

Tribhuvan University

**Displacement and Alienation in le thie diem thuy's *The gangster we are all
looking for***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Yubaraj Sapkota has completed his thesis entitled, “Displacement and Alienation in le thie diem thuy’s *The gangster we are all looking for*” under my supervision. He carried out his research work from 2010 to 2011. I hereby re-commend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis titled “Displacement and Alienation in le thie diem thuy’s *The gangster we are all looking for*” submitted to the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Yubaraj Sapkota has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Abstract

This research deals with the experience of Vietnamese immigrant family in the United States who are having a traumatic life due to their physical distance from their native land. They are suffering from diasporic alienation and identity crisis in the multicultural society. When the family forcibly leaves its homeland it is affected by foreign culture. They not only find it difficult to assimilate but also cannot disown their native culture. Their identity becomes hybrid amidst the intersection of multiple cultures. So, their ambivalent or in-between position germinates alienation and identity crisis which pushes them to remain in the sense of tumultuous life. As a result their life crawls through the memory or nostalgia which becomes an alternative source in search of fix identity and belongingness.

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Chapter I

Diasporic Consciousness in *The gangster we are all looking for*

The novel by le thie diem thuy, *The gangster we are all looking for*, is a fictional autobiography of the protagonist who is living an immigrant life in America due to Vietnam War. In other words, she is in diasporic condition and trying to give shape and order to her fragmented life by writing her memories and experiences. le thie diem thuy is an award-winning poet, novelist and performer who was born in the South Vietnamese village of Phan Thiet on January 12, 1972 during the heart of the Vietnam war. *The gangster we are all looking for*, an acclaimed memoir which describes the life of Vietnamese family in America through the eyes of a child who is finding her place and voice in a new country.

The story starts with the year 1978 when six refugees - a girl, her father and four uncles are pulled from the sea and received by an American family to begin a new life in San Diego. This novel is the experience of new immigrants in America with its all confusion, loneliness, personal and familial disconnection, and the sense of loss of one's roots. At the center of the novel is the author, nameless young Vietnamese girl who struggles desperately to cope with her sudden dislocation from her home country to Southern California. The little girl struggles with her traumas, the absence of her mother where she yearns for her mother who has accidently left behind and lives with mental struggles in the strange, new country that feeds her imagination. She starts to see and hear things intensely and dramatically out of her loneliness. Then one day, in an effort to release a butterfly, which she believes was trapped and calling for help, she breaks the souvenirs of her sponsor. As a result, the whole group is kicked out of the house without anyone in the new country to fall back on.

The story continues with her mother, Ma, coming into the picture. The financial burden, the haunting traumas and the constant moving make each member in the family more miserable in their own tragedy. Ma keeps lamenting her sorrow of letting her parents down by her marriage to Ba, who is a Buddhist and a gangster from the South of Vietnam. Meanwhile, Ba is consumed in his hopeless rage with the haunting memory of his son and daughter who is drowned in an attempt to escape and his desperate situation in the new country. Worst of all, the surviving girl has to cope with her new life in all of those tragedies. *The gangster we are all looking for* is told in five interlocking stories, each one composes of a series of brief, sharply drawn vignettes. Details of how the author's parents are parted before the trip and reunited, how her brother and then her sister have drowned, how she and her father spends their first day in America waiting for her mother to come, and how they navigate through the difficulties to survive in America are treated in a non-chronological order. We see a story in movie like structure, in which past and present intermingle.

This research argues that the disruptive/non-linear timeline in the text helps to depict the acute condition of the author and her family as refugees as it shows chaos and disorderliness. The author uses her imagination constantly in the text as an imagined site on which she can represent her identity and reflects her condition as an acute refugee. At the same time she decodes the mysteries of American life, technology, and culture; the mysterious power landlords and bosses exert over her father, the racist behavior of schoolmates, who begin referring to all Southeast Asian immigrant students as “yang”. le's non-linear approach adds to the sense of childlike wonder as well as its fragmented memory and sense of permanent loss. Her powerful descriptions and imagery and her portrayal of her narrators musing, echoes these feelings creates an inescapable air of sorrow. This seems as if her life will never be

what it could and should have been. This is a harsh but exquisitely written fictional treatment of the underside of immigration which is a momentous debut, revealing great beauty and enormous sorrows, and the struggle to find a place and voice in the new world.

The primary objective of this research is to bring out how the diasporic people are suffering from separation, sense of loss, alienation, identity crisis, linguistic problem, loneliness, domination, cultural hybridity, etc. in the new country. It examines thuy's representation of diasporic people's suffocated life in multicultural society. In the novel le explores the postcolonial issues like identity crisis, sense of dislocation, fragmentation, cultural hybridity, ambivalent subjectivity, mimicry etc. where le deals with the diasporic issue which is faced by immigrants in foreign land due to the geographical distance from their local culture. The Vietnamese immigrant family has to face identity crisis, separation, sense of rootlessness, domination, sense of alienation, dislocation, loss of homeland where they try to retain that homeland by creating "Imaginary Homelands" in their imagination with the help of their memory.

le's *The gangster we are all looking for* exhibits her quest for her cultural roots. While living in America, le is out of her root or origin. She is frequently haunted by the memory of her real homeland and suffers from the sense of displacement and rootlessness. She feels nostalgic memories are fragmented like broken mirrors because of the distances of time and space. But imaginative reconstruction is the only means to connect herself to her homeland. As a diasporic writer, le has hybrid identity. In fact, hybridity is inherent in le right from her hybrid lineage. le belongs to the lineages of two cultural and racial status where her Ba, a Buddhist gangster and Ma is a catholic school girl.

As an immigrant writer too, she is in the position of hybridity. She is attached to Vietnamese culture by her birth, whereas, she is attached to the foreign culture by her diasporic condition and upbringing. So she straddles between two cultures and her identity is at once partial and plural.

As a diasporic writer, she also faces the problem of identity crisis. One's identity is embedded in his/her own culture and cannot be separated from it. In the foreign land, she is haunted by the questions like "Who am I?", and "Where do I belong to?" So the novel shows her attempt to gain insight into her own identity. She had left Vietnam at the age of six. So in order to get rid of her crippling sense of loss of identity, and sense of disintegration, she attempts to recollect the memories of the life, her parents and grandparents had led there. In fact she attempts to link herself to her cultural roots to get rid of the sense of rootlessness.

It is noteworthy that the novel is not chronologically constructed. There is constant shifting in the plot. It is because when one reconstructs the past, the past does not come in chronological order. The memories are always vague and past cannot be delivered purely. So the style of the novel also corresponds to the theoretical tool of the novel. Fragmented and disintegrated state of the writer resembles by the fragmented writing of the novel.

The gangster we are all looking for, being the very first novel by the Vietnamese-American author Le Thi Diem Thuy, has generated several critical commentaries since its publication in 2003. First published as a short piece in the best American essays of 1997, it was also awarded a Puschart prize "special mention". Several critics belonging to various backgrounds have ventured to interpret and analyze it from diverse angles and point of views including the autobiographical dimension. But the author commenting on this very issue in an interview says: "it's

not purely autobiographical, the characters move through a landscape that my family moved through but in the novel I follow them as characters; I don't think of them as me and my father and my mother" (2003). So, even after critics' attempt to analyze it from the autobiographical point of view, she denies it and comments them just as the fictional characters and events that are common to the immigrants. As the story presents the detail of the period during Vietnam War, it has succeeded to give general and common people's life in that period. On the very point Ly Nguyen in her *Hunting Tale of Vietnam* presents her view about the novel in this manner:

I bought this book a few years ago and could not put it down. I was a baby when my family fled Vietnam, so I have no memories of it, but I do have vague memories of my early childhood in an apartment complex and then later a town house during the mid to late 70s. I was often in tears while reading this book- it's like someone crawled in to my head and captured all those memories and expressed them in words that I could never find. One of the prevailing themes of the *The gangster we are all looking for* is the real and detail description that can describe the real incidents in fictional manner. If you like books with a "plot", this book is not for you. To everyone else who are keen to know the real history in ground level, and especially to Vietnamese Americans, I highly recommended this historical fictitious book. (12)

So from her opinion the book is a success in presenting the life of the common people amidst the war of Vietnam when after the fall of Saigon. In Vietnam the new communist government sends many people who support the old government in the South to 're- education camps', and others to 'new economic zones.'

The very book is observed from different vantage point by different critics. John D. Blanco observes surrealistic elements in the novel with hypnotic prose in style;

le's prose is hypnotic. An iridescent blend of simplicity and enchantment, it magics a world in which butterflies speak, chickenpox scars are diamonds, and the Mexican man in the French bakery tries out phrases from his English- language tape on bags of flour. (5)

But in the research, the researcher has brought fore the issue of sense of alienation, rootlessness and other diasporic features in the novel. To prove the stand, the research takes help of the diasporic consciousness.

The term Diaspora is derived from Greek word which means a scattering (of seeds). It refers to the movement of people sharing a common ethnic identity which is coerced into leaving its culture. The term is thus linked with the creation of a group of refugees. Diasporas define themselves in terms of their relationships with the homeland, international entities and host country thereby influencing various dynamics. Conflict has been one of the primary causes of the most diasporic movements and this is true to the Vietnamese Diaspora. Diaspora, established in the late 20th century is an academic field which is first used to study dispersed ethnic populations especially the Jewish dispersion in Babylonian times and then after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In the beginning period, the term 'Diaspora' is narrowly connected with the migration of the people. But in the present time its area of research has been broad in the field of cultural studies which has been the study of Diasporas. Similarly, it has come to merge into issues raised in postcolonial theory.

This research ventures to analyze the novel through the postcolonial issues of Diaspora, hybridity, identity crisis, ambivalence, mimicry. According to the

contemporary Diaspora studies, it is the term mainly used to elaborate periphery to centre population as a movement, voluntary or involuntary of people from their original homeland to a new alien region. Similarly in cultural studies, 'Diaspora' is used to explore a dynamic mechanism of communities scant of stabilizing allusion to an original homeland. But nowadays it has been included even in the studies of race and ethnicity to describe a range of cultural affiliations that have been migrated across national boundaries and joined at other groups of majority.

To cover a range of different cultural religious commitment, the term 'Diaspora' has been extended with the sense of exile from a place or state of belonging or origin. According to Ashcroft 'Diaspora' is a movement. He further says:

Diaspora is the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself is a radically diasporic movement involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlements of millions of European over the entire world. (68-69)

It is said that European colonization gave birth to Diaspora. In this postcolonial situation people go to European metropolitan centers to get education and job, because of racial, social conflict or war on their homelands. When people are far from their homeland, they feel something lacking within them. To retain that lack, some people try to recreate their homelands through their writing, such writing becomes diasporic in which the writer brings the issues of homelands using the language of new land. At that situation they are forced to use English language to challenge, to communicate their homeland issues.

In the text novel, the immigrant family is not only haunted by the trauma of exile, displacement, migration, rootlessness but also some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim and to look back. The notion of Diaspora of peoples has become increasingly common in describing the combination of migrancy and contained cultural affiliation that characterizes many racial ethnic and national groups scattered throughout the world. Where immigration connotes travel from one country to another, Diaspora is the scattering throughout the world from one geographic location. The scattering leads to a splitting in the sense of home. A fundamental ambivalence is embedded in the term Diaspora: a dual ontology in which the diasporic subject is seen to look in two directions-towards a historical cultural identity in one hand, and the society of relocation on the other.

In the postcolonial discourse, Diaspora deals with the ambiguities of having multiple homes. At the same time it goes beyond the territorially confined notions of a cohesive national culture because the movement of people is so wide ranging. Postcolonial criticism treats the formation of identity based on the diversity and difference as central to what constitutes a Diaspora. In many ways the central motif is that of a journey from a homeland to some sort of a new place during which memories and histories are revisited and reconstructed. The constant movement of the diasporic individual brings to mind the state of homelessness. Diasporic discourse needs to deal with the notion of finding a home for those who have become a homeless due to political, natural or professional reasons because they want to restore their stories, languages and cultures that they carry with them.

Oxford Dictionary defines Diaspora; as 'the dispersion'. The term first occurs in Deuteronomy 28, verse 25 which says 'the lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies you will come one direction but flee from them in another and

you will become a thing of horror'. Similarly, *Webster Dictionary* in the United States, Diaspora refers to 'dispersion from'. Hence the word embodies a notion of center, a locus, a 'home' from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes images of multiple journeys. The dictionary also highlights the word's association with the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile.

The increasing refugee crisis in every western country is just one manifestation of the long-standing circulation of people in what Edward Said has called 'the voyage in' (261). He further says:

Diaspora does not seem at first to be the province of post-colonial studies until we examine the deep impact of colonialism upon this movement. The most extreme consequences of imperial dominance can be seen in the radical displacement of peoples through slavery, indenture and settlement. Diaspora does not simply refer to this movement but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home that such movement produces. (261)

Said talks about the issues of identity, home and memory which are resulted by the displacement of people due to different reasons. Edward Said addresses the complex issue of identity, subjectivity and exile. The issue here is not only one of cultural engagement but also that of cultural circulation.

For James Clifford, there is a new world order of mobility, of rootless histories and the paradox of global culture is that it is 'at home' with this motion rather than in a particular place. Clifford's book *Routes* examines the extent to which practices of displacement 'might be constitutive of cultural meanings rather than their simple transfer or extension' (3). Clifford further remarks that:

Diasporic cultures attempt to negotiate the experience of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering or desiring another place. Feeling displaced in the host country is equally important to the feeling of loss experienced by separation from the homeland. Whether the attachment towards homeland is imagined or real modifies how the construction of identity by diasporic people is undertaken. (255)

Clifford, thus, focuses more on what happens to a diasporic people in the host country as well as highlights the maintenance of relationship with the real and symbolic homeland.

In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Hall talks about cultural identity in the different forms. In this regard he defines:

Cultural identity in terms of one, shared culture a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Such a conception of cultural identity played a critical role in all post-colonial struggles which have so profoundly reshaped our world. Cultural identity in this second sense is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. (111-12)

Here Hall defines cultural identity as a matter of becoming as well as with a shared culture and history which belongs to the past and future but not already exists.

Similarly, in the essay “The Mind of Winter”, Edward Said ponders on the state of exile. He dwells of the sense of loss, “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (429). In this

sense it is a punishment, but an ambiguous one. For in the same breath said emphasizes the profound creative empowerment of the Diaspora brings with it. Exile and Diaspora are experiences that exist more widely and in more circumstances than those produced by colonialism.

Migration has created a significant number of Disaporas. Either the migration leads by the imperial power or occurs in the periods of late capitalism and globalization. But all these migrants are displaced from their homeland which not only refers to the spatial location but also signifies the displacement from their origin, root and culture. So in this state their sense of exile, fragmented memory, their nostalgia for homeland, feeling of in-betweenness etc. especially sensed by the descendents of Diasporas become extremely intense and irrepressible. They have to face identity crisis in the new land which they want to resist using new world's language. That is why; the diasporic writings capture both the problems of experiences of the migrants. With the help of memories, familiar myth or nostalgia, they try to recollect their past. Such writers revisualize their history of origin and offer all the exotics of fantasies of their homeland.

Another scholar Robert Young talks about the postcolonial issue-hybridity in his essay "The Cultural Politics of Hybridity". He further says that:

Hybridity makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference. But in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. Hybridity thus consists of a bizarre binate operation that is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and economies of agonistic reticulation. Hybridity thus operates within the same conflictual structures. (158)

So, hybridity is the factor that has its own distinctness. Even in similarity it searches differences and within differences it aims to seek for sameness. This very characteristic has made hybridity to encompass vast territory of critical analysis even sometimes in conflictual structure.

In his essay “Imaginary Homelands” Rushdie talks about the life experience in the foreign land. He further says that:

The past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity. Which seems to me self- evidently true; but I suggest that the writer who is out-of-country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form. It is made more concrete for him by the physical fact of discontinuity of his present being in a different place from his past of his being ‘elsewhere’. (429)

Rushdie takes the past as a useful tool with which to work in the present.

Hall defines identity in terms of hybridity as well as diversity and he further remarks that identity is nowhere to be found in its pure, pristine state. It is already fused, syncretised with other cultural elements. Stuart Hall talks about hybrid identity in his essay Cultural Identity and Diaspora, he further says:

The ‘New World’ presence-America, Terra Incognita- is therefore itself the beginning of Diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity, and difference. The Diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite difference; by hybridity. Diaspora

identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (438).

So, the Diasporic people don't have pure identity as such, because of their displacement from their homeland and a cultural diversity, their identity is always fluid and inconsistent. Diasporic identity is a matter of producing and reproducing where it belongs to future as much as to the past. It is not which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.

Likewise another critic Avtah Brah in his essay "Thinking Through the Concept of Diaspora" says that, at the heart of the notion of Diaspora there is the image of journey.

Yet not every journey can be understood as Diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'. These journeys must be historicized if the concept of Diaspora is to serve as a useful heuristic device. (443)

Avtah defines the Diaspora in terms of multiple journeys where he is not ready to take every journey as a Diaspora. He puts forward his views; these journeys must be historical and essentially about putting roots elsewhere, about settling down. In other words, it is the economic, political and cultural specificities linking these components that the concept of diaspora signifies.

Hybridity is one of the most disputed terms in postcolonial studies. It is commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone which is produced by colonization. Hybridization takes many forms including cultural, political and linguistic: pidgin and creole are linguistic examples. Robert

Young says widely written commentaries on imperialism and postcolonialism has remarked on the negatively sometimes associated with the term hybridity. Young would argue that at the turn of century hybridity has become part of a colonialist discourse of racism. Jean Rhy's also says on wide Sargasso Sea, to be a creole or hybrid was essentially negative. They were reported in the book as lazy and dangerous of such hybrids inevitably reverting to their 'primitive' tradition which is highlighted throughout the novel. According to Ashcroft, the most postcolonial writing has focused on the hybridized nature of postcolonial culture as a strength rather than weakness.

Critics like Bhabha assert that there is a reciprocal influence that is exerted on the cultures of the countries, diasporic people born in and those they reside in. Bhabha refers to the silicate position of the luminal subject in exile, who has to negotiate constantly between two conflicting cultural identities. While the subjects tend to navigate and negotiate between cultural, religious, linguistic and geographic boundaries, the culture of Diaspora, continues Bhabha, is characterized by a hybrid quality.

This research will mobilize the theoretical concepts of postcolonialism, especially the issue of Diaspora, to probe into the problem of identity crisis which is brought by displacement from the land of birth. The first chapter Diasporic Consciousness in *The gangster we are all looking for* mainly focuses on the introduction of the writer and critics view on it. Furthermore, it introduces how this research has significance. Along with that it attempts to define the key concept of the research i.e. Diaspora in reference to different diasporic writers and critics. Second chapter attempts to show how of Diaspora is projected in the text. Then the last portion of the research is completely devoted to combine and sum up the

issue of methodology and ideas of the text in nutshell. So it is the conclusive part to strengthen the hypothesis presented by the research.

Chapter II

Displacement and Alienation in *The gangster we are all looking for*

In the novel *The gangster we are all looking for*, Le depicts the identity crisis of Vietnamese family in new land due to displacement from their home country; Vietnam. In the new land they find difficulties in assimilating themselves and they also cannot disown their native culture that results into isolation, fragmentation and alienation. Then their identity becomes hybrid amidst the intersection of multiple cultures where they are torn apart. So, their ambivalent or in-between position germinates the existential as well as identity crisis. *The gangster we are all looking for*, being a diasporic text, all the events come disorderly; there is constant shift in time and space as well as plot. It is noteworthy that all the incidents do not come chronologically and linearly, it is because the events come in the fragmented form when one reconstructs the past. The past cannot be delivered purely or as original because the memories are vague where events come in disorder form, that's why, the style of the novel also corresponds to the methodological tool of the research. In the novel time is disruptive with constant shifts from past to present and present to past through flashbacks. The shifting of time conquers with the shifting of space in the novel. If we follow the lines, at one time, we are in America during late 70s then all of sudden; we are in a Northern village in Vietnam during the war in 60s.

This research aims to shed light primarily on the issues of displacement and alienation as well as separation, domination, fragmentation, frustration, mimicry, hybrid identity formation etc. as expressed in the novel *The gangster we are all looking for*. It aims to find out whether displacement in terms of hybrid assimilation of cultures produces conflicts within the various characters or there is a sense of celebration of diversity. Similarly looks forward, whether there are any indications of

the assimilation of two or more customs, cultures, religions, or folklore in the text. In addition, deciding whether the text is itself hybrid through the displacement of Vietnamese and the utilization of American culture is also worth looking into. In the same manner, it looks into the question of whether the novel shows various forms of resistance. Displacement is viewed as the separation of people from their native culture, through physical dislocation such as refugees, immigrants, migrants, exiles or expatriates as well as the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture. Such a separation may result in a number of diasporic negotiations that includes splitting, assimilation and nostalgia, leading to depressive states and isolation. So, this research highlights an experience of migration is a journey where actual, physical travel and a one-way trip to another place has disrupted the natural sense of home.

Displacement is taken as a forcible movement of mass number of people or compelled to live a life of refugee or exile from their native homeland for shelter and safety. So it has long term effects on consciousness, emotions and identity. In the recent days, diasporas are analyzed from the perspective of associated concepts like deterritorialization, displacement, multiculturalism, exile etc. and can be viewed as one of the results of the international migration. When mass numbers of people are forced to leave their homes, traditions, culture, language and religion at that time they have no alternative without living diasporic consciousness, where the term displacement means movement of mass numbers of people. Diaspora is the movement, migration or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland or people dispersed by whatever cause to more than one location, or people settled far from their ancestral homelands. Originally the word exclusively referred to the Jewish Diaspora after the Babylonian exile, but recently the word has also come to refer to other historical mass-dispersions of people with common roots, movements of an

involuntary or voluntary nature. In all cases, the term Diaspora carries a sense of displacement; that is, the population so described finds itself for whatever reason separated from its national territory and usually its people have a hope or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the homeland still exists in any meaningful sense. Diaspora involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys have undertaken on an account of economic compulsions. Basically, Diaspora is a minority community living in exile. The dispersal signifies the location of a fluid human autonomous space involving a complex set of negotiation and exchange between the nostalgia and desires for the homeland and the making of a new home, adapting to the power, relationships between the minority and majority, being spoke persons for minority rights and their people back home and significantly transacting the contact zone, a space changed with the possibility of multiple challenges.

Alienation refers to the condition of people where they feel that they do not belong in a particular group or alien beings from outer space. It signifies to living in a system established by somebody else is being make isolated from the communities, be it the native and the host country. The alienation effect has a new perspective associated with an external position and the perspective is estranged from the familiar perspective. This definition is further extended to the dilemmas that are embodied in one's attempts to seek home. Thus, the idea of alienation could be referred to as occupying space created by somebody else and is isolated from the native and current community, making a person living in the state of in-betweenness.

Thus, these issues displacement and alienation which are amalgamated in the broad umbrella of Diaspora are important. This research shows how the Vietnamese refugees are culturally alienated and suppressed in the American society due to

displacement. These refugees start to adopt what the American people do as a result this mimicry acquires to hybrid identity formation so that the refugee immigrants are culturally dominated in the alienated land. The causes of all the incidents or suffering arise due to displacement.

Diasporic people often experience a longing for and have a very clear picture of what home for them look like. This concept of home manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand there is the home land that is left behind while on the other hand there is the host land in which to make a new home where they have to face the problems of marginal status, in-betweenness, vague memories of home, separation, frustration, alienation etc. An opinion about the formation of diasporic identity is advocated by Avtah Brah. He further explains that the idea of fixed home gives way to more fluid ways of finding and narrating home in other spaces. However, this is in no way an easy process but one which is accompanied by trauma, fear and ambiguity. He explores a head that:

Diasporas are places of long-term, if not permanent, community formation, even if some households or members move on to elsewhere. The word Diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation and this is certain by a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But Diasporas are potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individuals and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure. (193)

Brah's definition of Diaspora as a place where a new cultural identity is forged through memory comes close to Homi K. Babha's concept of hybridization, which for Bhabha is a process that takes place in the third place of enunciation where identity is

reconstituted in a process that reconstructs fixed meaning into different ones. Through the new constructed identity the refugees do not become happy, they are alienated by their glorious past and on the other hand separation from the family brings suffering to these immigrants. The same sort of suffering is also there in the following lines of the texts:

Linda vista, with its rows of yellow houses, is where we eventually washed to shore. Before Linda vista, we lived in green apartment on thirtieth and Adams, in normal heights. Before the green apartment, we lived in the Red Apartment on forty-ninth and orange, in East San Diego. Before the Red Apartment we weren't a family like we are a family now. We were in separate places, waiting for each other. Ma was standing on a beach in Vietnam while Ba and I were in California with four men who had escaped with us on the same boat. (3)

Being an immigrant in the multicultural ground the narrator and her Ba appear too tangled in several rundown apartments. From the beginning of their life in foreign land they are compelled to live such an ill-managed life due to their diasporic condition where they are taken as inferior. Thus, they become a victim of misbehavior of landlords. It's not easy to cope in the foreign land whereas immigrants are dominated by the foreign norms and values at the host community. After the Vietnam war communist has been taking over the country in 1975 then the new communist government has sent many people who has supported the old government in the South to "re-education camps", and others to "new economic zones", some are imprisoned without formal charges or trails, thousands have abused, tortured and executed. These factors, coupled with poverty and the total destruction of the country that has happened during the Vietnam War, which has caused thousands of Vietnamese to flee

the country. Thus, narrator and her Ba escape with four uncles on the same boat but at the same time Ma is left behind due to the rumors which results the tragic separation in the life of immigrants. They are in compulsion to leave several apartments due to marginalize condition in host country as well as live in separation and have no alternative to waiting for each other.

In postcolonial discourse, Diaspora concerns with the complexities and ambiguities of having multiple homes at the same time. During such journeys shared memories are reconstructed and revisited, that is the compulsion of diasporic people. As Clifford says, "Though this is journey, it is different about setting down, putting roots elsewhere" (443). The diasporic people's movement from place to place brings the notion of finding a home that have become homeless due to political strife, war and conflicts as well as other reasons. Where power is the dominant factor which deprives them from many opportunities and treats as marginal. "Along with other people from our town, we floated across the sea, first in the hold of the fishing boat, and then in the hold of a U.S. navy ship" (3). From the above line it is clear that it is the new immigrant's experience in America with all its loneliness, personal and familial disconnection. It covers Vietnam and America, past and present, hardship and struggle, trauma and haunting, all of which are imbedded in constant movement.

The immigrant's condition of rundown apartments exposes the tragic pain of diasporic people in the host country, where first of all they are kicked out from Mel's house then they have been evicted by landlords from red apartments. Similarly their pain of movements is continuing after one of the managers has murdered a woman.

The movement is the primary step of research in Diaspora. This movement may be voluntary or forcible which is caused by different reasons such as due to political strife, to get job, to study, as well as conflict and war etc. Ashcroft, in his *Key*

Concept also describes Diaspora as “the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homeland to the new regions” (68). Among the many other diasporic critics Avath Brah talks about the reason behind the displacement of people from their homelands. He further says that:

They may have been forced to flee in the wake of political strife, as has been the refugees such as the Sri Lankans, Somalia’s and Bosnian Muslims. Perhaps the dispersion occurred as a result of conflict and war resulting in the creation of conflict and war, resulting in the creation of a nation state. (443)

Brah explores the compulsion of diasporic people and briefly describes the reason behind it. Where Brah takes political strife, conflict and war into account as a possible cause behind a force to flee from their homelands, it occurs dispersion but along with this movement culture, language, myths etc. too has transferred with them.

The same concept can be seen in the lines. In the text, the Vietnamese family becomes the victim of such conflict and war which forces them to flee from their origin or homelands. In the given abstracts the nameless narrator shares her feeling when she is going to flee from Vietnam with her father and to many others.

The night I left Vietnam, it was my father who carried me down to the beach and placed me on the fishing boat. During hours that must have been one of fear, anxiety, desperation, my only memory is of how calmly I sat waiting for him. (105)

They are escaping so it is after sundown at that time she is full of fear, anxiety and desperation. The nameless narrator feels it too long time not only one hour but hours where she does not remember light and dark but only remembers her parents when Ba has gone back to get Ma but it is rumour that someone has alerted the police. The

escape plan is unraveled in chaos and he could not find her anywhere. They heard many voices, each calling for help, each voice linked to the next by grief. Similarly the state of confusion comes to them when the sponsor, Mr. Russel was dead. At that time they are unable to think clearly or understand what is happening to them in their process towards United States.

The original plan was that my father, the four uncles and I would live the elderly couple, but as our papers were being processed Mr. Russell died and there was some question as to where we would be sent Tokyo? Sydney? Minneapolis? (5).

The confusing experience of the immigrants can be seen in the above lines. In 1978, an elderly couple in San Diego has decided to sponsor five young Vietnamese men and one six years old girl from a refugee camp in Singapore through their church group. But in between, Mr. Russell's unexpected death results the confusion in the life of Vietnamese immigrants. Their papers are on the process but they are entangled in confusion, where they would be sent. None of them become sure about their further destination-Tokyo? Sydney? Or Minneapolis? State of confusion is diasporic issue which immigrant's family desperately struggle to cope with their sudden dislocation from their homeland.

After Mel and his mother took us to the room in Mel's where Ba, four uncles and I would all be sleeping, they wish us good night and left us alone, closing the door quietly behind them. They stood in the hallway and we could hear them talking. Even without understanding a word of what they were saying, the tone of their voices troubled us. (6)

They are received by Mel and his mother after their arrival in California and transfer them to the room in Mel's house. From here it is clear that how linguistic problem

results the trouble in the condition of diasporic people. They are living in full of fearful condition inside the room which is due to the results of linguistic differentiality. After hearing the tone of Mel and his mother's voices, trouble them and arouse fear even without understanding a word what they are saying. Conversation between Mel and his mother invite the Diasporic pain in the life of Vietnamese people in the foreign land. Inside the bedroom, they remain quiet due to the fear of misunderstanding of new language. Ba has been standing with his back against the door. The four men were sitting on the two bunk beds and the narrator was still on the double bed by pulling her knees up to near her chest.

One of the uncles has taken a deep breath and lies down on bed. Who is wearing his shoes and let his feet hang off the edge of the bed so he wouldn't get the covers dirty. After hearing unfamiliar tone and their footsteps move down the hallway toward the living room results in immigrant's life so fearful tragic condition in host communities. Here linguistic problem is prominent issue in the life of foreigners to the adopted country. It pictures the pitiful condition of Vietnamese diasporic people in the new land. Image after image drifts into an out of the narrative a bit clearer every time. Diasporic people are unknown to the foreign culture, tradition as well language. Thus, they suffer from the various aspects. All people remain quiet, some are sitting on the bed by pulling their knees up to near chest not only that one of them takes a deep breath and lay down on bed. From here it is clear that, how diasporic people suffer in the host community due to the linguistic problem. "Ba step forward and explained to the four Men and me that Mel had bought out way into the United States. "If it wasn't for him, they would have sent us back the way we came" (7). Ba is trying to console themselves where they have no option without it. Their confusing state clears tragic life condition of diasporic people in host land.

If it was true that this man Mel could keep us from floating back there- to those- salt- filled nights- what could we do but thank him. And then thank him again. Only why did it seem form the tones of the voices in the hallway as if something was wrong?

Ba said that we had to be patient. (8)

These lines expose the inferior mentality of the immigrants and think the westerners as superior being, where narrator's father is trying to console four uncles and his daughter after hearing the suspicious voice in the hallway. At that time Mel's mother's cry and the sound of footsteps make them worry at that night in the host country. They think themselves as marginal and being a marginal there is no other way without to be patient. And also thought that being an inferior, they could not do anything except thanking to Mel.

The diasporic immigrants are in such a condition that neither they strike nor they feel secure in the new land. "Ba said whatever we might come to thank to Mel, we should always remember that he opened a door for us and that this was an important thing to remember" (8). They are in confusing state in one hand where they can not flee from fear or suspicion or scruple and on the other hand they have no weapon to accept what has happened or think positively. In the same manner the narrator further mentions the tragic condition of separation through the conversation with her father:

Why doesn't she take us to the beach? I asked.

Ba shook his head. "No. Not possible. There's no reason for us to go there."

"But Ma's there," I said.

"Not, she's not," Ba said, leaning down to zip up jacket.

“You told me she was at the beach,” I said.

“Not the beach here. The beach in Vietnam,” Ba said.

What was the difference? (12-13)

In the conversation between narrator and her father exposes how the child psychology is haunted by the separation and nostalgia. When the narrators psychology is deep rooted in her past memory which haunts time and again even in her trip to the mountain. How tragic life bears to the child by separation with her mother which is like separation of parts from the body can be seen from these lines. One normally realizes that how image of beach germinated in the mind of the child however, she does not recognize the different beach.

The different shores identified by the protagonist and the other characters in the story act as a method of differentiation, creation of a sense of “otherness” and alienation to the people who come from other shore. However, it is the same body of water that separates protagonist from her mother. When her father tells her that Ma is not at the beach in San Diego, CA but in the beach in Vietnam, the younger narrator naively questions, what is the difference? But the unlimited thrust of reconciliation with her mother has given the pitiful condition of diasporic immigrants in the host community. Mother has been accidently left behind in the beach of Vietnam. Time and again, the child recalls her mother and longs for unification. The absence of her mother always troubles her in the host community. So she raises such questions to her father.

The people who are migrated from their homelands are compelled to assimilate with the foreign culture and tradition during struggle to cope with their sudden dislocation from their home country to Southern California.

While Ba and I were following the grandmother around in the snow, the uncles were smoking cigarettes, drinking iced coffee, shooting pool and learning to watch and then bet on football games with their new Vietnamese brothers. (15)

In the foreign land, they feel lonely and alienated. They are living with diasporic consciousness of their homelands nevertheless; they are in compulsion to assimilate the foreign cultures as well as habits to struggle in the new land. They are entangled in the mysteries of American life; technology and culture which create an inescapable air of sorrow to the life of immigrants in the host country. The four uncles spend their Sunday afternoon walking around the neighborhood, looking for signs of other Vietnamese people. They struggle desperately to cope with their dislocation from their home country to host country where they involve in smoking cigarettes, drinking iced coffee, shooting pool as well as learn to watch football and bet on games with other Vietnamese.

Neither they discard nor can adopt easily, they are in full of illusion, alienated, lonely as well as hopeless. So, their life style goes ahead very randomly and scattered in the land. "Often they would still have their coats on and one uncle, sleeping on a top bunk, never manage to kick off both his shoes" (16). Being immigrants they have to learn everything which is new to them so they become alienated in new land. Such things can be seen from their unmanaged life style too. Similarly the feeling of discomfort and uneasiness can be seen in the process of assimilation:

Ba would hand me one of the pastel colored dresses the grandmother had given me. I'd pull the itchy, rustling dress over my head and let it hang for a moment around my neck, a huge flower whose petals were bunched and whose center had been replaced by my frowning face.

“I don’t want to wear American dresses”, I’d say to Ba. (16)

These lines explore that every new thing make them feel uncomfortable even six years child (narrator) shows her uncomfortable behavior to adopt American dresses which the grandmother has given. She addresses the dress as itchy and rustling instead of wearing them she lets the dress hang for a moment around her neck and expresses her anger towards her father by saying “Who wants to wear American dresses?” (17). It shows that their deep love towards their homeland. Ba lowered the edges of his mouth and raised his eye brows and at the same times, laid a clown about to cry. Ba shrugs his shoulders to the narrator and reaches under the bed for narrator’s shoes, a pair of clear plastic sandals also from the grandmother.

The immigrants have no option to cope with foreign culture they are compelled to adopt. She is trying to resist but ultimately have no way in foreign land without adopt. Steve Koss says that America is not a land of opportunity but a refugee camp for displaced persons, a land that will forever be foreign for lives that will never feel fulfilled. The issue of blocked freedom and domination are depicted in the following conversation:

Ba and I would tiptoe to the front door. Mel often slept until noon, so we all had to be quiet when leaving the house.

As we walked toward the school, he’d often tell me not to make so much noise in the morning.

Once, he told me Mel had complained to him that he could hear me “Chattering in his sleep.” When Ba told me that, I said, “Dumb birds chatter. I don’t chatter.” Ba squeezed my hand and didn’t say anything.

(18)

People in diasporaic situation live a dominating life and they have not got freedom as well as their desire are designated by foreign environment. So, they feel inferior and marginal in the host country. Here also Ba has to face such behavior by Mel, who has often slept until noon. That's why; all the immigrants have to be quiet while leaving the house because he thinks himself superior and immigrants as other and inferior. So, they live life according to others' desire. From this dialogue he presents the domination of landlord to Vietnamese immigrants in the new house. Where landlord Mel complains about child's chattering to her father. The narrator is trying to resist such domination by defending her, "Dumb birds chatter. I don't chatter (18)." She speaks aggressively towards Mel over his domination to Ba. But Ba has known that they cannot resist and challenge them on the host community and understands that they have no option without accepting it. That's why he squeezes her daughter's hand and does not say anything.

In the postcolonial situation diasporic people are compelled to live in new land where they meet with different culture, language, tradition as well as lifestyles. So that new land is a juncture point where many cultural tributaries meet that results the hybrid identity. About hybrid identity formation Stuart Hall further says:

The third, 'New World' presence is not so much power as ground, place and territory. It is the juncture-point where many cultural tributaries meet, the 'empty' land where strangers from every other part of the globe collided. It is the place where the creolizations and assimilations and syncretism were negotiated. (438)

Here, Hall takes the new land as a juncture point where strangers of the every other part of the globe has collided it. As like Hall says in the text too different cultures

collide, where creolizations and assimilations and syncretism are negotiated which results the hybrid identity.

Hybridity, however, more obviously, stands as the construction of the space that beyond the two or more than two existing cultural systems Bhabha call “Third space of enunciation” (37). The culture becomes our identity when we are in contact zone, the cultural identity emerges in the ambivalent attitude in regard to time and space. In this regard Bhabha defines:

It is significant that the production capacities of this third space have a colonial or post-colonial provenance. For willingness to descend into alien territory [...] the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based on not an exoticism of multiculturalism or diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity. (38)

It is the liminal space, where we find those words with which we can speak about ourselves and others that attempts to carry the meaning of culture and the burden of it as well. The burden of the culture is referred to the painful experiences of the people in adopting with the new culture in an alien land. When the people migrate from their homeland for betterment at that time they experience the traumas and diasporic pain in a new land that results the cultural hybridity. Therefore, it is the third space of enunciation where the nameless narrator searches for the new cultural space that makes the notion of cultural hybridity reliable.

I was the only Vietnamese student at my school. On the first day of class, the teacher introduced me to the other students by holding a globe in one hand as she gave it a spin with the other and then pointing with her finger at an S-shaped carve near a body of water.

Was that where I had come from?

As I stood before them in a dress the color of an Easter egg, with my feet encased in clear plastic sandals, the other students looked at the globe and then back at me again. Some just stared. I imagined the stripes on my underwear flashing on and off, like fabric signals, under the dress. (19)

This is the child's first experience with marginalization which takes place on her first day at school. This setting has a lot to say. She seems to be out of place/homeland.

First of all, she is a stranger to the rest of the class. The strangeness is expressed in her Vietnamese body with the American Easter egg color dress on. By introducing herself as the only Vietnamese student in her school, she shows the marginalization she felt in her first encounter with the new culture. And it creates a sense of loss, the loss of a self.

After all, she is a Vietnamese who is wearing an American outfit. This compensation for the loss she has been through during the assimilation process. In fact, embodies in itself a struggle of Vietnamese children, as outsiders, to integrate into the American Mainstream with only a vague conception of what their original culture was. In the very first effort to assimilate (she agreed to go to school), the teacher introduced her to the other students by holding a globe at that time she feels discrimination where other students and teacher behave her as other. Some look at her by differencing, some just stared such behavior suffers her at her first attempt to assimilate.

As Rushdie defines, "The broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also I believed useful too with which to work in the present" (429). The immigrants' people have memory of their past life. With the help of memory they live

in the present which gives them some sort of relief even though sometimes nostalgia results depression, homesickness and frustration. Therefore, memory is such a weapon for immigrants with the help of which they put forward their lives and get compensation. While dwelling into nostalgia or memory the narrator remembers her glorious past days and starts to watch around her surroundings to get relief of separation from the home country.

I began to play with the ceiling a game that I used to play with the sky when I was lying in the fishing boat on the sea. At that time, I thought that everyone and everything I missed was hovering behind the sky. The game involved looking for a seam to the sky, a thread I could pull. I told myself that if I could find the thread and focus on it hard enough with my eyes, I could tear the sky open and my mother, my brother, my grandmother, my flip-flops, my favourite shells would all fall down to me. (21)

Upon these lines the narrator recounts one of her experiences during the very first day of school in the United States where she feels staying in an isolated room, everything has been strange for her. In her first attempt to assimilation in a foreign culture (by going/accepting school) she feels being rejected by dominant culture. At the process of assimilation in the society is defeated by marginalization, a history of racial discrimination, heightening the child's sense of indeterminacy in a foreign nation. Most of the difficulties for many of these Asian-Americans lie in the gap between their perceptions of themselves and their encounter with the gaze of the mainstream.

Memory is taken as an ultimate alternative to give compensation of loss to diasporaic people. Safran describes the diasporaic pain in relation to "memory, vision or myth about their original homeland" (19). Everything is new to immigrants and not

fully accepted by the society so they feel alienated and isolated in the host country. That's why they are indulging in the deep imagination to get relief even if that is not ultimate source of happiness. What seems to be impossible in real life is possible in her childhood game. Actually, it is the game of her life, the game she plays when she is in the middle of nowhere, in a transition zone waiting to be accepted. That sky and that ceiling perform as a barrier that needs pulling down. That space in her imagination is the whole world to her. In this case, on the level of an individual, the protagonist in her diasporic life uses her imagination to create her own world and her own identity through the construction of space. That space then in turn portrays the author's state of mind. Often, she gets lost and absorbed in her own creation. Such a space in her mind always comes with a border that divides the world into two parts, a zone that should be broken through. She is trapped in that liminal terrain between the two borders most of the time, where she feels lack of connection with her beloveds, her mother, her brother, her grandfather, her belongings and her cultures too.

As a matter of fact, Arjun Appadurai in one of his discussions about time and space in post colonialism does mention the connection between imagination and space. He describes the spaces building blocks of imagined worlds. The multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imagination of persons and groups spread around the world. In the same manner the diasporic condition of immigrants is explored by using an image of butterfly. Such experience is explored through the child and her father's conversation. When Ba and the narrator lay down to sleep one night, she whispered into Ba's ear that she found a butterfly that has a problem:

“What is problem?” Ba asked.

“The butterfly is alive

“Good”, Ba said.

“But it’s trapped.”

“Where?”

“Inside a Glass disk.”

Ba said nothing.

“But it wants to get out.”

“How do you know?”

“Because it said this to me: ‘Shhuh-shuh/shuh-shuh’. (25-26)

She uses an image of a butterfly to expose her diasporic condition in the new land. Through the suffering of butterfly she is trying to represent her diasporic pain. Here, she is a trapped butterfly that needs releasing where as before. She is someone who wants to crack open the sky to enlarge the space. The thirst for a place with more freedom and comfort is obvious. From here, it is understood that the marginalization leaves her no comfort zone and that urges her to create her own space. She compares glass disk with this foreign land where she is trapped and longing for freedom.

Perhaps she needs a transformation because the spatial of being involves a spatial articulation and deployment of the notion of transformation: space as the milieu of becoming, a scalar event. However, the girl binds everything related to her present state problematic. In this sense, it is the lack of freedom of mind in the new land. There is a sense of incompleteness of some sort of unfulfilled state and sense of loss; the loss of self. Such a transformation cannot be completed; thus the imagination of spaces and the assimilation process continue. She is someone who does not belong to anywhere, is trying to adopt with traumatic experience in a not-so-friendly place. The loss also manifests itself in the sound of silence and also it denotes her existence.

Going back to the image of the trapped butterfly above, it is recognized that she imagines herself as the butterfly speaking shuh-shuh/ shuh-shuh ... she recalls:

I held the disk up to my ear and listened. At first of all I heard was the sound of my own breathing, but then I heard a soft rustling, like wings brushing against a windowpane. The rustling was a whispered song. It was the butterfly's way of speaking and I thought I understood it. (25)

It is she who is speaking from a confined space without being physically heard. She is the trapped butterfly whose voice is silenced in the new society which is felt and recognized through the pain, the suffocating state and the imprisonment. In this sense she says, "Though, I could not find the place where the butterfly had flown in or where it could push its way out again" (25). She represents the new society as a pool of yellow jelly from where she wants to get out but cannot.

The power relationship plays a vital role in the life of immigrants. The power is the key fact to dominate and hegemonize the people who have in less power as Avtah Brah describes the concept of Diaspora linking with the power. He further describes, "The concept of Diaspora centers on the configurations of power which differentiate Diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another" (444). It is about the relation of power where power is the dominating factor to the immigrants. In the host land immigrants are treated as other as well as voiceless people and they are dominated by the people of mainstream. The immigrants are compelled to do hard work and low pay job on almost every day of the week. Such experience is clearer from the assertion below:

When the white wall in one of his properties had faded or became dirty with the grubby prints of people's lives rubbing up against them, he

sent Ba and the four uncles in with direction to “touch them up,”
 “make like new,” “make white again.”

On almost every day of the week, you could find them working: five
 small-boned Vietnamese men climbing ladders in empty rooms,
 painting the white walls whiter. (9)

Power is a matter of domination and hegemonization. Power is applied to the Vietnamese immigrants by Mel who is reinforced by his superior mentality. Above in the lines, one can clearly see the tragic situation of the Vietnamese immigrants in the host community similarly, low ranking job and work of the week shows the domination over diasporic immigrants’ people by the Mel’s so called superior mentality. Mel dominates the five small-boned Vietnamese by employing as his crew of house painters and general maintenance man where they have no alternative without doing in low pay. And compelled to do risky job of climbing ladders in the empty room with direction to touch them up, make like new, make white again where they have to feel marginalized from the mainstream of the society. They are always looked as outsiders as well as inferior in the eyes of native people where they have to climb shaky ladders or crawl through dark and narrow spaces to see about small broken things that are considered to be lower which is ultimately linked with issue of identity. Suffocating and painful condition of immigrant’s life in the alien land can be seen in the following assertion:

“But what does crying mean in this country? Your Ba cries in the
 garden every night and nothing comes of it.”

“Just water for Mel’s lawn.”

“Nothing.”

They went back to work. (27)

However, there is a sense of hopelessness and futility in tears. Her father's tear in the new land is like "a flood of tears rushing" towards them which is just water for Mel's lawn not more than that. When the butterfly is in the trouble at that time the child asks the uncles to help her to get the butterfly out. In this sense uncle says "Yeah, what do we know about butterflies stuck in glass. I never saw anything like it is in Vietnam" (27). It's a foreign land so no one is ready to listen trouble, suffering of the diasporic people it does not let any remark to the host people. It clearly shows that how a pitiful life they had to live in host country. By implying the image of butterfly Le exposes the painful and tragic life of Vietnamese immigrants closely in the foreign country and she shows Ba's pain and cries in the garden every night which results nothing but just water. They have to live a marginal life; they have no access to the mainstream society. So uncle says what does crying mean in this country? By implying a method of differentiation Le creates a sense of otherness and alienation of the immigrants in the new country after they are displaced from homeland. The immigrant's life condition in the confined space is shown in the given lines where they have not only to adjust in the limited space but also living with limited desires and unsatisfied job:

I lived upstairs, in a one-bedroom apartment with my mother and my father. She worked as a seamstress, doing piecework at our kitchen table. He worked as a welder at a factory that made space heaters.

Neither of them wanted to be doing it; Ma wanted to have a restaurant, and Ba wanted to have a garden [...] the three of us slept in one room.

My parents' double bed was separated from my single bed by a side table with a lamp on it. (43)

This description intends to expose that the life condition of Vietnamese immigrant's family in the red apartment complex after Mel has kicked them from his house when

the child attempts to free the butterfly from a glass disk by smashing it. It is the description of the apartment with her parent's profession. The mother of the narrator and wife of the father makes her way to America and is reunited with her daughter and husband after two years in red apartment complex. They are compelled to live in poor apartment complex where no running water, no electricity is and they have to adjust life in a confined space. The mother and father works as seamstress and welder respectively but they are not satisfied form their work. They have to work at low paying as well as their desire and freedom is displaced by the domination in the new land, the immigrant's family has to face a diasporic pain in the foreigner's land. In the new land diasporaic people are always haunted by their past life where they relate to other things. These people are lamenting on their glorious past days in the host country. Rushdie says, "The writer who is out of country and even out of language may experience this loss in an intensified form" (429). The immigrants try to console themselves because they have their past life in the memory which gives them some sort of relief. This is why; memory is the most valuable property to the diasporaic people. A similar opinion is advocated in the following lines and it shows how long the past life gives gratification to the diasporaic people:

Ma says living next to Anh's family reminds her of Vietnam because the blue tarp suspended above Anh's backyard is the bright blue of the South China Sea. Ma says, isn't it funny how sky and sea follow you form place to place as if they too were traveling.

Thinking of my older brother, who was still in Vietnam, I ask Ma, "If the sky and the sea can follow us here, why can't people?" (89)

This is the immigrants' experience in America with full of memory of the past as well as personal and familial disconnection and the sense of loss of one's roots. Issue of

identity is prominent to all the people even whenever they live. People in the foreign land always suffer from the memory of their homeland and they relate homeland to other things. Here too the narrator's mother recalls her home country; Vietnam. The blue tarp has suspended above Anh's background is the bright blue of the South China Sea which relates her to the cultural root. Diasporic people always try to link themselves as their origin or root culture. The mother by linking with the South China Sea, tries to expose her identity and connects herself with own culture, nation as well as belongingness. They try to get relief from loss identity or want to make a way from identity crisis. For diasporic people ultimate home of identity is their imagination through which they try to create imaginary homelands and link themselves to their origin.

The term alienation is use to refer to both a personal psychological state and to a type of social relationship. Kale Kin-Fishman believes, “ the term alienation refers to objective conditions to subjective feeling and to orientations that discourage participation,” and remarks that in modern sociology, “alienation is a term which refers to the distancing of people from experiencing a crystallized totality both in social world and self” (6). Alienation is common emotional state of the people after far from their homeland and feel everything is new to them in the new land. At that time, they have no other option without indulging into deep memory of the past. Similarly through the childish conversation she tries to evoke the consciousness about how much they have been living with diasporic pain. Child is suffered from the separation from her brother, who is in Vietnam but she is longing all the time. When mother says sky and sea follow you from place to place as if they too are travelling at that time child raises a question why can't people? But there is no answer of this tragic situation. Every steps of her life she remembers her brother and longing for

him. Similar experience is also exposed through the narrators experience on the first day school in the host country.

At recess that first day of school, as I stood in the shadow of a big electrical box on the edge of the play ground, I missed my older brother. Could he see me standing here? Was he wondering why I wasn't playing with the other children? (19)

The separation results the pain in the life of Vietnamese immigrants' life in new land. She is in United States and now she has only vague memories off her brother. At the school in America among the crowd too she feels alienation, loneliness and raise questions to herself linking with her brother. Time and place and viewpoint shift constantly, as memories of Vietnam are interwoven with incidents in the United States.

Vietnam is a black and white photograph of my grandparents sitting in bamboo chairs in their front courtyard. They are sitting tall and proud, surrounded by chickens and a rooster. Between their feet and the dirt of the courtyard are thin sandals. My grandfather's broad forehead is shining. So too are my grandmother's famous sad eyes [...] photograph my grandparents had taken late in life, for children, especially for my mother. (78)

As the narrator makes her halting adjustment to America, she also tries to discover what the family has left behind in Vietnam. Her grandparents are known to the girl only through a worn photograph. Through the photograph le explores the nature of memory and its ability or inability, to travel from generation to generation. In le's narrative the photograph can be understood not only in terms of reference and time, but also perspective of mobility. These lines are connected to her root as well as her

belongingness. In diasporic writing, photograph has a prominent significance. It is directly said that it has taken for their children. As Salman Rushdie, it is a way to reach homelands as well history to the child where the child is unknown to her grandparents because she has left Vietnam only at her six, with her father and shifts in new land.

Similarly, Rushdie talks about the photograph where he takes the photograph as the way to reach his homeland or history. He has a photograph of his Bombay house on Britain. Through the photograph he tries to visualize his history. In this regard he argues that: “But the photograph tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time”. (428)

With the help of writing Rushdie is creating Indian history by looking at photograph. It is the alternative way to expose their diasporic pain by creating their lost home or city only in their imagination. The people long their homelands when they are far from their home. When the people have not reached to their homelands or are in the mists at that time they have only option of remembering home as well as belongings through the help of memory or by creating imaginary homelands. Rushdie further explores that:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge which gives rise to profound uncertainties that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual

cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of the mind. (428)

Like Rushdie, Vietnamese immigrant's family is haunted by the sense of loss. Such people suffer from diasporic pain that cannot reclaim about their home, neither can they see future in their new home nor can they retain their original homelands. Similar opinion is advocated by Cohen in the text *Global*, who argues that: "a collective approbation can be found in almost all immigrants when they establish groups and cultural centers" (162). Like Cohen says in the text *Global* that the notion of collectiveness, nearness and feeling of security are found to the diasporaic immigrants after they establish groups and cultural centers. When they are haunted by diasporaic insecurity at that time they feel secure near the groups like them. So they decided to leave Green Apartment. Diaspora is defined in terms of multiple journeys where something is left behind.

We moved out of the green apartment after we turned on the TV one night and heard that our manager and his brother hacked a woman to pieces and dumped the parts of her body into the Pacific Ocean in ten-gallon garbage bags that washed up onshore. Ma said she didn't want to live in a place haunted by a murdered lady. So we moved to Linda vista, where she said there were a lot of Vietnamese people like us.

(91)

From the above lines it is clear that series of movement is still continue of diasporic immigrant family which is not earnest desire but a compulsion. Where pain of shifting from one place to another is over flown and also exposes that to settle in host land is not easy. Form the TV news immigrants family come to know that pitiful death of the woman that is the example of domination as well as villainy crime of the manager and

his brother in the host community who has murdered the woman. From such anarchy child and her family is troubled in the host community. That's why, mother doesn't want to live there being haunted. This atrocity is a common problem of diasporic people in the foreign land where they live a life of minority, domination and inferiority. Because of this reason the family is compelled to leave Green apartment and shifts towards Linda Vista, Ma says that there are a lot of Vietnamese people like them where they feel themselves nearer to their cultural roots and some sort of security. It also connects them to cultural root as well as identity.

“It is hot and dusty where we live. Some people think it is dirty but they don't know much about us” (90). It is obvious that they have a feeling of diasporic insecurity from the economic status among many other possible reasons where they have no alternative without using hot hand dirty apartment. These are the problems of outsider of outside where inside their soul they have much more grief than that of physical. It is the description of life condition in green apartment where they live a poor condition of life and lower level of apartment they use to live. From the above lines one can see the diasporic insecurity.

The feeling of diasporic insecurity compels them to leave the red apartment. Taking above lines into account one can see the melancholy of the marginalized immigrants in the assimilation process in the mainstream American culture. Ma's longing for Linda Vista represents the longing for own cultural norms and values as well as secure place in the host country where she wants to feel secure. Thus, she chooses Linda vista where a lot of Vietnamese people settle.

The experience of fear, anger and marginalization can be found in Bhabha's lines too where he confesses his experience of pitiful condition in the foreign land due to a diasporaic being:

Who confesses to having felt fear and anger in England each time he had been spat in the face with the phrase- paki, go home! Is aware of the discomfort, marginalization and humiliation that sometimes are implicit in the condition of – in-betweenness. (139)

Bhabha explores that the immigrant people are haunted by fear and anger in the foreign land. They are frustrated because of discomfort and marginalization. These immigrants do not provided equal opportunity and are not treated as the native dwellers. They feel humiliated in the host country. That's why; they are always seen to be establishing their sense of identity cultural affiliation, sense of subject position and sense of home. In between that they are entangled in the luminal space neither they discard foreign norms and values nor can accept in full length that results sometime fear and anger against the background of majoritarian rule.

The Vietnamese immigrants are victimized by the native people. Being a few in numbers they are treated as the marginal beings. The government and the rule is constructed working beyond them. At once, they can neither go against these American people nor do they can assimilate what they need. Similarly, according to James Clifford, "Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the traditional movement" (4). The identity becomes volatile in traditional period and frequent movement. At that time one could neither forget the past nor could s/he adopt new change. These sorts of suffering have been facing by these immigrants frequently as they are compelled to leave the apartments.

In the car, Ma starts to cry. "What about the sea? She asks. "What about the garden?" Ba says we can come back in the morning and dig up the stalks of lemongrass and fold the sea into a blue square. Ma is sobbing. She is beating the dashboard with her fists. "I want to know,"

she says, I want to know; I want to know [...] who is doing this to us?"

Hiccupping she says, "I want to know, why – why there's always a fence. Why are we always living like this? [...] Take me back! She says. "I can't go with you. I've forgotten my mother and father I can't believe [...] Anh Minh we've left them to die. Take me back." (97-8)

It is the suffocating state of the diasporic people in the new land. Where one can see another pain of shifting, this process of ongoing is like a flowing river but here Ma wants to know why they have been throwing time and again from one complex to another. When the eviction letter comes they are compelled to leave the apartment. The notice also says that if they don't get out in time, all their possession will be confiscated in accordance with some section of a law book or manual that is supposed to know them but they have never seen. Shortly, thereafter the family is evicted from its apartment complex, which is soon to be razed. Ma becomes frantic and frustrated. This is the cry of pain after leaving the Green apartment. She raises a question that is unanswerable, why are we always leaving like this? From this it is clear that the family is puppet into the hand of mainstream culture. Ma cannot tolerate the domination and discrimination time and again in the new land. So, she cries in the car and beats in the dash-board with her fist after being evicted from Green apartment but cannot do anything more than that in the alien land. In the alien land she is haunted by the memory of the past and longs for returning back. She remembers her parents, origin of her roots as well as homelands and wants to return back so she says her husband to take her back. Ma does not want to give continuity to the series of pain and does not want to live within fence created by the host communities. She wants freedom as well as her identity. The diasporic pain is also clear from her sobbing face. This is the result of displacement from their homeland to the new land where they

become the victim of the new norms and values and feel alienated. Here she represents the unstable identity with the movement and shifting of time and space. She is whispering “Ma/Ba, Ma/Ba” (99). She recalls her parents who are in Vietnam; it means she is haunted by the memories of the past. “There is not a trace of blood anywhere except here, in my throat, where I am telling you all this” (99). Those sounds of silence are more painful from where she is uttering all those pain which is more suffocating than the trace of blood. It signifies that they suffer within inside than outside. There is discrimination between native people and immigrants so Ma wants to go back to the home. Like Avtuh Bharh in his book *Cartographies* highlights, “Diaspors may take account of homing desire” (180). Diasporaic people have desire to return their native home frequently they don’t feel happy in foreign land because they are torn apart in the assimilation process.

In the postcolonial theory mimicry is a prominent term because it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonizers and colonized. The mimicry means the imitation of foreign tone, culture, norms and values. When the main stream cultural discourse encourages the dominate subject to mimic by adopting the main stream cultural tone, habits, assumptions, situations and values. At that process the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. In this regard V.S. Naipaul further explores his views:

Mimicry allows the non- Western people to grasp at his or her aspirations. It also represents attempt to adopt a powerful, external reality while preserving something of oneself. The power of mimicry is proven formidable” (5).

When the people feel difficult and alienated in the new land, at that time to adjust in foreign land they start to imitate native tones, cultures and habits. The foreign

discourse encourages them to mimic their culture, vocabulary, life style etc. As a result, to make their life style easier in the host land they start to mimic. The character Ba used to walk around the house and mutter the spelling of his name in English. He changes his name according to the American society. The names of the alphabets are changed according to the American tone. To make him as the native people he starts to articulate his name according to the American tone.

“M - I-”

“M-I-N-”

“M-I-N-H”

He pronounces the H like a combination of “ache” and “ash”: “aycsh.”

He would point his figure at the air, as if each letter were appearing briefly before him, suspended for a moment, as he awaited the next.

But before he could spell out his whole name, the letter preceding the one to appear would often be gone. (114)

To assimilate in foreign land they struggle to cope with the new language that is English. The people are forced to use English language either they are living in Europe or United States of America. Ba is imitating the English language. The abstract above illustrates what is called linguistic hybridity. At the time of imitation he misspells the ‘H’ like a combination of ache or ash or aychs. Ba repeats each letter of his name over and over again, in a tone more hushed and halting than time before. He thinks inferior to English language so even when he is successful to spell his whole name, he can not quite trust that this is he himself and arouses the questions like: Are these the letters? Is this his name? The reason behind raising such question is thinking themselves as inferior which is habituated from the behavior of the mainstream culture.

“Above him, the moon continued to cast its light. He said the word “moon” aloud, in English. Often when he said a word in English, he would think of how his daughter might say it” (197). Assimilation of English language is clearly seen through these lines. The narrator’s father’s curiosity about its utterance also exposed here. Where he remembers his daughter, the nameless narrator when he pronounces the word moon and thinks how the child might say who learn foreign language from her early childhood because of her diasporic situation at the age of six.

Chapter: III

Befuddled Position in *The gangster we are all looking for*

After the discussion and analysis of le thie diem thuy's novel *The gangster we are all looking for*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the prominent cause of identity crisis is displacement. The search for identity is the prominent issue in the research. Similarly, this research explores the diasporic issues like hybridity, mimicry, sense of dislocation, fragmentation, etc. which is resulted by the physical distance from their native land. So, this research brings out the difficulties and problems faced by the immigrant family in the state of post colonial pang. When the Vietnamese immigrants are forced to flee from their native land, they neither have fully assimilated with the foreign culture nor have abandon their native culture, norms, values, assumptions etc. That is why identity becomes hybrid amidst the intersection of multiple cultures. So their liminal position results the identity crisis which pushes them to remain in the sense of tumultuous life. Moreover, the primary objective of this research is to bring out the diasporic people's identity crisis, suffering, alienation, fragmentation, mimicry etc. because of the displacement from their native culture.

In the 20th century, migration has been a common phenomenon. Due to various reasons, people have to move from the land of birth and adopt different languages, cultures, traditions, lifestyle as their own. The concept of Diaspora has traditionally been connected to the dispersal of Jews, thereby carrying with it a strong connotation of suffering, loss and return. Diaspora is used to describe the situations in which people experience suffering, alienation, domination, hardship and displacement. Diaspora is the phenomena of the extraordinary and accelerating movement of peoples throughout the world. Where immigration connotes travel from one country to another, Diaspora is the scattering throughout the world from one

geographic location. These scatterings lead us to splitting sense of home. A fundamental ambivalence is embedded in the term Diaspora. Diasporic people are always seen to be establishing their sense of identity cultural affiliation, their sense of home, their sense of subject position, against the background of majoritarian rule. Diaspora does not simply refer to the movement but also to vexed question of identity, memory and home that such movement produces. The complex issues of identity, subjectivity and exile are addressed in the extracts of the diasporic writers like Salman Rushdie, Stuart Hall and Edward Said.

A majority of Vietnamese have left Vietnam as refugees after 1975 as a result of the fall of Saigon and the resulting takeover by the communist regime. The novel is told through the voice of the immigrant girl who is fleeing with her father and four uncles, they are uncles not by blood but by water, at the age of six. She tells her story of growing up in a foreign land and remembers her daydreams from the land of her birth. In the earlier days of their arrival they feel alienated, sense of loss, separation, frustration, and everything is new to them. They are haunted by the memories of the past and question like 'Where do I belong to?' as well as immigrant family feel loneliness among the crowd. In the host country everything is new to them and feel diasporic pain where they under go through mimicry, hybridity and ultimately that results into identity crisis because of the displacement from the land of birth.

In light of these depictions of issues of alienation and displacement, one could argue that an experience of a Vietnamese -American or other immigrants can be referred to as being subjected to constant negotiations. In *The gangster we are all looking for*, displacement is evident in terms of hybrid assimilation of cultures that produces conflicts among nameless narrator, her father, her mother and their family members. In addition, the displacement of Vietnamese culture and the utilization of

American culture is also shown from the articulation of the text. Similarly, various modes of resistance are shown through its subtle forms of resistance that shows opposition to or conflict with the American culture. In the short novel, nameless narrator occupies a space on the border between two worlds- her ancestors and host, belonging to none of those worlds completely and expects to reside in that border country. There are two implications of this analysis of diasporic issues. First, it calls for a study of the distinct processes of acculturation and negotiation of identifications with the home and host countries. In other words, Vietnamese refugees are reshaped to be Americans and they have no other choice but to accept that, despite the difficulties.

Diasporic people often experience a longing for and have a very clear picture of what home for them looks like. This concept of home manifests itself in two ways- on the one hand there is the homeland that is left behind, while on the other hand there is the host land in which to make a new home. As a diasporic writer le, in the United States successfully explores memories of home, marginal status and in-betweenness that resists uniformity and alternative ideas of fixity and belonging in her writing. Thus, separation, frustration, alienation, hybridity, mimicry, dislocation of the immigrants has been projected as the result of the main cause i.e. displacement.

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