NEGOTIATING THE THIRD SPACE: SOUTH ASIAN FEMALE IDENTITY IN DIASPORA

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE* AND TANUJA DESAI HIDIER'S *BORN CONFUSED*

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Abstract

The study examines how the theory of the third space contributes to identity crisis for the south Asian females in diaspora. It also looks for the possible differences between the experiences of two subsequent generations of female immigrants, the factors responsible for it and the resultant socio-cultural changes which occur in the process of negotiation of the home and host cultures. The study focuses on the process of cultural enunciation among south Asian immigrant women with special reference to Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Tanuja Desai Hidier's *Born Confused.* The research proceeded in qualitative form, scrutinizing the two selected novels in order to evaluate the notions of fluidity, hybridity and cultural change with respect to first and second generation of females in diaspora. The analyses revealed a greater tendency towards adopting change and acquiring hybridized identity among second generation of south Asian immigrant women than the first generation settlers. It also brought to light hegemonic discourses such as racial or religious biasedness, and cultural norms which prove limiting to the process of psychological and cultural transformation among these women, thereby problematizing the notion of third space as an unbound, fluid space. The study is significant in that it unearths the freedoms as well as the implicit hegemonic structures faced by the south Asian immigrant women in the global social fabric.

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Dedicated to

Ammi, Abbu

&

Saquib

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS II

TABLE OF CONTENTS IV

1. **Chapter One**
   Introduction 1

2. **Chapter Two**
   Literature Review 11

3. **Chapter Three**
   Identity Formation of the First Generation of Female Settlers 38

4. **Chapter Four**
   Identity Formation of the Second Generation of Female Settlers 59

5. **Chapter Five**
   Conclusion 80

6. **Works Cited** 90

Chapter One

Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore the process of identity fragmentation and reconstruction among first and second generation of south Asian female diaspora migrating to U.K. and USA. The ethnic, racial and religious aspect of the lives of the female protagonists in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Tanuja Desai Hidier's *Born Confused* shall be considered with special reference to the notion of the third space which infers the migrants as agents of change and the process of intercontinental migration as unavoidable characteristic of the recent times.

Globalization and the tremendous increase in transnational movement of people and communities have resulted in a growing number of diaspora population. People tend to move away from the place of their origin to newer communities and places for the sake of better economic, social, educational and political opportunities. This massive migration is mostly from the former colonized and under developed Third World countries to that of highly developed imperialist centers of the world such as London and New York. The change of spatial location has a tremendous effect upon immigrants' sense of self with relation to the society and culture. On one hand they seem to belong to the host society, but on the other they find themselves as aliens, ostracized by the very fact of the difference of their culture, origin, race and color.

The term diaspora was initially used for theological debate about Jewish dispersion, but now the term is increasingly been adopted by the theorists of culture and anthropology to describe the psycho-social specificities that characterize a huge bulk of immigrant population. Post-modernist and culture critical authors such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994) adopted the Diaspora term to denote a specific type of experience and thinking, i.e. that of "Diaspora consciousness" (Virinder 54). According to Virinder diaspora consciousness is a state of mind which develops with the involvement of various territories and includes multidimensional experience (55). Antithetical to the earlier ideas of banishment and exile, these theorists tend to celebrate the term by characterizing it with the notions of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and (re)construction, double consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth (Virinder 31-32).

As the world is increasingly turning into a global village, migrants tend to shift from one socio-cultural space to another, taking along with them their ties to the past and facing the challenges of the present. This type of situation in which they find themselves is called the third space by Homi Bhabha in his seminal work *The Location of Culture* (1994). This concept entails that overlap or "in between-ness" (13) which evolves when the Diaspora population finds itself in a space where their past and present merge. The migrants have to negotiate their identities anew as their link to the home and to the host space is redefined (Bhabha 36). Obviously this space where two cultures collide is not without its problems. The transition is never easy and fluid. It is further complicated when the questions of gendered identities and the postcolonial discourse enter the already

complex issue of Diaspora identity formation processes, thereby making the diaspora consciousness further a challenge to comprehend.

The "diaspora consciousness" is a product of the hybrid space which Homi Bhabha defines as a place of cultural re-interpretation (Virinder 30). Bhabha conceives it as a specific awareness, supposedly a characteristic of people living 'here' and relating to a 'there' (1). Another prominent scholar of diaspora studies, Stuart Hall reiterates the same thoughts and states, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235). Thus both Bhabha and Hall consider changeability as the basic characteristic of the migrants' lived experience resulting in a sense of dual affiliation to home and host cultures and societies. And more significantly, according to Avtar Brah, diaspora consciousness carries a creative power and ability, questioning both "configurations of power" and the "hegemony of the all-pervasive, normative nation-state" (183).

Feminists have not been unaware of this creative power that diaspora consciousness may hold for questioning the configurations of patriarchal power embedded in culture. They have argued that this hybrid space can turn into two directions for women. Either it can be a perpetuation of the patriarchal dominance by the continuity of rigid patriarchal cultural constructions, or it can become a reformatory phase, a space where women can get over with the modes of domination in the process of reproducing identities for themselves.

Theorizing the third space or the hybrid identities, Homi Bhabha talks of the misrepresentation of the minoritarian culture and people by the dominant cultural group.

This misrepresentation often takes the form of stereotypes of the oppressed subjects. Stereotype, Bhabha says, "...is an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power" (66) through which the oppressor continues to hold power. He says that these stereotypes function as phobia or fetish for the dominant group. This holds true to the situation of women in diaspora. Their stereotypes are produced by the patriarchal culture and perpetuated in diaspora conditions. That is why it is here in particular that feminists tend to contest the pre-conceived binary construction of the south Asian women as either being a docile, malleable creature or the disobedient, strong headed outcasts. This binary construction is mostly a characteristic of south Asian cultures upon which this study shall emphasize. Indian Feminist Mala Pandurang in her article "Conceptualizing Emigrant Indian Female Subjectivity: Possible Entry Point" states that the Indian women are taken as repositories of tradition and thus they always remain under close scrutiny of patriarchs (Puwar 87). Their identities are fixed for them and they have to strive harder than the males in order to form separate identities. Seen from this perspective, the third space becomes even more challenging for the women to re-conceptualize or reform their existing identities. Faced with the opportunity to critically analyze their cultural roles, they have to strive more than a male to construct a new place for themselves. Pragna Patel gives voice to these sentiments in the following words:

> Women's bodies and minds are the battleground for the preservation of the 'purity' of religious and communal identities. So the role of women as signifiers and transmitters of identity within family becomes crucial (*Black British Feminism: A Reader* 264)

Following these observations there seems to be a growing awareness among the south Asian women for self-identification and self-determination. In particular those women in diaspora who have the opportunity to critically analyze both the western feminist ideals and their own cultural belief systems are at an advantageous position to look at the plight of south Asian Diaspora women. The literary among them give voice to the experiences, the conflicts, the identity crises and the struggles which majority of the women diaspora population has to go through. These experiences of transformation and cultural shock find expression in form of narratives by the south Asian diaspora novelists, particularly the females. Yasmin Hussain, a researcher upon the diaspora experience among south Asian women, points towards the major concerns that characterize such narratives. In her work *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity* (2005) she examines how south Asian women who are characterized by a particular historical background view the world while living in cosmopolitan Britain. She reveals the major concerns in the work of diaspora female novelists which mostly revolve around the relationships between image, identity, culture, power, politics and representation; she also makes an effort at exposing the differences between images and reality, policy and practice.

This study shall explore these issues in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Tanuja Desai Hidier's *Born Confused.* It shall be seen how the female protagonists in both the above mentioned novels renegotiate their belongingness to home and the wider world which offers untraditional, unbound opportunities of self-realization. The Processes of reconstructing the third space and redefining the cultural space shall be investigated in this work. The literary works of Monica Ali and Tanuja Desai have been chosen for three

important reasons. Firstly, as both the novelists are females and as the study holds a gendered perspective, their insights into the female psyche will be more relevant. Secondly, both of these females belong to south Asian immigrant families living in U.K. and USA respectively so their work is informed by personal experience and direct information. And thirdly because both the novels have been written with the background of 21st century socio-political scenario such as the 9/11 incident thus the researcher will be able to get first-hand knowledge of the current issues through the protagonists and their lives depicted by Monica Ali in the *Brick Lane* and by Tanuja Desai Hidier in *Born Confused.*

Both the texts analyzed in the work depict two different diaspora groups, having different ethnic and religious background. First novel is Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* which depicts Muslim women in Bangla community. Her novel is significant in that it is first of its kind to focus on Bangladeshi women written by a woman. The novel is a bit controversial as it has been criticized by British Bangladeshi community of East London as being written with an "outsider's view" thereby inauthentic and "shameful" (Hussain 92). But the present study takes the depiction of the novel as informed with the personal experience of its south Asian immigrant young novelist, i.e. Monica Ali.

The second literary work analyzed in the study is *Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier. *Born Confused* focuses on the identity confusion of a teenage girl and the settlement process of her family. The diaspora community of central focus in the novel is Indian by origin and belongs to Hindu religion. The ethnic and religious difference of the

communities depicted in *Brick Lane* and *Born Confused* sheds an added light to the variance in experiences of diaspora communities belonging to different backgrounds.

Statement of the problem:

The present study seeks to explore the potentiality of the third space concept for the south Asian immigrant women in the process of reconstruction of their identity. The third space is defined as a meeting ground of differing cultures, thoughts, and ways of life resulting in a newer situation which holds the power to subvert any essentialist identity theory. The concept has thus been applied to diaspora setting in order to investigate the identity fragmentation and reconstruction processes in the south Asian female immigrant population. The lived experience of the immigrant females residing in America as well as in Great Britain has been explored. In order to fully comprehend their identities, the impact of time lapse shall be considered and for this purpose the lives of first generation South Asian immigrants and second generation south Asian immigrants shall be analyzed separately. The exploration process shall help to determine whether the third space does actually entail any positive, re-generative values for south Asian immigrant population who has a history of colonialism at their backs.

Research Questions:

1. How does the theory of the third space contribute to identity crisis for the south Asian females in diaspora?
2. How do the females make use of the creativity of the third space in order to negotiate their identities?

3. How is the experience of the two subsequent generations of female immigrants different from each other?
4. How do both generations negotiate their home and host cultures?

Significance of the study:

This study shall be contributing to the anti-assimilation movement which tends to reject acculturation. Assimilation denotes to that phenomenon which accompanies notions of global village and global citizenship. This study shall explore the voice of the periphery, thereby articulating the difference which prohibits one culture to get dominated by another prominent one. Furthermore the study shall help in unearthing the imperceptible, concurrent discourses of difference and domination that help in perpetuation of hegemonic practices not just among various cultures but also among gender relations in diaspora communities.

Methodology:

This research will be a qualitative and critical study in which a parallel close textual analysis of the two texts will be carried out in order to explore the lived experiences of south Asian women in diaspora in UK and USA. The elements of hybridity, fluidity and cultural enunciation in the theory of the Third Space shall be analyzed with reference to the personal and social aspects of the lives of diaspora communities. The theory shall be approached with a gendered perspective and the work shall focus separately on the lives of the first and second generation of south Asian women in diaspora in order to analyze the effect of time lapse and exposure in the foreign culture. The themes expostulated by

Yasmin Hussain (2005) and Nirmal Puwar (2003) shall be investigated which include quest for identity in the face of cultural change and ideological variances, religious fundamentalism, racial discrimination, literary stereotyping, class differences and ethnically-rooted gender-operated power structures. In particular the themes of acquisition of transcultural hybrid identities, individuality and freedom vs. ethnic conformity and social acceptance, political and religious affiliations in a foreign society shall be examined with reference to the second generation of south Asian immigrant females. The aforementioned themes discussed in the backdrop of the concept of the Third Space-with particular reference to Bhabha's ideas- shall serve as frame work for the discussion. Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), Yasmin Hussain's *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity* (2005) and Nirmal Puwar's *South Asian Women in the Diaspora* (2003) shall serve as primary sources for the research work. The discussion shall revolve around the female characters portrayed in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Tanuja Desai Hidier's *Born Confused* in order to examine the thematic concerns. Thus the study shall probe into the theme and the character portrayal of the selected texts in order to determine the extent and mode of change that occurs in the lives of south Asian immigrant females of the first as well as the second generation after migration. Secondary sources shall include Journal articles, magazine and newspaper articles, social media interviews, films and documentaries.

Structure:

This thesis will comprise of five chapters.

Chapter One: This chapter will introduce the study as well as its significance.

Chapter Two: This chapter will be an overview of the literature produced on the lived experiences of the south Asian Women in diaspora.

Chapter Three: It will contain a critical discussion of both novels with particular reference to the challenges and reactions concerning the first generation of female settlers in UK and USA. The personal, social, political, ethnic, economic and religious aspects of the lives of these women shall be probed into.

Chapter Four: This chapter will focus on the experiences of the second generation of south Asian immigrant females. The theme of trans-national, trans-cultural identity formation, cultural change, and notions of freedom and individuality shall be explored.

Chapter Five: In the last chapter, the discussion will be concluded with the presentation of the findings of the study and recommendations for further researches in the area.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The present study takes a gendered approach towards the lived experience of South Asian diaspora living in US and UK. Its objective is to chart out the identity trans/formation process of immigrant females of the first and second generations. As a discussion of ethnicity and culture is crucial to the investigation therefore the concept of hybridity and the third space in relation to cultural enunciation shall serve to build the theoretical base.

Any discussion of south Asian Identity would be incomplete without considering its imperialist history. In the imperialist times identity was assumed to be an unchanging, pre-given heritage as Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978) explains. He explicates in his work that in the colonial times the imperialists constructed identities in binary terms with the colonizing nations acting as cultural supreme to the colonized and that these constructions were pre-given and unchanged (qtd. in Ashcroft 50). A different perspective in the identity theory was established with the notion of the third space which has forced the social theorists to approach the question of identity formations in this global world more cautiously. The theory of the third space introduces the concept of hybridity in relation to immigrant identity. Going a step further, feminists have started analyzing this concept in the gender based studies of diaspora lived experience.

The notion of third space has been explicated by several postcolonial theorists, particularly in relation to south Asian immigrants with respect to its postcolonial history. The most notable among them is Homi K. Bhabha. He is a postcolonial theorist who has given a new turn to the way colonizer/colonized relationship, and the resultant cultural dialogue had been viewed previously. He focuses on aspects of cultural transformation and identity formation of the colonized in postcolonial perspective. Drawing on the points of intersection of the two cultures, i.e. of the colonizer and the colonized, he reveals that the relationship between these two has never been a one way cycle of influence as assumed by the colonizers to be necessarily from the colonizer to the colonized; rather it has always been a complex two way give and take process. In The Location of Culture (1994) Bhabha states that the sentiments of the imperialist like Macaulay, which he gives voice to in his famous Minute (1935) - the belief of the colonizers at transforming the colonized into beings who are 'Indians in flesh and blood but English in mind and spirit'- ended up quite contrary to the expectations (87). The natives ended up being "mimic men", turned into "almost the same but not quite" (89). They acquired hybrid identities with the character traits quite unique to them. The process of cultural intersection in which they were forced to indulge opened up the possibility of reinterpretation and psychological mutation for the natives. Imitation and mimicry deployed by these natives became tools of resistance against the hegemonic power of the white imperialists (Bhabha 90). Bhabha holds that the same process of cultural intersection has speeded up due to the rapid increase in the number of migrants from the formerly colonized areas to metropolitan cities of the West (Bhabha 21).

cultural forms produced by the diaspora are actually sites of contestation, the productive outcome of a revisionary time which negates any essentialist claims regarding culture and tradition (38). This notion shows diaspora as deploying a resistant strategy to the colonizer's culture as they hold their ground against all essentializing and totalizing ideologies. Moreover it also poses a question to the home cultural claims of unchanged perpetuation.

The outcome of the third space, i.e. hybrid identity has been presented by Bhabha as resistance on the part of the migrant community to any sort of hegemonic efforts at essentializing cultures or identities. The formation of hybrid lives is the natural consequence of their efforts to fit in the host society. In the present times feminists like Yasmin Hussain question the usefulness of Bhabha's theory as more and more scholars try to unearth the still existent hegemonic factors influencing the lives of the previously colonized subjects (Hussain 11). More specifically female scholars work from the gendered perspective and efforts have been directed at contesting and unearthing hegemonic practices against women in the form of stereotypes. Several researchers are exploring the trajectories and discourses that influence female diaspora sense of identity. The reactions and responses of these females are also being recorded in the process of exploration. All these efforts pose a question as to the usefulness of the notion of the third space for the female diaspora (Hussain 11-14).

In this scenario female scholars' research often gets involved in the debate whether the openness and fluidity ascribed to the third space (i.e. the experience of living between two cultures) actually holds some meaning for the female migrants or is it just a

myth (Hussain 13). It would be indispensable to hint that Bhabha's idea of hybridity as a productive, regenerative space has not been wholly agreed with by some scholars of Diaspora as their researches have disclosed certain discourses that still influence the lives of the diaspora women. John Hutnyk quotes Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak who is one of the most critical thinkers in this respect (Hutnyk 19). He states that Gayatri in her work *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) defines hybridism as the sole privilege of the well-settled economically privileged south Asian migrants. She states that the theory leaves out certain hegemonic discourses still existing for the south Asian female immigrants. She emphasizes that the theory does not speak for the economically unprivileged. In fact when the lime light falls upon this privileged group it puts into darkness the majority of those who are unprivileged, underpaid and stratified due to the color of their skins and meagre financial position. She states that hybridity, viewed from this position holds little hope for the majority of labor-force diaspora. Spivak even calls hybridity as a part of the ideological state apparatus the sole purpose of which is to create a multicultural corporate in favor of the financially privileged. Subalterneity (the voice of the unprivileged), according to her, gets mystified and obscured in front of the razzle dazzle of hybridity talk (Hutnyk 19).

In order to ascertain the power of influence that hybridity might hold, an analysis of the actual social condition of the female immigrants is often carried. There have been efforts at literary and scholarly levels to decipher the lived experiences of the diaspora female population. The efforts of organization among south Asian migrant women have been made at political level so that common issues may be brought to the fore. For instance Shaminder Takhar in her article "South Asian Women and the Question of

Political Organization" talks of the ways in which South Asian women in diaspora gather in common group for political purposes (Takhar 215). These groups are an effort at raising a voice against othering discourses. But an important point she establishes here is that these groups may not be unanimous in their beliefs and cultures. They may vary in their ideas regarding feminism, may also be different from each other. But the truth is, they are moving towards a positive edge, posing a challenge to the subversive discourses (Takhar 225-26).

Researches have disclosed that Gender lies at the heart of all identity issues for women whether they are in their native land or living in diaspora. In this regard Mala Pandurang's work is of significance which reveals that the hegemonic practices bind emigrant women into domestic and cultural subjugation. The women are deemed as cultural navigators. They are made responsible to balance out tradition and modernism (Pandurang 90). She delineates that the Indian women are taken as repositories of tradition and thus they always remain under close scrutiny of society. Their identities are fixed for them and they have to contest in order to form separate identities. Seen from this perspective, the third space becomes even more challenging for the women to re-conceptualize or reform their existing identities. Faced with the opportunity to critically analyze their cultural roles, they have to struggle more than a male to construct a new place for themselves. The plight of women described by Pragna Patel in her work "Third Wave Feminism and Black Women's Activism" sheds more light upon the way females are loaded with the responsibility to preserve the "purity of religious and communal identities" therefore they are not just individuals but "cultural signifiers" (Patel 255). This added responsibility means a personal freedom further curtailed.

Mala Pandurang further elaborates the means through which home culture sustains. And that is the presence of 'umbilical chords' (Pandurang 91) like social media, cultural practices, societal bonding- which are attached to them. She exposes the umbilical cords which continue to shape female subjectivities even after emigrating when the ties with home are supposed to have loosened its grip. The umbilical chords ensure the perpetuation of patriarchal system and its control through tradition (Pandurang 91). Her findings are informed by her personal experience as she lived in Tanzania all her childhood and teenage because her parents lived there for forty years. On the basis of her personal experiences she narrates that a young female immigrant has a natural desire to blend in among the host culture, but the first generation immigrants (i.e. parents) do not usually allow them to cross a certain limit. Dress code and modes of behavior are strictly adhered to (92). The efforts of the parents are directed at making the young girls socially acceptable to the Indian culture as they see the future of their daughters back in the native land. On the contrary for the younger generation the social system at home becomes an alien discourse (92-93). Particularly Mala found controversial sentiments among second generation immigrants regarding the notion of patriarchal control as unquestioned social norm practiced in the home culture. As a result, the second generation resists (93). Her analysis of the Self reveals that the identities negotiated in the third space are never totally attached to any one culture. The hybridity that youth acquires in diaspora is difficult to assimilate under any one definition. It also exposes the translatability and changeability of cultural traditions when exposed to changes in time and space (94).

The impact of the cultural restraints go so far as the areas where personal choice is imperative, notes Hussain. Choices for women in diaspora are far more complex than

males (Hussain 28). Hussain quotes Suicide rate (among immigrant women) study conducted by Siddiqui (1995) which reveals the growing tensions these women have to face (qtd. in Hussain 29). The study explicates that the factors leading to such extreme tensions may be arranged marriages, lack of services and resources, fear of banishment from community, or apprehensions of the larger community. Women face insecurity at both family and social levels.

A prominent researcher and scholar in diaspora women studies is Nirmal Puwar who in her article "Melodramatic Postures and Constructions" throws light on the theme of deliberate misconception of the female immigrants in the western academia through such practices as stereotyping (Puwar 21). She shows in her research that the south Asian women in diaspora are always stereotyped therefore their identities are pre-determined to a large extent. She discloses the key factor responsible for stereotyping of all immigrant females and states that the south Asian females in diaspora are not totally free. There are certain bonds which render these women powerless. The reason why south Asian females find it hard to give voice to their personal experience is that the scholars belonging to south Asian descent are overwhelmed and influenced by the supremacy of the white academia (Puwar 37). A deep observance of the actual on ground situation in educational institutes reveals that migrants from south Asian descent are treated with a marked difference as researchers and scholars. Though brown bodies are thought excellent as objects of study, their voice as researchers is considered inauthentic. There are restraints such as rules of the canon, limitations regarding the choice of subjects, methodologies adopted and research funding rules which restrict the south Asian diaspora scholars from finding the true voices of the south Asian diaspora women (10-11). Even as objects of

study there are certain character traits essentialized unto their identity. The south Asian females are being stereotyped as passive and dominated by their men, incapable of speaking their own mind (24). She further states that though there has lately been an increased enthusiasm regarding the culture of the exotic orient, yet the truth is that the effort of the research scholars at finding the females' own voices in literature are responded with an ominous silence. The dearth of literature of the original migrants' voice speaks something of the still existent hegemonic practices of the white western academia. The space in which the diaspora scholars find themselves in is always influenced by the relations with other members of academia, mostly white (7). Therefore in the light of Puwar's observation it can be deduced that the third space in which the south Asian diaspora females reside is not as much fluid and open as Bhabha suggests.

Yet another prominent factor responsible for perpetuation of hegemonic structures has been unearthed by Lisa Lau in her work "Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals" (2007). She criticizes some of the techniques of the south Asian Diaspora scholars living and producing prolifically in the West about the East. Lisa highlights how these scholars having privileged position act out as agents of stereotyping through their work. The fact that they do not have knowledge and yet they claim to be writing the truth, is damaging in more than one ways. They employ techniques of generalization and totalization in their fictional work which re-create the already held stereotypes and myths about south Asian femininity. If implicit factors such as these are taken into account, it can be observed that the diaspora space does not prove all welcoming to the process of transformation and translation among the females of south Asian minority. The female identity thus becomes even more complicated as it has

to wade through an entangled mess of cultural as well as foreign presumptions and restraints. The process of forming an identity becomes more intricate.

Puwar delineates in her work *South Asian Women in Diaspora* (2003) the factors due to which the female scholars from the south Asian descent feel it necessary to investigate the gendered perspective of the diaspora population because the area has been hitherto totally neglected (Puwar 7). In this effort she concentrates on bringing together the voices of a myriad of researches by other south Asian diaspora female scholars. The body of work particularly focuses on the lived experiences of the working class south Asian women in diaspora. Her aim has been to unmask the discourses and overlapping trajectories which have an influence upon the lives of south Asian female immigrants and which will be discussed further. Compiled works such as hers reveal a collective effort at making the sense of the hybridity befalling upon south Asian women migrating to diaspora. Several social factors influence the lives of the females, the most prominent of which has become religion in the wake of recent socio-political upheavals.

Anneetta Seecharran throws light on the heightened sense of insecurity Muslim diaspora women and in particular the teenagers had to face after September 11 incidents in U.K. Her article "'Just Don't Act Muslim': Reflections from a Queens-based Community Organizer" (2011) criticizes the state practices and the resultant religious insecurity to such an extent where a few of the Muslims find refuge in denying their affiliation to the persecuted religious sect. Religion has emerged as a discourse which has forced the south Asian Muslim Diaspora to form groups and organizations in order to secure themselves. Works like these pose a challenge to notions like that of the third

space which celebrates the cultural difference and claims of cultural translations in the hybrid space.

Another prominent Muslim researcher, Fauzia Ahmed also reveals through her research the fact that the most conflictual of the debates regarding identity of women (Muslims in particular) in diaspora revolve around religion (Ahmad 43). The theme of religion is intrinsic for understanding their identity from the perspective of both the outer society and their inner self. For example Islam and its influence upon women have been hotly debated and misrepresented by the western media. As a result identity negotiation for the Muslim south Asian female immigrant has become a complicated process (Ahmad 45). They face conflict at both societal and personal levels which definitely influences the way these women see their religious identity. Ahmad in her article "Still in Progress?- Methodological Dilemmas, Tensions and Contradictions in Theorizing South Asian Muslim Women", lays bare the fixity with which South Asian Muslim Women are portrayed within media and literature in Britain (43, 44). She explicates how researchers are forced to rely upon already established 'authentic' discourse which ensures perpetuation of stereotyped and essentialized identities. Her study reveals that Political upheavals worsened the already racially charged atmosphere. For instance the incident of 11th September 2001 left millions of second and third generation Muslim migrants on the threshold of insecurity and alienation (47). Sensational terminologies were persistently used against Muslims in public and in print media. The ensuing riots in UK revealed racist attitudes of people and religious intolerance among British society. Jihad has been synonymously used with War against the West. Burqa has been immediately taken up by

white academia as a cultural sign of male domination. Muslim women were only portrayed as 'victims' (48).

Yet Fauzia Ahmed relates that with time lapse there has been a change in the self-image among Muslim women in diaspora (48). She writes,

> Empowerment, many Muslim women would argue, is not simply a matter of making a choice between religion and gender; for them it hinges on the acceptance of a fundamentally and politically distinct ideology of gender relations. It is one that enables Muslim women both to offer critiques of oppressive practices and 'patriarchal relations' within their own communities and also simultaneously to maintain a positive religious identity *as Muslim women.* (Ahmad 56)

Furthermore Ahmad also observes that the issues for second and third generation have radically altered as compared to those portrayed in early migrant literature as full of insularity, grief and chaos. Recent scholarship on diaspora has observed that the current literature deals with negotiable factors such as identity, hybridity, agency and social change (Ahmad 58). One sees an evident bent in the female migrants towards the attainment of social acceptability, conciliation and adjustment. The adjustment process is not without pitfalls. Intersection points between cultures are contradictory and invite an unavoidable clash in the migrant females' endeavors of finding a sense of self. For the South Asian Muslim women, religious discourse as identity marker becomes the locus of the tension. For example veiling is a symbol which arises much controversy between the scholarship of the west and that of diaspora. Both interpret and conceive it altogether

differently (52, 59). In this situation Ahmad states that the need for the deconstruction of the term Muslim and the concept of female emancipation is imperative (53-60). Only then can the subjectivities of the south Asian migrants be free of essentialized identities prescribed to them. It has to be understood that female emancipation may mean different things to different people (53).

Shahnaz Khan records the reactions of the south Asian Muslim females in diaspora in the midst of prevalent religious discourse. In her work "Muslim Women: Negotiations in the Third Space" she records the account of two south Asian female immigrants, one from first settler generation and the other from second generation. Her analysis focuses on how religious discourse is viewed and carefully negotiated by the south Asian Muslim females in Canada amidst the onslaught of biased discourses against Islam and its practitioners. She explains that the females residing abroad have to work through spaces which are tensed with presuppositions and conflicts which require them to rethink the aspects of the religious identity which they can follow (Signs 465). Theirs' is a compromised identity. But she also reveals that the third space has proved to be empowering in that it allows them to deconstruct the discourses, in particular the religious discourse (466). The critical probing these women are forced to indulge in ultimately help them in unearthing patterns of patriarchal domination lying covert under different guises (470). Conflict is of extreme nature for the first generation settlers but it is quite overwhelming to note that second generation settlers are taking a clear stance as to what they want, though their negotiation does not necessarily touch either of the extremes, i.e. total subjection or total rejection (493).

Yasmin Hussain observes that self-awareness through written texts has encouraged the youth to get to know their religion better. The dominant western picture of the submissiveness of Muslim women is far removed from the lives of Muslim women in present times (Hussain 27). The popularity of hijab has shown that it has been willingly adopted as a marker of self-identity; it is not just an imposed symbol of religiosity as is perceived by western scholars. According to Hussain the second generation British south Asian Muslim women in particular are far more confident in physical expression of ethnicity and religion than the first generation (28).

A huge bulk of the literature exploring south Asian female identity focuses on bringing about the differences among these women based upon ethnic background. Factors such as religion, the area of origin and the relevant culture they belong to are important for their identity (Theorizing Diaspora 6). This difference has often been neglected by the white academia which considers all women of brown color as the same. In this regard Jerry Z. Park records reactions of the youth in his article "Second-Generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meaning of a Racial Label" (2008). His work shows a growing resentment among the youth towards using the term Asian-American for immigrant people with as diverse origins as from China, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The south Asian youth, according to him, criticizes the unwise accumulation of the people of such diverse origins into one undistinguishable mass. The young prefers to retain their culturally unique identities. They also criticize the implicit racialized otherness inherent in the term Asian-American.

Therefore there are numerous South Asian diaspora scholars who are striving against the tendency of the European scholarship to ignore all differences of history and nation in viewing females of various origins as one unanimous whole. This practice is harmful in that it again constructs a binary where the western feminists stand on one extreme and the rest of the world on the other end. Several scholars including Lisa Lowe has contested the homogenizing tendencies of the west regarding south Asian Diaspora. In her work "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences" (Theorizing Diaspora 132) she advocates heterogeneity and points out that womanhood for the South Asian females is inextricably bound up with several other social relations, ethnicity being the chief of them. She tries to abate any totalizing action and speaks in favor of understanding the unique diversities of race, class, gender and nation. She argues that the women's identity in diaspora is being carved up for them by the stereotyping practices of the west especially with regard to the discourses on ethnicity and race (Theorizing Diaspora 144).

Hussain is also one of the advocates of plurality and imposes that there is no such thing as pure, fixed, uncontaminated, essential south Asian-ness in diaspora. There is no 'homogeneity' as such which can be celebrated among migrants. Hussain depicts that change is an important factor in South Asian women's lives (Hussain 11-13). Racial exclusion is still very much at play. Though some of the women have proved themselves successful and have successfully taken east and west together yet for others there is "fear mixed with the sense of freedom" (30).

The same probing sentiments as to the distinct ethnic vs. all-encompassing spatial labelling 'South-Asians' are voiced out by Avanthi Meduri in "The Transfiguration of Indian/Asian Dance in the United Kingdom: Contemporary 'Bharatanatyam' in Global Contexts" (2008). With reference to Indian dance forms labeled as south Asians she forces the readers to unearth the political aspect of the acts of naming and unnaming, while focusing on the distinct cultural character each one of the south Asian country holds.

But there are also those scholars who welcome the collective use of the term south Asian for the political power it contains. Such as Soniya Munshi who focuses on the tendency to group together under the common label 'south Asian' so that social work can be done for the collective benefit of south Asian Diaspora minority especially in connection with the state institutions. Soniya Munshi Comments upon the role of state policy while recording her observation as a social worker in response to domestic violence on the south Asian immigrant women at personal as well as community level. In her work "Multiplicities of Violence: Responses to September 11 from South Asian Women's Organization" (2011) she narrates her experience as a staff member at a community based organization dedicated to ending violence against south Asian women. She narrates that changes in socio-political scenario such as the 9/11 incident directly affect the females in more than one way. The emotional and psychological stress added to the already challenging domestic environment for the females. But the 9/11 incident worsened situation for them as after it the female survivors of domestic violence were afraid to go to law enforcing agencies. They found the state policy unaccommodating and non-supportive towards females and often feared threat of deportation in case

government agencies are contacted. Considering these incidents in mind which affect all south Asian diaspora alike, the author emphasizes the need to leave off ethnic or cultural based foundations in order to form South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs) so that general state support can be attained. Thus there are conflicting views as to the cultural movement towards assimilation or distinction.

In the formation process of subjectivity at a new place, feminists observe, the importance of the economy cannot be ignored. Discussing the factors which promote migration movements, Sanjay Barbora et. Al in the article "Migration Matters in South Asia: Commonalities and Critiques" (2008) list economic factor to be at the top. According to him the majority of south Asian men is driven from their home towns and migrates to the industrial and economic centers of world by poverty discourse. The social changes that take place at home and the extra strain which is put on the females is all due to the economic need which supersedes family needs of social bondage.

Exploring the effect of economic driven migration upon females, Hussain notes that when the first settler immigrant males came to Europe they were driven majorly by economic factor (23). The females in particular tried to contribute by entering practical jobs. As a result they became economically independent but they faced difficulties, for example in child-minding. The problem of child-minding was fiercer and greater in urgency and extremity for south Asian working women than for their white fellows. Apart from that, there were political, ideological and economic structures that constrained them. South Asian working women began to question both the state (discriminatory laws) and the family (domestic violence). They adopted the way of political activism, in which

initially they faced obstacles. But they preserved in the face of troubles, thereby adding the element of confidence in the face of challenge to their hybrid identity (Hussain 10).

Parvati Rahghuram investigates the material realities and their impact upon the migrants' lived experience in her article "Fashioning South Asian Diaspora: Production and Consumption Tales" (Raghuram 67). She brings forth the economic participation and financial roles played by south Asian diaspora women. She challenges the stereotypical image of south Asian women in diaspora as laborers and workers (as producers only) in the economic cycle by the white academia, thereby rendering them to a lower status (Raghuram 68). She narrates the success story of a migrant Asian woman entrepreneur. Malini, the business woman, started producing fashion clothing (using female body and clothes as markers of identity) as her own demand for culture specific drapery was unmet in the large European market. She gained economic independence which certainly was a factor in boosting her image of the self (Raghuram 76). Raghuram discloses the various aspects of global economy, design, production and consumption, at which migrant women play their roles making use of their home culture. But the question arises whether such culture based consumption patterns mean greater economic and personal emancipation or implicit perpetuation of hegemonic discourses in the shape of stereotyping for the south Asian women. She also shows that diaspora is not a cohesive group as perceived by the white majority, rather it consists of heterogeneous communities with heterogeneous consumption patterns.

It has further been revealed by Mala Pandurang (Pandurang 67) that an inclination for an upward economic mobility is to be clearly discerned among south Asian emigrants.

In the present age the middle class Indian women migrating to west are not "workers" alone anymore, instead they are highly qualified professionals. But the immigrant policies still portray and force them to be dependent upon their male spouses (87-89). Thus patriarchy and European laws go hand in hand in stereotyping them as dependents. Therefore how these professionally skilled women negotiate with the host culture is of great importance. Their engagements with conflicting heterogeneity are also unique which ought to be explored (90).

Hasmita Ramji draws attention to the fact that most of the existing literature on the lives of south Asian diaspora women views them as low paid laborers or domestic beings (Ramji 227). While recording the experiences of the south Asian working women, Ramji observes that they have to face the presence of racial discrimination at work places. She shows that these women have tried to project an ethnically neutral image of self. Efforts have been made for it through dress, language, behavior etc. (230-31). Moreover, women did not find their professional work incompatible with their home lives. Rather their roles as income provider enabled them to establish family system on renegotiated terms (231). With the change in economic status, Bhopal (1997) showed that class has also become important identity signifier among South Asian communities (qtd. in Ramji 233).

In "Engendering Diasporic Identities" Hasmita Ramji throws light on marriages as a social expression of connectivity (Ramji 232). She finds that the younger lot wants to connect to somebody with whom they can form an identity. The vast majority of younger educated lot continues to marry within conventional circles, yet it is also found that there

is a higher tendency in the young of 'marrying out' than the older generation (232-33). Caste has remained important in the choice of marriage. Marriage among these families is a hot issue which is normally decided upon geographical ties. Education has also proved to make the women more independent in choosing the marriage partner (236).

Ines Lourrenco and Rita Cachado explore the effect of migration upon the social lives of Indians in their work "Hindu Transnational Families: Transformation and Continuity in Diaspora Families" (2012). They observe that some of the initial values of the Indian family unit remain the same such as respecting elders, keeping a close link to the deities, or considering home as a sanctity in which cultural norms and values are practiced. Yet the interaction with the west has influenced gender roles within family system and change is unavoidable. The most important factor they bring to the fore is the use of the body by the female members of the family as a source of liberation from the patriarchal domination, and this also particularly among the second generation. These second generation immigrant females utilize their bodies and the act of dressing as preliminary modes of liberation.

As regards the mode of resistance there are numerous social practices which become the emblem of cultural transformation for diaspora women; the most visible of which is the way these women decide to appear before others. The importance of clothing practices as political agency is highlighted by Bakirathi Mani in her article "Undressing the Diaspora" (Mani 117). She shows that the act of dressing by South Asian diaspora female youth has never been an innocent activity. The act of cross-dressing is used by the younger lot which confuses race-skin identity mantra (Mani121). It disrupts the uniform

gaze with which women of minority culture are viewed. The cross dressed youth not only keeps a link with home but also shows fault lines in host culture-places where ruptures give opportunity to multidimensional identities. The cross dressing breaks the 'assumed isomorphism between space and culture' (Gupta and Ferguson 34) and thereby comment on the narrative paradigms of transnationalism. It breaks the first world-third world binary very much prevalent in the narratives of multicultural states. Their dressing styles deconstruct the popular image of south Asian women in western media (Mani 122). For women usually schooling becomes the start of their hyphenated identity and the act of changing clothes becomes symbol of navigation between two cultures (Hussain 30).

As a kind of response to the gendered approach to their identity, the south Asian women have also stepped into the areas of gender discussions hitherto deemed inappropriate for them. They have become more radical regarding gender ideology. For instance Rani Kawale's article "A Kiss Is Just A Kiss...Or Is It? South Asian Lesbian and Bisexual Women and the Construction of Space" (Kawale 181) explores the managing of multiple identities such as ethnicity and sexuality. Her research reveals that there is a greater tendency in diaspora females to question the culturally inscribed heterosexual norm. Rather they tend to follow the notions of the host society with regard to sexual orientations.

Nirmal Puwar writes in *South Asian Women in Diaspora* that education serves as a weapon for these women and plays an important role as it empowers women through knowledge and self-confidence (14). Education enables women to combat patriarchal and racist structure, not through open rebellion but rather through a persuasive renegotiation.

It is interesting to note that racial and cultural boundaries are not weakening due to educational and work achievements of British south Asian women. Rather these boundaries seem to be solidifying (232). The existing researches into relationship between education and South Asian Women's ethnic identities [for example Clash of Culture Thesis (Taylor 1976) and that of Bhopal (1997)] suggest that educated women necessarily leave their families behind as they are always shackled by them (qtd. in Puwar 228-29). These researchers create modern / traditional dichotomy as they fail to see the complex renegotiations in which family plays an important role. In order to figure out the role of family and educational success into the female struggle for identity creation, Ramji goes after real life evidence in her article "Engendering Diasporic Identities" (Puwar 228). Her findings are based on biographical data as she conducted interviews with twenty British Hindu Gujrati women (some mothers, some daughters). She found out that women are using their education and work achievements to renegotiate their gender, ethnic and class location (230). Hussain points out that the south Asian migrant women have been using education as a key source of gaining independence from the presupposed and the pre-ordained imposed upon them by the foreign society as well as their home culture (26). Hussain quotes Hiro (1991) who says that education has implanted the seeds of individualism and liberalism in the minds of south Asian youth (qtd. in Hussain 26). She also observes that the language of education has a very significant part to play in the sort of ideals the young generation forms related to their culture as well as religion (26). Initially Education was thought to be necessary for only boys among emigrants, but with the passage of time there has been a change in the social ideals. In contemporary times, females are equally encouraged which has

resulted in marvelous transformation in the self-image of the females (Hussain 27). Education is viewed as a means of getting empowerment. Another interesting aspect to note is the move away from oral tradition and closer to written text which has resulted in strong affinity with religion among South Asian youth (Hussain 27, 28).

Generational gap is another imperative theme which helps in understanding the transformation among the generations of the immigrants. It throws light on ways in which the immigrant females are using the discourse of hybridity in their negotiation process. According to Yasmin Hussain it is important to see the reactions of both generations in order to observe what sort of change or evolution is taking place in the migrants' life. In the chapter "Identity and Gender across Generations of British South Asians" she examines the responses of two generations towards the experiences of living at a foreign land (Hussain 19). The first generation settler citizens faced issues such as traumas of exile and dispersal, discriminatory practices, and acute racial discrimination. Participation in British society was limited due to both external constraints (racial and cultural discrimination) and internal constraints (notions of returning home and strong ethnic bonds as a means of self-defense). First generation women in particular appeared on the diaspora scenario as dependent beings, almost invisible culturally. Initial experience for them was that of isolation but slowly it gave way to the feelings of being comparatively free and independent (Hussain 22). If age-wise performance is viewed it becomes quite clear that it was mostly the middle aged women who brought changes and Hussain states that the struggle is still going on. For the subsequent generations, there is a genuine value in having dual nationality. Their hyphenated identities are an amalgamation of the wider foreign group and their indigenous cultures. It is at this point that generational gap

becomes apparent. The reactions of both generations have differed due to the exposure to the integrating services. Younger generation has been enjoying it since birth as compared to the older generation who had to fight for even their basic rights (Hussain 28-31). The younger generation has a greater exposure which has resulted in greater self confidence in the face of hostilities. Owing to the variance of experience the younger generation had to go through a test, pertaining to the sort of negotiation they have with their parental values and cultures. The majority of the youth tends to interpret and negotiate their home and host culture. The riots of 2001 showed their expectations as well as affiliations with the British society. Hussain observes that the second generation has high political ideals of equality and equal citizenship but they are continually disillusioned in the face of unending racism (27). She delineates that this generational gap is not a crisis as it is so often presented by some of the diaspora scholars. The integration process of the two generations always continues one way or the other and native language plays a vital role in it (27).

Viewed as a whole, for female diaspora scholars like Yasmin Hussain the south Asian women are transforming in diaspora. They give the concept the name of the emergence of a New Woman (Hussain 53). Within Britain the New Woman as a term emerged in the 1880's and 1890's, and depicted the changing image of women from established norms. The New Woman is a radical figure, questioning set roles, demanding equality of rights and economic independence. The New Woman is a figure who has the courage to take stance, no matter what the outcome may be. The strategy for depicting the metamorphosis of ordinary women into New Women in fiction is through a journey into self, within both psychological and geographical contexts. Physical 'journey' of the

protagonists is gradually transformed into settlement and by the end, into 'self'. The female protagonist gains an insight into the dilemmas women are facing and shows an assertion of her rights. Liberal ways of life are desired by her (Hussain 60).The new woman who emerged from the tide of feminism in the 1960's is expected to be different from her traditional counterpart (Hussain 55). The difference is that in south Asian literature a woman begins to try questioning patriarchy, whereas in diasporic literature she desires to move into modernity at any expense. She is already on the way to individuality under the impact of western values. She takes a step ahead and goes on to assert her individuality. Though she finds tradition to be imperative at some stage yet she is New Woman because she is an individual with the power to choose; she is self-determined and autonomous. The diasporic New Woman ends up finding a dialogue between self and culture, deciding on how much to conform (Hussain 69).

Chapter Three

Identity Formation of the First Generation of Female Settlers

The following chapter focuses on the lives of the first generation of south Asian female immigrants. The female protagonists Nazneen as depicted by Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* and Shilpa as portrayed by Tanuja Desai Hidier in *Born Confused* will be taken as representatives of South Asian female working class diaspora. The aim would be to observe the responses of these immigrant females to the phenomenon of spatial/cultural change. The process of identity formation shall be noted in the backdrop of the theory of third space in particular that of Bhabha which propagates fluidity, creativity and cultural translation as necessary characteristics of Diaspora lived experience. The study shall also endeavor to unearth the implicit/explicit hegemonic practices still extent in their lives which might play a role -negatively or positively- in the process of identity formation among the first generation female settlers.

It is often noted that the fact that they are females has to play a key role in their sense of self not only in their native land but also in the foreign society (Pandurang 90). The ideal womanhood which these female characters aspire to attain and take as a role model to follow is an ideological outcome of a host of discourses which are ruling and shaping gender ideology. Most important of them are ethnicity, religion and class (Lisa Lowe 1996). Ethnicity uses culture for its hold over the individual's life; religion patrols the sphere of personal desire; whereas class monitors the social status of the immigrant

females. All three need to be discussed in connection with the gender debate because it is with this background system of beliefs that these immigrant females have stepped forth into the new environment. At the new place they are faced with a different sort of social system which might not be in accordance with what they were familiar with in the past. It becomes a challenge for them to rethink and re-establish their selves in accordance with the new situation.

A study of the lives of Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and Shilpa in *Born Confused* and a host of other female characters in these two novels throws light on the reactions of the first generation of immigrant females in response to change and conflict. The major factor creating conflict and challenge for the first generation females is ethnic and cultural by nature (Pandurang 90). It is noticed that ethnicity and culture shape the gender roles for the first generation of immigrant females like Nazneen and Shilpa. Ethnicity and culture influence an individual's life from three aspects; firstly, it embeds its idea in the subconscious of the individual herself; secondly, it ensures its persistence through the community surveillance; and thirdly it presents the foreign society with a presupposed image which often takes form of stereotypes. At the individual level it is observed that Ethnicity acts as a defining feature and determines what role she has to play. Both Nazneen and Shilpa are in their thirties and have spent more than ten years in the new community. But still these women are psychologically tied to their home (Bangladesh/India) through invisible 'umbilical chords' (Puwar 91). It is to be noted clearly that both the female protagonists act out their role as cultural navigators unquestioningly which shows the strong hold ethnic ideals have upon them. Their living style and manners, thoughts and beliefs project the omnipresence of culture in their lives.

Whenever and where ever the opportunity arises, the first generation sustains its connection with the roots (Puwar 92). Physical connection is dependent upon financial resources whereas the psychological connection needs no such means. Therefore one generally sees the later sort of connection being forged and sustained. The way Shilpa in *Born Confused* decorates her home in UK in Indian fashion shows her desire to relive her home culture. As she is economically sound, she can afford to visit India after every few years. When she is in America, her means of keeping in touch with relatives back home is through letters and phone calls. She feels delighted whenever she locates an Indian community and is extremely ecstatic on hearing her native tongue spoken by somebody in America. She even enkindles a psychological connection by keeping secret relics of past life, e.g. her dancing dress. One quick glance at the dress takes her back in the realms of memory (Hidier 71). Same is the importance of home for Nazneen (Ali 21, 24). The problem is her economic situation which does not allow her to go back to Bangladesh although she wants desperately as her sister (Hasina) needs her moral support (Ali 58, 70). When economic condition hampers her, she forges a psychological connection by constantly reviving her native land through such means as imaginary discourses with her mother, writing letters to Hasina, and reliving the past moments in memory. She even desires her daughters to share her past therefore she keeps on retelling tales of her childhood. These psychological ties bring a sense of stability and feelings of being at home for Nazneen as well as Shilpa in the new place of emergence. It shows that for the first generation of immigrant females ethnic roots are not a restraint but a foothold in the shifting sand, contrary to the assumptions of the white academia.

For theorists like Mala Pandurang, the umbilical chords are the means through which culture retains its power over its adherents (Pandurang 91). But this study finds that even after change in spatial location, the immigrant females willingly embrace these chords to make sense of their lives and as ideological supports. Their connection with home manifests itself in their efforts at keeping alive the home cultural values at their respective households. It is observed that they willingly adopt the cultural code of life in matters as simple as everyday activities such as table manners, food items prepared for meals, speech patterns, behavior with each other, manner of dressing etc. Cultural norms are maintained as it would have been practiced in the native country. Both Shilpa in *Born Confused* and Nazneen in *Brick Lane* are always seen clad in traditional dress, i.e. sari, doing housekeeping as a good wife and mother should have been. Small rites and rituals, such as eating with hand (Hidier 301; Ali 21, 24), or taking off shoes at the threshold (Hidier 280) are symbols of their efforts at maintaining the link of their present with the past. Even the way they perceive their place in the family is an outcome of their subconscious which is molded and shaped by their early life in home culture. The prescribed role of a caring, selfless mother and a dutiful, obedient wife is carried out by both willingly and unquestioningly (Hidier 19, 21: Ali 205).

Ethnicity and culture not only exert its influence upon individual's own consciousness but also through external factors such as close knit social fabric. Whether it is the Bangladeshi community in *Brick Lane* or the Indian community in *Born confused*, it becomes a means of propagating the cultural norms. *Brick Lane* depicts this phenomenon quite evidently and it is mostly the females who are shown responsible for making the community a very close knit fabric (Patel 264). They keep themselves well

informed about each other's lives by gossiping which Razia calls the "Bangla sport" (Ali 125). In fact the reader is kept in touch with what's going on in the Bangladeshi community by showing Mrs. Islam and Razia discussing, analyzing and often times criticizing the actions of Sorupa or Jorina or any other female in the community. They do this in front of others thereby creating a fear of social criticism and isolation in case anyone deviates from the social norm. The fear and apprehension which society is capable of creating can be well perceived through Nazneen's sentiments when she feels guilty about her affair with Karim, the young boy who brings sewing orders for her (Ali 391). This aspect is less evident in *Born Confused* but by no means totally absent. As the story progresses, Dimple, Shilpa's daughter, is pleased to find Indian students' community in a club. She gains her sense of cultural pride, self-confidence and belongingness through this community. It shows that being from the same place and sharing a culture is a source of strength not only for the first generation but also for the second generation female immigrants (Ramji 232). In both the above mentioned instances it is to be noted that the immigrant society considers females to be the sustainers of cultural norms and values (Patel 255) therefore the choices for these women become tough as compared to their male counterparts. Community influence goes a long way in ensuring ethnic and cultural perpetuation even among immigrants who are at a new place.

Ethnicity and culture are also to be blamed for being the root cause of stereotypes which define the south Asian immigrant females to the general Western audience even before they have a chance to present themselves (Puwar 21). Stereotypes affect identity formation process of the immigrant females. References to Ethnicity are made by the foreign inhabitants whenever an encounter with someone from south Asian

population happens. The foreign society in which these immigrant females have to find a foothold is not a neutral receptive zone. Rather it is charged with pre-assumed notions and theories with regard to south Asian notions of femininity. For example when Dimple's complexion is criticized as dung colored or her braids are mocked at and when a Sikh student, Jimmy Trilok Singh at Dimple's school is made fun of for having greasy hair beneath the turban (Hidier 3), it all shows the prejudices western audience contains for south Asians. In this scenario the efforts of the younger generation at westernization can be well understood. And as Lourenco and Cachado observe, they adopt western style dressing, feel shy of their own cultural norms and symbols because they are highlighted and made fun of among their peers (Hidier 4). Among the first generation, racial and cultural prejudice results in social isolation. Despite the personal efforts to fit-in on part of immigrant females like Nazneen, Shilpa, Razia and Jorina, one finds a sense of social isolation prevalent throughout the novels (Ali 310). They are shown as if in a small native community or cubicle of their small family circuits. No mention of any white society around is ever made. Even if there is, it is described as something alien and unimportant to the lives of the south Asian women (Ali 182). The reasons might be internal inhibitions or external prejudices; or may be both. But none of the protagonists in both the novels have any real friendly social communication with any member of the white society. The reason for this social isolation of the south Asians by the foreign inhabitants can be a particular ethnic image prescribed to them by the general white academia as being passive, culturally controlled, subjugated beings (Puwar 20-22). Therefore it becomes increasingly difficult for the south Asian immigrant females to make themselves known as other than what the literary practices have presented them to be. They have to strive a

great deal and fight not only with themselves but also with the outside society in order to turn their image into an active, independent being.

The white academia usually makes references to the south Asian women in ethnocentric and pathological terms (Puwar 12). They are looked upon through the lens of the western values which often present them as passive, subjugated, rather enslaved by the cultural norms in which patriarchy reigns supreme. This point of view is prevalent to some extent in the depiction of south Asian immigrant characters and they are presented as threatened by the British norms and values and afraid of its impact on themselves as well as on their children. However the lives of Nazneen and Shilpa reveal a situation somewhat different to the passive picture painted by the white academia in the minds of the general public. In actuality it has been depicted that they hold the power to bond the family together. In both the families it is the mother/wife who is the central figure (Hussain 22). She is the one who brings fathers and their daughters closer to each other. It is the figure of the mother who is seen making an effort at navigating between the western values that are influencing the children, and the traditional norms of the husbands as does Nazneen (Ali 205). The importance of their role as a home maker is acknowledged and appreciated by their husbands as well as the daughters for example Chanu gives expression to these sentiments towards the end of the novel when he calls it a stroke of luck that he married a homely woman like Nazneen (Ali 297). The centrality of their position in the home is independent of any economic contribution or patriarchal terms and conditions. This fact yet again questions the assumed universality of the white feminists' claims regarding notions of emancipation, free will and subjugation.

Among the discourses influencing the gender ideology of the south Asian immigrants, religion holds a prominent position. It becomes an important means for both Nazneen and Shilpa in determining the course of conduct they ought to follow and the role they ought to be playing in the house (Puwar 52). Religion also predetermines the nature of male-female relationship whether it is in the form of husband/wife or father/daughter. The liability to maintain the relationship is more upon women than men which is felt acutely by the women, for instance Nazneen feels 'walking through a field of snakes' whenever she has to act as an intermediary between Channu and the girls; the stress of responsibility ultimately brings nervous breakdown (Ali 205). Religion is closely interlinked with culture and these first generation females carry it as a cultural baggage (Ahmad 43). In Brick Lane for instance, Nazneen's mother has been depicted as an average Bangladeshi woman governed by the rules of society and religion. What she believes in and teaches to her children is "If God wanted us to ask questions, He would have made us men" (Ali 80). Her husband often remarks on her conduct by saying that she comes from a family of saints. The statement is partly ironic as his purpose in calling her a saint is to refer to her utter passivity, the constant habit of weeping in the face of difficulties, uncomplaining attitude in response to her husband's infidelity and a total subjugation to the phenomenon of fate (Ali 15). Society considers such a woman religiously pious and a role model for other females. Nazneen's mother suppresses her inner wishes, anger and the urge to retaliate so much that at one point she loses control of her sensible self; but instead of understanding the psychological fissure, society diagnoses her to be possessed by spirits (Ali 15). This utmost self-sacrifice and suppression ultimately leads her to commit suicide. She is a symbol of all those women

who are socially and religiously pressurized. Naturally she imparts the same character traits to her daughters. The elder daughter Nazneen accepts it, while the younger daughter Hasina retaliates and goes on the way of her own will (Ali 16). Strangely enough, in the end Nazneen is the one to negotiate and relieve herself from the strong hold of culturally trimmed notion of religion to some extent while Hasina considers her deviation from religion to be the cause of all her misfortunes. In both of these instances, Religion dictates total acceptance of fate.

The factor which marks Nazneen's experience apart from that of Hasina is their perception of religion. With the passage of time, religion takes a stronger hold on Hasina as her guilt consciousness regarding the use of free will leaves her totally destroyed. The failure or inability to make right decisions for herself leads her to rely upon religious discourse for refuge. It is evident from the sort of language she uses and the number of times she refers to God and the topic of sin and virtue in her letters towards the end of the novel (Ali 146, 220, 269, 334). It is noticeable here that religion is not what she learns on her own through the holy books or directly from some scholar, instead it is the religion that society molds, shapes and presents before her. Culture and religion are intermixed due to which religion becomes indistinct from culture and loses its distinct character. For instance it is assumed as a religious norm that the girl must obey her father's orders in her marriage (Ali 16, 17). So when Hasina marries after her own heart, she has to flee from home in fear of social persecution. In response to that her father's honour killing is deemed justified. His effort at stalking and killing her goes unquestioned and even approved by society (Ali 16). As the time progresses and the adverse circumstances befall upon Hasina, her guilt consciousness at retaliating from social norms forces her to

incorporate the culture-religious mix into her mind more strongly. For Hasina, religion is culture and vice versa which is totally inseparable and indisputable. In fact one finds that the religion she has been accustomed to, is a reinterpreted form which is heavily prejudiced in favour of patriarchal domination.

On the other hand Nazneen in the comparatively free environment of the foreign culture, becomes aware of the disputability of both religion and culture. After the affair with Karim, which is a manifestation of her total disobedience to religious and cultural rules, she expects the heavens to fall on her and the society to be severely critical of her misdeed (Ali 299, 341). Contrary to her expectations she learns that circumstances remain in her control. She learns that an individual can live in an alternate manner even if she does not follow the set cultural norms. This episode is important as it helps her in realizing the power she holds and the effectiveness of her free will. When she takes control of herself and accepts her individuality, she even deserts Karim and returns to her family life (Ali 452). She learns not to care about social criticism and thus learns to differentiate between private and public life. Her experience teaches her that religion is also a discourse liable to interpretation and that in her private life she can choose the aspects to follow or even not to follow altogether. With this change in attitude, the whole discourse of fate-bound feminism that her mother had so laboriously taught her loses control and she turns out to be a woman who has the courage to question the most influential of discourses such as religion.

Back in Bangladesh both Nazneen and Hasina are taught to accept fate, which one notices is equal to the obedience of existing social order in which mostly patriarchal

structures reign supreme. The discourse of fate is often times used as an apparatus to control the females and keep them under prevalent social order. Mrs. Islam's struggle to get Nazneen's daughter admitted to her madrassa is a fine example of this fact (Ali 197). Even her name is emblematic of the connection that society builds between the discourse of fate, religion and social obedience. Her real aim is to keep Channu and her family under her financial and social control and for this purpose she uses the means of religious education. She does so as she knows that people tend to accept anything in the name of religion. This line of thought is also strengthened by the fact that it is mostly the women who resort to religion for finding a sense of direction. They follow the rights and rituals for guidance and comfort. Whereas the males (whether it be Channu, Nazneen's father, Mr. Azad or any other male in the immigrant community) are independent of any such obligations. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen is seen praying and reciting the Holy Quran. The strong faith in religion and blind acceptance is not just to be found in Muslim community. In *Born Confused*, Shilpa keeps all sorts of gods in almost every corner of the house (Born Confused). Not only Shilpa but also Mr. RohitBhai Lala is seen giving offerings to their various deities at home (Hidier 236). Mr. RohitBhai Lala also tries to take his daughter to their religious gatherings, as for him it is the only means of gaining peace and prosperity particularly amidst the mayhem of the multicultural confusion they are facing.

Complete subjugation to the phenomenon of fate faces a set back as the time lapses and exposure increases. The women tend to become increasingly critical. The response of Nazneen and Shilpa also evolves as their perception changes with the change in circumstances. For example in the early years of migration Nazneen resorts to offering prayers and recitation of the Holy Quran (Ali 51). It becomes her sole means of guidance.

Slowly and gradually she begins to listen to reason. There arises a conflict between personal whim and religious obligations (Ali 302). The conflict would never have risen in the native country under the continuous surveillance of the society. It is perhaps the freedom of the foreign society which gives opportunity for contradictory thoughts to arise. Eventually there comes a time when Nazneen starts questioning her religion and culture. It was a moment in her journey towards finding her free will. At some point during the process she thwarts every commandment and rule issued by religion and culture in order to assert her free will. This is basically her way of realizing her power to say No to any sort of authority (Ali 10). Similarly in *Born Confused* for Shilpa in the beginning religion represents the invisible ray of hope. It is to the gods that she and her husband look forward to for better monetary condition, general well-being and in particular their daughter's marriage. Though their emotions regarding religion remain the same throughout the novel but it is significant to note that they too become more self-relying as the novel progresses. They seem even a little sceptic to the basic principles of religion. It is depicted in their behavior towards Kavita's bisexuality which they accept and react to quite liberally (Hidier 312). Both the females tend to evolve in their behavior towards religion. They turn from passive followers into critical individualists (Khan 466).

Any discussion as to the social status and identity of the south Asian immigrants in the foreign community will be incomplete without considering the economic factor (Hussain 23). Even a brief overview of the lives of the immigrants portrayed in both the novels reveals that their financial position plays a major role in the process of settlement. For example in *Born Confused*, the family of RohitBhai Lala is comparatively well settled therefore they have access to the middle class white society. They are capable of

sending their daughter to a school where there are only two Indians in the whole school because the institute is for the upper middle class white society (Hidier 3). One notices occasional interaction with the white Americans around and a considerable sense of life satisfaction in family. But the family of Channu and their fellows in the Brick lane are working class people, doing menial jobs. Their economic activities are limited to their own community for instance Mrs. Islam who runs a money lending business among Bangladeshis (Ali 28) or Razia who works at a garment factory, or Jorina who tries to establish a beauty parlor. The working class immigrants are placed at the lower rung of social status and one does not see any white society around them.

As economy plays a vital role, there is to be found a greater tendency among first generation females towards gaining economic independence (Raghuram 71). Eventually women like Nazneen and Razia start participating in the larger economic cycle. This economic activity provides an opportunity to the women in particular to step outside their small ethnic circuits and take part in larger economic cycles. Women from working class like Nazneen, Razia and Jorina find it unavoidable to take part practically in order to better the living standards of the family and this step becomes their first connection with the foreign community. For instance Channu's job satisfaction remains to the minimal and ultimately he is forced to take help from his wife, Nazneen. She starts as a low paid, home tailor. Similarly Razia, Nazneen's friend, is also forced to become a home-tailor because after the death of her husband she has to take care of her children. And the number of women entering labor market keeps on increasing. Their objective is to support the family and work for children (Ali 187, 189). The economic participation brings greater sense of freedom and individuality for both Nazneen and Razia (Ali 94,

Raghuram 76). It is also evident that work does not become a clash between the family members, nor do Nazneen and Razia tend to walk over their familial duties in order to attain freedom. Both Nazneen and Razia live and work hard for the sake of their home and children. But one thing is for sure that with economic independence comes a sense of the changeability of the self and an awareness of new possibilities (Ali 187).

Another challenging factor which forces the first generation immigrant females to break free of small social circuits and expand their vision is the need to develop psychological compatibility with their ever advancing and adapting children (Ali 74). Mothers are shown to be more sensitive to this issue than the fathers. Nazneen for instance is more aware of the language shift her daughters are going through or the ideological difference with their father that is being increased as the exposure with the outside world gets increased (Ali 385). The need of the children to fit in among their white peers is better understood by Razia or Nazneen or Mrs. Azad rather than their fathers. Perhaps this is the reason why Mother-daughter relationship has often been focused upon by the diaspora critics. They look for any possible fissures and disruptions among the two generations which might hint at any psychological incompatibility (Hussain 27). Yet the analysis of the novels reveals that the mother-daughter relationship is portrayed as a strong bond. Almost all the mothers depicted in the novels (Nazneen, Shilpa, Razia, and Mrs. Azad etc.) are quite empathetic and encouraging to their daughters. Even if they don't fully agree, they take on a considerate stance towards their daughters' changing preferences (Hidier 19-21). All of the mothers encourage speaking of English language, accept the western style dressing, and recognize their daughters' desire to fit into the society which the youngsters consider their own. The relationship

between mothers and daughters is flexible and based on mutual trust and respect. That is the reason second generation females like Shahana and Dimple are closer to their mothers. The acceptance on the part of the older generation to the ways and manners of the younger generation might be taken as a reflection of their own desire to become a part of the new society. It shows that the first generation of immigrant females is open minded and have the courage to take an active stance in the process of settlement in a new place.

Often times it becomes quite difficult for the first generation to maintain balance between the restrictions of the home culture (which their husbands desire) and liberties of the foreign culture (which the youngsters demand). Along with the desire to get settled, there is always a concern among the older generation regarding influence of foreign culture on the future of the kids. The fear has often been voiced by Channu (Ali 182), Dr. Azad (Ali 86) and even by the Indian community in Born Confused (Hidier 86). Trust on the younger lot, if taken too far, leads to such catastrophic situation as Razia's son becoming a drunkard and Mrs. Azad's daughter taking the liberties provided by her mother to the extremities where she becomes a blind follower of the white teenage culture (Ali 111)

The increased freedom and liberty of the foreign culture is no doubt of great attraction for the first generation females when it is compared to the burden of responsibilities of the home culture. The women in the novels are depicted going through a gradual transformation of thought about the foreign place and culture. There has been a change of feelings in Nazneen and Shilpa towards the newly found situation. Right after immigration, these females experienced a sense of isolation as they lacked the emotional

and social support which was available in their native social fabric. For instance the only activity of Nazneen after immigration is to keep watching outside the window, or the house hold activities. Similarly for Shilpa her life revolves inside her house. But this initial isolation and loneliness gave way to an increased sense of freedom (because they had to maintain their own homes), increased decision making power (as there were no elders), and more importantly a sense of confidence and trust in the relationship between husband and wife. For Nazneen her work paves way for these qualities to be induced and for Shilpa the encouragement of Radha, her college friend, becomes the initiatory step. Both these protagonists evolve gradually to be the self-reliant, enthusiastic beings that they become at the end of novel (Hussain 69). These positive character traits are definitely the outcome of the third space provided in the new spatial location which provides them an opportunity to revisit their sense of self and being.

Education is a powerful tool which determines their place and proves helpful in attaining the position they seek to achieve in the foreign society (Puwar 14). The reason why Nazneen and Razia in *Brick Lane* find it hard to adapt to the environment around is because they are uneducated and thereby less confident that they would be able to tackle the unknown. On the other hand both Shilpa and Radha in *Born Confused* are educated women, doctors by profession. Radha is still practicing but Shilpa has abandoned for the sake of her family. The easy settlement of Radha and Shilpa in *Born Confused* proves that education is source of power for the south Asian immigrant women. Its importance is felt direly by the mothers as they all encourage their children to acquire it at any expense. The females put themselves in hard circumstances but back up their daughters to get educated (Ali 189). Here it is important to point out that Education means a system of

imparting information. Information is always selected and presented to suit the aims of the state and society. So the role that education is playing in molding the psyche of the second generation is yet another prominent aftermath of migration and cultural intersection in the third space. It often takes form of psychological incompatibility among children and parents which is in itself a difficult issue to resolve (Ali 179, 182). Related with educational syllabus is the importance of the language in which education is being imparted.

Language not only acts as a means of communication but also a specific outlook (Hussain 26). Channu draws attention to this fact when he points towards the subject matter being taught to his daughters (Ali 178). He does not approve of the one sided picture children are provided with at school. Language may also serve as a bridge through which differences can be understood and breached. It is a fact that English is used by the immigrant females as a means of getting greater freedom in communication and in adjusting quickly. The problem with majority of working class first generation of immigrant females is that they are unfamiliar with English. Razia and Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, being illiterate have a hard time adjusting and understanding, whereas Radha and Shilpa in *Born Confused* have this advantage which helps them in quick settlement. It is this realization which leads women like Nazneen and Razia to acquire it as soon as possible. They not only encourage their daughters to be fluent but also strive themselves. Yet it is also notable that despite the importance these women attach to learning English, they are always more at home and comfortable in their native tongue. Native tongue is used within family to retain traditional touch in familial relationships as does Shilpa whenever she meets with someone from her community (Hidier 114).

The Black feminists have often strove to bring about the ideological differences between the white feminists and those from south Asian origin. The lives of both Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and Shilpa in *Born Confused* are a living testimony to this fact. Black feminists hold that the notions of freedom and individualism celebrated among the west are not an ideal for the black women to follow rather they think it as selfish and irresponsible (Hussain 22). The reaction of both Nazneen and Shilpa is that of marked inclination towards the native cultural value and a dislike towards the ideals of the west. The technique of compare and contrast of the characters has been used by the authors to reveal this fact. In *Born Confused*, Shilpa is put in contrast to Gwyn's (friend of Dimple) mother. Gwyn's mother stands for the western ideals of female independence, individuality and the right to pleasure. Her ways of life turns her into a desolate, lonely, self-indulgent drunkard whose husband left her with their daughter and moved with some-body else. In contrast, Shilpa chooses to be a loving and caring mother and wife because she prioritizes her family over personal whims and desires which sometimes borders on self-neglect. So one might say that the choice she makes and the way of life she chooses is made being fully aware of the options and consequences. For her the cultural values of bonding and sacrifice hold meaning which is generally referred to as female subjugation in the white academia. Shilpa gives way to her individuality by starting dance practice again, something which she enjoys and which is totally acceptable in her culture (Hidier 409).

In the case of Nazneen there is a brief spell in which she follows the way of all pleasure and all flesh when she indulges in an affair with Karim. But later she realizes that this is not the type of freedom she wished for. Later on she reverts to her family life

wholeheartedly. She reverts back to the way of cultural values of home and family. In her very early days of migration her first encounter with a white female is through tattoo lady. She is depicted as a solitary, fat, drunkard woman who lives perhaps on social assistance provided by the government (Ali 18). Her poverty seems to be the only reason for her being in that area allocated for the economically downtrodden, third world immigrants like the Bangladeshis. She is solitary in her flat, always sitting by the window where Nazneen first saw her. She does not seem to have anybody in relatives or friends. What Nazneen feels for her is not a sense of inspiration but rather sympathy and pity (Ali 130). She definitely does not idealize the way this white epitome of individuality, self-indulgence and freedom is living her life. Her other encounter with western ideals for female emancipation is through the over powering and dominating Mrs. Azad and her teenage daughter. Both are in line with the western ways of living both socially as well as ideologically. They dress and behave as any other white woman might have. The dissatisfaction of Mr. and Mrs. Azad warns Nazneen of this type of living. Not only does she choose the cultural mode of living for herself but also encourages her daughters to do the same, at least in certain crucial areas of life if not completely. It depicts that the values which the white feminists hold dear and fight for are not necessarily of the same value for the south Asian immigrant women.

The concept of patriarchy in relation to south Asian community has always been an object of criticism for the white Academia. The analysis of the novels under discussion subverts the concept through such characters as Rohitbhai Lala, Channu and Mr. Azad. All three are not only very cooperative to their wives but also aware of the central role these women play in the family. All three psychologically adhere to the past

by proudly reviving culture (songs, rituals, dress code, eating habits, family setup pattern) and informing their daughters of the culture specific knowledge. All three take up the financial responsibility of the family yet their aim is not to stay permanently. Homing desire is found in greater intensity in males as compared to their female counterparts (Ali 32). This desire takes form of an increased interest in home culture. For instance Channu is often shown lecturing the girls to follow their home culture and be proud of its history (Ali 182). In the same manner Rohitbhai Lala also wishes to teach Dimple about their culture and he is very happy when Dimple seems inclined to learn (Hidier 238). He takes pains to look for a suitable Indian boy so that the future of her daughter can be secured. He keeps his link with the deities and follows the cultural rituals at home (Hidier 236). Mr. Azad regrets his inability to go back and the fact that now is the point of no return (Ali 108). This strong bent among the males towards roots often shows forth in their attitude with their daughters. Though Rohitbhai is polite in enforcing his desires, Channu becomes more aggressive with his daughters. Father-daughter relationship in *Brick Lane* is very much strained; even in *Born Confused* both Rohitbhai and Dimple feel that without Shilpa in between, it becomes hard for both of them to communicate intimately. It again brings the same fact to the fore that mothers are of major importance for the unity of the family.

On the whole one notices that Nazneen and Shilpa as representatives of the first generation of immigrant females have initiated a critical dialogue with the overpowering discourses like culture, religion and class. In their attitude one finds a greater desire to fit in, to be independent and to be free. Theirs is a mediated identity where they strive to

keep both culture and modernism intact. Whatever course they adopt, their major concern always remains their children. Thus the solidarity of the family remains uncompromised.

Chapter Four

Identity Formation of the Second Generation of Female Settlers

The following chapter aims to explore the lived experience of the second generation of south Asian female diaspora. Shahana as depicted in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and Dimple Rohitbhai Lala as portrayed in *Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier act as representatives of the second generation of immigrant females in USA and UK. Their lives are explored at personal as well as social level in order to observe the transformation that takes place among the youth as they negotiate between home and host society. The effect of the third space provided to the immigrant communities with its alleged creativity and liberty shall be discerned. The process of identity construction among the younger generation in the face of cultural differentiation and socio-political biasedness shall be studied and the factors responsible for cultural modification among the younger generation will be highlighted. The cultural as well as the foreign factors influencing the sense of self and identity of the second generation immigrant females shall be brought to the fore.

Shahana, Nazneen's daughter in *Brick Lane* and Dimple Lala, Shilpa's daughter in *Born Confused* stand prominent as focal representatives of the second generation of female immigrants. Along with these two major characters there are a host of other minor female characters, for instance Shifali, Burqa clad girls in *Brick Lane* and Kavita, Sabina in *Born Confused* whose actions and thoughts allow the reader to have a glimpse of the

sense of identity second generation is forming for themselves. Almost all of these girls are yet in their teens but they display a marked difference of behavior from their mothers. For example Shahana in *Brick Lane* belongs to Bangladeshi Muslim community and is of working class background, while Dimple's parents in *Born Confused* are middle class qualified professionals and belong to Hindu community. The cultural, religious and social standing of these two families has a prominent role to play in the identity crisis second generation females has to face.

The most prominent feature of the existence of second generation females is the fact that they are exposed to two varying cultures right from early childhood and that becomes the locus of identity crisis for them(Pandurang 92-93). At home they observe their parents who have been anxious to retain the cultural norms; outside home is the foreign culture which is reinforced through association with peers, school environment and media. It can be easily observed that the influence of the host society upon second generation females is far greater than the home culture although they are somehow marked apart by the western community due to the color of their skin, their ethnic and religious background.

The second generation tends to own the foreign culture more than they do that which is followed by their parents at home. Their bent of behavior towards the western society becomes apparent particularly through the way they decide to appear before others. Dressing as an activity is and has always been a politicized activity, emblematic of the way of life one prefers for oneself (Mani 121). In the novels under discussion the dressing adopted by Shahana in *Brick Lane* and Dimple in *Born Confused* clearly reveals

their preference for supposedly modern style apparel, something which they see around them. Both of these girls love to wear the western style skirts and jeans (Ali 180: Hidier 21) the prominent feature of which is that they are too tight fitted or revealing. For the south Asian community both at home and abroad, dress trends generate from the religious philosophy. In Islam as well as Hinduism a dress is supposed to cover the body curves, and the western style apparel preferred by Dimple and Shahana does exactly the opposite. Due to this very basic difference in philosophy of dressing, both of these girls have to face censure from their parents. For instance whenever Shahana wants to wear jeans, Channu is there to remind them of the Bangla culture. Similarly Dimple is being criticized by her mother for the dress Gwyn gives her as a gift. Their fashion sense also contradicts cultural norms such as Shahana's wish to have her lip pierced (Ali 292) is an act radically different from the cultural expectations that is why she is not permitted to adopt it. Both the girls reject the traditional salwar kameez or even sari which they see their mothers wearing all the time. As soon as they get a chance to decide their own dressing, they immediately discard their traditional wardrobe. Dimple's mother even remarks that she should wear something nice and Indian before the guests, not something out of the second hand stuff she has collected in the name of fashion. The reason why Shahana or Dimple prefers to wear even second hand western attire is because for them the traditional dressing is a part of the past which they don't share with their elders (Hussain 30). For the youngsters, the present and substantial is always more real than the past and the imagined.

Their friendships are no more ethnic bound as was their mothers'. For example Dimple Rohitbhai Lala prefers to be friends with Gwyn, a European blonde girl, instead

of children from her own community like Jimmy Trilok Singh or even Karsh. For Dimple, Gwyn is admirable in every aspect as she stands for the western ideals and norms of behavior and beauty (Hidier 35). Gwyn is symbolic of the star-worshiping Hollywood culture, the sleek and slender blonde beauty, the independent teenager who is a source of awe and admiration for south Asian teenagers like Dimple. That is why she unconsciously compares herself to Gwyn and she feels shy of everything belonging to her ethnicity including her south Asian physique. She perpetually tries to attain the slim posture that European beauty cult promotes and Gwyn symbolizes (Hidier 19).

The reason of such a radical difference between the thinking of the children and their parents is because the perception of the concept of home has undergone a change (Virinder 30). The definition of home for the second generation is quite different from their elders. Where the first generation considers the native country to be home, for the youngsters it is something of a myth. The second generation cannot relate to the past life of their parents. For Shahana and Bibi who have never been to Bangladesh, the country is like any other country in the world. They cannot feel its importance with the same intensity as do their parents. Both the girls cannot understand the homing desire of Channu which he so enthusiastically explicates. Both the girls share a common disinterest but specifically it is Shahana who gives voice to these sentiments openly from time to time (Ali 469). Shahana feels repelled at the idea of going to Bangladesh which for Channu and Nazneen is "home" (Ali 216). Not only Shahana but also Bibi who is merely five years of age is uninterested to know and learn about Bangladesh, and the small amount she knows is learnt in fear of physical punishment from their father. Similarly Dimple who even has some occasional visits to India in her childhood remembers it only

as an extension of her relation to dada Jee. It is because Shahana or Bibi or Dimple does not have a first-hand conscious experience of their parents' native country. India or Bangladesh is no more a native country to them. They consider the foreign society to be their home. The younger generation no longer views themselves as aliens or temporary immigrants. Rather they consider themselves a part of the wider society as Dimple's arguments with her mother reveals in which she insists on being called an American rather than an Indian (Hidier 21). For the second generation the place of settlement is home.

As a result of the change in perception of home, the ensuing challenge for the second generation also differs in nature from that of first generation (Hussain 27). Their challenge is not so much to accept as to be accepted. Their efforts are concentrated upon fitting in completely and asserting their belongingness which is denied to them by a large faction of the society. Their affiliations is so strong that both Shahana and Dimple act defensively whenever their fathers say something against the foreign culture or pass any negative comment regarding any sort of adverse effects on the teenagers (Ali 180, 216). The protest and defensiveness of the younger lot shows their sense of belongingness to the place where they are born and bred. Dimple's or Shahana's insistence on being called an American or a British is as strong as their parents' desire to be identified as true Indians or Bangladeshis.

Due to the fact that their affiliations are different from their parents their reactions have also altered as compared to that of their mothers. The invisibility and isolation their mothers faced due to their ethnic difference when they migrated is totally unacceptable to

the younger lot. The cause is that while the older generation of females had a past to relate to and a cultural norm of life to follow, the younger lot cannot relate to it with same zeal (Pandurang 19). Right from their early childhood the second generation is exposed to two naturally different ways of life. The reason why they show greater inclination towards the host society is because they want a sense of belongingness. For them the norms and standards of white/western society are as natural and unquestionable as the culture of the native country for their mothers. That is why they compare themselves to the white society in every aspect.

The bent of behavior the second generation of females show towards the host society is in point of fact a defense mechanism in response to the sense of inferiority forged into their psyche due to continuous comparison with the wider European community. It is an effort at getting free of the stereotyped images, and a desire of mingling with the common masses (Puwar 20). Despite their personal sense of belongingness they find the society around not quite in accordance with their expectations. The white majority considers them as separate entities, not quite the same as they themselves. This attitude makes itself apparent when one notices that like their mothers they have also a limited society around which usually consists of members of their own community. For example in *Born Confused* there are only two Indian students in the whole school and both are criticized for their ethnicity; Jimmy Singh for his turban (Hidier 3) and Dimple for her braids and complexion (Hidier 3). When the second generation faces this social discrimination, it is quite understandable why they wish to get merged and lose their ethnic identity. The peer criticism overpowers the parental persuasions. Similarly in Brick Lane, Bibi and Shahana have Bangladeshi friends. Their

social gatherings and festivals are mostly culture based and is attended by only a specific society. They are not shown going out with friends, mingling with the larger community much or participating in something which is inter-racial by scope. Still Shahana wishes to live in London and be a part of it. There might be two factors responsible for this partial social isolation of the Bangladeshi second generation Muslims like Shahana, Bibi and Shifali. Either they themselves are shy and cautious of mixing with the white majority, or that the society around takes them as still a temporary population which does not belong to the place permanently that's why there is a reserve between the two groups of people.

Analysis of the social lives of the second generation females show that social prejudice affects both generations (Puwar 24). Yet there is a marked difference of response between the two. Where first generation women, like Razia and Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and Shilpa in *Born Confused* shrink away and remain limited to their own kind of people, the second generation females like Shahana, Shifali in *Brick Lane*, Dimple Lala and Kavita in *Born Confused* are not afraid or hesitant. This we see apparent in Shahana and her friend's effort at staying behind when they run away from home because of the prospect of Shahana been taken by Channu to Bangladesh (Ali 469), or Bibi voicing out loud that it is her wish to stay here and not to return (Ali 216). It is also evident in Dimple's efforts at synchronizing with the world around by adopting similar appearance and social norms. It is for the same reason that she detests the idea of meeting with the suitable boy Karsh that his parents have arranged for her. The boldness with which Kavita and Sabina accept and openly declare their different sexuality also shows the extreme version of rapidly transforming psycho-sexual orientation heavily influenced by the western norm (Kawale 181). And also the boldness of decision by Dimple to make

herself acknowledged through her photos making use of her ethnicity reveals a growing courage to stand out for her birth right publicly, that is her identity. This attitude of acceptance of challenge and persistence in ambition to get accepted is what marks the second generation apart from the first generation. Where the first generation shrinks back and forms close knit societies in response to social isolation, the second generation advances ahead and accepts the challenges.

There is a tendency among second generation to group together to find answers to their complexities when they are faced with social discrimination and prejudices (Munshi 419). The locus of the group usually becomes the same discourse because of which they are marked apart. In *Brick Lane* Karim, the Burqa clad girls, the Questioner and the rest of youngsters form a group, Bengal Tigers, with an aim to retaliate to the accusations laid on them by white society on the basis of religion and culture (Ali 239). Though the cause seems to be a universal one but the very name of the club betrays its ethnic roots. The ethnic touch in the name of the group also tells something of the plurality of identities which exists in the term 'south Asian'. Most of the members of this group are Bangladeshis. The absence of any Pakistani, Indian, or any other south Asian member shows that there exists an invisible divide among the immigrant societies of these countries (Lowe 132). The group is formed to fight against the social discrimination and religious prejudices which the youngsters face in the wider society and particularly by the Lion Hearts (a group of white boys) in that vicinity. It forces them to find strength from group solidarity (Ali 257, 258). In the same way, Dimple finds a sense of belongingness when she meets the likes of her own in the cultural club, HotPot where Karsh (the suitable Indian boy and family friend) works as a DJ. She is amazed and also relieved to

see so many 'American Born Confused Desi (Hidier 86) like herself who are striving to make sense of their place in the world (Hidier 337). The term "American Born Confused Desi" has been explained in the novel as a person who belongs to two cultures simultaneously. An immigrant who is born in America so he considers himself as American but is south Asian by origin and this fact rules his identity in many ways. Young immigrants like Dimple, Karsh and Jimmy Singh fit into this category.

When they gather in a group, it is an opportunity to share their experiences (Seecharran 400). The confusion results in the process of reinterpretation and reorientation of both the cultures. Especially the symbols of home culture are reinterpreted and adapted to suit the needs of the place of settlement (Bhabha 38). Both the cultures are present in HotPot (The club for Indian teenagers in *Born Confused*). But the two cultures are not presented and preserved as pure or separate; rather everywhere one finds hybrid displays. The most obvious of which is the drink being served there, the Punch. Sabina explains that Punch is a Hindi term for a mixture of five different drinks. She explains how the term was borrowed and became a part of the Western culture. The Music which is played is neither solely Indian nor totally Western; it's neither pure classical nor popular. All of the above music types are borrowed from both the cultures and fused into each other by Karsh. The resultant symphony is enjoyed by all, including Gwyn who is a European and does not understand a thing of Indian language or culture. At this point it can be deduced that second generation youngsters are at an advantage as they are in touch with both music forms. It is only an Indian DJ who can produce a fusion of music so enchanting and experimental in nature because he has the knowledge of both. It is only at this point in this club that Dimple embraces her identity confusion. The sense

of group solidarity is felt by not just Dimple and Karsh but there are numerous others who come to the club for the same reason for example Kavita, Sabina, and Jimmy Trilok Singh. The club or its gatherings is an opportunity for all these youngsters to interact with their age fellows who are going through the same psychological transition as they themselves.

The efforts towards group solidarity are not just through small, unofficial organizations and clubs like Bengal Tigers or HotPot, there are some serious efforts as well which are made to find answers to perplexing questions regarding identity (Takhar 215). In *Born Confused* for instance, there is the mention of an official conference being held in a renowned university in New York which is particularly focused on south Asian identity (Hidier 240). That conference brings to the fore the psychological hotch potch which youngsters like Dimple face. It is here that she realizes that having dual affiliations can be a source of strength, and not merely inferiority complex. For Dimple the term 'south Asian' becomes a source of endearment, a place in empty space, a sense of belongingness (Hidier 240). Similarly in *Brick Lane* there are protests and group demonstrations in public by the boys of groups like Bengal Tigers (Ali 471). The cause of such an obvious voicing out of identity by the youngsters is aimed at two goals. First that second generation females like Dimple feel at odd in the foreign community even after full attempt and desire of adjustment. The identity of the second generation females gets completed when they incorporate both home and host cultures. Secondly, after personally accepting the fact that they cannot be either one or the other, but a hybrid, these youngsters move forward to assert their plural identity and demand equal rights from the white majority. As a result conflicts arise but it does not hamper Shahana or Dimple from

going forward and taking their rightful place. The second generation females initiate a struggle towards accepting plurality and changeability as the only norm which govern rapidly migrating societies today (Bhabha 37).

But it is also to be noted that group solidarity that the youngsters seek does not mean complete solidarity with the home culture. If a view of the lives of all these youngsters is taken, it can easily be seen that they neither accept the home culture completely nor reject it altogether. There is a mix and fix of this or that tradition that constitute their life experience. They embrace a little bit of both and that too in a transformed way, suited to their specific socio-economic situation (Khan 466). The hybrid formations take different manifestations. For instance it is depicted through the Indian-European mixed pop music being played at the club HotPot in *Born Confused*, the mixed style dressing of the club members (jeans with colourful cholis, rakhis with bracelets etc.), mixed style dancing (Bhangra with Break Dance), drinks being served there (Punch- a Europeanized Hindi drink) and even in the very concept of being a member of a cultural club (Hidier 155). For instance Karsh is a DJ but called DJGJ, a short form of Disk Jockey Gulab Jamun. Being a disk jockey is a particularly American Teenage thing but the name Gulab Jamun is a typical Hindi sweet, a mithai. The combination is not just limited to his name; the music played by him ranges from Lata Mungeshkar to Michael Jackson, all the oldies and latest of Hindi as well as English music (Hidier 157). He has a huge fan following especially by the second generation immigrant boys and girls and his philosophy of an international identity impresses them all. He is well aware of the modern pop culture but values traditional family setting and relations equally well. He respects and follows small Indian rituals, keeps the rules of

family duty and affiliation alive in him. Similarly in *Brick Lane* for instance Karim has never been to Bangladesh, also dresses up western style, does not know a thing about Bangladesh, he is even not conscious of true religious obligations (when he gets involved with an affair with Nazneen and remains guilt free about it). Despite all this he still wants to be the head of Bengal Tigers and actually runs it for cultural/religious cause which is integral for Bangla community. He even tries to learn Bangladeshi language from Nazneen and alters his dressing a little bit for the sake of claiming Bangladeshi group identity. Dimple in *Born Confused* though initially beseeching acceptance from the white community around by following Gwyn (Hidier 18) gradually develops an individuality which is part Indian part European. Indian in the sense that she accepts her parents beliefs and customs, follows it to some extent, takes pride in what she is by race and Indian legacy and then moves on to assert her individuality. She is European in that she considers that society to be her home and has the courage to give voice to her expectations and possession. She has acquired an attitude of acceptance to several of the customs which her parents have a hard time to accept. The second generation of immigrants are neither completely traditional nor complete Europeans, instead one might call them having hybrid identities (Bhabha 37, Pandurang 94).

An important reason for Dimple or Shahana to adopt hybrid identities is that even though they strive to be completely a part of western society but still they are subjected to stereotyping and discriminated on ethnic grounds. They do not want to be considered as mere immigrants by their peers but they also cannot risk being total rebels to the system their parents hold dear. Moreover the society does not let these girls forget their ethnic roots. It is in an effort to create a balance that they end up being part western style and

part cultural. For example in *Born Confused* Julian, a friend of Gwyn, gives voice to the generally held belief quite openly in words when he expects Dimple (whom he has just met) to give him a Kama Sutra experience (Hidier 48). In saying that, he is referring to the generally held belief among Europeans on the enhanced Indian female sexuality. The girl at the fashion store hints at Dimple being too fat for the trendy sleek pants (Hidier 18) which is obviously a direct hint at his Indian-ness. Gwyn often refers to Dimple's Indian-ness of wardrobe, culinary tastes, family traditions, and even thought (Hidier 31). As a result of this social criticism teenagers like Dimple get shy of their own heritage. It is evident in the incident where Gwyn takes Rakhis from Dimple, taking them as mere beautiful bracelets. Dimple's mother allows her to take them and she also tells the cultural meaning this piece of wrist band has, i.e. a rakhsha bandhan article which sisters tie on their brothers' arm. Gwyn is able to appreciate the philosophy but Dimple shrinks away from it. Ironically, she wants them back when they are appreciated by Gwyn (Hidier 31). It is as if she needs approval of a European for her own culture to embrace it. When the younger lot is subjected to this type of cultural stereotyping they either become totally western style like Mrs. Azad and her daughter (Ali 106, 111) or adopt a more mediated way, taking both foreign and home culture in a mixed fashion like Shahana or Dimple or Shifali. There might also be a smaller faction which adopts a totally reverse style, becoming strictly ethnic and religious just like the two burqa clad girls in *Brick Lane* (Ali 279).

The burqa clad girls and their enthusiasm to play active part in 'Bengal Tigers' speaks of the confidence and self-worth that the second generation females have acquired (Ali 285, Hussain 28). During one of the meetings of Bengal Tigers these girls are

criticized by a supposedly more religious of the boys for being wrong at joining the group which is supposed to be only for boys. This criticism is symbolic of the cultural thought which considers political activism to be the field fit for boys alone. It also speaks volumes of the gender differentiation prevalent in the religious discourse (Khan 470). The burqa clad girls persist in their demand to be equally treated, addressed and being given weightage same as the males. In doing that, they not only assert their political and social rights, but also question boldly the long held male interpretations of Religion (Ahmad 58). These girls not only have to strive against their own cultural values but also the prejudices prevalent in the foreign society. The white society takes the Hijab or Burqa as a symbol of patriarchal and religious domination. But in adopting specific attire these girls have found a way to give voice to their unique religious/cultural individuality. Their attire may look like the expression of religious fundamentalism but this is something which has been given a positive outlook (Hussain 28, Ahmad 56).

The Burqa clad girls not just represent ethnicity but more than that, they stand for religious fundamentalism, especially among Muslim women. It is of significance to note that as the novel progresses these girls improvise from hijab to burqa (Ali 279). The question would be of importance as to why the need for fundamentalism has risen. Answer might be found in the ongoing debate in the West about Islam being a source of imprisonment for the women. The backdrop is certainly the 9/11 incident which is also referred to in the novel *Brick Lane* (Ali 366-368). Social biasedness against the Muslims is given voice openly through pamphlets by the western group (Ali 257). The back lash is severe. Hijab of the girls are pulled off, there is a general unrest among white majority, Muslim communities are targeted (Ali 366-368). It is in this backdrop that the psyche of

the Muslim teenage women develops. Thus one might take the adoption of burqa by these girls as a defense mechanism. The difference of thought between immigrants and western scholarship brings to light the deeply buried difference of ideology between the two (Ahmad 52, 59). When the society tries to be severe on them for a discourse which is an essential part of their identity, some youngsters like those two girls stick to it more fervently (Ahmad 56). Some adopt the moderate way like Shahana or Shifali in *Brick Lane*. A few seek refuge by totally blending in the western society like Mrs. Azad and her daughter. It is to be noted that religion does not become a point of persecution for the members of other religions. For the Hindu family in *Born Confused* Religion is a personal matter which they might follow without any censure from the foreign community. The reason might be the liberal bent of mind the European society has and also the absence of any biasedness or conflict against Hinduism as is present against Islam.

What is common between Shahana in *Brick Lane* and Dimple in *Born Confused* as representatives of the younger lot is that they do not adhere to the religion as vehemently as their elders do. They are more prone towards taking guidance from societal norms than religious discourses. Exceptions occur as in the case of Kavita when she goes through an emotional trauma, but generally religion is limited to some rites and rituals (Hidier 354). Even a little skepticism is to be found among the youngsters in *Born Confused* as they consider lesbianism and transvestism quite normal (Kawale 181). There is no mention of any religious festival being celebrated either at domestic level or social level. It is also to be noted that inter-religious connections (among various immigrant communities) are rare in both of these novels. It seems as if the societies are formed on

ethnic as well as religious basis but the adherence to these particular philosophies have weakened or transformed over the time.

In some instances the steps taken by the second generation turn out to be extremely different from their ethnic or cultural or even religious norms. Particularly Gender debate is becoming intensely confusing as the youth deviates from religious and cultural values and embraces Western notions of gender. The fact that Kavita and Sabina are on lesbian partnership strikes no alarm bells for the elders in *Born Confused.* Lesbianism which is deemed inappropriate in Hindu religion as well as culture has been presented as something normal. Similarly transvestism has also been presented as something in fashion and admirable (Kawale 182). Zara, the dancing girl in HotPot is a publicly known she-male, has relationship with a boyfriend and this fact has become not just acceptable but appreciable for the second generation. Dimple's photo shoot of Zara turning from a boy into a girl is exhibited at the HotPot where a European magazine covers the story (Hidier 369).

Financial position is also responsible for the social orientation the younger lot attains (Raghuram 76). As Dimple's parents are middle class professionals they can afford to send her to a better school and take residence in a better area where she gets to know and befriend a few of the white school fellows. But her only European friend is Gwyn as both of them live in the same area and know each other since childhood. Shahana, Shifali or Bibi does not have the opportunity to befriend people other than their own community and the reason might be the humble financial background they come from. The urge for financial stability is found among all the immigrants and especially

the working class population like in Brick Lane (Pandurang 67). That is why Razia and Nazneen are shown working very hard to sustain themselves and their families. Though they get menial jobs in the beginning but their hopes are high which is depicted by the ending of the novel where Razia, Nazneen, and Jorina are shown working together to establish themselves as entrepreneur in clothing and fashion field. They even get help from their ethnic community's demands as they know their tastes better. Some of the immigrants like Mr. and Mrs. Azad work so hard to financially stabilize that they have to scarify their private and family lives. But overall it can be deduced by comparing Channu's family and that of Dr. Rohitbhai Lala's that prospects for the qualified and educated immigrants are brighter than for the unqualified. Finance even plays a role in the mutual relation among people belonging to the same country. Channu advises Nazneen only to keep in touch with 'respectable types' like Dr. Azad or Mrs. Islam. A closer look reveals that their importance in the eyes of Bangladeshi society is due to the financial affluence they enjoy as compared to people like Channu. Financial affluence is a rare luxury for the working class Bangladeshi immigrants like Channu's family.

Along with class consciousness, caste also plays a role in the relations among south Asian immigrants (Ramji 233). But this fact is of more value for the elders as Channu who considers himself superior to Sylheti's or Mr. and Mrs. Rohitbhai Lala whose favorite activity is to mark apart immigrant Indians from their language accents. They also take pride in their being Kashatrias-the tribe of the fighters- as Dimple's mother mentions it proudly to her at an occasion. It is because of the same caste and regional background that they consider Radha's son Karsh to be a suitable match to their daughter. But as far as the second generation is concerned, caste is not shown to be of

much value when they befriend each other. Even Dimple's decision to marry Karsh is based on psychological compatibility which she realizes by the end of the novel, and not due to his caste (Ramji 232)

In order to make up for the financial or ethnic weak points, education is being focused upon by the youngsters. The females are especially encouraged to get education (Puwar 14). Almost all the girls in both these novels are taking formal education. Trend is more towards modern scientific knowledge rather than traditional education like in madrassas or religious institutes (Ali 197). For instance Shifali is being sent to University (Ali 464) though Razia has to over burden herself with extra work for it. The first generation females like Razia or Nazneen or Shilpa are contributing greatly towards educating the young no matter how tough their own lives tend to become. It is perhaps a reflection of their own deprivations which they try to make up for in the form of their daughters (Hussain 26).

Education is directly linked to the mode of communication. Naturally the youngsters become more fluent in English even though they are mostly given an exposure of the native tongue at home (Hussain 26-27). Another reason they are more desirous than the elders to be fluent in foreign language is that they do not want to be pointed out among their peers (Ali 195: Hidier 03). But with language comes a whole system of persuasion of beliefs. That is why Channu blames the system of education for the distancing of his daughters from Bangla culture. He even is wary of supposed manipulation of historical facts by the modern education. That is why he forbids his daughters to speak English language. Contrary to Channu's attitude, Nazneen encourages

her daughters to be fluent in the foreign tongue, and even tries herself to learn it. The act of learning a foreign language can also relate to the desire to be a part of the community which speaks it. The increased desire in women as compared to men might be taken as an increased desire in women to settle in the host society.

In both the novels *Brick Lane* and *Born Confused*, mother-daughter relationship is shown to become stronger than the father-daughter relation. In particular in Brick Lane, fathers are symbolized by such characters as Channu, Mr. Azad and Razia's husband. Father-daughter relation is depicted for its possible psychological incompatibilities. Fathers stand for traditional ideals whereas the daughters propagate western ideals. Razia's husband and Mr. Azad are shown to have distanced themselves from their children to an extent where the children totally look up to their mothers for support and guidance. Also in the case of Channu one notices a flicker of the traditional fatherhood as he tries to make his daughters dutiful and obedient just like a girl is expected to be in south Asian communities. In his efforts, he forgets to be conversational and becomes dominant which results in a perpetual tension between Shahana and her father (Ali 193). In this scenario, it is Nazneen who constantly tries to be the bridge between the two. The difference between the fathers and their daughters depicted in the novels is of ideological nature. While the fathers try to establish obedience among their children, the girls want to be taken as adults and demand a serious discussion method (Ali 193). Adherence to two varying cultures becomes the root cause of conflict.

In contrast, mother-daughter relation is always depicted thriving and strengthening. Compromising and considerate nature of the mothers is the greatest factor

in this regard. For example it is Nazneen who decides to stay behind because her daughters do not wish to go to Bangladesh (Ali 472). It is she who takes stand against Channu. Similarly it is Razia who does personal hard work to establish a home in the foreign land for the better future of her children (Ali 189). Similarly in *Born Confused*, Shilpa acts as a bridge between Dimple and her father. It is she who brings Dimple closer to the cultural norms when she is going through identity confusion. It is she who brings Dimple out of the personal trauma which she faces, seeing Gwyn getting close to Karsh.

The relationship of the first generation of females and the second generation of females (Mother-daughter) is strong because the individuality, the strength of character, the efforts at fitting in among the European culture which is displayed by daughters are ideals of the first generation of females which they were unable to pursue for various reasons. By helping their daughters achieve their wishes, they indirectly fulfill their own desires (Hussain 22, 27). Shahana taking Nazneen for skating in the end of the novel or Dimple encouraging her mother to take out her dancing dress and start practicing again are actually efforts on the daughters' part to bring about the individuality of their mothers to the fore. They do this to encourage their mothers to follow the path of their hearts' content so that they may not have any regrets or unfulfilled desires. The psychological compatibility gets increased as they face and solve the problems together (Hussain 27).

Concluding it might be said that for the second generation of females their identity naturally consists of the home as well as the foreign culture. Their extreme sense of belongingness pushes them forward to make space from among all social and racial prejudices they face. Their gender roles are comparatively free from discourses which

influence their mothers' lives. For Shahana, Shifali in *Brick Lane* and Dimple in *Born Confused* home is where they live. There is an increased urge to prove themselves and to be accepted and acknowledged by the white majority.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The present study was aimed at investigating the concept of the third space in relation to the lived experience of south Asian immigrant females in U.K. and USA. The aspects of fluidity, creativity, and the act of cultural translation as unavoidable aspects of the third space theory were applied to the female immigrant protagonists depicted in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and in *Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier. For the sake of better understanding the impact of time lapse and exposure, the first and the second generation of females were studied separately. The research questions the study tried to answer were: How does the theory of the third space contribute to identity crisis for the south Asian female Diaspora? How do the females make use of the creativity of the third space in order to negotiate their identities? How is the experience of the two subsequent generations of female immigrants different from each other? And how do both generations negotiate their home and host cultures? The discussion of the concept of the third space was majorly focused on Bhabha's *The Location Of Culture* (1994) and it was backed up by the insights of female diaspora scholar Yasmin Hussain as depicted in her work *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity* (2005) and numerous other female scholars belonging to south Asian diaspora research field.

The theory of the third space is important in diaspora studies as it addresses the immigrants' condition with a positive note. It defines the place of immigration as a space

which offers the possibility of revision and reinterpretations of the already held beliefs regarding the way of life, commonly known as culture. Consequently the immigrants are deemed as agents of change, the ones who are standing on the threshold of relatively objective engagement with culture. They are no longer considered by Bhabha as a traumatic society, rather he understands them to be the ones who struggle and in this process, attain the ability to question long held beliefs. Their objective engagement with culture also poses a threat to the theories which are considered to be fixed, unchanged and the identity to be a pre-given, a sort of heritage. Thus the theory also addresses the identity crises arising from the revision of culture.

The present analysis explores the presence and effectiveness of this phenomenon in the two subsequent generations of the female immigrant population. Despite the fact that female population is under strict cultural scrutiny in south Asia, it has been observed that after immigration radical changes have taken place in the thinking of women. Both the generations go through psychological change. The first generation females adapt themselves to the new environment, loosening their grip over the past. On the other hand the second generation acknowledges the unavoidable part ethnicity plays into their identity and they gradually enter into a compromised relation with their home culture.

Identity crisis as defined in Meriam Webster dictionary is, 'personal psychosocial conflict especially in adolescence that involves confusion about one's social role and often a sense of loss of continuity to one's personality'. The study of the lives of the first generation female immigrants reveals that they do not go through any sense of loss of social role as they keep on following the home culture the way they used to in the place

of origin. In contrast to that, the younger generation has been more prone to psychological distress due to the almost equal influence of home and host culture right from the early age. As regards the first generation, the confusion and conflict had been characterized by the former literature on diaspora identity with feelings of isolation, trauma of exile, alienation and a desire to return to the roots. These feelings among the first generation gradually decrease and transform into a sense of belongingness to the new place. This idea portrays the immigrant population as if in a vacuum, caught up in past and uninfluenced by the flux and cultural coalition happening all around them. This is where Bhabha's theory of the third space contributes. In contrast to formerly stated beliefs, Bhabha's notion of the immigrants as a population in a flux, reshaping and remolding their former selves and creating identities anew is more applicable to the lives of immigrant females.

Both the generations face identity crises because they have dual affiliations, one with the home culture and the other with the host culture. But the nature of crises differs for the first generation females as compared to the second generation. For the first generation females like Nazneen and Shilpa the crises arise because of an acute sense of alienation from the host culture and a longing towards the home culture. But in the second generation females like Shahana and Dimple it takes a different form. They have a sense of alienation from the culture of their parents and a longing towards the host culture; their efforts are more centered upon how to get merged in the foreign society.

On the positive side, the place of settlement holds a creative, regenerative power for the immigrant females. For the first generation females, this experience brings forth a

personality change. The need to face the challenge makes them comparatively more self-reliant and confident just as Nazneen and Shilpa have been shown to become more enthusiastic, free will individuals. For the second generation the third space becomes creative in that it provides them with an answer to their identity confusion. They are born in the foreign culture but the majority does not accept them as a part of their social fabric; similarly the minorities groups in which they are born hold no interest for them. As the time passes both home and host culture unavoidably gets fused into each other and they come up with hybrid selves, mixing both the cultures in order to establish a place somewhere between the culture of their parents and that of the white majority. A hybrid as defined by Bhabha is a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions. Analysis reveals that the term can be more appropriately used for second generation as both the host and the home cultures go into their identity formation. Actually it can be observed that the second generation tilts more towards the host culture as they seek equal acceptance as any other white member of the society. On the other hand, the first generation females like Shilpa and Nazneen have still a relatively stronger connection to the home culture after ten years of migration. The sense of belongingness and the desire to merge into the majority culture is particularly stronger in younger generation. The factors that play a part in this are social reinforcement, peer approval, social environment and in particular media. These factors are responsible for the variation in the psychological orientation between first generation and the second generation.

The factors which play key role in the process of negotiation of identity are the freedom and individualism which is present in the foreign society. In other words, the absence of overall south Asian cultural milieu becomes a factor which initiates the

process of negotiation. It shows forth in some really unexpected and surprising steps taken by a homely, traditional wife like Nazneen for instance in supporting children against her husband's will, in questioning the practices of her Bangladeshi community, in learning to take decisions of her own life, in learning not to care too much of the social criticism when she indulges in an affair with Karim against religious norms, and also in attaining the courage to stand up for herself and her family against the tyrannical Mrs. Islam. Her defiance to the powers that shape her life for her is a character trait attained solely due to the fact that she has role models like Razia, or Mrs. Azad around who are inspired by the notions of freedom and individuality prevalent in Western culture. Similarly Shilpa would never have accepted the lesbian practices of Kavita if it all had happened in the home culture. It is the impact of women like Gwyn's mother which sow the seeds of acceptance of radical ways of life in her mind. Therefore not only she but also her husband, Mr. Rohitbhai Lala and her daughter Dimple, all are sympathetic towards Kavita. They act highly cooperatively and understandingly towards this affair which is quite opposite to the cultural and religious norms. All this show that the host culture, that is the third space, holds the power to bring far-reaching changes into the belief system of the immigrant females; whether it is for better or for worse depends largely on relative thinking. This power can be called creative in the sense that the females willingly use to explore alternative ways of seeing their lives.

For both the first as well as the second generation of immigrant females, the experiences and reactions differ to a great extent. What is common is the fact that identity certainly is a crisis for both of them as they belong to two different cultures at the same time. Both of these generations have to face social prejudice from the white majority. But

the situation is complicated as the first generation views the foreign land as a temporary place of settlement whereas the younger generation accepts it as their sole home. This basic difference in their feelings towards the host society makes all the difference in their reactions. For instance the value that cultural norms hold for first generation is not felt with the same intensity among the second generation. That is why for Nazneen and Shilpa cultural ways of dressing and behaving might be important but for Shahana and Dimple the western way is more appreciable and they defy this particular cultural norm by sneaking in to western attire whenever they get a chance. In the same way religion is another factor where marked difference of reverence is to be noted among the first and the second generation of females. While Nazneen and Shilpa seek refuge in praying to the deity, the younger lot perceives them as a mere cultural ritual. For the second generation like Shahana, Dimple, Shifali and even Burqa clad girls, religion becomes a personal affair which needs not be brought to the public. They are not shown offering prayers or indulging in religious rituals at any point. For the second generation religion is a part of belief system which has very little to do with practical life.

Another change between the two is in the extent to which they affiliate themselves to the host society. It is to be observed that though both generations face social criticism and racial prejudice yet they react differently. Where the first generation like Nazneen and Shilpa shut themselves tight into their homes and small community circles, the second generation like Dimple and Shahana retaliate and demand equal right to citizenship. They not only strive to be accepted by their peers but there are also political efforts at gathering for rights for instance via groups like Bengal Tigers. Education and economic independence has been used by the second generation as means

to get access to the white majority. The basic reason in this difference of reaction is the difference of perception of the notion of home. The first generation considers the country of origin to be their home as is depicted by their desire to revisit or return to the place of their birth. But the second generation cannot share this sense of affiliation as they have no memories of the country of origin. The foreign land is their homeland that is why there is a greater effort on their part to be accepted and treated equally. Though the first generation has affiliations towards the country of origin and they also maintain psychological links with the home culture but there comes a gradual change when there is a greater urge to build compatibility with their children (the second generation). The concepts of culture, home and ethnicity changes its meaning and their affiliations with roots weaken. Nazneen and Shilpa compromise with the foreign society because of their children, whereas Shahana and Dimple compromise with some of the values of home culture solely for the sake of their mothers. Actually towards the end of the novel, Nazneen skating on the ice in London and Shilpa dancing to the tune of classical music in her home in America is emblematic of the settlement that takes place between their past memories and the future at the new place that lies ahead.

Concluding the debate it will be well worth to discuss the contribution of the third space towards diaspora female identity. The third space, i.e. the space that opens up in the points of intersection of two varying cultures, has certainly helped the females to break the binary politics which viewed them as south Asian females who are necessarily naïve, passive and subjugated. In both the novels which have been discussed the writers have portrayed characters with a plurality of dimension. These women, especially the second generation, has striven to present themselves as beings who cannot be easily put into the

category 'religion' or 'ethnicity' or 'culture'. Specifically the hybrid trends and manners displayed by the second generation points towards the formation of selves which cannot be neatly labelled under any one of the above mentioned categories. This specific attitude has been termed by feminists as The New Woman; a person who is ready to face the reaction to her radical behaviors and can take challenges.

Most important change to be noticed is in the behavior of the first generation. By giving equal opportunity and importance to the daughters and by being fully supportive, they stand as true representatives of the act of cultural reinterpretation. Women like Nazneen and Razia who have transformed from a very conservative, culture specific beings into the understanding, forward looking, risk taking females speaks volumes of the regenerative power that third space might hold for any migrant woman. Similarly the fact that these women are able to translate and mold the cultural and religious discourse in their lives shows that the process of migration contains a fluidity which challenges any notion of fixity regarding identity whether it be gender based or cultural.

Overall the female characters portrayed in the diaspora literature bring to mind the New Woman concept which was established in the early nineteenth century (Hussain 53). The term was used at that time for the European females who rebelled the traditional ways of being and becoming. Their prominent characteristics were the courage to question the gender roles prescribed to them by the patriarchal system. They were the women of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw's writings, those who set up their path personally and have the courage to face the risks involved. The female protagonists depicted in the works analyzed here have acquired the same strength of character. The bold decisions

taken by Nazneen or Shilpa pave way for the undaunted efforts of Shahana and Dimple for making radical changes to the way they themselves perceive their lives and the way society expects them to be.

Most importantly the second generation has tried to make room for the acceptance of plurality of identities. An analysis of their lives reveals the multiple factors due to which the term south Asian cannot be generalized into a single state of being. For instance there are inherent differences and factors like education level or financial position or religious background due to which the experience of Bangladeshi Muslims is different from Indian Hindus. Their mutual differences of thought and manners break the binary divisions in which they are categorized by the western majority and insist upon dissecting the common term South Asian Diaspora. The younger generation in particular claims both of the titles i.e. 'south Asian' and 'American/British'. This new consciousness which is increasingly becoming common among the second generation of immigrants is the outcome of the third space in diaspora setting which allows them to rethink the discourses surrounding them, most importantly the gender discourse.

Recommendations:

The study can be extended to the diaspora residing in different countries in order to ascertain the relationship between the extent of fluidity and creativity available in the third space of settlement in varying cultural setups. The influence of the third space theory can also be observed among the South Asian male diasporic population. A comparative study can be held between male and female diasporic population in response to change and conflict. The diaspora population can also be separately studied on the

basis of place of origin or religion using the same theory in order to investigate the kind and level of cultural affiliation and change. And most of all, current research can be a study of the responses of second and third generation in order to further ascertain the direction in which the process of cultural translation in third space is taking the vast majority of south Asian immigrants.

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