

## Chapter 1

### Migration and Displaced Identity in *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*

#### Background of the Study

The dissertation examines Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* (2010) as the novels of migration, displaced identity, hybridity and transnationality. The attempt is made to sieve these aspects in the novels. It shows how the writers reflect their own experience through their protagonists. The authors, Mukherjee and Thapa write in diaspora as both of them do not live in their own country, the country of their origin. Mukherjee was born in India, who married a Canadian, settled in America and died there, whereas Thapa was born in Nepal, who is living in Canada now. Both the writers, who were or are in search of their identity in the foreign land, are from South Asia. They left their place of origin to grab the opportunities available in the new place. They struggled to establish their identity as successful authors writing in English. The protagonists of their novels are immigrants like them facing the challenges and hardships to fix their displaced identity. They try to create their own identity competing with the natives and other immigrants. These two novels are written by immigrants about immigrants.

Migration results in the assimilation of the culture of the place of settlement. A migrant tries to adjust in new place by copying what he or she sees there. Thus hybridity in culture and lifestyle occurs. The characters in the novels exchange their culture and language with each other. The authors use multiple languages in the novels. Hybridity is the newness that forces one to create an alternative world by connecting new culture with their root. This alternative world becomes the third world for them. Migrants can neither fully adopt the country of settlement nor can they leave their native land. So in order to be connected with both the places, they opt

for creating an alternative world. It is true of the protagonists of the novels as well.

The characters of both the novels are of different places, from the East and the West. However, the protagonists in both the works are Asians. Every event and character runs around them. The foreign characters are shown in the dire need of the Asians, Jasmine and Prema. The two worlds get interconnected and invite for cultural negotiation. The characters are shown adopting multicultural. They not only follow the new culture, but also attract others to follow their culture too. It means that the West attracts the East and the East influences the West. They represent the immigrants' problems.

Migration plays a key role in the development of the plot in transnational writings. The protagonist of Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is Jasmine who migrates from India to America in order to fulfill the wish of her dead husband. Her husband had the dream of going to America for his further study but unfortunately he is killed in a Sikh terrorist bomb attack. Taking it as the last wish of her husband, she migrates to America. Later she accepts the circumstances and tries to adopt herself in the new place. For this, she has to go through different hardships. She finds herself displaced. However, she does not think of going back to India. She bears every situation and struggles to create her identity. Her identity gets changed with the change in the places inside America. She has five different names for five different places that she lives in. She is Jyoti in her parent's home, Jasmine in her husband's home and then she has other names in America, such as, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane.

Jasmine has to go through exile. She does not contact her relatives in her homeland and makes herself strong enough to tolerate the outcome of her action. She even kills the captain of the ship who rapes her. Since then she transforms herself to make her own identity. She goes through physical as well as emotional

transformation. Transnationalism is not just seen in her migration but in her identity and name too. She faces both physical and emotional violence in an attempt to create her displaced identity in the foreign land. She struggles to create the American identity. The novel is the mixture of the East and the West not only in the process of giving identity to the protagonists but also using setting, characters and language. It shows how one strives to be someone out of no one in a new and different land where everyone seems to be indifferent to each other.

Similarly, the protagonist of *Seasons of Flight*, Prema goes to America after she wins a DV lottery. She does not like her life in Nepal. She becomes a modern girl although she was born in a village near Kathmandu. She leaves her boyfriend, Rajan, to go to America. He helps her a lot until she goes to America. Then she is disconnected with all the relations that she has in Nepal. She becomes new Prema. After she immigrates in America, her hardships begin. She works at a restaurant first. Then, she works in a Korean store and as a caretaker of an elderly woman. She teaches school children in California floral region and finally works on El Segundo Blue which works for the conservation of butterflies. This process of changing so many jobs is to adjust herself and create her identity in the land of dreamers.

Prema loves Luis while working as the caretaker of Esther, an old lady. At first, she is happy to have an American lover but later, she gets unsatisfied as she does not know what she really wants. She cannot decide what she wants from America until she visits her home in Nepal. She comes back and thinks of giving chance to her relationship with Luis.

Migration here too plays an important role. The plot develops with the migration of Prema. The novel depicts the protagonist as an opportunist who is always in search of getting opportunity. The time she gets it, she does not think for a

second to grasp it. She is a modern Nepali woman who migrates from a village to Kathmandu and who breaks the traditional identity imposed on her for being a female. She does not feel guilty for making love with Rajan in Maya Lodge.

She gets her identity displaced in America. She finds everything different. She does a work that she has no experience of just to adjust herself in new land. She strives to create her identity doing everything she gets in her hand. She even goes far away from the Nepalese circle of Sushil and Neeru so as to be a complete American. Finally, she is able to get the work of a conservationist, the work that she has done in her homeland. It shows she is about to create her identity after going through numerous transformation in terms of place, language, work and love-making. She creates an alternative world in foreign land with the intention of getting connected with her homeland, family and relatives. She gets in contact with other Nepalese after many years in order to stay connected with her native land.

The transnational reading of *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* mainly shows how the novels' major characters create the third world as an alternative world which does not have fixed territory and boundary. It is an imaginative creation. The objective is joined with the effort of comparing both the novels in terms of the similarities and differences they possess. This study does not attempt to cover all the areas of the novels. It only emphasizes on their transnational aspects. Even though the novels have females as their protagonists, it does not study the works from feminist perspective. Only the major characters and the characters associated with them who share the transnational aspects are focused. Mainly Jasmine and Prema are highlighted and studied in order to prove the use of transnationalism.

### **Review of Literature**

Different critics have viewed *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* from different

aspects. Some of their views and ideas regarding these novels are mentioned in this section. They have chosen to study them from various perspectives.

Mukherjee partially agrees that the creation and recreation of Jasmine in her novel is an autobiographical impulse. In her interview with Michael Connel, Jessie Grearson and Tom Grimes in *The Iowa Review*, she says, “I have been murdered and reborn at least three times ... Jasmine in the novel does not care about social demotion. And Jasmine in the story sees all this as an opportunity, and I guess part of this is autobiographical impulse” (18-19). She means that she has transformed herself several times and created her identity that she has. In this sense, Mukherjee, being an immigrant knows what it is to be an immigrant and shows the struggle of an immigrant in the novel, which is more or less her own struggle.

Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* has been recognized as a celebrated novel. As mentioned on the blurb of the novel, *Los Angeles Times Book Review* has acclaimed it as an artful, arresting and breathtaking work. In *The New York Times Book Review*, Michael Gorra opines *Jasmine* as “One of the most suggestive novels we have about what it is to become an American” (par. 6). The book is the depiction of an Asian who transforms into an American but the process is not an easy one.

Mukharjee is also the first naturalized American citizen to win the National Book Critics Circle Award for the book *The Middleman and Other Stories* in which the short story of Jasmine is included. The story of Jasmine has later been extended into the novel *Jasmine* as the author really liked the character Jasmine. The novel has generated various critical commentaries from distinguished critics. They have used different perspectives to interpret this particular work of Mukherjee.

Shilpi Pradhan pens in the biography of Mukherjee, “Jasmine develops the idea of the mixing of the East and the West by telling the story of a young Hindu

woman who leaves India for the U.S. after her husband's murder. ... Mukherjee also uses the female characters to explore the spatio-temporal connection between different cultures" (par. 9, 10). The novel is the story of the East and the West which begins from the East and ends in the West.

In a book review published in *The New York Times*, Michael Gorra asserts,

*Jasmine* is so tightly made one wants to read in a sitting. Yet, paradoxically, that's also the novel's chief weakness. Its other characters, however vivid, remain too firmly subordinated to Jasmine. Their stories matter only insofar as they affect her ... perhaps *Jasmine* is as much an implicit criticism of the self-absorption of American life as it is a celebration of its inventive openness. (par. 5)

Gorra criticizes that the novel has emphasized only the protagonist of the novel. He takes *Jasmine* as the criticism of American life.

Talking about its theme, Longiam Monika Devi contends, "In the novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee takes up the theme of search for the identity. She writes how the female protagonist tries to tackle the problem of loss of culture and endeavors to assume a new identity in the U.S." (245). She studies *Jasmine* from the perspective of identity construction of the female protagonist and her struggle to get the American identity that she wishes to have.

Similarly, Rie Koike views *Jasmine* from Chaos Theory. He expresses,

Jasmine's metamorphosis, however, is so complicated in nature that some of her instabilities lead almost all of the readers to an interest in the meaning of disorder and unpredictability in the novel. This is the reason why some concepts in Chaos Theory are hypothesized to be effective tools to understand not only the complexity of the novel and

its heroine but also that of immigrant culture in America. (1)

Koike uses the chaos theory, a different perspective than other critics to study Jasmine and the novel. He uses this tool to understand the complexity of the novel, its characters and the immigrant culture.

Jairo Adrian Hernandez in his dissertation opines,

I have analysed Jasmine as praying mantis, taking the life of her lovers in order to survive in this jungle full of predators called America. At this point it is clear that Bharati Mukherjee is not just writing about postcolonial stories as a diasporic author, but she is mocking at the western orientalism by creating a character who is able to be a greedy and ambitious American woman without purposefully losing her otherness. (25)

Hernandez views the work of Mukherjee as a mock at the western orientalism. He finds Jasmine as selfish and greedy character whose mission is to Americanize her identity.

Himanginee Kaushik uses feminist perspective to analyze the novel and its major character, Jasmine. She argues that women's problems are kept in margins and it is man who defines who a woman is (75). Jasmine is identified by who her male counterpart is.

Different scholars have used different glasses to view the novel. Most of them have used feminist perspective since the novel has a female hero. But this research views her simply as a hero who suffers not because she is a female but because she is an immigrant. The novel has not been studied from transnational aspect yet. This is an effort to analyze transnationalism in the novel. Moreover, it explores the connection of the novel with Mukherjee's life, especially the portion of migration, struggle and

identity transformation. Critics have so far taken *Jasmine* as the promoter of American Dream but this study tries to depict it as the promoter of Orientalism because it is not only Jasmine who is in the dire need of America but it is also America which needs Jasmine. Bud, Taylor, Darrel and Duff, the native Americans want Jasmine to be with them.

Similarly, Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* is taken more than a feminist text. Thapa is a feminist who talks about women's rights. Though she got all rights equal to her brother, she is dissatisfied with the way women are treated in Nepal and in other parts of the world. Her protagonist, Prema, is a modern woman who does not only cross traditional social boundaries but geographical boundaries too in order to get what she wishes for.

As mentioned on the back cover of the novel, *India Today* exclaims, "Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* is many things – a love story, an immigrant's tale, a matter-of-fact telling of the costs of war, a manifesto for environmental conservation, a meditation on faith and chance. A [novel] could sag under the burden of such weighty themes, but Thapa pulls them together flawlessly." Although the novel has various themes, the novelist is tactful enough to deal with them and create a beautiful piece of story. It is because of her craft, the novel is taken to be worthy enough to be read and re-read.

Rabi Thapa, a Nepali author who writes in English, asserts, "The novel will speak to those who have sought a destiny apart from what the Nepali milieu offers them .... As an addition to the corpus of immigration literature, *Seasons of Flight* makes for absorbing reading" (par. 1, 7). Thapa prefers the novel to be read as a migration literature. He takes it as the platform where one can know what it is to be an immigrant.



Writing about the protagonist and the novel, Ross Adkin mentions,

The novel presents Prema's long, winding discovery of largely unexplored opportunities for individual expression, such as living alone, sex, friends and food. Her inevitable feelings of dissatisfaction and uprootedness are never fully resolved. While *Seasons of Flight* does not break any new thematic ground, it stands out for being the first novel to add a Nepali voice to the genre of the US migrant story. (par. 14)

Adkin takes the novel similar and yet different from other novels. It does not talk about any new theme but holds the position of being the first novel to add Nepali voice in the collection of immigrant literature.

Writing about Manjushree and her novel in *SAPAC*, Terry Hong opines,

Nepal-born Manjushree Thapa, herself a peripatetic hybrid of East and West with an American Education and Canadian ties, is one of a handful of Nepali authors successfully writing in English ... *Flight* – ironically – is essentially an immigration story, enhanced with resonating layers of political and socioeconomic history. (par. 1)

Thapa herself is the hybrid of East and West and her work too speaks of her experience of being hybrid through the depiction of her protagonist in the novel.

Abdul Khan in *The Hindu* admits, “This is a delightful read about self-discovery, sexual awakening and search for an identity in a foreign land. Lucidly written, the book also gives new insight into an immigrant life in America.” (par. 9) Khan also focuses that the novel's protagonist discovers her ‘self’, who is sexually awakened and attempts to search her identity in the land of immigrants where everyone dreams of creating oneself.

In *The Telegraph*, Anusua Mukherjee commends, “Manjushree Thapa’s novel is pure poetry... it is emotional, lyrical, and heartfelt. Since immigrants are churned out by the dozen every day, and are usually characterized by their vapidness, *Seasons of Flight* seems all the more striking in the way it makes the usual rare” (par. 7). The novel is taken to be different from other immigrant fiction. The usual things are depicted in a rare way which is the striking aspect of the novel.

Saguna Shah, a Nepali who writes in English, opines, “Prema’s quest for identity represents those who have been displaced and belong to neither part of the world ... As always Ms. Thapa’s novels are marked with the political turmoil which is a bit stale to read about time and again ... overall a very interesting and light read” (par. 1). Shah sees identity crisis being represented by Prema who is constantly searching for her identity. The inclusion of political turmoil is what she does not like since Thapa writes about it in all her fiction and non-fiction.

Pooja Swamy puts forward, “Thapa’s work has primarily focused on Nepali first generation immigrant’s exploring themes of exile, isolation, and assimilation. Her struggle to carve an identity for women wherein they feel belong resonates through her works” (494). Swamy views the novel from the perspective of diaspora. She studies the struggle of Prema to create her identity.

In an interview with Terry Hong in *Book Slut*, Thapa says, “I’m very much a hybrid, rooted in Nepal but influenced by international displacement. That was a painful way to grow up, but now I’m really glad to have had exposure to both east and west” (2). It means that she herself has a hybrid identity and one can notice the same in Prema, the protagonist of the novel. She writes the story of Nepal and the Nepalese, making it a way of creating the third world to have her attachment with her birth place.

Mukherjee and Thapa, the transnational authors have some similarities and differences between them and so is the case with the novels that are studied here in this thesis. This research tries to exhibit those similarities and differences including the study of its transnational elements. It shows how it feels to be an outsider in the foreign land. Moreover, it studies the overall scenario of the protagonists' life then and now. It invites the readers to feel the changes that occur in the lives of the characters after they land in others' land and fight to be someone. The characters are compelled to go through the process of exile, hybridity, assimilation and creating an alternate world. The thesis attempts to show how a new communal setting is created by the authors and the characters for staying connected with their root.

### **Outline of the Study**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter explains the migration and the displaced identity of the protagonists in *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* by Bharatri Mukherjee and Manjushree Thapa respectively. This chapter introduces the background of the study. It clarifies the works of these two authors as transnational texts. Both Asian authors use American setting that their protagonists choose to migrate and have the identity of. The first chapter introduces the thesis statement, its argument and the tool the research uses. The Review of Literature too is included in this part. It shows what other critics have to say regarding these novels and their creators and the perspectives that they have used in order to study these two fictional works. The views and the ideas of some critics are included so as to show what they agree and disagree on and also to support the argument of this thesis taking them as evidence. It helps the present researcher to pave her way.

Similarly, the second chapter focuses on the theoretical background of transnationalism. It is the tool that is chosen to be used in the study and to show how

transnationalism is created. The attempt to clarify the concept of transnationalism is what this section is aimed for. It clarifies the factors that create an alternative world and imaginative community. This chapter also illustrates multiculturalism and hybridity as the result of migration. Its main purpose is to define the perspective that is to be used while going through the events of the novels.

The third chapter explores the fictions *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* by using the transnational perspective. The lines from the fictions are taken for enriching the argument with the proofs. The transnational phenomenon is highlighted and the effects of migration are thoroughly studied in both the novels. Identity transformation, mixing of the East and the West, and multiculturalism are scanned from the texts. The comparison between the two novels and their authors is also made in this section of the thesis.

The final chapter is the concluding part of the thesis. It shows the creation of the alternative world that takes place in both the fictional works. It concludes proving the thesis statement and its argument at the end in this chapter.

## Chapter 2

### Transnationalism and Creation of an Alternative World

#### The Concept of Transnationalism

This thesis discusses transnational aspects like migration, hybridity and displaced identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*. First of all, the concept of transnationalism is to be made clear. Various reputed scholars' ideas and explanations are mentioned to define what transnationalism is. Moreover, it explains what an alternative world means. It also studies how an alternative world is created and what connection it has with transnationalism.

Transnationalism basically refers to going beyond the nation. It is accompanied with multiculturalism and hybridity. It first starts with migration and crossing the boundary. Various scholars have defined transnationalism in different ways. N.G. Schiller, L. Bash and C.B. Szanton define it as:

The process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated 'transmigrants'. Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. (1)

This definition clarifies that transnationalism is the product of immigration. The immigrant creates social field through which s/he gets connected with the country of origin and the place of settlement.

Schiller et al. further define transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies and settlement" (qtd in Mitchell 168). The immigrants have to adjust in the

place of settlement by following multiple social relations that are completely new for them.

Similarly, Nelson Shake describes transnationalism as follows:

As a large-scale concept, transnationalism typically refers to a world where political and economic intersections span national boundaries. Thus, national borders become porous and permeable, and the nation loses some of its centrality as the demarcating point, around which global interactions are defined. Such changes ultimately affect individual citizens. Multiple academic disciplines have examined this evolution of global society for some time. Historians, economists, cultural theorists, philosophers, and anthropologists all have dissected and analyzed transnationalism. Literary studies, though, has entered the discussion only briefly – current literary discourse is still largely rooted in dialogues of nationalism and postcolonialism and continues to try to exist in a world where cultures can be easily separated by nation. (8)

Shake explains that transnationalism refers to crossing national boundaries. He regrets that today's literary discourse is still not giving importance to it. It is rather loitering among the old theories like nationalism and postcolonialism.

Rainer Baubock defines it in the following way:

The term “transnational” applies to human activities and social institutions that extend across national borders. The very definition of transnationalism refers therefore to states as bounded political entities whose borders are crossed by flows of people, money or information and are spanned by social networks, organization or fields. (2-3)

Transnationalism studies human activities and institutions related to them that cross national boundaries. Everything is in motion.

Emma Brouwer takes transnationalism as:

An interpretation of identity that goes beyond those national borders, that is fluid, allows for identification with several nations and cultures as is therefore more useful when thinking about migrant experience.

One of the fields of study where fluidity and borders come together is called transnationalism. Together with phenomenon such as

globalization and cosmopolitanism, the study of transnationalism shows a raised awareness of the permeability of national borders ...

Transnationalism thus disputes the idea that national borders define and delimit people's identification, and emphasizes how we relate

across, and beyond borders to other people, places, and cultures. This idea in itself is not necessarily newly introduced by transnational

scholars, because theoretical frameworks such as cosmopolitanism and universalism have similar beliefs, and the ever-increasing worldwide

economy is proof of global proliferation. (3-4)

Brouwer opines that transnationalism is the study of migrant experience, fluidity and multiple borders coming together. Several nations and cultures mix together resulting in hybridity and this is what transnationalism studies.

Transnationalism is a new term that has been used and studied in literary discourse. Before it, the importance was given to nationalism and nation-state. There is a long history of nationalism but not of transnationalism. About the history of transnationalism, Simon Macdonald writes,

The first appearance of 'transnational' in a work of academic history

has been credited to Laurence Veysey in 1979, writing in the context of United States history, but this intervention seems to have found little immediate echo. More widespread deployment of the term can be dated from the early 1990s, when a series of major journals began to publish forums and special issues discussing transnational history, with the study of United States history again, being especially prominent.(4)

It means the word 'transnational' is a new word which has been used time and again since 1990s. The journal writing has been enhancing the development of transnationalism with the study of American history.

Steven Vertovec too expresses the similar idea in the following words:

Since the early 1990s research on transnational dimensions of migrant experience has expanded. There is now a substantial, and growing body of literature concerning the ways migrants' lives are affected by sustained connections with people and institutions in places of origin or elsewhere in diaspora (family obligations and marriage patterns, remittances, political engagement, religious practice, regular visits, media consumption and so on). (2)

Vertovec also agrees on the flourishing of transnationalism in 1990s. The use of transnationalism in literary discourse is growing now with the increment in migration and the issues related to it.

Sometimes diaspora and transnationalism are synonymously used. They carry some differences. In *Diaspora and Transnationalism*, Thomas Faist et al. state the differences between these two terms as given below:

Although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has been



often used to denote religion or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries – and, more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organizations. Moreover, while diaspora and transnationalism are used interchangeably, the two terms reflect different intellectual genealogies. (9)

Diaspora and transnationalism are two distinct terms that are used to analyze the migration process. Diaspora has religious and national connection whereas transnationalism has connection with crossing the border of countries.

Not only this, transnationalism has relation with assimilation too. Regarding this, Peter Kivisto suggests:

I would like to propose that the relationship between transnationalism and assimilation ought to be seen in the same light as the relationship between assimilation and ethnic pluralism and multiculturalism... This is because at the moment the transnational immigrants are working to maintain hardened connections, they are also engaged in the process of acculturating to the host society. (571)

Kivisto finds similarity between assimilation and transnationalism and recommends others to see these two terms under the same light. He also says that assimilation and acculturation go hand in hand.

### **Transnationalism and its Importance in Literary Discourse**

Transnationalism has got its high importance especially in migration literature. Writers prefer to write literary texts including more than one nation.

Migration plays a key role in their works. Sometimes the authors themselves write about their experience in foreign land. These two novels are also the product of immigrant authors who write connecting their country of origin and the country of settlement. Critics highlight the importance of transnationalism in the following ways:

Sophie Mamattah writes, “The value of transnationalism theory is apparent in cases where an immigrant group is disparate... Viewing aspects of migrancy, psychological or cultural, through the lens of transnational theory generates insights into migrant experience which might otherwise be overlooked” (1-3). Mamattah means to say that the study of transnational theory helps to understand the experience of migrants which otherwise might be undermined.

Roger D. Waldinger iterates the same idea in the following words:

Though failing to deliver on its promise, the transnational perspective has nonetheless performed a useful scholarly function. By attending to the many cross-state connections, which international migrations invariably produce, it has moved migration studies beyond the largely unconscious, implicit nationalism of established approaches, highlighting important aspects of the migrant phenomenon that prior research had largely ignored. (10)

Waldinger expresses the necessity of transnationalism to study and understand the international migration. Hence, it has been a great tool that could be used in scholarly function.

S.P. Moslund highlights the features of the literature of globalization in the following words:

Reading the literature of globalization, the whole world appears to be

on the move ... It seems that we are witnessing a massive international and transnational defeat of gravity, an immense uprooting of origin and belonging, an immense displacement of borders, with all the clashes, meetings, fusions and mixings it entails, reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world's countries and cities. (Moslund 1-2)

Moslund asserts that the world is moving and to understand the movement, transnational study is required. There is the reshaping of nationalism.

Nina Schiller, et al. postulate, "The recent use of the adjective 'transnational' in the social sciences and cultural studies draws together the various meanings of the words so that the restructuring of capital globally is seen linked to the diminished significance of national boundaries in the production and distribution of objects and ideas and people" (49). 'Transnational' has various meanings in various fields.

Despite its connection with numerous fields, it has the sole meaning, that is, to cross the national boundaries.

Vertovec underlines the importance of transnational study. He asserts, "Transnationalism represents a topic of rapidly growing interest witnessed in the proliferation of academic articles, university seminars and conferences devoted to exploring its nature and contours" (2). Immigrant experience has been the matter of interest for the scholars. So they use this theory in academic articles, academic seminars and conferences.

Paul Jay too has the similar view about the study of transnationalism in literary discourse. He positions literary studies within the process of a transnational turn, a process that suggests new paradigm for the study of literature that breaks down the once more common nation – state model (par. 1). He claims that transnationalism in the literary discourse breaks the nation-state model as it goes crossing the boundary

of a particular nation and state.

Ian Tyrell indicates, “National identities have been defined in relation to other identities, including the transnational phenomena that impinge upon the nation as it is constructed and reconstructed repeatedly” (474). In order to define national identities, one has to connect them with transnational phenomena. The nationality is constructed and reconstructed due to migration and transnationalism attempts to see this aspect in literary discourse.

Faist et al. highlight the importance of transnationalism as given below:

A transnational community links the global to the whole range of greatly different local networking places, without hierarchy between these different hubs. The role of the border is very much curtailed by a migrant population whose essential element of identity is knowing how to first cross the border itself, pass through the border area and then live outside it, whilst avoiding expulsion. (43)

The world has been taken as a global village due to the easy access to the other nations and nationalities. The border is crossed each and every day without getting expulsion from the country of origin and it is very important to study about those immigrants in the literature.

There are various theories applied in literary discourse but transnationalism is a new theory that could be used especially to understand migrant literature. Migration is an unavoidable trend of modernism. People migrate for many reasons. They may migrate due to opportunities, war, facilities etc. The world has been shrunk into a small village due to means of communication and transportation. The scientific tools and technologies have contributed a lot for the globalization process. In this kind of situation, literature has also expanded its horizon towards the broader border of the

world, not just of a single nation. Authors have started writing the transnational texts with their experience of living in foreign countries. Thus it is very important to write transnational books and texts to invite the larger group of the people including immigrants to read them. It is also important to use this emerging theory to analyze hybridity, assimilation, acculturation and the creation of an alternative world so as to enjoy and understand migration literature.

### **Hybridity and Creation of an Alternative World**

Migration invites for different kinds of changes. The first change occurs in the place and other changes occur in the fields like culture, identity, lifestyle, language etc. Not only do the migrants face the newness but the migrated place also faces similar kind of newness. Everything gets mixed with the migration. The immigrants also influence the place to change with the assimilation and acculturation. The fusion of culture, language and identity occurs. It means hybridity could be noticed in these fields. Some of the definitions of hybridity are given below:

Elmo Prayer Raj states, “Hybridity is a cultural transactive creating a temporal interactive sequential between the colonizer and the colonized bestowing a conciliation inestimably concussive beyond the managed identity of the dominant” (125). Hybridity is the outcome of the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized that introduces the negotiated culture, lifestyle, identity etc.

Homi Bhabha, who is accredited with developing the concept of hybridity and who is one of the most important figures in contemporary postcolonial studies, posits:

One might also argue that hybridity consequential of the procedures of specific and indeterminate yet yielding relations, is not two separate imaginative moments from which the third emerges but hybridity itself is the ‘Third Space’ which facilitate other positions to come into sight.

The “third space”, at once contentious and prospective is the “in-between space” – the platform for resistance and acculturation groomed. The ‘third space’, thus, “constitute the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read as a new. (qtd. in Raj 1.2: 126)

Bhabha is the pioneer to use the term “third space”. He takes hybridity as the third space which is the result of the fusion of the first (place of origin) and the second space (the place of settlement).

Bhabha adds, “For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the (third space) which enables other positions to emerge” (qtd. in Mitchell 15: 535). He does not wish to trace the two original moments. He rather emphasizes in the third space which makes other change.

H.H. Sarhan connects cultural studies, literary theory, colonialism and postcolonialism in reference to defining hybridity: “Hybridity, in the field of cultural studies and literary theory, is the normal evolution of interaction between different cultures. This interaction is completed or has the chance to occur in colonialism. Cultural hybridity is associated with post colonial literature” (1). Sahran takes hybridity as the evolution out of interaction between different cultures.

Making clear about its origin and broader meaning, Amardeep Singh mentions:

At a basic level, hybridity refers to any mixing of eastern and western culture. Within colonial and postcolonial literature, it mostly refers to

colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who have found a balance between eastern and western cultural attributes ... However, the term hybridity, which relies on a metaphor from biology, is commonly used in much broader ways, to refer to any kind of cultural mixing or mingling between East and West. (par. 13)

Singh states that hybridity is used in wider ways from biology to literature. It simply refers to mixing of eastern and western culture.

Farahzad and Monfared believe, "Some scholars consider 3<sup>rd</sup> space as contact zone within which different cultures encounter and hybridity is an inevitable result of this cultural encounter" (par. 19). The third space, as Homi Bhabha says, is the center of encounter among different cultures. This encounter is the producer of hybridity.

The third space is the alternative world for the immigrants who are the followers of both the cultures being negotiated. The immigrants neither completely follow their culture nor the culture of the foreign land. So they assimilate with the foreign culture but what they had already is with them. They mix their own culture with that new culture and create the third culture which is not completely their own. This third culture is the third world as well as the alternative world for them. They create this kind of alternative world to adjust themselves with the newness and the changes they find in the place of settlement. The immigrants neither choose to follow their culture nor the culture of the place of settlement. This is the way an immigrant comforts himself/herself in the new land.

Transnationalism is a bit different from nationalism. Scholars have been studying about nationalism since past. The concept of transnationalism is a new one. Due to the increasing trend of migration and the changes brought by it, the study of transnational aspect has been the appealing subject of present time. Nationalism is

connected with the identity that one gets because of the birthplace. Earlier, nation was defined in terms of its fixed territory and the feeling of nationalism. This definition of nation is not applicable now as the whole world is taken to be a global village.

Justifying the new way of redefining nation and nationalism, Earnest Gellner writes, “Nationalism is not the awakening of the nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (qtd in Anderson 6). Gellner means to say that nation and nationalism could be created anywhere and anytime and denies the concept of fixed territory. The alternative world could be taken as another nation for the immigrants.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defines nation as given below:

It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (6)

Anderson defines a nation as an imagined political community. Through the imagination the members of the nation have some kind of communion feeling.

Satya Nath and Sohini Dutta write, “Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* has provided the impetus for other scholars on nationalism and area specialists to formulate different ideas on nationalism” (par. 13). Different scholars use Anderson’s idea of nationalism to define a nation.

Karolina Szuppe elaborates Anderson’s definition of nation as given below:

Anderson saw a nation as imagined, because its members will never



meet and they have to imagine their comrades and their community. A nation is also limited, having boundaries where other nations start. It is sovereign, because the concept was born in the age of Enlightenment destroying the hierarchical dynastic realm, and making all nations free. What is also important is that all nations constitute communities, where fellow-members are linked together by invisible 'love for their nation', all ready to die for it. (31)

The feeling of nationalism emerges with the imagining of the community. The members of the community do not meet with each other but they have the common feeling of nationalism.

## Chapter 3

### Transnationalism in the Novels

Mukherjee and Thapa write about migration in their fictional works. They more or less use their own experience in creating the characters and the plots in their novels. These selected novels are the examples of their writing trend. Multiple nations and cultures are interconnected as the result of migration. This invites for the in-between position of the characters in the migrated nation. The characters then connect their part of self with the newness that they find in the host nation. This connection creates an imagined community making it an alternative nation which needs no boundary for its existence.

If one reads the writing of an author who lives in foreign land, one can experience the author writing about his/her own homeland. The writing of a diasporic writer can be taken as an imaginary world for the author being chosen to get connected with the homeland. The writing itself becomes an alternative world for the author as it demands imagination for its creation. Mukherjee has the protagonist from India in *Jasmine* and Thapa has Prema from Nepal as the protagonist in *Seasons of Flight*. The novels are similar to each other as both of them are transnational texts and both of them are written by diasporic authors. They have females as their protagonists. Both the novels are written by Asian female authors. The fictions have some influences of wars in their life. Both the protagonists migrate to America and are in search of their identity. Americans are shown following them, loving and wanting them in their life.

The novels are yet different from each other as one is written by an Indian and the next is by a Nepali. Jasmine is pregnant but Prema is unmarried who never wishes to give birth to any child. Jasmine migrates to America to fulfill her dead husband's

wish but Prema migrates to fulfill her own wish. Despite some differences, both the novels are transnational fictions with the authors' own experiences.

### ***Jasmine* as a Transnational Text**

Bharati Mukherjee is originally from India but she likes to be called an American. She praises America for its flexibility that allows everyone to be American. Her novel *Jasmine* is a transnational text as it talks about migration, hybridity, multiculturalism and identity transformation. It depicts international migration that takes place in America. The protagonist has to go through international and internal migration in the migrated nation in order to be an American.

The expatriate writers have some sense of loss as they are not able to have their physical presence in their homeland. So they imagine their homeland in order to compensate the loss. By creating an imaginary homeland in their works, they give birth to an alternative world in their fictions. They create the characters and the plot according to their imagination to connect themselves with their homeland. In

*Imaginary Homeland*, Salman Rushdie states:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles, or migrants 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 visible ones, imaginary homeland, Indias of the mind. (10)

The physical alienation of the immigrant writers from their homeland makes them

have a sense of loss. In order to console themselves, they create their imaginary homeland in fictions.

*Jasmine* is also a way of getting connected with Mukherjee's native land. She creates India of her imagination mixed with some part of reality. Her creation of Jasmine has some autobiographical impulse. Mukherjee too had to go through various hardships to create her identity of an American author. Jasmine links the author to her homeland, India. The fiction incorporates India, her country of origin, and America, her place of settlement. This interconnection is the in-between position of the author. This imagined community is the alternative world for the author.

In *Mother Jones*, Mukherjee asserts, "As a writer, my literary agenda begins by acknowledging that America has transformed me. It does not end until I show that I (along with the hundreds of thousands of immigrants like me) am minute by minute transforming America. The transformation is a two-way process. It affects both the individual and the national culture" (par. 30). America was and is a dreamland for many people. While achieving their dream of being an American, they try to change themselves so that they could adopt with the place. It is not only America that transforms immigrants, but it is also the immigrants who transform America.

Jasmine not only changes herself in the process of being an American but also changes America and Americans. She says, "People are getting used to some of my concoctions, even if they make a show of fanning their mouths. They get disappointed if there's not something Indian on table" (9). In Iowa, she lives with Du Ripplemeyer and she has made everyone there fall in love with her Indian dish. It shows that she has also changed America by giving her Indianness to them.

The way Jasmine is portrayed in the novel speaks some autobiographical sides of the author. Jasmine's struggle for her identity creation and the state of exile reflect

Mukherjee's experience. She likes to be recognized as an American and so is the case with Jasmine. Jasmine migrates and makes relations with Americans to be recognised as an American. In India, she says, "I couldn't marry a man who didn't speak English, or at least who didn't want to speak English. To want English was to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world" (68). Even though she was not sure of migrating to America, she was already fascinated towards English language. She thought that knowing English was like conquering the world.

Jasmine is not forced to go to America. It is her own wish to fulfill the dream of her dead husband. She thinks, "We have created life. Prakash had created Jasmine, and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash, Vijn @ Wife" (97). Going to America is the only aim that Jasmine has after the death of her husband. She wants the creator of Jasmine to complete his mission.

After she migrates to America, she has to face a lot of challenges. She even murders the Half Face to cope with the situation. She is sexually abused by him. She changes herself after murdering him. She wants to become the creator of her 'self'. For that she burns her clothes, which is the burning of her old self. When she lives with the family of Professorji, she requests him for a green card. Professorji had invited Prakash to study in America. She says, "If I had a green card, a job, a goal, happiness would appear out of blue... I told him I wanted a green card more than anything else in this world, that a green card was freedom" (149). It shows her keen interest to be a part of America by having a green card. She would be happy if she got it.

The plot moves with the movement of Jasmine from India to America. She faces identity crisis there. To create her identity, she works as a caretaker of Duff, daughter of Taylor and Wylie. She is happy to get the job and earn American Dollar.

Duff calls her 'day mummy'. Taylor loves Jasmine. It shows that it is not only the West that attracts the East but it is also the East that attracts the West. After she notices Sukwinder, the person who killed her husband in India, she moves to Iowa leaving Taylor and Duff.

In Iowa, she lives with Bud Ripplemeyer, a fifty year old banker, for three and a half years. She is going to be the mother of Bud's baby. Jasmine gets a message that Duff and Taylor are coming to take her with them. Even though she is pregnant with Bud's baby, she leaves him and goes with Taylor. When she leaves, she speaks the following lines:

Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats  
cross-legged above my kitchen stove ... Then there is nothing I can do.  
Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere  
and disappearing into a cloud. I am out of the door and in the potholed  
and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants  
and reckless from hope. (240-41)

She leaves Iowa and moves to California with Taylor and Duff to reposition her identity. She is greedy and selfish as she only thinks about herself, not about Bud.

Immigrants have the sense of loss in the foreign land. They lose their culture as it gets mixed with the country of settlement.

Immigrant means as Salman Rushdie has it "a triple loss"- the loss of roots, the loss of language and the loss of cultural codes. According to Rushdie, roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what is to be a human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human. (qtd in Radkauskiene 125-26)

The migrants are in loss from many aspects. Those who have the loss of their roots, language and their culture follow the new ways to define themselves as Jasmine does.

Professorji's family and other Indians try to adopt the new ways to define themselves by creating mini India in America. Jasmine lives with Professorji's family and sees this adoption. She reports:

There were thirty-two Indian families in our building of fifty apartments, so specialized as to language, religion, caste, and profession that we did not need to fraternize with anyone but other Punjabi-speaking Hindu jats ... We squeezed onto the sofa in the living room and watched videos of Sanjeev Kumar movies or of Amitabh ... Sundays were our days to eat too much and give in to nostalgia, to take carom board out of the coat closet. (146)

In this way Indians in America create artificial environment to cope with the new environment. They have a new way of life which prevents them from being a pure Indian and American.

### **Transformation and Fusion of the East and the West in *Jasmine***

When an immigrant moves to a foreign land, s/he has to go through numerous transformations. There is transformation in place, language, culture, lifestyle etc. This transformation brings the fusion in the migrated place. The fusion of the East and the West is seen in *Jasmine*. The protagonist is an immigrant who faces a lot of changes and who brings changes in Americans' life too. She creates fusion of the East and the West. The characters are from America and India. Jasmine runs after America and America runs after Jasmine. In this way, transformations and fusion are automatically created.

While talking about Jasmine in an interview with Runar Vignisson, Mukherjee

says,

I have a sentence there that you have to murder your old self in order to reborn every time. And murder is a very violent word. Some of it automatically withers away and falls off. Some of it really you are deliberately discarding and that's where I think the disappointment, the unhappiness with what life has allotted her, what destiny has planned for her comes, and that is why we have that early scene where she wants to change the stars, the astrology. (par. 47)

Mukherjee agrees that one has to kill his/her older self to create the new self. Jasmine does not believe in destiny rather she believes in creating it.

Jasmine transforms herself by being a murderer on the first day of her stepping in America. She becomes aware that she has to fight for herself in order to exist in the foreign land. She follows American lifestyle by having many male counterparts while she is in America. She says, "I have had a husband for each of the woman I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali" (197). She has many men in her life, who have something to do with her identity creation. She gets her identity changed with the change in her male counterparts.

About how an Asian changes an American, the narrator narrates, "Six month later, Bud Ripplemeyer was a divorced man living with an Indian woman in a hired man's house five miles out of town. Asia had transformed him, made him reckless and emotional" (14). Jasmine transforms Bud by making him leave his wife Karin and his two children. Even though he is divorced, he does not get married to Jasmine.

About Jasmine's transformation, Anjana Sukumary writes,

Jasmine's life is a constant shuttling between identities and the individuality of Jasmine undergoes tremendous transformation.



Jasmine undergoes a metamorphosis during her life in America. There occurs a transformation to her entire personality that enables her to come out of the shell being a village girl to a matured and liberated Jasmine. Jasmine journeys through multiple identities to become an American woman and strives to fit in the American society. (70)

Jasmine transforms from the very first day to fit in the American society. She changes her whole personality through multiple identity transformations and becomes a different being.

Arjun Dubey and Shradha Shrivastava comment about the novel, “The story does not become a pathetic story of an immigrant but explores the ‘state-of-the-art expatriation’ where the woman aggressively waits for the future without regretting the past.” (165) Jasmine does not regret for what she did in the past. The novel does not depict Jasmine as a pathetic character rather she is shown to be an opportunist.

When Du, the neighbor and the lover of Jasmine, commits suicide, she tries to think like Lillian Gordon, an American. She says, “I want so much to be like her. Be unsentimental, I order myself. Don’t cry, don’t feel sorry for yourself; be proud of what we did” (224). This is a transformation that she has learnt from America. She transforms her emotion into strength.

The novel has intertextuality to refer to the transformation of Jyoti by comparing her with different women. It talks about English play *Pygmalion*, novels like *Great Expectations* and *Alice in Wonderland* and, the film like *Seven Village Girls Find Seven Boys to Marry*. She says, “*Pygmalion* wasn’t a play I’d seen or read then, but I realize now how much of Professor Higgins there was in my husband. He wanted to break down the Jyoti I had been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name Jasmine... Jyoti, Jasmine:

I shuttled between identities” (77). She compares her husband to Professor Higgins and herself to Eliza Dolittle. Prakash gives her a new identity in India by changing her from Jyoti to Jasmine.

She is like Alice of *Alice in Wonderland*. As Alice goes through numerous transformations, Jasmine too faces the similar kind of transformation. America is the wonderland for her. She keeps on changing the place and transforming herself like Alice.

The novel has the mentioning of English books and films, as well as Indian Gods and films. Kali, Ganapati, Lord Yama are some Indian Gods that she remembers while she is in the confrontation with the Half Face. She is compared with Goddess Kali when she kills the Half Face. Sanjeev Kumar, Amitabh, Sanjay Dutt and their films are the films that are watched by Indians in America in the novel. It is the fusion of India and America. To understand these Indian Gods, actors and the films, one should have prior knowledge of them.

Professorji was not a professor in America. He was an importer and sorter of human hair. When Jasmine needs money to make green card, he says “A hair from some peasant’s head in Hasnapur could travel across oceans and save an American meteorologist’s reputation. Nothing was rooted anymore. Everything was in motion... You could sell your hair, if you wanted to” (152). Hair from India is transported to America for making wigs that could be used by Americans. Jasmine’s hair too could be used for it. It shows that the West too needs the East.

Jasmine is in love with American food and whatever she finds in America makes her confront with the reality. She does not have complaints against anybody. She likes Americanness as a real American does. She easily accepts the newness that she finds in America and moves with it. She remembers Dairy Queen as her first true

American food. She found it soothing her tongue. She thought of it as healing food (133). She likes to eat American food and makes American people like her Indian food. The interchange of food and culture could be noticed in the novel.

Jasmine says that American clothes disguise her widowhood. In a T-shirt and cords, she is taken for a student. In the apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, she wants to distance herself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like (145). She is not happy to live in the Professor's apartment. She wants to get rid of Indianness and become an American-like.

The immigrant characters in the novel take America as the place of opportunity. But it also provides fluidity as the immigrants' culture is adopted by America.

In *Jasmine*, there are really no coalitions to be built as long as "we" (those who can think and act as Jasmine does) knowingly and willingly accept America as a utopian space, symbolizing fluidity and possibility more overtly than any other country because its culture has always depended on immigration and thus hybridity. Positive relations in this novel are defined by the capacity of individuals to exist separately but provisionally-related in similar states of liberating dislocations. (Jain, par. 17)

Jain asserts that there is no coalition in America and its culture is always depended on immigrants. Since there are many immigrants from different countries, hybridity is sure to occur and so is the case with the novel.

The novel shows the transformation especially of Jasmine. Professorji and other Indian families in the colony too have transformed after settling in America. With transformation comes fusion. Not all can become happy with the transformation.

The old parents of Professorji are not happy to be in America. They try to create mini India in America. This is not the case with Jasmine. She wants to run away from every Indianness. She has no regret for it. She is an ambitious woman just like an American modern woman. She is ok with the transformation of her name and her identity. She thinks and acts like an American. She uses Americans for her benefits and dreams of settling in America. She does not think of going back from America. Jasmine is ready to face anything that comes on her way of being an American. The novel ends with a hope for Jasmine that may help her to be what she wishes for- an American identity.

### ***Seasons of Flight and Transnationalism***

*Seasons of Flight* is a transnational text. Manjushree Thapa who was born in Nepal and who is residing in Canada usually writes about her homeland in her essays and novels. Whatever she writes shows her connection with her homeland. She chooses the protagonists and the plot from Nepal. It is true that she keeps on visiting Nepal and has the thorough knowledge of what is happening in Nepal. She shows her dissatisfaction at the way females are behaved in Nepal. She is a feminist and creates her female protagonist a stronger one. *Seasons of Flight* has the female character, Prema, as its protagonist who is strong enough to decide what she has to do. But the thesis analyzes it not from feminist perspective but from transnational aspect.

About the author and the novel, Rabi Thapa writes, “One cannot help but think Manjushree Thapa, herself prone to considerable migratory flight, is addressing herself rather more to an audience outside Nepal ... Undoubtedly it will speak to many Nepalis who have experienced the pleasure and pain of leaving one’s home behind and seeking another” (par 2, 4). Thapa takes the novel as a means for the author to address the audience outside Nepal. It is a way of connecting herself with

her homeland by creating the imaginary characters from Nepal and events that run after them.

The novel shows internal and international migration. Prema migrates to the town from a village for her study and job. She works for the conservation of the environment. She is a modern woman who dares to live in a town leaving her parents and earning money herself. She loves Rajan who works in an INGO for poverty elimination. But when she gets a DV lottery, she goes to America, leaving everyone and everything in Nepal. She feels that being a Nepali she is unknown to the world and that Nepali language is the language of her sorrows (76). She wants to run away from the sorrows and reinvent herself in America, the place that everyone knows of. She encounters with many Americans, most of whom are unknown about Nepal.

‘Where are you from?’

Why did Americans ask this when they were so unprepared for the reply?

‘Where are you from?’

‘Nepal.’ (14)

She is frequently asked from where she is. When she replies that she is from Nepal, she finds Americans unknown about Nepal.

Her migration from her village to town does not satisfy her. She does not want to go back to her village because she is fed up of war. Her sister, Bijaya, gets engaged with Maoist rebels willingly at the age of 16. She does not support the war and is so sorry about the abduction of Kancha, a 14 year-old boy, by the army officers suspecting him of helping Maoists. It is also because of war in Nepal that Prema uses the opportunity to go to America after she wins a DV lottery.

After Prema reaches America, she stays in Little Nepal in Los Angeles with

Neeru and Sushil. She works in the Shalimar, the restaurant where Neeru works. She is not happy with her work there as she feels that she is not in America but in Nepal. Workers in Little Nepal speak Nepali so she thinks she is living in Nepal. “Her compatriots spoke in the Nepali language among themselves; and their talks invariably turned homeward ... They talked of Americans – ‘foreigners’- with some perplexity” (112). Prema feels no newness. Nepali immigrants talk in Nepali and call Americans – foreigners but the fact is that they themselves are the foreigners.

Prema keeps on changing the place and job in America as she is in search of her identity. She leaves Neeru’s place and lives in another part of the city sharing house with Meg, an African-American lady. She then works in a Korean store. There she gets no chance to speak in Nepali and cannot understand Korean. She wants something more. The narrator says, “Feeling something. Not homesick, but something like it. She missed something. Not her compatriots, she could return to in Little Nepal. She could even go back to Nepal if it came to that. That was not what she missed. What then?” (126). She is in confusion. She does not know what she is missing and what she is wishing staying away from Nepali compatriots.

She again changes her job and works as a caretaker of Esther, an elderly woman, after three years of her arrival in America. She meets Luis in the nursing home where she takes Esther for her check-up. She dates Luis and falls in love with him. Luis is a divorced man having a 7 year old daughter. She is surprised to know that Luis knows things about Nepal. He has once been to a Hindu temple and wears a bracelet having a locket of a Hindu guru. She meets him, “Rare though it was to meet an American who knew anything about Nepal” (51). She knows that it is rare to find anyone who knows about Nepal. Luis is different from other Americans as he knows something about Nepal.

With the intention of reinventing herself, she follows American life style. She keeps physical relationship with him and is so happy to live with him in his apartment in the beginning. She experiences love in America with an American. It is not only with Luis that she has physical relationship but with Andy, Bobby, Jose Marco and other Americans too. She tries to get Americanized from every aspect. She does not contact her father and her friends in Nepal. Moreover, “She stopped looking up the news of Nepal on the Internet, and let her email account expire. Instead, she scoured the newspapers for information about America: unemployment was up, the housing figures were down, the president’s popularity was dipping” (116). Prema completely stays away from her homeland. She does not want to know anything about Nepal. She only wants to know about America, her country of settlement.

She becomes happy to live with Luis. She meets his daughter, July, his friends, his ex-wife and her husband. She celebrates American festivals, Christmas and Thanks Giving, with Americans. Luis and Prema go visiting different places and enjoy each other’s company. But later she feels that she is no more happy living with Luis. The narrator narrates,

Prema began to feel out of place where she was. Living in a flat on a toy street. Working as a homecare attendant. Ensnared snugly in Luis’s life, his very – American – life. She hadn’t actually reinvented herself, had she? She had just drifted along a zigzag trail, as always. And though there was nothing wrong with the life she had now, though she was content enough, it just – This was not really her place. (174)

Prema finds that she is not reinventing herself. She thinks that, although settled securely and cosily, Luis’s place is not her place and she finds herself lost.

Prema decides to go away from Luis. The narrator states, “He wanted her to

stay. The relationship was a trap. It confused her. Love confused her. Or Luis confused her. He tempted her to think: may be there was no problem. Or the problem lay with her, with her being – abnormal. Jagged, unmade” (202). She gets confused as she does not create her identity staying with Luis. She is disillusioned and goes away leaving Luis.

Before she decides to leave Luis, she contacts her father and gets the information that civil war in Nepal is over. Bijaya too has come home with a baby boy. She also sends emails to Trailokya and Rajan. Through the email, she knows that Kancha has not come home yet. She visits her homeland and goes back to America. Finally, she works as a conservationist of El Segundo Blue, a type of rare butterfly. Now she gets the job of her interest. The novel ends with her thinking of giving next chance to Luis to continue their relationship.

Luis said, ‘I really loved you, Prema.’

She said, ‘I loved you too, Luis.’

They looked at each other. They knew what the other was thinking.

He said it first: ‘Think we could meet again? I don’t – You think we could go out again? Not to – Just on a couple of dates, see how things go? You think we could?’

‘Do you think?’ she said.

‘Dunno.’

‘I don’t know too. I really am a bit screwed,’ he said. ‘So what you think?’

‘What do you think?’ she said.

They kept looking at each other...

She took a chance on the lottery, the lottery of life.



‘Yes,’ she said. (253)

Luis asks Prema for being in relationship again. She looks to be confused at first but decides to give a chance to it towards the end of the novel.

*Seasons of Flight* has the characters from Nepal, India and America making it a transnational text. The restaurant owner of the Shalimar is an Indian. The novel starts from Nepal and ends in America. The major characters are Prema and Luis. One is from Nepal and the next is from America. Two different characters from two different nations and continents are shown liking and living with each other. There is identity problem, hybridity and cultural negotiation in the novel. Thus it is a good example of a transnational text that depicts migration and multiculturalism.

### **Hybridity and Multiculturalism in *Seasons of Flight***

The novel has Prema, the protagonist, migrate to a foreign land with the wish of creating her American identity. DV lottery makes Prema migrate to America. She gets in in-between position after she reaches America. She can neither be a complete Nepali nor an American. She takes her native language as a language of sorrows. She does not like it and prefers to use English. She finds cultural differences in America and tries to adopt American culture. In turn, she unknowingly makes Americans adopt her culture too. She feels that she is in Nepal even though she is in America until she leaves Nepali compatriots. The narrator states, “Every now and then she still wondered what she was doing in America” (14). She is not satisfied with the way she is reinventing herself. She thinks that she is doing nothing in America as she is not able to create her identity.

Prema faces difficulties in adjusting in America. She lives in Little Nepal and works with Neeru in a restaurant with Nepali people. Nepalis living in Little Nepal is like creating their homeland in foreign land. It is the way they have chosen to connect

with their homeland. They get their Nepaliness alive in the foreign land. They use Nepali language and eat Nepali food. However, Little Nepal is not completely Nepal but is the combination of Nepal and America. They use English language and adopt some American culture too. Prema does not feel that she is in America while living with Neeru and Sushil. Therefore, she leaves Little Nepal to create her identity. The narrator says, “Prema left Little Nepal as abruptly as she had left Nepal” (117). She leaves Little Nepal without telling Neeru and Sushil.

The immigrants in America are from many countries and continents. Each immigrant gives a new thing to America and makes it more hybrid. The culture gets new form with the hybridity. Luis and Prema are hybridizing their relationship and their culture. Both of them try to understand each other. But problems certainly occur when there are differences.

American lifestyle is different from Asian lifestyle. Prema’s lifestyle in Nepal is different from her lifestyle in America. She eats American food, talks in English, has an American lover and earns dollar, not rupees. The narrator comments, “Prema found American so curious she could not help studying each one” (31). Because she is from Nepal, she finds America and American curious and different from Nepalis. So she studies every American curiously.

*Seasons of Flight* is a different migration literature as Prema does not mourn for her loss while protagonists in other novels have home sickness and mourn for the loss of staying away from the homeland. Abdul Khan in *The Hindu* writes, “Unlike most protagonists of novels by non-resident South Asian authors, she does not mourn the loss of her homeland nor does she regret her decision. On the contrary, she gets rid of the cultural baggage of her home country and adopts the new social mores of her adopted country” (par. 5). Prema is never shown regretting her decision of living in

America even though she has to stay away from her family and home. She adopts American lifestyle and does not look back.

Prema faces multiculturalism and hybridity in America. Her lover, Luis, is a Guatemalan-American, whose ex-wife, Tina, is a Chinese-American, and whose friend, Christopher, is a Mexican-American. The culture is not the only thing hybridized here in America, everything is hybridized, even people. One can find more hybridization and multiculturalism in America than in any other place. It is because America is the dream of every migrant where immigrants are more than the natives. Not only are they hybridized, they hybridize America too. The immigrants are from multiple nations so there are multiple cultures in America brought by them.

The immigrants want to be independent so they try to change themselves. It is the case with Prema too. “She missed Sushil and Neeru, the company of her compatriots in Little Nepal. But she was determined to keep going farther” (125). She knows that she will not be able to be an independent person living with Nepali compatriots, so she moves away from there. She is determined to create her ‘self’ and she knows what she has to do for it.

Prema finds that many Americans know nothing about Nepal. While answering the question about where she lives, she dodges. The narrator reports, “If possible Prema dodged the truth: ‘Pasadena.’ ‘Compton.’ ‘San Pedro.’ Sometimes she would say, ‘I am from India,’ because Americans had at least heard of India” (12). Prema would introduce herself as an Indian, thinking that Americans do not know anything about Nepal.

She finds strange that Luis and some other Americans know at least few things about Nepal. Luis speaks Nepali words like *dull-bath*, *tur-curry*, *himmals* and many more. He even learns Nepali alphabets, which the narrator describes as follows:

‘The first five letters of the alphabets. Ka, khha, ga, ghha, nga.’

‘Um.’ He said, ‘Ka, ka, ka, ka, ka.’

She laughed.

‘Say it again. Say it slower this time.’

‘Ka.’ Pause. ‘Khha.’ Pause. ‘Ga.’ Pause. ‘Ghaa.’ Pause. ‘Nga.’

You are toying with me,’ he said. You’re going ka ka ka ka ka to make fool out of me!’

‘I am not, I am not,’ she said. ‘Just try.’

‘Ka. Ka. Ka. Ka. Ka.’

She burst out laughing.

That’s what you said!’ he cried. ‘That’s exactly what you said!’

‘Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka!’ she laughed.

He started to laugh too. ‘Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka!’(158)

Luis, an American, is so much interested to learn Nepali alphabets and he learns it from her. Since the author is a Nepali and her protagonist too is a Nepali, it is obvious to find Nepali words and language in the text.

It is not only Nepali language, but also Indian and Mexican languages are used in the novel. Urmila, the owner of Shalimar, is an Indian. She uses Indian words like *bas*, *chalo* while communicating with her workers. The following lines from the novel show the use of Mexican language too:

Luis turned to her. ‘¿*Quieres tomar un café?*’

‘*No soy Mexicana,*’ she said, having learned early on how to deal with this confusion.

‘*¡Ni yo!*’ He laughed. ‘*¡Soy cien por ciento Americano!*’

She had to explain: ‘*No habla Espanol.*’

‘¿*De verdard?*’ He looked her up and down. ‘Geez, sorry about that, I could have sworn – I was just saying, *kinigitchyacoffee?*’ (47)

Luis uses Mexican language while talking to Prema. She also uses some Mexican expressions as taught by Neeru.

The novel shows multiculturalism through the variety of languages that it has used. It has used English, Nepali, Hindi, Mexican and Spanish languages. Neeru and Prema talk in Nepali. The novel uses the Nepali words like *dai*, *bahini*, *bhinaju* etc. Neeru says, “*Bahini*, you can’t do anything in this country (America) if you don’t have a driver’s licence ... Your Sushil-*bhinaju* got his licence as soon as we got here. You can take the test in Hindi in the state of California” (109). The novel has the use of such Nepali words spoken by Nepali compatriots.

Similarly, various Hindu gods and goddesses, like Bishnu, Krishna, Parvati, Shiva, Lakshmi are used in the novel. The narrator narrates,

The ammonite had belonged to her mother. A Hindu ascetic who came wandering through Prema’s birth village had given it to her. Her mother, devout, used to worship the coil at the centre as a shaligram, an avatar of Bishnu. She kept it in her bedroom shrine, and every morning sprinkled rice grains on it and made offerings of flowers and vermilion powder. The ammonite sat at the centre of the shrine, with pictures of deities – Krishna, Parvati, Shiva, Laksmi – placed lovingly around it. (13)

Using Hindu gods and goddesses in the novel connects the author and the protagonist to their root. Prema has that ammonite with her as the memento of her mother.

The novel connects Nepali language and Hinduism with English and Christianity. It depicts multiple culture and languages. It does not follow the idea of

center and thus there is no center in the novel. It does not only show the story of a Nepali migrant, but of every migrant. The immigrants take American lifestyle and culture as center but it is already mixed with the lifestyle and culture of migrants.

Prema is also a hybrid character. She is a new being created in America with some degree of Americanness and some degree of Nepaliness. She is sexually liberated in America. She has relationship with many males. If it was in Nepal, she would be seen as a whore. It is not the case in America. This is one of the transformations that she goes through. She is also culturally transformed. She celebrates American festivals, eats American food and wears American clothes to change herself into American.

There are differences between Luis and Prema and it is obvious that when an Asian and an America meet, they have to deal with their differences. When Prema says that she does not want to go to Steve and Camilla, they have an argument. Luis finds Prema hiding things from him. He says to Prema, “There are ways, you know, to bridge our cultural differences. I mean, let’s face it, we are really different, in fact. I’m also finding it hard going some days. But you know – there are ways to work things out” (211). Luis tries to deal with their differences by working it together.

When Luis wants to understand her world, she says, “I do not have a world. I left the world I had, and do not belong in the one I am in now – your world. I do not have any place to take you, Luis. I do not have a place in the world” (212). Prema means to say that she has already left her world (Nepal) and she does not belong to Luis’s world (America).

Luis is happy to be in relationship with Prema but it is not the case with her. She enjoys American relationship in the beginning but she leaves him later. She feels that she has not reinvented herself. She thinks Luis’ place is not her place. So she

leaves Luis and his place to create her own identity.

Migration does not only bring hybridity and multiculturalism, it also brings difficulties to know the position of places and use of language. Instead of using American English, Prema uses British English learnt in Nepal. She also does not know the situation of roads in America and footpaths being called sidewalks. The narrator portrays this through the conversation between Prema and Luis:

‘Maybe let us walk?’ she said.

‘Walk?’

‘The shop is just there.’ She gestured. ‘We can take the footpath.’

‘It would still take, like, twenty minutes. And footpaths? They’re called sidewalks. Anyway there’s no –’ He said, ‘I don’t think there’s any sidewalks there.’

This left Prema feeling utterly defeated. (185)

Prema has difficulty in understanding situation of American roads and using American English. She feels defeated when she is not able to understand America and Americans. A migrant faces such problem.

Prema finds difficulty in adjusting in America. However, she wishes not to go back to Nepal and spend her rest of life there. She is hopeful about her job and relationship with Luis. She hopes to create her identity in America with the work of her choice. The novel is a true mirror of an immigrant’s life. It is a transnational text as it occupies multiple nations’ characters and their experiences. It shows the mixing of the East and the West. This novel too has an American running after an Asian. Despite their cultural differences, they are attracted towards each other.

## Chapter 4

### Creation of an Alternative World in the Novels

This thesis aimed to analyze Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* as transnational fictions that study about the immigrants' experiences and mixing of the East and the West. They redefine the concept of nationalism denying the fixed territory and boundary of a nation. The novels create an alternative world for the authors and the characters to invent their position in foreign land. The authors and the characters of the novels connect their native land and their country of settlement with the help of their imaginary homeland which is an alternative world for them. The alternative world consoles them as it denies the national boundary and makes them feel being connected with their root. The main research question of this thesis was: What makes the novels transnational texts and how is an alternative world created in the novels? The novels have been analyzed from different aspects of transnationalism, hybridity and imagined communities.

The novels are written by Asian expatriates about the immigrants like them. More than a single nation is represented by the authors and the characters. Migration, hybridity, assimilation, transformation, fluidity, multiculturalism etc are studied in this thesis to show transnationalism in the texts. The authors have difficulty in adjusting in new country so they opt to create the third world in the novels with the help of imagination. Writing the novels is the way to connect their native land with their new home. They have their native culture mixed with foreign culture. They could neither completely follow their culture in the foreign land nor could follow the new culture. They mix both cultures and create the third culture. The following of the third culture makes them think that they are attached with both the nations. The authors writing transnational novels write about more than a nation. This is the case



with the characters too.

In today's world, nothing is constant. Due to migration and the advancement of science and technology, the concept of a global village is created. One can easily communicate with the people living far away and know the culture of people living in any part of the world. Due to this, western culture is copied in many eastern countries. Trying to assimilate others' culture gives birth to hybridity and the hybridized culture gives birth to a new culture. In a sense every culture is hybrid culture. There is no culture as pure culture. The concept of a nation is changed due to the concept of a global village. The geographical boundary does not work in the formation of the nation. The nation could be imagined as claimed by Anderson. The community is imagined with the feeling of connection that one has for a particular nation. The nation is imagined rather than created by geographical boundaries. The latent love for the nation and nation's people invites the nation to exist. The community and the nation are distinguished the way they are imagined.

In Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, the struggle of Jasmine in America is shown. She migrates from India to America and faces different changes from her name to male partners. The novel moves around Jasmine and her life in America is highlighted. Since the thesis studies the life of an immigrant, it becomes a transnational text. It also shows the identity transformation of Jasmine in course of her attempt to create identity in America. She not only follows American culture, but makes Americans follow her culture too. The family of Professorji and other Indian compatriots create an alternative world. They create little India in America by watching Hindi film, eating Indian food and following Indian culture. This is a way of creating a nation in others' nation. Writing novel about an Indian migrant Mukherjee uses her imagination to create the nation of her desire. Thus *Jasmine* creates an alternative world for the

author herself and for the migrated Indians like Jasmine.

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* is also a transnational text as it has an immigrant as its protagonist. Prema migrates from Nepal to America through DV lottery. This thesis studies her life in America and her attempts to create an American identity. She gets disconnected with her family and friends to be an American completely. She spends seven years in America and feels that she is doing nothing. America confuses her. She does not know what she wants until she visits her homeland and family. She has American relationship which she breaks and thinks of giving it a second chance after she comes back from Nepal. She follows hybridized culture and influences Luis to know her culture too.

The novel creates an alternative world for the author as it is the product of her imagination. Thapa lives in Canada now and writes about Nepal in her works. She imagines Little Nepal which is an alternative world created by Nepali compatriots who speak in Nepali, eat Nepali food and follow Nepali culture. Prema feels that she is in Nepal while living in Little Nepal. Thapa has created the third world, an alternative world, in the form of Little Nepal in America. This helps the author and the characters feel that they are connected with their root.

*Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight* are the works of immigrant authors sharing their part of experiences in the foreign land. Both the authors are transnational authors who write not only of their origin but of their country of settlement too. They are hybridized and it is so with the characters. Both the novels present their protagonists as the followers of American dream. In attempt to achieving their dream, they become the dream of some Americans. As immigrants neither fully follow their native culture nor can they isolate themselves from foreign culture, they follow both the cultures. This results in the mixing of two cultures which is the third space. The third space is

the third world for them. The first space is their native space, the second is the foreign space and the third is the fusion of the first and the third space. The novels have created that third space through the protagonists and the other characters.

This thesis is an attempt to study the novels through transnationalism. It claims how the earlier notion of nationalism is challenged referring to Anderson's concept of imagined communities. Moreover, this thesis opens ways to other researchers to make further study of these novels from the perspective of transnationalism.

Not all aspects of transnationalism are studied in this thesis due to the limitation in the length of the thesis. It can be studied from various point of view of transnationalism like 'fluidity of identity in foreign land', 'migration as state of exile', 'cultural complexity in immigrants', 'sense of loss created by migration' and many more. These kinds of studies could be recommended for the studies in future. This can lead to new findings that researchers so far have missed.

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