Chapter-3

Racial Bias

The individuals of different nations, cultures and races exhibit very pronounced differences. They show differences in their personality, social and moral values, character and mental abilities, which are the outcome of their environment. When someone faces the different environment from their own, these individuals confront clash. When Indian people go abroad, they carry with them their value systems and belief systems which are headed to clash with those ones of the society they adopt. These differences of culture and values between two cultures are called cross-culture which makes up a huge part of the fiction of Meera Syal. In the works of Meera Syal these cross-cultural differences are felt at two levels-individual and social. Meera Syal has created waves in the West and made her impact on Indian literary scene. Syal shows in her works how an alien culture produces disenchantment in the minds of expatriate Indians and how they find themselves crushed under the burden of in-betweenness. In our contemporary world, we come across several Indian diasporic women writers such as Bharti Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee, Divakaruni, Sujata Bhatta, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, and Meena Alexander who represent images of diaspora. These diasporic writers faced the problems of dispersal, collective memory, sense of alienation, sanctity of the ancestral homeland and a belief in its restoration, definition of the self in terms of identification with the homeland are seen as the key characteristics of the diasporas.

The diasporic Indian writers of the first generation have already established their credentials by winning numerous literary awards and honours. But recently the ranks of the second generation of Indian writers in the west have swelled enormously and many among them have won international recognition. Human societies and
cultures are not uniform. They differ from one in several respects. Human relationships and their respective cultures are too often conducted on the basis of the differences rather than the similarities between these cultural groups. These differences are either physical or cultural in nature. The arbitrary human division made on the basis of the physical characteristics or cultural traits are often termed as "racial, cultural or ethnic groups". There are over billion people in the world, and they display a wide variety of skin, colours, hair texture, limb-to-trunk ratio and other characteristics such as distinctive nose, lip, eyelid forms, their behaviour, dialects and so. Such intermixing, overlapping and the gradual shading of physical and cultural characteristics invite problems. Only man is born and brought up in a cultural environment. Every man is born into a society is the as saying that every man is born into a culture. The dictum Man is a social being can thus be reduced as man is a cultural being. Every individual can be regarded as a representative of his or her culture.

The work of women writers of dual or multiple cultural heritages in Britain contributes to the positioning of English literature at a cultural crossroads of international scope and significance. As writers responding to and incorporating their cross cultural heritage in their writing often across a variety of genres and media, women writers have managed to make new geographies of (un)belonging," rewriting the metropolis", as well as the whole of the country, from a gendered perspective as a multicultural physical and imagined space. Their writing is informed by post-imperial migrations and translocations and engages with the ongoing legacies of colonialism. Colonial forces have typically shaped social differences between East and West for their own selfish purposes. The histories of why one country has been able to lord it over another have too frequently used social differences between east and west as a
justification. Post-colonial theory also speculates the legacy of imperialism which leads to social differences as we are faced with the world divided into discrete cultures. Many contemporary female writers whose work share the common fate and label of second generation citizens in Britain, and therefore they are "Uniquely positioned to be agents of intercultural communication and exchange [...] also uniquely capable of transforming adopted homelands into 'diaspora space' (Buonanno 53). Now they have drawn new maps of fictional Britain, while contributing to the expanding "internalization of English literature". In the present research, my attempt is to explore the psychological tensions behind the formation of personal identity and the role of the 'outside' in the process on the basis of the writer's background; her writings have been approached as a kind of "ethic" comedy. Meera Syal's novel *Anita and Me* shows the circumstances through the eyes of a child looking at the outside of the English world through the 'inside' of their own, yet never forgotten world.

The reinvention of the past implies an appropriation of cultural memory. The silences of the past, the silenced voices, leave blanks in the cultural memory of a nation. Filling those blanks with different versions of the past saves the marginalized voices from collective forgetting. The most influential writer George Orwell makes a passing observation about the exile, self-imposed or otherwise on the scope of a writer's subject and purpose. He says:

Leaving your native land [...] means transferring your roots into shallower soil. Exile is probably more damaging to a novelist than to a painter or even a poet, because its effect is to take him out of contact with working life and narrow down his range to the street, the cafe, the church, the brothel and the studio (Joseph, Wilson 3).
The sense of marginalization has a great deal to do with having to deal in a language other than one's own. The person who has travelled abroad surely will knowledge the central insight that "exile" can shock the sensitivites of most 'artist' and until they become true cosmopolitans who are equally at home in two or more cultures, arguably shrink their expressive abilities.

The nation state is integral to the structure of the capitalist world system. This structural independence between the nation state and the world system that the nation is the world's "primary cultural container" and will continue to be as long as the capitalist world system exists. Nevertheless, despite the pre-eminence of national categories, a "gigantic paradox" is inherent to the incorporation of the world into a system of nations with distinct cultures and identities. On the one hand, the very definition of a national identity is particularistic: one nation must be distinguished from another through its distinctness for the very category of the nation to exist. On the other hand, the division of the world into a system of distinct national cultures also represents the unifications of the world into a system of distinct national cultures also represents the unification of the world through the "inescapably universal phenomenon" of nation building.

The occurrence of racism is an important issue mainly concern from the entire world. This issue dealt with our everyday life. Many theories of racism have presented by the writers to explain the origin and growth of racism in modern society. Some famous critics of racism like Gunner Myrdal, W.E.B. Dubois, E. Franklin Frazier and Robert E. Park have explained the racial relations. Oliver C. Cox developed a theory on racial relations and its relation with the rise of capitalism. Oliver C. Cox argues that:
Racial exploitation and race prejudice developed among Europeans with the rise of capitalism and nationalism, and that because of the world-wide ramifications of capitalism, all racial antagonisms can be traced to the policies and attitudes of the leading capitalist people, the white people of Europe and North America (Klarlund 85).

The racial relationships are based on three stages, social intolerance, racism and ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is attached with the norms and value of one's culture. We use this tendency to judge and measure all other cultures. Cox believed that social prejudice is most likely as old as social organisation. Cox defines race as "any group of people believed to be and accepted as a race in any given area of ethnic competition" (Klarlund 86).

Race is above all a matter of politics. The assignment and acceptance of racial identity, the configuration of racially demarcated groups, the logic of collective action as practiced by members of racial politics, and the stratification of society along racial lines are but some of the main dimensions of racial politics. The state is a central player in racial matters: the modern state carries out racial classification, surveillance, and punishment of the population, it distributes resources along racial lines, it simultaneously facilitates and obstructs racial discrimination and it is both structured and challenged by political mobilization along racial lines. Language is central to racism, colonialism and notions of identity and hybridity. Colonialism imposed not just a language, in this case English, on South Asian peoples, but with it, sets of meanings and values. In Britain and other European societies growing interest in the theorisation of race and racism can parallel, resulting in a number of important and sophisticated analyses of the politics and ideology of racism. There are two major in these early European attempts to theorise racial and ethnic relations: the patterns of
immigration and labour market incorporation of black and ethnic minorities and the part played by colonialism in determining popular conceptions of colour, race and ethnicity in European societies. John Rex defines the field of race relations in the following terms:

Race relations situations and problems have the following characteristics: they refer to situations in which two or more groups with distinct identities and recognisable characteristics are forced by economics and political circumstances to live together in a society. Within this they refer to situations in which there is a high degree of conflict between the groups and in which ascriptive criteria are used to mark out the members of each group in order that one group may pursue one of the number of hostile policies against the other. Finally, within this group of situations true race relations may be said to exist when the practices of ascriptive allocation of role and rights referred to are justified in terms of some kind of deterministic theory, whether that theory be of a scientific, religious, cultural, historical, ideological or sociological kind (Solomos 19).

The Indian Diaspora spans the globe and enlarged all the oceans and continents. It is so widespread that sun never sets on the Indian diaspora. The population of Indian diaspora is near about twenty million. They live in different countries, speak different languages, and are occupied in different vocations. Their common identity is Indian origin, their consciousness and deep attachment for Indian cultural heritage. Between the deterritorialization of the world's spaces and the myth of origin, between the nation-state and the plural relationships of multinational corporations-this is the milieu of today's diasporas. South Asian diaspora produces a
range of critical dilemmas, which include essentializing of character, identity and inclination. The fundamental problematic of subjectivities that is radiate in the languages of race and ethnicity. It is difficult to describe the difference from inside or outside and nation or transnation-without reifying the boundaries of difference-colour, religion, caste or culture.

The two cultures are not on an equal footing; one dominates the other in prestige, in creativity, in power etc. Thus more than simple cross-breeding takes place: there is a kind of double movement whereby the receiver culture both appropriates and abrogates, transforms the donor culture, but is in turn transformed by the elements it takes up and the in-between spaces that are created in the process. Critic like Homi Bhabha locates culture and the value of the gesturing "to the beyond" of postmodernism and other Post-conditions. To dwell in the beyond is for Bhabha "to be part of a revisionary time, to reinscribe our human, historic commality", that is a way of intervening in the present Bhabha writes:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent: it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (Vander, Chris, and Viljoen 8).

Bhabha here underlines the importance of borders and the spaces between them-the in-between states which we can also states of homeliness and hybridity. We see that Bhabha attaches to the in-between seem indubitably tied to his own
experience of present-day living as a state of beyondness and his "paradigmatic place of departure" as postcolonial critic, which he describes as standing" on the shifting margines of cultural displacement-that confounds any profound or 'authentic' sense of a 'national' culture or an organic intellectual.

The production of national culture is necessarily involves the identification of some quality or criteria that function simultaneously to exclude outsiders or to primordialize insiders. But how the construction of national boundaries be sustained in a world now more than ever open to cultural flows? The notion of nation with a fixed, "given" cultural identity is a sign of the success of a whole array of practices in naturalizing the identity. Homi Bhabha claims there is a space "in-between the designations of identity" and that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Easthope 145). Hybridity have other meanings also-in terms of biology, ethnicity and culture. In the terms of etymology it meant the offspring of a tame sow or a wild boar, hybrida and this genetic component provides the first meaning. The definition of hybridity might be understood to mean an individual "having access to two or more ethnic identities"(Easthope 145). Bhabha's terms "interstices" mean to give respond to Derrida's account of difference as spatial differentiation. Cultural differences are defined as "in-between spaces", "interstices" in which "domains of difference" may "overlap", an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" (Easthope 146). Bhabha predicates his revision of the history of critical theory on a notion of cultural difference which he succinctly opposes to the more familiar doctrine of cultural diversity:

Cultural diversity is an epistemological object-culture as an object of empirical knowledge-Whereas cultural difference is the process of the
enunciation of culture as "Knowledgeable", authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. If cultural diversity is category of comparative ethics, aesthetics or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiates, discriminate and authorize the production of systems of cultural identification (Gikandi 41).

The study of race relations is concerned with situations in which structured conditions interact with actors' definitions in such a way as to produce a racially structured social reality. Diaspora is a contemporary reality which has thrown more questions than their solutions. The process of uprooting and re-rooting is as old as the human race but as a systematic body of study it was never so well pronounced as it is now for the last two decades. There is an ever increasing corpus that heavily draws upon experience of expatriation and immigration and all its natural offshoots. The writers of Indian Diaspora have certainly made a special foray in the literary circles not only because the volumes with which they have flooded the markets but also because of the wide range of concerns and issues such as identity, survival strategy, nostalgia, race, economy, history, religion etc.

The dislocation from one's familiar world, for whatever reasons, to another world or culture always throws one into a pool of uncertainty as it compels one to refashion his or her life according to the challenges in the adopted land. This transition in most of the cases is not smooth and might result in confusion, psychological disorder, compromise or in a few cases in exploration, endurance and finally happy settlement. The notions of 'nation' and 'race', and the ideologies of nationalism and racism are shown to have some common features which create
potential rather than opposition. In England the ideology of racism used to define and maintain the nationalism. According to Marxist point of view:

These racial elements impose their modes of existence on nations circumscribing them within limits from which, like blind slaves, they do not even wish to escape, although they would not even have the strength to do so. They dictate their laws, inspire their wishes, control their sympathies and stir up their hatreds and contempts (Miles 24).

Marxist considers that racism and nationalism are connected with each other. But the critic Anderson argues that racism and nationalism are very different from each other. He says:"The fact of matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history"(Miles 24).

He says that racism is derived from the word nationalism. In this context shown that Britain constitutes a situation that lead toward English or British identity. Identity refers to how 'self' is defined and to show the relation with other people. Identity's main characteristics are that sense of belonging to a particular group shared by its members. Identity divides the people from each other into 'us' and 'other'. The 'ethnic identity' is related with the concepts of race, culture and nation. In 'multi ethnic' societies, the national identity of people's may or may not correspond with their ethnic identity. The character of ethnic identity is a topic of controversy.

The developing theories of the women's liberation movement are an analogy with racism and the struggle of women's liberation movement. The Feminist theorists point out that struggle against sexism is encompasses the struggle against sexism is encompasses the struggle against racism. Several minority women writers consider
that there is a special factor that is inhibiting about the development of feminist consciousness that is racism. According to Pauline Terrelonge Stone views in "Feminist consciousness and black Women":

Racism is so ingrained in American culture, and so entrenched among White Women, that black females have been reluctant to admit that anything affecting the white female could also affect them. Indeed, many black women have tended to see all whites regardless of sex, as sharing the same objective interest, and clearly the behaviour of many white women vis-a-vis blacks has helped to validate this reaction (Simons 385).

Now these days the feminist is facing the problem of racism and ethnocentrism in the feminist movement especially within theory and society but this is not accepted by the white feminists. All women writings is not necessary connected with feminism. We can't consider women centred novels a new happening in literature. The feminism deals with the main issues like sexual, racial and class submission which is main characteristics of women-centred novels. Now we shift our attention to a related set of issues, namely social changes and their impact on the future of race and racism in British society. Perhaps no other feature of contemporary racial and ethnic relations in Britain has attracted as much attention in recent years as the intersection of race, class and gender relations.

The question of the impact that racism has on social relations has preoccupied many sociologists working within a variety of theoretical paradigms. Meera Syal's novels 'Anita and Me' and 'Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee' is mainly concerned with a globalized and homogeneous London. Interracial connections are inherent in the background of both novels. The main themes of cross-culture incongruities, betrayal,
marriage and marginal patriarchy are common in Syal's novels. The women writers of
Indian diaspora are the product of two cultures, they are unsure of their status related
to mainstream and also in relation to their minority group. The culture and its effect
on the mentality of Indian people which is contradictory to the western life and
thinking. Meera Syal is one such Indian literary Diaspora writer who belongs to the
second generation of immigrants, born and bred in England, owns the nationality by
virtue of her birth, talks of some exile and hostile treatment which her contemporaries
of first generation experienced. Ultimately, Syal's novel moves towards an affirmation
of the value of 'traditional' cultures to her protagonists, but does so carefully, with an
awareness of the limits to which this acceptance should stretch.

The novel explores those aspects of British Asian ideologies that may be
subjected to critique, particularly regarding gender relations; it searches for ways to
renegotiate relationships with tradition in order to circumvent these oppressions.
However, by the end of the novel, the heroines achieve personal and social stability
through reaching back to tradition and affirming the 'Asian' aspects of their plural
heritage. Syal's cultural conservatism is at least as important as her critique of the
repressions operating within the field of ethnic delineation. While the storehouse
embodies changing social and cultural relations wrought by histories of immigration,
other sections of the novel render the spaces of London as having undergone recent
and rapid change from an apparently uniform past. The opening paragraphs offer a
metaphor for the transformation of British culture under the influence of foreign
immigration. The snow falling on Leyton alters the landscape, but rather than
whitening the vista serves instead to darken everything on which it falls. The narration
then takes the perspective of an old man, who is surprised when Deepak's wedding
procession travels down this street. He is the first of several old white characters who
are given a brief outlook on events in *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. While Enoch Powell's notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech made much capital of the image of an old white woman tormented by 'wide-grinning piccaninnies', Syal's old people react differently to the presence of the Asian migrants. The old man who watches the wedding procession invokes Thatcher's famous swamping comments, only to reject them as inappropriate. He says: "It isn't like that, wet and soggy like Hackney Marshes. It's silent and gentle, so gradual that you hardly notice it at all until you look up and see that everything's different. 'Like snow', he said, out loud" (LAH 11).

His view is ambiguous, with no sense of an evaluative element, merely an expression of a more appropriate metaphor. Conspicuous by its absence, however is the fear of difference that a Powellite might expect to find. Contrasting with this, Mr. Keegan, whose perspective is shown later in the novel, expresses an evaluation of the Asian presence, this time embodied in the funeral procession for Tania's father. His wife feels that the Hindu traditions fit poorly with the British way of remembering the dead. However, though this old man "had never dared say, [...] he looked forward to these foreign cremations" and 'wondered if it wasn't better [the Hindu] way" (LAH 331). The Asian communities are seen to have provided a new and positive way for the white British to regard the world. This idea that immigration might actually revitalize and ameliorate British culture is also present in the novel when Tania sees how the communal life practised by Somalian immigrants in their front gardens has led "a few white OAPs to venture into the once hallowed space of the front lawn" (LAH 272). The impression is of Britons liberated from the stuffiness of their culture and free to explore new and exciting spaces. Cultural diversity is seen here as inherently beneficial to the nation. However, this version of 'feel-good-diversity' or multiculturalism as a more liberal version of the heritage industry is equally
challenged within the novel. Tania role as a television producer is crucial in this respect. Syal is able to explore the dangers of ethnic cultures becoming defined externally in the service of national improvement through cultural diversity. Tania bemoans pre-production meetings where “she had sat tight-lipped and buttocks clenched as Rupert or Donald or Angus nibbled on ciabatta and explained to her what is meant to be Asian and British, at least for the purposes of television”.

Meera Syal's fiction in the space of liminality where she describes some serious issues about the choices women face today, locating her characters as British women with Indian backgrounds living in London; lives at the threshold of the new millennium, their ethnic background forming a double story, the one “seamlessly informing and invigorating the other” (Toplu 62). Syal's fiction shows a line between sympathy and satire in the portrayal of British culture moving on two axes: young women's relations with Indian society and traditional upbringing, on the basis of their hybridity and the other are betrayal, love and friendship.

Our culture shapes and determines our identity. Our sense of self, as Black women, we must first generate a positive understanding of the long cultural tradition, which has fashioned our way of life here in Britain. Being "black" in Britain is about a state of “becoming” (racialized): a process of consciousness when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are. Located through your “otherness” a “conscious coalition” emerges:

A self-consciously constructed space where identity is not inscribed by a natural identification but a political kinship. Now living submerged in whiteness, physical difference becomes a defining issue, a signifier, a mark of whether or not you belong. Thus to be black in Britain is to
share a common structural location: a racial location (Arana, Ramey 73).

Contemporary African-American resistance struggle must be rooted in a process of decolonization that continually opposes re-inscribing notions of "authentic" black identity. Identity is an important issue in contemporary Britain where there are ongoing struggles to redefine both "Britishness" and the nature of a desirable, culturally diverse society. For black people in Britain, another crucial factor is racism, which has both shaped their relationship to Britishness and produced various forms of resistance. Recent black cultural production is “putting the issue of cultural identity in question” (Arana, Ramey 74). Stuart Hall suggests that creative cinema, in the case of writing- is important, not like reflections of an already existing black identity, but in the production of identities. Hall argues that:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about "cultural identity". The first position defines "cultural identity" in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves", which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, out cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes, which provide us, as "one people", with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our cultural history(Arana, Ramey 75).

The discovery of a true black identity involves decolonizing the self and recovering an identity no longer distorted by the colonial experience and by racism. Meera Syal's versified novel depicts the growing face of multicultural Britain as it
traces the two dissimilar cultures of Meena British-born Asian girl growing up in the 1960s. Meena stands on such a vantage though perilous pedestal from where she can view and compare the two different worlds. She is naive enough not to understand that she cannot adopt and be adopted by the other culture and be a part of it the way an insider Anita can be. The differences remain-submerged in the starting, drowned for sometime in the climatic period and re-emerging forcefully in the end. In the initial stage the dominant culture is so enticing that the differences can be easily identified. The desire is to follow the other blindly, identify completely, to be like them, to be one of them. All these feeling of the protagonist's behaviour manifest in the beginning of the book when the revolt is directed against the way of life that her parents have chosen. Kumar family is the only Indian family in the village, Tollington, which is the source of humiliation to Meena. The living style, sense of dressing, food habits are some obvious disparities created trouble for her.

Syal's first narrative text *Anita and Me* (1996) in which Meena seems to fit in quite well with the other children and the family are certainly accepted, admired even, by the community. This all begins to fall apart though as ignorance and racism clash as Meena encounters first hand how hurtful racism and ignorance can be and she struggles to understand the relationships between people and their ideas. This fragile balance breaks when the Punjabi girl examines her tie with the English friend, who has also a racist behaviour and finds her own doubts pointed on the face of the other:"In fact, sometimes, when I looked into her eyes, all I could see and cling to was my own questioning reflection"(AM 150).

The analysis of the body in which skin works like a crossing point between the self and the other, between the insideness and the outsideness thus it may seen as a barrier. Skin not only show the physical condition of the person, but it also exhibits
feelings, emotions and thoughts for the individual can blush or become pale or knit the brows. Meena feels the humiliation of the insult 'nigger', a very offensive word. She finds it very difficult to come to terms with body and the interrelation between the physical aspect and the ethnic origin. She says:

I always got told off, but I was beginning not to care. I knew I was a Freak of some kind, too mouthy, clumsy and scabby to be a real Indian girl, too Indian to be a real tollington Wench, but living in the grey area between all categories felt by increasingly like home (AM 149-150).

The migrant's displacement shows the difference of in-betwenness in the society. Meena's social management of the body affects the public and private spheres of perception. According to sociologists critic David Morgan and Sue Scott: "there is, indeed something, fluid and indeterminate in the interplay between individual and societal representations and concerns with bodies" (Adami 156). The lack of faith in the girl betrays a revisition of Meena's plans to conquer Englishness and when she is excoriated by the different forms of racist intolerance, the protagonist, endowed with her limited tools of comprehension, has to face up to the operation of reciting roles and working out identities. The abrupt reaction towards migrants the sharp verbal abuse and physical assault.

The issue of identity acquires a primal status when an individual finds himself or herself in a foreign land among foreign people, unaccustomed to the dominant culture and way of living. The mode of belonging, affiliation and community that the author conceptualizes, transforms the concept of a traditional home as a geographical space into a political state of being. The diasporic homesickness on the one hand engenders a longing to go back to the original homeland and on the other it gives birth
to an aversion for the alien culture. The philosophical justifications of multiculturalism within an idea of the politics of recognition are unpacked to suggest that the only types of identity that can be recognized are those guaranteed by ethnicity, even as the ethnic remains an unstable and contentious category. The particular attraction of such ethnicity politics as a mode of understanding racialized experience is worked through in Meera Syal's *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999). Syal recognizes that the unquestioned preservation of ethnically determined values may at times cause problems, but she ultimately wishes to affirm the potential of the ethnic community as a meaningful and perhaps indispensable source of affirmation for individuals.

Meera Syal's second novel *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1996), in which all three women characters Tania, Chila and Sunita have to compromise their Indian background with modern English lifestyle. Hybridity of these characters is revealed in the conflict they have in their family atmosphere, more than in the society they live in. The significance of the focus from intercultural to racism hybridity is shown by Syal's protagonist Tania who has a successful career. She is fed up with her patriarchal father, Tania fashions her global shift and the hypocrisy of the English. She says:

> When I get asked about racism, as I always do in any job interview, when they're checking whether I'm the genuine article (oppressed Asian woman who has suffered), as opposed to the pretend coconut, (white on the inside, brown on the outside, too well off and well spoken to be considered truly ethnic), I make up stories about, skinheads and shit through letterboxes because that's the kind of racism they want to hear about. It lets my nice interviewer off the hook, it confirms that the real baddies live far away from him in the SE postcode area, and he can tut at them from a safe distance. I never tell
them about the stares and whispers and the anonymous gobs of phlegm at bus stops, the creaking of slowly closing doors and the limited view from the glass counter (we never get as high as the ceiling), which all scar as deeply as a well-aimed Doc Marten. May be I would not have learned about them so early on if it hadn't been for dear papa. May be I should thank him for that (LAH 145).

In Syal's fiction racial discrimination is shown in the case of Tania, Deepak and Chila. Their complicated personality shows the dilemma of the multicultural selves. Syal's characters are affected by migration, sojourn, settlement, displacement, relocation, alienation and belongingness, cultural crisis, rootlessness, polylingual attitude, and social ostracization. Her works are replete with the images of loss and longing. *Anita* and *Me* is a semi-autobiographical account of a young girl, growing up in the Midlands in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The protagonist Meena navigates a course between the Punjabi culture of her migrant parents and the white working-class community in which she lives. The Anita of the title is an older girl whom Meena admires as both friend and role model. Anita's increasingly racist attitudes, which mirror the growing tensions in the town as a whole, eventually necessitate a break for Meena and lead to her development of a more productive sense of self: "The place in which I belonged was wherever I stood and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forward and claiming each resting place as home" (Gunning 112).

Roger Bromley describes *Anita* and *Me* as detailing Meena's "becoming British Asian", suggesting that this is an identity that needs to be constructed"(Bromley 147), Bearhold schoene-Harwood argues that "the novel traces how Meena is able to reach a position where the possibly restrictive elements of cultural hybridity are negotiated into a fruitful and liberated identity" (Harwood 159).
The similar issues about the formation of identity are raised in *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, in this later novel they are explored through several different characters. The diffusion of narrative focus from one to many characters might allow for a more complex account of British Asian identities.

The heroines of *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) belong to the same generation as Meena but, as the novel is set in the late 1990s, are in their mid thirties. The novel depicts a year in the lives of three friends, Chila, Sunita, and Tania. The narrative begins on the day of Chila's wedding to the successful business man Deepak and the first part of the novel is mainly concerned with documenting the early days of her marriage. Tania's relationship with her white boyfriend, Martin, is also explored, as are her attempts to oversee her first full television production. Encouraged by her boss, Tania makes a documentary about love and marriage among British Asians and her two friends agree to take part. At the opening party, Tania's film is revealed to have made a laughing stock of Chila's naivety and of Sunita's failing marriage. Her betrayal of them is completed when she is witnessed in a clinch with Deepak. The climax of the novel comes when the disgraced Deepak tries to snatch Chila's newborn baby but is unable to flee the country as Tania has stolen and destroyed his passport. The baby is returned, the friends are reconciled, and the novel ends at Tania's father funeral. Sunita and Akash are working to rebuild their marriage, Chila is about to take her baby to India, and Tania is increasingly involved in media projects that attempt to aid Asian people in Britain, rather than just using them for raw material. The setting of this novel is very different from *Anita and Me*.

The location of the earlier novel in a small ex-mining community was able to disturb received notions of the geography of black Britain by asking us to territorialise diasporic cultural production and pay attention to the regional and economic
unevenness of the black British community. The later novel is set in the East End of London and invokes a different set of cultural association. The British countryside is often represented as having only registered the Asian presence in passing, the area around spital fields and Brick Lane can perhaps be read as a symbolic centre. This allows Syal to address the idea of community, rather than simply to map the individual consciousness, mirroring the decision to include multiple narrators.

In the novel, Tania previews for her film, takes place in an East End bar that was formally a Victorian workhouse. Syal traces the building's occupants throughout the twentieth century from three generations of Jewish owners into hands of a Muslim named Imran Wahaab, and then on to: "A young Bengali man who did not look like the entrepreneur he claimed to be-too much gel in the hair, too flashy a car to be decent, but who paid, like all the building's previous owners, in crisp, fresh notes" (Gunning 113).

This passage allows Syal to plot the ways the East End changes from being part of a nineteenth century British landscape to a place changing under the impacts brought about by the successive Jewish and Asian migrations, and most recently becoming the dwelling place of a confident British-born Asian community. This potted history also allows Syal to focus on the lines of continuity that run through the area. The building represents microcosm of a city that has always thrived on change and relied on the renewals brought by successive generations of new arrivals. In Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee, Syal offers a clear sense of how one might understand the persistence of cultural tradition as playing a vital role in the construction of her heroines' selfhood, but also as providing a necessary ballast for them as they seek to flourish within multicultural Britain. Ethnic identity cannot simply be abandoned, nor used purely to score cultural capital, but must be recognized and accommodated as
much by those individuals who live within it as by society as a whole yet Syal's novel ultimately offers a confused version of the ethnic community: while her protagonists' generation exhibits a hybridity which frequently find itself needing to retreat to an older sense of belonging, little sense is given of where this fixity may in turn have originated, nor how a future generation might understand its ethnic self against the seemingly newly fluid identity of its immediate predecessor. The novel wants simultaneously to insist on the possibility of change within, and the essential diachronic sameness of, ethnic cultures. The novels written by black British and British Asian writers shows that how antiracism has determined the form and content of both political debate and individual minority identities in Britain. The dominant mode of antiracism in Britain continues to be multiculturalism, even if it has been increasingly contested in recent years. Multiculturalism itself is a problematic term, with multiple and often conflicting meanings, but it perhaps remains the only available ideology that has been diversity seriously.

Despite its comedic touches, Bhaji on the Beach retains a keen awareness of the racism that is 'always around the corner' according to director Gurinder Chadha, with a nasty stand-off between the women's group and a group of thuggish men at a service station. Chadha and co-writer Meera Syal also provide a nuanced portrayal of an abusive marriage, refusing to present Ranjit as an outright villain by showing his vulnerabilities whilst never pulling their punches about his brutality towards Ginder and their son. In this sub-plot, along with that of downtrodden Asha who finally revolts against 'duty, honour, sacrifices', saying "what about me? I wasn't meant for this! "Bhaji on the Beach' triumphantly lives up to Chadha's aim to 'draw you in and make you care for my characters, and feel for them, and make you see that they are not 'other' any more" (Bell et al. 33). Almost a decade elapsed between Bhaji and
Chadha's next British feature, the highly successful Bend it like Beckham (2002) but Chadha remains a pioneer of the new wave of British Asian cinema along with Hanif Kureishi, Ayub Khan-Din and Udayan Prasad, while providing her own valuable and often humorous perspective on female identity. In the 1990s South Asian film and television began to move from minority slots, often broadcast in a mixture of English and South Asian languages, into the main stream. Recent films have raised questions of gender, cultural difference, hybridity, generational conflicts, identity and racism. A significant landmark in this shift was the film Bhaji on the beach (1993), written by Meera Syal and Gurinder Chadha, which was shown on television and in ‘arthouse’ cinemas and released on video. It is now often taught on film and media studies courses.

Bhaji on the Beach a fiction film raises questions of the politics of representation and was criticized by some British South Asians for not restricting itself to positive images of South Asians. It is explicitly feminist in its approach to its subject matter, offering a series of insights into the lives of a group of South Asian women from the Midlands, who range in age from teenaged girls to elderly ladies. They come together for a day trip to Blackpool organized by the local Asians women’s centre. The film raises issues of white racism and ethnic stereotyping, problems within the South Asian community, including cross-generational conflict and domestic violence as a response to the changing role of women. Women’s voices are often invisible or less visible in account of migration, settlement and community, as well as in multiculturalism and racism and the shift from a focus on ethnicity to religion. Even when women are written back into the historical record, they are still sometimes invisible since there is a tendency to employ colonialist narratives that essentialize women as passive victims of their culture who
need rescuing. The ethnographic studies that demonstrate a gender difference with respect to migration, settlement and community formation. Meera Syal works in Britain show the clash between the older and younger generations of immigrants is one of the central theme of her work. Meera Syal's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1994) shows her audience the complexity of Asian women's lives in England, the conflict between modern ways and tradition, the price some women refuse to pay for the so-called comforts of home, and the tensions that arise in recognizing the state as both oppressor and protector. In campaigns against domestic violence, like Asian women have made demands for their right to leave oppressive family environments and for the state to criminalize domestic violence, dismantling the notion of the family as a sacred and private space. At the same time, British Asian women have also needed to demand that the state recognize the right to family unity in immigration cases where racist laws and policies separate and even criminalize some members of minority families. To keep silent about domestic violence for the sake of preserving the mythical notion of a United Asian community means to support and collude in their own oppression as women.

There are many women like the fictional Ginder in Chadha's film, who have fled violent homes and are living in battered women's shelters. *Bhaji on the Beach* is accomplishing without loud speakers and big demonstrations is the reconceptualization of community for Asian women living in Britain today. Very few women at the end of the movie will have any sympathy left for Ginder's mother-in-law, to whom we are introduced in one of the film's initial scenes, at the breakfast table, reminding her family that Ginder is too dark and may be that's the reason why “since she stepped into [her] house, she's been nothing but trouble” and now wants a
divorce: “she's brought the English court into my house!” (Arana, Ramey 56). She tells her son, and that cannot be the last thing happening to her before she dies.

*Bhaji on the Beach* helps interrogate the idea of national identity, thus invigorating the project of forging alternative social identities and practices. The filmmakers' depiction of the seaside resort of Blackpool exposes the extent to which there has never been an uncontested set of values—Queen, Church, and commons notwithstanding. What is left of whiteness in the movie, like, fittingly performative: an old English actor who wonders the streets of Blackpool in search of ladies in distress with whom to recall his and England's past glories? Rather than depending on the dominant values of the existing society, Chadha cinematography attempts to forge a new consensus. After acknowledging the necessary fictions of identity the British have attempted to preserve, her audience is ready to move on to create the society of the future.

Syal's *The Kumars at No. 42* powerfully enacts the shift to new market-driven modes of television production in the contemporary world; the clash of economics is also self-consciously entangled with cultural politics—the representation of the migrant. The fictional Kumar family can be seen to conform to the well-worn trope of the migrant as alien invader, taking jobs and displacing the white, mainstream cultural establishment. The show draws on-and re works - what can be called the 'revenge of the migrant' texts that have been central in depictions of South-Asian life in Britain. The key word here is re-works, a point which is to be appreciated if we situate *The Kumars* against other recent representations of South-Asian diaspora in Britain. *The Kumars* clearly draws its impetus from the forerunner show, *Goodness Gracious Me.*

*Goodness Gracious Me* is a BBC comedy sketch series that began its life on radio in 1996. Multiculturalism is an integral component in the overall educative objectives of
the BBC. The show states about the values of the South-Asian diaspora, along with white British attitudes to South-Asians. *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) explores the intergenerational conflict within South-Asian families in the 1970s, as well as the hostile British context in which they attempt to make a living through a small business. *The Kumar at No. 42* has rapidly established itself as one of the most successful British TV shows of recent times. It is divided into eleven parts.

*The Kumars* was nominated for a BAFTA Award in 2002, the same year that it won an Ethnic Multicultural Media Award for Best TV entertainment production. In the 1990s South Asian film and television began to move from ethnic minority slots, often broadcast in a mixture of English and South Asian languages, into the mainstream. Recent films have raised questions of gender, cultural difference, hybridity, generational conflicts, identity and racism. A significant landmark in this shift was the film *Bhaji on Beach* (1993), written by Meera Syal and Gurinder Chadha, which was shown on television and in 'arthouse' cinemas and released on video. It is now often taught on film and media studies courses. *Bhaji on the Beach* - a fiction film raises questions of the politics of representation, and was criticized by some British South Asians for not restricting itself to positive images of South Asians. It is explicitly feminist in its approach to its subject matter, offering a series of insights into the lives of a group of South Asian women from the Midlands, who range in age from teenaged girls to elderly ladies. They come together for a day trip to Blackpool organized by the local Asian women's centre.

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The narration then takes the perspective of an old man, who is surprised when Deepak's wedding procession travels down this street. He is the first of several old white characters who are given a brief outlook on events in Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee. While Enoch Powell's notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech made much capital of the image of an old white woman tormented by 'wide-grinning piccaninnies', Syal's old people react differently to the presence of the Asian migrants. The old man who watches the wedding procession invokes Thatcher's famous swamping comments, only to reject them as inappropriate: "It isn't like that, wet and soggy like Hackney Marshes. It's silent and gentle, so gradual that you hardly notice it at all until you look up and see that everything's different. 'Like snow', he said, out loud" (LAH 11).
His view is ambiguous, with no sense of an evaluative element: merely an expression of a more appropriate metaphor. Conspicuous by its absence, however, is the fear of difference that a Powellite might expect to find. He says:

> Contrasting with this, Mr. Keegan, whose perspective is given in the final chapter, expresses an evaluation of the Asian presence, this time embodied in the funeral procession for Tania's father. His wife feels that the Hindu traditions fit poorly with the British way of remembering the dead. However, though this old man "had never dared say, [...] he looked forward to these foreign cremations" and 'wondered if it wasn't better [the Hindu] way (LAH 331).

The Asian communities are seen to have provided a new and positive way for the white British to regard the world. This idea that immigration might actually revitalize and ameliorate British culture is also present in the novel when Tania sees how the communal life practised by Somalian immigrants in their front gardens has led 'a few white OAPs to venture into the once hallowed space of the front lawn' (LAH 272). The impression is of Britons liberated from the stuffiness of their culture and free to explore new and exciting spaces. Cultural diversity is seen here as inherently beneficial to the nation. Meera Syal's screenplays *Bhaji on the Beach* and *My Sister wife* were favourable received. Her first novel *Anita and Me* (1996) is narrated by a child in an Indian family in Britain.

In the novel, we get a clear picture of nine-year old Meena's interaction with her British neighbours, Syal cannot sustain the child's point of view, and the adult novelist frequently intrudes. *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) deals with the youth and middle age of three school friends: Sunita, a former law student and activist, has married her university sweetheart Akash; Tania has rejected tradition, family and
marriage in favour of a career in television, while child-like and unalluring Chila has managed to beg the seemingly perfect Deepak. As in her other works, Syal reveals the plight of British-Asian men and women, caught between the traditions of their families and the social mores around them. Some women have written just one novel each in the last decade; however, the variety of themes is impressive. The heroine Meera Syal is settled in Britain, but feels dissatisfied with her life there, and wants to come back to India. Most South Asian women writers seem to favour serious work, rather than entertaining popular fiction. There are a number of key academic texts that have attempted to bring the politicization of British Asian women to the fore. Cultural studies text is very influential in shaping postcolonial writings on diaspora Pratibah Parmar writes that:

Asian women have been at the forefront of numerous industrial, political and social struggles over the last decade. They have also been subjected to the full oppressive force of immigration legislation and institutional racism at all levels of British society. Yet, existing literature on black people in Britain has tended to ignore gender differences or to look at them through ethnocentric and pathological categories. With the exception of a few recent studies, there have been no serious attempts to analyse the role of women in the processes of migration and settlement, let alone the struggles against racism which have characterized the everyday lives of West Indian and Asia people in Britain (Jha, Arvind, Naik kumar, and Ram Kumar 12).

The ethnographic literature is concerned with the politicization of British Asian Women and is itself polemical and controversial as it grapples with the intersection between race, gender and colonialism. Parmar argues that: "Asian women
have ... also been involved in struggles and campaigns against other forms of oppression and repression" (Jha, Arvind, Naik Kumar, and Ram Kumar 13). The concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female consciousness, often in reaction to male paradigms for female experience. It is an ideology that opposes the political, economical and cultural relegation of women to positions of inferiority. The critical project of feminist critics is thus concerned with uncovering the contingencies of gender as a cultural, social and political construct and instrument of domination. Feminism is an umbrella term for range of views about injustices against women. There are some disagreements also among feminists about the nature of justice in general and the nature of sexism. All the feminists agreed that there is some sense of "rights" on which achieving equal rights for women is a necessary condition for feminism to succeed. According to critic Kolodny:

What unites and repeatedly invigorates feminist literary criticism... is neither dogma nor method but an acute and impassioned attentiveness to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed within our literary inheritance: the consequences of that encoding for women-as characters, as readers, and as writers; and with that, a shared analytic concern for the implications of that encoding not only for a better understanding of the past but also for an improved reordering of the present and future (Jha, Arvind, Naik Kumar, and Ram Kumar 236).

The field of feminism is undoubtedly very vast as it is committed to bring about social change to end injustice against women, and injustice against women as women. Feminist literary criticism has been very successful especially in reclaiming the lost literary women and in documenting the sources. Feminist literary criticism
really wants to generate new analytical methods in its readings of literary texts, and
disrupting the patriarchal tradition within its dominant discourses, by working from
within that tradition. Third world women's literature composes the literatures of
women writers Asia, Africa and Latin America, together with their respective
metropolitan diasporas. The grounding act of third world women's literature is
colonialism and this experience of imperialism has greatly influenced the lives and
texts of the so-called colonized. Racial globalism, racial difference and racial justice
are among our most fundamental political challenges. The modern epoch founded on
European imperialism and African slavery. Both systems organized racially. The theft
of labour and life, of land and resources, from millions of Africans and Native
Americans and from Asians and pacific Islanders as well, financed the rise of Europe
and made possible both its subsequent mercantilism and its later industrialism. The
main issue in this chapter is racial politics and to show the degree and scope of racial
inclusion justice available in a given society. The novels written by black British and
British Asian writers show how antiracism has determined the form and content of
both political debate and individual minority identities in Britain. Antiracism refers to
a broad range of discrete activities, behaviours, and attitudes which contest
discriminatory practices based on racial or religious difference. Many of these facets
have long histories and exist in their present forms only because of the many decades
or struggle that have made them possible. The dominant mode of antiracism in Britain
continues to be multiculturalism, even if it has been increasingly contested in recent
years. Multiculturalism itself is a problematic term, with multiple and often conflicting
meanings, but it perhaps remains the only available ideology that has taken diversity
seriously. It is valid to question whether this respect for diversity can on its own
challenge the many material bases and forms of racial discrimination, but few
antiracists accept that its ideals could profitably be abandoned altogether. Antiracism's legacy informing British political discourse and more, fundamentally, the types of selfhood which currently can be articulated cannot be ignored.