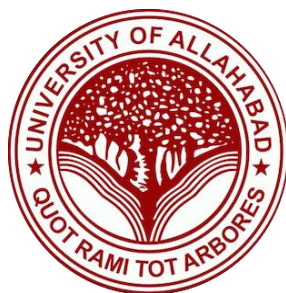


# **Cross-Cultural Parallelism in South Asian Diasporic Women Writers: A Comparative Study**

**(Bharati Mukherjee, Thrity Umrigar, Bapsi Sidhwa & Kamila Shamsie)**

## **Thesis**

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## Chapter -VI

### Conclusion

### **A Diasporic Perspective of 'Host' Becoming a 'Home': A Combined Study**

*(Jasmine, If Today Be Sweet, An American Brat and Salt and Saffron)*

The transition from bondage to liberty, from being caged in structures to structure where one can choose, is what has been projected in translating the diasporic consciousness of the major and majority of characters in these selected novels by diasporic writers from South Asia, Bharati Mukherjee, Thrity Umrigar, Bapsi Sidhwa and Kamila Shamsie.

The representatives of the Indian and Pakistani diaspora, having recognised the importance of the cultural communication required to let grow the identity of any diaspora have made their attempt to bring forward and discuss the entire dimension of being an immigrant to an alien culture. Since the writers have been through the same journey and had their fair share of bittersweet experiences themselves, they vigilantly have highlighted those aspects that altogether contribute to the whole understanding of an immigrant and have beautifully delineated the caricatures that represent the cross-cultural journey along with their respective identities in the concerned novels.

Migration is a voyage that can be defined not only as a physical transplantation; it is a quest to get adopted and be adapted. The change in identity associated with transformation becomes integral for the protagonist to survive in a

host land. This whole phenomenon of acceptance has been artistically underlined by all the chosen writers. Their works have suggested looking beyond the much elaborated and celebrated nostalgia that is assigned to a diaspora.

Handling the concept of diaspora has always invited varied responses, Prof. Jasbir Jain opines that Diaspora is not merely a scattering or a dispersion but an experience determined by who travels, where, how, and under what circumstances. Past (homeland) and Present (the land of adaptation), crop up between the imaginary and the real. Loneliness, isolation and 'ghettoisation' go hand in hand with success, affluence, and recognition. Self is constituted through the multiple pasts co-existing in the present. She observes that the condition of isolation and separation, the state of schizophrenia and frustration provides a background for the sense of identity. Dr. Jain further talks about the two aspects of the diasporic experiences positive and negative. It is positive in the sense that it reflects Indianness, history and identity and negative because it acts as a buffer. In her opinion, 'self' is both affected by and affects identity. Self is a deeper core and is constituted of many factors. The 'self' develops after the act of dislocation and it relates to the new environment as it negotiates the past, the cultural inheritance, geographical and historical memories and challenges of present.

Adhering to some of the positive aspects surrounding diasporic sensibility that may be suggested in spite of all the seriousness of the claimed losses we have Bapsi Sidhwa, in her novel *An American Brat*, mouthing through the persona of her protagonist Feroza:

“Although the sense of dislocation, of not belonging, was more acute in America, she felt it would be more tolerable because it was shared by thousands of newcomers like herself.” (Sidhwa 312)

It is quite a daunting task to channelize the meaning oozing out of this highly debatable term diaspora, as its basics of origin and the outcomes keep varying in various orders. While theorizing Diaspora in a time of globalization, Markand Paranjape identifies two categories of diaspora- the doubly privileged and the doubly underprivileged. His emphasis laid though on only the Indian diaspora, can be taken into account for the diaspora as a whole. He has a word of caution about Diaspora creativity threatening to submerge native Indian English creativity; diaspora substituting the homeland and emphasizes the necessity to resist and counter the hegemony of diaspora text.

Dwelling upon the structure of dislocation Markand observes that a Diasporic journey is a possibility with diaspora's two-fold motif of holding on to the old and inviting the new. Theorizing two- dimensional hybridity, away from and towards India, he advocates a synergy of diaspora and homeland and interrogating of diasporic discourse with sharing and difference. Paranjape concludes with the argument that India is an 'Idea'; the idea of mind and spirit, not a territory only, and an Indian diaspora has a mystic relation.

Thus it becomes an essential task to understand expatriate sensibility. It is therefore necessary to understand the psychology of artists in the recently liberated Third World Countries, striving to find out their new identity. The expatriate sensibility of the writer may wonder and dig huge sections from his/her own life, for subjects related to his/her country, historical background, political and social life or his/her personal experiences, whatever may suit the objective.

Enormous questions and the reasons behind expatriate sensibility could be traced to the emergence of this genre called Diaspora literature or expatriate writing.

Some of the answers and origins that have been discussed in literary history are crucial as enslavement; search for better prospects or exile, but there may be many more that go unrecognised.

Chelva Kanaganayakam divides expatriate writers into two divisions. Under the first category falls the set of those writers whose work features the loss, pain, nostalgia, burden of staying away from their motherland. M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land* and Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending*, which deals with the theme of alienation, are cited as examples of this type. The second category applies to those writers who are away voluntarily.

Reasons may vary but this stay away from their mother country is their individual choice. Thus their writings become a little more debatable and require a complex understanding of their perspective towards their nation, culture, ethnicity, and cross border assimilation, which they tend to be a part of. Their writing presents them in a state of 'to be or not to be'. They seem sure of the losses that they administer while away from their land, but their coming back is not an option for them at all. Some kind of ambivalent attitude will be available in their works.

A representative for the similar kind can be distinguished in Bapsi Sidhwa's, *An American Brat*. Feroza is able to come over her dilemma and pose a head, that is clear with the consciousness of what she encounters as an immigrant:

"Yet this paradox was shaping a New World, the future in microcosm, the melting-pot in which every race and creed was being increasingly represented, compelled to live with and tolerate the "other", and she would play her part, however minuscule it was, in shaping the future.

She would leave room in her life for the ideals of generosity and constancy she had grown up with and the attachment to the family and their claim on her. She would manage her life to suit her; after all, the pursuit of happiness was enshrined in the constitution of the country she had grown to love, despite her growing knowledge of its faults, and she would pursue her happiness her way."(Sidhwa 314)

Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth's works are considerably falling under the second category as referred by Chelva Kanaganayakam. The Search for identity and clash or cross or hybrid or intermixing or diluting of cultures as one may please to refer, make the popular themes in most of the contemporary fictional works of the diasporic writers, As Rushdie sees it:

"The Indian writer, looking back at India, does so through guilt-tinted spectacles... I am speaking of those of us who emigrated...and I suspect that there are times when the move seems wrong to us all, when we seem, to ourselves, post-lapsarian men and women. We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork. And as a result- as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates-we are now part of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy." (Rushdie 15)

It seems obvious that in an expatriate writing or the literature encircling the diasporic awareness, the tales that the writers tell, the stories that they narrate, and the

beliefs that form the matrix of their writings, there are genuinely two threads, being unravelled simultaneously. One being of the dominant culture the host culture and the other formed out of the ethnic sub-culture or the native culture. Sometimes the two strands intermesh so well that the one may not be able to distinguished itself from the other. This is the cross-culture that mostly is forming the crux of the whole exploration that is debated time and again.

As one undergoes the geographical displacement, the cultural shift is bound to follow, making room for the emotional and later on for the added intellectual change of perspectives. The ideologies adhering to any strict norms, be it that of the host or the home, the concerned parameters do call for a total makeover. To let the structures deconstruct themselves, and give way to what was unsaid. This unsettling or deconstruction may help frame out a better-suited explanation for the required circumstances of the diaspora, that may justify the whole scenario of his/her relocation. The answers or the explanations drawn out of the above comprehension may find themselves suitable enough to stand for the facts of the writer's roots. Simultaneously giving varied reasons for the routes, that was their choice, either by chance or the result of excessive brooding. However, it does result in the writers' reality of becoming a diaspora.

Displacement and Resettlement; the outcome of it is a 'hybrid' evolved out of sensibilities. "Our identity is at once plural and partial" as says Rushdie, no matter how much we confuse ourselves by debating on the issue of the inclination of a diaspora, his responsibility and honesty toward which side, home or host, his attitude governed by whom, the traditional lineage of the native or the modern boom of the host, we can certainly not deny the fact stated by Salman Rushdie that: "...we straddle

two cultures". (Rushdie 15)

The writer speaks in many voices, in plural tongues. In this context, it may be relevant to mention Gloria Anzaldua who's *Borderlands* mentions speaking "a Patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages"(Anzaldua 55). Anzaldua refers to the new mestiza consciousness as one of 'crossing over', of 'perpetual transition', of plural personality. Expatriate writing is characterized by a pluralistic vision, there is a deliberate shuttling between two antipodal worlds, journeying back and forth between two locales.

The cultural morality and ethnicity that keeps popping up in objectives concerning the immigrants and diaspora refers to:

"The fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group: a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviours, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties."  
(Ashcroft 80)

Observing the works of various expatriate writers, we acknowledge that commonly 'Nostalgia' and 'Pull of home' is yet another major and engaging aspect around which their ideas linger and circulate. Precisely in my selected novels, we find that most everything that relates them to their land affects them, and influences them. The traditions, customs, family values, cultural and community rites, relatives, memories every minute detail affects them.

Being away from their home, memories of the past, of the lost homeland configures the main theme of expatriate literature. The memories evoked are of bygone times, places and people as they were, when the writers and their characters



experienced them first handily, not as they are now as in present when everything may not be the same, but have undergone a vast change. These memories seem to be coloured in nostalgic imagination, imaginations of remembrance, an urge to go back and feel every bit of their past once again as if they were experiencing it in their present.

This imaginary call is fulfilled to some extent in these writings of the expatriate writers, where they have the liberty to go back, to stand once more on the soil that they recognise as their home, to speak through those characters their mind, in the language that they recognise so easily, to shake hands with their memories, to live the pain and laughter once more, to feel the past once more, this is the liberty that the writing brings them, to experience and experiment the joy of the lost once more.

The irony of hollowness amid all the comfort of life has been beautiful compared and contrasted by Thrity Umrigar in her novel *If Today Be Sweet*. A pair of mother and son both immigrants in America, representative of different generations but able enough to regard the trauma of each other and how amicably can Sorab, the son; understand the alienation his mother goes through before she finally becomes a part of the land she now belonged to:

"Each evening he came home and felt compelled to spend time with her, knowing that she'd been alone at home full day, knowing how pale and dull and lonely his suburban life must feel to her, compared to the colourful, busy, active, people-filled life she led in Bombay. Here, with the windows shut for the winter, the house felt as sealed and silent as a tomb. There, the open balcony allowed the sounds of the bustling city- the sounds of *life*, it suddenly seemed to Sorab- the piercing, nasal

cries of the fruit vendors, the wailing of the children, the dry wheezing of the BEST buses, the incessant blaring of the horns-to penetrate the apartment. There, the doorbell rang at least fifty times a day as the newspaper boy and the butcher and the doodhwalla and the servants and the neighbours and the friends who happened to be in the neighbourhood stopped by. Here, she could go an entire week without answering the door."(Umrigar 176-177 )

Thus in the fictional world of diasporic writers we have, different worlds jostling each other, the one that exists in reality against the one in imagination. The lines demarcating them are faint; the two spheres tend to blend and merge in their mind. For example, at the core most of the expatriate writing from writers of Indian origin we witness "the haunting presence of India- and the anguish of personal loss it represents" (Nelson 15). There is what may be called a "homing desire" (192), the individuals wish to return home, to the landmarks left behind, is a part of one's personal history, but, where exactly is "home"? Avtar Brah would like to see "home" as a:

"mystic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin' (Brah 193).

This leads us to the other side of the story, the second picture of the same coin where the diaspora is nostalgic but only to the extent of special occasions otherwise he/she seeks comfort in his own domain of the newness to which they currently belong, well brought out in this statement of Sorab, a pioneer character of Thrity Umrigar's novel:

“His life here was like a pastoral painting compared to the tumultuous cityscape of her life. He himself had come to appreciate-to even love-the solitude, the bleakness of the winter landscape. But would she?”  
(Umrigar177)

The indisputable fact that is persistent in the writings of the expatriate writers, be it from any portion of the earth, reflects their experiences of life they shared, celebrated, stories of how they fought and made up with their mother nation. The eminent writers like Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth, Bapsi Sidhwas, Kamila Shamsie, etc. are the products of this phenomenon. And to a large extent, they are responsible for their countries reputation on the global front, they are responsible to make their nation visible on the cultural map and secure a position of respect, admiration, love, for their motherland on the international platform. Their personal experiences of sorrow and pain, love and longing, darkness and joy, tears and laughter, have contributed a whole new dimension to diasporic literature.

Mostly we find the mother country at the core of the expatriate writings, the land that was left behind, partially or completely. Most commonly it does evoke a sense of guilt, regret, on the part of the writer, which makes him admire and love his land even from that great distance and call out so strongly his emotions of patriotism, As Rushdie puts it:

"India, my terra infirma, my maelstrom, my cornucopia, my crowd.  
India my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable,  
my mother, my father, and my first great truth [...]" (Rushdie)

The feeling of Nostalgia, alienation, and yearning for 'home' varies from

person to person therefore varies from writer to writer when we talk of expatriate literature. Unlike all the above expatriate writers Hari Kunzru (author of *The Impressionist* and *Transmission*), for instance, is dismissive of the nostalgic writing that many writers of Indian diaspora usually indulge in. For Kunzru, India is simply a country where his relatives live and where he comes occasionally for a holiday or to attend family weddings.

There is another author who has a different point of view regarding dislocation in an alien land, Agha Shahid Ali, who taught creative writing at the University of Massachusetts, claimed that he did not feel that dislocation or personality even though it influenced his thinking or personality even though it influenced his writing. He felt that he was able to absorb both experiences, Indian and American, and yet he remained aware of an acute sense of loss and nostalgia for a world, a country irretrievably lost:

"I remember even as a kid having a terrible sense of things vanishing, things all over the world ending, civilization vanishing, people dying [...] so I'm nostalgic for a moment even right when it is happening because I'm so aware it is going to end" (Melwani1)

In a case like this one may detect an acute anxiety syndrome- the desperate feeling of being somewhere (Anzaldúa 20). Such anxiety for belonging, however, is not so obvious in the works of Shashi Tharoor who lived away from India all his adult age of life, now holds a plum post in the United States, and visits India frequently. His idea of home is India- even though he has led a nomadic life he is emphatic about it. The uncertain suspension between different worlds, the despair of the uprootedness is not for him.

However, when he composes a work like *The Great Indian Novel*, what he is engaged in is the conscious evocation of the *Mahabharata*, albeit in a parody form. Shashi Tharoor's works give evidence of the writer's fascination with the great Indian epic in the manner that he plays with it and distort it in the retelling. It is astonishing and much too clever to be simply dismissed as just another instance of a writer being influenced by myths and archetypes. Despite all disclaimers to the contrary, it bespeaks the need to go back in time and space, to grope for one's emotional and cultural roots, to ascertain that the umbilical cord has not yet been served.

Shauna Singh Baldwin, second-generation expatriate, who lives in Wisconsin, has been much in the news over the last few years for her books (*What the Body Remembers* and *English Lessons* and other stories), is of the opinion that:

“It doesn't really matter if we are Indians writing about a recent memory or immigrants stuck in a past version of India or Indo-Canadian writing about a mythic Homeland. What matters is that most diasporic writers write about

India and Indians with love instead of contempt, offering glimpses of a complex active people with high aspirations. Through our writing, we have certainly reinterpreted India for ourselves, revisited it and taken our readers with us.” (Baldwin)

The expatriate writer, it may be argued that, remains in what may be called a state of animated suspension, insecure in his new environment, uncertain of his affiliations and his roots, but among them are many who strive to arrive to a stable position, get themselves free of their insecurities and try to assimilate well.

Bharati Mukherjee claims to work optimistically towards 'assimilation' but this assimilation is not an easy process as one is "housed", 'un-housed', and 're-housed' (Mukherjee's words), uprooted and re-rooted in an alien land. It remains a three-way relationship, the country of origin-the writer-and the adopted country. Like 'Trishanku'- she 'Trishanku'- she and other writers, too, remain in a state of suspension between different worlds- the one left behind, the one desired and the one obtained. For the expatriate writers, therefore, home is an uncertain territory they must discover for themselves somewhere in-between two geographical locales, somewhere within Trishanku's space.

Mukherjee contrasts the paradoxical pattern of social limitations and spiritual freedom in India with that of the life in the adoptive land/ new world. There is an ironic conflict between the eastern concept of fate and human destiny and an American concept of self-making. This issue has been vividly brought forward and discussed in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, here is an extract from *Jasmine*, showing two different perspectives and how do they appear to one thinking mind of an immigrant, regarding the two cultures that dominate east and west respectively. Mukherjee tries to bring out and leaves it on to the reader to choose according to their justice of what stands more accurate:

"Mother ... She is seventy-six and sprightly in a Younger's pantsuit, white hair squeezed into curls by Madame Cleo, who trained in Ottumwa.

In Hasnapur a woman may be old at twenty-two.

I think of Vimla, a girl I envied because she lived in a two-story brick house with real windows. Our hut was mud. Her marriage was the

fanciest the village had ever seen. Her father gave away a zippy red Maruti and a refrigerator in dowry. When he was twenty-one her husband died of typhoid, and at twenty-two she doused herself with kerosene and flung herself on a stove, shouting to the god of death, "Yama, bring me to you."

The villagers say when a clay pitcher breaks, you see that the air inside it is the same as outside. Vimla set herself on fire because she had broken her pitcher; she saw there were no insides and outsides. We are just shells of the same Absolute. In Hasanapur, Vimla's isn't a sad story. The sad story would be a woman Mother Ripplemeyer's age still working on her shell, bothering to get her hair and nails done at Madame Cleo's." (Mukherjee 15)

The predicaments surrounding the cultural conflict existing in the minds of diaspora have a lot to do with nostalgia and discovery, a debate continues on their choice :

"how much of original culture to let go and how much American culture to embrace." {The IOWA Review 1990}

The writer like Mukherjee is bold enough to claim that She felt more comfortable in America where life was easy:

"It is, of course, America that I love where history occurs with the dramatic swiftness and interest of half-hour television shows. America is a sheer luxury, being touched more by the presentation of a tragedy than by tragedy itself. History can be dealt with the thirty

-second episodes; I need to suffer its drabness and continuum". (Mukherjee 168)

Working on the same grounds are yet so many other writers as Bapsi Sidhwa, Thrity Umrigar, Kamila Shamsie, who through their writings have time and again justified, that the first world countries provide the desired freedom and luxury to the immigrants. They do not fail to suggest that, the diaspora from third world countries, no matter how many odds they administer, stand in awe and admiration of the freedom that is registered only in the first world countries.

"I looked out into the dorm windows across Claremont Avenue. The windows were long, bright, shadeless rectangles of light. No window shades, no secrets. Barnard women were studying cross-legged on narrow beds, changing T-shirts, clowning with Walkmans clamped to their heads. They wore nothing under their shirts and sweaters. Men were in their room. Even on the first morning, I saw naked bodies combing their hair in front of the dresser mirrors. Truly there was no concept of shame in this society. I'd die before a Sob Sister asked me about Half-Face." (Mukherjee 171)

No doubt, we can see there is some sort of parallel running ideas prevalent in the diasporic sensibility in the works originating from the same clan, one side is the positive and the other is a little darker but both stand true on their grounds, none can be denied and negated and none can be considered absolute in itself. Both are the opinions and experiences of almost every diaspora and thus participate in their literature making.

Expatriate writing, in its theory and practice, is to be considered as the work of



the exile who has experienced unsettlement at the existential, political and metaphysical levels. This phenomenon of exile has emerged only due to uneven development within capitalism, and due to the movement forced by colonial powers. This uneven development has led to unprecedented migration of the Asians and Africans to the West, a lasting essence if faced with two centres, the external colonial or modernist, and the internal or national filtering into a personal identity. The hybridity experienced is not just philosophical; it is also local and existential. The chief feature of the poetics of exile is the trial during which it deals with these centres, sometimes rejecting and sometimes accepting them.

"I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence, and graceful self-absorption. I wanted to become the person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful." (Mukherjee 171)

As already mentioned in the previous chapter but still worth mentioning again, Edward Said's writings are a very interesting and praiseworthy example of this trial. As a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem and self-exiled to the U.S.A., he has always aligned himself with the Palestinian movement for liberation and a sovereign state. The experience of the movement that is partly self-chosen and partly imposed on him by history has become very "important" to him. His way of looking at culture and creativity has been altered. In an interview with Salman Rushdie he says: "The whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another, is extremely important to me, being as I am – as we all are, a sort of hybrid."

The beneficial perspective with Said's exile is that, while a diaspora may or may not get pleasure from this doing, they certainly seem to experience and

sometimes even appreciate the instability and surprise, especially the juxtaposition of double perspective. The element of shock, unpredictability which does not surprise the exile anymore, has been accurately outlined by Mukherjee:

"In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager, to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate." (Mukherjee 181)

Bhabha projects culture as a hybrid from the side of migrant and subalterns. He defines culture or nation in terms of 'double inscription'. It means the theoretic – historical constitution related to origin or event that he calls 'pedagogical', and the disruptive 'scraps', patches and rags of daily life, that are 'performative'.<sup>8</sup> Though Bhabha assimilates the post-colonial Manichean view of Fanon into his theory, Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* explains the identities of both the colonial and his victim as hybrid.

But Bhabha's 'disjunctive temporality' is analogical to Salman Rushdie's notion of 'broken mirror' about the migrant. Rushdie even generalizes the excitement of the 'homeless' when he says: "But human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not gods but wonderful creatures, cracked lenses, capable of fractured perceptions". The migrant's or expatriate's cracked and fractured seeing has been called by Bhabha as 'the twilight existence of the aesthetic image'.<sup>10</sup> Diaspora, according to him, produces 'incompatible systems of signification'.

The aesthetic image of the expatriate that has been referred to, is surely built on multiple disappointments, longings, struggles of being at periphery and an outsider

and then forcing their way upwards to belong to the centre, the mainstream of the first world. Bharati Mukherjee is quiet comprehensible regarding her identity as an American writer. She said to Jerry Pinto:

“ I think my position has been misunderstood largely in India  
I insist on being considered an American writer  
because I want America to realize that in the late 20th  
century there can be no American centre and  
periphery... I am fighting the American establishment  
to be regarded as central. I want to destroy the whole  
notion that Asians or people of different colours are  
'sojourners' whereas those who arrived in America  
from Germany or Sweden are 'settlers.' It's also a way  
of resisting exoticisation.” (Mukherjee)

The resistance that has been offered by writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Thrity Umrigar, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Jumpha Lahiri has pushed courage in their followers, the immigrants, writers from diasporic clan, people, exiles from third world to look up to the dreams and enlarge their aspirations of the sustainable future, and non-discriminating stay in the alien, first world countries.

The huge numbers of growing immigrants, writers, is a proof of this movement in the field of diaspora. It is the evidence that now they do not regard or are just measured by the parameters of nostalgia, pull of home, feeling alien, and isolated in a distant land. But instead, it altogether projects and successfully presents

the pictures of the expatriates, immigrants, diasporas, exiles, who do not stand symbolic of weak, and subaltern but rather they have their own priority list of achieving and belonging to both in the same time, to the homeland and the host land. Sometimes they are even more desirable of the host because of the diverse features that it is enriched with and million promises that it has to offer.

Among the many on the list of immigrants, expatriates, exiles, the primary stands the power to choose. Choice is the most important syllable and symbol in all the four texts, running parallel in all the novels throughout. The celebration of being able to choose has imparted a new definition to the nostalgia and losses of the immigrants. The freedom is not only of physical appearances, physical stability or instability, but an intellectual shedding the burden of being directed and held captive to rules and ideologies.

“These and the other constraints would crush her freedom, a freedom that had become central to her happiness. The abandon with which she could conduct her life without interference was possible only because of the distance from her family and the anonymity America provided.”  
(Sidhwa 312)

“I told him I wanted a green card more than anything else in the world, that a green card was freedom.”(Mukherjee 149)

Yet another example from Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine*, which exaggerates the concept of freedom, and what perspective do many individuals who wish to migrate have in their heads and how strongly they desire to be the part of an alien land is reflected in this statement of Prakash:

“If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be

cancelled. We'd start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of Gods sight.”(Mukherjee 85)

Similar to the characters that she has painted in her writings Bharati Mukherjee, does not like to be categorized as Post-Colonial Indian writer or Asian American writer. She rejects the hyphenation of a racial group because it is only applied to the non-white immigrant. She argues in *American Dreamer*:

“I choose to describe myself... as an American, rather than as an Asian- American. Why it is that hyphenation is imposed only on non-white Americans? Rejecting hyphenation is my refusal to categorize the cultural landscape into a centre and its peripheries; it is to demand that the American nation deliver the promises of its dream and its constitution to all citizens equally”. (Mukherjee)

Their mind seems all together awaken, the conscience alert yet calm, there is so much communication between the past and the present, but thoughts of future do not scare them anymore, their apprehensions seem to drop its veil to reveal a whole new world of delight and appreciation.

“I could not admit that I had accustomed myself to American clothes. American clothes disguised my widowhood. In T-shirt and cords, I was taken for a student. In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like.to them, I was a widow who should show a

proper modesty of appearance and attitude.” (Mukherjee 145)

The legacy that characters in all the four novels carried in the start, seems to accompany them till the end, but in a whole new translated version.

“She would stay. Here in America ... When she loosened her grip on that fence, when she had found the courage to jump, she had landed in more than Antonio’s yard. She had landed in America. The fence had been dividing line between the past and the future, between India and America .”(Umrigar 293)

A significant point that emerges from this critique is that there is no going back in any of the chosen works, and it has been a mountain task for all the writers to make the readers believe and agree to the decisions of the four powerful women protagonist of the four different stories, each on a journey of her own, diverse in shape size, age, country, and culture. But constant in believing in themselves and allowing their soul, body, and mind to breathe the change and be the change.

“There would be no going back for her, but she could go back at will.”  
(Sidhwa 317)

“There’s no going back, is there?”(Mukherjee 164)

“I BECAME an American”(Mukherjee 165)

They believed that they were free to choose where they want to be, and where they wish to stay, nothing was being imposed on them, that land provided them the strength that they could compare themselves to the freest creatures on earth and believe to become one:

“Fish swim across five-panel oceans, birds wing pleated lavender skies.”(Mukherjee 225-226)

The diaspora certainly does not forgets his/her culture of the past but now open-eyed does views the host culture with compassion:

"Rain in Bombay was like a heavy-footed, clumsy intruder, crashing and falling over the furniture, drooping the china, making its heavy, sweaty presence felt upon the hammered, beaten streets. But the snow here! Tehmina marvelled at its stealth, its subterfuge, its light touch. ...Rain and snow. The perfect way to describe the difference between Bombay and America, Tehmina thought. One was loud, chaotic, tumultuous, and erratic. The other was calm, antiseptic, genteel, and polite."(Umrigar 87)

The observation of the surroundings is very dear to the immigrants, they observe to belong, to behave, to be comforted, to appreciate the host culture, which would later help them become a part of it more fluidly:

"Her melancholy and fear flew out 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 83)

Second only to the freedom that these immigrants experienced stand the comfort and luxury that awed them and captivated their brains. They all seemed

mesmerized by the beauty, money, show of comfort and the discipline that their host country forwarded towards them

“But once she stepped inside Zareen was pleasantly surprised by the thickly carpeted interior, the evenly hung drapes, the comfortable furniture, and she fell in love with the large green fridge and matching dishwasher in the spacious kitchen. she touched the shining surface of things with delight, appreciating the materials that could be kept so easily clean without the help of servants.” (Sidhwa 276)

The luxury of the first world has the power to even make one forget of the greatest pain in their lives, for examples this extract from jasmine just after she was raped:

"I turned on the shower, making it hot. With water pelting the shower curtain, I vomited. Then I showered. I had never used a western shower, standing instead of squatting, with automatic hot water coming hard from a nozzle instead of cool water from a hand-dipped pitcher. It seemed like a miracle, that even here in a place that looked deserted, a place like a madhouse or a prison, where the most hideous crimes took place, the water should be hot, the tiles and porcelain should be clean, without smells, without bugs. It was a place that permitted a kind of purity."(Mukherjee 117)

Even years later Jasmine could not get over the comfort and relief she found in the showers of America. It always mesmerised her, seizing all the pain and grief of her heart and breathing in her a desire to survive, even the oddest. Such is the power and influence of luxury that America provided her:



"American showers still delighted me, despite the inevitable, daily association with Flamingo Court, with preparation for death, with the knowledge that naked body was outside the door, waiting to rape again, perhaps to kill. Touching a tap and having the hot water hot-hot, and plentiful, was still a sensual thrill." (Mukherjee 175)

There are ample examples in the selected novel to provide a point, that immigrants get addicted to the comfort and luxury of the first-world lifestyle. And despite all the talked about nostalgia and remembrance of the motherland, they do not desire to return. This is symbolic of the changing perspective of the expatriate, who earlier was not able to assimilate himself, but now is so much part of this newly acquired culture, that it appears impossible for him to turn back again to the third world atmosphere:

"Will you get thirty-one channels in Karachi? You won't even get two. You have your Thunderbird, your washing machine and dishwasher, and so many other gadgets. And Gerber food and Pampers for dilly. The Karachi pollution would have her wheezing all day and give her asthma, and the water would give her non-stop diarrhoea. You'd be pumping asthma medicine into her lungs from morning to night and scrubbing her diapers with sunlight soap. And even if you had the gadgets they wouldn't work because of the shortage of electricity and water." (Sidhwa 316)

"The sheer bliss of telephones that worked could or drizzle, the force of water in YMCA showers, the electricity that never fluctuated or broke down or required daily hours of "load-shedding" were joys

Feroza was discovering for herself. The enchantments of the First World."(Sidhwa 103)

"Feroza went into Bloomingdale's. It was like entering a surreal world of hushed opulence festooned by all manner of hats propped up on the stands and scarves and belts draped here and there like fabulous confetti. The subtle lighting enhanced the plush shimmer of wool and leather and the glowing colors of the silk. Feroza felt she had never seen such luxuriant textures or known the vibrant gloss of true colors. And it was merely the entrance foyer that had affected her so."(Sidhwa 73)

The economic power that the immigrants, expatriates get boosted every day with, in these fully developed countries makes them feel less alienated. The money marks their isolation if any as negligible because they seem to understand the language of wealth and power over poverty and unemployment:

"Do you know, more money changes hands here in one hour than in whole year in Pakistan?"(Sidhwa 72)

"I felt lucky. My pillow was dry, a launchpad for lift-off. ...America may be fluid and built on flimsy, invisible lines of weak gravity, but I was a dense object, I had landed and was getting rooted. I had controlled on my spending and now sat on an account that was rapidly growing."(Mukherjee 179)

Along with wealth the expatriates receive the respect and love, they are appreciated for their contribution, which makes them grateful towards the employers, the culture, and the country, any job small or big, is treated with compassion, which

makes them aware of their own respect and in return they admire the nation that has bestowed them with so much appreciation irrespective of the caste, creed, colour, culture, or country they hail from:

“caregiver.”...The word sang off my tongue. I was a professional, like a school teacher or a nurse. I wasn’t a maidservant.

In Hasanapur the Mazbi woman who’d stoked our hearth or spread our flaking, dried- out adobe walls with watered cow dung had been a maidservant. Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, and I was a professional.”(Mukherjee 175)

“The Indian languages department used me as a Punjabi reader; they asked if I wanted to teach a beginning section someday, or tutor some graduate students. I choose the tutoring. ...they asked if forty dollars an hour was too insulting, ... I paid back proffessorji in a single check.”(Mukherjee 180)

The prosperity of the nation seems to have stretched out its arms to everyone and anyone. The expatriates find all that they have been longing for in that very land which people call 'host', they feel even more comfortable and wanted in the host land, than they ever felt at the land they so far have been calling their 'home':

“Here he could be as competitive, as aggressive, as loud, as greedy, as expansive as he wanted. Here he could reach for the stars and nobody told him to be careful, that pride always comes before a fall, no old grandparent told him the cautionary tale of Icarus flying too close to the sun and getting burned. Here was a sky-is-the limit country of

towering ambition and large dreams, a fabled country that believed in dreams, that was itself a kind of dream. And it fit Sorab like a glove. Like a friggin' glove. It was as if the country had been designed with him in mind, him and the millions of other restless souls who were misfits in the land of their birth and who arrived at America's shores brimming with energy, bursting at the seams with pent-up ambition so combustible it felt like violence. And for him (unlike many others), it all worked out. It was all going well, all following a plan—a smart, beautiful wife, a gorgeous, intelligent son, a big house in the suburbs, two imported cars in the garage, a series of jobs where he had always outperformed everyone else."(Umrigar 138-139)

"Day by day our Jullundhar graduates are rushing to this country and minting lakhs and lakhs of rupees. They stay in a nice house with 24-hour electricity and no load shedding. They have running hot and cold water. They and their wives also are liking to work."(Mukherjee 84)

The cultural hegemony appears diluting in the novels, we see every character evolving, they appear healthier and fuller, in both mental and physical charm. They seem to crossover the thin, faint division of cultural clash and they confidently build a bond with people outside their community. These bindings are symbolic of the building relations, between people their cultures, a union of concepts, sharing of friendship, cross-cultural marriages that turn out to be successful, people admiring each other's existence and a lot more. They are not hesitant in the projection of their true selves, they are capable of dropping their guards and breathe the freshness of the land, the soil, the air, the snow, they now exist in. They are all living in the present.

"Joe... "Well, Tammy, you've surely seen all sides of our beautiful country-the good and the bad. So, can I ask? What's your favourite thing about America ?"

"Making rainbows," she said immediately.

Joe raised his left eyebrow. "Making rainbows? What's that?"

"You know how, in the summer when you're watering the outdoor plants with the water hose, you can sometimes create rainbows, I love that. You see, in Bombay, we all live in apartment buildings and none of us have lawns and water hoses or anything like that. So we never get to make our own rainbows. We just wait until Mother Nature decides to bless us with one."

Joe Canfield let out his breath. "Boy, what a powerful metaphor that is. Sort of sums up America, doesn't it ?"..." (Umrigar 247)

It may be considered that the acceptance or rejection by a host culture depends upon the 'value' of the person, his use to the new society, his educational level and his social milieu. Not that the expatriate would be thrown out, it fails to become valuable, but it seems more evident that if he does add some value to his stay, it becomes easy for both the host and the expatriate. The added value eases them to have their ideas and culture exchanged in a much more feasible manner, which benefits both simultaneously.

Plenty of youngsters heading to these first world countries to receive education, they are interested both in upgrading their knowledge and enhancing their personality. All the selected novels have focused on this extremely important aspect of migration because it does require some purpose to go and be a part of the host land.

Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa have presented their protagonist Aliya and Feroza as the representatives of the diasporas who seek migration for education. Aliya despite coming from a very legendary family Dard-e-Dil could afford and receive the best of education in Pakistan but chooses America for her studies. Same goes for Feroza, hailing from highly influential and rich class from a Parsee family in Pakistan, who chooses to educate herself in the United States of America. Sorab, Percy created by Umrigar, along with Sidhwa's Manek, Feroza's uncle who becomes an inspiration for her to draw her to America, and Shamsie's Saima all of them are yet another example of the same type.

“...planning to return to the Blighted Estates of America to get a Master’s in Education?”(Shamsie 19)

"Feroza applied for and was admitted to the University of Arizona's graduate program in anthropology."(Sidhwa 314)

“I’m a student, sir. At M.I.T. I’m studying chemical engineering.”  
(Sidhwa 63)

Not only do the youngsters feel elated at the sense of their travel, even the families left behind do participate in their growth and happiness. To mention again an incident from the writer's life itself, speaking of Thrity Umrigar, the perspective of her dear father, which stands for pain and pride at the same moment, as she's about to board that plane back in '83:

"And when you go," her father tells her at the airport, "I will lose not only my daughter but my best friend." Yet he lets go because he loves her because he must set her free to begin her flight to become the writer she needs to be.” (*Umrigar*)

Similar experience of emotion has been witnessed in the novel *If Today Be Sweet* whereas parent Tehmina Sethna recalls:

“She and Rustom had been so proud when Sorab had gained admission to all the three of the American Universities he had applied to.”(Umrigar 188)

The most important and significant impact that can be and should be registered about the first world countries, which benefits the expatriates to an enormous level is that they have and promote a classless society. Offer opportunities based on merit and are not biased. They do not give weightage to the superficial details as to which part of the locale you live back home, or how poor or shabby or non-English your parents are. The class conflict is discussed at length by Kamila Shamsie in her novel *Salt and Saffron*, and here she states an example, or rather one more positive reason, why do expatriates travel to the host land and wish to become a part of it:

“... Khaleel's parents. They were hardworking, decent people. Not professors, though. Somehow they'd made it to America, land of opportunity, with barely more than the clothes on their backs, and worked absurd hours for even more absurd wages, swearing all the while that for their son it would be different. And it was. He was smart enough and lucky enough for scholarships, and he'd assimilated; maybe he'd even been offered (and accepted) the chance to live as an exchange student in England or France while still in school. At college, perhaps he'd studied abroad for a year, and now he was thinking of going back, back to Karachi, to show his parents' families that yes, the Butts had succeeded in the US...”(Shamsie 63-64)

The value that any person can add to society does not depend on his age, class, culture or country, but on his way of realizing his responsibility. It can even be any simple act of compassion and benevolence towards the society and people we are all part of. This has been proved in the novel *If Today Be Sweet*, that compassion is the language that needs no clarification, it is beyond barriers and is understood by all home or host, does not matter.

Tehmina's act of rescuing Josh and Jerome from their torturous mother, invites an enormous amount of attention and respect from the whole of America, they acknowledge and celebrate her act of kindness:

"Miss Tammy... you're a hero. Not too many Americans would've done what you just did, ma'am, I can tell you that." (Umrigar 211)

"And ma'am, I just wanted to thank you for doing your duty. I just wish we had more good citizens like you." (Umrigar 216)

"Her face turned pale as her eyes took in the headline and the first few lines of the story. *She is a stranger to this country. But to two frightened young Rosemont Heights boys, Bombay native Tehmina Sethna, 66, turned out to be a Christmastime angel.*" (Umrigar 228)

Diasporic writers are bound to bring in some of their native experiences in their writings, which show their simultaneous influence on the host, in order to ease out the influence of host and establish a balance for themselves which facilitates their easily straddle between two worlds. It is vigilant to an extent that even with their extreme involvement with the west/'host', there is always their 'home'/east embedded deep in their psyche and it does surfaces in their writings time and again.



David Stock relates expatriate writing to the theory of receptivity to the dynamics of language. It is no longer how we see ourselves but how others do so, and in this transaction language, which is a cultural construct, is a significant medium. The cultural nuances are often imperceptible to the foreign reader, yet the expatriate writer, very often deliberately disrupts his narrative to include words and expressions from his native language consciously creating a barrier for the foreign reader and requiring the reader to make an effort to understand. This strategy succeeds in large measure in defining generic.

In all the four concerned novels there has been enormous use of Hindi, and Urdu words, slangs, repeated mention of the idioms that specifically distinguish eastern culture from that of the western. The writers have made a great impact on the readers of both sides to see that they have the knowledge of two very different cultures. The brilliant use of mixing the languages shows the multicultural aspect of the writers. The characters have been outlined carefully and the writing precisely sculptured, so that it can be of equal value to both parts of the globe. The writing style speaks a lot about the writers themselves; it narrates that even if they have dealt with newness they have not given up what they were born into, they have successfully managed to preserve both.

Kamila shamsie's, *Salt and Saffron* is flooded with the language of her country, each word reminds the readers of the nativity of Pakistan, the culture of Karachi, and the affection that the writer shows in keeping Urdu close to her heart:

*Uf tobah* !(10), *gharara*(12),*chhipkali*(17),*Fakhr and Nazish* (20),*pultan*(27), *Qaida. Saleeqa*(36), *musibat*.(96) *ghazals and aadabs* (110), *gunghroo* (116), *dolkhis* (124), *nikahnama* (154),

*bhuttawallah...chaatwallahs (212), Shaabaash,chotoo'(213), shalwar-kameez(213), chalaang(217)*

Bharati Mukherjee's, *Jasmine* is also representative of the similar cultural difference between India and America. The writer by the use of language diligently portrays the cultural dissimilarity between the two countries. The reader can easily extract the essence of difference from the use of languages by the two countries Hindi and English respectively.

*bazzar(42), charpoy(42), Pitaji (42), Mataji(46)*

“That Masterji fellow thinks you are a lotus blooming in cow dung?”(46), “...lit tips of their *bidis* floated like fireflies”(55)

Mukherjee has not failed in her motive, to bring out the cultural difference at every instant both in language and in perspective as Jasmine wonders:

“In the America Du knows, mothers are younger than sisters, mothers are illegal aliens, murderers, rape victims; in Du’s America, parents are unmarried, fathers are invalids...”(224)

The extract is in sharp contrast to what the writer narrates of the eastern approved ideology, which challenges Jasmine to venture in a new territory, as the older was nothing better than a cage of old stale beliefs for her:

“When Pitaji died, my mother tried to throw herself on his funeral pyre. When we wouldn’t let her, she shaved her head with a razor, wrapped her body in coarse cloth, and sat all day in a corner.”(61)

Thus Mukherjee by the medium of words has sketched the live difference that

separates ‘mother’ from “*Mataji*” and ‘father’ from “*Pitaji*”.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat* is yet another excellent example where the intermingling of English and Urdu is seen so well:

*goondas... mullahs (11) burqas(10), “He had promised them roti ,kapra,makan”(21),*

*“please don’t bring your gora complex with you”(26),*

*“Stop it , bus kar- you’ll squash my bones and ribs.”,*

*izzat(66), “Vekh ! Vekh! Sher-di-batian!”(67), “Kush ho-Happy?”(241), “Okay ,baba, finish your studies,”(240),*

*“His ancestary , his khandan”(277)*

And finally in Thrity Umrigar’s *If Today Be Sweet* every time an Indian slang pops up, one is reminded of Bombay, India so easily :

*“Your mummy was so lattoo- fattoob about me that she would’ve bought me the Qutub Minar, if I’d asked.”(118)*

*“Saala , I’m glad we don’t live too close to you.”(147), jaldi-jaldi (154), “Chalo ne Mamma.”(154), “We need you here, yaar, Sorab and me.”(155), “You luchcha”(190), “Arre wah. How dare you say that?”(190)*

Thus eventually all the writers have managed well to explore and incorporate their mother tongue and thus also their nativity in their concerned novels. Undoubtedly achieving a state of ‘ Ambivalence’. The idea of ambivalence that sees culture as consisting of opposing perceptions and dimensions. Bhabha claims that this

ambivalence this duality that presents a split in the identity of the colonized other allows for beings who are a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity.

Similar to the usage of language, the mention of the native dishes, food, and flavours also carries great importance and occupies a large section in the writings. The flavours in the pages seem to bring back the taste of the home and it helps them (diasporas) keep connected:

"I took gobi allo to the Lutheran Relief Fund craft fair last week. I am subverting the taste buds of Elsa County. I put some of last night's matar panir in the microwave. It goes well with pork, believe me."(Mukherjee19)

*" Aloo ka bhurta , achaar gosht, pulao, masoor ki daal, kachoomar."*

(Shamsie 56)

"Well, dinner is served. It's an authentic Parsi wedding menu. Although the *patra-ni –macchi* is wrapped in parchment paper, I'm afraid. The caterer couldn't find banana leaves."(Umrigar 162)

Thus to conclude, the language and food, do play an important role in binding the gaps, between eastern and western cultures, prevalent in the minds of the expatriates. The author time and again by using the phrases from his /her native tongue gives the evidence of his belonging to the motherland too. Though the expatriates are far from their soil, and even when they do have accepted the host as their home willingly, still the remembrance of the motherland keeps surfacing in their works, through the use of language. These skills in writings give them a medium to

experience the flavours of closeness and comfort, that they can and do use as a method to reunite with their home.

So far, having looked at so many aspects related to diaspora, expatriates, exiles and immigrants, we have seen that there are many different opinions regarding each and every aspect discussed. When analysed, it sure cannot be denied that the diaspora, who happens to be a part of the considered host land, has enormous reasons to hold on to the host. Stating from stability to economy, to luxury, to power, to happiness, and to comfort, is/are the essentials that keep him attracted/ attached to these first world countries. And to top it all, the celebrated freedom that they experience here, the choices that they are free to make, the decisions that they claim to be their personal. Their decisions seem not to be clouded by the restrictions and biases, of class and religion, of unemployment and poverty, of rules and old ideologies. They tend not to restrict their movement back home, but willingly stay with the host.

No denial that their heart always keeps beating for their motherland and they try to find ways to visit their mother soil, play with its memories, and sleep in its lap. But having accounted all that, it cannot and should not be overlooked that, here they are judged on their labour and rewarded for their efforts. The acknowledgement of their potential eases out the pain that they have in leaving their home behind.

The burden of nostalgia decreases with every step that they take forward, to nourish their present and building their future becomes their dream. The immigrants start to value the 'Host', have gratitude towards the newfound culture, show regard to the traditions and laws implemented by the host. Every moment here seems to be an admiration of life. The liberty they are provided within the so-called strange land motivates them to enjoy the country, its people and their company.

Despite all the odds that they face, they seem to flourish and prosper in this land. They discover themselves as eager learners and make the most of every opportunity that comes their way. The positivity that they seem to be fuelled up with, tends to heal every pain in the land that was alien once, but not anymore. Because they have learned to find their happiness, they may have become a believer in the philosophy of 'home is where the heart is', as who knows where do their actual home resides? Herewith the host or there with the natives.

“But where the home was, she was no longer sure.”(Umrigar 120)

The extract below sums up for all the discussion above. It eventually summarises the whole idea behind the analysis of all the four novels, and why did the writers wrote what they did? And how much do they believed in it? It also may answer why do we need to change our perspective towards the countries we still consider 'alien' while still being immigrants in them, and how much of 'alien' do they really are?

"Tehmina felt grateful to America. She and Rustom had given Percy a shot at life, but America had given him his life. It was amazing the transformation that happened to all these young people when they came here- most of them gained weight, most of them talked louder and laughed louder,...But the most amazing thing was, they became happy in America. Kids who had been pencil-thin, melancholy, depressed, quiet, and shy became confident, strong, talkative, happy. How could a country change someone's basic personality? Tehmina wondered. This thing in their Constitution which we used to mock in India –the pursuit of happiness or some such thing- maybe it really did something for people to have such a preposterous idea embedded in the

Constitution. Maybe it gave them the freedom to feel they were worthy of happiness, that being happy was something they didn't have to apologise for or feel guilty about." (Umrigar 150-151)

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