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Diasporic Consciousness in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*

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Letter of Recommendation

The thesis entitled "Diasporic Consciousness in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*" by SherBahadur B.K. has been accomplished under my supervision. I recommend this finalized version for the viva voce.

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Abstract

This study investigates the problems of the immigrants represented by the characters in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* that they face in the Imperial Hotel. The world of capitalism does not respect human sensibility as depicted in the text. The research is an inquiry of the economic and social complications of the immigrants. To look into the issue, the Diasporic consciousness, the researcher mentions the views and ideas of the Diasporic critics and scholars. Basically the project foregrounds the protagonist, Gabriel around whom the significant incidents and events move. He is the chief chef in the kitchen and his relationship with other characters clarifies the issue. The immigrants undergo diverse exploitation and oppression due to lack of sufficient legal documents in the nation that believes in the principle of democracy. To sum up, the research finds that the people in Diaspora are generally deprived of human rights and they are not treated in the line of the natives.

Contents

I. Projection of Diasporic Consciousness in Monica Ali's *In The Kitchen*

This research entitled "Diasporic Consciousness in Ali's *In the Kitchen*" probes into the desperate condition of Gabriel Lightfoot and his immigrant workers in Monica Ali's novel who suffer from terrible discrimination and deprivation. Moreover, this research concentrates on how the immigrant workers are exploited and are forced to compromise with the injustices even at the cost of their dignity and self-respect. Gabriel, the protagonist of this novel works as an executive chef of a kitchen. He is laborious and honest. But his integrity is under suspicion which is the cause for his apathy towards the job itself. Despite sincerity, he faces troubles as he is an immigrant. This disappointing situation leads him to see for alternatives for living. Subsequently, Max secretly plans to move a restaurant of his own. A worker is found dead in the kitchen's basement. The situation of the restaurant and workers leads to realization of the value of life. Gabriel understands the irony of his integrity and honesty as a chef in the restaurant when he witnesses the death of his fellow worker who cannot do anything to overcome the situation.

The major argument of the researcher is that immigrants face discrimination and deprivation because they belong to no-where. They do not have a clear identity. They do not feel any sense of belongingness neither in the new place they are in nor the place did they leave. They suffer from nostalgia. They cannot adopt in the new places. This lack of situatedness or belongingness is the cause of their suffering. In spite of the fact that as human beings they are treated inhumanly, they possess unalienable rights from nature to work, earn and enjoy their life and full-fledged freedom. The situation becomes complicated when the immigrant workers die, but nobody shows any concern with their death. Rather they are deposed as they are neither significant to the government nor to the employer. The text demonstrates a

situation that reflects the world of the power-holders with the political rights in a nation. The employers do not show any concern to the death of foreign workers whose labor enhances their enterprises, though immigrants as human beings equally possess the fundamental rights to live anywhere in the universe.

Moreover, the novel depicts the situation of workers and their worsening situation in the capitalistic world that believes in machines more than in humanity. Human workers and machines are treated and handled in the parallel way and with similar intention. Feelings and emotions do not work in the world of commerce. Money is the king that guides every action and event.

Even in the world of commerce, the issues like identity, injustice, race and politics are prominent matters because these affect and control the immigrants when they are engaged in making a living. The text brings in to light the issue of the undocumented immigrant employees found dead in the hotel premises.Gabrielbecomes the main agent in the resolution of the mystery, with the discovery of a human trafficking and prostitution network. The novel depicts the type of immigrant communities in its narrative, as these include mainly recently arrived individuals from areas on the globe such as Eastern Europe or Africa due to the historical connection of the British colonial empire. These immigrants are culturally and linguistically distant not only from Britain, but also from the ethnic groups which migrated there after the Second World War from the British ex colonies.

The kitchen at the Imperial hotel, the main setting of the story exposes the interaction among the characters who weave the net of the plot. Among many of the characters portrayed are those working for him, a young or middle-aged male has travelled to Britain alone escaping from a country in turmoil and finally leaves his

family behind. Similar case is of the porter found dead in the cellar, Ukrainian Yuri, who is discovered to have university training as an engineer to Gabriel's surprise.

Gabriel is the focal character who undergoes different ups and downs in the course of his stay as an immigrant. His attitude to his employees is somehow painted with a superiority which reflects when he calls them humorously "his brigade, a United Nations task force" (99) and even lacks the interest to know where they come from, though as he matures he develops a growing curiosity which leads him to establish a friendship with some of them:

> Every corner of the earth was represented here. Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between. Oona had taken on a new dishwasher, from Somalia or somewhere pretty much like that. The other one was Mongolian and the third was from – where? – the Philippines? [...] The room-service guy was fresh from Chile and Gabriel doubted that his English extended beyond fries and burgers and whatever else was on the menu. He'd fitted in all right. It was touching, really, to watch them all, every race, every colour, every creed. (99-100)

The mentioned extract reveals the diversity of people perceived in the new place. The writer has constructed characters from different continents and ethnicities to display how people suffer deprivation and domination when they are in a new place regardless to their ethnicity and region.

The inclusion of these communities in the narrative stems from the attempt to realistically depict Britain's multicultural and multiethnic society at the turn of the new millennium, with the new immigration trends that can be observed since the 1990s. Indeed, recent studies show that "the ethnic diversity of immigrants coming to

Britain has grown in the last decade; particularly after important immigration policy changes began to favor the arrival of Eastern European workers as members of the EU" (3). Ethnic diversity of Britain enriches its beauty and attraction that draws the attention of the people from different corners of the world. The number of immigrants has increased there as it is welcoming and respects the uniqueness and norms and values of every cultural and ethnic group residing there. But this study exposes the situation in which immigrants are victimized and degraded to the position of animals which is in one sense the irony of life in Britain.

The research points out the daily bustle of the kitchen employees in an eminent, centrally-located London hotel which employs mainly recent immigrants, some of them living illegally in Britain and, they are tackled from perspectives which are foreign to the expectations of readers in terms of characterization, genre and topics approached. But the basic focus of the study is the marginalization, oppression, and exploitation of them in the world of commerce that values profit more than human existence. This can be attributed to several aspects. In the first place, its protagonist is the white, English, middle-class executive chef at the hotel, Gabriel, who offers his Eurocentric viewpoint throughout the narrative. Having a male focaliser is very rare in fiction by women from ethnic minorities, which is usually mainly autobiographical and female-centered. The writer talks about the gender issue as well but it is not primary. Ali basically talks about the ethnic issues in her writings and the problems of those who are in diaspora. Writers and non residential people living abroad as foreigners undergo diverse complications in their settlement and adjustment. Not only their adjustment is problematic, but their identity is colored in the multicultural situation.

Immigration is said to “have contributed 1.8 million people to the British population between 1997 and 2007, which implies a rise in the arrival of immigrants with respect to previous decades and, thus, in the number of first-generation individuals, being the Polish community the biggest foreign-born group in the UK nowadays” (3).By focusing on first-generation migrants and ethnic communities who are not her own, Ali is establishing a distance from her own autobiographical background–she is second-generation although born in Dhaka–and thus trying to break free from the expectations of representative readers and critics might hold about the novel. The study probes into the voice of the voiceless immigrants whose social standing is undercut due to their servitude and helplessness in the land of the tycoons.

In addition, the author places the new immigrant populations on the map and inscribes their experiences, which in many cases have little to do with those live by her own family or relatives as they are the consequences of new political and social circumstances. As a matter of fact, the South-Asian community to which Ali belongs is depicted in the narrative only through very secondary characters like Gabriel’s Indian employee Suleiman, through the description of London areas which are now peopled by this ethnic group or in a passage which interestingly shows the contrast between the new reality Gabriel lives and the immigrant communities he remembers from his childhood in a Northern England town, where racist attitudes were generalized:

> In Blantwistle there were only the Asians, or the Pakis as they were called then, maybe still were. They did only the night shifts as the mill, were just coming out as the morning shift went in. That was the way it was at first. Gabriel remembered the journey on the number 72, going down from the heights of Plodder Lane to the market square [...].

> Michael Harrison's family lived there, 'marooned', said his father, among the Asians, and when the bus pulled in at the bus stop the conductor shouted 'Khyber Pass' and rang the bell. People said things about the Asians. They never scrubbed their doorsteps, the children pissed on the flagstones, they made curry with Pal dog meat. Gabriel played a game with Michael, walking behind them making monkey noises, he didn't know any better then. (100)

The excerpt describes the fragile situation of the immigrants from different nations and faiths. Whatever the culture and nation they belong to countless in the world of commerce. The capitalist world respects transactional activities rather than human emotions. The people hold on distinct attitudes towards each other as they have internalized stereotypes of cultural groups. The mentioning of Asians especially Pakistanis reveals that Europeans as hold power positions use derogatory terms to address the people from Asia. Moreover, they pose such Asians as uncivilized who even piss wherever they feel comfortable. By reflecting on the forms of racism prevalent in 1970s Britain the protagonist is acknowledging British racist past and his own conformity to it, while suggesting that attitudes have changed in the 2000s and British society has now learnt to accept multiculturalism.

However, the narrative itself contradicts Gabriel's perception, as he realizes later on, by showing to what extent the exploitation of migrants is still a common occurrence, though in more subtle ways, and is even getting worse as a result of the global economy which rules a first world metropolis like London. The metropolitan world highly focuses on the commercial deals rather than human values. Meanwhile the rich holding double forms of powers: economic, ethnic and social rule upon the immigrants in subtle ways. Not only that but also blows and pushes are targeted to

such helpless people. They feel superior to the immigrants and working class people. They impose their outdated ideas upon them as well. They use them as instruments and later on toss them into garbage when they realize that such workers do not hold any value and stamina for the employers' profits. The sociologist Saskia Sassen highlights:

> the corporate economy characteristic of twenty-first century society, whose greatest concentrations can be found in major Western cities, requires large concentrations of workers devoted to lowly paid nonprofessional and manual jobs and these are often held by women and migrants who are usually ignored and excluded from economic representation. (170)

Sassen draws a picture of hostility between the workers and the enterprisers who hold economic power and exploit the laborers for their vested interests even at the cost of the former's happiness and necessity. Not only the migrants suffer but women do face terrible situations such as deprivation and exclusion in their life course in the capitalist world.

Sassen makes it clear the capitalistic world embodies the distinct features of class struggle between workers and the employers. The Western major cities like London provide manual jobs to the marginalized groups such women and migrants as they generally hold lower social strata. They are usually deprived of their right to decent jobs and handsome salaries. This is what happens in the competitive market of labor.

Eleonor Kofman adds, "the important number of lower-wage jobs created in global cities has supplied the opportunities for flows of immigration, both legal and – to a notable extent – undocumented and illegal" (282) and it is at this point that

migrant exploitation begins to play a role in global economy, a cityscape which is depicted in *In the Kitchen*.

The employers better understand the desperate and helpless condition of migrant workers. Therefore, they tend to take advantage of that by providing their lower scale and discouraging job situation. The western mindset basically triggers some burning issue of the metropolis that respects money and beauty at the cost of human values. Prostitution, human trafficking and enslavement are some of the evils which are proliferating in the world as a consequence of global economy and it is no surprise that theyall affect migrants in a direct way, as they are usually the victims of these forms of exploitation. By making them part of the plot of the text, and not secondarily but as a central topic due to the direct implication of the hotel staff and the protagonist's involvement, Ali is bringing to the forefront the fast spread and nearness of very lucrative forms of crime in the new globalised world which many people ignore or are indifferent to, thus making readers reflect on issues of moral responsibility and guilt. The recent emergence of these crimes and of organized criminal networks devoted to them gives an added value to the novel, as the text can be said to be one of the first narratives to tackle in literature the social conditions of victims and perpetrators, and particularly the situation of migrant prostitutes in Europe.

The novel implants the nature of Gabriel that continually energizes his investigation: his frequent nightmares about the Ukrainian's corpse and rotting food. In the middle of his breakdown he starts to interpret the nightmares as the clue indicating that a murder has been committed and that he is the one who must find the culprit, in the most purely crime-fiction tradition: "Why do I keep having [the dream]? Over and over again. It might mean [...] something significant, like Yuri's

death was no accident. It might mean that the dream won't stop until the killer is caught" (343). However, in the end Yuri's death turns out to be not a crime but an accident, in an interesting reversal of the crime genre climax, although the protagonist's involvement leads to the discovery of two large-scale crime networks implicating many people.

With Gleeson, Ivan the grill man and Branka the hotel chief housekeeper as the non-scrupled leaders of the gang, the narrative thus presents two forms of crime which are now getting more and more widespread as a consequence of global economic interests, and not the classical murder plot. Furthermore, this realism gives the novel a social dimension, particularly since it is closely linked to the problematic of immigrants, who are the most vulnerable group to human trafficking, a realism which is further supported by some of the criminals who eventually run away from the police and are never arrested.

The novel also deals with gender relations in the twenty-first century globalised world as well. But this research highlights the immigrant communities depicted in the narrative mainly African and Eastern European who come from areas on the globe which is culturally remote from that of the author and much of the plot deals with their problems.

In the novel, the communities Ali depicts are totally alien to her own in terms of cultural background, period of arrival and problematics faced, since they do not experience the same forms of racism as 1970s migrants. Instead, they are subjected to more sophisticated types of marginalization and exploitation often linked to criminal practices to which undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable nowadays. Hence, by offering a cityscape that is unrelated to her second-generation immigrant background, Ali is exploring new territory while escaping from the autobiographical,

and not acting as a mouthpiece for her community as readers had come to expect after successful semi-autobiographical novels of the 1990s and 2000s.

The research analysis the desperate conditions of the immigrants. Different critics have interpreted the work from different perspectives. Marie Arana, a former editor of Book World, currently a Kluge Scholar at the Library of Congress remarks regarding Ali's *In the Kitchen*:

> But Ali's novel creeps along like your grandmother's knitting. You wind through passages like this: "The walls were covered in fleur-de-lis wallpaper in a richly subtle color somewhere between silver and beige. . . . Overall the effect was not displeasing though somewhat precariously contrived. . . . A party of women -- polished skin, bouclé and velvet, liver-spotted hands -- set down their forks and exclaimed. (2)

Arana has looked at the literary and thematic power of Ali's novel. She frankly says her writing incorporates the subtle description of things and characters in a vivid manner that can capture the reader's interest. In the same way, Rehana Frahan, a Pakistani journalist makes a critical reading to Monica Ali's fiction and thus says:

> Her subsequent books, *Alentejo Blue* and *In the Kitchen,* set respectively in rural Portugal and in the chaotic corridors of a London hotel, throw light on the middle class and subaltern communities that inhabit suburbia and villages. Ali is known for her moving insights into the lives of people of Asian origin and the white middle class in Britain. (5)

Frahan has focused her analysis upon the characters and themes of Ali's fiction. The middle class people of rural Britain and immigrants have been captured in her reading.

Ali's basic concern in fictionalizing the lives of the people from Asian origin might be the result of Ali herself being from Bangladesh, a nation of the Asian continent. An Indian fiction writer, Raghu Bir Singh has made a critical study of Ali's *In the Kitchen* and thus states:

> The story is told from the perspective of Gabe, the head chef, heading in directions he didn't think about for long enough, and the plot centers on the mysterious death of a porter. The suspense builds as we learn more about the lives of the diverse characters affected by this death – and why. (34)

Singh focuses on the narrative mode in Ali's fiction that is from the view point of the protagonist, Gabe, the person who suffers the tragic situation in his life due to his entanglement with a girl at the cost of his fiancée.

The protagonist has his employees who are of different origins, and some from former colonies. The narrator compares them to a United Nations assembly. When one of them is to describe his chief Gabe represents the colonial power while the other workers are his and The Imperial's colonized subjects. "English flags in the parts of London populated by Arabs in addition to pictures of English royals, country cottages and a postcard of the Tower of London in the foreigner Fazal's café, also demonstrate British sovereignty" (137-138). Colonial history is shown through employees at the hotel, especially Suleiman from India, but also through characters that come from countries that might be characterized as former colonies.

Benny from Liberia tells the story of his Congolese friend who was imprisoned while his family was murdered because of his political views. Another friend, Kono, became a child soldier, while the former doctor and now chef Nikolai from the Soviet Union, was judged a spy and traitor when he discovered that chemicals let out in the water caused birth defects and proceeded to publish his findings. The Ukrainian Olek has a math degree, but came to England to escape poverty. With his passport taken away from him by his new employers, a shed to live in, small pay checks and no rights, all he wants is to get back to his country of birth. Many of the characters we meet have an education, but have to content themselves with manual labor. They must take any job offered, even though they are underpaid. They have no rights, and have to do the jobs no one else wants. One may argue that they are slaves in a modern British Empire. These characters represent Diaspora, a term used to describe "the combination of migrancy and continued cultural affiliation that characterizes many racial, ethnic and national groups scattered throughout the world" (425).

Due to the waves of immigration, the focus on British identity has become more and more apparent. A result of the new people settling, is for many people the creation of a division between 'us' and 'them', the white population and the immigrant newcomers, "Negative images, stereotypical and pejorative public representations of minority ethnic groups are known to contribute to a sense of alienation and low self-esteem among members of these communities" (10). Because of fears of cultural and linguistic fragmentation, the importance of a British national identity is now stressed.

The previous celebration of Britain's multiculturalism has given way to a new emphasis on conformity. Today, the government wants the country`s new inhabitants to integrate into mainstream society:

> Not only do prospective British citizens need to display sufficient knowledge of life in Britain, its culture and civic institutions; they are expected to take a citizenship oath and make a pledge of allegiance at a public ceremony. Most significantly, those wishing to take up British nationality will have to be able to speak English. (135)

Gabe's father, Ted is deeply worried about the English nationality as he desperately tries to preserve it. He thinks that the country`s identity disappeared when much of its production stopped. Ted himself lost his pride and identity together with his job when the mill where he had been working his whole life closed down.

Mike Storry and Peter Childs state that a national identity in Britain is being brought to light and debated:

> Even within organizations such as the National Trust there is discussion about whether to preserve in aspic the many British stately homes and gardens, or whether it would be better to modernize and update ´our heritage` by preserving elements across the range of British culture, including mines, textile mills and wartime bunkers. Otherssee British culture (rather than heritage) as being in a constant process of evolution and being far more about the present than the past. (34)

To Ted who has identified himself with his work a whole lifetime, it is difficult to know who he is without his job. How can one form an individual identity separately from the national identity when the nation's own is under pressure and as he sees it

almost gone? To Gabe's grandmother Nana, keeping the country British is also essential, "What I don't understand is," said Nana, "why they make such a fuss? The Pakistans, the Asians, or what have you – always on about something, aren`t they, complaining about this and that" (170). Claiming not to be a racialist, Nana seems to be afraid that she will lose her identity like Ted. The new changes in society make her fear for her own and Britain`s uniqueness.

This research draws up on the theory diaspora studies to justify the claim of the researcher. The word diaspora which has initiated at the beginning from an easily identification with Jewish communities is elaborated including the experience of people marked by forced migration and enslavement (the African diaspora in the U.S. Latin America and the Caribbean), and as a shifting condition of colonial and postcolonial period (for instance, Asian and Caribbean communities in England)

Diaspora studies is an academic field established in the late twentieth century to study disperse ethnic populations, which are often termed diaspora peoples. Initially, diaspora was concerned narrowly to the migration of the people. Dislocation can also be defined to describe both displacements that occur as a result of imperial occupation, and the experience related with it. Place and displacement are crucial and displacements are crucial feature or post-colonial discourse but place means not simply physical landscape. Dislocation can be defined to describe both displacements that occur because of imperial occupation and the experience related with it. Place and displacement is crucial feature or post-colonial discourse but place means not simply physical landscape.

The new concept of diaspora insists on the idea that it explains the complexity, diversity and fixity of migrant identities and experience. It relates the idea of uprooting of migrants from their societies and cultures of origin, and given the sense

of alienation, displacement, exile and dislocation. Thus, diaspora also causes cultural hybridity in diasporic regions.

According to Hall, the face of the society is that rapture place where there is instability of the identities. It happens so that the dislocation and displacement can be created with the social structure. The reason behind is that of the decline of old identities, which stabilizes the social structure for long time. That is why it gives rise to new identities and fragments modern subject. It indicates the identity crisis.

Homelessness Gabriel faces in the new world is the problem that the research highlights. The problems that the immigrants face while working in the Imperial Hotel are critical. What Diaspora writers inculcate in their writings is the major focus of the study. The Diaspora approach centers on the themes of homelessness, and cultural hybridity. Indeed the characters portrayed in the works feel isolated and mechanized in the political and industrial systems in the capitalistic worlds while being away from their home or home countries.

The research is designed to have altogether three different chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and elaborates the theoretical methodology in connection with the major line of thought of the study. The second chapter critically analyses of the text by mobilizing the theoretical insights of diaspora studies. The third chapter concludes the whole study in a logical and coherent manner and mention findings. Finally a separate works cited lists is included.

II. Pathetic Condition of Immigrants on Ali's In the Kitchen

Ali's *In the Kitchen* foregrounds the suffering faced by immigrants. They undergo various layers of oppression and exploitation because the legal procedures to stay in a new place and to work there are complicated for the immigrants. The existing laws do not allow the immigrants to have a proper stay in the United Kingdom. They hold inferior positions and are manipulated by the employers. Indeed, human beings possess equal fundamental rights from nature to work, earn and enjoy the equal level of freedom despite not having the legal citizenry cards that generally empower people to live in a nation freely.

Gabriel and his fellow workers in the Imperial Hotel can import the traditions and cultures of their countries of origin to their host country, provided, such practices do not violate universal human rights. The characters represent the immigrants working in England to earn money and turn their dreams into reality who do not violate the rights of anybody but their rights are not preserved as they are exploited and discarded in the Imperial Company they are working in. Their migration puts them into the pool of suffering where they writhe but helpless to come out due to globalization of human resources. This is the problem with the people residing in the host countries as Diasporas. Eliezer Ben-Rafael writes:

> William Safran goes as far as reversing the contingency–identity relation. He acknowledges that a diaspora often illustrates deracination, oppression and painful adjustment, but it is also via incentives of their own that diasporans develop institutions and symbols. Tölölyan adds the consideration of global processes of deterritorialization and migration. These processes are bound to a decline of locality as a point of reference for the collective identities at the core of the diaspora

> experience. Defining a collective identity is by no means easy, as its formulation often varies among members of the same community, and at different places and times. (3)

Diaspora exemplifies problems of acculturation, oppression and painful adjustment in which the immigrants in the host country suffer. The diaspora does experience the collective identity at the cost of the original associations with culture, ethnicity and community. There emerges a new culture that is global and combines varieties of colors. The notions ‘migrant’ and ‘diaspora’ outline for us the variety of scenarios a person might have wished to choose from when being transferred or moved to a new territory. The idea of ‘a home’ and the construction of ‘the (artificial) home’ in migrants and Diasporas give us a texture to understand the realities of the past.

A diaspora is a much more complex process than migration, because a diasporic community, according to Barclay is “neither a wandering body of people, nor simply a community of ‘immigrants’ absorbed into a new home”. Under migration is understood spatial, geographical changes in a residence, either permanent or semi-permanent, and it always involves a place of origin and a destination. Diasporas emerge through migration; they are created as a consequence of movement to one or another particular territory. When migrants reach the place that suits their original reasons for migrating, they are faced with the choice of whether to assimilate or join diasporic groups. The final decision is primarily based on ties with the original homeland, “the personal and collective history” and memory of (an idea) of a homeland. All in all, diaspora is a product of migration rather than its twin, and is more complex and multileveled formation. The idea of home allows the distinction to be made between migrant and diasporic groups: people in diasporas have two homes (the original, the lost one, the abandoned one and newly acquired), while migrants

only one (the one they settled in). The readiness and capability of the people who have moved to maintain their original homeland identities and to promote their uniqueness are two other fundamental elements of the difference.

Ali's *In the Kitchen* locates the characters as immigrants who are nostalgic about their original homeland. They compare and contrast between their place with the new one wherein they are forced to work under pressure and at low payment. Despite their willingness and pursuit of freedom in the Imperial Hotel, that stands for the world of commerce, their longing is not responded to by the concerned authorities.

Longing for home creates the center piece of the diasporic identity. Yet, in order for a community to start expressing diasporic features, it does not necessarily have to be oriented to roots in a specific place or have a desire for return, since longing for home can be described as more of a condition centered on an idea of a place. The abstract notions of 'home' or 'place 'are not fixed and bounded, but flexible and creative, meaning that a new society can be recreated at any location using symbolism of individuality. This 'idea' can be a shared experience, connecting "multiple communities of a dispersed population" but it also can mean different.

Ali portrays Gabriel, the protagonist who grew up in a small town dominated by the textile industry, and he positions himself against this history. He views his old town as indicative of everything outmoded in British life: namely, a respect for authority that is actually a fear of being "what you really are" (243) and a glorification of community that is in fact an expression of racism. Meanwhile, London is, for him, a place where people respect each other's differences and just go about their business. Gabriel aspires to be a great chef, maintaining that he is motivated not by a desire for extrinsic rewards, such as Michelin stars, but rather by a passion for cooking. He is

convinced of his own autonomy and free will, and is persuaded that self-expression and self-discovery are goals that should motivate everyone.

Gabriel's dream of having a beautiful and meaningful life is dismantled. Gabriel's plans for his own business, and remarks about the new world of work, lead Ted to bemoan the end of community and personal character in Britain. Ted promotes doing over feeling, the material over the affective. He suggests that any breathing body could have done his job at the mill, a claim that troubles his son because a sense of the superiority of mental labor is so ingrained in him. Embracing the rhetoric of the new world of work, Gabriel responds: "But 'having character,' that was just a way of saying you did what was expected of you. It's almost the opposite of having a character, a personality, of your own. Nowyou've got to know yourself, what you really are" (243). Ted laments that what people now want is "pleasure without responsibility" (260), and suggests the new economy they have built is based on nothing.

A new place for those who lack legal authority becomes a source of complications in the sense that they cannot stand in the line of equality and human treatment with the local residents. In the similar vein, England proves a nation of consumers as mentioned in the text. Gabriel, in contrast, avers improbably, "There's more people employed in curry houses now than in all those old industries combined" (260), and suggests that the sheer number of people eating in expensive restaurants is proof of ongoing prosperity. Gabriel says, "It's invisibles, you know, banking and finance and advertising" (261). To Ted it is, instead, a house of cards, built on nothing solid.

The tragic event at the novel's opening shocks Gabriel's satisfaction: the body of a Ukrainian kitchen worker has just been discovered in the hotel's subterranean

halls. Gabriel suspects that Yuri did not die of natural causes and, discouraged from pursuing the matter, he has vibrant dreams in which he guiltily enjoys delicious food within arm's reach of the corpse. We learn eventually that these dreams manifest a guilt he does not consciously recognize or understand, as well as a frustration at the fact that he cannot do anything about situations like Yuri's. They become more vivid with the unfolding of his affair with Lena, who had been Yuri's lover, as she exposes Gabriel to tales of the underground economy in which she moves.

Faced with the realities of slave labor, exploited illegal immigrants, and forced prostitution, and troubled by his inability to take any positive action, Gabriel experiences a mental collapse that revolves on his continuous self-interrogation and, in particular, on his inability to settle on any actual qualities that might fasten his self-definition. He is confronted by a gaping void at the center of the self he had until now taken to be a self-evident agent of change in possession of free will and positive forward movement. This negation is one Ali connects to the new world of work and to a broader emptying out of the meaning of Britishness under neoliberal governance.

Besides, Gabriel is a typical character of immigrants. The main voice discouraging Gabriel from doing anything about Yuri, and from feeling responsible for his death in any way, is his associate Fairweather, a New Labour politician who is backing the new restaurant. Fairweather claims that the long chain of subcontracts involved in labor like "Yuri's, combined with the universally accepted pressure to keep costs low, the lack of protection for workers, and the death of the union model" (421), mean that real labor reform is impossible. Gabriel's rejection of his family's old-town values, his interpretation of his self as destiny, and his political harmony, are indeed all echoed and elaborated by Fairweather.

Diaspora is the movement of people from known location (their homelands) to the unknown location (new regions). Hence, it creates a sense of dislocation and alienation because they could not adjust themselves in new location and culture. Ashcroft Tiffin and Griffiths remark:

> After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European power in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labour in colonial plantation economies was met by the development of a system of indentured labour. This involved transporting, under indentured agreements, large population of poor agricultural areas, such as India and China, to area where they were needed to service plantations. (69)

After the beginning of imperial project to create an empire, imperial have transported the people round the globe and engage them as the cheap labour in the huge plantation which raises the economic success of the imperialists.

As Gabriel begins to attempt to understand himself, he asks Fairweather a series of searching questions about the economy, the meaning of work, British culture, and British identity. These questions allow Fairweather to opine at some length, and he emerges as a mouthpiece for the Third Way politics of New Labour. He insists that the language of Right and Left is outmoded, and thus fittingly provides in the same breath damning evidence against, and promotional rhetoric in favor of, contemporary work. In the process he adds depth and detail to the ways of thinking that Gabriel and his father respectively represent.

Gabriel's consciousness of a lack of meaning in his life, expressed in his yearning for reconciliation with a father-figure returned to an original authority, is dimly present even before his traumatic breakdown. "Recall that the new housing

estate he sees out of his father's window seems to him a Tudorbe than mishmash of stone cladding and fake timbering—that found favour with the upwardly mobile" (213).Yet his vision of the estate is clouded by the reflection of "his own image peering menacingly from the dark" (218). This confrontation with his own threatening countenance suggests that he sees himself, his type, in the sad appearance of the estate's pretence to individuality: like the estate, what is marked as presence is really just absence signaled here by his willingness, just expressed, to hide his real views from his father in order to make a point. This scene is echoed later in the novel, when he confronts his reflection in a London shop window as a "featureless mannequin, every characteristic obliterated or obscured" (327).

Gabriel soon sees what is evident to us: his morning of newfound joy is only a further expression of his mania. His crisis, while still inching toward an inevitable comic resolution, begins to decline properly only after he inadvertently joins a bus of new immigrants contracted to pick spring onions. He has never thought about where his recipes' ingredients originate; on the farm his eyes are opened to some of what lies behind his work as a chef.

Gabriel is bothered by the working conditions faced by those he labors beside, as he discovers that they are paid very little, and that some have even been tricked into the work, their visas taken away so they cannot seek other employment. During his time on the farm, Gabriel finally uncovers a plot, partly conducted from his hotel, to exploit immigrants and force young hotel workers into prostitution. Ali's *In the Kitchen* draws to a close when Gabriel confronts the coworker responsible, and finally finds an outlet for his new moral outrage: he punches Fairweather in the face during an important event at the hotel, suddenly convinced, on the slightest evidence, that he was the man who had abused Lena when she was forced into prostitution.

Violence against Fairweather clearly means more than avenging his lover's suffering. It is a suitable way for Gabriel to take himself out of his own life story, as it ensures that he will not be going forward with his planned restaurant venture, and that he will be relieved of the job that was causing him such stress. In addition, Fairweather represents the kind of waffling blankness that Gabriel has been plagued by.

The issue of the class disparity the immigrants face in the kitchen counts as it associates the characters' situation with that of the people in Diaspora. The novel takes up the disparities between elite politicians, financiers, chefs, and their service workers, and emphasizes some of the psychic risks of the transition from a generation of steady employment. The text opens the door to critiques of an economy in which wage slavery and forced prostitution are insufficiently regulated, and in which attempts at political reform seem increasingly pointless.

In addition, Fairweather is an eloquent politician familiar with the criticisms levied against the new Britain, as ultimately unaffected by questions or worries, and it links his attitude to a neoliberal rhetoric that empties out the meaning of diversity and personal freedom just as it heralds them as the basis of the new British identity. In focusing on Gabriel's psychic struggle with himself, in which his experience of spiritual emptiness is intermingled with family dysfunction and a struggle with feelings of guilt and inadequacy, the novel emphasizes that his inwardness serves the economy in which it unfolds. This inwardness signifies a political peacefulness, as it has Gabriel seeking a way to overcome his own guilt through action in the domestic rather than the political sphere.

Moreover, *In the Kitchen* highlights the use of negative effect as a progressive engine through which to better oneself while pursuing the intertwined goals of personal contentment and career success. Though it charts the inequities emphasizing

the disparities between rich and poor, and how the government ignores, and justifies them, the novel filters this context through its protagonist's biography: a therapeutic language of crisis and recovery casts Gabriel's guilt-ridden psychic struggles as a problem to be treated not through rational action in a public sphere, but rather through alteration of his life's path and his domestic arrangements.

For Gabriel, achieving some ironic distance from neo-liberalism appears to be sufficient, and the novel is unclear if this means he has failed in some fundamental way. Ali's narrative instead hesitates between a critique of Gabriel's obsessive focus on himself and sympathy with his promising attempts to consider how his privilege relates to others' suffering.

Despite its own ambivalence, the novel offers a clear analysis of the intimate interplay between ideology and the self-development. In the figure of Gabriel we see how arrival at what Mark Fisher calls "subjective disinvestment" (55) from capitalism can simply allow one to continue to participate in it with impunity, and without suffering undue mental anguish. Gabriel is concerned with the hazards that the immigrants face. He mentions:

> 'Well, we've not managed to notify the family. Ran the usual immigration checks and naturally it's a false name. Usual story. You don't happen to know . . . of course not. Apart from that, I'm just checking back to make sure nothing's occurred to you, nothing out of the ordinary, before I start wrapping it up.' He referred to his notebook. 'One employee we haven't spoken to, another kitchen porter, I think.' (76)

The keen investigation made upon the immigrants indicates the intensity of suspicion the authorities hold in the process of checking the testimonies which prove the nationality and work permit of workers.

The identity crisis is the issue of the workers in diaspora. They are no more treated humanely. The way they are handled irritates the human sympathizers. One employee refers to the unknown figure. The workers lose their self-definition in the host country. The immigrants become insignificant in the neo-capitalist society represented by the kitchen in this context. Khachig Tölölyan illustrates the problems related with the migrants in diaspora:

> 'Dispersion' is the more general and inclusive term, whereas 'diaspora' is merely one of several kinds of dispersion so that, in a curious reversal, it has become a synecdoche, the part – diaspora – standing for the whole. Other forms of mobility and dispersion include migration intended to acquire education, jobs, land, settlement, new citizenship, or a combination thereof; there are also mobile traders and itinerant laborers who circulate between homeland and extraterritorial opportunities; there are victims of mass deportations, refugees and asylum seekers – some choose mobility, others have it thrust upon them; some are uprooted, others uproot themselves. Some eventually return home, many are assimilated, and the remainder may become consolidated into diaspora communities. (5)

There are two types of immigrants in diaspora. The people who cannot take on board in the host culture return to their original culture which is the backward mobility and those who can adjust into the new society remain there which can be termed as upward mobility. In each of the situations they suffer. Assimilation is a challenging

task in the sense that they are looked at from the perspective of *othering* which distances them from the host community if not geographically but psychologically.

There are multidimensional challenges on the part of the protagonist, Gabriel. However, he is forced to undergo: “His father was dying. He had to deal with a dead body. He had to deal with the police. His job was high-pressure, his girlfriend was away. . . He’d got a bit wound up. It was natural. But it had been brief, and it was over now” (63). Gabriel is surrounded by uncountable problems. He is fighting the battle of varieties. He is not dealing with only personal perils but meanwhile he is obliged to tackle the legal and professional issues as well since he is an immigrant. Diasporans wish to be absorbed into their new environment, but when they attach to their dispersion a particular significance that merits enduring loyalty, they attempt to remain distinct from the ‘others’ – as a diasporic community.

The institutions and networks which they establish then lead them to adopt the usual pattern of an ethnic group. Gabriel, one of the diasporan attaches himself to the new ethnic group for his sake. He has to be loyal even at the cost of his self-esteem. He cannot keep him away from the host community.

The matter of legality dominates the key characters in the novel. The characters suffer due to not having maintained the legal formality during their stay in the new nation. The author mentions, “She was only a pot-washer. An illegal one, most likely, she didn’t want to talk to the police. ‘I have to ask you about Yuri” (111). The pot-washer is considered as an illegal worker. This is the reason for not being able to communicate with the police. She does not dare to express her views before them. She has to repress her desires for collecting about Yuri as she is under the pressure of fear.

The daily activity of the kitchen staff is portrayed in an important, centrally-located London hotel which employs mainly recent immigrants, some of them living illegally in Britain and, though it returns to ethnic minority concerns. In the first place, its protagonist is the white, English, middle-class executive chef at the hotel, Gabriel Lightfoot, who offers his androcentric, Eurocentric viewpoint throughout the narrative. The immigrant communities depicted in *In the Kitchen*– mainly African and Eastern European –come from areas on the globe which are culturally remote from that of the author and much of the plot deals with their problematics as recently arrived, and sometimes undocumented, individuals.

The reading revolves the undocumented immigrant employees and one of them is found dead in the hotel premises. As the narrative advances, it gradually moves towards an exploration of present-day British multiethnic, globalised society, which is portrayed through the experiences and conflicts lived by the male protagonist. As several reviewers have highlighted, Gabriel Lightfoot is portrayed as a "deeply unlikeable" person (4), a "flawed man" (9); indeed, he appears as a self-centred, 42-year-old English chef who goes through an identity crisis right after–and not by chance–the body of Ukrainian porter Yuri is found dead in the hotel cellar. His breakdown is linked to several related circumstances: his father, who lives in a provincial town, is dying of cancer; his long-term relationship with his fiancée deteriorates just as he feels attracted to a young Eastern European prostitute, Yuri's friend, who eventually becomes his lover; he discovers untold truths about his eccentric mother and, to make things worse, his plans to open a restaurant on his own start to fall through. It is no coincidence that his most salient personality trait is evoked by his own surname, Lightfoot.

The protagonist changes his attitude to life throughout the narrative, and particularly towards the end, and his relationships with women play an important role in his evolution. Indeed, Gabriel's conflicts with women – his secretary, his girlfriend, his sister, his lover –are to a great extent the trigger of his mental collapse and clear indications of the fragility of his personal relations. From the very first time these women are introduced, we become aware of Gabriel's perception of them: "his girlfriend Charlie, who wants a family above all and to be asked to move into his flat (23); "his patronizing sister Jenny, who finishes all his sentences as if she knew his thoughts better than himself" (38); or his Caribbean secretary Oona, who is the focus of his hostility for most of the narrative despite her being the one to support him later in his moment of breakdown:

> There was something about Oona that infuriated him. . . .What offended him about Oona was simply this: her domesticity. When she blew into his office and sat down it was as if she had just got home with the shopping, looking forward to a cuppa and a chat. The way she talked, the way she walked, the way she pressed her bosom when she was thinking, all of it, at core, was irreducibly and inescapably domestic. In Gabe's experience, women who worked in kitchens – and there were a few – worked the hardest, swore the loudest and told the dirtiest jokes. It wasn't about being one of the boys, not necessarily – they could flirt like hell too – but it showed they knew the rules. (14-15)

This passage shows to what extent he seems to reject the traditional association of cooking with the female, domestic sphere, while encouraging a masculine behaviour in women involved professionally in it. Gabriel's perception of Oona as an

incompetent worker since he is following conventional, male-centered views of the professional world – which belongs to the public sphere – as an aggressive domain where femininity must be invisibilised.

When Gabriel gets to know more details about her frightful experiences –with her pimp and clients, on her migration journey –he realizes his attitude to her is also that of the sexual exploiter, which makes his guilt grow despite the attempt to justify his behavior as love:

> She had come to him. Keep that in mind. He didn't keep her locked in the flat. He hadn't stolen her identity. She wasn't in his debt. There was no debt bondage here. And anyway, he loved her. Why shouldn't he? Was there a law against that?
>
> He loved Lena. He loved that stupid girl. (257)

Thus, Gabriel's male-centered, Eurocentric perspective defies readers' expectations of identification with the focaliser usually found in diasporic narratives and not even witnessing his identity crisis reverses the situation. Indeed, his approaching nervous breakdown is announced in subtle ways: on the one hand, through his recurrent nightmares about Yuri's dead body and the act of eating rotting food, on the other, through the growing frequency of compulsive gestures such as tearing his hair out and scratching his head to the point of bleeding.

Gabriel's interaction with his family contributes significantly to his breakdown: the discovery that his idolized mother had bipolar disorder and for that reason committed suicide confuses him deeply, whereas the conversations with his dying father and racist grandmother revive sad memories of childhood and reveal the changing landscape of provincial England, with the end of local industries, the settling of immigrant communities and the loss of national identity as it was traditionally

perceived. In fact, through these and other characters contemporary British identity is often discussed in the narrative and eventually presented as a “neutral, value-free identity”, “a non-identity”, “a vacuum” (282).

The protagonist’s obsession to ask for the words to describe him as he is shocked to discover few people know him well enough marks the peak of his breakdown and suggests his outdated perception of identity as fixed and coherent:

> He needed to know now, and he needed to know urgently, what he was. He grabbed at words. Fair. He was fair, oh yes, everyone said so, everyone knew it. He was fair and he was reasonable. That was him. A perfect description. Above all, he was a reasonable man. Maybe not this morning with Oona, no, that was out of character. He wasn’t really like that. [...]What am I? he thought. What am I? The question pinged round and round plaintively until, firing faster and faster, it took on a sharper edge. What am I? What am I? A nobody? A zero? Am I a hollow man? [...]What was he? Was he a man without qualities? A man about whom nothing could be said? (372)

After a long wandering through London under the influence of energizing drinks, his identity crisis is finally overcome towards the end of the narrative when he is determined to change his life and become a contented, lonely, grateful man. It is only then that he gets involved into some action to solve the mystery surrounding Yuri’s death and the strange encounters at the hotel, when he goes through a cathartic experience working on a Norfolk farm with a group of illegal immigrants, which hurries his discovery of the truth and the intervention of the police. Whether we consider the literary portrayal of his breakdown and recovery successful or believable,

it certainly has philosophical implications in that it makes identity a central topic in the novel and, Eurocentric identity.

The most striking issue is the type of immigrant communities depicted in the narrative, as these include mainly recently arrived individuals from areas on the globe such as Eastern Europe or Africa, often with little historical connection with the British colonial empire. This means that they are culturally and linguistically distant not only from Britain, but also from the ethnic groups which migrated there after the Second World War from the British ex colonies, subject of most diasporic fiction in the 1980s and 1990s and of Monica Ali's first novel. In addition, since most of the plot takes place in Gabriel's work context, that is, the kitchen at the Imperial hotel, many of the characters portrayed are those working for him, whose profile is mainly with the exception of Caribbean Oona that of a young or middle-aged male who has travelled to Britain alone escaping from a country in chaos or the poverty of post-communist Europe, sometimes even illegally and leaving his family behind. That is the case of the porter found dead in the cellar, Ukrainian Yuri, who is discovered to have university training as an engineer to Gabriel's surprise; Russian obstetrician Nikolai, who sought political asylum after being considered a spy for being concerned about public health, or Liberian Benny, a former child soldier who tells tales of horror in his war-ridden country.

One of the employees is somehow tinted with a superiority which hides an important dose of Eurocentrism, as he calls them humorously "his brigade, a United Nations task force" (99) and even lacks the interest to know where they come from, though as he matures Gabriel develops a growing curiosity which leads him to establish a friendship with some of them:

> Every corner of the earth was represented here. Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between. Oona had taken on a new dishwasher, from Somalia or somewhere pretty much like that. The other one was Mongolian and the third was from – where? – the Philippines? . . . The room-service guy was fresh from Chile and Gabriel doubted that his English extended beyond fries and burgers and whatever else was on the menu. He'd fitted in all right. It was touching, really, to watch them all, every race, every color, every creed. (99-100)

The inclusion of these communities in the novel seems to stem from the attempt to realistically depict Britain's globalised society at the turn of the new millennium, with the new immigration trends that can be observed since the 1990s. Somerville et al. mention, "Indeed, recent studies have shown that the ethnic diversity of immigrants coming to Britain has grown in the last decade, particularly after important immigration policy changes began to favour the arrival of Eastern European workers as members of the EU" (3). Furthermore, "asylum seekers increased dramatically between the late 1990s and the mid 2000s, descending again after 2002" (6). Somerville et al. illustrate:

> All in all, net immigration is said to have contributed 1.8 million people to the British population between 1997 and 2007, which implies a rise in the arrival of immigrants with respect to previous decades and, thus, in the number of first-generation individuals, being the Polish community the biggest foreign-born group in the UK nowadays. (3)

In addition, she is placing the new immigrant populations on the map and writing their experiences, which in many cases have little to do with those lived by her own

family or relatives as they are the outcome of new political and social circumstances. As a matter of fact, the South-Asian community to which Ali belongs is depicted in the novel only through very secondary characters like Gabriel's Indian employee Suleiman, through the description of London areas which are now peopled by this ethnic group or in a passage which interestingly shows the contrast between the new reality Gabriel lives and the immigrant communities he remembers from his childhood in a Northern England town, where racist attitudes are generalized:

> In Blantwistle there were only the Asians, or the Pakis as they were called then, maybe still were. They did only the night shifts as the mill, were just coming out as the morning shift went in. That was the way it was at first. Gabriel remembered the journey on the number 72, going down from the heights of Plodder Lane to the market square [...]. Michael Harrison's family lived there, 'marooned', said his father, among the Asians, and when the bus pulled in at the bus stop the conductor shouted 'Khyber Pass' and rang the bell. People said things about the Asians. They never scrubbed their doorsteps, the children pissed on the flagstones, they made curry with Pal dog meat. Gabriel played a game with Michael, walking behind them making monkey noises, he didn't know any better then. (100)

In this way, by reflecting on the forms of racism prevalent in 1970s Britain, Gabriel, the protagonist in Ali's *In the Kitchen* acknowledges British racist past and his own agreement to it, while suggesting that attitudes have changed in the 2000s and British society has now learnt to accept multiculturalism. However, the text itself contradicts Gabriel's perception, as he realizes later on, by showing to what extent the exploitation of migrants is still a common occurrence, though in more slight ways,

and is even getting worse as a result of the global economy which rules a first world metropolis like London. As sociologist SaskiaSassen highlights:

> The corporate economy characteristic of twenty-first century society, whose greatest concentrations can be found in major Western cities, requires large concentrations of workers devoted to lowly paid nonprofessional and manual jobs and these are often held by women and migrants who are usually ignored and excluded from economic representation. (170)

Eleonor Kofman adds that the important number of lower-wage jobs created in global cities has "supplied the opportunities for flows of immigration, both legal and to a notable extent undocumented and illegal" (282) and it is at this point that migrant exploitation begins to play a role in global economy, a cityscape which is depicted in the novel.

The real face of globalization is usually hidden from view, that is, all the activities performed in the symbolic 'kitchens' of global cities, while inscribing the experiences of their protagonists and the exploitation they are submitted to, though perceived through the eyes of a privileged character, Gabriel, who gradually develops an awareness of the situation. The dehumanization of such cities is expressed in a passage which metaphorically likens London to the central part of a digestive system, always in constant motion and whose hunger disintegrates everything it takes in: "London wasn't the brains of the country, as people said; it certainly wasn't the heart. London was all belly, its looping, intestinal streets constantly at work, digesting, absorbing, excreting, fuelling and refueling, shaping the contours of the land" (240).

As the narrative advances, we discover through Gabriel's investigation that the exploitation of migrants hides an even darker side, since it involves specific criminal

activities in which several members of the hotel staff are implicated. Firstly, a prostitution network which deceives young foreign waitresses at the hotel into becoming prostitutes; secondly, a human trafficking network which brings illegal Eastern European workers into Britain only to be forced to work under conditions of slavery on a Norfolk farm. The indifference of those around him, even London politician and benefactor Fairweather, worsens Gabriel's mental breakdown and leads him to question the moral fabric of twenty-first century society in such a way that this seems to explain the nature of his dreams about Yuri's death, as Nikolai suggests: "The significance of Yuri's death. . . is that it is insignificant. That is why it is so troubling. That is why you dream" (260).

However, it takes the protagonist some time to realize that in his behavior towards Lena his attitude is also that of the exploiter, as he is always the one to decide when to have sexual relations while she "merely submit[s] to his claims" (238) following the pattern expected of a prostitute. The protagonist's initial kindness by giving her shelter and listening to her sad stories of violent pimps and capricious clients – she is "his charitable cause" (88) soon turns into a possessiveness in which he does not recognize himself to such an extent that his own sexual impulses become alien to him: "His desire was a foul creature that climbed on his back and wrapped its long arms around his neck. What did it want with him? He would cage it if he could. One day he would have the strength to kill it, for it was not part of him" (239).

The social evils such as prostitution, human trafficking and enslavement are the byproducts of globalization which do count in this study as they are multiplying in the world. In addition, they all affect migrants in a direct way, as they are usually the victims of these forms of exploitation. By making them part of *In the Kitchen*, and not secondarily but as a central topic due to the direct implication of the hotel staff and

the protagonist's involvement, Ali is bringing to the forefront the fast spread and nearness of very profitable forms of crime in the new globalised world which many people ignore or are indifferent to, thus making readers reflect on issues of moral responsibility and guilt.

Exploitation severely done upon the workers in the kitchen reveals their helplessness. In this regard, the author mentions, "But there's only two things certain in hotel life,' Mr Maddox continued. 'Number one: to make your margins you screw every last drop of blood from your workers. Number two: they screw you right back" (125). The workers are treated as animals that they are forced to deliver their duty under pressure at the cost their physical loss. They are consumed in the capitalistic system which sucks laborers' blood. The workers are helpless and therefore, they cannot revolt against the system. They are immigrants and therefore they do not hold the citizenry power to ask for the protection of their inalienable rights.

London is a multicultural city that bears the varieties of colors in terms of ethnicity. There are both cultural growth and oppression and exploitation on the part of the immigrants. The narrative of the novel poses:

> Every corner of the earth was represented here Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between. Oona had taken on a new dishwasher, from Somalia or somewhere pretty much like that. The other one was Mongolian and the third was from-where?-the Philippines? Gabe had worked in places where porters came as a job lot, the first getting along a cousin who recommended a brother-in-law who also brought his friend. (129)

Here people are from different corners of the world with the expectation of bright future and happy life. The tragedy is there that they cannot meet their expectations

due to not being British. Reality as depicted in the novel is beyond the wishes of the immigrants.

It is difficult to differentiate between human beings and animals when the former are commodified and are just treated as if they are senseless and emotionless. The workers in the kitchen are being treated so: “I can see what you are thinking,’ said Benny, ‘heh, heh, you are thinking how can a human being do this? Every myself, I am thinking the same. What is it that makes us human? Are we just animals, after all?” (157).The workers seem to have forgotten their identity as they are mechanized and rather feel being treated as animals. This is how the life of the workers in Diaspora is going on in the world of commerce where money counts more than human emotions and feelings. There is no difference between human beings and animals.

As a matter of fact, language empowers people to communicate their views and enjoy a beautiful life. But the immigrants when fail to speak English correctly, they get deprived of so many opportunities and benefits that the other fellow beings are taking advantage of. The novel carries on such situation:

> He said, ‘She doesn’t have a phone. Of course not’. It was pointless prizing phone numbers from porters anyway. If you managed to get through, it would be to someone who spoke no English. Or to someone who, in broken English vehemently denied that the person in question had ever entered the UK, let alone set foot in their house. ‘Is she agency or permanent?’ (24)

She is suspected whether she is English due to her deviated linguistic competence. She is feeling difficult to assimilate in the host country because of her language. There is a big deal of western culture in the novel in the sense that the study does

highlight the norms and values of capitalism depicted by England in this context. Ali asserts: “No humility and no respect, this is the problem. It’s the western values they pick up, wanting everything their way” (251). The study further points out: “Don’t forget that these people very often speak little English and they’re not aware of their rights. Your porter, he could be a victim, should we say. Or he might not be. The fact that he was an illegal immigrant is neither here nor there” (420). Failing to speak English is some sort of crime in the western notion. The immigrants involved in tedious jobs are presented as if they do not recognize their subjectivity. They face identity crisis; they are victimized and exploited in many ways.

Britain is recognized as a trading nation. The commerce is the unique feature of England. Ali mentions: “You know what,’ said Gabe. ‘You know we were talking about “British”-what does it mean? There’s your answer that’s what we’ve always done as a country: trade. We’re a trading nation. If anything’s our national identity, that’s it, that’s what it is” (260). The national identity of this country is to deal with everything in terms of money.

Everything has a monetary value. Even human beings, the immigrants in the kitchen are treated as goods to be sold and bought for the consumerism. What kind of humanity can be sought after in the nation that simply assesses humanity in terms of economic value? is the reading of the study. Gabriel advocates the value of human beings working in the kitchen that symbolizes neo-capitalism. He asks: “Gabe stood up straighter. ‘My name is Gabriel Lightfoot,’ he said, ‘and I demand you pay this man. What is he owed?” (158). On the one hand, Gabriel represents the immigrants, and on the other, he exemplifies the rulers who deploy people for their commercial advantage. This situation creates some sort of confusion.

Other characters in *In the Kitchen* are lonely too. One of them is Lena who is lonely when Gabe finds her, but also when he takes her home. Throughout the novel, she talks about her alleged brother Pasha, but without ever meeting him. Even Gabe, caught up in his own confused and egocentric thoughts about Lena and that she must never leave him, describes her as lonely (87). Both Lena and Brick Lane`s Nazneen use the television to escape loneliness and reality – at the same time as it shows them their opportunities in life. Lena`s deceased friend Yuri and other immigrants working in the kitchen are also alone in the world. Having to leave their families, friends and home countries behind for different reasons, they must feel lonely in England: "Yuri was lying somewhere, unattended, on a mortuary slab. It was loneliness, certainly, that killed Yuri" (25). Even the restaurant is, according to Gabe, infected with loneliness.

Ali describes fake leather, fake windows, fake words and fake arguments. As Gabe decides to see the Changing of the Guard, he is disappointed, finding them to look like toy soldiers and therefore fake. "The tourists, on the other hand, do not see this and are pleased to observe the Britain they wished to see" (241). But this is not the truth. Even back home in Blantwistle, the plants are made of rubber and the holly and mistletoe made of plastic (300, 198, 308). It seems like Gabe`s whole world is unreal and without identity. You keep who you really are to yourself (67). This perception of everything being fake is very much part of Gabe`s identity crisis. Already on page nine of the novel, it becomes clear that he has issues related to his personality:

> Sometimes, if he was busy completing order forms or logging timesheets, Gabe let his phone ring until it beeped and played the massage. You have reached the office of Gabriel Lightfoot, executive

> chef of the Imperial Hotel, London. Please leave your name and number after the tone and he will call you back as soon as possible. To listen to it you`d think the office was something else, that he was someone else, altogether. (34)

Almost throughout the book struggles to find his true character. When he was a young boy, he knew his place and was one of the members of the group. Now, Gabe claims to be living a phony life where everything seems unreal. His identity is compared to a model`s which looks anonymous, indistinct and featureless with every characteristic obscured. Gabe has many dreams and plans for the future, but they are never realized. Through his actions, or in this case through what he does not complete, Gabe's lack of self-confidence is apparent. Since he was 15 years old, he has planned to open his own restaurant. He wants to move in with and propose to his girlfriend, to start a family, to get to know his employees better, to improve his relationship with his family.

The main character feels uncertain about his work. He states that he is not working at the restaurant because he wants to, but because he wants to prove himself. He later wonders if he has fallen out of love with food, and questions if he was meant to be a chef at all. "Maybe he chose the profession only to annoy his father" (316). The confused Gabe asks chef de partie Suleiman, the only one of Gabe's workers who shows a genuine interest in food, "if he always knew he was going to cook" (266). But Gabe still does not gain enlightenment, realizing his own confusion; "Why didn`t he know what he wanted?" (312). This is also related to Lena as Gabe does not understand why he keeps cheating on Charlie. He admits that Lena and he are poles apart while Charlie and he are the same. Still, he makes himself believe that he loves Lena.

In *Death and Identity*, John S. Stephenson states, “The loss of one`s role is another form of loss of self which may foster a grief reaction” (139). As Gabe never manages to realize his plans, he also in many ways loses his role as a future father, husband, restaurant owner and devoted chef, son, brother and uncle. Using Stephenson’s theory, grief and identity confusion are normal reactions. Gabe has a bald patch on his head. During the novel, this middle age cliché worries him. “Gabe also keeps pulling his hair without knowing it” (195). His problems are growing bigger and bigger, and he is no more able to control the difficulties which lead to his breakdown, than the fact that he is going bald. It also represents what is absent in the protagonist`s life. Something is missing, but Gabe does not see this. Gabe has hopes that his life and identity will straighten out with the new restaurant, and that his questions will be answered. But he is not sure they will: “Am I the kind of personwhodoes this? he thought. Is this me, am I this type?” (123). “What was his personality anyway?” (369). “But he wasn’t the kind of person to ... or was he?” (407). Gabe further shows his insecurity by comparing himself to his friend and junior minister Fairweather when a woman asks Fairweather if he is somebody: “He was delighted, of course. He was somebody. What was the alternative? A nobody. If you were more than your own self you were somebody, and if you weren’t “somebody” perhaps being yourself amounted to nothing at all” (111-112).

Gabe later states that “Who was he? He was nobody” (406). There is antagonism between Gabe and Ernie. While Ernie has done the same work and been living the same life for numerous years, Gabe cannot settle. As he asks Ernie if he wants change and Ernie answers no, the chef shows his own desires at the same time as Ernie`s life choices are made clear. Yes, Ernie has been living a life without alteration, but this does not mean that he has led a sad or boring life. As opposed to

Gabe’s, his life has been steady. It seems like changes do not result in finding the true identity.

III. Longing for Home in Ali's In the Kitchen

The research concludes that the projection of deteriorating situation of the immigrants in the United Kingdom and the severe oppression and exploitation of their labor is the major contention of Ali's *In the Kitchen*. The immigrants lead a pathetic life who work in the Imperial Hostel in London under the supervision of Gabriel. The Imperial Hotel represents the world of capitalism that respects those who own properties and discard the existence of those who are powerless. Poor economic and social conditions of the immigrants eventually push them to face unnecessary problems and compromise with injustices at the cost their self-esteem and human values.

Moreover, the researcher found the binary opposition created of between powerless and the powerful in terms of nationality and legitimacy. The people not having all the required legal documents suffer intolerably. They lack identity and the people holding citizenry power hardly show any concerns towards the helpless. The meaning of humanity is dismantled and the world of cruelty is created.

The study inculcates the sense of humanity on the part of those enjoying supremacy because of their citizenry documents in the host country. The identity crisis has been the prominent part of the study as the people in Diaspora undergo this gruesome experience which degrades the position of humanity. The immigrants have faced identity crisis because of their power position and nationality. Human beings must not be divided in terms of legality and illegality as every individual has the right to work in any place of the world. Provided that s/he is deprived of the job opportunities because of her/his failure in maintaining legal formalities, the government of every nation needs to rethink of the issue for amendment in the laws.

They are commodified and treated as just machines. They lack human values and dealing. The Imperial Hostel has given them a space for delivering their duties but is paralyzed in protecting their rights. The rich are indifferent towards their lives. When the workers pass away, nobody shows concern towards the dead body.

The project has dug up the pool of sufferings and pains the immigrants. Every human being has a dream of leading a meaningful and prestigious life even at the cost of one's sweat. Therefore, s/he must not be denied the opportunities for growth and enhancement.

The people of the higher strata enjoy better life than the poor. Meanwhile the city is a place of opportunities. Therefore, people from different corners of the world come to turn their dreams into reality. Gabriel is one of such people, weaves the garland of dreams in order to achieve success both monetarily and emotionally. He fails to attain the target of his expectation due to being surrounded by diverse problems and hazards.

The failure of Gabriel is the failure of the western notion of capitalism. He works hard but gets refused when the time of promotion comes. The research uncovers the problems of the working class in London whose dreams are dismantled and whose existence is discarded by the people representing the capitalist system. The workers in diaspora experience identity crisis and are forced to conform to the rigid laws of the Imperial Hotel which is a power agency to exploit helpless immigrants.

The history of Gabe ends in a positive way. Even though his father dies, his Nana is sent to a nursing home and the plans about his own restaurant are not realized, Gabe now seems to face a bright future. By the end of the novel, he is talking to Charlie on the phone, planning to meet for lunch. He has also let go of Lena, finally a selfless act. After all, Gabe has faced and accepted his background together with his

own identity. Gabe shows that this is not the case. It seems like the snow has settled for Gabe.Finally the study concludes the situation of the protagonist’s bewilderment.

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