there is gold lying about in the streets here and I am just hoarding it all in my place. But I did not come here for money. Was I starving at Dhaka? I was not. Do they enquire about my diplomas?' he gestured to the wall, where various framed certificates were displayed" (Ali 35).

Space is evident in the love relationships of the migrants as well. Just as their lives, their relationships also suffer from insecurities, cultural differences, and arbitrary changes. Most of the times they end up like the Gogol-Moushumi relationship in *The Namesake*, Feroza-David relationship in *An American Brat* or they end up unexpectedly like Subhash's relationship with Holly in *The Lowland*. Besides space is also evident in the life of married couples who migrate to resettle in foreign land. In *An American Brat*, Manek and his wife, struggle with the space that creeps into their lives due to their lack of time for each other, and lack of family members with them. Space is also seen in the relation of the Ahuja couple, their incompatibility gets worsened by their migration:

'In bed especially I could not forget those nights in India. Even when he tried to be gentle I was stiff and not willing. Then he would lose patience and shout the American words he'd learned. Bitch. Fucking you is like fucking a corpse... *Mataji*, I used to be afraid of death. I'd hear of women who killed themselves and think how they could. Now I know'... '*Hai mataji*, once milk has

curdled can all the sugar in the world turn it sweet again?’

(Divakaruni, *The Mistress of Spices*, 103).

Lahiri describes Kolkata as “a city with nothing, with everything” (*The Lowland*, 89). This description speaks about the spaces travelled by her protagonist Subhash when he returns to Kolkata from Rhode Island. Space gains manifestation in physical terms when Ali describes two of his migrant characters saying: “He sat on the sofa next to her, but leaving the widest possible gap” (Ali, *In the Kitchens*, 106). Here, the physical gap symbolically represents the space between two migrants from two different countries and cultural backgrounds working in the same restaurant.

‘Space’ is also seen as a sense of freedom in migrants who migrate from a trapped unworthy life into a free and liberating one which can be found only in an unknown land. Gauri travelling to America with her unborn child in her womb feels a sense of freedom inside the plane. “On the plane time had been irrelevant but also the only thing that mattered; it was time, not space, she’d been aware of travelling through. She’d sat among so many passengers, captive, walking their destinations. Most on them like Gauri freed in an atmosphere not their own” (Lahiri. *The Lowland*. 125). With every passing second, along with her unborn child Gauri moves more and more away from her captive identity, like a bird migrating towards an unknown land, to lay eggs.

2.6. Nostalgic Associations and Migration

Memory and longing of the past are the major reminiscence of geographical displacement. According to Fernández: “When a subject remembers something, the content of her memory does inherit the content of a previous perception of the subject” (114). Migrants, more than any other section of society, relate to the previous perception. They live in the memory of past; the moments which they spent in their homelands. When human beings move into a phase of life where they feel an ‘outsider’, nostalgia of better days of past; the days when they were more secure, more strong and when they knew that they ‘belong’; become their only rescue.

According to Valerie Smith, scholar of African American literature and Marianne Hirsch, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University: “Memory is visual and spatial. Places ... are marked by the events that occurred in them and the people who passed through them” (6). When Sidhwa’s character Feroza sees familiar things of the East, at a museum in America, she is reminded of her city: “At the end of their museum tour, Feroza discovered a room filled with Eastern miniatures and Persian rugs. It reminded her of the museum in Lahore, and she ached with nostalgia for the first time since she’d come to the United States” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 127). Often, when people see clothes, food, arts and artefacts of their part of the world in a foreign land, they ache with nostalgia. Divakaruni’s character Seema, staying in New York, is filled with nostalgia for her hometown. She wishes to get updated information regarding the latest developments in films, fashion, etc. in Kolkata. The following conversation between Seema and Korobi from *Oleander Girl: A Novel* symbolically shows the feeling of ‘not belonging’ and ‘exile’ of Seema, who falls back on nostalgia for survival:

Disappointed and a little taken aback, I gulp down my watery tea and stalk impatiently around the apartment, which is crammed with expensive furniture that looks as if it was brought for somewhere else. With a sigh Seema puts her swollen feet up on a large and elegant coffee table and barrages me with questions. What news of Kolkata? Have I seen the latest movies? Which are my favourites? What are the new fashions, and have I brought any with me? . . . In between, she glances nervously out the window, which is covered with a thin fabric that allows her to look out without being seen . . . What brought me to New York? She finally asks (Divakaruni 95).

The expensive furniture that is crammed in the apartment “looks as if it was brought for somewhere else” (ibid) symbolises the aspect of being an outsider in the lives of migrants; whereas “a thin fabric that allows her to look out without being seen” (ibid), showcases their exiled identity in foreign lands.

Landscapes and familiar geographical elements add to nostalgia. Lahiri's character Subhash feels nostalgic looking at the coastal landscape: "As strange as it sounds, when the sky is overcast, when the clouds are low, something about the coastal landscape here, the water and the grass, the smell of bacteria when I visit the mudflats, takes me home. I think of lowland, of paddy fields" (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 43). The water, grass, and the smell of bacteria make Subhash think of the lowland of paddy fields near his home.

People also form an important part of migrants' nostalgic associations to their homeland. These include not just their parents and family members but also people with whom they grew up. Sidhwa's character Feroza, feels the displacement and nostalgia more when she remembers the people of Pakistan:

After school, Feroza sat glumly in front of the TV nursing her broken heart and her empty lap and thinking about home. She missed her grandmothers, her parents, their friends, her friends, her ayah, the incessant chatter of her cousins, and even the raucous chorus of the Main Market *mullahs* on Friday afternoons. She became unbearably homesick and found it impossible to work on her term paper (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 162).

Whereas, migrants like Divakaruni's Character Mitra, do not miss their homeland; they never become free from their colonized mindsets. They feel privileged to make friends from the West and keep a strict eye on not getting along with their own kind. On the other hand, Seema – Mitra's wife in the novel, misses having friends of her 'own kind' at moments when she feels nostalgic about food:

They began to make friends, though generally they avoided the Indian set. They hadn't come to America, Mr. Mitra reminded her, to stay connected with their own kind. Seema agreed, though sometimes she missed having friends who would have understood her pangs of homesickness, who could have taught her easy

American substitutions for Indian dishes. . . (Divakaruni
Oleander Girl: A Novel, 96).

During her days of pregnancy, Shidwa's character Aban feels nostalgic just like Lahiri's character Ashima. She misses out on all the traditions and ceremonies of her culture associated with pregnancy and childbirth while in America. Even after the birth of her baby, she misses ceremonies like 'Sitting' and 'First Step' and thinks: "What a fuss and stir little Dilshad would have caused in Lahore or Karachi, the grandparents vying to look after and the aunts competing for her attention, everybody lavishing gifts" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 314-315). When migrants miss their festivals, traditions, ceremonies and cultural engagements, they feel geographical displacement psychologically that not only makes them feel nostalgic, but also makes them feel the pangs of loneliness among the crowd where they do not belong. In such situations, "the pull of land" (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 32) becomes stronger even than "the pull of blood" (ibid) and they wish to return.

Though people migrate for varied reasons, employment migration or labour migration acts as the major migrating factor. Inability to find proper jobs to sustain livelihood in foreign lands thus, is an important reason of 'return migration' (q.v. Chapter 1). *In the Kitchen* gives us a glimpse of Olek's journey as a migrant, that takes him through a series of odd jobs, which finally left him in a situation, where "his only ambition was to scrape together enough money to afford the journey back home" (Ali 517). *Brick Lane* tells how Nazneen and Chanu did their best to facilitate their "going home". They take odd jobs to save funds to meet the expenses when Chanu realises that London is not the place where he wants to spend the rest of his life (Ali 208-209). At times, memories of dear and departed ones also make people return to visit their homeland. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel* Vic says, "... my mother always asked me to accompany her, but she'd have to end up going alone. And then she died. May be one of these days, if I get enough money together, I might go visit her hometown. . ." (Divakaruni 149).

In *Brick Lane*, Dr. Azad's coinage "Going Home Syndrome" (Ali 32) speaks perfectly about the migrant's situation: "They don't really leave home. Their bodies

are here but their hearts are back there” (ibid). The distance, differences, and memories make “the pull of land” (ibid) stronger for the migrants; hard as they might try, they are never able to save enough money to go back. Here ‘going back’ is a paradox of contrasting opposites, that means – either they can never go back for financial reasons, or even if they go back, they will no longer ‘be’ and ‘feel’ the same. The image of ‘home’ that is in their minds can no longer be achieved as home for them is no longer exterior to ‘self’, but implicated within.

Migrants also seek for return, as at times, they are unable to fit into the new place as in their subconscious minds they always look for a reflection of their home and family wherever they go. *In the Kitchen* gives an account of such a situation: “Well, I mean. This is England. If they want things exactly like home that can bloomin’ well go home, is there, because they didn’t like it at home and that’s why they’ve left and come here.” (Ali 219).

Ironically at times even though migrants want to return home, they cannot return due to the incompatibility of their current lifestyles to the life and situations at home. They always live in an uncertainty, in the worlds of may be(s). In *Brick Lane*, Dr, Azad’s situation represents this condition of migrants:

‘Every year I thought, “May be this year.” And I’d go for a visit, buy some more land, see relatives and friends and makeup my mind to return for good. But something would always happen . . . And I’d think, “Well, maybe not this year.” And now, I don’t know. I just don’t know.’ (Ali 33).

2.7. Exile and Migration

Apart from the uncertainty of jobs, and uncertainty of belonging, the uncertainty of relationships can also make migrants seek the return path. In *An American Brat* when Manek says to Aban: “Look. If we get a divorce, you’ll get half the house by American Law. You might as well contribute to it so there will be no hard feelings later” (Sidhwa 259). Aban couldn’t sleep that night “The mention of divorce was not only insensitive, diabolical, and cruel, but also an affront to all that

was auspicious and lucky. Such ill-omened words could not help but attract misfortune. Jinx their marriage. If this was what being in America meant, Aban wanted to have nothing to do with America. She would insist they go back to Karachi or Lahore” (ibid). Ironically, when migrants finally return, like Lahiri’s character Subhash, all they discover is a changed home; the home which they had left behind, they find it no more. It exists only as fragments of memory (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 87). The migrants are thus exiled between their past and present.

Exile is a state of captivity that is either physical or mental or a social one. A migrant in captive, is mostly unaware of his/her bondage, “this is the immigrant tragedy” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 140). In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Divakaruni symbolically talks about the situation of exile of migrants who are unaware of their captivity when she describes the life of birds inside large cages: “...watching the birds flit from branch to branch inside cages so large that they probably didn’t know they weren’t free” (98). With time migrants know that they want to break free; but they know that there is no physical escape. Hence, migrants long for a temporal escape in their minds. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen “knew that where she wanted to go was not a different place but a different time. She was free to wish it but it would never be” (Ali 45). In the host country migrants are constantly haunted by the memory of home and all they do is live in an exile with the memory of things they know but no longer see. In *Brick Lane* “as the years passed” in Nazneen’s life, “the layers of netting multiplied and she began to rely on a different kind of memory. The memory of things she knew but no longer saw.” (Ali 217). But the case is different for the children of the first generation migrants. They are born and brought up in the host land and hence they develop more attachment towards their place of birth irrespective of their origin and colour. Whenever the context of returning comes, they express their resistance to their parents as they did not choose to take birth in the host nation, it is because of their parents that they are there as mentioned: “I didn’t ask to be born here” (181) says Shahana to her parents in Ali’s *Brick Lane*. Most of the times, the second generation migrants like Shahana look down on their homeland as inferior: “When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not

care. Shahana did not want to go back home” (Ali 180). The second generation migrants resist when they are given the option to return home, so it becomes difficult for their parents to escape the exile of migration. Hence, Ali writes: “If they went to Dhaka she could be with Hasina. Every nerve-ending strained towards it as if the sheer physical desire could transport her. But the children would be unhappy. Bibi, perhaps, would recover quickly. Shahana would never forgive her” (Ali 183). ‘Exile’ in case of migrants is not just about being unable to leave the foreign land; the dimensions of exile also include situations like ‘forced migration.’

2.8. Forced Migration

As exile in ‘wilful migration’ is discussed in the above contexts, ‘forced migration’ also causes exile in physical and psychological levels. Migrants who remain exiled through forced migration are called ‘Refugees’. They are either physically forced to move out of their country or they feel forced to leave their homeland in order to escape unavoidable circumstances such as war, socio-political instability, or natural disasters. Migration mutilates the life of refugees to such an extent that they no longer remain the people they were. According to Khalid Koser, especially in the protracted refugee situations:

refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance (79).

In these situations, refugees suffer from ill health, lack of care, shelter and food. At times they receive grants from the host government but that is never enough as the reality is that they can never attain the same status that they used to have in their parent nation. The social, climatic, and emotional changes, and the suffering that ‘forced migration’ brings to every refugee is a tale in its own: “Every refugee knows how to tell his story. For him, you understand, his story is a treasured possession. For

true, it is the most important thing he owns.” (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 380). In *Brick Lane*, Ali portrays lives of poor Bangladeshi migrants, who have accepted their fates:

Nazneen said, ‘My husband says it is discrimination.’ ‘Ask him this, then. Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?’ These were questions she had neither asked nor thought of asking. She was in this country because that was what had happened to her. Anyone else, therefore, was here for the same reason (Ali 72).

In the process of breaking free from intolerable situations, refugees are “stripped of their ancestral land” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 5) and are left with no other choice than becoming a burden on the economy of the host country; but the irony remains that they have not chosen to be a burden, all they have chosen is to be alive. This picture gets reflected in Lahiri’s *The Lowland*: “On the family radio they listened to the news of East Pakistan turning into Bangladesh after thirteen days of war. For Muslim Bengalis it meant liberation, but for Calcutta the conflict had meant another surge of refugees from across the border” (Lahiri 96). In a similar manner in the *Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is also forcefully taken away by dacoits, and she eventually migrates to America.

As discussed earlier, migration is a social phenomenon that occurs due to many reasons of which war and socio-political unrest are more prominent. In *Ice-Candy Man* the partition of India is presented. The novel seamlessly captures the partition-time-migration in its pages. It shows the characters in multiple situations related to forced migration. At times, people have relatives across the borders to go to and at times they have nobody to go to (Sidhwa 79). In between the social and religious unrest, one could find people unwilling to migrate from their homes even at the cost of their lives, as they cannot leave their ancestor’s graves. Sidhwa describes the pangs of people evocatively in her novel: “Where can the sacred Muslim villagers go? There are millions of them. Even suppose Dost Mohammad and his family leave Pir Pindo, which they can’t... how can they abandon their ancestors’ graves, every

inch of land they own, their other kin? How will they ever holdup their heads again?” (Sidhwa 109). The villagers get exiled by their traditions which they value more than their lives: “Most of the villagers resisted the move. The uncertainty they faced made them discredit the danger. ‘We cannot leave,’ they said, and, like a refrain, I can hear them say: ‘What face will we show our forefathers on the day of judgement if we abandon their graves? Allah will protect us!’” (Sidhwa 195). In the social scenario where people see everyone leaving their surroundings to safer places, it becomes worst for the people who are left back; they feel insecure and stranded in their own country which was once the place where they derived all their strength and security from:

The Mehtas have gone! The Malhotras have gone! The Guptas have gone!’ says Mr Singh, coming straight out with what is uppermost in his mind...’ ‘The Guptas too? When?’ asks Mother, her voice throbbing with concern. ‘About two hours back. They are joining an escorted convoy of cars.’ Mother’s eyes grow moist. (Sidhwa 145)

In *Ice-Candy Man*, the manner in which people get relocated as cattle herds from place to place by army trucks could be evidently seen (Sidhwa 109). People are threatened to migrate, they are attacked and forced to walk away even when they know the aftermath. They are helplessly trapped under socio-political circumstances. In *Ice-Candy Man*, the villagers tell the soldiers on evacuation duty:

‘Do you expect us to walk away with our hands and feet? What use will they serve us without our lands?’ “The soldiers, unimpressed by the sarcasm and indifferent to the villagers’ confusion and troubles, shrugged and said, ‘We’re just here to evacuate you: hands, feet and heads. Nothing else. . .’ (Sidhwa 110).

It is difficult for villagers to leave their lands as it is not just a geographical area on which they live, but everything they have valued since childhood (Sidhwa 111).

2.9. Effect of Migration on Women

Forced migration has terrible impacts on women. They are either used for domestic work or suffer in the dark lanes of sex market. They are referred by the society as ‘fallen women’ for no fault of theirs; and even if they get identified by their family members, they are not taken back, as they are considered impure. Ayah in the *Ice-Candy Man* could be seen suffering from a similar situation where she has to sustain her life as a sex worker after migration:

I spend hours on the servants’ quarters’ roof looking down on the fallen women. The turnover, as they are rescued, sorted out and restored to their families, is so rapid that I can barely keep track of the new faces that appear and so soon disappear. The camp is getting crowded. If this is where they bring kidnapped women, this is where I’ll find my Ayah... I wonder about the women’s children. Don’t they miss their mothers? I pray that their husbands and families will take them back (Sidhwa 221).

Not just as refugees, but also as migrants, women suffer more than men as mostly men migrate for jobs whereas in majority cases women migrate along with their husbands to live with them. In *The Namesake*, *The Low Land*, *Brick Lane*, *An American Brat* and *The Mistress of Spices*, ample examples of these situations are evidently seen where women as house wives of husbands who are “teachers, researchers, doctors, engineers” remain “homesick and bewildered...” (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 38). Amidst all the captivities, migrants still take small escapades in the host nation, from the inescapable exile that they are destined to live with. Davakaruni’s character Tilo’s stepping out of the Spice Bazaar where she feels that she “must step onto the forbidden concrete floor of America, leaving behind the store. . .” (Divakaruni, *The Mistress of Spices*, 29) and Ali’s character Gabriel’s boarding of the bus where in “one ride on a bus and he had left the known world behind” (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 506) serve as examples of such escapades.

Most of the times in the process of fitting into the new milieu, fighting memories, dealing with the differences, coping with the distance, and existing between times and spaces, the dreams of migrants fade into reality and their desire to escape and return becomes stronger with the increasing sense of exile, but ironically their journeys lead them to a space from where there is no escape. Lahiri's character Ashoke's words from *The Namesake* sums up all the facets of geographical displacement that migrants live through in the process of resettlement: "Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go" (187).

This chapter deciphers the spatial aspects of the process of migration. After relocating from the homeland, migrants encounter new people, climate, and culture. Culture, being the core ingredient of the social fabric, remains unique to each place. Hence, in the process of getting along with the newness that surrounds the migrants in the 'new' land, they often get tangled between the threads of their native culture and the 'new found' culture. The next chapter identifies the cultural dichotomies that migrants face after geographical displacement.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTIFYING CULTURAL DICHOTOMIES IN MIGRANT LITERATURE

Culture essentially is the way of life. It is a by-product of the environment (i.e., language, food, attire, tradition, and the lifestyle) one lives with. According to Estelle M. Raben, Professor Emeritus of English, Queens College, environment shapes both the “culture” and each “individual” in it (107-109). When people of different ethnicities co-exist and interact together as the members of one society, cultural transmission takes place. “Different ethnic groups possess identifiable characteristics, encompassing cultural values, practices, and social networks” (Zhou 134) that are “formed in the homeland and transplanted with minor modifications by immigrants in the new land and... transmitted and perpetuated from generation to generation” (ibid).

The “Cultural Capital” (Bourdieu, Lareau and Weininger), i.e., education, intellect, style of speech, dress, etc. that migrants bring with them often has an influence on the natives. The “set of cultural resources” that migrants bring “from the country of origin to the country of migration” (Erel 642-660) at times fit and at times do not fit to the natives. Hence, “migration results in new ways of producing and re-producing . . . cultural capital that builds on, rather than simply mirrors, power relations of either the country of origin or the country of migration” (ibid).

The mobilizing, enacting, and validating of cultural capital brings in the cultural dichotomy between the migrants and the natives, that gets more potent due to “Relativism” (Baghrarian). The doctrine of relativism states that “knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute” (Oxford Dictionary). The principle of cultural relativism states that a person’s beliefs and activities should be understood by others in regard to that

person's cultural background. According to Franz Boas, the father of American Anthropology: "Civilization is not something absolute, but . . . is relative, and . . . our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes" (589). The 'relative' contexts of culture mostly remain shadowed in multicultural societies, that not only distances the natives from understanding the migrants, but also makes them live in their own "absoluteness" (Yan 51-78) which is criticized by Bernard McGrane as "Prison Theory" (119). According to Sociocultural Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, "Natives" are "not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places" (36-49). They are considered prisoners contained in their niche and epistemology.

3.1. Cultural Relativism and Migration

Cultural relativism, usually conceives cultures as boxes, each with its own time and space, and, therefore, necessarily presupposes that "the anthropological observer is above all these boxes seeing the relativity of what's contained in each culture box" (McGrane 119). Hence, "Relativism is the ground upon which the anthropologist gains the position as a privileged observer vis-a-vis the "natives," who do not have relativism but absoluteness" (Yan 51-78). Apart from cultural capital and relativism, rationalization of "Cultural Geography" and idealization of "Cultural History" (Steadman 15), act as significant factors for bringing 'Cultural Dichotomies' into the psyche of the migrants. Hence, every observer must "take a cultural relativist stance towards the alien culture under study and withhold value-judgment" (ibid).

Every culture, though different it might be from the others, possess some similarities with the others. Similarities might exist between cultures in certain food habits, rituals, etc; however, the differences that exist in their 'ways of their life' are many. These differences are either 'real' or 'imagined'. The 'real' ones are the "differences that can be found in the reality of languages, histories, and social and political institutions" (Longxi 305-328) whereas the 'imagined' ones are the differences that are constructed "by pushing difference of degree to the absurd extreme, by imagining cultural values as uniquely one's own and the essence of an

alien culture as whatever stands at the opposite from one's self" (ibid). Hence, "owing to the deeply conservative and ethnocentric nature of cultural systems in isolation as well as to the attractiveness of exoticism, all cultures tend to engage in the construction of such myths of cultural difference..." (ibid). The construction of cultural difference works on the principle of binary opposition. "The contrastive principle imposes a logically necessary exclusion on both sides of the dichotomy" (ibid). In the words of John M. Steadman, Professor Emeritus of English, University of California: "To define the Orient, they contrast it with the West. To elucidate European civilization, they emphasize its opposition to Asia. In their hands, the terms become mutually exclusive--what is true of the one cannot be true of the other" (15).

Different cultures are often set up in a mutually exclusive dichotomy to facilitate conceptualization of the 'self' and the 'other' that promotes the cultural differences (Longxi 305-328). These differences are experienced in most aspect of life starting from parenting, etiquettes, freedom, privacy, marriage rituals, work culture, sense of time, interruption, corruption, lifestyle, discipline, economics, religion, language, food habits, and sense of dressing to fierce situations like poverty, racism, and gender issues. These aspects, collectively give rise to cultural dichotomies. This chapter aims to discuss the differences in the above mentioned aspects between Eastern Cultures (Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi) and the Western Cultures (British and American) one after another by drawing references from works of the select writers.

When people migrate to a 'new' land, along with the change of localities around them, they also experience the 'newness' of the culture in the 'new' geography. The novelties can be surprising as well as intimidating giving rise to the clash between 'new' values and the migrant's own; the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage; the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent; the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family (Ali 113). The clash essentially is from both sides – the residents and the migrants – the sufferers being mostly the migrants. Monica Ali depicts this condition in *Brick Lane*: "“This is the tragedy of our lives. To

be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy' . . . 'The clash of cultures...and of generations'" (112).

Most Indian migrants in America are like Divakaruni's character Geeta who is described as "India and America all mixed together into a new melody" (*The Mistress of Spices*, 87). Migrants often work towards assimilating the cultural differences, but sometimes the differences are so extreme that one cannot accommodate the two places together in mind. Migrants are mostly obsessed about the "things that might go wrong" in the new country (Divakaruni, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 93); this is more in the case of the first generation South Asian migrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as their colonial past makes them trapped with the *gora* complex. Bapsi Sidhwa, in her novel *An American Brat*, showcases this colonial dilemma that the South Asian migrants face in the West: "Sit, stupid. You must get over your *gora* complex. Once you know enough whites, you'll realize how ignorant and dirty they are, and you'll stop feeling sorry for bastards like him" (84).

The children of migrants also are brought up in the fashion that the new culture offers – which their parents were unaware of in their childhood. They are brought up with two cultures one that represents their roots and the other that represents the society they grow up in. In *The Namesake*, Ashima teaches her son "to memorize a four-line children's poem by Tagore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during Pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesha with his mouse to her right" (Lahiri 54). And every afternoon before sleeping she "switches the television to channel 2, and tells Gogol to watch *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, in order to keep up with the English he uses at nursery school" (ibid).

According to American Sociologist Mary C Waters:

Theories derived from the experiences of European immigrants and their children in the early twentieth century predicted that the longer the time spent in the United States, the more exposure to American culture, the more likely second-generation youths were

to adopt an “American identity” and to reduce ties to the immigrant or ethnic identities and culture of their parents. This “straight line” assimilation model assumes that with each succeeding generation the groups become more similar to mainstream Americans and more economically successful. (799)

When the children of the migrants grow up between this dichotomy where they have to choose between the culture assigned to them by their birth and the culture assigned to them by their host society; they often end up choosing the later as they grow up in that culture and identify themselves more as a part of the host culture. In *Brick Lane*, Shahana, a second generation Bangladeshi migrant, “did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest” (Ali 180).

When South Asian students migrate to the West for higher education they encounter cultural differences in the independent attitude and upbringing of their friends. The protective upbringing of their parents shackles their freedom of thought and expression even in the distant land; whereas they see their colleagues and friends living completely in their own terms. Feroza is surprised to see the Millers who exercised what she could not help but consider a remarkable discretion and forbearance. It astonished her that they were on speaking terms at all with their daughter (Jo) and that

their relationship worked so smoothly and without traumatic scenes featuring heart attacks and lachrymose bouts of sustained melancholia. She could almost see her grandmothers, aunts and uncles collapse, with hands on hearts and wounded looks, if she had exhibited a fraction of Jo’s blithely independent attitude and disregard for their opinions (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 209).

Jhumpa Lahiri also in her novel *The Lowland*, through her character Subhash gives instances on the differences between the two cultures when she writes– “Here

life ceased to obstruct or assault him. Here was a place where humanity was not always pushing, rushing, running as if with a fire at its back” (34). Hence, as portrayed in the novels, the notions of individuality, lifestyle, and their freedom vary across cultures.

3.2. Contrasting Notions of Individual Freedom

Privacy is a prized possession in the Western culture and a zone of individual freedom as illustrated in the novels. In the words of Monica Ali: “They all do what they want. It’s nobody’s business” (*Brick Lane*, 88). Ashima after years of stay in America understands “that Americans in spite of their miniskirts and bikinis, in spite of their hand-holding on the street and lying on top of each other on the Cambridge common, prefer their own privacy” (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 3). Privacy is “a generic process that occurs in all cultures but that also differs among cultures in terms of the behavioral mechanisms used to regulate desired levels of privacy” (Altman 66-84). Hence at times, privacy as a ‘way of life’ brings in dichotomy in the minds of the Eastern emigrants, which Monica Ali presents in *Brick Lane* where she mentions: “if a child is screaming because it is being beaten, they just close the door and the windows. They might make a complaint about noise. But the child is not their business, even if it is being beaten to death. They do what they want. It is a private matter. That is how the white people live” (88-89). Privacy is one of the prime luxuries the opulence of the First World could provide. The sheer physical space that the vast country allowed each individual, each child, almost as a birthright is noteworthy (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 312).

The aspect of privacy could be seen well portrayed in the novels ingrained in the institution of marriage in the West. In Eastern countries, daughters join their in-laws after they are married, and sons stay at home; generations do not separate as they do in the West. Lahiri’s character Subhash, knew that it was impossible for Holly, probably for any American woman, to imagine the life of staying with parents after marriage (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 67). Sometimes he imagined what it would be like “to lead a life with Holly; to live the rest of his life in America; to disregard his parents to

make his family with her.” At the same time he knew that it was impossible. (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 77).

People from the East often have biased notions about life in the West. They believe the “white working-class culture” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 254) to be a culture of “television, pub, throwing darts, kicking a ball” (ibid); they question in their minds “their shameless morals” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 197-198). For them, it is a society where schoolgirls and boys have sex “as casually as if they’re shaking hands” (ibid). These preconceived notions at times prevent the Eastern emigrants from wholeheartedly receiving the new culture, and they are afraid with their children growing up in a country which proves to have an entirely opposite set of values than that they identify with. Ali’s character Nazneen wants her son to grow up in her own country where he would learn to respect his parents: “I don’t want him to rot here with all the skinheads and drunks. I don’t want him to grow up in this racist society. I don’t want him to talk back to his mother. I want him to respect his father” (*Brick Lane*, 111).

It becomes difficult for the Eastern emigrants to identify with that kind of lifestyle in the West, where, in the words of Manek: “You don’t get something for nothing” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 124). The work culture of the West is significantly more demanding than the work culture of the East as seen in the novels; hence, the emigrants have to deal with the differences in work culture as well. In *An American Brat*, the conversation between Manek and Feroza graphically represents the American lifestyle with a humorous touch from the migrant’s perspective:

People here work much harder. Husband and wife both work. Every minute is organized. A wife will say, ‘Dear, put the clothes in the washing machine and come back in ten minutes to take our son to baseball practice. I’ll be back from the grocery store in thirty minutes to put the clothes in the dryer and take our daughter for ballet lessons... In the afternoon they trim a hedge or clean the swimming pool for relaxation. Then the husband cooks a barbecue dinner while the wife vacuums. There is no ‘Cook, bring

me soup' and 'Bearer, bring me whiskey-*pani*.' At night they go to a movie or to a disco and enjoy life. They know how to work hard, and they play hard. But they do this only on Saturdays and Sundays. On working days they are so busy that they have to regulate... even in breathing," Feroza cut in. "Dear you breather in, I'll breathe out, two seconds in, two seconds out..." "That's right. That's what a free and competitive economy in a true democracy demands. That's why the country is prosperous. That's why the Third World is so backward and poor" (Sidhwa 124).

American life as seen in the literary depictions, on the other hand, is easy as it is well organised. So, when Sidhwa's character Manek sees Feroza struggle with a jar or bottle to open it, he says: "Remember this: If you have to struggle to open something in America, you're doing it wrong. They've made everything easy. That's how a free economy works" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 140). As the Eastern migrants lack in skills of chronemics, they find this nature of western life being 'busy yet easy' quite paradoxical.

3.3. Interpersonal Interaction and Migration

Interpersonal interaction is an important factor of difference between Eastern and Western culture. People in the East are hostile to the gaze of strangers. They find it fishy, insulting, and intimidating. It is often considered as filthy, when a man stares or smiles at a woman. At times a stare is also considered as eve-teasing among the girls of the East whereas in the West, a stare or a smile at a stranger is often taken as a gesture of appreciation, and is well reciprocated as portrayed in Sidhwa's *An American Brat*. This cultural dichotomy could be evidently seen in the following stanza:

Feroza noticed a slender, beautiful girl with short fair hair and transparent green eyes smile at Manek. "Do you know her?" Feroza asked, surprised. "No," Manek shook his head deliberately

enigmatic. “But she smiled at you.” “I looked at her and she smiled back, that’s all.” . . . Manek leaned towards Feroza and spoke in a low voice, “Civilized people don’t kick men in the balls just because they happen to stare at them. Imagine what would’ve happened in Lahore! First she’d kick me, then she’d go whining to the cops wailing, ‘*O menu ghoor ghoor ke vekh raha see*. He was making big, big eyes and staring at me!’ I’d be soundly slapped and hauled off to the police thanna.” (106).

As depicted in Sidhwa’s novel, in the Western culture, people find interruption very disturbing. Interruption between conversations is considered obnoxious and impolite. In *An American Brat*, Manek recalls the stony expressions of professors as they looked away whenever he tried to correct someone who was giving wrong answers in class. “Nobody had told him that Americans felt so strongly about interruptions” (Sidhwa 100-101); he had to find it out for himself and therefore advises his cousin to learn not to interrupt when he speaks:

There you go, interrupting again. You won’t even let me finish a sentence. I don’t know when you *desis* will learn good manners. If there’s . . . one thing Americans won’t stand, it’s being interrupted. It’s impolite. It’s obnoxious. You’ve got to learn to listen. You can’t cut into a conversation just as you like. You’ll be humiliated. Learn from someone who knows what he is talking about (ibid).

Whereas, the Eastern people as depicted in Ali’s character Chanu in *Brick Lane* have altogether a different view about the politeness of the Western people. He considers it a disguise that hides their ‘real’ self. According to him, “All the time they are polite. They smile. They say ‘please’ this and ‘thank you’ that. Make no mistakes about it, they shake your hand with the right, and with the left they stab you in the back” (Ali 72).

Apart from interruption, corruption and bribe are ingrained aspects of the Eastern culture. People get away from the clutches of law by bribing the concerned officials; it's the way of life so much so that people do not consider it a wrong deed. In *An American Brat* Manek couldn't bribe the cop with small change as he'd been warned by his compatriots not to try it. (Sidhwa 104).

3.4. Lifestyle and Cultural Dichotomies

The American lifestyle is quite fascinating for the Eastern people as could be understood from the novels. There, people drink water straight from the tap without worrying how many cholera and jaundice germs one is swallowing; whereas in the East, poor people rarely have access to clean water. Having no shortage of water and electricity; taking tub baths as many times one wants, keeping air conditioners on all the time; having huge football stadiums and offices and shopping malls air-conditioned all summer are some things the Eastern people could never imagine in earlier times (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 197-198). In Sidhwa's words: "You have to wear a cardigan indoors, one forgets what summer is: it's as if you are always at a Hill Station. The same thing in winter; everything is centrally heated and you can walk about in shirtsleeves." (ibid).

An organised lifestyle is possible in the West as 'Discipline' is an ingrained aspect of the Western culture, as portrayed in Lahiri's *The Namesake*, whereas in the East, starting from common man on a train to a politician, everyone has aspects of indiscipline ingrained in them. Ashima and her Indian friends are surprised to find the lost luggage which Ashima had left in the train: "For the rest of the afternoon she is furious with herself, humiliated at the prospect of arriving in Calcutta empty-handed apart from the sweaters and the paintbrushes. But, when the character Ashoke comes home he calls the MBTA lost and found; the following day the bags are returned, not a teaspoon missing. Somehow, this small miracle causes Ashima to feel connected to Cambridge in a way she has not previously thought possible, affiliated with its expectations as well as its rules. She has a story to tell at dinner parties." Her Indian friends listen, amazed at her luck and say, this can happen "Only in this country" (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 42-43).

The business culture in the East as seen in the novels is quite different from that of the West. The shopkeepers are friendlier and treat their customers as family and friends. They offer their customers food and share feelings and emotions with them; which makes the customers remain loyal to those shops. When Subhash comes to Kolkata, feeling tired, he stands in front of a store that sold embroidered shawls. “What would you like to see?” the owner asks. “Nothing” replies Subhash. To which the shopkeeper says: “Come have a look. Have a cup of tea.” Subhash had forgotten about such gestures of hospitality from shopkeepers; he ends up purchasing a shawl from the shop (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 113). On the other hand, the Western business culture is different. It’s more professional by nature. In the words of Manek, “Money changes hands here in one hour than in a whole year in Pakistan?” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 72).

The West could be seen as having a vast economy where the standard of living of people is much higher than in the East. Cars, refrigerators, or air conditioners are things of luxury in the East whereas the poorest of British or American has all these comforts. When Nazeen walks for the first time in the streets of London she feels: “There were more cars than people out here, a roaring metal army tearing up the town” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 43). The insiders on the other hand have a different take to the economy of West. According to Ali’s character Gabriel, the so-called British identity is like British economy, deregulated in the extreme. “It’s a marketplace of ideas and values and cultures and none of them are privileged over the rest. Each one finds its own level depending on supply and demand.” . . . “The multicultural model” is really nothing more than “laissez-faire”. And as a remark of sarcasm he adds – “I think that’s quite unique. Our national identity, in that way, is very distinct” (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 364).

3.5. Religious Beliefs and Traditions across Cultures

In *Ice-Candy Man* we see the innocent beliefs of children growing up in a multicultural society where they live among several religions. To make the cultural conflicts easy, they consider the presence of God in the holy books based on the size of the books:

Jagjeet Singh is sitting cross-legged in front of an open Granth Sahib. It is resting on an elaborately carved walnut stand. I have never seen a book so large. Surely, if God Dwells in Books, He dwells in one as large! Later that night Ranna told me that he had wished that the holy Koran their mullah occasionally displayed was larger (Sidhwa 106).

On the other hand in the novels of Sidhwa, Divakaruni and Ali one sees how people of different cultures and religions accept each other's beliefs. Sidhwa writes: "When Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from across the border in India visit the temples and *gurdwaras* in Pakistan, they never fail to "pay their respects" to the Muslim mystic known for his miraculous power to grant wishes" (*An American Brat*, 19). Korobi is surprised to see a Ganesh temple in America; in Divakaruni's words it was "the last thing" she expected to see (*Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 94). Ali's character Suleiman, beneath the little shrine he had erected to Ganesh, toiled devotedly (*In the Kitchen*, 329). And we also see the multicultural side of ice-candy man when he says: "So what if you're a Sikh? I'm first a friend to my friends. . . And an enemy to their enemies. . . . And then a Mussulman! God and the politicians have enough servers. So, I serve my friends" (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 122).

Traditions and festivals are the significant parts of any culture. The culture of celebrating any and every occasion by naming it as a 'Day' is uncommon in the East whereas as depicted in *In the Kitchen*, in the West there is a calendar full of 'Days' – Mother's Day, Father's Day; they have got a 'Day' in every month, at least (Ali 123). In multicultural societies, at times, people do not understand the sentiments of others regarding their cultural celebrations as they are unaware of the importance of those rituals. In *The Namesake*, Ashima explains to her friend Judy, what it means to go home four months after Durga Pujo. "It is like going home a few months after your Christmas," Ashima explains to Judy, to which Judy replies that she and Alan are Buddhists (Lahiri 41). This conversation shows the ignorance of both Ashima (migrant) as well as Judy (native) towards each other's cultures, which very often leads to dichotomous situations between the migrants and the natives.

When people migrate to a new country for better education, or job they get the opportunity to live among people of different nationalities and cultures in their workplace. The cosmopolitan variety of students – Black, Hispanic, Arabic, Irani, and some unmistakably Pakistani and Indian – fills Sidhwa’s character Feroza with suppressed excitement in America (Sidhwa 1993: 212); and in The Imperial Hotel of London in Ali’s *In the Kitchen*, every corner of the earth gets represented – “Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between” (Ali 129). Dichotomies get added up when multiple cultures co-exist.

In *An American Brat*, in order to make Feroza more open towards other cultures, Manek takes her to “a whirlwind tour of all the major museums in New York” (Sidhwa 74). They visit the Museo el Barrio, devoted to Hispanic-American art, and the Jewish Museum in the Warburg Mansion. The spectacular Guggenheim, with its impressive spiralling interior, delighted Feroza more than the paintings on its curving walls (Sidhwa 1993: 75). Whereas, in *Ice-Candy Man* one could observe the total opposite of this mindset when in between the traces of the influence of English, Japanese, and German cultures, ice-candy man says to his friends: “If we want India back we must take pride in our customs, our clothes, our languages. . . . And not go mouthing the got-pit sot-pit of the English!” (Sidhwa 28-29). These differences in the approach in dealing with other cultures as seen from the novels often contribute to dichotomies in the minds of people.

The migrants, at times, see contradictions in their own culture once they get exposed to the ways of another culture. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel* at the Empire State Building, Vic asks, “how does Kolkata compare to New York?” (Divakaruni 149), for which Korobi remains silent. She had never looked down upon Kolkata from up high, so she had no idea how far the city sprawled, which shape it took. On the ground, she knew its contradictions: lavish wedding halls behind which beggars waited for leftovers; red-bannered, slogan-shouting protesters marching by a house where a musician practiced classical flute. But Kolkata’s spirit, at once vibrant and desperate, she had no words to describe it to someone who has never lived there. “It’s complicated” Korobi says finally, “Most Indian cities are. You must have noticed that yourself” (ibid). Migrants live between many such dichotomies all through their lives

which is transferred in some ways to their second generations as well. From the perspective of their friends and relatives back 'home', they are well off and live a life of honour in the 'foreign' land. From their points of view "It's a success story" "but behind every story of immigrant success there lies a deeper tragedy" (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 113).

3.6. Dichotomous Language and Migration

Sharing of thoughts is one of the more important ways that brings people closer. Language being the carrier of thoughts plays a great role in connecting people across cultures. According to Sociologist Ruben G. Rumbaut: "Language is also closely, and affectively, connected to the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity - both within and without the family" (779). 'Common language' as a code helps people of varying cultures to communicate with each other; but beyond the basic purpose of being the vehicle of thoughts, language also reflects the impact of one culture over the other.

When a migrant speaker acquires and speaks the native language – the diction, speech pattern, grammatical connotations and syntax of his/her first language influence the acquiring of the second. They are caught up in the dilemma of 'sticking to the pattern of expression with which they have grown up' and 'following the new pattern of expression in front of them'. This is where the dichotomy begins in the personalities of the migrants that gradually create in them a different facet to their existing self. In *An American Brat* when Feroza replaces 'yes' with 'yup' her uncle feels disgusted and hurt, and tells her: "What's this new 'yup-yup' business you've learned? You're not a puppy!" (Sidhwa 76).

Language is the carrier of cultural codes and values. In Indian culture, people never say 'goodbye'; Indian languages do not represent a culture of parting it's always a culture of meeting; so also is the case in most Eastern cultures. Hence, instead of goodbye they say "I'm coming" (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 37). On the contrary, the Western culture as seen in the select novels has a different approach towards parting, as the way of speaking is often determined by the cultural use of

language. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, in the East, business is not just transaction of money, but transaction of emotions as well; hence, people seldom use words like 'buy' while conversing with shopkeepers, whereas in Western culture they do. Thus, when people from different cultures communicate, it is found as often creating misunderstandings between them. Feroza's conversation with a storekeeper serves as a befitting example to this situation. In America after selecting a product when Feroza asks the shopkeeper: "May I have these, please?" The shopkeeper replies: "You may not. You'll have to pay for it. This isn't the Salvation Army, y'know; it's a drugstore" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 150).

Every language comes with its specific range of paralinguistic features. So when a non-native speaker of another language communicates in the native language, variations come into play. While describing a migrant character, Ali emphasises on the pronunciation of consonants by writing: "He had a cauliflower ear, sharp Slavic cheekbones and an even sharper accent, the consonants jangling together like loose change" (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 14). As the migrants are from a different language speaking background, at times it becomes difficult for them to understand the pronunciation of the native speakers. In *The Lowland*, Gauri is seen as facing the dilemma of being unable to understand the local news on radio. Even though "she'd studied at Presidency, and yet she could barely understand the broadcast" (Lahiri 125).

At times, foreign language itself confuses the migrants in understanding and using it. Not just in terms of pronunciation, but also in terms of grammatical rules, their native tongue always plays as a strong intervening factor in acquiring and using the second language. In *The Namesake*, on being asked, "Hoping for a boy or a girl?" by the nurse, Ashima replies: "As long as there are ten finger and ten toe" (Lahiri 7). When the nurse smiles, "suddenly Ashima realizes her error, knows she should have said "fingers" and "toes." This error pains her almost as much as her first contraction . . . But in Bengali, a finger can also mean fingers, a toe toes" (ibid). Hence, Lahiri's character Ashima gets caught in the dichotomous aspects of language – a common dilemma for all second language speaking migrants.

3.7. Food Cultures and Migration

Apart from language, food is essential for life and every culture has its own eating habits. According to food critic Pamela Goyan Kittler et al: “The development perspective of food culture suggests how social dynamics are paralleled by trends in food, eating, and nutrition. It is useful in conceptualizing broad trends in cultural food habits that emerge during structural changes in a society” (11). Eating habits depend on a variety of factors including religion, climatic conditions, and geographical location. The food habits of people are hence seen as different across cultures. When people migrate, they discover an array of food which they could never think of eating on regular basis in the past, which makes them surprised yet curious. When Feroza reached America, she could not believe her good luck with regard to food. “It was an extravagant bonus – like so many of the unexpected delights her visit to America was to provide. She had presumed that canned foods like olives, mushrooms, condensed milk, asparagus, clams, were as precious and rare in America as they were in Pakistan, to be served up only on special show-off occasions” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 113); whereas in America those were the principal food that she had to survive on.

In cultures, specific to certain religions like Islam, drinking of alcohol is considered a profane affair. But, when people migrate to a country where drinking is ingrained in the fabric of society, they end up drinking. In the words of Chanu: “It’s part of the culture here. It’s so ingrained in the fabric of society. Back home, if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don’t drink you risk the same thing” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 110). In *An American Brat*, after coming to America even a traditional Pakistani like Zareen defends Bhutto’s drinking habits by saying, “You know what he said when they accused him of drinking: ‘Yes! I drink! Yes, I drink whiskey: not the blood of poor people!’” (Sidhwa 12).

Eating mannerisms also vary from culture to culture. “Americans eat their chicken in its skin” Ashima, being an Indian is not acquainted with eating chicken with its skin and searches for a butcher “willing to pull it off for her” (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 5). Some cultures like their food bland whereas others like their food hot

and spicy. Subhash in the dinner cooked by his American companion Holly “ate pieces of chicken cooked in mushrooms and wine, served with bread warmed in the oven instead of with rice. The taste was complex, flavourful but without heat of any kind (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 71). Being an Indian, Subhash is more acquainted with heat in the food, hence, he feels unsatisfied after the meal with Holly. Eating mannerisms are not just reflected in the use of condiments but also in the style of eating. Americans are more familiar to eating with fork, knife, and spoon where as people in India grow up eating with fingers. These differences create cultural dichotomies among the migrants and the natives. When after a long time Subhash returns home, “the freedom to eat with his fingers” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 92) and drinking water with a heavy cup whose rim is slightly too wide for his mouth poured from a black clay urn in the corner of his room, gives him the satisfaction that the sophisticated dinners in America could not (ibid).

Different cultures have different ceremonial practices surrounding foods and water. As in Western practices, children are named and baptised in water, Bengalis and most Eastern Cultures have the rice ceremony. “There is no baptism for Bengali babies, no ritualistic naming in the eyes of God. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centers around the consumption of solid food” (Lahiri, *The Namesake*,38).

People across cultures have several preconceived notions regarding the food practices of other cultures. Such as, the people in the West think that Indian’s are vegetarians. In *The Namesake*, at Ashima’s buffet when Judy “bites into something that turns out to be a shrimp cutlet” she whispers to her husband: “I thought Indians were supposed to be vegetarian” (Lahiri 39). Food habit also serves as the parameter for people of one culture to determine the identity of another culture. *In the Kitchen* has a reference to one such notion: “Let’s see, you could say, for instance, that the French are more decidedly . . . French in their identity. But why should that be a good thing? It depends what you prefer. We got the Beatles. They got Johnny Hallyday’. ‘And we’ve got chicken tikka masala’, said Gabriel, ‘and they’ve got decent food’” (Ali 364).

Food, as a way of life, often faces sarcasm. People who do not identify with a particular food habit of another culture at times look down upon it and pass sarcastic comments. Ice-candy man, a Muslim, says to his Hindu friends: “You Hindus eat so much beans and cauliflower I’m not surprised your yogis levitate. They probably fart their way right up to the heaven!” (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 97). These kinds of cultural differences and comments not only create dichotomy but also brings disharmony among people of different cultures.

3.8. Dressing Mannerisms across Cultures

Dressing essentially is influenced by cultural practice and traditions of a society. From the observations of Professor of Library Services at Hofstra University, Elena Cevallos et al: “Dress is an important component of our daily lives. Through clothing, individuals establish their sense of self as well as their place in society.” [sic]. Every culture has its own unique dressing mannerisms. The style of dressing varies from culture to culture. In America, as depicted in *The Mistress of Spices*, one can see “the professor types in tweed with patches on jacket elbows or in long skirts in earnest earth colours”; one can see the American Krishna devotees “in wrinkled white kurtas with shaved heads”, and one can see “backpack-toting students in seldom-laundered jeans” (Divakaruni 67-68). The three categories of people described by the author not only represent the cultural diversity of America but also presents differences amidst similarities and similarities amidst differences in terms of dressing across cultures; as one can see the dressing traits of all three mentioned category of people in East as well, but with little variations.

At times, social events and practices also determine dressing mannerisms, such as, as per cultural practice in the 1960s, women were not allowed to wear frocks in Pakistan. Women had to wear burkhas that hid their legs and faces:

When I was her age, I wore frocks and cycled to Kinnaird College. And that was in '59 and '60 – fifteen years after Partition! Can she wear frocks? No. Women mustn't show their legs, women shouldn't dress like this, and women shouldn't act

like that. Girls mustn't play hockey or sing or dance! If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then the *mullahs* should wear *burqas* and stay within the four walls of their houses! (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 10).

Women in those days dressed under prescribed parameters of the then Pakistani society. American culture is diametrically opposite to this, which makes the American aspirant Feroza retaliate to the ways of life her mother used to live.

Dressing as a part of culture keeps changing with time. Ali's character Chanu "no longer wore pyjamas"-- that he used to wear after returning home. With time, he preferred wearing lungi and vest (*Brick Lane*, 184). The aspect of change of way of life with respect to time is captured in the following lines of Sidhwa: ". . . It can't be undone. But it can be forgiven... worse things are forgiven. Life goes on and the business of living buries the debris of our pasts. Hurt, happiness... all fade impartially . . . to make way for fresh joy and new sorrow. That's the way of life" (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 262).

Unlike dressing mannerisms, the nature and texture of cloths that people wear also makes cultures unique. The manner in which people wear their cloths is also a part of cultural practice. In America people barely tailor their cloths; dresses are available readymade for all sizes as seen in Lahiri's novel. When Subhash tells this to his parents, "the news that there was nowhere to have clothes tailored in Rhode Island, that American clothing was all ready-made" comes to his parents as a surprise (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 112). Apart from wearing cloths, nudity in personal spaces is also blended with cultural practice and varies across cultures. In the West, as depicted in the novel *An American Brat*, people do not shy away from walking nude in front of their lovers; whereas in Pakistan people are born and brought up in a conservative approach, where nudity is considered to be too private to be displayed in front of anyone other than the self. The nudity between partners lasts just for the duration of sex, after that people choose to remain clad with their attires. This could be seen in *An American Brat* where Feroza's boyfriend David,

who might have wandered naked in his room before an American girl, didn't. Feroza dressed and undressed behind doors and beneath bed sheets. David never saw her, except for brief moments, naked, and then her voluptuous warm nakedness, her swelling breasts, were imprinted in his mind as the essence of desirability. Both were intrigued by the otherness of the other – the trepidation, the reticence imposed on them by their differing cultures (Sidhwa 256).

Clothes hence, have larger connotations across cultures. Clothes do not just reflect style, religious and cultural practices; it is also a way of covering one's nudity.

3.9. Socioeconomic Factors across Cultures

Like dressing, economic condition as a social factor, varies across cultures. Economic condition determines the lifestyle of people; and lifestyle being an ingredient of enculturation makes economics a distant yet important part of cultural industry and cultural transactions. "Throughout the years, poverty has been seen as one of the reasons that motivated migration" (López). Poverty has different definitions in different countries. Depending on the overall economic condition of a country, people get stratified as rich and poor. When migrants settle in a country of better economy, they sense the extent to which poverty stricken their homeland is. Feroza in America feels the poverty of Pakistan to be "a galloping, disfiguring disease" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 238-239). To her, the poverty stricken people in America seem to be richer than the Pakistani regular mass. In Sidhwa's words:

Every kind of poverty in the United States paled in comparison. Yet it did not mean that the condition of the poor in America was trifling, or the injustice there less rampant. Feroza tried to clarify her thoughts. Poverty, she realised, groping for expression, was relative (ibid).

Her friend who was at Kinnard College describes a house she had visited in one of the poorest ghettos in Harlem; the family had electricity, running water, a

fridge, and a car. The concept of refrigerators and cars stood at the very limit of extravagance and, in comparison to the people who dwelt in the rag-and-tin lean-tos and in infested, stinking *jhuggees* without bathrooms or electricity, undeserving of sympathy in Pakistan (ibid).

For the new Indian immigrants it becomes difficult to identify beggars in America as the culture of begging in America is totally different from India. Not just the way of begging, but also the dressing sense of beggars is different which makes it difficult for the Indian immigrants to identify them. When Divakaruni's character Korobi sees a man with a pale, shaven head and tattoos on his neck slowly pushing a rusted metal cart piled with plastic bags ahead of her, she tries not to stare, but she is disconcerted. The man who is actually a beggar senses her attention. In the words of Lahiri: "He suddenly turns and lumbers towards me, mumbling, hand outstretched. His nails are bluish, dirt-encrusted. His eyebrows look scorched. In Kolkata I'd have known how to ignore a beggar, how to drop coins into an outstretched palm if the case merited it. Here I am unsure" (*Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 2013: 114).

Citizens of the third world grow up with fanciful notions about the economic condition of developed countries. But at times, the reality surprises them when they migrate to live in one of those countries. In *An American Brat*, "Feroza was used to the odor of filth, the reek of poverty; sweat, urine, open drains, rotting carrion, vegetables, and the other debris that the poor people in Pakistan had become inured to" (Sidhwa 81). But those were smells and sights she was accustomed to and had developed a tolerance for. But, the pavement of America where she found her surrounded with "alien filth, a compost reeking of vomit and alcoholic belches, of neglected old age and sickness, of drugged exhalations and the malodorous ferment of other substances she could not decipher" (ibid); it disturbed her psyche; it seemed to her they personified the callous heart of the rich country that allowed such savage neglect to occur. "The fetid smell made her want to throw up. She ran out of the building, and leaning against the wall of the terminal, began to retch. . ." (ibid) After she turned right on the Forty-second street, Manek said, "So, you've seen now, America is not all Saks and skyscrapers" (ibid).

As the perception and preconceived notions of the migrants make them see a flowery image of the host nation, similarly the preconceived perceptions of the people in the host nation makes them discriminate the migrants on the basis of their race. Migrants face ethnic and racial discrimination on a daily basis. In the words of Ali Soylu, Professor of Management, School of Business, Cameron University, and Tom A. Buchanan, Manager, School of Business, Cameron University: “Ethnic discrimination starts with the national identification of individuals on the workplace during the application process, during interviews, or even during the course of the individual’s employment. It is also very common to identify persons based on their appearance, beliefs, religions, native languages, and accents. However, subjectively placing national labels on persons and stereotyping them accordingly is wrong and is often the foundation for discrimination” (851). Racial discrimination often creeps into the lives of dark skinned migrants in countries with fair skinned natives. Due to the colour of their skin they have to go through suspicion, hatred, and ill treatment in their host nation so much so that at times to escape the humiliation they wish to become light skinned: “*I must be proud like Mother says to be Indian, I wish for that American skin that American hair those blue American eyes so that no one will stare at me except to say WOW*” (Divakaruni, *The Mistress of Spices*, 63).

Migrants, in spite of their service, are withheld from the opportunities they deserve. Like Ali’s character Chanu, they remain helpless. In the words of Ali’s character Nazneen: “My husband says they are racist, particularly Mr Dalloway. He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white man. He says that if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 72). It is seen from the novels that, not just in work life, but also in social sphere, in market place, or on the streets they face attacks and slangs like “*Bloody bugger Hindoostani. Fucking Dothead. Paki go home*” (Divakaruni, *The Mistress of Spices*, 54). The conditions of racial discrimination have become worse after the 9/11 attacks: “All Eastern things are associated in people’s mind with 9/11” (Divakaruni, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 185). Anyone with brown skin is checked with extreme caution in the American airports. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi and Vic going through the process of security check at Airport, clearly shows the condition of

eastern migrants in the post 9/11 America: “Welcome to flying while brown in post 9/11 America!” “Doesn’t it bother you, being treated like this? You’re a US citizen. You shouldn’t have to –” Vic shrugs. “I choose my battles. Things could be worse” (Divakaruni 183).

3.10. Gender and Cultural Dichotomies

Apart from race, every society is divided by gender. In most societies women are given secondary status; they are dominated by men. But, according to the degree of freedom enjoyed by the individuals of a society, the ratio of dominance keeps varying. In the words of Political Philosopher, Susan Moller Okin: “Virtually all of the world's cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts,” she asserts that some cultures – mostly, she says, Western liberal cultures “have departed far further from [these pasts] than others” (Volpp). In some societies women enjoy a better state of life, where they live their rights and are free, where as in others, they remain emancipated. Male chauvinism becomes a significant part of such societies. In *An American Brat*, it is seen how, in the East, it is believed that the Western culture pollutes the minds of young girls and makes them wayward: “What with the onslaught of television and the American and British videos, it was hard to keep young girls as innocent as one might wish” (Sidhwa 17).

In Pakistan, every Parsee girl grows up warned of the catastrophe that could take the shape of a good-looking non-Parsee man (ibid). From their childhood, girls are threatened and trained not to marry outside the community. This condition applies to girls in India as well. In the name of ritual, women are not allowed to get inside temples during the period of menstruation: “Zareen could not accompany her because she was having her period; her presence would pollute the temple” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 40). These prohibitions and secondary treatments torture women making them seek for a better life, but most times they end up by being subjugated by their societies. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Ahuja’s wife thinks of restarting her life again in America, away from those eyes, those mouths always telling what a woman’s duty is and how a woman should act. But as voices, she had carried them all the way

inside her head to America. They never seem to leave her even in the distant land (Divakaruni 102-103).

In *Brick Lane*, Hashina gets insulted in Bangladesh for working with men. In her words: “They say it sinful for men and women working together. But they the only ones sinning take Gods name give insult to us and tell lie” (Ali 152). Girls are not allowed to work with boys; this notion is believed even by well educated, aged migrants like Geeta’s grandfather in Divakaruni’s *Mistress of Spices*: “Girls and boys are still girls and boys, ghee and a lighted match, put them together and soon or late there’s going to be fire.” When Geeta says, “But dada, this is America after all, and even in India women are now working, no, even in Jamshedpur.” Her grandfather replies:

What if this is America, we are still Bengalis, no?” (Divakaruni 85-86). Geeta is always blamed by her grandfather even on how much make-up she wears. Wearing make-up is considered a profane habit by him: “Uff, in my days only the Englishwomen and prostitutes are doing that. Good Indian girls are not ashamed of the face God is giving them” (Divakaruni 86).

Even in America, where women enjoy their equal rights with men, the migrant Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi women get to face their fate of being subjugated by the male members of their families. They are not allowed to look good, marry with their choice, or even work with men. In *The Mistress of Spices*, during a conversation with Tilo, Geeta’s grandfather says: “Maybe OK for all these *firingi* women in this country, but you tell me yourself *didi*, if a young girl should work late-late in the office with other men and come home only after dark and sometimes in their car too? *Chee chee*, back in Jamshedpur they would have smeared dung on your faces for that (Divakaruni 85). These words reflect the mindset of certain Eastern communities who still believe in clipping the wings of women rather than making society a better place for them.

Migrant women, who have travelled all the way from Bangladesh to London, as seen in Ali's novel, remain exiled inside the four walls of their homes. They are questioned by their husbands: "Why should you go out? If you go out, ten people will say 'I saw her walking on the street'" (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 45). To justify his statements, in *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's husband Chanu says:

Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do? Besides, I get everything for you that you need from the shops. Anything you want, you only have to ask. I don't stop you from doing anything. I am Westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck. And anyway, if you were in Bangladesh you would not go out. Coming here you are not missing anything, only broadening your horizons (ibid).

In the name of freedom and with the promise of a better lifestyle, all they give their wives is a lifelong imprisonment in a far distant land.

According to the report of European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights:

Available data indicates that migrant and minority women occupy the least-paid and least-skilled jobs in the most marginalised segments of the labour market. Often, their employment opportunities are restricted to work in the domestic sphere, with a high risk of insecurity and, often, irregular working conditions. In addition, discrimination experiences of migrant and minority women are different according to the various social and legal positions they occupy and to the attitudes of the majority population they are confronted with (8).

Some migrant women spend years in the new country sitting in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's friend says: "They go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The

society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing. 'That,' she said, stabbing the air, 'is the tragedy'" (Ali 114). Women are forced to keep purdah. They are not supposed to show their faces in rural parts of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Women like Hashina who retaliate such discrimination and voice their opinion ("I keep purdah in the mind no one can take it" (Ali 153)) are punished by the society. The fate of a widow in these countries is the worst. In Lahiri's *The Lowland*, after Udayan's death Gauri was treated badly by her mother-in-law. She had to go through the passivity and cruelty of her father-in-law. The coldness of her in-laws toward Gauri was insulting; their treatment of Gauri was deliberate, intended to drive her out. Even her pregnancy was not taken into consideration. With a child in her womb, she was kept starved for good food. Subhash loved his dead brother and around Gauri, he felt a shared awareness of the person they both loved. In the words of Lahiri:

The only way to prevent it was to take Gauri away. It was all he could do to help her, the only alternative he could provide. And the only way to take her away was to marry her. To take his brother's place, to raise his child, to come to love Gauri as Udayan had. To follow him in a way that felt perverse, that felt ordained. That felt both right and wrong (115).

Women in most Eastern countries are not given freedom. They are kept covered with purdahs and burkas in the four walls of their homes; and are outcasted and treated cruelly if they move out as is evident from the novels. In Pakistan "the victim of rape ran the risk of being punished for adultery, while the rapist was often set free" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 237). Sidhwa gives an example of how women are treated in Pakistan: ". . . Our elders used to say, keep the girls buried at home. Do you know your grandfather would not allow even our pigeons to stray? If one of the birds from our loft spent the night on another's roof, we'd have pigeon soup the next day. He'd have its throat slit!" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 121).

Mere arrival at America, at times gives the feeling of freedom to women migrants who live exiled in their countries as the novels depict. The thoughts that they

will no more be judged by people around them; they can walk with their faces uncovered; and they can make their own choices on the basics of their lives, makes them elated. In *An American Brat*, Feroza's arrival in America makes us understand this situation in the words of Sidhwa: "The liberating anonymity she had discovered within moments of her arrival at Kennedy airport, when no one had bothered to stare at her and the smoky-eyed American she was talking to, still exhilarated her. In Lahore these contacts would have been noticed and would have drawn censorious comment. Within the heady climate of her freedom in America, she felt able to do anything" (Sidhwa 216). The ways of Western life, their choices, and decisions, render an influence on migrants and make them differentiate between what life is and what life should be. As Feroza absently watched her friend Jo, who was on her knees washing the fridge with a dishrag and a bowl of suds, she felt a great swell of affection and gratitude for her friend. Not many girls did she know in Lahore – or anywhere – who could decide, just like that, to move out of their homes to spend a night in a motel? To Feroza it was an unimaginable feat accomplished, a lottery won (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 186). "Feroza felt that living with Jo helped her to understand Americans and their exotic culture – how much an abstract word like "freedom" could encompass and how many rights the individuals had and, most important, that those rights were active, not, as in Pakistan, given by a constitution but otherwise comatose" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 171).

In America, the character Feroza found the concept of job as a bartender to accommodate college fees – breathtaking and beyond the compass of the possibility in Pakistan. Since, in Pakistan there were no bars, there were no bartenders: "Even had the jobs been available and the stigma attached to them had not existed, Feroza would have found working at these professions in Pakistan intolerable. Her slightest move would attract disproportionate attention and comment, for no other reason except that she was a young woman in a country where few young women were visible working" (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 216). Eastern traditions and customs thus, keep women away from feeling equal with men. In Indian culture, "Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over" (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 2). Hence, in *The Namesake*, instead of saying

Ashoke's name she (Ashima) utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as "Are you listening to me?" (ibid). Men as a cultural practice, abstain from expressing their love verbally to their wives. "I love you, sweetheart." Words Ashima has neither heard nor expects to hear from her own husband; this is not how they are" (Lahiri 3). Expressing love and helping wife in the kitchen are believed to be feminine traits. Hence, as a culture, men mostly stay away from the women-centric affairs. Between Ashoke and Ashima, a cup of coffee is "the only thing he can do for her, the last thing she feels like drinking" (Lahiri 32).

Thus, when migrants arrive in the host countries, they come across new geographies and cultures. With time, they gradually discover the differences between their own cultures and the host culture. The sociocultural parameters as seen from the novels together bring about the contexts for the construction of cultural dichotomies that redefine the life of migrants in the far away land. These dichotomies make the migrants think about their past lives in their homelands. The memory and nostalgia of their past makes them live in a space of negotiation between their past and their present. The upcoming chapter analyses the temporal elements, especially the negotiations between the past and the present lives of migrants.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF TEMPORAL ELEMENTS IN MIGRANT NARRATIVES

Often migrants are caught between a space where they live negotiating between the past and their present selves. A sense of nostalgia traps them from within, that gets reflected in comparative parameters through their interaction with the new place and culture; through changing frameworks of family and relations; and through varying levels of perceptions. As a social phenomenon, migration gets potent when seen through the perspectives of time, nostalgia, and memory. Temporality hence, is closely connected to the understanding of the process of migration. In order to understand the role of time, one needs to examine it from the perspectives of past, present, and future. It is important to understand past as “the trials and tribulations of the present turn out to have roots in the past's unfinished business” (Walton and Jones 34). According to Biophysicist Daniel J. Leahy, there are three types of past: “There is the given past, which is in fact not a past at all but a name for those vestiges of the past which persist in the present as symbols. There is the problematic past, the past of our present, which we have described as those conditions which render our present experiences intelligible” and thirdly, there is “the ‘past as it was,’ the past as a ‘tissue of facts’ or as ‘the realm of truth’ (378-379). The ‘given past’, the ‘problematic past’, and the ‘past as it was’ come together to build a “linear narrative” in the face of the migrant’s “discontinuous present” (Rodriguez 156). The flows of “the past in the present and the present in the past” (Rodriguez 154) makes one understand that “past is merely a function and production of a continuous present and its discourses” (McDowell 147).

According to Smith and Marianne: “Feminist studies and memory studies both presuppose that the present is defined by a past that is constructed and contested. Both fields assume that we do not study the past merely for its own sake; rather, we do so

to meet the needs of the present” (12). Accounts of the past, hence, need to be interpreted and embellished through the perspectives of the present day ethnic and other group identities, aspirations, values, and interests (Seneviratne 13) to better understand the present and the future.

Future always roots back to the past. Events of the past shape the future. In the words of poet and mystery writer Lucha Corpi: “To look into the past . . . is to look into the future” (94). There is no single present, no single past, and no single future in isolation. “There are only presents focused in specific problems, each with its own problematic past and each exhibiting the potentialities of its future” (Leahy 380) and identity, whether individual or cultural, is a story that stretches from the past to the present and the future (Smith and Marianne 8).

History on the other hand is a contested terrain (Kössler 361). It is different from past as it is concerned with a “sequence of events” (Halbwachs, *La Memoire Collective*, 129, 140) and their forgetting and revival with time. Bringing it to the context of migration, Postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha says, “it is this forgetting . . . that constitutes the beginning of the nation's narrative” (160-161). “Being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation” (ibid). Therefore, narratives are written to reflect on the history which is passed down to and received by the next generations. In the words of James E. Young, Professor of English and Judaic Studies, University of Massachusetts, history is always “received” as it is “the combined study of both what happened and how it is passed down to us” (41).

Temporality of narratives includes the past, present, and the future as well. In the words of Daniel J. Leahy: “The problems of past, present and future, of possibility, existence, and actuality are sufficiently difficult to analyze even within some assumed framework and system of principles...” (369). This makes the present research more complex. Migrant psychology not only battles the comparisons between the past and present situations; but it also rests on an uncertain yet hopeful future. Uncertainty of future is a pivotal aspect of the migrant thought. Staying away from one’s homeland makes one uncertain about future ventures.

This chapter aims to analyse the conditions and situations that the migrants face when aspects of time and remembrance are brought together on a temporal scale of past and present from the select South Asian migrant literature.

4.1. Nostalgic Temporality

Moving between histories, past, present, and future, migrants essentially deal with nostalgia and memory. The term 'nostalgia' was coined in 17th century by the Swiss Physician Johannes Hofer. It is a compound word, consisting of *nostos* (return) and *algos* (pain) (Sedikides et al. 304). Hence, literally, nostalgia is the suffering due to relentless yearning for the homeland (ibid). According to Svetlana Boym, Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literatures at Harvard University, nostalgia is a longing for a home "that no longer exists or has never existed. [It] is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but . . . also a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii).

Nostalgia may mark continuity between past and present selves. According to Smith and Marianne, "nostalgia can perpetuate a necessary engagement with the past and act of witnessing in the present" (9). It may facilitate the use of "positive perceptions about the past to bolster a sense of continuity and meaning in one's life" (Sedikides et al. 306). In the words of Historian Michael Kammen, nostalgia is "essentially history without guilt" (688); it can function as a sentimental balm to salve the wounds of more divisive historical conflict (Turner 183). It is a social emotion that strengthens social bonds (Wildschut et al.). During nostalgic reverie, "the mind is 'peopled'" (Hertz 195) and symbolic ties with friends and family are affirmed by making them momentarily a part of one's present. Nostalgia hence, imbues life with meaning and boosts optimism, sparks inspiration, and fosters creativity which facilitates coping with existential threat thereby making a meaningful existence possible (Sedikides et al. 306).

With time, the understanding of nostalgia has changed from a medical disease to a psychiatric disorder to a repressive compulsive disorder to a variant of depression (Sedikides et al. 304). In the words of Psychologist Constantine Sedikides et al.:

Regarded throughout centuries as a psychological ailment, nostalgia is now emerging as a fundamental human strength. It is part of the fabric of everyday life and serves at least four key psychological functions: It generates positive affect, elevates self-esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threat. By so doing, nostalgia can help one navigate successfully the vicissitudes of daily life. More generally, nostalgia is uniquely positioned to offer integrative insights across such areas of psychology as memory, emotion, the self, and relationships. Nostalgia has a long past and an exciting future.” (307).

Nostalgia gets constructed from the fragments of memories that people have lived. Migrants often get nostalgic about the places they have left behind, that gets a vent through a comparison between past and the present situations in contrasting measures. When Lahiri’s character Subhash listens to the sound of foghorn in Rhode Island, he recalls the cultural practice where conch shells are blown to ward off evil at Kolkata: “On cloudy days, at intervals, the sound of a foghorn pierced the air, as conch shells were blown in Calcutta to ward off evil” (*The Lowland*, 38). When he sees boys kicking a ball on the grass with their father. He remembers how he and his brother Udayan used to do so “on the field on the other side of the lowland...” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 36-37). In the process of dwelling between their past and present, migrants often lose their connection with the past as their current lives take over their past experiences. Like Sidhwa’s character Feroza who becomes “disconcerted to discover that she was a misfit in a country in which she had once fitted so well” (*An American Brat*, 239), migrants also feel like an outsider when they visit their homes and try to re-live the past experience. Past, for them, remains as a fragment of memory to be remembered and cherished but never re-realised.

4.2. Migration and Migrant Memories

Nostalgia as a movement back to childhood “home,” whether “literal or mythical,” has powerful psychological implications, that works as “a return in both time and space back to a spiritual origin” where place becomes a site of

‘memory’(Taylor 225). In the words of British Composer Benedict Taylor, “Memory is the key to personal and collective identity... the core of the psychological self” (215). It is not in the true sense, a representation of the past perception (Husserl 82), rather, it is “a constructive process in which bits and pieces of information from various sources are pulled together” (Schacter and Donna 773). Memory is “firmly situated in the present, yet looks toward the future; it is the encounter between the “self” of the portrait and the space that resonates with history” (Smith and Marianne 2). Though, memory resonates with history still “there is a vital difference between memory and history” (Kössler 364-365); memory focuses on continuity of similarity not change, whereas history is all about transformation of events from one stage to another (Halbwach 140).

According to French Philosopher and Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs: “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (*On Collective Memory*, 38). Acts of memory are thus social acts of “performance, representation, and interpretation” (Smith and Marianne 5). “They require agents and specific contexts” (ibid); “they can be conscious and deliberate” (ibid); at the same time, in the case of trauma, “they can be involuntary, repetitious, obsessive” (ibid).

As a social construct, the “preoccupations with the gendered politics of decolonization, exile, migration, and immigration have given rise to questions ... about the transmission of memory across spatial and generational boundaries” (Ganguly). The present is thus, made of numerous layered temporalities that come together in migrant narrative sequences. Hence, memory forms an essential aspect of the process of migration.

Migrant memory is essentially the cultural memory which finds its roots in Social Anthropologist Paul Connerton’s notion of an “act of transfer” (39) in which individuals and groups construct their identities by remembering the shared common past. “These transactions emerge out of a complex dynamics between past and present, individual and collective, public and private, recall and forgetting, power and powerlessness, history and myth, trauma and nostalgia, conscious and unconscious

fears or desires” (Smith and Marianne 5). Cultural memory thus, is the product of personal and collective experiences that shape, even as they transmit. Hence, it can best be understood at the junctures like migration where the individual and the social come together (Smith and Marianne 7).

4.3. Relating Memory and Place

Place becomes a significant part of the memory for migrants. In the continuous process of resettlement, place often offers the space for a contrastive observation between the past and present. In *The Lowland*, when Subhash finds “a room in a white wooden house, close to the main road of the village, with black shutters flanking the windows” (Lahiri 34-35), his mind compares the black window shutters with the kind of shutters he has seen while growing up in Calcutta. In *The Namesake*, when Ganguli family first moved into the house in America, the place adds a lot to Gogol’s memory which eventually makes it difficult for him to live in Kolkata when he grows up (Lahiri 52). With the change of place, responsibilities also vary which affects the degree of control that migrants have on their lives. When Sidhwa’s character Aban leaves Pakistan, to settle with Manek in America, she perceives it as a big dreamy situation: “My Prince Charming carrying me off to the castle of my dreams” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 315). All her family members in Pakistan think that she is lucky; but on personal levels she is tired of coping in the new place, tired of doing everything on her own. When her son cries, there’s no one she can turn to for advice. In her words: “I know my mother and aunts would have known exactly what to do, but I don’t. And I can’t keep running to the doctor every time. Oh, I miss home. I’m longing to see my family and my friends and longing to talk to them. Just sit and talk to them. Sometimes I wish I’d never come here” (ibid). With the passage of time, her American dreams betray her and she longs to go back reminiscing the better past. Hence, memory and place lie on the same plane.

In the article “Identity, Memory and Place,” Anthropologist Kelly Baker writes:

Both memory and place are woven into the fabric of everyday life in that while personal memory makes place out of space, collective memory contributes to peoples' material and symbolic understanding of place through shared knowledges of buildings, streets, historical events, and other particularities of the place, as well as their sense of belonging to that place and their fellow inhabitants....Tied to and shaped by place, memory consists of an ongoing dialogue between the material and symbolic aspects of the past and the continuously unfolding present; working to "crystallize identity" (26).

Hence, place embedded with memories of life, death, and detachments become a significant reminder of the past in the present identities of the migrants. For Lahiri's character Gauri, the new life in America comes with "the anxiety that one day would not follow the next, combined with the certainty that it would" (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 111). Remembering her past she feels like holding her breath as her dead husband Udayan had tried to do in the lowland (ibid) but the sole reason of her choosing to remain alive was the new life that she was carrying in her womb.

It could be seen that uncertain lives of migrants make them detach from places and live a life that is still and stable. In *The Lowland*, when Subhash and Gauri land in America and travel towards the Rhode Island in a car, he drove more quickly than she was used to travelling on the streets of Calcutta. The continuous movement sickened her: "She had preferred being on the plane, detached from the earth, the illusion of sitting still" (Lahiri 124). Even through Gauri knew that the stability was temporary and was an illusion, still she rejoiced that moment as she badly needed to detach herself from the past.

The South Asian migrants who happened to be in America during the 9/11 attacks suffered to an extent that they never could imagine. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, when Mr Mitra and his wife newly relocated to America they thought of it to be a safer place. In the words of Divakurini's character Seema: "They often exclaimed how much safer it was than India – no pocket-maars snatching your wallet, no

burglars breaking into your apartment, no corrupt police who showed up to your store for monthly “tea-money.” Then the Twin Towers fell and everything changed” (97). Korobi feels Seema’s pain when her face caves in like an old woman while mentioning the incident: “When Seema mentions the towers, her face caves in like an old woman’s; her mouth move as though the words she needs have suddenly gone missing. The abrupt change startles me” (ibid). Vic’s restaurant which was popular and was doing a good business in the past broke down with the breaking of the twin towers. In his words:

I remember how terrified and furious I felt right after. That’s when my own restaurant business—which had been doing quite well—started going under. People just stopped coming. Nine-eleven injured the people of the city in so many ways—we still haven’t been able to tally up the casualties (150).

With time, when she listens about it from the voice of the victims, the understanding of the 9/11 attack changes for Korobi; her past perception gets replaced with the new found understanding of the insecurities, discrimination, and fear that migrants had faced in real in the post 9/11 America:

I’m dreaming of the Towers, which Seema talked about a little while ago. When I’d seen the disaster on Indian TV, sitting beside Grandfather in our living room in Kolkata, I’d felt only a mild sorrow. They had been icons of another world, tiny and distant and beheaded already. But, in New York their absence saturates the air I breathe (101).

Thus, the perceptions of people change once they become migrants and see the distant land from a closer angle.

4.4. Deferring Cultures

Time Management is a very important aspect of communication and lifestyle in the West. People give utmost value to time. It is considered a luxury in the Western

culture and is treated equivalent to money. Whereas, in the Eastern society, often people never bother about the importance of time and squander it. Sidhwa portrays this chronemic cultural difference in her narrative:

Why is Pakistan so backward?" he asked. Feroza knew better than to answer. "Are we stuck in the Middle Ages because we were colonized? Because we are illiterate? Because we don't have enough technology to make atom bombs? . . . We're backward because we can't make atom bombs? . . . "No," Manek said . . . It's because we squander time! It is the single most precious commodity besides money, and we act as if we are millionaires in eternity. But time is running out . . . and time will catch up with you" (*An American Brat*, 77).

Culture keeps flowing with time and acquires new dimensions with the place. The change gets perceptible when culture is seen from the angles of past and the present. According to Ralph E. Rodriguez, Professor of American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and English at Brown University, cultural identity "recognizes its discontinuities and ruptures, its dynamic status as always in formation and oscillating among the interstitial spaces between past and present" (166). Bringing this to the context of migration, in the process of displacement and resettlement, migrants often face the change of culture and with time they weather "the trauma of culture shock" that the new world provides, and in this process they emerge tougher (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 119).

In *An American Brat*, Feroza realises the difference in cultures when Jo mentions to her not to cover her legs: "There is nothing wrong in them,...why d'you keep them hidden?" to which Feroza replies:

It's not decent to show your legs in Pakistan". "Recalling the Punjabi movie she had seen before leaving, she used it as an example to explain her culture to Jo. The prancing heroine had tantalizingly lifted her sari to mid-calf and, after a coy look, let it

fall; the entire audience had burst into a chorus of whistles and catcalls (Sidhwa 152).

The differences in simple aspects of life come forward when migrants take a plunge into the past and see the present as could be evidently seen in Sidhwa's novel.

The following passage from *The Mistress of Spices* showcases the migrant dilemma in the new country when they face the complete opposite of what they had expected in the past:

No one told us it would be so hard here in Amreekah, all day scrubbing greasy floors, lying under engines that drip black oil, driving the belching monster trucks that coat our lungs with tar. Standing behind counters of dim motels where we must smile as we hand keys to whores. Yes, always smile, even when people say 'Bastard foreigner taking over the country stealing our jobs' (Divakaruni 62) [Italics in the original text].

Generally, migrants dream of a better life in the host country but, at times they end up in situations where they are not able to afford new dresses for their children: *"the landlord keeps hiking up the rent, last week the car wouldn't start, and the children grow so fast out of their cloths"* (ibid) [Italics in the original text].

Migrants leave behind their ancestral properties in the homeland and move to settle in 'foreign' lands with dreams of better lives. Hence, their economic condition is solely dependent on their performance at workplace. But it is 'time' that determines their success and failure. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, the Mitra's "at first all had gone well" when they had first come to America:

A grand opening at the Mumtaz, positive write-ups in the papers, several exciting sales. They rented a charming apartment on the edge of the Upper West Side, in a building with a door-man, like in the movies. They worked well together, she handling the accounts and reception, and he taking care of marketing and

customers. When work was done, they plunged into the heady life of New York-restaurants, plays, museums, shopping. Even walking in the central park or people-watching around Times Square was an adventure. . .

But after the 9/11 attack shook American roots, the interest for Eastern art faced a downfall. Which made the Mitras Descend from riches to rags (Divakaruni 96).

With time, migrants adapt to the changes that the ‘new’ culture and society provides. In the past, back in Calcutta before getting married it was enough for Lahiri’s character Subhash “to feel an attraction towards certain women. He’d been too shy to pursue them”; but in the present time when he lives together with Holly in America, he has casual sex with her without any intension of marriage and even does “certain ordinary things, as if they were already husband and wife -- going together to the supermarket, filling the cart with food, putting the bags in the trunk of her car -- things he would not have done with a woman, in Calcutta, before getting married” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 75). The adaptation of migrants to change can be seen in *An American Brat*, when Feroza’s mother talks to Manek after a long time she could sense that he had changed” “Her mother had been right when, after that short telephone conversation with him from Pakistan, she had asserted, with tears of happiness shining in her eyes, that her brother had changed” (Sidhwa 103). Feroza, after her conversation with Manek realised that the ‘past’ Manek has transformed into a better version of himself: “Feroza vaguely sensed that America had tested Manek. Challenged him, honed him, extended his personality and the horizon of his potential in a way that had made him hers” (Sidhwa 103). Like Manek, people change with time; the incidents of the past play a strong role in shaping the present. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi lands in America in search of her father and in the memory of her mother who had lived and loved in America. When she sees Oleander flowers (on which she has been named) along the freeway at California, she thinks: “My mother must have travelled this same freeway when she first came to California, seen the same flowers, felt the same stab of homesickness” (Divakaruni 194).

Cultural deference could be seen in Lahiri's character Ashima who is caught between the threads of past when she is "instructed to time the duration of the contractions." To keep in track "she consults her watch" which is "a bon voyage gift from her parents." She remembers her last meeting with her parents at the airport in Calcutta (Lahiri *The Namesake*, 4). The symbolic representation of watch during the phase of the birth of Ashima's first child (a new life) suggests the 'time' that is going to change in the course of raising children in America.

4.5. Effects of Migration on Individual Evolution and Relationships

Raising children in a foreign land is yet another battle between past and present. It is the battle to forget the past and move on with the present, which becomes difficult for the first generation migrants. They wish their children to get familiar with the faces of their family members back in home country, whereas, in the case of second generation migrants like Lahiri's character Gogol, it becomes difficult to remember family members back in home country as they have no memory of them. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri describes this situation through her character Ashima, when she writes: "Sometimes, if she is feeling energetic, she asks Gogol to go and get a photo album, and together they look at the pictures of Gogol's grandparents, and his uncles and aunts and cousins, of whom, in spite of his one visit to Calcutta, he has no memory" (Lahiri 54). On the other hand, through second generation of migrants, the first generation realises the difference between past and present. They understand the value of freedom that their next generation has in plenty compared to what they had in the past times. The freedom of the second generation migrants get reflected in the words of Ali's character Mrs Azad:

Let me tell you a few simple facts. Fact: we live on a Western society. Fact: our children will act more and more like Westerners. Fact: that's no bad thing. My daughter is free to come home and go. Do I wish I had enjoyed myself like her when I was young? Yes! (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 113).

Slowly the second and next generations of migrants drift apart from their homeland. But, for the first generation migrants 'change' is not easy; it is the 'trust' that keeps the migrants and their family members back home, emotionally connected to each other. In *The Namesake*, unlike Ashima's parents, and her relatives, "her grandmother had not admonished Ashima not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair or forget her family the moment she landed in Boston. Her grandmother had not been fearful of such signs of betrayal; she was the only person to predict that Ashima would never change" with time (Lahiri 37). This trust helps Ashima to stand strong as a migrant in the 'new' land and live on her own terms.

Parent-child relation also gets affected in occasions when parents migrate leaving the child behind. In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi's mother dies after her birth; she knows her mother only through a letter which her mother wrote to her father, which was never posted. Finally, when she discovers her father in America and gets the opportunity to go through the pieces of her father's memories which are associated with her mother, she re-lives all the past years which she had spent without a mother:

I long to sit in the chair my father has pointed out, to place my hands where my mother's had been, to learn through osmosis what she would have taught me had she lived. Ironically, I'd walked through this very building a few days ago. But it had no more meaning than when one leafs through a book in a foreign language, intrigued by the strange shapes but mostly frustrated. Now I had a translator, and it made all the difference (Divakaruni 240).

Migration thus, could be seen in a way as making migrants more responsible. Sidhwa's character Manek, who had the reputation of being irresponsible in the past, grows responsible for Feroza. From the moment of Feroza's arrival in New York, Manek chalks out a program for her future that blooms into a full-fledged vocation in a couple of weeks. Manek's phone call "involved not only Feroza's education and the development of her personality but also her induction into the self-sufficient,

industrious, and independent way of American life” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 119). This change not only surprises Feroza but also makes her realise that America has honed Manek and extended his personality and the horizon of his potential to a level that makes him more likeable and responsible than he was in the past.

Like geographical distance, physical distance is also the consequence of migration. Death separates people, but the worst kinds of separations are those that build up with a distance between people who are alive. The distance between a father and son and the manner in which the past differences change the dimensions of the present relation, could be evidently seen in *In the Kitchen*:

He was drifting again. He couldn't remember going to the mill, after that day. God, Dad had pissed him off! And then he'd gone and fallen and broken his ribs. Dad was so invincible. Then he wasn't. It was hard to forgive him for that. But it was all in the past. He hadn't given it a thought in decades. He was getting to be like Nana, the mill, the past, more real to him than what was in front of his face (Ali 341).

The effect of physical distance on relationships could be further seen in Lahiri's novel. The changed relation of Subhash and his parents get reflected in *The Lowland*. When Subhash returns from Rhode Island: “Only two people came to receive him. A younger cousin of his father's, Biren Kaka, and his wife. They were standing by a fruit vendor, unable to smile when they spotted him. He understood this diminished welcome, but he could not understand why, after he'd travelled for more than two days, after he'd been away for more than two years, his parents were unwilling to come even this far to acknowledge his return” (Lahiri 88). But, in the past, “when he'd left India his mother had promised a hero's welcome, a garland of flowers draped around his neck when he stepped off the train” (ibid). They were the same parents who were immensely worried for Subhash's health all the time (Lahiri 2003: 78); but with changing times and situations Subhash sees a new side to his parents; even when he reaches home, neither of his parents come to receive him at the

gate and for a moment all he wished was to go back. Thus, migration affects even the parent child relationship by creating a gap between them.

A lot of adaptation problems are seen in individuals post-migration. Post-migration changes in gender roles have been shown to have a profound effect on married couples (Guruge and Margareth 327). Initially “people are crazy for each other, then it’s gone”, and one is “left feeling terrible.” (Divakaruni, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 87). Specifically, in the case of migrants, love relationships are quite unstable as they not only live between physical and mental spaces, but also between different geographies. In *The Lowland*, Subhash’s brief romantic encounter with Holly that was like a “turbulence in his life” felt trivial later. With time, he learnt to let her go (Lahiri 99). Compromising to contribute with post migration relationships is an effect of migration.

In *The Lowland*, Gauri’s relation with the brothers Udayan and Subhash represents the change of time from the dead past to the hopeful present. “Her strongest image was always of time, both past and future” (Lahiri 110). The relationship of her ‘life’ with ‘time’ is depicted in the following lines:

Across the limitless spectrum of years, the brief tenancy of her own life was superimposed. To the right was the recent past: the year she’d met Udayan, and before that, all the years she’d lived without knowing him. There was the year she was born, 1948, prefaced by all the years and centuries that came before (Lahiri 110-111).

Just like Gauri’s circumstances, situations of life also contribute to the understanding of differences between the past and the present conditions in the lives of migrants. In *Brick Lane*, when Dr Azad and his wife first came to London, they lived in a one-room hovel. They had to face the harshness that often follows the migrants in the beginning phase of resettlement: “We dined on rice and dal. For lunch we drank water to bloat our stomachs. This is how he finished medical school. And

now – look!” (Ali 113) – but with time, they evolve into having a better social stature and lifestyle.

When Lahiri’s character Subhash visits Holly’s house in America he finds a similarity in the maintenance of house between what he had seen in the past, back in Calcutta and what he sees then. He also can relate to the ‘cottage’ style of the house that is often seen in rural India:

The roof of the cottage was as thin as a membrane, the pelting sound of the rain like an avalanche of gravel. Sand was everywhere, between the cushions of the sofa, on the floor, on the round carpet in front of the fireplace where Chester liked to sit. Hastily she swept it out. Just as the dust is swept out twice a day in Calcutta (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 70).

As Subhash is reminded of his past by recurrence of similar incidents, In *The Namesake*, the plastic bracelet on Ashima’s wrist at the hospital along with the watch with her marriage initials remind her of the passage of time -- her journey from being a daughter, to wife, to being a mother: “. . . She’d noticed the watch among the cavalcade of matrimonial bracelets on both her arms: iron, gold, conch. Now, in addition, she wears a plastic bracelet with a typed label identifying her as a patient of the hospital. On the back, surrounded by the words waterproof, antimagnetic, and shock-protected, her marriage initials, A.G., are inscribed” (Lahiri 4).

Lahiri’s character Ashoke remembers his bitter past where he had a rendezvous with death in a train accident in India: “It is not the memory of pain that haunts him; he has no memory of that. It is the memory of waiting before he was rescued, and the persistent fear, rising up in his throat, that he might not have been rescued at all” (*The Namesake* 21). That incident of past stays with him, due to which in the present also “he is claustrophobic, holding his breath in elevators, feels pent-up in cars unless the windows are open on both sides . . . At times the wailing of children fills him with deepest dread. At times he still presses his ribs to make sure they are solid” (ibid). In *The Namesake*, when Ashima is due a child, at the hospital in

America, Ashoke presses his ribs with nervousness “shaking his head in relief, disbelief. Although it is Ashima who carries the child, he, too, feels heavy, with the thought of life, of his life and the life about to come from it” (Lahiri 21). And after his son is born, he realises how his past and his present contribute together to the miracle of his life: “Being rescued from the shattered train has been the first miracle of his life. But here, now, responding in his arms, weighing next to nothing but changing everything, is the second” (Lahiri 24).

Apart from the change of position in personal relationships, with time, the social positions of migrants change as well. They might migrate for better lifestyles but the past at times offers them a better social stature than their present. The following lines from *The Mistress of Spices* capture the manner in which Tilo lived the life of a queen in the captivity of the pirates: “For a year – or was it two, or three? Time runs into itself at moments in my tale – I lived as a queen, leading my pirates to fame and glory, so that bards sang their fearless exploits” (Divakaruni 19). On the other hand at the present, in spite of being free she lived the life of a captive in America. The battle of expectation versus reality also significantly represents the dichotomy of past and present in the lives of migrants. Expectation, just like beer “*goes down so foam-sweet and smooth but then in the throat a bitterness, like a long-ago dream unfinished*” (Divakaruni 62) [Italics in the original text].

With the change of place, authority and position changes as well, the kind of confidence one has in one’s own locality sheds down in the ‘new’ one – especially in the initial phase of resettlement. When Gabe, the boss in the kitchen of the Imperial Hotel, travels to a new place, he feels a certain resistance in his surrounding, and his voice that used to rule everyone in the past turns weightless and fearful (Ali 2009: 506). The secure past versus the insecure present is one of the bigger concerns of the migrants as seen in Lenny, the seven year old narrate in Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man* who feels that the “idiocy of bottled-up emotions can’t be a symptom of growing up, surely!” (Sidhwa 217).

On the other hand, the perceptions of the natives make it difficult for the migrants to fit into the ‘new’ place, and at times the migrants suffer due to their own

perceptions as well. In *Brick Lane*, when Chanu came to London as a young man, he had ambitions and “big dreams”. He had thought that he would get a grand welcome and a big job at London, but he was a victim of the western misperception which believed that “the majority of migrants are desperate people who come from the poorest parts of the world” (Thompson 4-8); It could not differentiate between the Chanu “who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 34). But in case of Divakaruni’s character Vic, his perception towards his motherland keeps him away from visiting it both in the past and in the present:

“I’ve never been to India.” “Never? Didn’t you want to see where your people came from?” He shrugged, a bit defensive.”When I was young, we didn’t have the money to go. By the time we could afford it, I was a teenager and refused to waste my summers that way...” (*Oleander Girl: A Novel* 149).

4.6. Gender and Migration

Study of the aspects of “past and present” from the perspective of women is quintessential to this study on temporal elements. The case of Gauri in *The Lowland*, is a strong example of a woman defeating all odds and going ahead to live the life that she deserves. When Subhash sees Gauri’s photo for the first time, it was a black and white photograph and the second time when he sees her, she is a widow dressed in all white, although the past and the present colours in which he has seen her were the same, still the real Gauri with a white sari cast a stronger effect on him: “That picture of her had been in black and white, but now the absence of colour, even in the warm light of the candle, was more profound” (Lahiri 93-94). Gauri’s story is a journey from a bad past to a better present, whereas in *The Namesake*, Ashima’s better past haunts her in the bad times of the present. The only person in her life who had trusted her fully, who had given her all the strength to stand on own terms was her grandmother. In America, when she reads about her ailing grandmother in the letter from her father the strong Ashima of the past feels weak in the fragile present (Lahiri 37). Migrant women subsequently work on their weaknesses and emerge stronger

with time as they learn to be free from the clutches of the desire to be good to everyone.

In *The Lowland*, the more time Subhash spends with Holly, he realises the difference between the perception of women back home in Calcutta and the woman he is dating presently in America: “The most ordinary details of his life, which would have made no impression on a girl from Calcutta, were what made him distinctive to her” (Lahiri 76). Gauri’s past perception of Udayan changes after she meets Subhash: “Udayan had wanted a revolution, but at home he’d expected to be served; his only contribution to his meals was to sit and wait for Gauri or her mother-in-law to put a plate before him” (Lahiri 126-127). Whereas, her present husband Subhash “encouraged her independence also... She’d wanted to leave Tollygunge. To forget everything her life had been. And he had handed her the possibility” (ibid). Thus, gender roles also impact migrant perceptions.

According to Judy El-Bushra, an activist in the fields of gender, violence, conflict and peace: “Assumptions about gender difference operate not only between individuals but also within institutions, including the household, the community, the state, schools and places of employment, including development agencies themselves” (5). At times, when women like Sidhwa’s Character Aayah (Mumtaz) are forcefully migrated for sex trade, they are robbed off their dignity and are left helpless in the hands of fate (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 248). The perception of migrant women like Mumtaz mutates into a state where they prefer never to go back to their past and choose to remain socially dead while they are still alive: “‘I am past that,’ says Mumtaz. ‘I’m not alive’” (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 262). On the other hand, women like Ali’s character Hashina are so overburdened with work from an early age that their childhood gets buried in their past. They feel like ‘a woman’ even at a young age when they should be playing with other kids: “I am a machine woman and things are different now. When I was helper run around with thread and cloth I was just girl. Even in spite I think I am woman long before” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 150).

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo undergoes pain when she begins to weave desires into her vision. As the old one had told her: “When you begin to weave your

own desires into your vision...the true seeing is taken from you. You grow confused, and the spices no longer obey you.” (Divakaruni 72). Tilo steps out of the store and she transforms from the past; she no longer remains the same Tilotamma – the mistress of spices; she becomes a free woman.

Coming to terms with reality is more complex for genders with differing mindsets. When Lahiri’s character Ashima gets the news of her father’s death, she walks to Harvard Square, to the subway station and leaves all the things that she had kept for her father as gift when she returns India inside a train (Lahiri, *The Namesake*, 46). Leaving behind all the gifts that she had handcrafted for her father was her way of dealing with the pain and doing away with memories; her way to leave behind the past and live stronger on her own terms in the present. In *Ice-Candy Man* Sidhwa’s character Ranna who suffers due to the partition accepts his loss and also gets adjusted to his new environment. The following lines from the novel show the manner in which life moves on leaving behind the past: “So... one gets used to anything... if one must. The small bitterness and grudges I tend to nurse make me feel ashamed of myself. Ranna’s ready ability to forgive a past none of us could control keeps him whole” (Sidhwa 211).

The loneliness and feeling of being isolated are feelings that people suffer from in alien lands that make one seek for human company. The manners in which different genders tackle these situation also varies. In *The Lowland*, Holly keeps her radio on whenever she goes out as she hates “coming back to a quiet house.” Subhash after knowing this aspect of Holly’s life remembers “the shortwave radio that he and Udayan had put together” in the past, “drawing information from all over the world to another isolated place” (Lahiri 69). Subhash keeps missing his past in every occasion of present as distance separates him from his homeland: “For a year and a half he had not seen his family. Not sat down with them, at the end of the day, to share a meal... He was learning to live without hearing their voices, to receive news of them only in writing” (Lahiri 63).

Uncertainty gets amplified with the feeling of isolation. When Subhash goes on a crew with scientists and other students, he feels lonely and isolated and is

“unable to fathom his future, severed from his past” (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 62-63). But just like Gauri, it is hope that keeps the migrants going: “. . . the future was visible, unspooling incrementally. She wanted to shut her eyes to it. She wished the days and months ahead of her would end. But the rest of her life continued to present itself, time ceaselessly proliferating” (Lahiri 111). When the Gypsy woman in *In the Kitchen* tells Lena that she will be fortunate to meet the love of her life, she showcases the aspect of hope in the minds of migrants: “You know what is fortune? Yes, future. She use tea leaves for this. She tell me, you will meet man, beautiful man, tall and dark hair, yes, like fairy tale, and beautiful man he have mark on neck, back here, is mark from birth, yes, birthmark and he will take you to your life” (Ali 164).

The following excerpt from Udayan’s letter In *The Lowland* also speaks about the hope that make people survive through their past and present situations:

By the year 2000, that is only thirty-one years from now, the people of the whole world will be liberated from all kinds of exploitation of man by man and will celebrate the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse-tung’s thought (Lahiri 33)
[Italics in the original text]

The change of place, culture, relations, situations, and perceptions happen in the life of every migrant, over a journey from the past to the present to the future. The past does not exist to be changed or altered (Leahy 377); it is a space that is empty until one brings memories to it (Smith and Marianne 2). In the words of Sociologist Reinhart Kössler: “Memory needs to be made tangible and visible, by being reproduced in a continuous fashion. Such reproduction happens in a number of ways, making use of and combining in various ways time and space, as well as text, images and tangible objects. This can be conceptualised within the dimensions of space and time. In terms of space, specific places are demarcated to commemorate important events, both with or without spatial connections to the commemorated instance” (365) that are facilitated by the backward glancing of nostalgia which counters “the continuously shifting identifications of an increasingly transregional and global world, forming a conservative defence mechanism against contemporary culture’s overflow

of meanings by positing the singular meaningfulness of a sturdy, unified past” (Turner 183).

Hence, by bringing nostalgia and memory to study the present condition of migrants, this chapter facilitates the understanding of their negotiation between past and the changing present in the process of framing future. But, after the mental dilemma of living between past and present, migrants often get into a phase where they get caught between dual identities – the identity of the past and the identity of the present – and become hyphenated before they finally learn to deal with the differences. The forthcoming chapter interprets the hyphenated condition of the migrant identity.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION OF HYPHENATED IDENTITIES IN MIGRANT LITERATURE

Identity is the social, cultural, or physical attribute by which one is known to the world. It keeps transforming with experience, exposure, and time. Hence, it gives way to diverse forms of “identification,” which causes confusion over the existing forms of “stable identities” (Faymonville 130). Leaving their homeland for any number of years, maybe even the rest of their lives, immigrants construct a new identity abroad through the use of “imagination, nostalgia, and memories.” (Mostofi 685). In the present times of migration and multiculturalism, where national identities change “across and within national boundaries” (Gray 85), the study of “identity” offers a significant role towards understanding the unstable migrant experience.

5.1. Interpreting Multiple Identities

The concept of identity was not predominantly used before 1950. It was developed by an immigrant, Erik H. Erikson, a German-born American Developmental Psychologist and Psychoanalyst in his book *Childhood and Society* and many other subsequent works. His coinage of the terms ‘identity’ and ‘identity crisis’ were inspired by “the experience of emigration, immigration, and Americanization” (Gleason 31; Rumbaut 753). Migrant experience differs based on place, people, climate, and culture. These changes compiled together, bring a lot of mutations in their personality and lifestyle, which subsequently contribute towards the identity creation of the second generation migrants.

According to Geographers Lan-Hung Nora Chiang and Chih-Hsiang Sean Yang: “There is no simple way of defining and expressing identity, as it is complex and can change over time and space, due to a multicultural background” (256).

However, as migrants move along the continuum, they mostly develop three kinds of identities: the immigrant identity, the hyphenated ethnic identity, and the hybrid identity. These identities get defined by “different perceptions and understandings of race relations and of opportunities” in the host nation (Waters 795).

When migrants live as a separate entity as outsiders, among the host community, the identity that they bear is called ‘immigrant identity’; whereas when migrants find both their ethnic as well as non-ethnic identities in a state where they connect as well as separate, they experience ‘hyphenated identity’; and when migrants, mostly of the second generation, have both their ethnic as well as non-ethnic identities mixed up, they experience ‘hybrid identity’. According to Sociologist Mary C. Waters, in case of such contrasting identities one can see all these identities “as being an embrace of a particular identity, as well as an opposition to another identity” (Waters 811).

The shift from ‘immigrant identity’ to ‘hyphenated identity’ and to ‘hybrid identity’, often builds up a different person within the psyche of migrants, may it be in terms of national identity, language, economy, gender, name, physical identity, or lifestyle. These shifts in identity lead migrants from ‘culture shock’ to marginalisation of one’s previous identity. Migrants suffer from binary opposition dwelling in between sociocultural complexities, politics, and changing relations which “fracture” (Hussain 10) their identities and leave them in the condition of ‘hyphen’. In order to understand the condition of ‘hyphen’, the role of the ‘other’ in the process of formation of identity becomes significant. According to Sociologists Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex: “Identity is both a psychological and a sociological term” (4) for it is the basis of all other social constructions such as gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. “Identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized” (Connolly 64) and it cannot be ‘formed’ independently outside the influence of the ‘other’. Thus, in the words of Postcolonial critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin: "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (35).

Immigrants mostly maintain a “proper public face”, “public identity” or “persona” to disguise a ‘private self’ (Mauss 12-14). That ‘persona’ becomes a “mask” which hides a different part of the ‘self’. Homi K. Bhabha's interpretation of the ‘other’ as "an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity," (67) shows the significance of the relationships among the ‘other’, the ‘self’, and the ‘public’ identity. The formation of social identity not only happen with memories of the homeland, experiences of migration, and from members of the ethnic groups, but also by the influence of the members, laws, and circumstances of the host culture. According to Political Theorist William E. Connolly: “An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized” (64). Thus, without the ‘other’, individuality is meaningless.

Race is an important part in the understanding of Jean- Paul Sartre and Franz Fanon’s theory of "othering" (Fanon 138). For immigrants, ‘the body’ is significant in the construction of identity as it is interpreted by the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. According to American Philosopher and Psychologist William James: the body is "just as much the entire vehicle of the self-feeling" as it is "the vehicle of the self-seeking" (322). The more the skin is like the skin of the people of the host nation, greater the ability for assimilation of the public face, which translates to success of migrants, or else they are ‘othered’ into a position of wretchedness and inferiority.

5.2. Hyphenated Identities

In the words of Susan Stanford Friedman, Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin Madison:

Identity is constructed relationally through difference from the other; identification with a group based on gender, race, or sexuality, for example, depends mostly on binary systems of “us” versus “them” where difference from the other defines the group to which one belongs. Conversely, identity also suggests sameness, as in the word identical; an identity affirms some form

of commonality, some shared ground. Difference versus sameness; stasis versus travel; certainty versus interrogation; purity versus mixing: the geographies of identity moves between boundaries of difference and borderlands of liminality (15).

Hyphen lies between the 'self' and the 'other' where it simultaneously connects as well as sets them apart at different proportions. Hyphens are radically ambivalent signifiers; they simultaneously represent distance and connection, belonging and not-belonging. According to Nasser Hussain, former Professor of Law, Jurisprudence and Social thought at Amherst College: "What is even more curious about a hyphenated pair of words is that, meaning cannot reside in one word or the other, but can only be understood in movement" (10). This less noticed trivial item of grammar raises serious conceptual questions. According to Berel Lang, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the State University of New York: "The lowly hyphen is bound by few set rules; it rests on a convenient escape clause that allows users themselves to decide at times to do away with it, turning hyphenated phrases back into two distinct words (as in "science fiction" or "peer group") or, in the opposite direction, blending hyphenated phrases into a single word (as in "postmodern" or "subdivision")" (1). Just like the "binational hyphenated" identity (Rumbaut 774) of migrants, with time, the hyphen either fades making migrants the bearers of two distinct identities or their identities turn into a single word amalgamation of both the identities. In Lang's words: "The more frequent the usage...the more probable the single word option." (1).

Hyphenated identity changes the direction of social discourse from "melting pot" to "multi-pot" (Lang 2) where different cultures exist in a hyphenated condition; this representation of 'the divided self' between two vying traditions creates anxiety in the migrants (Lang 4). According to Sociologist Steven M. Cohen, the Jewish "Decline" theory sets towards assimilation in which "the hyphen marks the first step toward the state of assimilation" by making the second half of the hyphen disappear; and the "Stabilization" theory "finds in the assertion of hyphenated identity the possibility... of a steady state in which both sides of the hyphen survive" (49-51). The

conflicts raised by these two theories mark a prime occasion for the "anxiety of identity" (Lang 5).

In Arjun Appadurai's words: "There is the seductiveness of a plural belonging, of becoming American while staying somehow diasporic, of an expansive attachment to an unbounded fantasy space. But, while we make our identities, we cannot do so exactly as we please. As many of us find ourselves racialized, biologized, minoritized, somehow reduced than enabled by our bodies and our histories" (*Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* 170). Whereas Cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues: Identity "is always a structure that is split. It is something that happens over time, that is never absolutely stable, that is subject to the play of history over time and the play of difference" (*Becoming National, A Reader* 345).

In multicultural pots like America, where the structure of society is essentially constituted by the immigrants, culture is "likely to be spelled out with a hyphen." (*Time*) (Mostofi 697). According to Kenneth A. Bruffee, professor of English at Brooklyn College: "Life at the hyphen is not just a cultural identity peculiar to each one of us, nor is it merely the residue left over after taking into account our differences" (15). Hyphen, thus, lies somewhere between the self and the other, between the similarities and differences that the immigrants share with the natives of the host nation. Hence, understanding hyphenated identity is essential not just towards the understanding of the psychological dilemmas migrants undergo, but also towards understanding of social concepts like "dual citizenship" and the identities of second and third generation migrants. Apart from that, it is instrumental towards understanding of the varying immigrant behaviour in response to "hostile or welcoming atmospheres" ((Lary 113). Immigrants often embrace the citizenship of the host nation with time, whereas their preceding generations would unlikely even accept a hyphenated identity. Thus, "identity is dynamic, not a static state of mind" (ibid).

This chapter examines the concept of hyphenation of identity based on various facets and determiners of migration with contexts from the selected texts.

5.3. Contested National Identities

When people migrate from different countries to the world capitals like UK or US, they hardly get recognised with their national identities. This challenges their identity. In *Brick Lane*, when Chanu says: “We are from Bangladesh”, the Londoner replies: “Is that in India?” and Chanu has to tell him: “No, no. India is one country. Bangladesh is another country” (Ali 296). These kinds of misplacement of identities slowly make the migrants move away from their ethnicity by creating a hyphen in their nationality. These situations have their roots in the fact that when a ‘foreign’ culture arrives, natives are sceptic about it and hence they look at it with their preconceived notions. This leads to the framing of wrong perspectives and biases regarding identities of migrants in the minds of the natives. In *Brick Lane*, the leaflets that were distributed among Londoners surfaces the bias towards migrants and the identity curbing attempt of the natives. On the leaflet it was mentioned:

It's multicultural murder. Do you know what they are teaching your children today? In domestic science your daughter will learn how to make a kebab, or fry a bhaji. For his history lesson your son will be studying Africa or India or some other dark and distant land. English people, he will learn, are Wicked Colonialists. (Ali 251) [Italics in the original text].

To which Chanu replies: ““See how they do that?”. . . ‘Putting Africa with India, all dark together. . .’” (ibid).

During the British rule, when India and Pakistan got divided, people were forced to migrate from one country to the other. This created a crisis in the identities of people. The following lines from the *Ice-Candy Man* show this dilemma, where a character is no more able to identify himself as the native of Pakistan and mocks off his situation by telling that he is English when he remarks: ““Again Bombay?” says the man sitting at the end of my bench who had objected to our coming to India in the first place. ‘If we must pack off, let’s go to London at least. We are the English king’s subjects aren’t we? So, we are English!’” (Sidhwa 40). When migrants get too much

gelled with the new found culture in the new land, they at times end up neglecting their own culture, whereas deep within them they are never able to get rid of their culture. This situation gives rise to hyphenated identities in their personalities. In *An American Brat*, when “Feroza adopted the classic pose of the bemused New Yorker tourist and bent back awkwardly to ogle the skyscrapers beginning to blaze their lights, Manek preened and glowed as if he were the architect of the fabulous city. It dawned on Feroza that Manek was not showing her around as much as showing off America.” When Feroza observes this difference in Manek, she feels “an unexpected and almost tragic sense of loss” (Sidhwa 77-78) as it strikes her that he might not want to return to Pakistan any more. Manek’s address to Feroza as ‘*desi*’ shows how his Americanization has led him to mentally marginalise his own culture: “I don’t know when you *desis* will learn good manners.” . . . “What do you mean, ‘you *desis*’! What’re you? A German?” (Sidhwa 101). Feroza could only guess how Manek had been taught American ways and mannerisms. He had become a mimic man; in Homi K. Bhabha’s words, within the demand for identity, stasis, and the counterpressure of the diachrony of history, his mimicry represents an “ironic compromise” (85-92). She understands that he must have endured countless humiliations which have “affected him, changed him not on the surface but fundamentally” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 102).

On the other hand, in *Brick Lane*, migrants like Mrs Islam assimilate both the cultures and take the best of each. They get along in the multicultural milieu and live it their own way as could be evident from Ali’s work: “Mrs Azad continued. Listen, when I’m in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I’m just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry, that’s my business” (Ali 114). For majority of migrants, it becomes difficult to assimilate both the cultures. Hence, they find it comfortable in completely adapting their lifestyle in relation to the new culture: “If you mix with all these people, even if they are good people, you have to give up your culture to accept theirs. That’s how it is” (Ali 29). This ‘assimilation of cultures’ at times contribute to the building of hyphenated identities in migrants.

When migrants return to their homeland after long gaps, they are no more able to identify with the natives of their homeland. Their native identity gets cornered in their homeland. They are caught in the hyphen of being a foreigner among their own people. When Lahiri's character Subhash returned from the Rhode Island, "though he looked like any other Bengali he felt an allegiance with the foreigners now. He shared with them a knowledge of elsewhere. Another life to go back to. The ability to leave" (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 112). This ability to escape to another country becomes a significant reason of the distances that grows between the migrants and their homeland.

Along with being marginalised, identity is also constructed, marketed, and politicised. The history taught in the British schools always glorifies Western identity; they never portray the colonised nations in good light. To shadow their imperialism, they glorify colonisation by equalising it with modernisation. In the words of Ali's character Chanu:

'... The English gave us the railways. As if we should get down on our knees for this.' He appealed now to his public. 'Do you think they would have brought the railway if they did not want to sell their steel or their locomotives? Do you think that they brought us railways from the goodness of their hearts? We needed irrigation systems, not trains' (*Brick Lane* 249).

The honest comments of the people from the colonising country are never brought into attention of people. Their histories never show the colonised nations in true lights. False identities are constructed and infused into young minds that further add to hyphenation. The following passage from *Brick Lane* points this aspect:

Do you know what Warren Hastings said about our people? ... "They are gentle, benevolent..." So many good qualities he finds. In short he finds us "as exempt from the worst properties of human passion as any people on the face of the earth." ... 'Do you think they teach this in the English schools?' (Ali 186).

Wrong information leaves a lot of unwanted impact on the minds of the second generation migrants that make them divided and hyphenated as they grow up.

5.4. Linguistic Hyphens

Language being the medium of expression is a major shaper of identity. According to Sociologist Ruben G. Rumbaut: language is “closely, and affectively, connected to the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity” (779). Every culture has its own communication etiquettes. While living with her friend in America, Sidhwa’s character Feroza couldn’t believe that people actually said things like: ““Do you mind if I turnoff the light?” or, “Is it all right if I read? I wouldn’t want to disturb you”” (*An American Brat* 149). While adapting to the new speaking etiquette “Feroza sounded mannered even to herself sometimes” (ibid). She had to learn the new accent and mannerisms to adapt herself to the newfound culture:

One evening in the dining room, Feroza asked someone where the “may-o-neeze” was. No one understood what she wanted, until she found the glass jar on a counter” (154). Jo helped Feroza in improving her pronunciations and “taught her to say mayonnaise as “may-nayze” and mother-fucker as “motha-fuka,” with the accompanying curl of nose and emphasis. She made Feroza practice saying: “Gimme a lemon-ade. Gimme a soda,” and cured her of saying: “May I have this – may I have that? (154).

The following passage from *An American Brat* shows how language plays a significant role in the identity of a person and how important it is to reshape that identity to survive in a foreign country as a migrant:

The English that she used while speaking to her friends in Lahore was informal because it had a mixture of Urdu and Punjabi words tossed in for emphasis, expression, or comic effect. When she talked to Manek, her intonation and her accent also changed – not to mention the blithe bounce of the Gujurati idiom that popped into her English. But she could hardly speak to Jo that way. Jo

would understand neither the syntax nor the pronunciation and would find her even more “foreign” and tedious than she perhaps already did. It was almost like learning a new language, and both sometimes wondered if the other knew enough English (Sidhwa 149).

Being the medium of communication, learning the foreign language of the host country gives the migrant a sense of completeness in constructing the new identity. When Ali’s Character Nazneen stepped out of her house and walked through the streets of London, she felt proud of the fact that she could communicate in English, which was a foreign language to her. It was her significant step towards a new independent ‘self’:

And in spite of the rain, and the wind which whipped it into her face, and in spite of the pain in her ankle and arm, and her bladder, and in spite of the fact that she was lost and cold and stupid, she began to feel a little pleased. She had spoken in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 61).

At times, migrants like Ali’s character Moldovan, face criticism for their unusual accent (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 28) whereas at times, migrants like Suleiman in *In the Kitchen*, who accept and learn the new language of the host country so well that they speak in par with the natives (Ali 27).

Thus, language plays a very significant role in the shift of identity in migrants and in the process of adapting to a new language, migrants somewhere accept it as their own, whereas the fact is that however they might try, it can never become their first language. Hence, between their first language and the newly acquired second language, migrants live somewhere in a hyphenated condition.

5.5. Hyphenated Economic Identity

Apart from language, economic condition is a significant contributing factor in the framing of identity of individuals. Being one of the primary push factors of migration, it becomes a more crucial factor in the case of migrants. According to Tanya Golash-Boza, Professor of Sociology at the University of California: the “processes of assimilation are affected by a number of factors including: the human and financial capital of the immigrant parents... cultural and economic obstacles... and the community and family resources available to the immigrants and their children...” (30). Economy thus, determines the lifestyle of people, which contributes to identity making in individuals. In *An American Brat*, Manek’s description of America’s economy shows his own economic condition and identity conflict as a Pakistani:

. . . Manek regaled his audience with boasts of the wonders of America. “You think we eat well because we’re rich? You should see how the poor in America eat! Everyday chicken! Everyday baked-beans, ham, and sardines! What the Americans throw away in one day can fill the stomachs of all the hungry people in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan for two days.” (Sidhwa 197).

On the other hand, it could be seen from the novels that the first world nations are also poor in their own distinct ways. When Sidhwa’s character Feroza went through the terminal in America, “she sensed the terminal was the infested hub of poverty from which the homeless and the discarded spiralled all over the shadier sidewalks of New York.” When Feroza sees “ragged and filthy men and women were spreading scored of flattened cardboard boxes to sleep on in the bus terminal” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 80) she realises that the rich identity of America that Manek had fed to her mind, was not true. America has the rich, so also it has the poor, it itself was in an economic hyphen.

In *Brick Lane*, Chanu's situation in London is a perfect instance of hyphenated identity. His family and relatives back home think that he has become a rich and affluent Londoner, whereas in reality he barely had money to return to Bangladesh. But, Chanu keeps the mask on and when the letters come from family members and relatives requesting for money, all he does is blame himself:

'All this time they thought I was rich. Why should I stay here in this foreign land, if it did not make me rich? I let them think it. It suited them and it suited me. Actually I told them some more things that are not true, have never been true. Made myself a big man. Here I am only a small man, but there...' the smile vanished. 'I could be big. Big Man. That's how it happened.' He sighed and placed his hands atop his stomach. 'So when the begging letters come and I blame left and I blame right, what I should be blaming is this, right here.' He moved his hands up over his chest, to show how his heart, his pride, had betrayed him (Ali 133).

On the other hand, Divakaruni's character Korobi has to fake her identity to act "like a rich man's daughter" in order to find her real identity (*Oleander Girl: A Novel* 128).

5.6. Contesting Racial Identity

Migrants mostly are from diverse racial backgrounds. Therefore most times they face racial discrimination from the natives of the host nation. The identity of the migrants gets affected and hyphenated due to this discrimination as well. Ali narrates many such situations where migrants suffer due to their race. In Ali's character Chanu's words: "And you see, to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan. But these people are peasants. Uneducated. Illiterate. Close-minded. Without ambition" (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 28). Most of the times "non-whiteness poses a barrier to occupational mobility and social acceptance" (Golash-Boza 30). These discriminations force them to believe that only by becoming

another race, they will be able to get respect and acceptance in society: “‘If you wanted to be cool you had to be something else – a bit white, a bit black, a bit something If you wanted to be cool, you couldn’t just be yourself. Bangladeshi.’” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 263). These discriminations are the means of social subjugation. In the words of Chanu: “‘If they see us rise then they are resentful because we have left our proper place They can play on those fears to create racial tensions, and give these people a superiority complex” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 38). Racial identity hence creates conflicts for the migrants and the host nations.

In the Kitchen voices the aspect of racial tension in the conversation between Ted and Nana, where mutual respect is considered the key towards peaceful co-existence of different races (migrants and natives) in multicultural societies. As said by Nana, not how one looks, but what one does determines one’s identity:

‘They came for the work, Nana,’ said Ted. ‘That’s right,’ said Nana. I tell you what disgusts me. When people say it’s all about colour, well that’s just nonsense, because I’ve nothing against any colour, black, white or brown. It’s what you do that’s important. You do right by me and I do right by you, isn’t that the way?’” (Ali 220).

But unfortunately, most of the times, the treatment of the natives towards the migrants is not free from racial discrimination; which, in the long run, make migrants end up suffering from psychological hyphenations.

5.7. Gendered Hyphens

Among many other factors, gender is an important framer of identity in female migrants. According to Anthropologist Marleine Marcelin:

Womanhood is an ever changing conceptualization There is a constantly evolving effort to reconcile the dissimilarities of identity reflected through standards of beauty, sexuality, and gender roles. For first generation American and immigrant

women the challenge of navigating through pivotal stages of their lives as a product of two cultures has been one of difficulty, fueled by the contradicting norms of beauty, identity and womanhood: defined by American standards which often times more than not clashes with the way in which these standards are defined in their homes.

It could be seen from the select novels that, differences in culture, thought, upbringing, and lifestyle of women contribute to hyphenated identity in female migrants. As could be observed in *An American Brat*, “Feroza had grown up, like most young girls in the Subcontinent, believing that everything she expected of life would be hers after marriage. The denial of even her most insignificant wish was followed by comments like: “You’ll reign like a queen in your husband’s house. You can do as you wish once you’re married.” Statements like this made marriage seem to all the girls to be the ideal condition of existence” (Sidhwa 219). Feroza’s journey from being brought up with the thought that marriage would unshackle women, and “open their lives to adventure and knowledge of the world, give them the freedom that is each individual’s due” (ibid) to being able to forgo her American lover and choosing to be independent, portrays the space travelled by a woman from ‘denial of identity’ to ‘hyphenation of identity’ to ‘finding identity’.

Identities of migrant women are more affected in the ‘new’ land as they are shackled with rules and morals which they have been brought up with; fighting those off and creating their ‘own identity’ makes their journey tougher than men. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is made to clearly understand the difference between a ‘lover’ and a ‘mistress’. Her heart wants to be a lover but she has to juggle her emotions and choose the identity of a mistress and leave her passions behind: “Not warm and damp as the breath of a waiting lover against the windowpane, for a mistress must leave her own passions behind” (Divakaruni 31).

From the novels it is observed that, women in the East, lack the freedom of choice as per sexual fulfilment is concerned. In *An American Brat*, when Feroza’s mother Zarine visits her daughter in America, looking at her lifestyle, she is worried

about her virginity, to which Feroza replies: “If you are referring to my virginity, you may relax,” and adds “I’m perhaps the only twenty-year-old virgin in all America”, which clearly shows the difference in lifestyle and the cultural baggage that she has to deal with (Sidhwa 292).

Not just sexual freedom but freedom to choose identity is snatched away from women in the male dominated South Asian societies. Women are not allowed to have their own views or ask questions. When Ali’s character Nazneen asks her mother about her father, she replies: “If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men.” (*Brick Lane* 80). Women are considered to serve of men. The old man who loves Hasina as his daughter, believes that it is the duty of a daughter to rub his feet: “But if I had a daughter lovely daughter like you to rub my feet I will be happy man.” (Ali, *Brick Lane*, 154).

Often women do not get a chance to create an identity for themselves; identity is forced on them. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen’s relationship with Chanu is an example of voicelessness of a woman in front of her fixed social identity. Nazneen has travelled all the way from Bangladesh to London, still her fate remains the same. Chanu considers her lucky as he is educated: “‘It is lucky for your mother,’ Chanu told the girls, ‘that I am an educated man’” (Ali 192). On the other hand, Nazneen struggles between her identity of being a wife and the identity of a new found lover for Karim in herself; and when her daughter asks her about whether she loves Chanu, Nazneen says: “Your father is a good man. I was lucky in my marriage.” To which her daughter replies: “You mean he doesn’t beat you” (Ali 303). Even though Nazneen suffers psychological torture every day because of her husband, the only fact that she is not beaten by her husband is supposed to makes her feel lucky in her marriage.

Wars and Partitions could be seen as affecting the identity of women. During the partition of India, women either got lost or kidnapped. On being found, they were not taken back by their families. Even if it is not the fault of those women, their husbands and families “can’t stand their women being touched by other men” (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 222). In *Ice-Candy Man*, Lenny on knowing about Hamida who went through this, says to her: “I don’t like your husband” (ibid), to which

Hamida, just like Ali's Character Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, replies: "“He's a good man,' . . . 'It's my kismet that's no good... we are *khut-putli*, puppets, in the hands of fate.”" (ibid). Lenny thinks of what Hamid-Ali-alias-Hari once told her when she reached to lift a tiny sparrow that had tumbled from its nest on our varendra: "Let it be...The mother will take care of it. If our hands touch it, the other sparrows will peck it to death." "Even the mother?" Lenny asked. "Even the mother!" he'd said. "It doesn't make sense – but that's how it is, it is" (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, 215-216). Migrant women like Sidhwa's character Hamida and Ali's character Nazneen are so helplessly tangled in their changing identities that instead of blaming their husbands, they accept everything as their destiny. Thus, the identities of such women get hyphenated in the hands of the society and migration worsens this situation.

In *Ice-Candy Man*, Sidhwa portrays how women are exploited by their male counterparts for their own growth. Sidhwa's character 'Ice-Candy Man', when unable to win Aaya's love, rips her off her dignity and identity in public and forcefully takes her away with him and later lives off her earning by forcing her to become a sex worker. (248-249). Women undergo so much humiliation in the process of migration that they are no more able to smile in response to situations like Ali's character Oona in *In the Kitchen*. For Women like Aaya and Oona, in the words of Monica Ali, life becomes a "never ending cosmic joke" (Ali 24).

On the other hand, women like Divakaruni's character Korobi emerge stronger in the process of migration. They take the hardships as opportunities of self sustenance. In the following excerpt from *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, when Korobi, on being chased by a stranger, does not get any help from her host Mitra, takes charge of the situation:

I look for Mitra, but he's gone ahead around the corner of the building. I have no choice but to face the man, who's almost upon me. Heart thudding, I square my shoulders and yell, "Go away! Stop harassing me!" To emphasize my words, I clap my hands. The sound echoes eerily down the street like a shot. The man doesn't leave but at least he stops advancing. That's victory

enough. I run and catch up with Mitra, stumbling in my unsuitable Kolkata sandals. He gives me a brief, appraising look. Was he watching to see how I'd handle myself in a dangerous situation? Was he hoping I'd break down? I am happy to have disappointed him (Divakaruni 114).

Korobi proves to her host that even though 'new' at America, she can handle problems herself. This new found self-confidence helps Korobi to rediscover her identity through the search of her missing father in America.

A woman is often considered as someone who is taken care of by men, by father before marriage, and by husband after marriage. When these women migrate, the baggage of their own culture along with the 'new' found culture of the 'new' land come together and hyphenate their identities.

5.8. Hyphenated Connotations

According to Sociologist David Mason: "Names are intimately bound up with identity – both individual and collective" (123). The primary identifying factor of a person is his/her name. People get recognised by their names. Names not only define people by providing information about their gender, the works they are associated with, and the families they were born in; in most cases names also give us the information about the language they speak, and the countries they come from. Thus, names are vivid, symbolic, and meaningful.

When one migrates to a new place, where one's name is unfamiliar to the natives; at times, one suffers from identity crisis, so instead of being the black sheep, he/she wishes to change his/her name to something that would be more articulable to the natives. In *An American Brat*, Manek changes his name to Mike as he believes in the philosophy: "In America be American" (Sidhwa 260). Migrants often go with these life strategies to cope with the 'new' found culture and get caught up between dual identities, as could be seen when:

Feroza... looked at the card with an appropriately admiring smile and tried valiantly to maintain it as she realised, with a jolt, that he had changed his name from Manek Junglewalla to Mike Junglevala. She couldn't help it. "Mike?" she asked, her appalled voice conjuring up Jo's unpleasant boyfriend. "You've become a Mike?" Manek remained calm. "The people I have to deal with at work find it hard to remember Manek. It's too foreign, it makes them uneasy. But I'm one of the guys if I'm Mike." "In America, be –" and Aban added her voice to Feroza's as they both chorused, "American!" The tension was at once dispelled (ibid).

Similarly, in *The Namesake*, Gogol's parents wanted to name him Nikhil as the name 'Nikhil', is artfully connected to their previous choice – Gogol. "Not only is it a perfectly respectable Bengali good name, meaning "he who is entire, encompassing all," but it also bears a satisfying resemblance to Nikolai, the first name of the Russian Gogol" (Lahiri 56). When Gogol was younger, he wanted his name to remain unchanged in his school records. As a child he liked his pet name 'Gogol', but as he grew up he realised that he was never happy with his name, as the writer he is named after, does not have 'Gogol' as his first name; his first name is Nikolai. "Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. And so, it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake" (78). Thus, the hyphenated identity that Gogol suffers due to his name is a major theme of *The Namesake*.

In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi's journey to the post 9/11 America is not just a journey in search of her father, but also a journey that helps her know the meaning of her name and the significance of it. When she meets her father she asks: "Did my mother ever tell you why she wanted to name me Korobi?" Her father replies: "She did, actually...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 253). This not only made Korobi know what her mother wanted her to be like, but also made her bear the identity of the

oleander. Names are symbolic. Just like Korobi, people are given chosen names as they are expected to be like the name, or inculcate in them values for what the name stands for. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo, before setting for her journey to America to become the Mistress of Spices and be the restorer of health and hope of the common man, she had chosen her own name. She wanted to be named 'Tilottama'; she tells her First Mother: "*Til* is the sesame seed, under the sway of planet venus, gold-brown as though just touched by flame... I will be Tilottama, the essence of *til*, life-giver resorther of health and hope" (Divakaruni 41-42). First Mother warned her, as seen in the novel:

When Bramha made Tilottama to be the chief dancer in Indra's court, he warned her never to give her love to man – only to dance. . . Remember this too: Tilottama, disobedient at the last, fell. And was banished to earth to live as a mortal for seven lives. Seven mortal lives of illness and age, of people turning in disgust from her twisted leprous limbs" (Divakaruni 42-43).

To which, with a firm voice Tilo replied: "But *I* will not fall, Mother . . . My heart is filled with passion for the spices, my ears with the music of our dance together. My blood with our shared power. I need no pitiful mortal man to love. I believe this wholly" (ibid). But, subsequently Tilo falls in love and faces a shift in identity as the spices betray her.

Apart from names, people are also given pet names. According to Jhumpa Lahiri, it is a practice that grants two names to every single person:

In Bengali, the word for pet name is *daknam*, meaning, literally, the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other inmates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a persistent reminder of childhood, a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people (*The Namesake*, 26).

Therefore, identities are not constant; there is always an invisible hyphen that holds all these identities together.

5.9. Spatial Identities

According to Cultural and Postcolonial critic Iain Chambers, “movement, migration, maps and travel” characterize “our time” (3). These metaphors essentially speak of the changing life of people along with the changing places. Hence, just like the association of identity with name, the association of identity with place is inseparable. The land where one and one’s family lives from generations and the place where one grows up adds a lot to one’s making. “What do you miss about it?” when holly asks Subhash about Kolkota, all he replies is: “It’s where I was made” (Lahiri, *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, 66-67). In *Ice-Candy Man*, the partition of India and Pakistan created a fracture in the identity of the inhabitants. Their sense of belongingness was the major question that they had to deal with. To quote from the novel: “Playing British gods under the ceiling fans of the Falettis Hotel – behind Queen victoria’s garden skirt – the Radcliff Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India” (Sidhwa 140). People become Pakistani and Hindustani in a snap, “ Just like that” (ibid) and “a new nation is born” (ibid). This excerpt from the *Ice-Candy Man* reflects the uncertainty of the fates that leads to the hyphenation of Identity of people during partition.

The division of country and political unrest causes people to migrate to neighbouring countries to seek refuge. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri writes: “On the family radio they listened to the news of East Pakistan turning into Bangladesh after thirteen days of war. For Muslim Bengalis it meant liberation, but for Calcutta the conflict had meant another surge of refugees from across the border” (Lahiri 96). The refugees face great ordeals of identity crisis as suddenly they neither belong to their own country nor to the host country.

Apart from the division of land, the influences of the colonisers also play an essential role in shaping the identity of the people. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri pens:

“...India was still a semicolonial country, behaving as if the British had never left” (25). The language and culture that the colonisers left behind stays with the natives for a very long time and subsequently become part of the native identity and culture even after freedom from colonisation, making them hyphenated forever.

According to Nasser Hussain: “Hyphenated identities contain within themselves a bi-polarity, a movement between cultural identity and nation states” (10). The process of Migration brings in significant changes in the personality and lifestyle of the migrants; due to which they often experience shifts in their identity. Like Sidhwa’s character Feroza, who after a few months of living in America wonders “if she was the same girl who had lived in Lahore and gone to the Convent of the Sacred Heart” (Sidhwa, *An American Brat*, 264), most migrants undergo identity conflicts; they experience the change more when they visit their home country. When migrants return to their homelands it becomes difficult for them to connect back to identity that they had left behind. When Feroza comes back to Lahore, she could not connect to Lahore anymore; instead, she prefers the sense of ‘not belonging’ in America, to being in Lahore as “she felt it would be more tolerable because it was shared by thousands of newcomers like herself” (ibid). This same message is conveyed in the words of Monica Ali: “What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne” (*Brick Lane* 16) by the migrants who can never do away with their hyphenated fates and identities.

The incredible transformation of Ice-candy Man post partition is a significant example of change of personality. According to Sidhwa’s character Lenny:

He has changed from a chest-thrusting *paan*-spitting and scrutting *goonda* into a spitless poet. His narrow hawkish face, as if recast in a different mould, has softened into a sensuous oval. He is thinner, softer, droopier: his stream of brash talk replaced by a canny silence (Sidhwa, *Ice-candy Man*, 245-246).

Lenny didn't recognise him in the first sight. In her words: "Had I not been looking at Ice-candy man as he spoke, I would not have believed it was him. Not only has his voice changed, but his entire speech. His delivery is flawless, formal, like an educated and cultured man's" (ibid). The change of place and profession made Ice-candy Man transform himself to a new avatar in order to gain a livelihood by making use of available opportunities. Still, his past did not leave him, making him live as a hyphen between past and present under the shadow of his karma.

In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Vic, even though Indian by birth, didn't think of himself as Indian. When Korobi asks: "How did you think of yourself? As American?" he replies: "Yes. Though after 9/11, I had some difficulties with that too..." (Divakaruni 149). The 9/11 terrorist attack made the life of South Asians worse in America, just like the lowland that looked "like a mudflat after a tide" (Lahiri, *The Lowland*, 91). Thus, the identities of people are uncertain and keep getting hyphenated with time and changing circumstances.

Imperial Hotel, the workplace of several migrants, in the novel *In the Kitchen*, has been personified by Monica Ali which further projects the hyphenated identity of the hotel: "If the Imperial were a person thought Gabe, you would say here is someone who does not know who she is" (Ali 37). Ali keeps constructing and personifying the shifted identity of the hotel as a metonymy for the migrants who work in it: "The kitchen brigade seemed less like a United Nations assembly this morning and more like a pirate crew" (Ali 264). Even while describing a room she mentions: "All it lacked was some photographs, some flowers, a few touches to bring it to life. Even a room needed love" (Ali 491).

According to Sociologist Nilou Mostofi, reconstruction of the identity of migrants "not only incorporates their past lives and histories but also represents the experiences of their new lives" (688) giving rise to hyphenation in them. Ali's character Gabriel's battle with himself in accepting his hyphenated identity is a defining moment in *In the Kitchen*, where one sees the identity crisis of a well settled migrant:

What am I? He thought. What am I? . . . What am I? What am I? A nobody? A nothing? A zero? Am I a hollow man? He was angry. He was furious . . . What was he? Was he a man without qualities? A man about whom nothing could be said? No, he was somebody. He knew who he was. He had cooked in a two-star restaurant in Paris. At the age of only twenty four he had run a London restaurant with a friend. He had cooked in Austria, in Switzerland, in Brighton and Lyon. He had worked at the Savoy. He was somebody. He pulled up the blind and sat at his desk to survey his domain. He was somebody. He lacked only the right words. With a shaking hands he pressed the message button on the telephone. He listened and then played it again once again. You are through to the office of Gabriel Lightfoot, executive chef of the Imperial Hotel. ‘That’s me’, said Gabe, out loud ‘That’s my telephone, this is my office and that is me.’ (478-479).

Migrants like Gabriel struggle for name and identity, but all they are left with is an emptiness caused due to alienation. When Gabriel asks Benny: “How would you describe me in only three words?” her reply: “Tall. White. Male.”, makes Gabriel collapse against the worktop, as he had expected her to say things that people usually see in him – his name, power and designation. Benny’s answer made him aware of his basic reality and identity (Ali, *In the Kitchen*, 479-480).

5.10. Hyphenated Relations

In *Oleander Girl: A Novel*, Korobi’s search for her father could also be brought under the search for identity. She gets so obsessed with it that she gets lost in a world that existed in the past before her birth. When Vic tells Korobi: “You need to look away from some-one else’s past into your own future. You think that if you learn who your father and mother were, it’ll teach you who you are? But you are someone already. You’d see it if you weren’t so busy focusing elsewhere” – she sees her own identity from a perspective different than being a daughter of an unknown father; a perspective from where she finds her own self. (Divakaruni 217).

In *The Namesake* after living the life of a migrant and after understanding her identity from her own perspective and from the perspective of the natives, Ashima believes that: “Like pregnancy, being a foreigner . . . is something that elicits . . . curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect (Lahiri 50). After becoming a mother, Ashima misses her family more than she used to miss before, as could be seen from the novel: “At times, staring at the baby, she sees pieces of her family in his face – her mother’s glossy eyes, her father’s slim lips, her brother’s lopsided smile” (Lahiri 35). She revisits her family through her child. She finds all her relationships and identities collaged in the face of her baby like little hyphens that join many individual words together giving them a new meaning with old interpretations.

Family is the primary social institution where an individual grows up. The relations in family are the first social relations that an individual experiences. Hence, family plays a significant role in shaping the identity of individuals. As MariaCaterina La Barbera, Post-doctoral fellow of Department of Anthropology at the University of California mentions: “Identity is the result of the negotiation of personal given conditions, social context, and relationships, and institutional frameworks” (3). When relationships face ups and downs in a family, it also affects the identity of its members. Especially due to migration, when the distances between the members increase in physical and emotional terms, the dimensions of those relations change as well. In *The Lowland*, when Holly asks Subhash: “Are you close to your father?” He does not say whether he is close or not. He replies: “I admire him” (Lahiri 76). He does so as he has never been close to his father and the minimum proximity that he shared with him had ceased to exist after he moved to America. The distance that had grown between Subhash and his parents had widened after his brother Udayan’s death.

Distance develops hyphens between migrants and their old relations which they had formed in their homelands. However, the new relations that develop in the lives of migrants after migration are neither able to replace the old ones. Migrants are never able to invest the same in the new relationships due to changing circumstances in their lives. Hence, the new relations also remain hyphenated.

5.11. Cultural Grafting and Hyphenated Identities

Migrants often experience change in culture as they move from one country to another, which refers to a change in “the distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group” (Despres 26 and Kymlicka 18). Due to the increase in migration, people of different national origin having distinct “demographic, geographic, socioeconomic, ethnocultural, generational, familial, academic, linguistic, psychological characteristics” (Rumbaut 753) live together in the host nations. Therefore, in the process of living with the dispersed and fragmented identity of "migranthood", migrants become a part of "the modern experience" (Hall, *Minimal Selves*, 5) where identity is not only constituted by a “continuum of shared, lived, remembered experiences” (Mostofi 684) but also by the perception that sees “immigrants as a threat to domestic well-being” (Rumbaut 752) of the host nation which involves psycho-cultural concerns touching the individual as well as the national identity of the migrants.

According to Sociologist Breda Gray: “The experience of migration challenges the meanings attached to national identity and offers new possibilities for thinking of the ‘self’ in relation to nation, place, and community” (90). These possibilities cause crisis in the identity of many immigrant ethnic groups and lead to “negotiation between traditional values and recently acquired practices” (Mostofi 681). This brings one into the context of “hybrid” nature of diasporic cultures, which have been showcased by Stuart Hall, Homi K. Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and James Clifford in their respective works. In the words of Gray: “By encountering new cultures migrants cease to identify with their places of origin and develop more "hybrid" identities in order to accommodate themselves to their new location” (90). Gray further asserts that: “Hybridity does not necessarily mean the loss of a national identity and the substitution of a diasporic one. It may involve an intermixture of sometimes contradictory identifications, including attachments to different aspects of and longings for home” (ibid). Hence, as a discourse of identity, “hybridity often depends materially, as well as figuratively, on movement through space, from one part of the globe to another. This migration through space materializes a movement

through different cultures that effectively constitutes identity as the product of cultural grafting.” (Friedman 20)

‘Cultural grafting’ often gives place to hyphen that acts as the agent of grafting cultures and identities together making the migrants struggle to determine “which side of the hyphen they should embrace” (Furman 211). In the 1988 study of case histories of Southeast Asian refugees by Ruben G. Rumbaut, Professor of Sociology at University of California and Kenji Ima, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at San Diego State University, a 16-year-old Cambodian girl, a survivor of Cambodia's “killing fields” of the late 1970s, is puzzled on being asked a question about her American identity. She replies: “How could I be American? I black skin, black eyes, black hair. . . My English not good enough and my skin color black” (750). This query shows the genuineness of the conflict in the mind of migrants who feel ‘othered’ in the new land. The issue of hyphenated identity of migrants hence becomes important and needs to be discussed on various platforms and brought into the account of society through the interpretation of migrant literatures were migrants can re-evaluate their “national identities” by situating themselves “within the narrative of the nation” (Anderson 205) and the “rhetoric of spatiality” to find the locations of their identity “within the mappings and remappings of ever-changing cultural formations” (Friedman 14).

The chapter hence, aims to help migrants find a better place where they can discover the meaning of their “past” as it “reverberates” in their “present” (Hussain 13) and stride towards a future where they can rediscover their identities and become transcultural beings, by moving beyond hyphens and embracing the ‘new’ culture.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Transculturation is a process the elements of which are altered and from which a new, composite and complex reality emerges.

- Yolanda Onghena

In the essay “The Transcultural Journey”, Richard Slimbach, Professor of Global Studies at Azusa Pacific University, mentions that the primary goal of a transcultural journey is “to open windows to reality outside ourselves” (214). When one takes leave of one’s “cultural loyalties” (223) and embraces ‘others’, irrespective of their nationality, race, gender, and culture one becomes transcultural. When one transcends the boundary of one’s “inherited identity” (224) one opens up to “the good, the true, and the beautiful” (ibid) in other cultures and traditions. Thus, “transcultural development begins with the realization that, amidst the diversity of cultural expression, we share common human potential and experience” (209). This research has tried to project the phases that migrants go through in their journey of discovering the common human potential and becoming transcultural.

6.1. Research Findings

Through this research, it is found that geographical displacement accounts to transcultural shift through different stages such as cultural dichotomy, negotiation between past and present, and hyphenated identity. It is further found that spatiotemporality plays a crucial role in migrant literature as migrants travel both physical and psychological spaces, the complexities of which vary with changing times. Additionally, it is found that the dissimilar nature of cultures and lifestyles between the homeland and the host land cause cultural dichotomies and with time, bring about hyphenated identities in migrants that subsequently act as a step towards cultural assimilation. The major finding however is that, in the process of

geographical displacement individuals become migrants by relocating to a foreign land; the new land tangles the migrants with dichotomies of culture and identity, and leaves them negotiating between their past and present lives until they rediscover their identities and become transcultural beings by embracing the new culture as seen from the select novels.

6.2. Specific Contributions

Migration as a field of study had been explored and discussed before; but migration as a precursor to transcultural displacement had been sparsely explored in literary studies. A collective research on four major stages of transcultural displacement – geographical displacement, cultural dichotomy, negotiation of past and present, and hyphenated identity – in the works of migrant writers from South Asian origin makes this endeavour a distinctive contribution to the field of enquiry into South Asian migrant literature.

Migration is often considered a male centric activity. As migration of women is rarely studied in literature, this research contributes towards breaking the existing stereotype by studying migration of women in different contexts in literature written by female migrant writers. In cultural contexts, migration is often seen as a conflicting process, whereas, this research also brings into discussion the positive roles of migration in women who discover their freedom through geographical and transcultural displacement. The less studied aspects such as ‘return migration’ and ‘involuntary displacement’ have also been discussed in this research. Further, by bringing together India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh under the common canopy of culture, this research becomes a medium towards collaging the cultural background of these three South Asian nations.

6.3. Summary of the Work

Migration, being the cause of transcultural displacement, gets explicitly discussed in this research that focuses exclusively on the migrant narratives of female writers from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Facets of transcultural displacement are explored in this research with examples from select novels. Taking the major aspects

of transcultural displacement into consideration, the chapterization of the thesis has been done where in, the first chapter introduces the key concepts of transcultural displacement and migration. The history of Indian migration (migration from the undivided India that includes the present India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) is discussed. Apart from that, the types, factors, advantages and disadvantages of migration have been foregrounded followed by concepts like return migration and diaspora. The relation between fiction and migration has also been stated emphasising on the role of female writers in the representation of migration.

Migrant literature is the product of writers who like millions of migrants have spatially relocated from their parent nation; hence, the phenomena of physical movement for resettlement across borders as an aspect of human geography is essentially rooted in the geographical displacement of individuals that branch to other analogous sides of transcultural displacement. The second chapter elaborates the different types, factors, and outcomes of geographical displacement as a sociocultural process. It discusses the concepts of migrant dream, resettlement, cultural and social differences, distance, space, nostalgia, return migration, exile, and forced migration in the context of geographical displacement.

In this research, cultural dichotomy is understood to be a key outcome post migration. The third chapter begins with defining culture and goes on to exploring the concept of cultural capital and how it plays a significant role in the construction of cultural dichotomy. It puts forward the concepts of relativism, absoluteness, and prison theory followed by cultural differences that work on the principle of binary opposition and analyses the aspect of cultural dichotomy of migrants that get manifested in different aspects of life including, parenting, etiquettes, freedom, privacy, marriage, work culture, time, interruption, corruption, lifestyle, discipline, economics, religion, language, food habits, dressing, poverty, racism, and gender.

Place and time are two important aspects of transcultural displacement. Apart from studying the spatial and cultural aspects of migration, this research focuses on the temporal aspect of migration as well. The study of the past and present lives of migrants is the major concern of the fourth chapter. Using the concepts of past,

present, future, history, nostalgia and memory, the chapter explores places, cultures, relations, and perceptions through the analysis of past and present lives of migrants.

The notions of identity, change, the ‘other’, binary opposition of ‘us versus them’, and the hyphen, are found to play vital roles in the life of migrants. Keeping these facets of the process of identity formation in view, the fifth chapter discusses on the way in which migrants end up with hyphenated identity through a variety of manners that include the marginalisation of identity, the role of language in framing identity, the impact of economics on identity, racial discrimination, gender violence; and the role of ethnicity and relationships in influencing identity.

The above chapters discuss the crucial aspects of transcultural displacement such as geographical displacement, cultural dichotomy, negotiation of past and present, and hyphenated identity with examples from select South Asian migrant literature that lead to significant contributions, such as: understanding migration as a precursor to transcultural displacement; understanding stages through which migrants evolve from cultural to transcultural beings; interpreting migration beyond the established norms of gender by spotlighting the impact of migration on women; and foregrounding the cultural similarities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

6.4. Scope for Further Research

Any research is a means of exploration into the unknown vastness of knowledge. This research was a gentle attempt to understand some of the key facets of transcultural displacement where the scope could be further expanded to other migration theories in studies of similar nature. Here, only South Asian migrant literature was taken into consideration, whereas, similar studies could be conducted across other nations where migration is a recurrent phenomenon. Migration and its impact on the changing linguistic and literary patterns of the host nation could be another area where studies could be conducted. The experiences of migrant writers further vary across genders; the migrant narratives of male writers could be yet another possible area for research. Hence, this research is never the end but extends further into similar areas of inquiries and research.

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