CHAPTER IV
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

An American Brat, The Namesake and Brick Lane emphasize how cultural values impinge upon the lifestyle of the diasporic community. The three writers, Bapsi Sidhwa, Jhumpa Lahiri and Monica Ali, respectively discuss the experiences of the immigrants and portray the struggle undergone by the first generation immigrants. The three novels are set in two locations: the homeland and the settled land. These novels also discuss the absent homes and try to construct the environments of the homelands they have left. This can be substantiated by the words of Salman Rushdie in his article “Imaginary Homelands”, wherein he thinks that the people who have immigrated have identities that are both “plural and partial”. He points out,

Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground maybe, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles.

(2000: 257)

Within this perspective the novels focus on building up a private life and attempt to reveal public incidents that depict change. At the beginning of settlement, the diasporic community faces several problems and attempts to reveal the dynamics of life, through the fictions that they attempt to write. The novels reveal that when the settled community is able to compromise and assimilate in the new land then the problems lessen. On the other hand, when they cannot compromise and adjust then it leads to helplessness as well as discrimination.
To understand this, a reading of the novels is done using Bakhtin’s idea of chronotope. Bakhtin in his utilization of reading the Greek romance discusses the development of the adventure novel. He explains in his reading of the adventure time that individual motifs such as meeting/parting, loss/acquisition, search/discovery, recognition/non-recognition become constituent elements of the plot. Bakhtin continues to state that the temporal marker cannot be separated from the spatial marker and yet, at certain levels the negative motif works, thereby allowing only time or space to be present. Moreover, as he points out, “The inseparable unity of time and space markers…gives to the chronotope of meeting an elementary clear, formal, almost mathematical character” (97). He also depicts that such a denouement of character is highly abstract. Therefore, the motif of meeting may have “different nuances depending on concrete associations, such as the emotional evaluation of the meetings…” (97).

Bakhtin uses the idea that the chronotope of meeting could lead to explaining an opening, an ending or even a denouement within a novel. The motif of meeting has a close link to parting, escape, acquisition, loss and marriage and although it is of universal importance, this significance may not be understood. For the adventure time to work Bakhtin thinks that an “abstract expanse of space” (99) is essential. The movement of events is “inseparably tied up with space”. According to Bakhtin this is “measured primarily by distance on the one hand and by proximity on the other hand” (99). Therefore, adopting the view point of the Greek romance signifies, that no “essential ties with any particular details of individual countries that might figure in the novel, with their social or political structure, with their culture of history” (100). Taking this one could say that even the diasporic novels have similar pattern and a particular place can be denoted as only a “naked, abstract expanse of space” (100).
Bakhtin’s “adventure chronotope is thus characterized by a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of movements in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space” (100). He, further states that in such a chronotope “all initiative and power belongs to chance” (100). Due to this, issue of specificity and concreteness is very limited. Any type of concretization that is geographic, economic, sociopolitical, quotidian would hamper the freedom and flexibility of adventure and limit the power of chance. In cases, where one depicts “one’s own native world, the indigenous reality surrounding one, such specificity and concretization would be absolutely unavoidable” (100). He reveals, that the Greek romance when contrasted to the travel novel, displays that the point of view in the travel novel’s world is served by the “author’s own real homeland” (105). This forms the “organizing center for the point of view, the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien countries and cultures are seen and understood” (103). Therefore, in the diasporic novel, the center of vision happens to be the writer’s own homeland. Moreover, Bakhtin points out that the “hero in such a novel is the *public and political* man of ancient times, a man governed by his sociopolitical, philosophical and utopian interests” (104).

Bakhtin points out, that the human images in the Greek romance are “*individuals, private persons*”. He continues to state that such an individual can only function as an “isolated and private individual, deprived of any organic connection with his country, his city, his own social group, his clan, even his own family” (108). On the other hand, the private individual also dons a public image which is a “legal and judicial affirmation” of the individual’s identity (109).

In this reading, one can notice that since the diasporic novel is set in an alien world, there is an element of indefiniteness in the narrative. The characters due to this feature have no organic ties or relationships with it and the last
governing sociopolitical and everyday life are foreign to them. Therefore, the character’s homeland portrays an ordinary, familiar world which is against the otherness and foreignness of the alien land. The world of the diasporic novel is, consequently demarcated between the space that the characters originated from and the present existence. The present chapter by focusing on the above mentioned two concepts looks at how the characters, in the novels, struggle to create their identity in the settled society. It is, significant to mention at this point how Stuart Hall too discusses this aspect of cultural identity. He defines one identity as being homogenous with the community wherein the individual selves are subsumed while in the second case the individual is progressing towards an identity which explains “what we are” (1992: 222). Therefore, the individual identities are on a parallel plane to the one, wherein a group’s narrative of history plays an important role. In order to focus on the idea of public account and metamorphosis, the reading here is done at two levels – spatial and temporal wherein spatial factor is divided into community space and individual space and temporal factor is divided into remembering the past and progression of time.

**Spatial References:**

Personal, community, cultural and political space widen the chance to understand the diasporic characters. Personal space helps to determine the nature of the diasporic characters in a vivid manner. Presentation of the community space includes political and cultural space, which discusses about the practice of a particular community. This chapter by looking at both personal and community space tries to show how personal as well as community space enables the readers to understand the effect of a community or communities’ practices on the behavioral nature of characters in diasporic fiction.
**Personal and Community Space:**

The presentation of personal space in each novel makes the readers to understand the characters in a better way. In *An American Brat*, Feroza is presented as a timid girl at the beginning of the novel and as the narration progresses Feroza’s movement to America shapes her into a bold and confident woman. Later on, in the novel, she begins to live her life independently. This change in America does not occur in a single night but takes several years. Even before one analyses the personal space, one must remember that this is rendered through the writer’s own experiences. From the presentation of Feroza’s character in the novel, one can notice that she is not very close with her parents even though she loves them. She keeps a distance from them and feels close to her friends. When she hears about her trip to the US, her heart overwhelms with happiness.

Feroza slipped under her quilt fully dressed, her eyes wide open, her mind throbbing with elation. She was going to America! She found it difficult to believe. She repeated to herself, “I’m going to America, I’m going to America!” until her doubts slowly ebbed and her certainty, too caught the rhythm of her happiness. (27)

Even though she feels excited about her trip, she also realizes at the airport that she is going to miss her family and her relatives. It makes her sad. “It was her city. A beautiful, lushly green and luminous city and she would miss it. Feroza felt the warmth of the sun nestle on the back of her head. She would miss Lahore, and her family” (47).

After reaching the Kennedy airport in the US, she becomes nervous about the enveloping sense of loneliness and alienation around her. She faces several challenges continuously which make her to understand the changes within her. After joining in a college she feels independent and slowly she changes her behavior. Her friendship with Jo helps her to learn the American way of life. Even then, sometimes she feels uncomfortable to mingle with the white and senses that
she is different from them. She is bothered with the environment around her: “She eventually came to the conclusion that it troubled her because America was so consummately rich and powerful, and the inconsistencies of its dual standards, the injustice it perpetuated, were so cynical and so brazen” (172). She earlier had felt comfortable to mingle with South Asians but later on due to her relationship with David, she forgets her friends. Slowly she begins to neglect her relatives for whom she gave much respect and concern. Due to her love for David there is a great deal of change in her nature, as she states,  

[S]he started seeing David everywhere. She saw him seated in shaded nooks in restaurants, slipping round campus corners and the counters in stores, cycling ahead of her on paths, climbing into the buses and riding past, walking away from her, always stepping away from her. Her heart pounding, she raced after him, her smile fading as she confronted strangers. (310)  

Much later in the novel although she is wounded and hurt due to the break in relationship between her and David, she decides to stay back in America as she recognizes this as her home, “But she could only do the healing right here, in America. For even in her bereft condition, she knew there was no going back for her, despite the poets and her friends” (311).  

From the beginning of the novel, Feroza appears to be emotionally dependent upon others. When she is in Pakistan, she is dependent upon her parents and friends. Later in the US, she depends first on Manek, then in college on her friend, Jo and later Shashi. After her relationship with David, she forgets everyone except David. When her relationship with David comes to an end, she goes back to her friends but at the same time she emerges as an independent woman. It enables her to think about her life seriously and to decide about her future with confidence. This point is reiterated by Geoffrey Kain in his article
“Rupture as Continuity: Migrant Identity and “Unsettled” Perspective in Bapsi Sidwa’s *An American Brat*”,

Theories of dynamic or turbulent identity are foregrounded when approaching a text like, most classically, Bapsi Sidwa’s *An American Brat* (1993), in which we encounter the increasingly familiar (though no less intriguing) narrative of “someone from out there” who comes “here,” of a spirited character who, despite her strength of resolve and youthful vigor, is fundamentally and inevitably changed by her exchanging “verbal communities.” As such, she helps us to see not only the power of culture to “select” behaviors and values, but also invites us to ponder the struggle of immigrants to retain their hold on what they value of their native (and—over time—increasingly distant) culture and, simultaneously, to relinquish those values and behaviors that are not reinforced by their present environment. (238)

Zareen’s (Feroza’s mother) personal space is filled with her emotional feeling for her family and her society. She is portrayed as an affectionate and sensitive woman, who is affected by the political condition of Pakistan. The political turmoil makes her to send her daughter to the US. She thinks that Feroza’s stay in the US will change her behavior. Not only is she interested about the welfare of her family but she also struggles for the upliftment of the society.

In the novel, Zareen’s political stances are rebuked by her mother, Khutlibai who remarks:

You’ve never shown much sense where Feroza’s upbringing is concerned. Jumping into this committee with Nusrat Bhutto, and that committee with Mumtaz Karamat, and not bothering about the child. And then you get her all fired up with this political nonsense.
Who is this Bhutto to you and you get so worked up? If I hadn’t been around, God knows who’d have taught my granddaughter to pray. (31)

When Zareen learns about Feroza’s relationship with David, it upsets her and it results in her visit to the US. After knowing David’s character, she changes her opinion about David and slowly she begins to like him. Besides this, the new environment too works on her: “Interestingly, however, Zareen’s perspective begins to change as the new environment exerts its influence over her, and she too begins to soften and drift from the cultural vantage point she has been sent from Pakistan to represent” (243). She forgets the purpose of her visit to the US and spends her days cheerfully but a letter from Pakistan reminds her of her purpose and she again begins to be indifferent towards David. She talks about the customs of their marriage to him and it results in the breaking of her daughter’s relationship with David. Zareen is thus, portrayed as an innocent and sensitive woman who gives much importance for her culture.

Manek, Zareen’s brother is introduced as a student in the US and is a representative of the South Asian community in the US. His initial struggles to cope with the US culture help him to guide his niece, Feroza to come out of the problems, which he faced. He considers his experiences as a lesson, to teach Feroza about the US. Whenever Feroza felt depressed, he attempts to help her. His life in the US (more than six years) does not change him considerably and his experiences enable him to understand the US better, and from that perspective he looks at the problems Pakistan faces. As revealed in the novel, he seems to interact with only his community people and ultimately also marries a girl of his community. One can conclude that his personal space is filled with his devotion to his culture and tradition and his admiration for the American work culture is only from a distance.
On a close reading of *An American Brat*, two different communities are presented – one is the Pakistani community which follows culture and tradition very strictly and another is the American community which believes in people’s independence. The nature of both communities is contradictory to each other. In this novel the characters who travel from Pakistan to the US in their initial stage will be shaken by the cultural difference which they experience. As a contrast to the American society, the novel portrays the Pakistani community too. It depicts the restrictions imposed on the Pakistani women. Zareen notices that in the Pakistani community women are made to accept their position without question and she once complains about it to Cyrus, her husband – “Women mustn’t show their legs, women shouldn’t dress like this, and women shouldn’t act like that. Girls mustn’t play hockey or sing or dance” (10).

The people in Pakistan considered American culture as a degraded one. When Zareen decides to send her daughter to the U.S, her mother Khutlibai condemns it. She considered American culture as a bad influence for her granddaughter:

The *there* was pregnant with unspeakable knowledge of the sexual license allowed American girls and the perils of drink and drugs. Compounding the danger were vivid images of rapists looming in dark alleys to entrice, molest and murder young girls. (30)

But the younger generation of the Pakistani community in the US have a different opinion about it. Manek in his statements points out the goodness of American culture:

The first lesson you learn in America is ‘You don’t get something for nothing...Nothing is given to you on a plate. You don’t know that, because nobody works in Pakistan. Not your father, your grandfathers, or your uncles. They think they work, but compared
to America, everyday’s Sunday. If you want to be independent and enjoy the good life, you have to get into the habit of working’. (123-124)

As already stated, American community is presented as a contrast to the Pakistani community. Feroza’s friend Jo’s family is presented as a contrast to Feroza’s. Jo has all the rights to select her life partner and to decide her life, but in Feroza’s case it is different. When she writes to her parents regarding her relationship with David, it shocks every one of them. It results in her mother’s visit to the US, because “Marrying outside her community could exclude the girl from community matters and certainly bar her from her faith” (17).

Another aspect touched upon in the novel, is Pakistanis’ preference for political issues. Their conscience regarding politics is described as follows:

In Pakistan, politics concerned – from the street sweeper to the business tycoon – because it personally affected everyone, particularly women, determining how they should dress, whether they could play hockey in school or not, how they should conduct themselves even within the four walls of their homes. (171) Americans in contrast, do not pay much attention to politics like the Pakistani people. Throughout the novel, community difference between Pakistan and US is presented. By presenting it, the author tries to present the struggle that is undergone by the diasporic people in different communities. The analysis here reveals how although the novel is written from the geographical location of America, Sidhwa effectively utilizes the personal and communal events to portray life in Pakistan.

In Brick Lane, Nazneen is portrayed as a simple village girl who comes to London after her marriage. The novel depicts that Nazneen most often keeps
visualizing her past in the homeland. She is brought up to believe unreservedly about the power of fate. However, later her life in London brings several changes in her character, which makes her independent. Earlier when she arrived in London, she was familiar with only two English words and her married life with Chanu had been founded not on love but convenience. She lives as his wife without any intimacy towards him and many a time his behavior and speech irritates her. In such cases, she displays her anger through her work:

Nazneen dropped the promotion from her prayers. The next day she chopped two fiery red chilies and placed them, like hand grenades, in Chanu’s sandwich. Unwashed socks were paired and put back in his drawer. The razor slipped when she cut his corns. His files got mixed up when she tidied. All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled in turn. Small insurrections, designed to destroy the state from within. (63)

Later, Chanu’s attachment and affection changes her attitude and she begins to show affection towards him. Throughout the novel, one can find that her love for her sister, Hasina remains unchanged and she consciously strives to help her. Her personal space is filled with love for her family and her desire for independent life. Nazneen’s move into the new world is not easy and she goes through compromise and adjustments before she takes a bold step. Commenting on this, Chris Weedon mentions,

As in other British South Asian novels and films, social control among Bangladeshi women in *Brick Lane* is exercised via gossip and censure. The text offers an insightful depiction of how women develop strategies of apparent compliance alongside internalized opposition to the people around them. As in many diasporic texts, dreams and memories of the lost homeland pay a positive role in securing identity and survival, yet in Nazneen’s case, while she dreams of her early years in the village of Goripur, she is aware
that where she wants to be is not in Bangladesh as such, but back in the world of her childhood. Her sister’s letters are a constant reminder of the harsh reality of life for women in her home country. While religion and fate sustain her identity, she becomes increasingly aware of contradictions and alternative interpretations of events from her past. By the end of the novel she is strong enough to reject a love relationship because it is based on the idea of her as an unspoilt and authentic village woman that does not do justice to her self-image. (27)

Alternatively Chanu’s personal space is filled with a number of disappointments and failures. When he marries Nazneen, he finds no attraction towards her and for the sake of marriage, he marries her. He says to one of his friends that, “a blind uncle is better than no uncle” (23), but slowly he begins to love her. He mentions, “[i]n all these years, I have never – not once – regretted my choice of bride” (406). Due to his education, he believes that he differs from his community people. He always feels himself as superior than his own community people in London. He accepts his wife’s wishes if it is necessary for them. Once he mentions to Nazneen, “I don’t stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck” (45).

Chanu is presented as an individual who is isolated and alienated from others. Even with his daughters he feels no intimacy, but he always feels close to them. When their son, Raqib is admitted in a hospital and later when Nazneen suffers due to nervous breakdown, through his concern towards Nazneen, he shows his affection towards them. He mention, “All these years I dreamed of going home a Big Man. Only now, when it’s nearly finished for me, I realized what is important. As long as I have my family with me, my wife, my daughters, I
am as strong as any man alive” (477). But this is only feeling is not constant and most often Chanu is depicted as a disgruntled and unhappy man forever complaining. One such instance of complaining is the incident where he tells to Dr. Azad:

I have been in this country for sixteen years. Nearly half of my life…when I came I was a young man. I had ambitions. Big dreams. When I got off the aeroplane I had my degree certificate in my suitcase and a few pounds in my pocket. I thought there would be a red carpet laid out for me…And then I found things were a bit different. These people here didn’t know the difference between me, who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads. (34)

He pretends that he is a successful person and reveals this image to his relatives in Bangladesh. He always dreams about high life but continuously he faces several failures. Initially, he had waited eagerly for promotion but in vain. Later he had decided to build a house in Dhaka and to leave there with his family members. But he could not save anything to do that. Even then with much hope he formulates his next plan, once again to be faced with disappointment and frustration:

His plans, to which he gave his all and from which he expected so much, had deserted him. Before that, each collapse of ambition, though it dented his surface, had goaded him to new determination, a more urgent reaching. He started every new job with a freshly spruced suit and a growing collection of pens. His face shone with hope. And then greyed with frustration, with resentment. (203)
Chanu is presented as a man who always likes to talk and who speaks as if he lectures to several audiences about books, English literature, history of Bangladesh and British people. Initially, Nazneen was often confused and was unable to understand, whether he was talking to her or to a huge audience. Later when he becomes serious about his return trip to Bangladesh, he reduces his speech and concentrates on his work.

The condition of Bangladeshi youth in London makes Chanu to take the decision of leaving London for Dhaka. He believes that the London culture will spoil the youngsters and Bangladeshi culture will be good one for them. So he decides to save money for their return trip. Due to it he works as a taxi driver. Later, he accepts his wife and daughter’s decision of their staying without imposing his own wish. It makes him to leave his wife and daughters in London and he goes back to Dhaka without them. Another fact that is to be noticed here as pointed by Kral, is that Chanu’s thinking is frozen in time:

*Brick Lane* provides a very telling example when Chanu argues that Bangladeshis are the happiest people in the world, a statement debunked by Hasina’s letters with their narratives of women beaten, raped, exploited and disfigured by their husbands. The gap between Hasina’s Bangladesh and Chanu’s dream country suggests a certain naivety but it also poses the question of the responsibility of migrants whose virtual “everywhereness” results in a political and ethical short-sightedness… (69)

Chanu in the novel is presented as a soft person and only his behavior and actions are narrated. His inner feelings and thoughts are not presented to the readers.

Nazneen’s daughters, Shahana and Bibi portray the problems faced by the second generation of the diasporic people due to cultural clash and identity problem. Shahana, the elder daughter of Nazneen from the beginning is presented
as one who opposes Chanu’s ideas outwardly. Shahana considers London as her home place and is not ready to accept Bangladesh which results in a misunderstanding between her father and her: “There was always this tension between them. They could never get over their disappointments” (193). She does not show any respect or love towards her father. She tells her mother, “What do I care? I hate him. I hate him” (194). When Chanu decides to leave for Bangladesh, Shahana is not ready for it. From the beginning she opposes the idea and she thinks Bangladesh as a new place for her to go. She already faces two different cultures – Bangladeshi culture at home and British culture outside the home. It makes her wonder why she was born to them. The daughter’s predicament in this novel, especially Shahana’s personal turmoil helps the readers to understand the tension between the first and second generations of the diasporic community.

Razia’s personal space in Brick Lane indicates her thirst for an independent life. She faces problems due to her husband and children. She emerges as a rebel in her community, who earns money and supports her family. This causes her to face several criticisms in her society. She gives importance to her family and for herself and is not bothered about the society. On seeing Razia’s courage several women from her community desire to live independently. Hasina’s (Nazneen’s sister) personal space illustrates the nature of the Bangladeshi community and its discrimination towards women. Readers can know Hasina through Nazneen’s memory and Hasina’s letters to her sister. She is presented as an independent woman in her society, which is a condemnable one in the Bangladeshi society. In a community, where one expects women to be obedient and passive, Hasina emerges as a rebel, who chooses her own partner for life. Unfortunately her love life comes to an end quickly, and through out her life in the male hegemonic society, she is made to live a life of difficulties, anxieties and dilemmas. Her experiences in the garment factory give a clear picture about the hypocritical nature of her society. The male chauvinistic society in
Bangladesh, does not allow women to live alone, and when a woman is alone, a number of stories about her are circulated in the area. Thus, Hasina, who works in a factory, is a source of gossip and rumor to the people in that area. They spread stories about Hasina and her landlord, thereby alienating her in the factory:

*I out from favour at factory. One week past they shunning me. I go to sit with the others for lunch time they make silence. I sitting apart and only look at chapatti. They put hands up and whisper. I am not looking still I see. I sit near the tap... I sad but it will pass. Just a mix up going around. Only small bad patch. Days going slow making feel a little tired.* (158-159)

Due to her friendship with Abdul she loses her job. In order to come away from her poverty stricken condition, she resorts to earning a livelihood as a prostitute. She writes about this aspect to her sister, “They put me out from factory for untrue reason and due to they put me out the reason have come now as actual truth” (169). Later she finds some hope in her life through Ahmed’s love and she marries him. That happiness also comes to an end soon when he sends her away and then she earns her living working as a servant. This peaceful existence lasts only for a few years for then she elopes with a cook who is younger than herself. Throughout her life Hasina is made to run and fight against her society. On reading Hasina’s character and suffering, one can easily understand that her personal space is used by the author to picturise the cruel nature of the patriarchal society of Bangladesh.

In *Brick Lane*, the community plays a major role. The Muslim community in Bangladesh as well as in London makes the readers to understand the leading role played by culture in their everyday life. By presenting the incident regarding Nazneen’s birth, the writer tries to capture the culture of the Bangladeshi community, which decides to leave everything to fate. They accept everything as God’s decision and do not want to act against it. When Nazneen tries to save her
son, she thinks that she can fight against fate and win, but she ultimately fails. Several years later she remembers that incident and in her dreams her mother calls Nazneen as the one who kills her son by not accepting fate.

The religious beliefs and practices of Bangladesh in London are repeatedly portrayed. The protagonist, Nazneen is presented as a very pious woman who prays regularly. Whenever Nazneen is confused or bothered with something, she found solace from the reading of the Koran. When she feels tensed about Dr. Azad’s arrival for dinner, she reads from the Koran to calm herself. “The words calmed her stomach and she was pleased. … To God belongs all the heavens and the earth contain. She said it over a few times, aloud. She was composed. Nothing could bother her” (20). The Bangladeshi community is presented as one which indulges in gossip. Razia thinks that, “Spreading rumours is our national pastime” (26). The Bangladeshi community in London together creates a little Bangladesh for themselves.

The novel concentrates on the major problems faced by the Bangladeshi community in London. The younger generations’ easy attraction to the Western way of life creates lots of misunderstanding between parents and children and also leads them to indulge in drugs and alcoholism. Elders of the Bangladeshi community complain that, “the young ones would do anything. If they lit a cigarette in the street and they saw an elder coming, they did not bother to hide it. They walked with their girlfriends. They even kissed, in the street, in front of an elder” (312). Till the end of the novel, the author presents the younger generations as spoilt children and youngsters. Dr. Azad comments, “[N]ow our children are copying what they see here, going to the pub, to nightclubs. Or drinking at home in their bedrooms where their parents think they are perfectly safe. The problem is our community is not properly educated about these things” (31). Everywhere, in the Bangladeshi diasporic society, drug and alcohol addicts increase and it causes
much trouble for the whole community. When the children are unable to get money from their parents first they start to steal from home and later from outside. It results in changing them from innocent youngsters to hooligans. At this time what they need is, “More drugs counselors and more jobs for the young people” (249). Karim feels that the White government encourages drugs among the Muslim community in order to suppress them. He thinks that the same method used for the Blacks is now being utilized for the Muslim community.

The FBI – the Government – they got together with the Mafia, and flooded the blacks with drugs, set them up with all the guns and stuff, so they can just get high and shoot each other. Long as it stays in the ghettoes, man, they’re not bothered”. (311)

The government itself encourages drugs for young Muslims because “as long as they’re on the scag, they stay away from religion. And the Government – it’s more scared of Islam than heroin” (311). Due to it many of the Bangladeshi elders decide to leave London with their children.

The Bangladeshi community even in London follows its societal restrictions. When Nazneen wishes to go out independently, Chanu objects to it for the sake of his community. He asks,

Why should you go out? said Chanu. If you go out, ten people will say, “I saw her walking on the street.” And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don’t mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?.... Besides, I get everything for you that you need from the shops. Anything you want, you only have to ask… And anyway, if you were in Bangladesh you would not go out. Coming here you are not missing anything, only broadening your horizons. (45)
Many women in the Bangladeshi community wish to bring in changes to their society. They feel fed up with the community in which they live. “‘Some people. Perhaps many people. They are all hypocrites. That is the thing about our community. All sinking, sinking drinking water’” (129). Women in the Bangladeshi community in London want to come out of the restrictive lifestyles. Razia by breaking the codes of her community, cuts her hair short, wears dresses like the Whites and goes for a job. When the novel ends, readers can find out not only Razia but many women including the protagonist, Nazneen begin to join her to live independently. In Bangladesh too, people face several discriminations especially women. The society imposes many restrictions on women. Hasina’s character is an apt example to show how independent women suffer in that society and how they are cheated by the male society. Not only in Bangladesh, even in London, Bangladeshi women are expected to be dependent. When they try to go for work they are viewed as cheap women and their status in the society is very low. Chanu considers Razia as disreputable due to her independent nature. The community space in the novel presents the cultural clash which the Bangladesh youngsters face in the White society such as suppression of women and discrimination.

In *The Namesake*, Ashima’s personal space represents the feelings and changes of the first generation diasporic women from the South Asian countries. During her initial stay, she feels lonely and struggles to adopt the American culture and its way of life. But slowly she begins to adjust to the American culture. Her personal space is filled with concern for her family. She does not have any independent or individual wish and whatever she thinks, it is only for the welfare of her family. In the beginning of her stay in the US, she tries to have the feel of her home country, through adapting the cultural and traditional practices of her homeland. Earlier during her stay in Calcutta, she was always surrounded by her family members. In the US, on the other hand, for the first time
in her life, she was left alone. Her feeling of loneliness is eradicated by her children. Later due to her friendship and interaction with her community people, she begins to gradually overcome her homesickness. She spends most of her life looking after her family members and satisfying their needs. For her, it is very difficult to understand and accept the concept of American way of living alone. When her children live separately due to their education and job, it affects her greatly. She often calls them and tries to communicate with them. Even after staying there for more than twenty years, Ashima is unable to overcome her nostalgia for home.

She has saved her dead parents’ letters on the top shelf of her closet, in a large white purse she used to carry in the seventies until the strap broke. Once a year she dumps the letters into her bed and goes through them, devoting an entire day to her parents’ words, allowing herself a good cry. She revisits their affection and concern, conveyed weekly, faithfully, across continents – all the bits of news that had had nothing to do with her life in Cambridge but which had sustained her in those days nevertheless. (160-161)

When Ahsoke goes to Ohio for his research work, she accepts to stay alone at home. In order to make herself busy, she works in the nearby library. Yet she is troubled by the emptiness of her house:

At forty-eight she has come to experience the solitude that her husband and son and daughter already know, and which they claim not to mind. “It’s not such a big deal,” her children tell her. “Everyone should live on their own at some point” But Ashima feels too old to learn such a skill. She hates returning in the evenings to a dark, empty house, going to sleep on one side of the bed and waking up on another. (161)

After her husband’s death, she begins to live with her children. As a responsible mother, she arranges marriage for Gogol which turns to failure. Due to this failure
she accepts her daughter, Sonia’s marriage with a White. After settling her children’s future to some extent, she decides to fulfill her husband’s wish of living in India for six months and in the US for the next six months. Again, by her decision, she proves her wish to live close to her family members and her inability to live as an independent woman in the society.

Gogol’s personal space is filled with the problems he faces due to his ambivalent position. In the novel, he oscillates between the American and the Indian culture. Most of the problems he faces do not arise from the society but from his own mentality and behavior. From his childhood, he has problems regarding his name and different cultural practices, which is practiced at his home and in the society. He is portrayed as one who feels dissatisfied with some thing or the other. Initially, he feels annoyed when his parents insist a name-change but he wishes to be known as Gogol. Later, he feels that the name Gogol, isolates him from his peers and he then decides to change his name to Nikhil. This change enables a personality and character transformation. This allows him to live an independent life and slowly he reduces his visits to his family. “He didn’t want to go to home on the weekends, to go with them to pujas and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world” (126). The cultural contrast between the American and the Indian is glaringly evident when Gogol lives in his girlfriend, Maxine’s home. He prefers the American culture and desires to stay with Maxine disconnecting all communication with his family: “...he remembers that his parents can’t possibly reach him: he has not given them the number, and the Ratliff’s are unlisted. That here at Maxine’s side, in this cloistered wilderness, he is free” (158). Another illustration of the change between the two cultures is witnessed by Gogol when he goes for a summer vacation with Maxine’s parents to New Hampshire:

[H]e cannot picture his family occupying a house like this, playing board games on rainy afternoons, watching shooting stars at night,
all their relatives gathered neatly on a small strip of sand. It is an impulse his parents have never felt, this need to be so far from things. They would have felt lonely in this setting, remarking that they were the only Indians. (155)

After his father’s death, he feels guilty for not contacting his parents often. The loss of his father makes him to shower affection towards his mother and sister, and slowly he comes away from Maxine. He begins to spend his weekends, with his family and agrees to marry an Indian girl whom his mother selects. When his marriage breaks up, it upsets him mentally. He realizes that his yearning is more than that of his parents. When the novel ends he revives his earlier name of Gogol. His personal space is filled with the sufferings faced by the second generation diasporic community and their inbetweeness in the society.

*The Namesake* gives much of the Indian cultural and traditional practices. One such instance of a cultural practice is that in India, married women do not address their husbands by their names. This characteristic of Indianess is presented through Ashima’s character.

When she calls out to Ashoke, she doesn’t say his name. Ashima never thinks of her husband’s name when she thinks of her husband, even though she knows perfectly well what it is. She has adopted his surname but refuses, for propriety’s sake, to utter his first. It’s not the type of thing Bengali wives do. Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband’s name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over. And so, instead of saying Ashoke’s name she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as “Are you listening to me?”
Even after staying for more than three decades in the US, Ashima does not leave the traditional lifestyle. When Maxine, Gogol’s girlfriend addresses Ashoke and Ashima by their names, Ashima develops a dislike towards her. Yet another cultural practice, mentioned in the novel, is with regard to the issue of names. According to the Bengali tradition, people have two names. One is a pet name and another one is a good name and at the same time they will not name after their ancestors. For the Americans such a practice is a strange one and a statement to this effect is made in the narrative: “This tradition doesn’t exist for Bengalis, naming a son after father or grandfather, a daughter after mother or grandmother. This sign of respect in America and Europe, this symbol of heritage and lineage, would be ridiculed in India. Within Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared” (28). By presenting several incidents within the novel, the author presents the contrast between the American and Indian community. *An American Brat, Brick Lane* and *The Namesake* through their community representations, present the contradiction between the two societies – American and Pakistani, British and Bangladeshi and American and Indian respectively.

**Political Space:**

Along with community space, political space too plays a major role in the novels. In *An American Brat* and *Brick Lane*, politics of the homeland is presented. It is one of the reasons for the protagonists to visit or to prolong their stay in the settled land. *The Namesake* does not have any references to politics.

*An American Brat* describes the importance given to politics in Pakistan. This novel portrays important political incidents which occurred during the 1970s. Most of the Pakistani characters in the novel give importance to the politics of their nation. “In Pakistan, politics with its special brew of marital law and religion, influenced every aspect of day-to-day living” (11). The Parsee
community which is presented in this novel has much faith in Bhutto, even though he is a Muslim. They all have pinned their hope upon him as Zareen mentions, “I was really hopeful when Bhutto was elected. For the first time I felt it didn’t matter that I was not a Muslim, or that I was a woman. You remember when he told the women in Peshawar to sit with the men? That took guts!” (11). Later Bhutto was arrested and there was a public communication to the extent that he would be hanged. Zareen’s admiration for Bhutto is revealed through an incident in the novel. Once, Zareen at a party meets an American who wishes to meet her knowing about her admiration for Bhutto. During their conversation, he enquires of her reaction to Bhutto’s death sentence. Such thinking makes Zareen shiver and she states in a trembling voice: “There will be a lot of trouble. It will be the worst possible thing, the most tragic thing to happen. He is loved by the masses. The repercussions will be terrible. Horrible” (176). But, when Bhutto was hung there was no such protest. Zareen writes about it in a wounded way to her daughter as, “I realized then that there is no such thing as a ‘spontaneous uprising’ unless it is sanctioned!” (178). After three years of stay in the US, when Feroza returns to Pakistan, she finds that people in Pakistan have forgotten Bhutto and his hanging and they begin to give importance to other political matters. Not only Bhutto’s hanging but several other political issues are also presented in this novel. By presenting the political incidents of Pakistan, The American Brat reveals the importance of political space in the Pakistani society.

Brick Lane makes an attempt, to present the political problems, faced by the Bangladeshi community in London, which in London, is considered as a minority group and occupies a lower position in the society. The political discrimination, faced by the community is presented through the anger of the Bengali Tigers movement. Chanu too points this when he states, “I myself would like to add that Bangladeshis are the most deprived ethnic group in the whole of the UK. This is the immigrant tragedy” (353). Along with the political space in
London, political space in Bangladesh is also presented. Bangladeshi community in London feels that they are discriminated. After the incident of the attempted destruction of the Pentagon by an air crash, the condition of Bangladeshis, especially the Muslims, worsen. Karim questions how the Americans know that the crash was planned by the Muslims. He gives his perspective of this incident to Nazneen,

All four black boxes from the aeroplanes – that’s where everything that went on is recorded – were destroyed. But have you heard about the magic passport? One of the hijackers’ passports survived the fire – heat of over one thousand degrees Fahrenheit. Found in the rubble of the World Trade Centre. What kind of fools does the FBI take us for? (383)

He believes that in order to suppress the Muslim community these incidents are made up by the Whites. Karim feels not only in the U.K but throughout the world Muslims occupy a minor role. “If a few Muslim children die, who cares? If it’s a few hundred, a few thousand, half a million, a million who cares? We should not write about our brothers in Iraq, or in Chechnya or anywhere else, because we do not care about them. To us, they ain’t nothing” (283). The White takes the attack on the Pentagon as a reason to suppress the Muslim community throughout the world. Because of that incident every individual who belongs to the Muslim community suffers.

The political space in the novel gives some incidents to show the superior position occupied by the White community. The diasporic community in London tries in several ways to claim for their rights, but the result is that ultimately they face unemployment, low wages, discrimination in several aspects and misunderstanding among themselves. In both novels An American Brat and Brick Lane political condition of those countries enable the character to form their characters.
Reading the Past:

An American Brat, Brick Lane and The Namesake are narrated from the point of view of the third person. These novels follow chronological order and it helps to understand the plot very easily. The movement from the present to the past occurs due to the characters remembrance about the incident which took place in the past. This chapter’s flashbacks can be considered to be of two types: 1) remembering the past without attachment to it, 2) remembering the past with attachment (nostalgia of the diasporic community). When a character thinks about another character and its action then he/she automatically remembers a past incident which is connected to the other individual’s behavior. This kind of remembrance is different from nostalgic remembrance of the diasporic people. In ordinary remembrance, the character remembers a terrific, sad or happy incident which connects one character to another. This will lead to thinking about past without any attachment.

Past without Attachment:

In An American Brat, Khutlibai objects to Zareen’s idea of sending Feroza to stay with Manek in the US. This made her to think of the past where Manek always ill treated Feroza. She tells about it to Zareen, “Don’t you remember how he chased her all over the neighborhood with a shotgun? Luckily she wasn’t seriously injured. And how he made her run round and round the compound, cracking that hunter’s whip of his?” (37). Here Khutlibai just remembers the incident without longing for it. She recollects this incident in order to stop Feroza’s trip to America. Similarly when Manek leaves Feroza in a museum, in order to teach her a lesson, Feroza’s reminisces of an incident, wherein Manek had tried to kill her in her childhood.

In Brick Lane, past is mentioned often without any nostalgic feelings. Nazneen narrates her past, as stories to her daughters, and often through some conversation or scene, she travels back to the past time through memories. During
her initial days in London, Nazneen remembers her sister and mother often. She recalls her mother’s death and the sufferings faced by her family members due to it. Her memory gives details about her village, her country’s culture and about her family. Her remembrance of her family, especially her mother gives glimpses of the Bangladeshi society to the reader.

An important incident in *The Namesake* is Ashoke’s experience during the train accident. This incident makes the reader to understand the reason for Ashoke’s special attachment to the name, Gogol and the reason for naming his son as Gogol. During Ashima’s delivery, while Ashoke reads a novel, he remembers an accident he had when he was young. Here Ashoke is not going back to his past to remember the incident, but the narrator takes the reader to the past to give a vivid picture of the accident. So here moving to the past does not possess any nostalgic feeling. The narrator mentions about Ashoke’s interest in reading Gogol, a Russian writer’s work, and how his reading has helped him to save his life from the cruel accident he met during his journey to his grand parents’ house. When the train in which he travels is blasted, most of the people who traveled along with him are dead. During that time, the book which he reads helps him to save his life. Similarly, the narrator again takes the reader to the past, when Ashima reminisces about the English language and the mistakes she commits. She realizes that “In Calcutta, before she was married, she was working toward a college degree” (7) wherein English had been her subject. In *The American Brat* and *Brick Lane*, past is mentioned through other character’s remembrance of their past. But in this novel the readers are taken to the past through the third person narration.

**Past with Attachment:**
The second kind of remembrance, is nostalgia, which makes the characters to think about their past in the homeland with longing. This kind of nostalgia results
due to the diasporic characters isolation in the settled society and their longing to return to the home country. In this kind of remembrance, the character experiences nostalgia for the past (time), for one’s own home (space) and for one’s family members. In *An American Brat*, even though Feroza stays in the US voluntarily, she feels nostalgic and home sick. Later, when she mingles with many people and adopts the settled culture, she feels comfortable to stay there without a feeling of losing anything. Aban, Manek’s wife feels lonely and nostalgic about the home country. She finds no one to be friendly with her and feels always isolated. When Manek complains at her talkativeness she replies, “Who else can I talk to? The walls? I’m alone all day. I didn’t know I was going to be so bored and lonely in America” (262).

In *Brick Lane*, no diasporic characters except Nazneen to some extent feels nostalgic about the home country and past. Therefore, Nazneen faces a number of apparitions, such as recording angels (210) and visit of her dead mother (267). This has been put down by Cormack as phantoms of her guilty conscience: “The angels on Brick Lane are simply phantoms produced by Nazneen’s guilty conscience” (716). This sense of rendering an ‘absent communal past’ in the novel, sets Nazneen to have a new cultural ambience, but at the same time this also constrains her ability to gain a new culture. Finally, it does provide her with a sense of belonging without any loss. Nazneen does not wish to return to her past, to live with her father. The only thing which makes her to be nostalgic is her love for her sister. This reminisces of the sister is viewed as a mirror story by Cormack in “Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form: Realism and the Postcolonial Subject in Brick Lane”. Cormack, believes that Nazneen’s sister, Hasina’s letters provide a world set in Bangladesh. This world is far from the world that Nazneen represents and hence Cormack thinks that the “letters that tell this story are presented unmediated by any metalanguage” (715). Further, Cormack places this in a post-colonial context and states, “The very distance
between cultures is crucially shown by Hasina’s mutilated attempts to render her experiences in the foreign tongue and Bangladesh’s resistance to representation accentuated” (715).

Ashima in *The Namesake*, during her initial stage in the US often remembers her family members and also her home country. She feels that in a foreign land, she missed every normal incident which occurred in her home country. When she gives birth to Gogol, her feeling of loneliness increases and she misses her parents intensely. Whenever she feels homesick, she reads a Bengali magazine, which she has bought from her home during her arrival to the US and letters from her parents for several times. Through this she remembers her past with nostalgic feeling. Here, after Ashoke’s death, Gogol looks back at the past memories of his relationship with his father. Till the time of his father’s death, he does not know how much love he has for his father. After his father’s death, he becomes close to his family. Once, when he travels back to meet his mother, on the way, he sees the ocean which reminds him of his father.

He sees a stone bridge, scattered islands the size of rooms, gracious gray and white homes with pleasant views…It is a view his father would have appreciated, and Gogol is reminded of the many times he had driven with his family, on cold Sunday afternoons, to the sea. There were times when it had been so cold that they had simply sat in the car, in the parking lot, looking at the water, his parents sharing tea from a thermos in the front seat, the engine running to keep them warm. (185)

In this way his memory takes him to the past, where he and his father had an adventure. In nostalgic remembrance, the diasporic community pays importance to the presentation of different locations, societies and times. It permits the
diasporic community to move to the past and to another land often and importance is given to both of it.

**Progression of Time:**
Temporal locality is understandably a part of the narrative in *An American Brat, The Namesake* and *Brick Lane*. Time is a crucial factor in everyday life. When the time progresses from one phase to another, life too progresses either in a positive way or in a negative way leading to a definite change in life. In diasporic fictions, role of time and space is more than in other kinds of fictions. In the initial stage of their settlement in the settled society, the diasporic community faces several problems and it leads them to be nostalgic about their home country always. As time progresses they begin to be comfortable in the settled society and learn to accept the new culture. Sometimes they may also become habituated to adjust to the discriminations in the settled society.

In *An American Brat*, one can find a drastic change in the character of Feroza when one traces the progression of time. Feroza is introduced as a nervous and shy girl in the beginning of the novel but her experiences in the US change her into a new Feroza. In the period of three years in the US, she faces several experiences and it results in the formation of another character within her. Through a close reading of the cultural conflicts, one can notice the progress of time as well as change in Feroza’s personality. Feroza’s changes in behavior make her relatives, especially her mother, to be stunned. “Zareen was astonished at the change in Feroza. Was this flaming, confident creature, who talked so engagingly and candidly and had acquired a throaty, knowing, delectable laugh, the same timid little thing who had refused to answer the phone?” (236). Feroza’s trip to Pakistan makes her conscious of the difference between her and her friends. She senses that she could not talk to them like before and understands that some gap emerges between them.
From her visit to Lahore, Feroza knew she had changed, and the life of her friends there had also changed, taken a different direction from hers. Their preoccupation with children and servants and their concern with clothes and furnishing did not interest her. Neither did the endless round of parties that followed their parents’ mode of hospitality. (312)

Later Feroza, who had at one point placed emphasis on religion and culture once, throws out everything for the sake of love and wishes to marry David, a non-Parsee. Sometimes she herself wonders at her change. “Once when she was sneaking back into her room at three o’ clock in the morning with her shoes in her hand, she wondered if she was the same girl who had lived in Lahore and gone to the Convent of the Sacred Heart” (264). Feroza feels David is everything for her and their love cannot be changed forever, but as time passes she finds a change in their relationship and she comes to believe that time could ultimately heal the wound.

Similarly coping and living in a new culture changes Manek too. Manek is the first person in his family who stays in the US and he learns everything in a tough way and thinks of his bitter experiences. In Pakistan, interrupting someone while they are talking is a common thing and it will not hurt anyone’s feeling. But in the US it is different. To learn these kinds of simple things is a very difficult one for Manek.

“Manek recalled the stony expressions of professors as they looked away whenever he tried to correct someone who was giving wrong answers in class. How icily they had looked down their noses at him afterwards. Nobody had told him that Americans felt so strongly about interruptions. He’d had to find it out for himself” (100).
Due to his harsh experiences in the US, he trains Feroza to learn everything so that she too does not face the bitterness and embarrassment that he had experienced. Feroza understood the trauma, her uncle Manek might have undergone. “Feroza vaguely sensed that American had tested Manek. Challenged him, honed him, extended his personality and the horizon of his potential in a way that had made him hers” (103). In Feroza and Manek’s case due to their departure from their home country, they face several changes and experiences in the course of time. But in the case of other characters change is not presented in a vivid manner. They seem to live a same life without much change. Even if there is any change it vanishes in a small interval of time.

In a similar vein, *Brick Lane* too presents the changes in the characters’ personalities. Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel arrives in London from Bangladesh after her marriage. She is a simple and obedient woman. She is a woman who has immense faith in her father and agrees to his suggestions docilely. Even when her marriage is being arranged, her father asks whether she wishes to see the groom’s photograph, and she replies, “‘Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma’” (16). She is new to the atmosphere in London and the only known person in that place is her husband. She plays the role of a perfect housewife from the point of view of her husband. He comments about this aspect in a telephonic conversation: “[S]he is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that. The only complaint I could make is she can’t put my files in order, because she has no English. I don’t complaint though. As I say, girl from the village: totally unspoilt” (23). As Chanu observes, Nazneen pays too much attention to household chores and depends upon her husband for everything. Her relationship with her husband was cold and distant. Often she questions herself whether she loves him or not, “Was she beginning to love Chanu, or just getting used to him?” (40). She desires to keep any one issue
for herself without letting her husband knew about it. Therefore, she began to eat by night time or when he was absent at home.

Nazneen did not turn on the light ... She took a tub of yoghurt from the fridge and sprinkled it with sugar. She leaned against the work surface and ate. ‘Eat! Eat!’ her husband told her at meal times. But for him she would not. She showed her self-restraint like this. Her self-denial. She wanted to make it visible. It became a habit, then a pleasure, taking solace in these midnight meals. (77)

Initially she feels shy to talk with others, even within her own community members. When Mrs. Islam and Razia visit her, she keeps quiet by simply listening to their conversation. Even though she had “some questions in her mind” (27) she could not question.

Nazneen wants to have numerous experiences outside. Without her husband’s knowledge, she roams through the Brick Lane. She speaks with strangers in English and it makes her to be excited. “She had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something” (61). After giving birth to a male baby, she feels her life fascinating, and believes that her world has changed. She becomes so possessive that her respectful behavior towards Mrs. Islam changes to a tone of disrespect, when Mrs. Islam wants to take the baby out.

Whenever Chanu speaks, she listens with disinterest and questions herself, whether he is talking to her or to any other audience. Slowly she understands that whatever he speaks will remain only as his plan and it will never happen.

No, the degree would never be finished. The promotion would never be won. The job would never be resigned. The furniture would never be restored. The house in Dhaka would never be built. The jute business would never be started. Even the mobile library,
the petition for which had taken Chanu from door to door, would be forgotten. (91-92)

When her son, Raqib is admitted in the hospital she begins to love Chanu. Her stay in the hospital and her husband’s care and affection makes her to love him. “Abba did not choose so badly. This was not a bad man. There were many bad men in the world, but this was not one of them. She could love him. Perhaps she did already. She thought she did…” (120-121). It makes her to forget his failures and encourages her to show affection towards him.

Nazneen’s stay in London and her friendship with Razia, formulate her into a confident woman. Her life, with her two daughters, made a big change in her life. She learns English from her daughters.

Over the last decade and a half she had gleaned vocabulary here and there. The television, the brief exchanges at the few non-Bengali shops she entered, the dentist, the doctor, teachers at the girls’ schools. But it was the girls who taught her. Without lessons, textbooks or Razia’s ‘key phrases’. Their method was simple: they demanded to the understood. (194)

When her husband resigns his job, she decides to do sewing at home like Razia. With her husband’s permission she does that work successfully. Karim, who works as a middleman in getting her labour contracts slowly enters into her life. She feels some kind of attachment with Karim and senses that Karim has brought changes in to her life. “This was something he did: made her feel as if she had said a weighty piece, as if she had stated a new truth” (262). Slowly it leads her to have a sexual relationship with him. Even though she is pious and knows what she does is a sin, she is unable to come out of it. Due to her relationship with Karim she finds some wonders in her life.

But much of the time she felt good. She spent more time talking to her daughters and they surprised her with their intelligence, their
wit and their artless sensitivity. She served her husband and found that he was a caring husband, a man of integrity, educated, and equipped with a pleasing thirst for knowledge. She did her work and she discovered that work in itself, performed with a desire for perfection, was capable of giving satisfaction. She cleaned the flat and even wiping the floor after the toilet had flooded was not so tiresome if it was done with a song on the lips and in the heart. It was as if the conflagration of her bouts with Karim had cost a special light on everything, a dawn light after a life lived in twilight. It was as if she had been born deficient and only now been gifted the missing sense. (301)

But when Karim proposes she realizes that what Karim really needed was, “[a] Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her” (454). She understands the mistake she had committed. She tells him, “I wasn’t me, and you weren’t you. From the very beginning to the very end, we didn’t see things. What we did- we made each other up’’” (454-455). She herself feels the transformation within her. This aspect is substantiated by Cormack who comments: “[S]he is forced to understand that ‘he’ is not what ‘she’ thought… Karim has been a catalyst, forcing her into an existentialist realization of her bad faith, but he offers her no space for her own identity. To fall in with him would be to reject one form of pedagogy and to accept another” (706).

Initially, Nazneen feels happy about returning to Bangladesh, where she can meet her sister, Hasina and eagerly waits to live with her. Later, when her husband arranges for their trip back home, she has her doubts. She decides to pay heed to her daughter’s wish rather than to her husband’s and takes the decision to stay back in London: “A thousand thoughts crushed into Nasneen’s skull. Dhaka would be a disaster Shahana would never forgive her. Chanu would be finished. It
was not even going home. She had never been there. Hasina was in Dhaka but the
city of her letters was an ugly place, full of dangers” (426). Not only for the sake
of her daughters she decides to stay in London but she too wishes to remain there.
Slowly she begins to give importance to her wishes “I will decide what to do. I
will say what happens to me. I will be the one. A charge ran through her body and
cried out again, this time out of sheer exhilaration” (405).

When Nazneen comes to London, she is like a clean slate without much
experience of the outer world but her life in London from 1985 to 2002 makes
several changes in her life. When time passes, her life too changes. She is no
longer a simple village woman who accepts everything as fate. Now she begins to
question everything and decides everything for her own self. In her initial days of
stay, in London, she is dependent upon her husband for everything. As time
passes, she starts to work in order to support her family along with her husband.
Later, after her husband’s return to Dhaka, she takes care of her children and lives
an independent life. Time brings numerous changes in her life. It makes her to
shed her innocence and experience several things in her life.

*The Namesake* too presents changes in the character through the
movement of time. The time period, reflected in the novel is 1968 to 2000. In this
novel, especially two characters’ changes are presented by the narrator in a
detailed way. Ashima travels to the US due to her marriage. After her stay in the
US, she understands that she will be facing a lonely life by staying alone.
Everything in the new atmosphere makes her to feel miserable and lonely. She
creates her home in the US by following Indian culture and tradition. She tries to
bring her homeland to the US through several ways like preparing Indian food at
night time and reading letters from home. Even though she tries to bring her home
to the US, she is unable to succeed completely. After giving birth to Gogol her
life changes a little. She finds no time to feel homesick and always feel busy with her son Gogol.

Before Gogol’s birth, her days had followed no visible pattern. She would spend hours in the apartment, napping, sulking, rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. But now the days that had once dragged rush all too quickly toward evening – those same hours are consumed with Gogol, pacing the three rooms of the apartment with him in her arms. (35)

She is very much occupied with Gogol and finds less time to remember her parents and yet she still constantly wishes to return home. She says to Ashoke, “… I don’t want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It’s not right. I want to go back” (33). Later when it becomes habitual for her to stay there, her circle of friends begins to increase. “Every weekend, it seems, there is a new home to go to, a new couple or young family to meet. They all come from Calcutta, and for this reason alone they are friends” (38). She always creates some occasions to meet her own community people by throwing parties to them. Slowly, through her experience with her children, she learns several things regarding American culture.

She finds that her children’s behavior is different and their desire for independence is not understandable to her initially. She always likes to be together with her family members. “Having been deprived of the community of her own parents upon moving to America, her children’s independence, their need to keep their distance from her, is something she will never understand. Still, she had not argued with them. This, too, she is beginning to learn” (166). When Ashoke dies, Ashima instead of returning to her homeland stays back and this signifies a sense of acceptance of American culture. Ashima, by spending thirty two years in the US, has learnt several things in her life. Her life in the US has brought changes in her character through the passage of years. She learns several
lessons from her life experiences and it helps to mould her character according to the location in which she stays.

In Gogol’s character, one can find changes through his attitude towards his name. As time passes his idea about his name also changes. When Gogol is born, his parents wait for a name from Ashima’s grandmother. When they are unable to get a name for their son due to the hospital formality, Ahsoke names his son after his favorite Russian author, Gogol. They decide that later they can change the name. But due to the circumstances, they are not able to change his name. When Gogol joins in a kindergarten, his parents decide to change his name to Nikhil. But, Gogol rejects the idea of changing his name. He could not understand why he has to answer to anything else.

“Why do I have to have a new name?” He asks his parents, tears springing to his eyes. It would be one thing if his parents were to call him Nikhil, too. But they tell him that new name will be used only by the teachers and children at school. He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn’t know. Who doesn’t know him. (57)

In the kindergarten, when his father requests the authority to change his name, he conveys his wish that he has to be addressed as Gogol in future. So his name remains as Gogol and he does not bother about his name at that age. “He recognizes pieces of himself in road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW. For birthdays his mother orders a cake on which his name is piped across the white frosted surface in a bright blue sugary script” (66). But when he grows up he finds some kind of oddness in his name. He hates to have a name which is neither Indian nor American and it makes him to feel indefinite about himself:

For by now, he’s come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain. He hates having to tell people that it doesn’t mean anything “in Indian”. He hates having to wear a nametag in his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school.
He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it…. (75-76)

Due to his name he avoids mingling with friends especially with girls. His reluctance towards his name increases when he reads about the life history of the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. He finds that Gogol is not the writer’s first name which makes him to be more depressed. When he tells a fake name to a girl, he finds that he can behave in an ordinary and relaxed way with others. This incident encourages him to change his name from Gogol to Nikhil. Even though his name is changed officially, he is known by the new name only in his college. His parents, relatives and even the narrator continue to address him as Gogol. After changing his name he feels that it is easy for him to change his character. With that name he easily mingles with his American friends and easily accepts the American way of life. “But now that he’s Nikhil it’s easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas” (105).

With the name Nikhil, he enjoys his adulthood. Due to his new name, it seems a new persona of Gogol emerges. He does not feel close with his family members and desires to live an independent life. But much later after his father’s death, knowing the reason for his name Gogol from his father, he feels reluctant to change his name. During the send off party to his mother, he reads the book by Nikolai Gogol given to him by his father, which makes him to think about his name. “Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all” (289). Through the process of time he changes his opinion regarding his name and again in the future he may change his name. In Gogol’s character, time progression depicts his
attitude towards his name which changes his character itself. Using this switching of names and the completion of it, Ruediger Heinze states,

By now it should be obvious that the protagonist’s “real” personal identity, like his cultural identity, remains ultimately indefinable because there is no such thing as a “real”, “original” identity. The notion of an original name and identity is just that. That he has not one name but several, forming a complex interplay of history, stories and personal and cultural identities, makes sense. For any attempt to focus on one name and circumscribed identity reveals inaccessible absences and deferrals in one’s concept of self and relationships, suggesting that the components of personal and cultural identity do not necessarily create a unified whole; furthermore, they occur across various fields of difference: affections, relations, food, clothing, etc. Gogol consciously chooses a name and identity from his “ethnic” background, but does not have absolute control over it. (196-197)

The hypothesis of the study of transformation in the characters’ is to show how people change due to the movement of space and time. Here in the three novels almost all the major as well as minor characters face changes in their life style in the settled land. The study proves that their entry into the new society “leaves a deep and irradicable mark on the man himself as well as on his entire life” (Bakhtin: 116). Carmen Faymonville similarly reading Bharati Mukherjee and Bapsi Sidhwa, comments on this remaking of the identity:

…Mukherjee and Sidhwa present their protagonists not as Huseboe and Geyer’s “subsequent generations who have had to rub the strangeness about the past from their eyes to be sure who they were” but as travelers who bring their own baggage and who don’t rub their eyes too hard. To both writers, the American west offers a
literary landscape that represents a unique ideological space for cultural clashes and transformations. In choosing the American west as a setting for their characters’ responses to the migration process, Mukherjee and Sidhwa test the validity of their original cultural assets and the survival of philosophical, political, and linguistic attributes after emigration. (248)

This point could be utilized for all the writers represented here, namely Sidhwa, Ali and Lahiri

It is understandable that the life of diasporic people in the settled society will be different from the life they lived in the home country. The present study reveals that Sidhwa, Lahiri and Ali, to some extent, use tradition and culture to portray the cultural shock faced by the diasporic communities. The writers in their works present the experiences of the first and in some cases, the second generation of the diasporic characters. In the case of the first generation of the diasporic people, they face more cultural shock than the second and the further generations. By presenting the homeland cultural practices in the settled society, the three writers try to create their individual identity in the settled society. The study shows that the writers use their work as a device to present their identity problems, cultural clash and inbetweenness in the society.