CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

*Reasoning draws a conclusion, but does not make the conclusion certain, unless the mind discovers it by the path of experience.* – Roger Bacon
Acculturation is a foregone conclusion with immigrants today, even if the process of achieving it is not synchronized. Unlike the earlier diaspora, theories like assimilation, separation and marginalisation do not hold true in the present diasporic situation. With a celebration of cultures in a multicultural set up, individuals can claim their right over two worlds and acculturate. The process leads to the formation of a hyphenated Identity which espouses dual or more world views, ideologies, cultures without compromising on his values and beliefs.

In the course of the analysis it was observed that the strategies most frequently used by the writers were in the Physical, Social, Cultural and Psychological category. An overlapping between Physical and Psychological categories was also frequently noticed. A major aspect of the findings examined the formation of the 'migrant' or the 'diasporic' identity. It was concluded that this identity could not be fixed, but was fluid and constantly in the process of change. Diasporic identities are formed out of social and cultural influences from the adopted homeland, which are dormant or embryonic and are also imbibed from the receiving culture. Again, this identity formation is situational and varies from generation to generation.

The themes which have been discussed are alienation, collective memory, cultural identity, dual loyalty towards nation states, diasporic moorings or anchors, socio–cultural identity etc. An analysis of the texts reveals two
interconnecting periods which begin with Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* and ends with Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani*. All the other texts can be slotted in the intervening period. Kureishi’s Karim tries to stake his claim on the identity scene by virtue of having an English mother. His attempts to belong and grow closer to the Whites are countered by their non-acceptance and rejection till he finally comes to an understanding of his own self. The desire to belong to both worlds and yet face rejection by the dominant group is also echoed by the characters of the other novels – till we finally come to the last novel where we locate the fully acculturated Br Asians who have arrived with an integrated identity efficiently straddling both worlds. With this case of reverse colonialism the migrant has finally arrived. There is no rejection of either world but an acceptance of both.

Home involves a radical dislocation of spatio-temporal, ideological and linguistic coordinates and offers different connotations for different groups. Home and Homeland are important constructs for acculturation, as they provide identity, support, security and are a stimulant for creative ideas. The idea of home is mooted by all the writers where the characters, despite all attempts at independence (real and make-belief) revert. Homeland memories are sometimes fractured experiences recreated from memory but the physical reality of the home with its positive connotations cannot be negated. Surprisingly, issues like domestic space or home do not form a vital part of the male writers as compared to the intricate details given by women writers. The first generation tries to
reconstruct the home as an ‘idealized centre’, recreating it with memories and invisible baggage from the transnational home. A distinct difference can be seen in the way homeland and home are projected, home is a ‘personal construct’ while homeland is a ‘collective construct’ of an entire group of displaced immigrants. However, all the writers posit it as a ‘roosting nest’, a place where their characters return especially in times of conflict with the external world. For the first generation, the strategic reminders were more of visual appeal, the visible and invisible icons he had brought with him from the homeland. For the second generation it is basically memories which they retained, either borrowed from the reminiscences of parents and relations or directly their own. Important aspects of homeland included the presence of relations and country men from the hostland or the homeland, they brought back collective memories, the past and its recapitulation helped in the process of acculturation in the hostland. The continuation of customs and traditions was observed and was handled with more zeal and enthusiasm probably because they were such strong reminders of the homeland. The trip down memory lane is a nostalgic one outlining the need to use psychological strategies and cultural memories to acculturate. For the second generation, knowledge and acknowledgement of the parental past and a larger ethnic cultural past, again which was sometimes embryonic, provided the necessary bond for continuity and community building. The adoption of ideals from the hostland and retention of values of the homeland fitted them out as syncretic individuals. Social strategies like celebration of festivals, get-togethers and ‘satsangs’ are also included by the writers of the Indian diaspora. Culture
specific customs are also a strategy to retain nostalgic, familiar community bonds between individuals and home. Sometimes, even religious strategies are used. Other markers of identity like clothes, music also proved to be representative markers of the homeland.

The family in the diaspora stands for a site where values, togetherness, ideals are imbibed both directly and indirectly. The family acts as a buffer against any crisis whether in the first or in the second generation. Ties that bind the family, relations, value systems, Indian music in social gatherings and celebration of festivals are used as strategies in the analysis. The family proves to be an important physical and emotional anchor both for the first and the second generation. Family values are reinforced through examples of care and commitment, a source of strength against the outside world.

The hyphenated identity of the Br Asian woman is established by the use of physical, psychological and social strategies. The first generation women are supporters and makers of their home and family. The second generation women included are the new women, who use psychological strategies like mental strength, friends, neighbours and an improved understanding of situations to move on and emerge as independent, empowered women. From positions of negotiation there comes a certain validation of the unique identity of the Br Asian
woman as she situates and effectively balances many worlds of experience
among her personal and professional fronts.

The NRSA as depicted in the novels also uses many physical and psychological
strategies to acculturate. The first generation characters with a few exceptions
have not been delineated very clearly by the writers. The second generation
characters continue with their search for answers on various issues, dealing
persistently with the pressure of the society to translate themselves culturally.

Diasporic Identity is more influenced by the homeland in case of the first
generation than the second generation. This hybrid identity is possible in a
multicultural setup as the global citizen adopts a more acceptable form of
biculturalism and bilingualism. As they bring together incompatible positions,
break up dichotomies, join the self with the other, deconstruct and reconstruct,
the second generation become the inheritors of a complex, multi-layered,
transnational identity.
Findings:

A major part of this thesis examines the impact of the experience of migration on the second generation Br Asian in terms of the hybridity it faces. Education has developed a sense of individuality, agency as given by the society provide independence from stereotyping. These skilled cultural navigators switch codes appropriate to the context effortlessly. They are citizens of the world with cultural practices which transcend territorial or geographical locations. Strategies are employed by the Second Generation in different social locations school, street, yard, playground and trains, offices, roads, hospitals to negotiate with the dominant authority. These strategies help them adapt better, as adults in the workplace, and in the society.

It was established that TV, Internet connectivity, cheaper communication facilities have made the homeland easily available in the confines of one’s bedroom or home. It could be assumed, that because of this cost effective and comfortable access between the motherland and the adopted country, improved education, economic benefits, cultural privileges and greater awareness, the NRSA enjoys a better multi-cultural and multi-racial identity in comparison to earlier immigrants. The past is remembered, with lesser nostalgia today than it was in the earlier diaspora. Longing for the homeland exists, but is not as poignant as it was before. An actual border-crossing meant differently for it shelved connections, there was a fear, a chance of no return. Today, there is no delay and wait in
communication – it is all instant. Facilities like cheap rates for international calls, email, chat, SMS give a feeling of living in two worlds and adapting seamlessly.

The majority of the second generation are split between contact with ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ preferring their independence over anything else. This migrant does not wish to be alienated from the mainstream or have any of the practices at home ridiculed by the peer group but also nurtures a strong desire to physically visit the homeland. The persistent questions articulated on home by every author reinforce the fact, that the quest for home is actually a deeper search for identity, positing a need to belong. It was found that, the desire of the migrant to return home is sometimes conditional, because even if the immigrant returns, he cannot sever the ties of comfort – physical, emotional, familial and social to which he has adapted. This is true for both the first generation immigrant as well as the second. It was noted that food played a major role in communicating about the essence of the South Asian culture. Food forms a life resource. It is used as a major psychological strategy to cope with alienation and fragmentation in the hostland. Food becomes a palliative, a form of catharsis, a bond between families and related communities, a major symbol to evoke memories of the homeland. Food also acts as an agency to attack the problems of life in the hostland.
Identity has been posited as mobile and dynamic rather than fixed and rigid. It was observed that, hybridity has brought about a better level of adjustment in the multicultural host society for the second generation, who finally accept their own hyphenated status. The plurality of influences calls for multiple identities today. It was felt that, the focus hybridity gave to multiplicity in the formation of identity, encouraged a better understanding and a better management of the self at home and outside. This in-betweenness in the second generation characters depicted greater self-fulfilment and freedom. The open hybrid status of the NRSA provides an effective way of redefining the centre. It was observed that the deep seated, deep rooted values from the country of his origin still exist within the migrant and are innate even if he is twice or thrice removed from the hostland. The value system nurtured at home in the hostland is exhibited in different situations.

The NRSA family, as a social institution played an important role in enabling the second generation to acculturate. They proved to be a buffer against any kind of problems whether it was social issues or interpersonal conflict. The focus was on education, value systems which rooted them successfully in the Third Space where they balanced the dual culture, identity and language. The continuity of customs in the new land ensured intra-generational links and continuity with one’s own family.
It was proved that women have a greater presence in the second diaspora than men. The transformative role in the construction of their identities can be found in the diasporic spaces they occupy. The support systems they create, the family, their sisters from their own land or at the workplace help them to integrate better. Empowered with better facilities, many women in the diaspora actually acculturate better and lead a better life than they would have in the homeland.

It was analysed that language has been used as a major strategy to acculturate efficiently. While knowledge of the dominant language, English, was necessary, yet language shedding (of the mother tongue) was not required. Bilingualism was helpful and strategies like expropriation, ventriloquation, code switching helped the immigrant to acculturate better and efficiently.

It was also anticipated in the hypothesis, that slowly but steadily, South Asians are colonizing the face of the country, here Britain, which had earlier colonized them. Immigrants do not passively take in the culture of the adopted land, but weave in their culture collectively and individually. The impact of Indian cuisine on the social milieu in Britain is just one of the many examples of Asian influence alongwith dance, music and clothes. These are all examples of the Asianisation of the West. India continues to grow even in the hostland. The social scene in the novels, indicates the positive presence of rock bands, flourishing curry
houses, yoga centres and celebration of important Indian festivals. The incidence of working women holding influential jobs has also gone up.

It was observed that the first generation has been depicted in all novels as a balanced and model immigrant community. It is a strategy deliberately plotted by the authors to highlight the political, social and cultural shocks which they faced, unlike the second generation who accepted the facilities the country offered as their birthright.

Diaspora literature opens itself up for intra-disciplinary studies within it. It is connected to psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science and culture studies, all these related subjects coalesce and slide into it.

There are a variety of views on the future of diaspora. Diaspora literature has opened itself up for intra-disciplinary studies. While political boundaries cannot be erased, cultural and social borders continue to intermingle and change the dynamics of life. Empirical studies can be conducted to discover links between the literature being written and life as it is actually led by the immigrants.
All the strategies for the categories described above: Home, Homeland, Family, and Identity formation of women, the NRSA and Language cannot be compartmentalized. They are fluid, dynamic and changing, even now. Acculturation and assimilation have acquired a new definition. Integration does not speak of losing one’s identity but reshaping it to emerge with a better identity, a way of successfully outgrowing roots.

Boundaries structure our lives, give inhabitants an identity, a sense of rootedness a readymade frame of reference. But, with sweeping changes everywhere, diasporas are metamorphosing all conventional paradigms of home and homeland, nation and nationality. The migrant today brings his nationality to his new home. It no longer means giving up one inborn habit for another, giving up spicy curry to bring in burgers but making sandwiches with mango chutney. In the borderless, deterritorialized world where we are posited today, the immigrant is a syncretic individual with a plurality of cultural selves and a global identity.