CHAPTER II
Diasporic Features

Literature emerging from the background of diaspora has led to two distinctive types of writing. The first of these is more autobiographical with references to the narration of self. The second is more scholarly dealing with studies on diaspora. Tololyan makes a distinction between these two types of writing by explaining that there are two discourses, named the emic diaspora and the etic diaspora. The emic diaspora refers to the diaspora that talk about themselves, while the etic refers to scholarly works on diaspora. He further states that, “[t]he self-study of diasporas produced representations and various forms of self-knowledge, some embodied in quotidian practices, some in public performances and others in oral and written archives and the thriving native-language press of groups such as the Armenians and the Chinese” (654). He is of the opinion that diasporas in the emic discourse generally keep making self-representations by referring to their selves in English. The other matter that is significant in diaspora studies, according to Tololyan, is the aspect of representation: “Who represents diasporas—the community itself or scholars—matters. As the works of Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey imply, the diasporic social domain that exists when only emic study and self-representation is going on takes a different shape when it is constituted as the object of knowledge of diasporic studies” (654). Furthermore, “theoretical conceptions, specialized terminologies, acknowledged and unacknowledged disciplinary interests and intentions, a will to knowledge, and a variety of methodologies combine to reformulate diasporas” (654). Thus diasporians become “objects of knowledge and cosubjects” (654). Tololyan finally hints at an additional factor in this aspect:
A corollary of this point is that the object of knowledge in area studies is also always in some sense a given and always, in another sense, created. For example, the territory and populations of the Middle East existed as sociopolitical domains before orientalism, and then Middle Eastern studies, represented and transformed them into disciplinary objects. They continue to exist, but in subtle ways how they think of themselves, how they act, what they are, is altered by the dialectic between self-study and the disciplinary and area studies emanating from powerful quarters. (655)

In spite of these kinds of differences most diasporic writings reveal certain features that are similar. Many of the works discuss the individual/communities attachment to the homeland and the urge to belong in the settled land and as a result of this they reveal a hybrid existence as stated by Lau: “They are people who are as multi-cultural as they are multi-lingual. They do not regard themselves as fully belonging in either culture, and have practically evolved a sub-culture peculiar to themselves. They try to take the best from both worlds, but suffer the sense of hybridity and cultural entanglement” (241).

Although the diasporic life portrayed to some extent is realistic, yet it is also fictionalized due to the type of imagination that is indulged in diasporic writings. Emphasizing this point, Jasbir Jain refers to it as a ‘split narrative’. She further discusses the past and the present of diasporic literature as being different – the past has a different ‘history’, ‘tradition’, ‘regional and colonial memories’ and ‘political equations’ and the present has different kinds of ‘loneliness, isolation, social ghettoisation, success, affluence and recognition’. Even though they live in the present they co-exist in the past too (76). Yet another point of interest is that of Ramraj in his article “Diaspora and Multiculturalism” wherein he discusses the difference among immigrant, exile and expatriate writing. According to him “exile and expatriate writing is more immersed in the situation
at home and the circumstance that prolong the individual’s exile or expatriation” more than with “the emigre’s or emigre’s community’s relationship with the dominant society” (229). Therefore he thinks that diasporic writing is often about “people who are linked by common histories of uprooting and dispersal, common homelands, and common cultural heritages”, but due to the political and cultural particularities of the society, on the other hand it develops different cultural and historical identities (229).

Nostalgia and dislocation are the other common features and this is pointed out by Rushdie when he states that “exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars, of salt” (1983: 76). He further mentions while discussing the diasporic group, “that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (1893: 76).

Diasporic writing, mostly becomes a response to the lost homes and to issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several factors which are the reasons for the dislocation of a community from their home country to a foreign land. These can be broadly divided into two such as voluntary and non-voluntary movements. Voluntary movements, can occur due to two reasons namely i) educational need and ii) economical need. On the other hand, non-voluntary movements occur due to political and national compulsions and in the case of women, it could be marital causes. When diasporic people find themselves dislocated from the home society, they are upset mentally and strive to remember and locate themselves in a nostalgic past. Through nostalgia they try to escape from the reality of life in the settled land:
Nostalgia, by its very nature, often produces a romanticized perspective of the homeland. Indulgence in these illusions evokes a pseudo comfort and security which sustain the individual away from home...the motherland reconfigures into a phantom of displaced paradise. (Sheik: 189)

Most often the first generation of a diasporic community face loneliness and alienation in the new country and due to this they do not mingle with others in the settled society. Even if they try to blend with the other community people, most of the time they find it difficult as they find that they are discriminated. A sense of alienation, loneliness and feeling of loss are inextricable for the diasporic people. Even though they face external problems like discrimination and identity crisis, their own inner problems like loneliness and alienation cause more suffering to them.

The diasporic community, initially try to adjust with the new culture and society into which they have moved. But at the same time they are not willing to follow the new land’s culture completely. At times, even when they live in the settled land for a long time, they still consider it as another country. When discrimination occurs the first generation accepts it in an ordinary way, but the second and further generations are affected psychologically. The reason is that from the second generation onwards are from the moment of birth, brought up in the settled country and consider it as their home country and follow its culture and tradition as their own. Therefore, when they face discrimination, it hurts them and raises questions regarding their roots/backgrounds. This kind of discrimination makes them to be separated from the settled society and to think about it in a negative way.

The settled country considers the practice of a different culture by the diasporic community as a threat to its own culture and therefore it provokes the
settled society to discriminate the diasporic community. When the settled society finds a mixing of the diasporic community’s culture with its own, it feels the danger of fragmentation of its cultural identity. As pointed out by Wieviorka, “Under such circumstances the national majority considers migrants to be the root of its difficulties, and draws on racial definitions that combine the idea of natural race and the idea of culture in order to make them scapegoats” (71). Therefore, the diasporic communities are greatly discriminated. Not only the settled government, but also the people of the country take law into their hand and discriminate the diasporic community in several ways. The discriminations shown against the diasporic community can be viewed in several ways such as cultural identity, national identity and religious identity. Under cultural discrimination, one can include the discrimination shown against the way of life led by the diasporic community and their cultural practices. National discrimination is shown when the settled society comes to know about the diasporic community’s national identity. It has stereotypical images about the nations of the diasporic community. By using it, the settled society imposes those images on it. In a similar way religious identity is used by the people of the settled land to impose its discrimination on the diasporic community.

Cultural change is yet another major problem faced by the diasporic community especially by the first generation people. When they try to settle in a new place, they find several changes in the new society. It shocks them and they try to cling to their homeland culture by following it strictly. As Wieviorka states, when a diasporic community is “constantly rejected or interiorized while only wanting to be included, either socially or culturally, or when this group or this individual is racially discriminated, and dominized under the argument of a supposed cultural different” then the individual or the group is embarrassed and this eventually “leads to a self-definition and behaviors based on this culture and, eventually, racial distinction” (72). Even though the diasporic community stays in
a new land for a long period, they cannot break away from their culture. They tend to live in a joint family or a commune where they can follow their cultural traditions.

One of the key problems that a diasporic community faces is the predicament with regard to identity.

Identity is one of the most common themes in their literature, and in many cases the search for self-identity is portrayed as confusing, painful and only occasionally rewarding. Some write semi-autobiographical novels, delving into personal pasts in order to either discover or re-examine their motivations and affinities. Others use fictional characters and situations to question traditional norms, testing, trying, and occasionally reinforcing (whether internally or otherwise) notions of race and culture. (Lau: 252)

The second and later generations of the diasporic community generally display a dual identity. Although the second and later generations of the diasporic community consider the country in which they are born as the home country, the society still perceives them as outsiders and therefore they are caught in a hyphenated identity. Kwame Dawes’ words as quoted in Weedon’s article “Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women’s Writing” substantiates this issue, “‘They were born there or have grown up there all their life. They are uncomfortable with the notion of a home elsewhere for they have no sense of exile. Their sole exile is the exile within their own home country’” (28).

One cannot assure that these common characteristics of diaspora are available in all the works of diasporic writers. Based on the theme of writing, diasporic writers can be divided into two types: writers whose works focus on their home country and writers whose works talk about the settled country. The
first type of writers locates the novels in their home country in order to criticize it or to portray their home country and its culture to the foreign readers or use their work as a tool to remember their home country always. Works of Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Ha Jin, etc can be cited as example for this type. The second type of writers locates their works in the settled countries to reflect the changes they undergo or to tear the mask of multicultural nations by portraying its discrimination towards them or to show their developed condition in the settled countries. Writers who belong to this category are Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parameshwaran, Meena Alexander, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, etc.

Profile of Writers:
The writers selected for the present study belong to different communities of diaspora. Each of them in a way try to portray their community to the readers through their work: but this does not mean that they are representing their community thoroughly to their readers. Selection of writers from different communities enables to know the history and practices of various diasporas.

Joy Kogawa is a Japanese-Canadian writer, who was born in 1935 at Vancouver, British-Colombia. During the World War II, the Canadian government has made the Japanese-Canadians to shift to internment camps and has confiscated properties from the Japanese-Canadians. Therefore, along with her family members, Kogawa was forced to move to different parts of Canada where her family worked as farm laborers. Kogawa had her studies at the University of Alberta, at the University of Toronto and also at The Women’s Training College and the University of Saskatchewan. In 1957, she moved to Toronto, where she got married and lives with her husband and two children.

Kogawa’s novel *Obasan* is a semi-autobiographical novel focusing on the Japanese-Canadians, and the injustice they faced during and after the World War II. The novel’s plot unfolded through the eyes of Naomi, the protagonist. Naomi through her family history explains the trials and tribulations of the Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. The story juxtaposes two of Naomi’s aunts, Emily and Obasan to provide the other points of view: Obasan, one of the aunts is a portrayal of tradition while Aunt Emily depicts modernity and activism. Due to the Canadian governments’ discrimination, Naomi’s family was fragmented: her mother and grand mother leaves to Japan to visit their relatives. Stephen and Naomi are left with their aunt, Obasan and uncle and other members of her family die due to the torture of the Canadian government. When the novel concludes, Naomi finds an answer for the unanswered question regarding the condition of her mother. Through circular narration, Kogawa portrays the discrimination faced by the Japanese-Canadian
community during the World War II and also the horrific Nagasaki incident. The novel focuses on issues of identity and belonging of the Japanese diasporic community in Canada.

SKY Lee, the Chinese Canadian writer was born on 1952 at Port Alberni, British Columbia. She moved to Vancouver in 1967 for University education and completed B.A. in Fine Arts and Diploma in Nursing. In 1983, Lee published her book for children *Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter!* This book is a collection of four stories which deals with the condition/experience of growing up as a Chinese-Canadian in Canadian society. Lee’s first novel, *Disappearing Moon Café* published in 1990 narrates the saga of the Wong family and is spread over four generations. This novel was nominated for the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize and the Governor General’s Award and it won the City of Vancouver Book Award. In the same year, she published a prose collection titled *Telling it: Women and Language across Culture*. This book delineates issues of racism and homophobia experienced by the native, lesbian and Asian Canadian women. In 1994 SKY Lee published her second short story collection, *Belly Dancer: Stories*, a collection of fifteen short feminist stories.

SKY Lee’s novel, *Disappearing Moon Café* narrates the story of four generations of Chinese-Canadian family. It focuses on illicit and incestuous relationships of the Wong family. The novel begins with Chang, the bone collector’s entry into Canada and his marriage with Kelora. Later, due to the cultural difference, he marries Mui Lan in China. Mui Lan accompanied by her son, comes to Canada to live with her husband. However, the solitude of the land and her husband’s behavior make her ill-tempered. In another part of the story, Ting An, son of Kelora, lives with Chang as his assistant in business, without realising that Chang is his father. The tortures faced by Fong Mei in the hands of her mother-in-law and husband results in a relationship with Ting-An and the
birth of two daughters and a son. Fong Mei’s daughters, Beatrice and Suzanne’s relationship with Keeman and Morgan respectively are suspected to be incestuous and this results in the death of Suzanne. Finally Beatrice’s daughter, Kae comes to know about her family history through her mother’s friend and decides to write the history of her family. The novel focuses on the cultural differences and discriminations faced by the diasporic community in Canada.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a leading Pakistani diasporic writer, born in Karachi in 1938. She received her B.A. degree from Kinnaird College for women in Lahore. An early marriage at the age of 19 resulted in thrusting her into familial responsibility and also hindered her creativity. She took part in many activist movements and represented Pakistan in the Asian Women’s Congress of 1975. Sidhwa began her career as a writer at the age of 26. Interestingly, while in Pakistan, Bapsi Sidhwa had written her novels in English and as there were no publishers ready to publish her works, she herself published the book. As a result, Crow Eater, her second novel emerged before her first novel, The Bride. The harsh review and distribution problems discouraged her and the publication of her works by the British publisher Jonathan Cape once again set her literary career rolling. Her third novel, Cracking India which is also known as Ice-Candy Man gained her recognition throughout the world. This novel, which was awarded the German Liberator Prize is set in the backdrop of India’s partition and is written from the perspective of the girl child, Lenny. Her fourth novel, An American Brat was published in 1997. At present Sidhwa is living in Houston, Texas.

The novel An American Brat is centered around the character, Feroza, a sixteen year old Pakistani girl, who travels to the US for three months to stay with her uncle Manek. The political condition back in Pakistan and the opportunity for higher education in the US enables Feroza to prolong her stay in the US. The novel deals with the experiences of Feroza in the United States and the
denouement of her progression in America. Feroza’s relationship with Jo and David bring enlightenment and maturity to her character and at the same time it also results in Zareen’s (Feroza’s mother) trip to the US as she wishes to sever Feroza’s relationship with David. The mother-daughter relationship and behavioral changes in the character of Feroza is portrayed through Zareen’s eye. With her mission accomplished, Zareen returns home, while Feroza in order to come out of the pain of the break with David decides to stay on in the United States. *An American Brat* focuses on the cultural shocks experienced by the immigrants in the settled society, their sense of alienation and estrangement.

Amy Tan, the Chinese American writer was born in Oakland, California in 1952. The death of her father and brother made her mother, Daisy to move to Switzerland. After her initial schooling in Switzerland, Tan moved to the US, where she acquired her B.A. and M.A. from San Jose State University. Amy Tan enrolled for her Doctorate in Linguistics, first at the University of California and later at Berkeley but she discontinued and took a job as a language development consultant. In 1985, when she suffered from depression and had to undergo treatment for it, she turned to creative writing. Her first short story “End Game” appeared in 1986 and later in 1987. Along with her mother, she visited China to meet her half-sisters, by her mother’s previous marriage. This incident gave strength and motivated her to write; her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* was published in 1989. This book was nominated for the National Book Award and National Book Critics Award. It received the Commonwealth Gold Award and The Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. This book has been translated into 17 languages including Chinese.

Tan’s second book *The Kitchen God’s Wife* was published in 1991 and it was followed by *The Hundred Secret Senses* in 1995. She published her fourth novel, *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* in 2001 followed by *The Opposite of Fate: A

The novel, The Bonesetter’s Daughter is narrated by Ruth, a second generation Chinese-American, who works as a freelance writer. She lives with her partner Art for twelve years. Her mother LuLing lives alone and due to old age she suffers from loss of memory. She forces Ruth to translate the writings of her life from Chinese to English. The translation gives details of LuLing’s life in China, and the story of her mother Precious Auntie, who becomes pregnant before her marriage and so was destined to live as LuLing’s aunt. In order to stop LuLing’s marriage with Chang’s son (who is responsible for the death of Precious Auntie’s father and lover), Precious Auntie commits suicide and it results in LuLing’s stay in orphanage. There she marries Kai Jing, a researcher but her life with him soon comes to an end due to his death during the civil war. After many sufferings, she comes to the US and marries a doctor. Her second marriage too ends soon after, when her husband dies in an accident. Later, she lives with her daughter, till Ruth leaves LuLing for Art. Ruth admits her mother, finally in an old-age home, and the novel ends with hope for Ruth’s future life. The novel focuses on the cultural clash and problems that exist between first and second generations of the diasporic community.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born to Bengali parents in July 1967, in London. Later with her family’s move to Rhode Island, she began life in the US. She grew up in the background of traditional Bengali culture. Lahiri had her B.A. degree from Barnard College and M.A. and Ph.D. (English Literature) from Boston University. Her writing is based on the lives of Indian-Americans and their experiences in the US. Her debut work, Interpreter of Maladies, published in
1999, was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. Her second work, The Namesake, was published in 2003 and later on filmed. Her latest work, The Unaccustomed Earth was published in 2008. At present she lives in Brooklyn with her husband and children where she works as a Vice-President of the PEN American Centre.

The Namesake presents the tension of the contemporary generation and the cultural gap between the parents and the children in the Indian-American community. Ashima comes to the US after her marriage with Ashoke, a student in the US. After his studies, Ashoke begins to work as a professor in an American university. They name their first child as Gogol, in remembrance of the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. The name becomes a problem for Gogol, because he feels uncomfortable with the Russian name. It makes him to detach himself from his family members. When he grows up he changes his name to Nikhil and feels comfortable to mingle with others and slowly he gains contact with some girl friends. But this too leads to a sense of loss of identity and later when his father dies, his attachment with his home renews. The novel concludes on the day of a send-off party to Ashima, where Gogol finds the book which his father presented to him during one of his birthdays and looks at the name Gogol. The novel focuses on the problems between first and second generations of the diasporic community, cultural clash and mainly on the identity problem faced by the diasporic community.

Monica Ali is a Bangladeshi diasporic writer, settled in England. She was born to English and Bangladeshi parents on 1967, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. At the age of three, she came to England with her parents from Bangladesh. She had her education in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Wadham College, Oxford. Her debut novel, Brick Lane, named after a street at the heart of London’s Bangladeshi community, published in 2003, is about experiences of the
Bangladeshi family living in U.K. The book caused several controversies within the Bangladeshi community. They felt that Monica Ali presented Bangladeshi community as uneducated and unsophisticated and yet Ali was voted as the Best of Young British Novelists in 2004. Her latest book, *Alentejo Blue* was published in 2006.

The novel *Brick Lane* narrates the story of Nazneen, who settles in London. Through her story, the novel also depicts the life of the Bangladeshi community in London. Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel, is a village girl from Bangladesh, marries Chanu, who is living in London. After her marriage with Chanu, Nazneen lives in an unknown land with her newly wedded husband. Due to the lack of her English knowledge, she is unable to communicate with others but only with her own community people. Her life slowly changes when her daughter begins to teach her English language, life and culture. Later on when she begins to earn independently by working, Karim enters into her life and she finds that her life takes a twist. Due to this aspect of self reliance and her friendship with Razia, she is able to reject Karim’s proposal of marriage and Chanu’s wish to return to Bangladesh. Chanu leaves for Bangladesh by leaving his family back in London. Through Hasina’s letter (Nazneen’s sister) the author portrays Bangladesh’s political condition to the readers. The novel looks at the discrimination faced by the Bangladeshi community in London, cultural clash and problems between first and second generations of the diasporic community.

**General Features of Diasporic Writing:**
The diasporic writers differ not only in the theme but they also differ based on generations/ages. The first generation of the diasporic writers’ writings may be different from the second and third generations. Most of the first generation diasporic writers locate their works in their home country as well as in the settled country. They do this because as Lau states, they are familiar with the “culture and
the geographical location of their countries (and cities) of origin” (240). Through their writing, they inform about their earlier life patterns. Most of the second generation diaspora, on the other hand, accept the land in which they are born as their homeland. They are not happy about the way their parents live. It leads to several kinds of misunderstandings between both generations. The second generation diasporic writers, according to Webner through their writings try to, “send out a critical message to the South-Asian community, portraying it as still locked in the obsolete and reactionary customs and beliefs of the old country”(901). Webner also feels that the central theme of these writers is “the sexual politics of the family, represented by the struggles of a younger … against arranged marriages imposed by authoritarian, coercive, gerontocratic elders” (901). He also points out the difference in the kind of writings of the second generations:

The new novels and films promote images of transgressive sexuality: gay, inter-racial or inter-ethnic love marriages and illicit cohabitation, to make their point. They satirise an older generation’s profligate consumption, false ethics, superstitious religiosity, blind prejudices and obsession with honor and status. (901)

Gender discrimination is another common feature discussed by diasporic writers. When one talks about diasporic experiences many consider it as a portrayal of male experiences, mainly because earlier scholars who discussed Jewish, Armenian and Greek diasporas concentrated on the condition of men only. Clifford too agrees that, “diasporic experiences are always gendered” (313). Till 1920s most of the settled lands did not allow the workers to take their wives or children with them. After many years only, women were allowed to settle in foreign countries along with their husbands/families. Even though women move from their home country to a foreign country to live and earn independently, their
experience of diaspora will be twice painful than the experience of the men, “the material and spiritual insecurities of exile” as well as with the “demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies” (314). Clifford believes that diasporic women are, “caught between patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures”. He mentions that “They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways. The lived experiences of diasporic women thus involve painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds” (314).

The present chapter is an attempt to view some of the problems faced by the diasporic community in the settled society as revealed in the novels. Almost all the diasporic communities face initial problems and sufferings, when they settle in a new land. Among the problems that diasporic communities face in the settled country, discrimination is the leading trauma, which upsets them most. Plants when plucked from a soil and planted in a new one have survival problem; similarly the diasporic community too faces problem of survival. They have to adjust to the environment, language, culture and the society. Many times, even after adjusting in the new environment they face several other problems such as discrimination, alienation and identity crisis. During the period of settlement in the new country, almost every one in the diasporic community would undergo psychological trauma. Feeling of loss, sense of alienation from the society, loneliness and longing are a part of diasporic literature. To put it in the words of Peepre, diasporic literature is,

[A]bout the loneliness and alienation of the displaced person, the struggle to survive in the harsh circumstances, the battle to retain their heritage culture while adjusting to the strange, new host culture, and the search for tradition and roots by the partially acculturated second and third generation. Most of these works are loosely autobiographical, and mark a passage from the silence of
the immigrant ghettos to the often out spoken self-examination of the partially hybridized, third-generation, host-migrant writer. (80)

The study of diaspora helps to select some of the diasporic themes found in diasporic narratives such as: 1) dislocation, 2) nostalgia, 3) discrimination, 4) survival, 5) cultural change, and 6) gender inequality. This chapter’s aim is to look at the portrayal of these diasporic features in the novels chosen for study, Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, SKY Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Café*, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*, Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*, and Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*.

**Dislocation:**

In *Obasan*, *Disappearing Moon Café*, *An American Brat*, *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, *The Namesake*, and *Brick Lane*, one can find that most of the women characters’ displacement occurs due to their marriages. Therefore, their moves from homeland to settled land cannot be considered as a voluntary one, although the men characters in the select novels come to the foreign land for education and career purposes.

Dislocation causes severe problems to the diasporic people. When individuals/ family move from their home country to a new land, the foreign atmosphere makes them sick. Based on the reasons for dislocation, the suffering faced by the diasporic people too changes. In the case of the forced displacement, the suffering will be severe when compared with those who move voluntarily. In *An American Brat*, two kinds of displacements both voluntary and non voluntary are presented. Manek comes to the U.S due to his own wish, for higher education, while Feroza moves due to the political turmoil in her homeland. Zareen, Feroza’s mother compels her to leave Pakistan for the US, due to the political condition of the country. Feroza feels excited about her trip to the US and comes there willingly. But in the case of Manek’s wife Aban, it is forced displacement. Even
though she does not have any reason beyond her marriage, she is forced to live in the US. Chanu, Nazneen’s husband in *Brick Lane*, lives in London for more than twenty years. He comes there to find a job and settle there. Nothing more is mentioned about the reason for his displacement. Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel, due to her marriage is forced to live in London.

In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, movement occurs due to the characters’ own wishes. LuLing stays in an orphanage which is maintained by the American missionaries, and works as a teacher there. When Miss Grutoff, one of the social workers, feels sick, she needs someone to travel with her to the US. LuLing finds this as a good opportunity to leave China. “In my heart, America was the Christian heaven… but there was a hope that I could find happiness that had stayed hidden from me. I could leave the old curse, my bad background” (279). But at that time she lost her chance to visit the US. Instead of her, her sister GaoLing goes there and eventually helps LuLing’s move to the US. In the case of LuLing and GaoLing, their journey to the US is based on their own wish.

In *Obasan*, Naomi’s ancestors come to Canada for economic purposes. Details about their visit to Canada and purpose of it are not given. In *Disappearing Moon Café* too, dislocation occurs due to economic needs in the case of men and marriage in case of women. Chang comes to Canada for gaining economic independence. He works as a bone collector, collects bones of the people who died during their work and helps to send it to their home. He marries Mui Lan and brings her to Canada. In the case of Mui Lan and Fong Mei, they are made to stay in Canada due to their marriages.

Ashoke, in *The Namesake* comes to the US for his higher education. After his education he gets a job and settles there. Meanwhile, he marries Ashima and brings her to the US. In the case of Ashoke, it is voluntary displacement and in
Ashima’s case it is non-voluntary displacement. As already mentioned, men characters in the select novels settle in a foreign land due to economic and educational factors. Except for Feroza in An American Brat, LuLing and GaoLing in The Bonesetter’s Daughter, other women characters move to the new lands because of their marital status.

**Nostalgia:**

Yet another problem that emerges among the dislocated and displaced people is the sense of nostalgia. In Brick Lane, An American Brat, The Namesake and Disappearing Moon Café one can find women characters leave their home countries after their marriage in order to settle in a new land with their unknown husbands. In The Namesake, Ashima, after her marriage with Ashoke leaves her home country for America. After settling there, she feels lonely in the deserted area. In India, her life was filled with a number of relatives but in the US, when her husband leaves for his job, she finds no one to communicate and later when she becomes pregnant not a soul to give suggestions. When she gives birth to Gogol, she cries because only she and her husband are there to take care of the baby. Feelings of loneliness make her depressed and emotionally upset. She could not find any solace from the new society:

> For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. (49-50)
Later she begins to mingle with the Bengali community who stay in the US and engages herself with Indians in order to feel at home there.

In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen, the eighteen year old girl marries Chanu, who is twice her age. When her husband goes for a job, she feels lonely and except words like ‘sorry’ and ‘thank you’ she does not know anything else to speak in English. This problem of communication heads her into forced imprisonment and she expresses her solitariness thus,

> In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sound of private lives sealed away above, below and around her. (24)

Like Ashima, Nazneen too feels utterly lonely during her initial stage of settlement and she comes out of it due to her intimacy with her own community people. In her case, mingling and interacting with the Whites is difficult due to her poor English knowledge.

In *An American Brat*, Manek comes to the US for his higher studies. During his initial stages he suffers a great deal because of cultural and social differences in the settled society. When Zareen, his sister calls and informs him about Feroza’s visit, he becomes very much excited. Once Feroza joins in a college, Manek leaves her in a hotel and she begins to live with Jo, a White. Often she feels homesick, as she is living in a foreign land, she cannot be an exception to such feelings.

> After school, Feroza sat glumly in front of the TV nursing her broken heart and her empty lap and thinking about home. She missed her grandmothers, her parents, their friends, her friends, her ayah, the incessant chatter of her cousins, and even the raucous
chorus of the Main Market *mullahs* on Friday afternoons. She became unbearably homesick and found it impossible to work on her term paper. (162)

She tries to relieve herself from homesickness by engaging in work. Much later she turns for relief to David. Manek’s wife Aban feels alone in the foreign land and is unable to cope with the American culture and this affects her mood and leads to quarrel between them. She complains to Feroza,

I thought coming to America was such a big deal, so wonderful – my Prince Charming carrying me off to the castle of my dreams. Everybody back home thinks I’m so lucky, but I’m tired of coping, tired of doing everything on my own….Oh, I miss home. I am longing to see my family and friends and longing to talk to them. Just sit and talk to them. Sometimes I wish I’d never come here.

(315)

In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Mui Lan and Fong Mei who settle in Canada after their marriage often feel alienated from their family and village. They are isolated in the deserted land and yearn for other women’s friendship. The lack of communication and comfort from others slowly frustrates them and turns them into harsh women. It is observed by Peepre that such loneliness and frustration leads to a “smouldering rage which is forced underground into silence and only later erupts into self-destructive behavior…” (84). Peepre thinks that this would ultimately lead to vengeance. This could be the reason why Mui Lan shows her vengeance towards Fong Mei, when she was unable to produce a heir to Chang’s family. Later Fong Mei takes revenge on her mother-in-law and also troubles her daughters. Not only the women feel alone in the settled country but men also have similar feelings. Gewi Chang, during his work as a bone collector, feels terribly lonely. “He didn’t want to think about the loneliness; it was the most dangerous struggle” (2). The diasporic community, in order to escape from their loneliness
and the feeling of alienation, start to live in an imagined space. They try to follow their culture and tradition in order to feel at home. In *Brick Lane* Chanu, comments, “‘They don’t even really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts back there. And anyway, look how they live: just recreating the villages here’” (32). Among the major women characters in these novels-- Nazneen, Feroza, Ashima, Mui Lan and Fong Mei, one can find the loneliness to a greater extent during the initial stage of settlement which later decreases. This is due to their struggle with other problems like cultural difference, question of identity and generation gap with their children. So in the later stage of life, even though they have the feeling of loneliness, they focus their attention on other problems.

*Obasan* and *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* novels deal mainly with the second and third generation of the diasporic community. For the characters in these novels, the land in which they are born and brought up is their home country. So there is no chance for them to feel lonely and nostalgic about their ancestor’s homeland. In the novel *Obasan*, description about the first generation of the diasporic community is very less and from the description about them readers can find that even after settling in Canada, they have contact with their relatives in Japan. Nothing more is mentioned about their relationship with the home country. In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, before entering into the US itself, GaoLing and LuLing consider it as a heaven and wish to escape from China. They do not have any emotional attachment with their homeland. LuLing considers the US as a place where she can escape from her curse and for GaoLing it is a place to live independently away from her husband’s torture. Both of them wish to forget China which is a horrible memory for them and desire to lead a comfortable life in the US. It shows that there is no chance for them to feel nostalgic for their homeland.
Discrimination:
The diasporic community even after settling in the new land, attempt to follow their own tradition and culture and consequently it leads them to face discrimination. Regarding this aspect, Parekh states, “that no society can ever ensure full equality to all its cultural minorities” (411). Talking with respect to elders and to the unknown person is the norm in the Asian culture, but in the American culture this seems a strange habit. Some such aspects of discriminations are discussed herewith. In An American Brat, when Feroza goes for shopping with her friend Jo, Feroza’s manner of speech and her dressing irritated the sales woman. After selecting things to purchase Feroza enquires whether she can buy it in a polite manner. The sales woman reveals her displeasure by remarking, “You may not. You’ll have to pay for it. This isn’t the Salvation Army, y’know; it’s a drugstore” (150). In Disappearing Moon Café, SKY Lee presents several points of discrimination faced by Chinese women during their entry into Canada. The Canadian government initially allowed only Chinese men to work in the Gold Mountain and those workers were bachelors, otherwise they left their family back in China. Later the Canadian government relaxed its law and allowed Chinese workers to bring their wives. When women entered into Canada, Canadian immigration officers abused many of them. They imprisoned the immigrants in order to stop illegal migration. Due to it many women from China were imprisoned. Fong Mei writes to her sister about the cruel experiences she has faced along with other women in the immigrant office. She feels that the immigrant officers “looked so hateful and cunning. And everyone warned me of their devious trickery” (43).

In this novel an incident about the murder of a White woman Janet Smith in 1924 is mentioned and the suspected victim is revealed as a Chinese boy. This incident paved the way for the White to show their discrimination towards the Chinese legally. The discrimination is revealed by the words in the text – “they’re
only looking for the slightest excuse to bring disaster down onto all our heads” (73). The Chinese know that if the same thing occurred for a woman from their community, then it has been unnoticed. An old man comments about this attitude: “No white one even blinked an eye for the countless dead Chinamen ‘murdered accidentally,’” but one of their own catches it, and they all go crazy” (225). In the settled society, diasporic community is mostly treated in an inferior manner. Varied diasporic communities are homogenized and attributed stereotypical characteristics. In *Brick Lane*, Chanu tells Nazneen, his wife, “to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan” (28). In *Disappearing Moon Café* too such an idea is presented:

> Under the strain of bigotry, they were outlaws. Chinamen didn’t make the law of the land, so they would always live outside of it. In fact, it was a crime for them just to be here. The result was submerged, but always there: violence, with the same, sour odour of trapped bodies under duress. That could be why the whites complained that chinamen were unclean. Sinister, they said. But imagine their fresh-faced, thoughtless innocence beside the seething rage and bitterness in Chinese faces! They grew uncomfortable in the presence of Chinese, without even knowing why. (221)

Moreover, even when the diasporic community stays for a long time in the settled society and follow the settled society’s culture yet, the settled society still views the diasporic community with suspicion and derision. In *An American Brat*, when Feroza enters into the US, the immigrant officer does not believe that she is planning to stay with her uncle. He suspects that the so-called uncle is her fiancé and they will marry and settle there. Even though Manek, Feroza’s uncle tries to convince the officer, he does not trust them. He argues, “You and your ‘uncle’ have concealed the truth. You’re both lying. Isn’t this man your fiancé? ... you’ve
come to the United States to marry your fiancé! You both plan to live here illegally” (64).

Some times, when the settled society has a political or economic problem with a nation, they immediately impose restrictions on the diasporic community who are from that particular country. Kogawa’s Obasan is based on the injustice faced by the Japanese-Canadians during and after the World War II. This book portrays the suffering and terrible effects of Pearl Harbor which affected the lives of Japanese-Canadians. The Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 led the Canadian government to view the Japanese-Canadians in a differential manner. Due to the Canadians’ oppressive tactics, the Japanese for more than seven decades wandered the land without having a permanent place to settle. The protagonist, Naomi’s uncle and father were involved in the fishing trade, but due to World War II, the Canadians took over their boats to use it for war. Canadians canceled Japanese-Canadians fishing licenses and asked them to find alternative livelihood and were instructed to leave those places where they lived and settle somewhere else: “They took away the land, the stores, the business, the boats, the houses – everything” (36). Even though Canada is a democratic country, the racial discrimination against the Japanese-Canadians was a violation of human rights.

Japanese-Canadian families were disintegrated and many families were separated due to the oppressive tactics of the government authorities. Japanese-Canadians were the underdogs who got to be addressed as “filthy japs” (99). In Obasan, the protagonist Naomi and her elder brother Stephen are separated from their family members and forced to settle with their aunt and uncle at Slocan. Besides being discriminated, the community was also put to hardship due to petty thieving and other such criminal activities. Therefore, the Japanese-Canadians were forced to live in strange places and had to struggle for survival. Their houses were looted and most of them were forced to return to Japan. Japanese families or
individuals settled in Canada were continuously made to face torments. “We’re like a bunch of rabbits continually chased by hounds” (90). They were totally cut off from any sort of communication. All newspapers which were published by Japanese-Canadians were closed while Canadian newspapers began to give wrong information. They were considered as “lower order of people” (87). Everywhere Canadians raised their voices as “japs keep out” (86). Japanese-Canadian boys were gathered in a place and made to work hard. They were not properly fed and were tortured by the government: “They’re cold, … they’re undernourished, they’re unwashed. One of the men who came out to buy food said it was pitiful the way the kids scramble for food and the slow ones go empty” (90). These incidents made Aunt Emily wonder whether the White considered the Japanese as a special kind of animal who was able to live without clothing, shoes, medicine and decent food.

Racial discrimination is an unavoidable issue in the settled society for the diasporic community. Even though the people in the settled society are educated, they are not able to escape discrimination. In Disappearing Moon Café, when Beatrice goes for an entrance test in the University of British Colombia, the Head of the Department without even bothering to know about her performance rejects her. He stares at her with “hate oozing from every pore” (202) and disqualifies her because she happens to be a Chinese. In Brick Lane, Chanu mentions, racial discrimination as the reason for not getting promotion. Nazneen narrates his opinion to her friend Razia, “He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white man. He says that if he painted his sin pink and white then there would be no problem” (72).

If discrimination is done racially then it is also carried out on the basis of religion. The settled society does not encourage other religious practices of the diasporic community. Many-a-time, the local authorities consider other
community’s religious practices as inferior and condemn it. In *Brick Lane*, the society does not allow the Bangladeshi community to follow its religious practices freely. The police viewed the mosque with suspicion and as revealed in the narrative, “Police had been to the mosque and questioned the imam for two hours. No one had any idea why, although many predicted trouble and everyone doubted that a church had ever been treated with such flagrant disrespect” (206).

Discrimination shown by the people in the settled society cannot be stopped totally even by the government of that nation. At times, if the diasporic community is well educated and rich, discrimination faced by them could be less. For example, in *The Namesake* and *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* discrimination faced by the diasporic community is not mentioned. Even in *An American Brat*, discrimination is not shown as much as in *Obasan* and *Brick Lane*. In *The Namesake*, educated upper class people’s life is presented and therefore the issue of discrimination is very less. In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, discriminations faced by LuLing and GeoLing are not presented, as they are married to rich doctors and live a decent life. Ruth, LuLing’s daughter is educated and works as a freelancer. So in the settled society, there is very less chance for them to face discriminations. In *An American Brat* due to Feroza’s innocence and cultural differences, she faces discriminations in the initial stage, but later discrimination is not mentioned. It is may be due to her educational and economical status.

In *Obasan* and *Brick Lane* discrimination is shown mostly because of their home country and religion. For example, in *Obasan* due to the Pearl Harbor incident, innocent Japanese in Canada face severe discrimination. Similarly in many cases, economically poor people face discrimination in the settled society when compared to the educated ones. In the case of characters in *Brick Lane* and *Disappearing Moon Café*, poor workers of the diasporic community face several kinds of discriminations. It can be assumed that when the diasporic community is
educated and live an economically comfortable life, discrimination from the settled society may be reduced.

Due to the problem of discrimination, identity crisis occurs especially in the life of the second generation. Some of them prefer to retain their homeland identity, some the settled land’s and others wish to integrate. In Obasan, when the Canadian government shows its discrimination against Japanese it affects the Japanese-Canadians psychologically. Japanese-Canadians, who belong to the second and third generations, suffer than the first generation people. As they are born and brought up in Canada, this is their home country. When their own country people fight against them, they are unable to bear it. Stephen and Naomi in Obasan could not understand the real condition of their country when they were young. Their friends, without any reason changed to being their enemies. Stephen considers their condition as a riddle – “We are both the enemy and not the enemy” (70). At school Stephen and Naomi suffer because of racism. Once in school a girl said to Stephen, “All the Jap kids at school are going to be sent away and they’re bad and you’re a Jap” (70). Therefore, most of the second generations in their adolescence begin to search for their identity as they face several contradictory practices which their parents observe from the society in which they live. It makes them to accept both cultures and live in a mixed way. This aspect is touched upon by Modood who states,

\[\text{Most of the Asian second generation wanted to retain some core heritage, some amalgam of family cohesion, religion and language, probably in an adapted form, but did not expect this to mean segregated social lives, for they lived and wanted to live in an ethnically mixed way. (110)}\]

Gogol’s character in The Namesake is among the few good illustrations that projects the difficulties and dilemmas of this dual identity.
**Survival:**

Survival in the settled society for the diasporic community is yet another major problem. In *An American Brat*, almost all the characters face this problem. Manek who comes to the US from Pakistan for education feels that money, which is sent from home, is not enough for his expenditure. Even though it is a large amount in Pakistan, it is very less in the US. Therefore, he resorts to selling the Bible and working at the university where he studies:

> Manek knew that at the conversion rate of fourteen rupees to the dollar, it was a princely sum by Pakistani standards. The family probably thought he was living like a prince in America. Not at all. He was living like a pauper. Why else would he, who was considered a heathen in the Bible Belt, sell Bibles? Perjure his soul by lying that he was a Christian? And sometimes risk his life against attacks from farm animals? (199)

In the US according to the law, the immigrant students were not allowed to work to earn money. When Feroza tells the immigrant officers that her uncle does two jobs to support himself, they threaten her and tell her that her uncle will be severely punished by the law – “Her uncle would be hauled before an immigration judge and, most likely, deported” (61). Sashi, Feroza’s friend from India, cheats to earn money. Sashi sits outside the shops with a notice indicating that some calamities has occurred in India and due to it he could not get money from home for his education. In this way he makes money for his education. In this way he makes money for his education.

The Bangladeshi community in the *Brick Lane* is mostly uneducated and perform manual jobs in order to survive. There are various instances in the novel to reveal the economic problems of the Bangladeshis. When Razia’s husband dies due to an accident in his work place, the family suffers due to the economic needs but when Razia tries to work outside and support her family, the Bangladeshi community criticize her. Later, when Chanu could not manage the house with his
salary, Nazneen takes up tailoring to support the family and after Chanu’s departure to Bangladesh, this work enables her to support her family.

In *Disappearing Moon Café*, SKY Lee presents the struggle of the Chinese to exist in the Canadian government. They were made to work hard and were paid very less. Playing on the diasporic communities’ economical needs, the Canadian government discriminated against them. The Chinese were made to undertake tough and risky jobs and were paid low wages. Chang, the protagonist meets Chen and finds that he too has faced a similar kind of situation in the gold mountain. “Chen had worked on the railroad. He also seemed to have participated in the gold rush over thirty years ago …. For sure, life was hard for a China man, and Chen would have had to give up something in order to survive” (7).

In *Obasan* too survival of the Japanese becomes questionable at the time of the World War II. The first generation Japanese lived a comfortable life till the Pearl Harbor incident but after that they are deprived of their property by the government. It makes them to suffer and work hard for their survival. Naomi, with her aunt, uncle and brother shift the place of dwelling according to the government’s order.

*The Bonesetter’s Daughter* and *The Namesake* do not focus on the issue of survival. In *The Namesake*, the author portrays the life of educated Indians settled in the US. Ashoke is presented as a student and later as a professor in a university. The members of the Indian community presented in the novel belong to the salaried upper class. They do not face economical problems due to their education and profession. In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, GaoLing is married to a dentist and lives a comfortable life. In the case of LuLing, she marries Erwin, a doctor and lives a prosperous life until her husband dies, which forces her to seek work to support the lives of her daughter and herself. She does not stake claims for in-
laws property due to their earlier discriminatory attitude towards her. Thus, her education and talent helps run her family without too many problems.

This analysis also displays that the diasporic communities’ throughout their settlements in new societies are not depicted only as facing misery. In most cases, the diasporic community thinks that the settled land is a place of opportunities and growth. In *The Namesake*, Ashima, after her husband’s death, decides to return to her home country, but not to settle there permanently. Gogol and Sonia are not willing to leave the US for India. This made Ashima to decide to live six months in India and another six months with her children. In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, LuLing even before entering into the US looks at it as a new heaven. In *An American Brat* Feroza comes to the US for her vacation and prolongs it by entering into college. When her relationship with David breaks up, she thinks of returning to Pakistan, but soon changes her mind to stay there further. Similarly in *Obasan* and *Disappearing Moon Café* no one mentions about their return to their home country. In *Brick Lane*, Chanu decides to return to Bangladesh for the sake of his children’s future, but Nazneen and their daughters are not ready to leave London. Nazneen considers London as a suitable place for her daughters’ future than Bangladesh. In *Brick Lane* and *An American Brat* due to the political condition in the home country they decide to stay in the settled country.

Most of the characters in the select novels at their later stages look at the settled society with the idea of acceptance. Even though in the beginning the diasporic community toil a lot to adjust with the settled society and its culture, in their later stages they are not willing to leave it. They try to live in the settled society by accepting and adjusting the problems and sufferings they face. They feel it as a land with good future for their children and not willing to take their children permanently from there to their home countries.
Cultural Change

As already mentioned the diasporic communities do not want to leave their cultural patterns of existence. Therefore in the settled land, they attempt to create ‘imaginary homelands’, which are culturally and traditionally similar to the homes they left behind. In *An American Brat*, when Feroza decides to marry David, Zareen advises her daughter “you can’t just toss your heritage away from like that. It’s in your bones!” (279). In *The Namesake*, Ashima and Ashoke find many Bengali friends and try to create their own community there. Often they use to throw parties to their friends in order to meet them. LuLing and her sister GeoLing in *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, Ashima and Ashoke in *The Namesake* and all the characters in *Disappearing Moon Café, Brick Lane* and in *Obasan* (both first and second generations) do not have intimate relationship with the Caucasians. On the other hand, mostly they mingle only with their own community people as revealed variously in the narratives. The second generation people are intimate with and have a greater degree of social contact with the Caucasian than the first generation. In *The Namesake* Ashima celebrates all the Hindu festivals and at the same time Western festivals for the sake of her children. It shows the mingling of both the cultures. Ashima and Ashoke are not bothered about Gogol’s relationship with the White girls. However, when it comes to marriage, Ashima wishes her son to be married off to a Bengali girl.

In *An American Brat*, when Feroza decides to marry David, a non- Parsee, it shocks her family in Pakistan. In Parsee community, exogamous marriages are condemned severely and they are excluded from the community and its rights. Thus Zareen, Feroza’s mother feels that her daughter, “would be branded an adulteress and her children pronounced illegitimate. She would be accused of committing the most heinous sacrileges. Cut off from her culture and her surroundings like a fish in shallow waters, her child would eventually shrivel up”
In order to stop that marriage, Zareen comes to the US and stays with her daughter for a month. Due to this kind of cultural adherence the diasporic communities are unable to assimilate easily in the settled land. In *An American Brat*, when Feroza loves David, she could not understand the importance and power of culture which stays within everyone. In the beginning of her love with David, she does not pay any attention to differences like home country, religion and culture between them. Once, Zareen comes to stay with them, David and Feroza begin to understand the difference between their nature and a gap begins to emerge in between them.

The very thing that had attracted him to Feroza, her exoticism, now frightened David. Zareen had made him feel that he and Feroza had been too cavalier and callow in dismissing the dissimilarities in their back grounds. He felt inadequate wondering if he could cope with some of the rituals and behavior that, despite his tolerant and accepting liberality, seemed bizarre. (309)

This results in the break up of their relationship. Similarly in *The Namesake* Gogol’s relationships with his girlfriends who are from the White community get disrupted.

Generally the cultural differences are too enormous to handle, for the diasporic community. Secondly they are also stupefied by the difference. Thirdly they decide for some reason that all practices of the society in which they settle are not good. Therefore, they wish to bring up their children according to their own tradition and culture. In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Fong Mei wants to send her children to Hong Kong and wants them to live there. She does not want them to be spoiled by the Canadian culture. She restricts her daughters’ friendship with the Whites. She rebukes them by stating, ‘The less you see of those white girls, the better off you’ll be. They don’t make good friends. Just be polite enough to get along with them at school!’ (151). In *The Namesake*, when Sonia wants to
color her hair it upsets Ashima and she wants her daughter to follow Indian culture. It leads to violent arguments between them:

> Her formally shoulder-length hair has been chopped asymmetrically by one of her friends. Ashima lives in fear that Sonia will color a streak of it blonde, as Sonia has threatened on more than one occasion to do, and that she will have additional holes pierced in her earlobes at the mall. They argue violently about such things, Ashima crying, Sonia slamming doors. (107)

In *Brick Lane*, Chanu thinks that London is not a suitable place for his daughters to grow up. Chanu comments about the cultural patterns, “It’s so ingrained in the fabric of society. Back home, if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don’t drink you risk the same thing. That’s when it becomes dangerous, and when they start so young they can easily end up alcoholic” (110). So he decides to leave the country for Bangladesh. Due to the cultural baggage the elders carry, some of the second generation begins to ruin their lives. In *Brick Lane*, most of the younger generations of the Bangladeshis are presented as drug addicts. This culminates in severe cultural clash, because at home parents follow a different culture and tradition and outside a different one. It often affects them psychologically. Gogol in *The Namesake* does not want to consider himself as an ABCD:

> Gogol has never heard the term ABCD. He eventually gathers that it stands for “American-born confused deshi”. In other words, him. He learns that the C could also stand for “conflicted”. He knows that deshi, a generic word for “countryman”, means “India”, knows that his parents and all their friends refer to India simply as desh. But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India. (118)
Another such instance is in *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, where in Ruth could not understand her mother’s belief about ghosts. She takes it as a play through which she conveys her wishes. LuLing, who comes from the Chinese tradition, wants her daughter Ruth to share everything with her. She could not understand when her daughter keeps some secrets and it affects their relationship, “They could not trust each other. That was how dishonesty and betrayal started, not in big lies but in small secrets” (139). Shahana in the *Brick Lane*, being born and brought up in London is unable to accept her father’s idea of Bangladesh as her home country. She hates to read Tagore and history of Bangladesh. She complains at her father’s politics about the usage of the English language at home. Whenever her father insists on matters related to Bangladesh and its culture, she rejects it:

Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dahl it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and could not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Noble laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care. Shahana did not want to go back home. (180)

Gogol too in *The Namesake* finds it difficult to comprehend when his parents speak in Bengali. “Lately he’s been lazy, addressing his parents in English though they continue to speak to him in Bengali. Occasionally he wanders through his house with his running sneakers on. At dinner he sometimes uses a fork” (75). Like Shahana, in *Brick Lane*, Gogol and his friends hate to attend Bengali classes. When Gogol’s parents reveal their idea of staying in India for eight months for a vacation, he could not bear that idea.
He dreads the thought of eight months without a room of his own, without his records and his stereo, without friends. In Gogol’s opinion, eight months in Calcutta is practically like moving there, a possibility that, until now, has never ever remotely crossed his mind. (79)

In the Asian culture, having boy friends and dating are forbidden. Even exogamous marriage is a condemnable thing. So the first generation of the diasporic community could not stomach when their children have boy/girl friends and fear that this would spoil their children. In The Bonesetter’s Daughter, LuLing does not want her daughter to have boy friends or to smoke. These are the things Ruth considers as normal, whereas her mother has a different opinion. Similarly, Gogol’s “parents do not find it strange that their son doesn’t date, does not rent a tuxedo for his junior prom. They have never been on a date on their lives and therefore they see no reason to encourage Gogol, certainly not at his age” (93). Due to the cultural difference, the second and further generations of diasporic community do not give importance to marriage as the first generation does. For them living conducive and happily is more important than marriage. In The Bonesetter’s Daughter, Ruth lives with Art for several years without marrying him. Ruth thinks this relationship to be normal but it affects LuLing and worries her frequently. In The Namesake too, the second generation do not think that marriage is a bond forever: “[T]hey have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima’s generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their idea of happiness” (276).

In Asian countries, joint family systems are followed. An individual cannot decide about anything without others opinions. But in the first world countries, individual opinions and options are more important. Although the first generation of the diasporic community desire their children to live mutually and
amicably together, they wish to adopt independent life styles. In *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, LuLing is forced to live alone, when Ruth leaves home and goes to live with Art. This upsets LuLing psychologically and similarly in *The Namesake* when Gogol mentions his stay in a room for three months, it upsets Ashima. When Gogol and Sonia reduce their visits to their parents, Ashima suffers a lot: “Having been deprived of the company 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” (166). The practice of cultural difference between parents and children of the diasporic community cannot be stopped by either of them because they both are born and brought up in different cultures and in societies.

**Gender Inequality:**

The writing by women belonging to diaspora also depicts another kind of problem namely, the issue of succumbing to or being constrained by their societal structures. Therefore most often, the writings by the women are critiques of their society. An illustration by Amy Tan in *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* is an example of this kind of demarcation as it discusses the access to knowledge gain. Precious Auntie, Ruth’s grandmother is a well educated woman, although education for women was forbidden in the nineteenth century Chinese society. Precious Auntie, when she narrates about her father explains her father’s liberal gender attitude:

> I learned to read and write, to ask questions, to play riddles, to write eight-legged poems, to walk and admire nature. The old biddies used to warn him that it was dangerous that I was so boldly happy, instead of shy and cowering around strangers. And why didn’t he bind my feet, they asked. My father was used to seeing pain of the worst kinds. But with me, he was helpless. He couldn’t bear to see me cry. (165)
Similarly Bapsi Sidhwa in *An American Brat* depicts how girls’ education is portrayed as not been extremely important. Another case where women are repressed revolves around the issue of marriage. The diasporic literature reveals the unfairness inherently present in the norms of marriage and attempts to depict this. In *An American Brat*, Zareen, “had often opined how unfair it was that while a Parsee man who married a “non” could keep his faith and bring up his children as Zoroastrians, a Parsee woman couldn’t” (287). *Brick Lane* portrays the gender discrimination faced by Bangladeshi women both in Bangladesh and in London. Women are seen merely as objects by men in the Bangladeshi society. The novel portrays how women are dominated by the patriarchal attitudes from their birth till death and how women themselves accept it as norms of the society. Almost all the women characters that live in London except Mrs. Islam and Mrs. Azad, the doctor’s wife face double discrimination in the new land. They are restricted by their husbands and elders by using Bangladeshi culture and looked in a mean way by the Londoners. Cormack comments that the novel *Brick Lane*, “is particularly of interest as an examination of the double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities” (700). Nazneen’s sister Hasina’s character portrays how free willed women are punished by the Bangladeshi society. Her wish and decision to select a life partner changes her to a life of prostitution and till the end of the novel her life undergoes negative changes due to the patriarchal nature of the Bangladeshi community.

In most cases, from the male point of view women are merely seen as an object to satisfy their sexual urge. In *Obasan* and *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*, during war time women were raped by the opposite country soldiers. Here men show their domination by physically torturing them. Not only women even small girl children are sexually abused by men. In *Obasan*, Naomi narrates her discomfort due to old man Gower’s sexual exploitation:
It is not an isolated incident. Over and over again, not just Old Man Gower – but years later there is Percy in Slogan, pressing me against the cave wall during hide-and-go-seek, warning me against crying out. The sharp stone cuts into my shoulder. I try to move by the holds me harder…I am filled with a strange terror and exhilaration. When does this begin – this fascination and danger that rockets through my body? (61)

These incidents affect the spirit of her childhood and it may be the reason for her silence and spinsterhood.

In the diasporic community, the society is bothered about women’s behavior rather than that of the men. They do not want their women to be following the settled society’s culture and therefore, enforce several restrictions on them. In Brick Lane, one can find several Bangladeshi families sending their daughters to Bangladesh in order to save them from the cultural change. Once when a girl gets married she is expected to be with her in-laws and allowed to pay occasional visit to her parents. Without the elder’s permission returning to parent’s home is a dishonor. In Disappearing Moon Café, when Mui Lan persists Fong Mei to leave the house because she could not give birth to a child, Fong Mei worries, because “… a spurned daughter-in-law would rather commit suicide than go back to her parents’ home, for all the ten generations of everlasting shame that she would cost her family, in fact her whole village” (59). By threatening her in this way, Mui Lan compels Fong Mei to accept her husband’s relationship with a waitress, in order to produce a child for their family. In such a society not only men, even women acknowledge men as superior. Fong Mei’s sister in a letter written to Fong Mei mentions that giving birth to a male child would increase one’s status in the society. The diasporic women writers use their work as a tool to present the gender discrimination they/ their society face in the home country and later in the settled country too. By presenting it effectively, they treat their
work as a battle field to fight against the male domination. In the novels even though in the initial stages women characters are made to face discrimination, in the end they live a free and independent life at least partially.

Through the reading of these novels one can understand that the diasporic community gets both positive and negative images from the settled society. In the initial stages of their settlement almost everything seems to be problematic and the diasporic individuals only get a negative view of the society. But later they derive enough experience to face the sufferings in a bold way and tend to look at the better economic opportunities for their children. From this, it is understandable that the diasporic community not only faces problems in the settled society but also enjoys the economical opportunity. So diasporic experiences are like a coin which has both sides.

The study of the novels by using the common diasporic features proves that no diasporic society is similar to another in all the aspects. Even though some of the diasporic societies share one or two common features with other diasporic communities, it does not mean that diasporic societies could be homogenized. The diasporic people presented in the six novels are from different countries and settled in different lands in different times. Their characteristics, reasons for displacement, educational qualifications and economies depict their distinct nature. In spite of their similar feelings of loneliness and alienation, their life differ due to the above mentioned various factors. The study proves that the diasporic communities represented in the novels are heterogeneous and it is therefore difficult to homogenize them.