



Diaspora and Multiculturalism: British South Asian Women's Writing

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Summary

This thesis analyses how the British South Asian diaspora is conceptualized, understood and reflected in a selection of female-authored literary texts which engage with the multicultural policies of the British state from the 1950s to the present. The primary sources include Attia Hosain's *Phoenix Fled* (1953) and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Kamala Markandaya's *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972), Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman seeks the One* (2009) and Rosie Dastgir's *A Small Fortune* (2012). I conceive of British multicultural state policies as unfolding in three major phases: Assimilation (1950- 1979), Integration (1980-2001), Social Cohesion/Interculturalism (2001- present). The thesis examines these policy changes and illustrates how these shifts are mirrored in and shape the character of British South Asian women's writings. In the light of this I argue that British South Asian women writers' engagement with a sense of exile, dislocation or a 'teleology of return' along with a symbolic longing to create imaginary homelands has produced new alliances which exist outside what has been called the national time/space in order 'to live inside, with a difference'. Through the selected writers' individual attempts to configure new fictional home spaces, a new architecture for the diasporic imagination is constructed around the poetics of home and the multicultural politics of identity. Such cross-cultural literary interventions exist both within and outside colonial and postcolonial genealogies, reconfiguring the critical geographies by which they have been mostly defined.

The first two chapters of the thesis attempt to define the complex configurations of the concept of multiculturalism and its interconnections with the terminology of diaspora. I have adopted a reading strategy tracing the South Asian migration history to Britain and the early literary representations which powerfully illuminate the fragmented imagination of the South Asian diaspora in terms of contemporary theoretical paradigms. The next three chapters analyse literary representations by Attia Hosain, Kamala Markandaya, Ravinder Randhawa, Meera Syal, Monica Ali, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir, who highlight and complicate the issues of race, ethnicity and gender in relation to the rhetoric of multiculturalism and multicultural policies. The writers use various strategies that testify to the innate relation between the political 'real' and the literary 'imaginary' and explain how real life experiences provide fuel to the 'diasporic imaginary' and affirm the transnational potency of literature.



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PROLOGUE

*‘OM Sarva Mangala Mangalye, Shive Sarvartha Sadhike, Sharanye Trayambake, Gauri Narayani Namostutey’.*¹

In 1987, when I was 6 years old, I was introduced to the first devotional verse of *Devi Mahamaaya* (Divine Mother), quoted above. I was a little embarrassed and reluctant to recite the verse then, especially to call *Devi* (Goddess) ‘Gauri’ – the white one, as I was brown-skinned and grief-stricken due to my childhood complexion. The reasons were twofold: the derisory chuckles of some conventional relatives and my younger sister’s magnolia white skin colour which she inherited from my father’s side. I remember how hard I tried to discover the image of ‘Kali’ (the female Black) – another facet of *Devi* which symbolizes darkness, mystery and her battle with demons and evil spirits;² as a childish tactic to seek a divine space for ‘the dark-skinned’. Thus, I had a hint about the dynamics of ‘colour politics’ since my childhood, which was apparent even in the prayer to the Mother Goddess. It is just like the question that my six year old daughter asked me when she was rejected for the role of the Virgin Mary in the school nativity concert in the United Kingdom just because she was not ‘white’. Amma, why is the Virgin Mary always ‘white’? Why can’t there be a brown Mary when the English Marie biscuits are brown in colour?, she asked.

¹ The verse is from *Devi Mahatmyam* which is a mantra in praise of *Devi Mahamaya* (the fully-fledged form of the Mother Goddess in the Hindu puranas). The verse means: *O ultimate auspiciousness, O accomplisher of all goodness, O source of ultimate refuge, O Divine Mother of all the three worlds, O ultimate beauty who is white and radiant, O expositor of consciousness, I salute and bow down to You.*

² Though ‘Kali’ is worshipped as a dispeller of darkness and devilry from the universe in a fearsome figure wearing a garland of skulls, Kali is not usually included in any of the Satvik Pujas (worship). In Vedic philosophy, ‘Satvik’ means that which is pure, the other two gunas (qualities) are ‘Rajas’ and ‘Tamas’. Kali symbolises ‘Tamas’ which means ‘dark’. Although there are 3 gunas, all the 3 are considered mutually qualifying and the ultimate consciousness is ‘trigunateet’ - that which has transcended the three qualities.

Colour politics is omnipresent in all domains of life, irrespective of physical, temporal, geographical, cultural, social and political borders or divides. Eventually, I arrived at a research topic that lies close to the ‘real’ dimensions of the dichotomy of ‘blackness/whiteness’, to analyse the different semantic layers of ‘racial diversity and racial politics’ embedded in the political and policy equations concerning South Asians in multicultural/multi-ethnic Britain. In her work *Black Body* (1999), Radhika Mohanram perceives nation and race as arbitrary or as political constructs. She designs a closely-connected circuitry of race, place and body to elaborate on the intricate associations of place or landscape with that of physical and racial identity formations of the individual.³ These complex inter-relationships have radiated multiple meanings of race, which in turn produced a highly volatile categorisation of black/white, especially during Colonialism. The Western white individual is given an upper hand, whereas the non-Western subjects remain passive, non-progressive and *displaced or misplaced* from where they naturally belong. The non-Western ‘other’ is always displaced as he/she gains an identity only from a sense of displacement from the source of origin, always being given an ‘alienated’ status by the mainstream Whites. The sense of being misplaced is attributed to the political components and policy systems, defining the non-Western subject as essentially an entity; static, unwanted and burdensome. It is this sense of dis/misplacement that radiates enigmatic implications of the concept called ‘home’.

Susheila Nasta defines ‘home’ as a space not necessarily where one *belongs*, but the place where one *starts* from.⁴ ‘Home’, ‘homely’, ‘feel at home’, ‘home sick’ – all the terms imply the same meaning, in one way or another, the creation of a ‘comfort zone’ where one feels absolutely reassured and at ease, like a chick under the sheltering wing of its mother. ‘Home’ is

³ Radhika Mohanram, *Black Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xii.

⁴ Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.1.

not merely a psychological feeling, but a powerful sensation where a number of social, economic and political factors contribute heavily to the *making* of a ‘home’. However, the notion of ‘home’ reaches an increasingly vexed and evocative terrain when it is linked to the concerns of the people who identify themselves as part of any ‘diaspora’, posing themselves as “imagined communities”⁵, creating a “diasporic imaginary”⁶ – redolent, imaginary landscapes of dreams and fancies as an illusory solution to their unfulfilled desires and deficiencies in their life. Here, the term ‘imaginary’ should not be read as monolithic, as ‘diaspora’ indicates heterogeneity, resisting precise definition.⁷ Robin Cohen, in his *Global Diasporas*, elucidates certain features that become highly functional in a diasporic context – appropriate to both ‘old’ and ‘new’ diasporas⁸. As Cohen suggests, a sense of strong ‘group consciousness’, a troubled relationship with ‘host societies’, a deep desire to return to the homeland, and a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members abroad⁹ are the shared traits of any diaspora, but feature disproportionately in contemporary diasporas in the new age of global immigration.

The question of multiculturalism has been very important in Britain since 1945, after the mass immigration from its former colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Being a South Asian female pursuing research in one of the leading universities in Britain, I am particularly interested in focusing sharply on the diaspora of South Asian women in Britain and their strategies in articulating identity politics within multicultural Britain. The South Asian

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁶ Vijay Mishra, ‘The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorising the Indian Diaspora’, *Textual Practice*, 10 (3), (1996), pp. 421-427.

⁷ Monica Fludernick, ‘The Diasporic Imaginary: Postcolonial Reconfigurations in the Context of Multiculturalism’, in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. by Monica Fludernick (New York: Rodopi, 2003).

⁸ The ‘Old’ and ‘New’ diaspora are Vijay Mishra’s terms that refer to the old indentured labourers and the new diaspora characterised by greater mobility, whose exile is negotiable, temporary and semi-permanent. Mishra refers particularly to the Indian diaspora and its migrational characteristics. See Vijay Mishra, *The Literature of Indian Diaspora: Theorising the Diasporic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1997).

diaspora is considered as a 'neo diaspora' as the migration it encompasses spans the rise of global modernity.¹⁰ Moreover, the South Asian diaspora has played a pivotal role in the making of a multicultural Britain and has been important due to the colonial affiliations and cross-cultural encounters between the two. There have been significant shifts in the character of the South Asian diaspora, generational attitudes, identity politics and the broader political and policy implications from the larger centre to the periphery. The fluctuations, alterations, relocations and repositioning of diasporic consciousness have been meticulously captured and aesthetically expressed and performed through art and literature. Literary narratives, thus, become highly active modes of representation that record diasporic manoeuvres— the past and the present; thereby, charting the diasporic narratives' way to a future that contains the convergences and contradictions between the past and the present.

As a way of entering into the heart of this thesis on the narratives of South Asian women diasporic writers in Britain, I should outline the major questions addressed in the work. In recent times, a great deal of critical attention has been focused on the theoretical remapping of diasporic literature, leading to the questioning of traditional grand narratives of the English canon. It seeks to position itself within the mainstream English literary space, challenging the prescribed ethnic tags by broadening the realm or refashioning it by experimenting with new ways of articulation. As cited earlier, the concept of home has been a highly ambiguous and complex concept in the now established terrain of postcolonial literary studies, especially in an inherently fluid, globalised transnational world. In his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Matthew Arnold posits 'home' as that which suggests order, cohesion, stability of culture, while a state of 'homelessness' is its inevitable opposite, a negative and disenfranchised space where anarchy

¹⁰ Susan Koshy and R. Radhakrishnan (eds.), *Transnational South Asians: The Making of a Neo Diaspora* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

will persist and disrupt the security of tradition and State¹¹. If we analyse the definition, the logic contained is relevant in the present day, particularly to Britain's diasporic space that makes it a "polarized cultural territory, an embattled space where difference signified by race, colour or ethnicity is forced into makeshift 'ghettos' on the edges of the nation."¹² Britain's black and Asian population existed in minimal numbers at least as early as the seventeenth century, whereas a solid visibility of substantial numbers of black and Asians can be traced back to the immediate years following the Second World War.¹³ The huge bulk of non-white 'human cargo' docked into British ports simply raised the anxieties of the state authorities about British cultural hegemony and the furore of a 'pure' British culture among many other concerns related to economic and political domains. It is important to keep in mind, as historians like Rozina Visram, Peter Fryer, Reshmi Desai and Antoinette Burton have stated, that the massive South Asian and black immigration to Britain during the post-war years was the result of their long and persistent connections with the 'island nation' that have been strategically kept hidden from Britain's national, political, cultural and literary histories and not just the result of the end of British colonial rule.¹⁴ This suggests that Britain's connections with its black and Asian diaspora have been a continual organic process that have later brought the claims of a fixed state and cultural identity, the conceptions of a homogeneous, 'pure' British identity into question.

Pertinent to the idea stated above, Britain, on the other hand, has posed herself as a "...great colonial power [that] has always sought to define her people, and by extension the

¹¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford: OUP, 2009).

¹² Nasta, 2002, p.3.

¹³ Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The History of Indians in Britain, 1700-1947* (London: Pluto Press, 1986); Rashmi Desai, *Indian Immigrants in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹⁴ Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Rozina Visram, 1986; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984); Rashmi Desai, 1963.

nation itself, by identifying those who don't belong.”¹⁵ Phillips' argument points at the 'unstable' positioning of the black and Asian immigrants in a predominantly white hegemonic Britain, where the immigrants who were 'unassimilated' to the dominant white British culture were always 'out of place' or totally muted or silenced from expressing their connections to the dominant narratives of British life.¹⁶ Additionally, the majority of the members of the first generation ethnic minority groups formed 'little Indias' of their own and considered themselves in their ethnic terms rather than being British. More recently, the 1997 Policy Studies Institute survey on ethnic minorities in Britain suggests:

They [ethnic minorities] were not . . . comfortable with the idea of British being anything more than a legal title; in particular they found it difficult to call themselves 'British' because they felt that the majority of white people did not accept them as British because of their race and cultural background.¹⁷

The divisiveness featured in the political rhetoric, policy documents and in the language of cultural critics occurs in diverse forms – either as metaphorical expressions or through circumlocutory, equivocal articulations. The creation of divisive 'ethnic' tags for Asian immigrants has created an alternative sphere of literary representations – Asian British writing – that reflect, inform, configure and re-shape Asian diasporic identities in all their heterogeneity and diversity. Narratives that contained multifarious reflections of memory, nostalgia, lost homeland, generational, cultural and racial conflicts, community politics and so on emerged in various literary forms, genres and styles.

¹⁵ Caryl Phillips (ed.), *Extravagant Strangers: A Literature of Belonging* (London: Faber&Faber, 1997).

¹⁶ See Phillips, 1987. See also Nasta, 2002.

¹⁷ See Tariq Modood and others, *Ethnic Minorities: Diversity and Disadvantages* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), p.330.

My concern in this study is with the female writers, critics and artists of the South Asian British diaspora¹⁸, who, through their counter hegemonic artistic and critical articulations display the variegated versions of female diasporic lives. My reading of the British South Asian women's narratives is, however, slightly atypical from the frequent critical observations setting sights on themes such as nostalgia, memory, domestic violence and the like, which already sound clichéd, producing a déjà vu effect. I intend to open up a fresh critical observations produced at the refractions of female British South Asian literature, analogous to the larger political expressions in the form of government policies and legislation in Britain. I analyse how South Asian women writing in Britain have aesthetically responded to the British multicultural policies, displaying true pictures of diasporic lives. The work considers the complex questions of race, class, gender and cultural differences. It is obvious that we should address these questions within specific temporal and historical contexts, in connection with particular histories and patterns of migration and settlement, as a way of portraying the intricate details of individual backgrounds that form the crucial context when analysing the texts along with the trials and tribulations faced by the writers in a hostile environment.

My aim in this thesis is to design a time sequence to map the trajectory of British South Asian female writing from the 1950s to the present *vis-à-vis* the changes in the government

¹⁸ The term 'British South Asians' in my thesis refers to the immigrants or diasporic subjects in Britain who could trace their roots on the subcontinent. I discuss a number of writers in the work, who, in one way or another, are connected to India, Pakistan or Bangladesh - the three major countries that outline the borders of the umbrella term 'South Asia'. Attia Hosain from the undivided Hindustan (pre-1947) and Kamala Markandaya from India are the selected first generation writers, Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal are the second generation British Indian writers, and finally, Monica Ali who is a British Bangladeshi born to a Bangladeshi father and English mother, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed - a British Muslim writer whose parents migrated to Britain from East Africa with their ancestry in Gujarat, and Rosie Dastgir who is a British Pakistani writer born to a Pakistani father and British mother are grouped as 'British born and bred Muslim writers'. References to Roma Tearne (British Sri Lankan), Hema Macherla (British Indian), Jasvinder Sanghera (British Pakistani) among others are made to explicate the complex mix of South Asian female identity politics as well as the diverse modes of literary representations. In the thesis, I use the terms 'South Asian', 'Asian', 'British Asian', 'Asian British', 'Asian Briton' interchangeably to denote one and the same group mentioned above, unless otherwise specified. See Appendix III, *The Map of South Asia*, p.227. and Appendix IV, *Major South Asian Migration Flows*, p.228.

policy make-up of post-imperial Britain. The work concentrates on the writers Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya to define how first generation South Asian women have imagined a 'lost homeland' to describe the 'new' diasporic experience in relation to the policies of state-sponsored multiculturalism framed to contain the 'newcomers'. Attia Hosain, who emigrated to England from the Hindustan (before the Partition) in 1947, belonged to an elite upper-class Muslim background. She showcases the issues of class divides and the subjugated position of women within her community. Her works are central to my reading of later female British Asian Muslim narratives in a post- 9/11 British scenario. Kamala Markandaya, an Indian writer in Britain, elaborates on the traumatic experience of the immigrants in a racially strained environment in 1950s Britain. Markandaya's works give an incomparably vivid picture of Indian diasporic life caught in the dilemma of conflicting Eastern and Western values and the failure of the Asian immigrants to adapt to the assimilation policies of the State. She, like Hosain, belonged to the first generation of Indian diaspora writers who wrote about immigration and interracial relationships. Her works are a lens through which to read the second generation British Asian women narratives of Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal, to understand the attitudinal differences between generations and the South Asian diasporic life influenced by racial politics. I chose to write on Randhawa and Meera Syal because of their narratives on second generation hybrid Asians in an insalubrious multicultural setting in Britain. Their works are systemic satires that solidify the themes of patriarchal oppression still prevalent among South Asian diasporic communities. Central to Randhawa and Syal's works are the encounters between Indian and British culture, exposing the racial and ethnic strait-jackets and a politics of place, concerning British Asian identities, their struggle to match their life with the policies of integration introduced in the late 1960s and 1970s. The final section of the thesis focuses on

female British South Asian Muslim literary representations of post-9/11 Britain and the accompanying chaos in the form of ‘mistaken identity’, attacks, suspicion and discrimination towards Asian Muslims in a highly-charged political environment. Consequently, major shifts in State policy in the form of social cohesion and interculturalism have ensued; a volte-face from multiculturalism to multifaithism, which has been reprehended for its inclination towards an ‘assimilationist’ mode.

In the work, I look upon British multicultural policies traversing, roughly, three major phases. The first phase –*The Assimilation phase* –was approximately from the late 1940s and early 1950s with the commencement of post-war mass migration from the subcontinent, through the 1960s when the Immigration Acts were passed to keep out the designated non-White settlers under the label ‘coloured’. The epithet ‘coloured’ was part of a racist strategy to debase the ‘newcomers’ and strip them of dignity and social standing. By the mid 1970s there were some policy moves on the part of the Labour government to tackle the upsetting racial anxieties. The enactment of the Race Relations Act in 1976 to address the highly pervasive racial behaviour that affected Britain opened up the second phase of British multicultural policies – *The Integration/Multicultural phase*. The period continued throughout the 1980s, during the heyday of Thatcherism, which witnessed race riots and clashes between the blacks, Asians and whites in areas such as Brixton, Bristol, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester. It brought in the political label ‘Black British’ to bracket the blacks and Asians in Britain as a unified entity, but soon the term became restricted to the immigrants and settlers from the Caribbean and Africa. It gave way to further division into a new category – British Asians – which included South Asians as well as the East African Asians.

The disintegration of the political label ‘black’ had been applied to almost all domains of immigrant life, including literature. ‘Celebrating difference’ was the watch-word of the policy where immigrants and diasporic communities were allowed to maintain separate, strong cultural and religious identity. *Prima facie*, multiculturalism seemed to be compatible with the liberal, universal notions of justice and equality, going hand in hand with human rights. Multiculturalism, therefore, provided a new policy discourse of recognition of ethnic minority cultural differences whose *raison d’etre* was to encourage an anti-racist discourse and public recognition of minorities. However, multiculturalism produced the new image of ‘multi-ethnic, multiracial Britain’, a transition from the notion of a mono-racial, mono-cultural British State. The ‘multicultural turn’ was subject to a backlash in the wake of the race riots of 2001 in the inner city areas of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. The riots displayed an inflamed religious character by virtue of being comprised of almost only Muslim male youths and far-right extremist whites. The riots also revealed the troubled realities of widespread racism, extremism, structural inequalities and deep-seated segregation between local communities.¹⁹ The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the 07/07 London bombings brought ‘Muslims’, especially South Asian Muslims, under the spotlight, being type-cast as ‘enemies within’.²⁰

¹⁹ Ted Cattle, *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²⁰ In Britain, Muslims of South Asian origin form 80% percent of the whole of the British Muslim community (ONS, 2010). Although there was a shift in the mainstream conception of Muslims after 9/11, from ‘an exotic, sensual stereotype of Islam to a Muslim fanatic stereotype, the involvement of South Asian British Muslims in the 7/7 bombings and the Pakistan/Afghanistan-based terrorist groups (Al-Qaeda and Taliban) behind the attacks have intensified the notion of South Asian Muslims as ‘anti-Western’. For details, see Tim Winter, ‘Some Thoughts on the Formation of British Muslim Identity’, *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, 8(1), (March, 2002); Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (London: Penguin, 2002); Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for New Umma* (London: Hurst, 2002); Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009); Geoffrey Nash, *Writing Muslim Identity* (London: Continuum, 2012).

The third stage, *The Social Cohesion/ Interculturalism phase* foregrounded ‘religion’ as a major bench-mark for designing immigration policies and legislation.²¹ The government introduced the policy of Social Cohesion and Interculturalism to promote community cohesion between faith groups and to reduce the tensions spilling out between different religious groups, mainly Muslims and far-right extremists. The drift was apparent in the literary terrain as well, with the emergence of a new category of writing called ‘Muslim writing’.²² Both male and female Muslim writers produced creative narratives reflecting on different facets and themes within and outside Islam. A significant number of works were based on the post-9/11 events and the resulting reactions against the Muslim diaspora that highlight the concept of ‘othering’ them as anti-western people who promote terrorism. Therefore, it becomes obvious that Asian British literary imaginary has carved a literary territory, positioning itself with regard to the changing British State immigration policies and legislation.

I will examine some questions that remain unresolved, still apparent within the critical discourses concerning British Asian female writing at the crossroads where the ‘literary imaginary’ meets the ‘political real’. The title of the thesis, *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: British South Asian Women Writing*, may appear unclear at first glance. The narratives on ‘diaspora and multiculturalism’ might indicate a repeated version of the often-quoted life experiences between ‘multi’ cultures with the entailed opposition between the dichotomies such as the ‘mainstream/minority – ghetto’ or ‘homeland/ hostland’ and so on. Of course, these ideas do nourish the work profusely, as the concept of ‘home’ looms large in any diasporic writing.

²¹ Various inter faith organisations such as *Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism* (FAIR) and Joseph Interfaith Foundation (JIF) have come to the fore to persuade the government to ensure establishing a safe, just and tolerant Britain by curbing attacks against immigrants, Muslim and Jews especially. In 2001, the Islamic pressure group, *Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism* (FAIR), published their newsletter stating the need to promote a multi-faith and multi-ethnic Britain. See Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), *Promoting a Multi-Faith and Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London: FAIR, 2001).

²² Claire Chambers, ‘Introduction’ in *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.1.

Along with a ‘homing desire’ diaspora people cherish an unreciprocated affection for a lost homeland, an ardent desire to reconfigure ‘home’ and come to terms with the ‘*unheimlich*’ through the process of creative writing, as a way out by furtherance of the condition of being ‘unhomely’²³. Here, I am not trying to kick-start a new tradition of critical reading of diasporic texts or display an extensive understanding of the massive literary output of South Asian diaspora women in Britain. Neither does this study look upon the variety of themes addressed in the selected authors’ literary oeuvre. Instead, I make an effort to situate the narratives of British South Asian women as a sequence of cross-cultural expressions as a response to British government policy interventions.

At this point, the question ‘Why South Asian diaspora women?’ is relevant. For the main part, little critical attention has been paid to the significant body of creative literature, especially that which came out in recent years, by Asian female writers in Britain. In addition, no study as yet exists that offers a coalescence of the cultural, historical, political and literary elements that nourish this branch of writing. Although there are a considerable number of critical readings and works on the major literary figures, mostly covering male writers such as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Tariq Ali and Aamer Hussein, for their exciting exotic representations of their ‘Asianness’ painted variously in assimilationist tones, few Asian women writers are immediately visible in the terrain. Therefore, my objective is to open a new discursive vista surrounding the evolution and construction of the South Asian female diasporic literary aesthetic welded together with everyday complex political propositions.

Nowadays, the term ‘Diaspora’ is employed to denote any population that crosses the borders to settle in a new nation. Originally ‘Diaspora’ was used in the context of Jewish

²³ See Nasta, 2002.

experiences of expulsions and also Greek and Armenian dispersions. In terms of Asian migration and settlement, 'diaspora' indicates not simply a sense of 'exile' and the entailed 'trauma', but an active realm producing "newer identities and subjectivities that dwell outside what has been called the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference."²⁴ Hence, diaspora is, to a great extent about crossing borders, displacement and settlement. To reflect on Mohanram's concept again, 'diaspora' can come into being, exist and gain meaning only "when perceived as being out of place, either from its natural environment or its national boundaries".²⁵

* * *

The thesis consists of five chapters. As explained earlier, the work looks at the intersections of female Asian diasporic writing and British multicultural policies. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the concept of 'multiculturalism' as a political philosophy and as a policy concept. The arguments in the chapter are woven around the current debates on 'multiculturalism' to establish its close association with the concept of 'diaspora'. A proper understanding of the philosophical aspect of multiculturalism is significant as it forms the base to understand the nature of policies, determining their possibilities, limitations and functionality. I have adopted a reading strategy to elaborate on the profound details of contemporary theoretical deliberations on multiculturalism, which are suggestive in terms of on-going intricate political tactics and identity politics structured by class, ethnic and gender stratification and historical determinations. The chapter reads the theoretical paradigms of multiculturalism experts such as Will Kymlicka, Lord Bhikhu Parekh, Charles Taylor, Chandran Kukathas, Bryan Barry, Tariq

²⁴ Anuradha Needham, *Using the Master's Tools: Resistance and the Literature of African and South Asian Diasporas* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

²⁵ Mohanram, 1999, p. xiv.

Modood, Stanley Fish, Floya Anthias and Susan Moller Okin, to identify the different schools of thought envisioning the complexity and diverse aspects of the concept. The elaboration may, sometimes, sound moderately overstated, but it is necessary to differentiate British multiculturalism from the multicultural policies of other Western nation states. Towards the end of the chapter, focusing in detail on British multiculturalism and its entwinement with British South Asian women writing, the chapter provides a context for reviewing the links between British multicultural politics and Asian British literary creations. In brief, the chapter is a curtain-raiser to give a general review of what is argued in successive chapters.

The second chapter, 'Politics and Poetics: South Asian Women Writing in Britain', identifies the features of South Asian women's writing in Britain since the post-war period by mapping the points of departures, shifts and breaks with a comprehensive outline of its historical trajectories. The chapter unveils the subtle layers of female literary constructions of 'home', 'identity' and 'generational conflicts' at the intersections of race, class, gender and ethnicity from the centre of the imperial metropolis thereby setting a platform from which to determine the transitions and transformations in this branch of writing. The chapter is designed in two sections: the first part prompts the reader to turn their gaze backwards as a way of facilitating a historical retrieval of the arrival of South Asians to Britain to ameliorate the country's economic decline in the 1950s and early 1960s. This signalled the emergence of 'multicultural policies' to manage the heterogeneous 'others'. This section focuses on the Asian settlement period in Britain in the 1960s and the 1970s, when a more emphatic mode of multiculturalism was implemented to 'celebrate differences' as well as with post-9/11 Britain when the policies were explicitly extended from a multicultural approach to include multifaithism. Social Cohesion and Interculturalism became the policy watchword especially after the 9/11 and 07/07 terrorist

attacks. The second part elucidates the literary writings of South Asian women in Britain and how they have aesthetically responded to the realities in the diasporic space along with their strategies to adapt and their sense of being placed and displaced. The chapter charts the emergence, evolution, expansion and continuation of the post-war poetics of the South Asian female diaspora; a spring board to the complex configurations of female aesthetic output, to understand its status enmeshed with that of multicultural State policies.

Chapters Three, Four and Five constitute the second segment of the thesis which focuses on the literary imaginary of Asian diaspora women spanning the three different time periods mentioned above. The section forms the heart of the entire work describing the disintegrated images of migrants abroad, the preoccupation with imagined homeland and memory together with grim and unpleasant realities of migrant life, that form the common currency of almost all diasporic writings, expressed in different modes and tones. My reading in chapter Three concerns Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya's literary texts that expose their embarrassment and fear of being 'dislodged' by history and being denied entry into the traditional canon of 'English' letters. I review selected works of the authors that unfold the cultural politics and the rhetoric of racial politics in the 1950s and 1960s British State and society. The chapter also pays attention to the strategies employed by these first generation writers in the Asian diaspora to construct and negotiate their 'homely' migrant space. Attia Hosain's *Phoenix Fled* (1953) and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) deal with the Partition experiences, which she makes a powerful metaphor to describe her exilic condition in Britain that produced a fragmented and unstable identity. Kamala Markandaya, on the other hand, signals candid expressions of 'coloured' imposed by the mainstream British society upon the South Asians to produce reductive 'Oriental' stereotypes. Her novels *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972)

powerfully narrate the hidden political agenda of anti-immigration sentiments and reveal a hardcore racist, xenophobic Britain. Both the writers complicate the issues of gender, by highlighting the women characters and their strategies and efforts to come to terms with the conflicting situations, maintaining the diasporic vein of writing 'home'.

The fourth chapter, entitled 'Multicultural Hybrid Aesthetic' reads the second generation writers who came to visibility in the 1980s and 1990s, exhibiting their fresh visions and experiences in their hyphenated hybrid space of dwelling called 'Asian-Britain'. The focus is on the first two novels of two important British Asian activist figures, Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal. Ravinder Randhawa is credited with feminist activist thoughts and activities that culminated in the founding of the Asian Women Writers' collective in 1984. Similarly, Meera Syal has presented herself as a social activist working towards the emancipation of underprivileged and victimized Asian females in Britain. Moreover, Syal has opened a new style of writing by breaking the usual typecast versions of Asian females in the popular culture of Britain. She is a multi-talented person who has made her presence felt in popular media and theatre. In this chapter, Ravinder Randhawa's *The Wicked Old Woman* (1987) and Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996) serve as the texts for analysis. Both Randhawa and Syal overturn the supposed 'ghetto' and create a new hybrid space whose boundaries are made porous to explore the questions of gender and female collectivity.

The final chapter, 'Post-9/11 Britain and the Female Muslimist Imaginary: Monica Ali, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir', shifts the debate from a general 'South Asian female' domain to the more specific, newly emergent orbit of representation called 'female Asian Muslim Writing'. Although the commonly encountered themes of 'home', 'memory' and 'culture' form the subject-matter of the texts, the focus of attention primarily rests on 'Muslim

Britain'. Rather than focusing on the miseries of women within their communities, these works debate the variable of a highly volatile religious and political scene post-9/11 which has placed British Muslims, especially South Asian Muslims, in a painful dilemma, being questioned for their loyalty as 'Asian Britons'. The physical location called 'Britain' refracts more or less differently in these texts than in Markandaya or Syal as the subject-matter focuses mainly on the category 'post 9/11 British Muslims', the sensationalist climate of Islamophobia and the harsh anti-terrorist legislation. Moreover, Britain for the new generation writers is no longer an alien land where the positioning of 'Other' should automatically vanish. Instead, 9/11 and the 'war on terror' have pushed their 'Muslimness' further, to a level where they experience multiple forms of 'Otherness'. The chapter, thus, attempts to throw light on this growing body of literature, the female articulations that document the imagined political terrain along with the formulations of race, class, gender and religion.

While a celebration of 'utopian possibilities of hybrid fusion'²⁶ is clearly visible in the new generation writings, the different ways they seek to connect themselves to their 'roots' are fascinating. A recent programme on the television channel 'Yesterday' was based on Meera Syal's attempt to trace her ancestry to a Punjabi village in India. She was seen to visit the village in traditional Punjabi Kameez and Kurtha, putting a veil over her head, seeking the blessings of elderly relatives by touching their feet and speaking in traditional Punjabi language. Her efforts to trace her lineage were successful in that she discovered herself to be a member of the ninth generation of the Syal family. The 'invisible cultural luggage'²⁷ (both spiritual and material) that she might have inherited, perhaps from her mother, was displayed in her temple visits and

²⁶ Nasta, 2002, p. 190.

²⁷ Rosemary Marangoli George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (London: University of California Press, 1996).

offering of rituals. The question that arises at this point is complex, when analysed in terms of Kristeva's idea of 'scorched happiness' that 'home' is always a *compromise* for female diasporic subjects. More recently, Syal was seen leading a public memorial in front of the High Commission of India in London, paying homage to Nirbhaya, the teenage girl who was subjected to a horrendous gang rape and brutally murdered in Delhi in December 2012, on the first anniversary of her death.²⁸ The efforts to maintain a strong connection with one's 'ancestral space' is innate and solid in all members of the diaspora which shows that the seductive power of 'homeward pull' is intense and deep-rooted.²⁹ This view could be read along with Attia Hosain's metaphorical articulations of Partition as a strategic substitute for her displaced state of existence in Britain.

The arrival of Muslim female writers into the activist sphere marks a changing dynamic in Islamic community politics. Monica Ali, being half Asian and half British, utilises her 'creole' identity as an easy route to question the rigidity of Islam in its treatment of women in a way which has raised much hue and cry in the Bangladeshi Muslim community, both in Britain and in Bangladesh. In contrast to Ali, Shelina Janmohamed creates an active space to voice the silenced female sector in the Muslim community through the virtual spaces of blogging and social media. Janmohamed claims freedom, independence and individuality not by rejecting Islamic principles, but by coming to terms with the cultural norms amicably, re-fashioning visible symbols like the *Hijab* as signifiers that lead to freedom. Hence, Asian British women's writings display multi-angled versions of varied themes pertinent to their diasporic life. What becomes obvious in the analysis of the links between multicultural politics and diasporic consciousness is the way in

²⁸ Meera Syal, 'Remembering Nirbhaya: Rape is Every Country's Shame', *Huffington Post: United Kingdom*, 10 July 2014, <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/meera-syal/meera-syal-delhi-gang-rape_b_4452241.html> (accessed on 18/12/2013).

²⁹ See Nasta, 2002; Cohen, 2007.

which it demonstrates British societal re-fashioning, from a politics of assimilation to the ‘salad-bowl’ idea of multiculturalism and onto a ‘spaghetti-bowl’ image of a complex, intertwined, interconnected, hybrid mix of identity structures addressed through social cohesion and interculturalism.

The thesis seeks to locate many more unexamined concerns related to the realm of Asian British women’s writing. Do the shifts in the policies influence the shaping of imaginary homes in the female literary diaspora? How do the writings serve as a link to bridge the hiatus between politics and poetics? Are all Asian British female writers destined to write within the set models of old, worn-out categories to fit in the literary space?³⁰ The works chosen for the study are exemplary models that trace a chronology of immigrant writing in relation to the State policies and the critical paradigms involved. The work looks into the multiple niches of the female Asian British diaspora and tries to produce a new perspective on migrant writing, away from the repetitive thematic formulae of loss, dispossession and dislocation. However, what emerges as a common factor is the vexing question of the dialectics of ‘belonging’.



³⁰Ruth Maxey, ‘Life in the Diaspora is Often Held in a Strange Suspension’: First Generation Self- Fashioning in Hanif Kureshi’s Narratives of Home and Return’, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 41 (5) (2006), p.7; Feroza Jussawala, ‘Writing the Diaspora: Parsi Women Writers’ Home and Nostalgia’, *South Asian Review*, 29 (4) (2008), p.32.

Chapter One. Diaspora and Multiculturalism

The Indian epic, *the Mahabharatha*, book IV, describes the life of the Pandavas in exile, masquerading as peasants in the service of the royal family of Virata. The Pandavas live incognito in Matsyadesha, concealing their royal identities. After completing the final 13th year of exile in the royal household of Virat in disguise, they return to their homeland, Indraprastha. The story is relevant in the new diasporic context, where all diasporic people live with contesting identities as 'Other', in search of a space where they can live as they are. Today the concepts of identity, homeland, exile and return have become more complex and diverse than ever before, centring around the term 'diaspora'. As explained in the prologue, 'diaspora' refers to 'any population which is considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational' – that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe'.¹

An etymological analysis reveals that the term 'diaspora' is of Greek origin. The root words *speirein* (to scatter) and *dia* (across/over) combine to form the term. The term originated in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 28:25), the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (3rd century B.C) in the phrase 'thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of earth' (*ese diaspora en pasais basileias tes ges*).² The ancient Greeks have confined the meaning of 'diaspora' in terms of 'migration and colonization'.³ James Clifford explains the 'strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora'.⁴ The term was used by Jewish neologists to refer to the Jews expelled from the 'Promised Land'. In this context, diaspora becomes a negative term

¹ Steven Vervotec, 'Three Meanings of 'Diaspora', exemplified among South Asian Religions', *Diaspora* 7(2) (1999), 1-37 (p.1).

² John Simpson and Edmund Weiner, eds, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

³ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. ix.

⁴ James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3) (1994), 302-338 (p.306).

signifying trauma, exile, expulsion and expatriation, which continued to be a deictic expression until the 1960s.

The semantic domain of 'diaspora' was expanded when George Shepperson linked the term with 'African'.⁵ The 'traditional Jewish term' was thus stretched to rename the 'Black communities' outside the continent, especially in respect of the collectivity of slaves. Phil Cohen observed this shift and noted that 'the Jewish diaspora has in the last twenty years become effectively Africanised'.⁶ Subsequently, 'diaspora' became a catchphrase in a range of disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Linguistics and Cultural Studies, to refer to expatriate and expelled groups, surpassing the victim tradition. The term gained momentum with the launch of the journal *Diaspora* under the editorship of Kachig Tololyan in 1991. Tololyan affirmed that the use of 'diaspora' was to:

indicate [the] belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community. This is the vocabulary of transnationalism, and any of its terms can usefully be considered under more than one of its rubrics.⁷

Martin Baumann states that the origin of the term 'diaspora' is deeply intertwined with the history of religions. He points out that:

the History of Religions was a real late comer in making the use of the term... Historians of religions, quite aware of earlier experiences of ambiguity in transferring culturally and religiously bound terms, shied away from applying the notion to non-Jewish traditions and peoples... In the history of religions and more vigorously, in its neighboring disciplines 'diaspora' was primarily employed as a

⁵ George Shepperson, 'The African Diaspora- or the African abroad', *African Forum*, 1(2) (1966), 76-93.

⁶ Phil Cohen, 'Welcome to the Diasporama. A Cure for the Millennium Blues?', *New Ethnicities* 3-10 (3) (1998), 3-10 (p.7).

⁷ Kachig Tololyan, 'The Nation-State and Its Others: In-Lieu of a Preface', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Spring, 1(1) (1991), 3-7 (p.4).

geographic- sociological category to denote dispersed groups and transnational relationships.⁸

The 1990s witnessed a significant change when post-modernist theorists and critical authors including Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, Kachig Tololyan and Gabriel Sheffer approached 'diaspora' with a variety of theoretical paradigms and definitions. Beyond this, they expanded the term to denote a specific type of experience called 'diasporic consciousness', thereby connecting the notions of identity, hybridity, memory, cultural ambiguity, multiple migrations and so forth.

Sheffer, Safran, Clifford and Cohen have explored the concept of 'diaspora', providing comprehensive definitions. Sheffer proposes a simple definition of 'modern diasporas' as 'ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries, but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands'.⁹ Willian Safran has set certain criteria to characterise diaspora:¹⁰

- 1) They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more peripheral, or foreign, regions;
- 2) They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, its physical location, history, and achievements;
- 3) They believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
- 4) They regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendents would (or should) eventually return when conditions are appropriate;
- 5) They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- 6) They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.

⁸ Martin Baumann, 'Diaspora: Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison', *Numen*, 47 (3) (2000), 313-337 (p.324).

⁹ G. Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p.3.

¹⁰ W. Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora : A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Spring, 1(1) (1991), 83-99 (p.83).

Robin Cohen modifies Safran's insights to consolidate the common features of 'diaspora':¹¹

- 1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
- 2) Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 3) A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
- 4) An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
- 5) The development of a return movement which gains collective approbation;
- 6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
- 7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least, or a possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
- 8) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in the countries of settlement;
- 9) The possibility of a distinct yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Cohen specifies that it is not compulsory to find all these features manifested in any single diaspora.

Tracing the thoughts of Safran, Sheffer and Cohen, one can conclude that the benchmarks of a diaspora are a migration from the homeland to an 'alien' place, the maintenance of an ethnic consciousness and continued connections with the homeland, real or imaginary. This is summed up by Judith Shuval:

A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams,

¹¹ Robin Cohen, 'Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers', *International Affairs*, July, 72 (3) (1996), 507–20, (p.515).

allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing.¹²

Cohen's 7th and 8th points suggest the significance of communal harmony and belongingness. 'A tolerance for pluralism' indicates the vision or desire for a peaceful coexistence between communities, preserving and establishing one's collective identity properly. This indicates a 'multicultural society' where ethnic communities could maintain their discrete identities based on a politics of recognition. The character of diasporic consciousness and a collective sense of identity have close ties with the host societies' political attitudes and policies as well as the home regime's disposition to the host land.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council appreciates that 'diaspora cultures constitute valuable networks for intellectual, cultural and educational exchange throughout Europe and the rest of the world. They are a key factor in the promotion of cultural diversity, intercultural understanding and tolerance'.¹³ The policies, like diasporas, are dynamic. European migration policies have moved away from the assimilation policies towards a multicultural accommodation. 'Multiculturalism' entered public policy discourse in the late 1960s and gained momentum in the last two decades. Initially, it is important to understand the terminology of the concept.

Multiculturalism: Problems and Possibilities

Today's international political climate is very much engaged with the arguments related to multiculturalism; the inadequacies or otherwise of governmental multicultural policies, the

¹² J. Shuval, 'Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm', in *International Migration*, 38 (5) (2000), 41-56 (p.43).

¹³ 'Diaspora Cultures', *Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1688*, (Council of Europe, 2004).

fairness of adopting multicultural philosophy and the abject failure of multicultural theory¹⁴. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the definition of the term ‘multiculturalism’ as ‘the characteristics of a multicultural society; (also) the policy or process whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within such a society are maintained or supported’.¹⁵ Before the 1980s, ethno-cultural diversities were viewed as a threat to the solidarity of the national culture. Public policies were designed in such a way as to disguise the diasporic ethnic identities without providing proper recognition, either by encouraging assimilation into the mainstream culture or by marginalisation.¹⁶

The influx of diverse ethno-cultural groups has made the matters of rights and representation more complex. Today, the Western nations have made notable changes in their policies towards diasporic minorities, exhibiting a more inclusive and accommodating character to diversity. This has resulted in the reframing of the assimilation policies to a multicultural model of immigrant diversity management.¹⁷ Multiculturalism has gained respect as it is grounded in the liberal-democratic principles of equal rights and justice for all individuals. Multiculturalism seeks to equitable and peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures within a nation state, maintaining their separate cultural identities rather than merging into a single mainstream culture. It encourages different cultures to retain their cultural ancestry and values, making the communities feeling ‘at home’ in an alien land and thereby increasing social cohesion, mutual understanding and tolerance towards different cultures. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said that ‘no

¹⁴ See Michael Murphy, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2012.

¹⁵ John Simpson and Edmund Weiner, eds, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

¹⁶ See Murphy, 2012.

¹⁷ ‘Diversity Management’ is an ongoing process of incorporating the recognition and accommodation of all sorts of differences between communities and groups in all sectors to create a more inclusive, harmonious, effective society which is free from sexual and racial discrimination. For more details see *Managing Cultural diversity Training Manual* (Victoria: Australian Multicultural Foundation, 2010), pp. 7-34.

culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive'.¹⁸ Thus, the reciprocal relationship between cultures strengthens the nation state through positive action plans organised to promote cooperation, eliminating racism and other divisive tendencies. Political pluralism and social welfare policies ensure recognition of the dignity and values in different cultures.¹⁹

Multiculturalism is, thus, believed to deliver a positive signal to enhance humanistic values, ensuring a robust welfare state. However, the implementation of multicultural policies has always been controversial. There are ongoing debates as to whether multiculturalism is fixed in an illiberal democracy where the citizens are cut off from information about the decision-making bodies and their exercise of power. The state policies often take an undesirable approach towards the diasporic communities, providing an advantageous position to the mainstream majority. The term 'multiculturalism' has been criticised as much reluctance is displayed towards an immigrant-driven diversity, especially the embarrassment and perplexity in handling Muslim immigrants post-9/11. The horrendous terrorist attacks of 9/11 and high profile London bombings of 7/7 have put the matter of national security in peril and boosted antipathy towards the generous policies of accommodation of immigrants. This has led to an outcry that the 'multicultural experiment' has been a failure.²⁰ Multiculturalism is a double-faced social concept which is viewed as capable of installing political and cultural correctness at the same time as it is a trouble maker framed in a utopian idea.

Samuel Huntington argues that the persistent pattern of the influx of immigrants (Latin American) to the United States has resulted in the consolidation of the country (South Western

¹⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, *India of My Dreams* (Ahmedabad: Navjeevan Trust, 2009), p.173.

¹⁹ L.Kuper, 'Plural Society', in *The Ethnicity Reader*, ed. by M.Guibernau & J.Rex *Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (London: Polity Press, 1997). Kuper says that plural societies cannot be equated totally with multicultural societies as the former has a dominant ethnic group.

²⁰ R. Baubock, *Farewell to Multiculturalism? Sharing values and Identities in Societies of Immigration*, IWE Working Paper No.23, Institute of European Integration Research. Online. Available at: <http://www.eif.oewac.ac.at/workingpapers-en/iwearchiv.php> (accessed June 11, 2012).

US) into a distinct cultural bloc that threatens to divide America, despite the multicultural celebrations in its linguistic, educational and business sectors.²¹ The United States and Europe, being the influential powers of the world and the paradise of prosperity, have been the main migrant target destinations. The declaration of the UK as an ally in the ‘war on terror’ created a dramatic twist in international politics, as well as in the inner political scene in the UK. Britain’s alliance with the US against terrorism served as a major determinant in the shaping of the policies towards its diasporic communities.

Multiculturalism is often criticised for its obsession with cultural diversity. Objections are raised against its withdrawal from the liberal democratic and enlightened principles of a fair, free, equitable and humane society²². Multiculturalism advocates preservation of cultural diversity at the expense of liberalism’s most fundamental dictates of individual rights and equal concern for all human beings. The concept is still in danger; it must prove its functionality as a formula to maintain social cohesion and coherence within a society of heterogeneous cultures. Multiculturalism has been criticised for its diversion from deep-seated injustices and discrimination related to race and gender.²³

There are, thus, multifarious opinions on the efficiency of multiculturalism. It is appropriate to begin with the factors that impede the proper implementation of the term. The first and foremost danger is the tendency to generalise issues on the basis of minimal evidence, to bracket specific groups into prejudiced notions. For example, Islamic terrorism has been overstated and hyperbolised. This has led to an irrational hatred of the West for Islam to a certain

²¹ Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2004).

²² Kenan Malik, *Against Multiculturalism* http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/against_mc.html (accessed on 30/09/2012).

²³ Michael Murphy, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012).

extent. These kind of predilections exist towards all diasporic communities whose cultural systems are viewed as rigid and malignant to the host culture. Often there is a misunderstanding that peace and unity are an unfulfilled dream in a multicultural society characterised by linguistic, ethnic, national and religious divisions. To some extent, this has fuelled the feeling that accommodation of the diasporic minority is a threat to the national integrity and security of the state.²⁴

Another major drawback is the failure to acknowledge the broad spectrum of the term ‘multiculturalism’. Multiculturalism is often oversimplified, which leads to a blanket assumption that it is mere acceptance of diversities. The attitudes of multiculturalists to these issues are surprisingly diverse. There is a clear distinction between multicultural political philosophy and the multicultural governmental policies of various states. Different states practice different approaches to multiculturalism, but the official state policies depend on the specific minority groups considered, and the nature, circumstances and political contexts in which the policies are implemented. Homogenization of the cultural minority groups is a major mistake which weakens the objective of multiculturalism as each cultural minority is immensely diverse and different. The aim of multicultural political philosophy is to analyse policies, determine its possibilities and limitations and offer the most fitting for each group. The ethic of mutual accommodation should be the core value of multicultural political philosophy which should be a balanced give and take process characterised by sacrifices and tolerance between the majority and minority alike.²⁵

Bhikhu Parekh’s notion of ethical value points towards a possibility of fairness and justice as it

²⁴ Kymlicka and Banting have expressed concerns to clarify the trade-off between diversity and the welfare state, the impact of the increasing ethnic and racial diversity on the welfare state. See Kymlicka and Banting, 2006. Online available at <http://www.brynmawr.edu/socialwork/GSSW/schram/banting.pdf> (accessed on 12/06/2012).

²⁵ Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.13; Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp.151-2.

effaces both the hegemonic privilege of the dominant ethno-cultural groups and the categorical deference to the demands of the cultural minorities. Hence, it suggests a position of equilibrium of differences.

Will Kymlicka distinguishes between three different types of minorities, which include: 1) Immigrant minorities 2) Sub-state National minorities 3) Indigenous minority groups.²⁶ The nature of multicultural policies to be implemented depends much on the kind of minority dealt with. Each kind of minority has its own aims and agendas; for example, diasporic communities yearn for an integrational mode of accommodation into the host society while the national minority groups seek an autonomous statehood. There are policies which increase diversity (in the case of religious education) and positive action plans to efface the differences between the majority and the minority. Geographical, demographical and historical factors also come into play. At the same time, political culture has a prominent role in determining the extent of the dominant national identity and whether its character is monocultural or multicultural. Multicultural policies form only one among various means the government uses to promote social integration. The crucial factor lies in the attitude of the cultural groups to accommodate each other and live harmoniously. There are a multitude of ongoing multicultural experiments, ad hoc multicultural policy and a multiplicity of distinctive contributions to the multicultural debates and political philosophy. A proper understanding of the diverse versions of multiculturalism is essential to understand contemporary multicultural scenario and practice. Before considering the different varieties of multiculturalism, it is necessary to understand its foundations based on the policies that are generally recognised as multiculturalist. The inventories of Will Kymlicka and others state that in 'multiculturalist' countries the policies fall

²⁶ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

into three categories: strong, modest and weak. The compilation of the list is based on two basic rules: a race-neutral education policy and admission criteria and the freedom to express and maintain the diasporic ethnic identities, as well as an inclusive culture from the public institutions to accommodate these ethnic identities. There are eight multiculturalist policies based on the above criteria:²⁷

- 1) Constitutional, legislative, or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism at the central and /or regional and municipal levels.
- 2) The adoption of multiculturalism in the school curriculum.
- 3) The inclusion of ethnic minority representation and sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing
- 4) Exemptions from dress codes, such as allowing Sikhs to wear turbans instead of helmets or school caps, and exemptions from laws banning Sunday trading, and so forth.
- 5) Allowing dual citizenship.
- 6) Funding for ethnic group organisations to support cultural activities.
- 7) Funding for bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction.
- 8) Affirmative action for disadvantaged groups.

The eighth principle covers an anti-discrimination policy such as the series of Race Relations Acts adopted by Great Britain since 1965 to ensure equal access by the coloured minorities in terms of employment, housing and other amenities and resources. Based on the strength of commitment to these principles, Kymlicka categorises nations as *strong* – those which adopt at least 6 out of 8 rules, *modest* – those with between 3 and 6 principles and *weak* – nations which follow fewer than 3 rules. Based on these criteria, the UK ranks as a *modest* multicultural nation. A proper understanding of immigration and diasporic history is crucial for comprehensive knowledge of the evolutionary trajectories of multiculturalism, as ethnic identities play a major

²⁷ Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.56.

part in shaping the national narrative of the UK, as we will see later in this chapter and in the next chapter in detail.

Multicultural debates and strategies often bring up new arguments and different versions of liberal multiculturalism. In liberal multiculturalism, there lies a clear distinction between the dominant group and the minority ethnic groups within a state. The dominant group sets the conditions for the participation of the minority groups. Will Kymlicka defines liberal multiculturalism as:

the view that states should not only uphold the familiar set of common civil, political, and social rights of citizenship that are protected in all constitutional liberal democracies, but also adopt various group-specific rights or policies that are intended to recognize and accommodate the distinctive identities and aspirations of ethnocultural groups.²⁸

This is not supportive of the bottom-line marginalised members, especially women. Liberal multiculturalism's claim for group rights has gathered much criticism from feminists, as most diasporic cultures are patriarchal and the group's interests and beliefs are articulated by its male members. Liberal multiculturalism is criticised for its paternalism ignoring the internal private sphere of the group.²⁹

Kymlicka summarises the liberal view as 'freedom within the minority group and equality between majority and minority groups'.³⁰ More importantly, however, Kymlicka argues that in many non-western cultures and especially in post-communist Europe, key prerequisites for liberal multiculturalism, such as disconnecting ethnicity and security have not yet been

²⁸ Kymlicka, p.61.

²⁹ Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1999).

³⁰ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.252.

reached. Most of the ethnic minorities are viewed as a threat to security and safety.³¹ However, liberal multiculturalism has faced stark criticism due to its inability to deal with the structural inequalities like racism, institutionalised poverty and discrimination, owing to its continued over-emphasis on ‘politically muted’ culture and cultural differences.³²

Although many multiculturalisms exist, the core element rests upon the liberal democratic principles of equality of opportunity and justice within a nation state. A short description of the offshoots of liberal multiculturalism is necessary to understand the complexities of the topic. There are numerous branches of liberal multiculturalism such as tolerationist, deliberative, contextual and critical/reflexive multiculturalism.

Tolerationist multiculturalists reject the principle of autonomy of liberal multiculturalists. Their core liberal principles are toleration and freedom of association i.e. each individual in a liberal society should have the right to freely associate and form cultural communities. S/he should also tolerate group practices that differ from liberal norms and be free to exit the community if s/he has a disagreement of any sort, thereby reflecting the libertarian principle of voluntary association. The maxim of tolerationist multiculturalism is ‘Live and Let Live’.³³ However, tolerationist multiculturalism is obscure, as individual freedom of conscience provides the liberty to form cultural communities that support their values and beliefs, but these communities are not granted any collective cultural rights or state protection. Kukathas joins with Spinner-Halev to criticise the assumption that every member of a conservative, traditional

³¹ Kymlicka, 2007.

³² Stephen May and Christine. E. Sleeter (eds.), ‘Introduction’, in *Critical Multiculturalism: Theory and Praxis* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.1-18.

³³ Kukathas admits the pitfalls in his liberal cultural order, the possibility of inhumane and insecure practices especially to the weak members of those communities. Here Kukathas deviates from his fellow multiculturalists. Spinner-Halev and Galston strongly criticise the inhumane treatment of children and they stand for the state intervention to prevent such atrocious, intolerant behaviour and the exit rights of the dissenting individuals. Kukathas, 2003; Galston, 1995; Spinner-Halev, 2000.

and inegalitarian community is an unfortunate captive of his/her cultural ties and that the exploitation and discrimination towards them would happen only with their consent or submissiveness.³⁴ Chandran Kukathas opines that in a civil society there are ‘many overlapping public realms representing settlements where different practices have converged on particular standards to govern social interaction’.³⁵ Kukathas believes that there would be a considerable amount of toleration in such a society of groups with ‘intolerable’ practices (such as forced marriages, denial of education and adequate medical care) as they would have the option of withdrawing from the wider moral community.

Deliberative multiculturalism proposes to increase the presence of minority representatives in the democratic procedures and argues for their active participation to equalise the minority-majority relations in a culturally diverse democracy. Such inclusiveness would pave the way for negotiation to reach acceptable terms of coexistence in a spirit of mutual respect and sociability.³⁶ Deliberative multiculturalism is often justified as a pathway where public policies reflect minority interests with a mutual understanding across cultures. Shachar points out the benefit of deliberation where a space of agency and empowerment is offered to the previously marginalised individuals, especially women.³⁷

Deliberative multiculturalism has been criticised for its unrealistic reasons and deliberations as the mannerisms and deliberations of people are expressions of their cultural background to a certain extent and that a just and mutually respectful process of intercultural dialogue should strive to recognize and accommodate participants in their own terms rather than seeking to impose

³⁴ Chandran Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Spinner-Halev, *Surviving Diversity: Religion and Democratic Citizenship* (Baltimore/MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

³⁵ See Kukathas, 20073, p.7.

³⁶ Miller, 2000; S. Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in a Global Era* (Princeton/ NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

³⁷ Ayelet Sachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

upon them a set of universal deliberative standards or some deliberative metalanguage.³⁸

Joseph Caren's *Culture, Citizenship and Community: A contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness* (2000) provides a detailed and sophisticated analysis of the contextualist approach of multicultural political philosophy. In this methodology, the multicultural issues are viewed and discussed in terms of the context of the circumstances. According to Caren, the contextualist approach gives shape to many of the abstract moral principles to form solid, practical policy-oriented solutions. It also motivates society to look at the efficiency and compatibility of the existing institutions and practices and understand the pitfalls of theories for a reformulation.³⁹ The contextual approach seems to analyse the challenges in accommodating diversity. It is similar to Stanley Fish's concept of Strong and Boutique multiculturalism.⁴⁰ Critical Multiculturalism contrasts with the static notions of culture upheld by the liberals.⁴¹ Critical multiculturalism acknowledges the dynamic nature of culture and identities while realising 'their location within racialised social structures within specific social sites'.⁴²

Critical/reflexive multiculturalism involves effacing the barriers to the legitimacy of different ways of being and is compatible with transnational and transethnic identities, as well as those that have been discussed using the notion of hybridity.⁴³ According to the Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 'critical multiculturalism redescribes the various public orders that are now

³⁸ James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitution in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁹ Joseph H. Caren, *Culture, Citizenship and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ Stanley Fish, 'Boutique Multiculturalism, or Why Liberals are Incapable of Thinking about Hate Speech?', *Critical Enquiry*, 23 (2) (1997), pp. 378-395.

⁴¹ Stephen May, 'Critical Multiculturalism and Cultural Difference: Avoiding Essentialism', in *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education* ed. by Stephen May (London: Flamer Press, 1999), p.15; Parekh, 2000.

⁴² Floya Anthias, 'Beyond Feminism and Multiculturalism: Locating Difference and the Politics of Location', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25 (3) (2002), pp.275-286.

⁴³ May, 1999.

undergoing change,... to realign what is now understood as simply insurgent or simply reactionary, simply dominant or simply marginal'.⁴⁴ Critical multiculturalism discusses critically the representations of diasporic minorities in the popular culture, literature and media enabling an inclusive culture to respect and celebrate the differences. Critical discussions make it possible to challenge the misrepresentations of the diasporic cultures as stereotyped, thereby opening vistas for constructing dialogue between communities for a more close-knit multicultural society.

The emergence of various types of multiculturalism has resulted in a situation of 'multicultural identity crisis', where one is put in a dilemma to understand what exactly is multiculturalism. In his *Boutique Multiculturalism*, Stanley Fish has rightly stated multiculturalism to be a concept lacking coherence and meaning, which cannot be either affirmed or rejected.⁴⁵ There is no particular core set of norms for multiculturalism; on the other hand, there are numerous forms of multiculturalism based on assorted categories of minorities. Like any philosophical doctrine, multiculturalism claims to promote justice and equality in a culturally diverse democratic society, where the identities and interests of communities are clearly defined. The idea of 'accommodating differences' demonstrates that there are various cultural elements to which each minority group is profoundly attached and finds hard to shed, however offensive they are to civilised decency. Thus, what matters in the politics of multiculturalism is the accommodation of differences of all sorts.

⁴⁴ The Chicago Cultural Studies Group tries to refine the confusion through the concluding note that "a genuinely critical multiculturalism cannot be brought by good will or by theory, but requires institutions, genres, and media that do not yet exist" (p.553). Stanley Fish asserts that such requirements will never exist (Stanley Fish, 'Boutique Multiculturalism, or Why Liberals Are Incapable of Thinking About Hate Speech', *Critical Inquiry* Winter, (23) (1997), p.385.

⁴⁵ Fish, 1997, p.388.

According to Bhikhu Parekh, multiculturalism is ‘about cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences’.⁴⁶ James Tully responds in a similar vein as the thoughts, speech and actions of different people reflect their culture to a certain extent and these diverse expressions should be respected and acknowledged.⁴⁷ Multicultural political philosophy always emphasises the significance of mutual respect between cultures. Brian Barry criticises multiculturalism stating that it has placed too much emphasis on ‘culture’ which failed its purpose. He says that multicultural philosophy has an ‘endemic tendency to assume that distinctive cultural attributes are the defining features of all groups’.⁴⁸ Barry points out a significant factor, that apart from the issue of preservation and accommodation of ‘objective cultural differences’,⁴⁹ there are claims of historic sovereignty, security, land rights and so on, which are crucial to different minority groups for their recognition.⁵⁰ The recent theories address the crosscutting edges, focusing on the diversities within diversities.⁵¹ While acknowledging group rights for diasporic ethnic communities, individual rights remain reserved for the dominant race. All minority groups have rights to be protected from disadvantage, racism, exclusion, the demeaning of cherished values and beliefs. No one has the right, in the name of culture, to oppress, kill or enslave another human being. But, this should not lead us, by focusing on the barbaric practices found in all groups, including the West, to condemn all cultures and to abandon the exercise of building a multiculturalist and anti-sexist society.⁵²

⁴⁶ Parekh, 2000, p.3.

⁴⁷ Tully, 1995.

⁴⁸ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ According to Murphy, Objective cultural differences include differences in cultural beliefs, practices, traditions, languages or lifestyles. See Murphy, 2012.

⁵⁰ Murphy, 2012; Patten, 1999; Spinner, 1994.

⁵¹ J. Caren, 2000; Jacob Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Modood, 2007.

⁵² Anthias, 2002.

A major impediment in the process of accommodating cultural differences is conservatism/essentialist notions of culture. Cultural essentialism is criticised as devoid of any value. It keeps culture in an airtight container, thereby making it impervious and rigid. Feminist multiculturalists like Okin and Sachar have argued that justification of traditional essentialist notions has always favoured the male cultural elites which have strengthened patriarchy, sidelining and oppressing women.⁵³ Cultural transformations only occur over a period of time. It will take a considerable time span to change their norms, take new forms or disappear eventually. Anne Phillips speaks in detail about the connection between cultural accommodation and human agency. She uses the term ‘strong notions of culture’ to denote the level of influence that cultural backgrounds force upon an individual. She explains how these ‘strong notions of culture’ would prove a weapon of cultural defence against the crimes and exploitation towards women and children like rape, assault and murder. Phillips furthers her arguments by detailing the paternalistic character of the ‘strong notions of culture’, diminishing the possibilities of gender equality, respect and consideration. She argues that the interests of the vulnerable sections should be given due value rather than keep on reforming our judgments of an existing theory or notion.⁵⁴

The relationship between radical moral relativism and multiculturalism is fundamental to any discussion about culture and multiculturalism. Moral relativism is concerned with the differences in moral judgments across various cultures and beliefs. Moral relativism throws away the validity of the claim of a single universal moral code across cultures. Is multiculturalism a twin of radical moral relativism? Bhikhu Parekh says that multiculturalism should treat all

⁵³ Okin, 1999; Sachar, 2001.

⁵⁴ Phillips, 2007.

cultures as equally rich and respectable, gainful for all the members. But, he asserts that every community must observe and maintain certain minimum standards of conduct, including mutual respect and protection of the weaker sections of the community.⁵⁵

The word ‘multiculturalism’, in the first instance, conveys the image of a complex set of various cultures, with components and interconnections that are well set and adapted as an integrated circuit. It would be wrong to consider multicultural political philosophy as a monolithic discipline. No culture is homogenous and hence we cannot attribute a uniform set of assumptions to any culture, although a basic standard of conduct should be maintained.

Multiculturalism is a set of conceptual ideas in political philosophy which has rules to manage different shades of diversity in a democratic society. Multiculturalism rests on the Enlightenment principles of equality, liberty and justice. It advocates not mere toleration of diverse groups, but recognition and accommodation through ‘group-differentiated rights’ . There are many dilemmas related to the claims of group rights and individual autonomy, issues of citizenship and fair representation of minority cultures. The debates on religious extremism, especially in the post-9/11 context, have fuelled the confusion and chaos related to the inner chemistry of multicultural political philosophy.

As cited earlier, contemporary multicultural philosophy can claim its legacy to the Enlightenment principles of equality, freedom and toleration. It is influenced by the basic principles of freedom advocated by J.S Mill, John Locke, Kant and Hume. Along with these, the Rawlsian principles of justice and pluralism also contributed to the structuring of the Anglo-American normative political theory of multiculturalism. The liberal principles of individual

⁵⁵ Parekh, 2000.

autonomy and the duel between communitarians (which I will explained in the next section) have created tensions in dealing with the rights of minorities, those belonging to Non-western cultures in particular.⁵⁶

Will Kymlicka is the most prominent figure among the liberal culturalists offering significant theories about group rights. Kymlicka's theorisations exhibit a strong bias towards the indigenous group rights for land and national minority rights for self-government sidelining the immigrants. At the outset, this appears to be illiberal but this view throws light on the 'historical responsibilities' of nations to their once colonised subjects and their on-going prerogative to engage in the nation-building socialisation of new migrant groups who choose to stay and participate in the new host society.⁵⁷

Britain has a rich history embedded in its widespread political, linguistic and cultural legacy through colonisation which spanned across the globe that resulted in the rise of the unchallenged dominance of the Empire as a global super power. The immigrants were transported as 'coolies of the Empire' to mend the post-war British economy. Later, South Asian settlements were mostly as a result of chain immigration based on kinship. South Asians had a strong sense of their cultural identity and a skill to recreate their 'cultural home' in the new land. This becomes intense in the case of religious ethnicities, Muslims in particular. Amy

⁵⁶ Amy Gutmann, 'Communitarian Critics of Liberalism', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, (14) (1985), pp. 308-322; Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Taylor, 1994; W. Kymlicka, 1995. Also refer Gary Kessler, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader* (London: Wadsworth, 2004), to understand Kantian Transcendental Idealism, Hegelian Absolute idealism, J.S Mill and others.

⁵⁷ Favell and Modood signal the inadequacy of such a principle when stronger claims arise from newly naturalized ethnic communities, differentiating the North American and European contexts. A. Favell and T. Modood, 'The Philosophy of Multiculturalism: The Theory and Practice of Normative Political Theory', in *Contemporary Political Thought: A Reader and Guide*, ed. by A. Finlayson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

Gutmann proposes religious exceptionalism where a neutral attitude of multicultural equality is to be applied in terms of religion.⁵⁸

Kymlicka and Gutmann explicitly reflect on the US political policies which seem unsuited to the European model, especially Britain. Brian Barry has expressed his strong opposition to Kymlicka's views on the inappropriate deal with the limits of minority rights. These difficult dilemmas have made the liberal culturalists ignore the sensitive cultural aspects such as diasporic identity politics. Radical multiculturalists reject the pure liberal views and support Marxian ideologies of class relations along with feminism and minority rights to support the liberational aspect of identity politics which traces its origin in post-colonialism and black politics. Radical multiculturalism challenges western ethnocentrism. Even then they had to face strict immigration laws which curtailed their influx, settlement and rights of citizenship. Theorists like Hall and Gilroy have explained culture as a dynamic site where newer forms of identities are created. No ethnic culture is therefore pure. This 'alloyed' form of culture reveals that minority cultures are heterogeneous and therefore it is impossible to keep them in separate neat ethnic boxes. Thus, cultural mixing prompts individuals to shape and reshape their identities. The claims for equal rights and recognition of collective identities (including feminists, minority groups) require guarantees of status and survival, whether they are placed in the context of a majority culture or Eurocentric global society.⁵⁹

Political philosophers of multiculturalism craft their theories with the state at the centre point. The analyses are made on the basis of the state-centric policies of rights and recognition.

⁵⁸ Gutmann, 1994.

⁵⁹ Jurgen Habermas, 'Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State', in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, by Charles Taylor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 107-148.

Many western liberal states became multicultural by default: because of the laissez faire attitude of the state toward cultural or market-led mechanisms. These would have been very difficult to legislate for in terms of the state-centred logic of rights or citizenship.⁶⁰ Each nation's ethnic make-up is different. Hence, any generalisation based on comparisons of the policies of anti-discrimination laws, recognition of diverse ethnic minority groups with equal rights as others, attributing due representation in policy making and channelling of equal opportunities to all ethnic groups should be made with caution.

Multicultural political philosophy is believed to go hand in hand with empirical theories of society reflecting the historical, political and sociological insights to theorise actual and particular cases. The core of most multicultural philosophies is the belief that the cultural framework of an individual decides his/her personal identity and internal make-up. Bhikhu Parekh argues that 'the liberal is in theory committed to equal respect for persons... human beings are culturally embedded, [hence] respect for them entails respect for their cultures and ways of life'.⁶¹

Charles Taylor has opined that the liberal-communitarian debate⁶² has failed due to its inconsistency and lack of conceptual accuracy that was focused largely at cross purposes.⁶³ Multiculturalism has no direct relationship with liberal-communitarianism, but many of the core

⁶⁰ Favell and Modood, 2003.

⁶¹ Parekh, 2000.

⁶² The liberal-communitarian debate, which took its present form in the early 1980s, can be traced back to the beginning of the modern age, when liberalism emerged as a political and philosophical movement. At the level of political theory, it is a debate over the relationship between legal or governmental structures and cultural structures such as religions or ethnic groups. At the level of moral theory, it is a debate over the relationship of values and obligations, or more specifically, over whether conceptions of what is good can logically ground principles about what is right, or vice versa. Finally, at the level of what is sometimes called philosophical psychology, it is a debate over the nature of the self. See Thomas. E. Wren 'The Liberal-Communitarian Debate' in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Business Ethics* (London: Blackwell, 1999), pp.224-251.

⁶³ Taylor, 1989.

themes of both the areas intersect. The questions of minority rights and cultural differences form a key concept in liberal-communitarian thought which has become a foundation for the development of multicultural political philosophy. Liberal philosophy highlights equal respect to all individuals with an emphasis on individual freedom. The liberal communitarians agree with the Enlightenment philosophy of Immanuel Kant on his tenet of individual liberty. However, liberals call for individual rights along with freedom from the interference of the state. There are strong differences of opinion about the liberal principles of individual autonomy, especially in the area of multiculturalism.

Will Kymlicka is a staunch liberalist who advocates individual autonomy as primary to liberalism. Chandran Kukathas, on the other hand, claims toleration and freedom of choice as the core principles of liberal multiculturalism. However, the liberal-communitarian divide had some common reference points as the liberals accepted the function of community in the enactment of individual identity, and communitarians too recognised the role of individuals in the well-being of the community. By the 1990s Liberal-communitarianism came to an end, but a new offshoot emerged in the form of minority rights and multiculturalism. As cited above, liberal multiculturalists such as Kymlicka consider individual liberty as the core aim of liberalism, while he believes that the liberal defence of minority rights depends on collective communal feeling as an essential requisite for individual autonomy. Kymlicka states that liberals favour policies to eliminate inequalities, like poverty and disability, which are outside the realm of choice for the individuals. He links this idea of minority rights to self-government. He argues that often minorities are placed in a chaotic situation in the state where they are considered as threats by the mainstream. Thus, Kymlicka says that minority right to self-government would help acquire a balance where all individuals (both minority and majority communities) are ensured liberty to

maintain and protect their distinctive cultural structures, provided no form of particular dominant culture is established. Individuals of the minority communities should be given the liberty to criticise and discard any beliefs or practices that are found illiberal.⁶⁴

Liberal-communitarians have taken different positions over the new multicultural debates on minority rights. Both liberals and communitarians have taken twofold attitudes depending on various factors like the type of minorities under consideration, the minority group character, if their cultural structure is a threat to social cohesion as a whole, or if the minority group values equal consideration and mutual toleration to fellow beings. As cultural diversity increased with an increase in the rate of migration, there were heated debates on the question of minority rights and about the adequacy of liberal philosophy.⁶⁵ The debates about the compatibility between individual rights and collective rights, the principles of theory of justice, and the influencing factors make the discussions on multiculturalism more complex.

The Praxis of Multiculturalism: The British Multicultural State

Britain is a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society.⁶⁶ The issue of immigration is always in the news and one question in particular, which is frequently debated, is that of Britain as a multicultural society. There are, undoubtedly, a variety of cultures living side-by-side in the UK, but the core problem is the balancing act of political, legal and social structures to keep pace with the changing environment.

⁶⁴ W. Kymlicka, 1989.

⁶⁵ W. Kymlicka, 2007; B. Barry, 2001; W. Galston, 'Two Concepts of Liberalism', *Ethics*, (195) (1995), pp. 516-34; Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁶⁶ Parekh, 2000.

After the Second World War, the Empire was on the verge of collapse. Britain witnessed large parts of the Empire at its threshold, seeking entrance as immigrants, especially from South Asia and the Caribbean. This has resulted in a tremendous change in the British cultural landscape with diverse ethnic groups turning the ‘homogeneous Britain’ into a multicultural assortment. In the 1950s and 60s, Britain adopted the assimilationist mode to manage immigrants. The ‘New Commonwealth’ immigrants were encouraged to enter the UK to mend the war-torn country with an expectation that they would assimilate into the dominant culture.⁶⁷ Racism and xenophobia in all spheres of life made assimilation impossible for the ‘new arrivals’. This made assimilationist policies ineffectual and futile. It was rejected in the mid 1960s to give way to a more egalitarian integrationist mode of diasporic accommodation.⁶⁸

In 1966, the then Home Secretary, Hon. Roy Jenkins, defined the British policy of integration as ‘not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’.⁶⁹ The integrationist mode proposed equal rights of cultural expression and participation to all as members of a society, regardless of racial, ethnic and religious background. Integration proved to be the initial stage of development towards a multicultural form of British society. Racial segregation, discrimination, prejudice and inequity towards blacks resulted in massive uprisings and struggles against the government.⁷⁰ The blacks campaigned for the right to protection and equal treatment at workplaces, schools, representation in the educational curricula, support of the media and maintenance of their

⁶⁷ Assimilation is the idea which puts forward the existence of a dominant culture or religion, where the ethnic groups are expected to fit in and merge.

⁶⁸ Parekh warns about the inadequacy of “integration”, the term itself as misleading and a one-way process in which ‘minorities’ are to be absorbed into the non-existent homogeneous cultural structure of the ‘majority’. Parekh, 2000.

⁶⁹ The Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins, former Secretary of State for Home Affairs, delivered this speech on 23 May 1966 to the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants. (See *Race*, VIII, 3 (1967).

⁷⁰ The term “Blacks” here is used to refer immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. They all shared a colonial experience ‘at home’ and were victims of racism in the ‘Mother Country’.

cultural and religious rules and habits. Multiculturalism sprang up as complementary to such efforts and group actions for equality and freedom.

The 1981 riots⁷¹ in England were caused by racial tension between communities and inner-city deprivation. Immigrant communities called on the Government to organise strategies like local funding projects, to gratify the needs of different ethnic minority groups. The Thatcher government introduced cultural policies as a means of combating disaffection within ethnic minorities, although she was immune and tough about the popular grievances of economic instability and unemployment. However, an affirmative wave was witnessed in the electoral politics when a considerable proportion of ethnic minority members were encouraged to find a place in active state politics. Apart from the undercurrents of inter-racial friction and fights, the 1986-87 polls witnessed a significant number of ethnic minority local councillors.⁷² A groundbreaking change in the British electorate's behaviour was witnessed, denoting a boost to ethnic minority integration into mainstream British politics. As a result, multiculturalism began to be more inclusive and institutionalised.

It has been now almost 30 years since the concept of multiculturalism came into the policy network in Britain. The defenders and opponents continue to debate its pros and cons. Great Britain, being a super power, had been a centre of attention for the world in its policies and home affairs, especially the adoption of integrational policies and anti-racist laws. In comparison with the US, the official recognition of minority cultures in the UK is far from a settled national

⁷¹*Tribune Magazine* Archive>> 18/07/1981>> RIOTS: avoiding the spiral of decline. <http://archive.tribunemagazine.co.uk/article/10th-july-1981/2/riots-avoiding-the-spiral-of-decline> (accessed on 28/06/2012); Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British* (London: Paladin, 1992).

⁷² Asians constituted about half of the total number of councillors in Greater London in 1986. In 1987, Keith Vaz (Labour) was elected from Leicester East, the first Asian to find a place in the House of Commons. <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ge87/i12.htm> (accessed on 28/06/2012).

objective. Multicultural measures, such as bilingual education, are viewed just as a temporary step towards cultural integration.⁷³ The US does not have an official policy of multiculturalism at the federal level, but if we look at the lower levels of government, such as states and cities, we can find a broad range of multicultural policies. The many formulations of multiculturalism range on a continuum from 'hard' to 'soft', or 'radical' to 'liberal'.⁷⁴ The unifying thread running through the varied multiculturalisms is their commitment to a 'politics of difference', that is, to the merit and viability of preserving different, equally valid ways of life within a political system.⁷⁵

'Hard multiculturalism holds that an avowal of 'one's ethnic particularity is an essential part of a strong sense of identity'.⁷⁶ To be true to oneself, one must be permitted, if not encouraged or forced, to be true to one's culture.⁷⁷ Hard multiculturalism shows a stark contrast with the 'melting pot' ideology.⁷⁸ Multiculturalism in the US is defined as a 'salad bowl' of cultures, where immigrant minorities remain ethnically distinct but wearing a superficial American veneer. The main factor which distinguishes American multiculturalism from the European model is the absence of resident/linguistic minorities. This absence of the linguistic factor makes American ethnic identities more constructed than others.⁷⁹ Today, the diverse 'old ethnics' tend to be lumped together as 'whites' or 'Euro-Americans', for whom a subcultural

⁷³ Jack Citrin and others, 'Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion', *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(2)(2001), pp.247-75.

⁷⁴ Diane Ravitch, 'Diversity and Democracy: Multicultural Education in America', *American Educator*, Spring (1990), pp.16-48.

⁷⁵ Taylor, 1994.

⁷⁶ S.Rockfeller, 'Comment', in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, (Princeton NJ: PUP, 1992).

⁷⁷ Taylor, 1994.

⁷⁸ 'Melting Pot' is a metaphor for a culturally diverse society where the different cultural streams melt into a harmonious whole to acquire a common identity.

⁷⁹ Fludernik, 2007.

identity is an option.⁸⁰ Contemporary multiculturalists use the 'ethno-racial' categories of affirmative action policy to designate whites, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans as the five constituent ethnic pillars of the United States. Some scholars argue that this 'racial pentagon'⁸¹ is a result of instrumentalist strategies on the part of ethnic activists.⁸² However, the US Government is active in producing and promoting racial categories and providing incentives for their maintenance, though there are confusions in granting rights to specific groups.

In Britain, there is no nationwide multicultural policy and many of the same basic ideas and principles are pursued through their 'race relations' policy.⁸³ In the British context, moderate multiculturalism would tell citizens that there are many different and legitimate ways of 'being British', and that being British is not consistent with the public expression and accommodation of other identities, including 'being Muslim' or 'being Scottish', whereas radical multiculturalism would absolve or discourage minorities from adopting such a pan-ethnic super-ordinate political identity.⁸⁴ Even then, Britain has shown a conservative attitude towards its diasporic minorities, especially the South Asians, since the 09/11 and 07/07 terrorist attacks. Britain has introduced strict policies like English Language proficiency, surveillance of alien students, restrictions on the wearing of religious symbols, control over Mosques and religious gatherings.

⁸⁰ Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁸¹ American historian, David A. Hollinger coined the term "ethno-racial pentagon," which refers to the five-part demographic structure within which each American is now routinely classified: African American, Asian American, European American, Latino and Native American. This "pentagon" is built on the basis of color categories – black, yellow, white, brown and red – that are highly relevant to an understanding of racism.

⁸² David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York, Basic Books, 1995)

⁸³ Kymlicka, 2007. For more details on British models of multiculturalism and Race Relations, see Favell, 2001; Parekh Report, 2000.

⁸⁴ Kymlicka, 2007.

Multiculturalism is a complex, heterogeneous concept. The debates on the topic specify how to tackle cultural differences, confusions and conflicts. Paul Gilroy notes that viewing multi-ethnic Britain as homogeneous would be faulty. He says, ‘the temptation to evaluate and assess contemporary London as though it could be a simpler, more homogeneous and less irreducibly diverse place, is something we should regard with utmost suspicion.’⁸⁵

Reframing Britain: Post-9/11

The current British Prime Minister, David Cameron, stated in his 2011 Munich Security Conference Speech that ‘state multiculturalism has failed... we need... a much more active muscular liberalism’.⁸⁶ In 1989, English author and essayist Fay Weldon opined: ‘Our attempt at multiculturalism has failed. The Rushdie-affair demonstrates it.’⁸⁷ Is multiculturalism a synonym for Islam after the 9/11 attacks? Multiculturalism has faced a severe backlash after the 09/11 and 07/07 attacks. The ‘war on terror’ campaign has locked horns with diasporic communities from the Indian subcontinent, especially Pakistanis. Britain joined the US as an ally in the ‘war against evil’. It was defined by the liberal left as an incompatible concept to be an individual from another culture and be ‘British’. Obituaries on multiculturalism were written galore, questioning how British youngsters from ethnic minorities (especially Muslims) were encouraged to intensify their ethnic differences leading to ghettoisation.

The debates on national security in the wake of 09/11 reached a swift conclusion by bracketing Muslims entirely as ‘the enemy within’. The anti-terror and policing measures directed against Muslims and South Asians along with the hyperbolic expressions of the media

⁸⁵ Paul Gilroy “A London Sumting Dis...,” *Critical Quarterly* 4(3) (1999), p.57.

⁸⁶ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/> (accessed on 03/06/2012).

⁸⁷ Fay Weldon, 1989.

disfigured the egalitarian face of multicultural Britain. Still, there persists a widespread tendency to stereotype all Muslims as terrorists. Samuel P. Huntington's concept of the 'clash of civilizations'⁸⁸ between the 'enlightened' Western Christendom and 'savage, outlandish' Muslims adds to the clamour. Muslims are viewed as intolerant, aggressive and opposing the values of freedom and fair-play. Arun Kudnani has commented on the seeds of segregation in the post-9/11 British context as: 'After the riots of 2001, when Britain woke up to the fact that a generation had grown up living 'parallel lives', this whole history was forgotten and, instead, it was Muslims who were blamed for refusing to mix'.⁸⁹

The obvious reasons behind the destructive aggression are the British foreign policies which displayed an open hostility towards Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. However, the blame was put completely on policies of multicultural accommodation. The West Indian or Asian does not, by being born in England, become an Englishman. In law, he becomes a United Kingdom citizen; by birth; in fact, he is still a West Indian or an Asian.⁹⁰ Britain's diversity is one of its greatest assets. This underscores the significance of multiculturalism in the UK. British history is so intertwined with other cultures and nations due to its imperial policies. Racial discrimination, divisions, respect and freedom for all cultures come in the forefront of the policies to engender a sense of belongingness between communities.

The observation of *the Guardian* social correspondent is that at least a dozen towns and cities will have no single ethnic group in a majority within next 30 years. Leicester is expected to

⁸⁸ Samuel.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations: And the Remaking of the World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

⁸⁹ Arun Kundnani, 'Cant on Cohesion', *Institute of Race Relations* (2006).
<http://www.irr.org.uk/news/cant-on-cohesion/> (accessed on 01/07/2012).

⁹⁰ Enoch Powell, *Speech at London Rotary Club, Eastbourne*, 16 November 1968. <http://www.enochpowell.net/fr-83.html> (accessed on 29/06/2012).

become the first ‘super-diverse city’ in 2020, followed by Birmingham in 2024, and Slough and Luton.⁹¹ This is clear evidence that multiculturalism is not an absolute failure. On the other hand, we cannot shut our eyes against the turmoil and destruction when the English Defence League (EDL)⁹² targeted Muslims and South Asians in Luton in February 2011. This has serious implications on matters of community cohesion in Britain. The EDL and the British National Party (BNP) are the extensions or remnants of the largely forgotten race riots of 1995 and 2001 in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley.⁹³ Reports say that Bradford, the ‘racial tinderbox’ of Britain is still disturbed by racial tensions.⁹⁴ The accusation the failure of multicultural policies to get to the core of reality.

Diaspora, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity

Diasporic identities are often viewed as static, possessive and homogeneous entities rather than having a fluid and heterogeneous nature. Identities, ethnic or otherwise, are not freely chosen, and to suggest otherwise is to adopt an historical approach which reduces life to the level of ‘a market or cafeteria’.⁹⁵ Rather, as McLaren asserts, identity choices are structured by class, ethnic and gender stratification, objective constraints and historical determinations. Put another way, individuals and groups are inevitably located and differentially constrained, by wider structural

⁹¹ Amelia Hill, *The changing Face of British Cities by 2020*, The Guardian, 23 December 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2007/dec/23/communities.population> (accessed on 16/06/2012).

⁹² EDL is the abbreviated form of the English Defence League, a racist street fighting movement formed in March 2009 in Luton. It has SDL (Scottish Defence League) and WDL (Welsh Defence League) as its tributaries. It is a secretive top-down racist organization built on military lines mainly focused on opposing Islam. For a detailed overview, see *Defending Multiculturalism*, ed. Hassan Mahamdallie, 2011.

⁹³ BBC News, *Profile: Shehzad Tanveer*, 6 July 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4762313.stm> (accessed on 01/07/2012).

⁹⁴ Lanre Bakare, ‘A Decade After the Riots, Bradford is Still Uneasy about Race Relations’, *The Guardian*, 7 July 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/07/bradford-riots-race-relations> (accessed on 01/07/2012). Also refer Lord Ouseley report and Cante report on Community Cohesion

⁹⁵ Peter Worsley, *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.246.

forces such as capitalism, racism, colonialism and sexism. As George Orwell observed satirically in his famous allegorical and dystopian novel *Animal Farm*, ‘all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others’⁹⁶.

The diasporic groups ‘preserve and protect’ their culture in such a way that they make the diverse political interests within their group apparent. Anthias and Yuval Davis state that it is the traditional male who represents the cultural group and defines and voices the needs of the group.⁹⁷ [Multicultural] approaches engage ‘in a celebration of difference when the most important issues to those who fall outside the white, male, middle class norm often involve powerlessness, violence and poverty’.⁹⁸ The idea of group rights has been emphasised as central parameters to resolve the problems related to particular communities, especially Muslims. Multicultural theorists differ to a great extent on the issue of minority group rights.⁹⁹

Shachar writes:

Multicultural accommodation presents a problem. . . when pro-identity group policies aimed at levelling the playing field between minority communities and the wider society unwittingly allow systematic maltreatment of individuals within the accommodated group—an impact which in certain cases is so severe that it can nullify these individuals’ citizenship rights. Under such conditions, well-meaning accommodation by the state may leave members of minority groups vulnerable to severe injustice within the group, and may, in effect, work to reinforce some of the most hierarchical elements of a culture.¹⁰⁰

As discussed earlier in the chapter, minority group rights voice the interests of minority groups, at the same time control and prescribe order for their own members.¹⁰¹ Kymlicka fails to mention

⁹⁶ George Orwell, *The Animal Farm* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000), p.77.

⁹⁷ Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992.

⁹⁸ Steinberg, 1997.

⁹⁹ Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Shachar, 2001, pp.1-2.

¹⁰¹ Kymlicka, 1995.

the distinctions within the groups such as gender and class in the public and private domains. The question of the shared public sphere and the unshared private space is raised, especially in the case of women. The issue becomes complex in the case of religion, gender and sexuality where confusion exists about the rules to be imparted with regard to the notions of public shared values, for example, the practices of polygamy or clitoridectomy. As said above, considerable controversy has been generated on the issues of wearing of Hijab, veils and purdahs by Muslim women; clitoridectomy, forced marriages and polygamy.

The fundamental tension between multiculturalism and women has been clearly put forward by the American political scientist Susan Moller Okin in her essay 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' Okin questions the disproportionate claims of equality of minority cultures or religions when they clash with the norm of gender equality that is at least formally endorsed by liberal states. She was convinced that the advocacy of group rights regarding each diasporic culture as 'monolithic' by liberal multiculturalists worsened women's condition within patriarchal diasporic cultures in Western nation states.¹⁰² Okin's critics point out that she falls into the trap of generalising all diasporic communities as crude and regressive by concentrating on extreme cases of subordination of women.¹⁰³

Women of minority groups, especially of the South Asian diaspora, face discrimination in multiple ways. The majority are denied freedom and a voice within their 'cultural norms', which are totally male-centric and often occur with the complicity of the older women of the culture who support the subordinated and subjugated status of women. The cultural systems are too tight

¹⁰² Okin, 1999.

¹⁰³ Joshua Cohen and Others (eds.), *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women? Susan Moller Okin with Respondents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

and rigid in matters of marriage and rituals like dowry, which form the fundamental cause of domestic violence and physical abuse against South Asian women. The case does not alter within most of the South Asian diasporic communities. Studies point out that British South Asians tend to get married early due to parental and community pressure. Girls are either abducted or forcefully taken to the homeland, or forced marriages even take place within the UK or elsewhere, threatening the girl for the sake of family honour or 'Izzat'. Homi K. Bhabha, in his *Liberalism's Sacred Cow*, warns Okin of the danger of creating a monolithic discourse on the cultural stereotype based merely on cultural defence cases. Okin speaks for a liberal multiculturalism by reducing 'woman' as an abstraction, without appreciating the diversity of her roles in different stages of life, thereby establishing the hegemony of liberalism which sets parameters for non-liberalist cultures.¹⁰⁴ The situation remains critical outside the cultural boundary when minority women face discrimination from the mainstream majority.

Avigail Eisenberg explains the reasons for the incompatibility between cultural autonomy and gender equality:

One of the main explanations for [the] deprived state [of minority women] is found in the cultural traditions and practices that shape women's lives and define their status within their communities. Second, even though sexism is ubiquitous, gender inequality in marginalized groups often provides a thin edge of a thick wedge that leaves vulnerable claims to cultural autonomy for minority groups. Together, these two factors give rise to a conundrum whereby measures aimed at promoting cultural autonomy are viewed as hostile to the achievement of gender equality, while measures aimed at promoting gender equality are viewed as threats to cultural autonomy.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Parekh, 1999.

¹⁰⁵ Avigail Eisenberg, 'Diversity and Equality: Three Approaches to Cultural and Sexual Difference', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11(1) (2003), p. 41.

Often it is the older, male dominated voice that sounds loud to represent the interests of the groups. But multicultural policies should be directed towards giving adequate representation of women as well, reinforcing gender equality without harming their interests. At this juncture, the significance of the entanglement of gender and identity politics in a culturally diverse democracy comes to the fore.

The notion of difference may be viewed as a strategic ideological plan of domination. Floya Anthias restates 'difference' as to think in terms of imaginings around boundaries and positionality referring to 'hierarchical' difference. Thus, the issue of multiculturalism and feminism must be located in the context of racism and other forms of exclusion faced by diasporic ethnic groups as well as the position of women within them. This should be viewed as an issue beyond patriarchy and ethnicity, where women become the participants in exploiting women, especially in the case of the female members of diaspora. This produces new subject positions where literary narratives become active articulators.

Identity politics can be strengthened by mythologizing homeland which can happen through literature. Fiction, autobiographies, diaries and letters, have long been a powerful mode for exploring patriarchal relations and for articulating questions of women's subjectivity and identities, as they are formed by and in resistance to social relations that are often racist, ethnocentric and shaped by class and heterosexism. Literary representations showcase the imaginative exploration of experience as it is lived by individuals and social groups and of the possibilities of living differently. It can articulate the affective and emotional dimensions of oppression and the processes of resistance and solidarity that produce new forms of subjectivity and identity. It can offer these new possibilities to its readership and provide escape from the everyday. Writing, like other forms of British Black and South Asian cultural production

including film and performance, has become an important site for exploring the consequences of migration and the place of minorities in Britain, as well as for the articulation of new forms of identity.¹⁰⁶ The literature of diasporic women is a dynamic, active space where constant shaping of identities takes place echoing their experiences in the new land, partaking in the jumble of identity politics.



¹⁰⁶ Chris Weedon, 'Migration, Identity and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women's Writing', *Contemporary Women's Writing*, March, 8(1) (2008).

Chapter Two. Politics and Poetics: South Asian Women's Writing in Britain.

The imperial sun has set.

Salman Rushdie¹

The poetics of 'border crossings' display a variety of features due to their multiple origins, making it problematic to place them within a single homogeneous category of English literary writing and intellectual discourse. In order to unveil and map the points of departure, crossings, shifts and breaks of literary representations of the South Asian diaspora in Britain, a broad comprehensive overview of the history of South Asians in Britain is necessary. The discontinuous nature of diasporic histories with their involvement in multiple locations and traditions has created a suitable space for intersectionality and refiguration of culture in its multiple modalities such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, generation and sexuality. This has caused diasporic cultures to meet, converge or clash with the conventional epistemological and philosophical knowledge and semantic representations of European intellectual structures that proved a source of origin for new literary genres.

Myriad revisionist historians as well as litterateurs have noted fresh evidence that the historical experiences of the Empire, with its imperial tradition, have produced a condition of creolisation 'between the social and the psychic; of politics and intellectual production; as well as between economic, political and cultural fields of articulation'.² Salman Rushdie's statement that 'the imperial sun has set' marks the Empire's collapse that was followed by the evolution of a time of re-territorialisation³ through the aesthetics of imagined narratives. Asian immigrants face strong resentment from the mainstream British when they arrived in Britain in the late

¹ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1991), p.129.

² Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 1984).

1940s. The immigrant experiences were recorded aesthetically in various modes giving rise to a global fusion culture, doing so in the context of their local culture and making it their own. The aesthetic representations mirrored the themes of lost *home space* and the identity crisis entailed, liberated self-representation, cultural syncretism as expressions of resistance, to release themselves from the epithet ‘exotic’ as conferred by the world Anglophone literary Empire.⁴ These ‘contact zones’⁵ that form the sites of political and cultural mergers and encounters have ‘refigured *Multi* as a sign for power dynamics of intersectionality which the concept of *diaspora space* interrogates’.⁶ In the case of the Asian subcontinent, its pre-colonial history demonstrates the recognition of an Asian presence in Britain long before the birth of the East India Company in 1599, as Nayantara Sahgal implies in her essay, ‘Schizophrenic Imagination’ where she traces her ‘awareness as a writer back to x-thousand B.C., at the end of which measureless time the British came, and stayed, and left’.⁷ As said earlier, the multi modes of race, class, gender and ethnicity, generate heterogeneous, contested spaces within the dominant social culture, engendering crucial dichotomies of us/them, i.e. the creation of ‘others’. These binary oppositions serve as a basis for political fissures and social segmentations generating a power play between the dominant communities and their Others.

This chapter seeks to elucidate the interwoven strands in the fabric of literary and cultural representations of female writers from the Indian subcontinent in post-war Britain. My aim is to provide a broad overview of the female Asian diasporic literary constructions of ‘home’, ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ when they came to *Vilayat* in relation to the multicultural policies and

⁴ Arundhati Roy, *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004). Ms. Roy states that the British Empire had been morphed into an Anglophone Empire.

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Studies in Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ Brah, 1996.

⁷ Nayantara Sahgal, ‘The Schizophrenic Imagination’, in *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial*, ed. by Anna Rutherford (Australia: Dungaroo Press, 1992), pp.30-36.

power relations. *Inter alia*, I am also concerned to map the general parameters of inter generational differences, to suggest that the literary inscriptions about ‘home’ and ‘culture’ from the heart of the imperial metropolis that provide an interesting platform to read and understand the changing spirit and continuity of contemporary writings of British South Asian women today.

The chapter deals with the literary reflections of British South Asian women straddling three phases. First, the influx of South Asians to Britain following the post-war economic depression during the 1950s and early 1960s, marking the beginning of ‘multiculturalism’ to handle the *differences* which had disturbed the *homogenous* British ethnic make-up. Second, the diasporic settlement period of the late 1960s and 1970s, 80s and 90s, when a more assertive form of multiculturalism began to develop by encouraging the recognition of differences of all diasporic groups and third, the post 9/11 era of social cohesion and interculturalism which is based on a faith-based approach to make the diasporic ethnic groups visible and heard. The study demands a retrieval of the history of South Asian diaspora in Britain to identify the interlinked series of literary genres, artifacts and strategies employed by Asian British female authors to chart their ambiguous positions in an extremely hostile social and political climate.

A Multiracial Britain in the Making: South Asians in Britain⁸

The post second world war economic gloom and severe labour shortages forced Britain to invite its ex-colonial subjects as a source of cheap labour to the ‘Mother Country’ in the 1950s and 60s. There was a massive outflow of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent when Great Britain offered considerable opportunities of employment (mainly unskilled) to reconstruct itself from post-war economic depression. Despite being citizens of the New Commonwealth who had the

⁸ See Appendix VIII.

right of access into Britain, South Asian workers occupied the lower rungs of the British employment hierarchy. The ‘newcomers’ were forced to settle in the dirty, rundown areas due to a lack of proper housing, adequate social services, the nature and locations of their jobs, as well as the strong resentment of the mainstream society towards the ‘immigrant’ who was marked as ‘undesirable and responsible for all the disturbances and chaos’.⁹ The Asians were considered as a group of awful strangers who lived ‘packed like sardines in a room’, ‘smelt like curry’, wearing ‘funny clothes’, with ‘strange beliefs and religious practices’.¹⁰ The resentful attitude of the British mainstream population towards the new arrivals intensified the pressure on the Government to implement an ‘anti-coloured’ stance in terms of immigrations laws. The Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962, 1968 and The Immigration Act of 1971 imposed tighter administrative controls over immigration as ways to restrict Asian and black entry to Britain.

The questions of ‘race relations’ that came up in the 1950s were concerned with the cultural differences of the immigrant minorities. ‘Assimilation’ was the expectation. The ‘coloured minorities’ were expected to adjust to the host society, abandoning their ‘*primitive culture and traditions*’ which would eventually even out any differences.¹¹ The early phase of South Asian migration to Britain was predominantly male centric, men who came with an aim of economic benefits. Increased discrimination in all spheres of life along with the issues of cultural identity forced the administration to replace the policy of ‘assimilation’ with a new terminology of ‘integration’. As cited earlier, integration was not regarded as a ‘flattening process of

⁹ Avtar Brah, *Inter-generational and Inter-ethnic Perceptions: A Comparative Study of South Asian and English Adolescents and their Parents in Southall, West London* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1979); Judith.M.Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Brah, 1979.

¹¹ C.Kondapi, *Indians Overseas, 1838-1949* (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1979).

assimilation but as equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'.¹² Integration, which assured a more egalitarian model of society, formed the basis for a multicultural British society. The rhetoric of 'multiculturalism' was a concomitant response of the British government to the anti-discriminatory, community-based struggles for equality and justice. However, racial antipathy incited 'paki-bashing',¹³ along with politicians like Enoch Powell who delivered his 'Rivers of Blood'¹⁴ speech in 1968 evoking anti-Asian sentiments. The arrival of immediate families restructured the life style and monetary investments of Asians to find new bearings in Britain, converting the desire to 'return' into a myth.

During the 1970s and '80s, institutional racism was further entrenched in the guise of immigration laws and the British Nationality Act.¹⁵ Asian women had to undergo embarrassing 'virginity tests' and were under strict surveillance of the authorities for their first year of arrival in Britain. Asian workplaces faced threats of police raids to search and deport the overstaying illegal migrants. Cultural clashes and racist attacks remained on the increase and proved a hindrance to mutual tolerance and cultural fusion. Young Asians experienced a disorientation based on the complex question of 'identity conflict' – a bi-cultural dilemma of being caught between two cultures, Asian and British. The similarities and intersecting behavioural elements brought in a generational clash among the South Asians.

¹² Roy Jenkins, *Race*, VIII (3) (1967), p. 216.

¹³ An epithet for the violence perpetrated against South Asians in the late 1960s.

¹⁴ 'Rivers of Blood' speech was made by Enoch Powell, the then MP for Wolverhampton on 20 April, 1968 in Birmingham to a meeting of the Conservative political centre. Although the phrase 'rivers of blood' does not appear in the speech, the speech became infamous for its strong anti-immigration sentiments.

¹⁵ The British Nationality Act 1981 brought nationality and immigration into line. It introduced a simplified definition that created a narrower definition of British citizenship for those with close familial ties to the UK who would have the right to entry and right to abode. For more details, see Ian R.G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 147-48.

Asian women's organisations came to the forefront to fight against the discrimination and oppression. They came together to live a dynamic social life in Britain, by registering problems of domestic violence and abuse as well as racist attitudes and behaviours outside. Moreover, as Avtar Brah states, Asian feminists have had to address the issues surrounding the ways in which factors such as caste, class and religion configure in the British situation.¹⁶ The emergence of Black British Feminism heralded the promotion of Black and Asian women's writing to fight against the disavowal operated by the white publishing industries. Smaller publishing houses such as Virago, Women's Press and Sheba Feminist Press were set up to encourage the writings of Black and Ethnic minority women.

Early Asian women writings were mainly subjective and empirical, systemic documentations of the social and personal grievances within a highly gendered and racialised British society. Amrit Wilson's *Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain* (1978), Amina Mama's *Black Women: The State and Economic Crisis* (1984), Hazel Carby's *White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the boundaries of Sisterhood* (1982), *The Heart of the Race* (1985) by Bryan et al. and the theoretical writings of Gail Lewis, Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar criticised and questioned the monolithic structuring of White feminism and the racial and sexual oppression exercised against Black women in all sectors of life. One of the main agendas of the magazines and journals such as *Spare Rib* (1972), *Feminist Review* (1979) and *Feminist Art News* (1980) was to encourage and publish academic articles and creative writing by Black and Asian women.

During the mid 1980s the term 'Black' became a political colour to embody various political and cultural meanings. The inclusion of South Asians within the term 'Black' became

¹⁶Brah, 2006 .

problematic due to the specific cultural differences between Africans, the people from the Caribbean and South Asians.¹⁷ The Asian Women's Collective was formed in 1984 to stimulate, foster and support South Asian literature. The writings were authentic recordings of genuine political, cultural and sociological experiences which shaped and moulded the aspirations and lifestyles of South Asian British people.¹⁸ Thus, Asian British women's writings produced an imaginative landscape where the 'dual fault lines'¹⁹ of East/West, tradition/modernity, male/female, us/them are captured effectively within the diasporic continuum.

Home Grounds and Border Lands: South Asian female poetics.

This section focuses on how various South Asian British women writers have attempted to examine the crucial questions of race, class, gender and ethnicity related to their diasporic experiences and to re-invent an altered Britain, thus, charting a new tradition of Asian writing. Their writings navigate various realms of literary imagination, locating themselves between 'a politics of belonging and a politics of location'. In the discussion which follows, the focus will be to draw a timeline of the diverse poetics of South Asian women's writing in Britain since the 1950s. Whilst I do not attempt to elaborate the wide critical paradigms and strategies of diasporic writings, this study maps the sense of literary imagination that consolidates South Asian women's presence in Britain, documenting the realities of diasporic life with the immigration policies of the British Government as the backdrop.

¹⁷ S. Hazareesingh, 'Racism and Cultural Identity: An Indian Perspective', *Dragon's Teeth*, 12 (1986); P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 1987); T. Modood, 'Black' Racial Equality and Asian Identity', *New Community*, 14 (3) (1988); A. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1990).

¹⁸ Chris Weedon, 'Redefining Otherness, Negotiating Difference: Contemporary British Asian Women's Writing', in *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: Contemporary Women Writers in Britain*, ed. by Beate Neumeier (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 225-26.

¹⁹ The term is taken from Meena Alexander's titular autobiography, *Fault Lines* (1993).

The first section outlines the diasporic inscriptions of British South Asian women writers in the 1950s and 60s, to suggest the ambivalence, psychological disjuncture and fracture associated with writing from dual subject positions within a hostile environment. The works of early women writers Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya are chosen to analyse the imaginative space of memory and nostalgia as well as the harsh realities encountered by the first generation South Asian immigrants in the 1950s-60s Britain. Attia Hosain, who came to Britain just before the India-Pakistan Partition in 1947, is known for her ‘nostalgic’ descriptions about the loss of her traditional homeland, written through the gaze of her upper-class Muslim family who belonged to the feudal Taluqdars of pre-Partition Oudh. My choice of Attia Hosain is deliberate, due to her South Asian diasporic Muslim heritage, as she belongs to the first generation, along with her detailed literary portrayal of the claustrophobic traditions of the Muslim family; the concepts of ‘izzat/honour’ and ‘sharam/dishonour’ and the age-old traditions of slavery and forced marriages that silence South Asian women.

I believe that Hosain’s works are significant to the reading of contemporary British South Asian Muslim women’s writings in a post 9/11 context when the British Government has adopted a multicultural policy of granting group rights on a faith-based approach to manage the persistent cultural differences of diasporic communities. I argue that a faith-based approach to multicultural policies clashes with the norm of gender equality within the diasporic communities. Susan Moller Okin, a liberal feminist political philosopher, has attacked multiculturalism for its inability to ensure equal representation and individual rights for women who remain marginalised.²⁰ It is important to note the strategic move of Hosain to record her discomfort with

²⁰ Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

displacement in metaphorical terms, by being reluctant to produce straight articulation of her diasporic experiences in Britain, instead writing about her Partition memories and trauma.

Attia Hosain, in her incompleted essay 'Deep Roots, New Language', published posthumously, says:

My mother came from a family of scholars, not from the feudal taluqdars of my father's family. One side of our home was my mother's domain, wholly part of an Indian culture, where we studied Persian and Arabic and Urdu poetry. Through a door and a hall was the Western side, my father's... His English friends came to our home,... not the condescending 'imperialist' breed... There was no division between the two elements in my home; rather a flow of life, acceptance... we lived in many centuries; it seemed, moving across them in moments.²¹

Although Hosain openly expresses her ease at mingling with British culture which her elite status had made possible, perhaps, her migration to Britain in 1947 had created a wound in her imagination, an excruciating pain of slicing the subcontinent of India into two.²² The *split* Attia Hosain experienced was not merely physical, but psychological; her crossing the frontiers to escape a divided loyalty of nationality to Britain, which was a neutral area which hosted Indians and Pakistanis together under the umbrella of South Asian ethnic identity. Although Hosain enjoyed the 'encounter' with the new land, Britain, she realised a grey space, a 'silent gap' between the East and the West, in terms of culture especially, where both the cultures exhibit an achromatic pattern, unable to clash or come to terms with each other. She admits that the process of writing was a sub-conscious strategy to console herself, to escape a mutilating sense of identity, to squeeze out the best of both the worlds.²³ Her short story collection *Phoenix Fled* (1953) and semi-autobiographical novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) are powerful

²¹ Attia Hosain, 'Deep Roots', in *Voices of the Crossing*, ed. by Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan, (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), p.22.

²² Ibid., p.27.

²³ Ibid., p.23.

renditions of a young Muslim woman's descriptions of nostalgia and loss of a traditional upper-class Muslim heritage due to her self-imposed exile to Britain. In these works, she expresses her disinterest in dividing her life and legacy between *Azadi* (freedom) and *tamas* (darkness), as the partition novels of Chaman Nahal and Bhisham Sahni speak about the India-Pakistan split, as well as intimately detailing the realities within the isolated 'zenanas' of Muslim communities; accurate recordings of a life behind the veil.

The characters of the stories in *Phoenix Fled* (1953) and in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) unfold Hosain's cracked spaces of memory created by the socio-political turmoil along with the displacement created due to Partition. In stories like 'Street of the Moon', 'The Daughter-in-Law' and 'First Party', Hosain indirectly hints at the power play and close connections between different positions of women within traditional Indian Muslim households such as servants and their mistresses, wives and husbands. In the titular story 'Phoenix Fled', written in an elliptical style of narration flowing through the memories of an old woman, Hosain repeatedly underlines the brutality of a violent past and liberation from the chasing memories like a phoenix resurrected by the creative process of narration. The old lady in 'Phoenix Fled' lives in a thatched hut, secluded from the world outside, enjoying the presence of her grandchildren who keep prompting her to dwell in another world of stories and myths, which the old woman considers as a way of escaping from the memories of the violent Mutiny. The story ends leaving a horrifying impression of the burning of the old woman's doll's house, her shield and protection. The old woman's story could be read as an allusion to Attia Hosain's painful emotions about the Partition and her expatriation to Britain to escape the emotional discomfort created by the divide.

‘The First Party’ seemingly describes the clashes and the incompatible ideas and interests that arise from an East-West encounter, through the experiences of a young wife who becomes exhausted with the disharmony between tradition and modernity. The title, ‘The First Party’ is an indication of the new, unknown, inescapable space of life that the young girl enters into. The Western style party throws her into a ‘bright bewilderment’ when she sees a woman with her polished nails as ‘claws dipped in blood’²⁴. She realises her position as a ‘wife’ is an inescapable imprisonment chained by patriarchal norms. The bridal attire decorated with rich embroidery and heavy jewellery symbolises the heaviness in her heart that comes out of the ‘imprisoned’ status she is in. The bride’s embarrassment in a Western culture gives a clue to Hosain’s dislike of adopting the English ways of life; an adamant attitude to hold aloft her tradition and culture, although she was able to deal effectively with the situation in a new country, as she had expressed elsewhere.

The stories like ‘The Daughter in Law’ and ‘The Street of the Moon’ describe tales of rebellion, which detail the fractured lives of women who are caught in the dilemmas of tradition, class and gender. The characters Hasina and Munni in both the stories serve as symbols of resistance against the outworn patterns and practices within the household. Hosain displays her pluralist vision by documenting the orally transmitted traditional tales of Oudh in the English language along with rhythmic flow of Urdu poetry. The characters like ‘the old lady’, ‘Hasina’ and ‘Munni’ are portrayed as extremely uncomfortable, who try hard to negotiate with their sense of displacement through defiance or silence, in one way or another. These characters could be read as alternate images of Hosain’s persona who wishes to feel ‘at home’ amidst her

²⁴ Attia Hosain, ‘The First Party’ in *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (London: Virago, 1988), p.17.

experiences of ‘otherness’ in the 1950s racist Britain²⁵. While the short stories in *Phoenix Fled* (1953) expose the pre-Partition Oudh within a hierarchical feudal context, Hosain’s novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), maps the chaos and violence generated within the context of Indian independence and Partition. Both the works serve as a repository of Hosain’s nostalgia, through which she dispels her distress in Britain.

Hosain’s novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, adopts a *bildungsroman* form set through the memories of Laila, an orphaned young Muslim girl from the aristocracy, growing up under the care of her aunts. The novel charts an ‘exotic’ picture of a society and family in transition, through gendered inner tensions on voices of patriarchy and the gaps in the nationalistic sentiments generated due to political divisions of the two nations; India and Pakistan. Divided into four sections, it exposes the life of Muslim women inside the ‘zenana’, forced marriage, and the courageous conscience of Laila to cross the codes of honour produced in terms of religion, gender and politics. Hosain exposes the inner gender politics of her community as a substitute to compromise with her sense of being ‘unhoused’ in an unfavourable Britain, inflamed by anti-immigrant feelings and insidious forms of racism.

Hosain identifies herself as ‘uncaught between’ the two worlds and asserts that she is firmly rooted in India, voicing cosmopolitanism.²⁶ However, Attia Hosain’s works were welcomed both in India and Britain, confirming her position among the early Indian women writers in Britain. Hosain has made clear that her choice to move to Britain was to avoid the

²⁵Omar Khan, *Growing Up in Gadia*: Interview with Attia Hosain, on May 19, 1991.
<http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosaininterview.html> (accessed on 30/03/2014).

²⁶ Nilufer E.Barucha, ‘I am a Universalist-Humanist’, (interview with Attia Hosain), *Biblio*, 37 (July - August 1998).

difficult choice of national affiliation;²⁷ to create an 'alternate mental geography' through writing as a means of literary refuge to escape the anguish and loss that Partition entailed.

Kamala Markandaya, in comparison with her contemporaries such as G.V.Desani, Aubrey Menen and V.S. Naipaul, has made her presence felt by carving out a literary *terra firma* that displays the collective images of tradition, cultural and political history within the parameters of colonialism, along with the strained displaced lives of immigrants, revealing conflicts and cultural cross-fertilisations. Markandaya is one of the earliest Asian women writers in Britain. The selected works are important depictions of the difficulties of first generation Asian immigrants in Britain. Her novels *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972) are good examples to compare and comprehend the changing character of the literary renditions of Asian British women writers.

Like Attia Hosain, Markandaya also does not disown her Indian sensibility. Markandaya has published a set of novels which reveals her creative sensibility to respond precisely to the changing socio-political situations both in India and Britain. Her work includes *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1967), *The Coffey Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and *The Pleasure City* (1982). The essence of Kamala Markandaya's writings is the artistic exploration and projection of human vagaries through the concept of cultural continuity.

The central ideas of Markandaya's early novels like *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) and *Some Inner Fury* (1955) rest on the themes of havoc created by industrialisation in India during the years of struggle for independence, resulting in domestic dislocation and disorientation of

²⁷ Hosain, 2000, p.23.

tradition and values, leading to political violence and racial feuds among the anglicised upper-class. Her third novel, *A Silence of Desire* (1960), presents the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity through the story of Sarojini, a traditional home-maker and the 'spiritual crisis' she faces when she is asked to abandon her traditional values by her modern husband. Sarojini accepts her fate, like Rukmini in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), to accommodate the scientific spirit and modernisation, the inevitable necessities of the time. In her novel *Possession* (1963), Markandaya tells about the influence of a foreign culture on the autochthonous cultural matrix through the character of the unsophisticated English woman Lady Caroline and her attempts to influence and entice the South Indian artist Valmiki to assimilate him into English ways of life. The fifth novel, *A Handful of Rice* (1967) is based on the theme of economic convulsions in post-independent India. The protagonist, Ravi, exposes the moral dilemmas that an individual is forced to experience in a developing country plagued by social injustice, poverty and inequality.

Coffer Dams (1969) also focuses upon the theme of the negative impact of industrialisation on indigenous life, culture and ideals. The story is about the construction of a dam across a river in a South Indian hill village, sponsored by the Government of India led by a team of expert British engineers. Markandaya dramatises the anxieties and tensions engendered due to the encounter between Eastern sensibility and Western materialism. The team leader, Clinton, represents the merciless commercial exploitation of modern civilisation at the expense of the innocent lives of tribal communities. However, Clinton's wife, Helen, acts as a cross-cultural connecting force to link the uncivilised indigenous tribes and modern British troops.

The Nowhere Man (1972) is the story of Srinivas and Vasantha who have migrated to England and their experiences against the backdrop of racism in post-War England. While Srinivas tries to assimilate to English ways of life, Vasantha remains traditional and retains her

identity. As in *Possession* (1963), the East-West cultural conflicts and racial segregation are described through dramatic episodes set in 1950s England. Markandaya returns to a rural setting in her *Two Virgins* (1973), which presents the sharp contrasts of tradition versus modernity through the opposite attitudes and nature of two sisters, Saroja and Lalitha. Her 1977 novel, *The Golden Honeycomb*, is drawn in the canvas of a historical novel narrating the story of the Maharajahs of Devapur State (which represents the princely states during the British Raj). The East-West dichotomy is portrayed through the relationship between Sir Arthur Copeland, the resident of Devapur and the Indian Maharajahs. Markandaya's final novel *Pleasure City* (1982) is about the invasion of technology into a fishing village which upsets the traditional lifestyle and poses a threat to their traditional occupation. The themes of East-West clash and cross-cultural understanding form the base of the novel.

My study focuses on the two novels, *Possession* (1969) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972), which explicitly explore the lives of Indian immigrants in Britain in the 1960s. The novels show how the South Asian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s were looked upon as Britain's 'post-war post-colonial crisis', causing disturbance to Britain's 'homogeneity'. This socio-cultural setting predominates in Markandaya's *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972), where the characters Valmiki and Srinivas attempt to strike a harmony between the two worlds separated by a wide chasm of cultural differences. Markandaya underscores the impossibility or inadequacy of an assimilationist policy throughout the novels:

Undilute East had always been too much for the West; and soulful East always came lap-dog fashion to the West...²⁸

²⁸ Kamala Markandaya, *Possession* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1994), p.110.

Srinivas, in *Nowhere Man*, doesn't protest at the hostile behaviour of his neighbour, Fred Fletcher. He remains cold to the 'oppressive presence of rejection'²⁹ when racial hatred is exercised on the immigrants who are blamed as aliens 'darkening' Britain:

BLACKS GO HOME, they said, their fear and hate crystallized into words
which opened whole new hells of corresponding fear and desolation.³⁰

Markandaya suggests the futility of adopting an 'assimilation' policy to manage the changing ethnic make-up of Britain because of apparent racism that prevented immigrants from integrating into the mainstream culture. Markandaya maps the objective and subjective levels of reality – inequality, racial tensions, as well as the emotional resistance and humane feelings through her characters. The two works absolutely reflect the sociological situation of the time as recorded in the report on South Asians by the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain in 1976:

All groups who come to settle in a strange country have difficulties in adjusting to a new way of life. Asians in Britain...strongly attached to their own religion, languages and customs...feel that the Western culture is a threat...so they tend to be isolated. Hostility and racial discrimination from the host community further... [make it] hard for them to 'assimilate' - to be accepted as British.³¹

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a panoply of measures introduced to mediate the early problems entirely based upon the notion of racial difference. The principal legislation in the UK was through a series of 'Race Relations' Acts, but discrimination against the 'new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child', as Kipling defined in his 'White man's Burden'³², persisted. The eruption of racial violence and political evasions found thematic spaces and an imaginative refuge in literature, reflecting 'a kind of aestheticism' that redefined a new nationalist geography

²⁹ Kamala Markandaya, *The Nowhere Man* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998), p.168.

³⁰ Ibid., p.168.

³¹ Report of Commission of Racial Equality (London, 1976). See Appendix VII, The Race Map of Britain, p.231.

³² Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man's Burden* (retrieved from http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_burden.htm (accessed on 13/04/2015)).

of 'Englishness', especially in the context of the Powellian xenophobic rhetoric in the 1960s and the Thatcherite England of the 1980s. This drift announced the 'creation of the new 'ethnic' tag for Asian immigrants in British government parlance,...yet another stereotype, *Asian woman*'.

The impact of diversity produced a kaleidoscopic pattern of identities, troubling the Western questions on race as 'the black is black and white is white and anybody who attempts to muddle the two is an idiot'³³. The 'cultural cross pollination'³⁴ and the 'interplay of borrowings between and across cultures'³⁵ have created an increasingly complex multicultural world of 'mongrel selves'³⁶ have been an accepted criterion in the 'English canon' as exhibited by Geoffrey Chaucer and Shakespeare who have widened the borders of thoughtful imagination to multicultural moods painting their characters in variegated colours of mixed identities. The aesthetic literary representations of the South Asian diaspora also translated the experiences of exile and expatriation which contained and exploded the stereotypes, but failed to gain acceptance within the grand narratives of modernity. The overtones of 'cultural contamination' opened up a new 'symbolic trope' to redefine ethnicity, ambivalent, hyphenated, a hybrid mixture of identities which again proved a cultural bar in gaining state support and recognition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the term 'hybridity' gained currency carrying the potential gradient of Asian Britain. Contemporary cultural theorists and literary critics such as Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall have highlighted the emergence of interstitial spaces in the nation's peripheries, which are active sites for the redefinition and renegotiation of identities³⁷ that problematised the hegemonic notions of static ethnicities of 'Others' as carved out by Western

³³ Aubrey Menen, *The Space Within the Heart: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991), p.8.

³⁴ Salman Rushdie, 1991, p.20.

³⁵ *Delivering the Truth*: An interview with V.S Naipaul by Aamer Hussein. p.154.

³⁶ Salman Rushdie, 1991, p. 394.

³⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

theorists. As Stuart Hall refashions the essentialist conceptions of 'ethnicity' in his *Minimal Selves*:

In our times, as an imaginative community, [ethnicity] is ...beginning to carry...meanings...to define a new space for identity...insist[ing] on difference-on the fact that every identity is placed, positioned in a culture, a language, a history.³⁸

Hall is trying to demonstrate the fluid character of cultural identities, unveiling the differences latent within the veneer of sameness and vice-versa to map the 'multiple ways of British life structured by racial hierarchies',³⁹ as Gilroy states. The term 'hybrid' in contemporary discourses casts off its negative linkage to the questions of colour differences. As Young states, as a 'creolisation [that] involves fusion, the creation of a new form...raceless, produc[ing] ...permanent revolution of forms'.⁴⁰

The particularity of the writings of second generation Asian Britons was the accuracy in details that they reflected in terms of subject matters as mirrors held towards the realities of life in the diaspora. A considerable number of pioneering stories could be taken to represent the second generation British Asian writings to continue the tradition of their forbearers such as Aubrey Menen, Attia Hosain, Kamala Markandaya and G.V Desani. The writings of the younger generation located the diasporic consciousness to substantiate the political transitions characterised by overt expressions of 'politically-motivated' racism and community politics during Thatcherite-Britain to mark the Asian Britons as an excrescence, an extra burden. Another

³⁸ Stuart Hall, *Minimal Selves* (retrieved from <http://www.ic.ucsc.edu/~dej/2012%20Porter%20Core%20READER/2012%20PORTER%20CORE%202012%20READER/Persepolis/Hall.Minimal%20Selves.pdf>. (accessed on 22/12/2012).

³⁹ Paul Gilroy, 'A London Sumtin dis...', *Critical Quarterly*, 41 (3) (2005), pp. 57-69.

⁴⁰ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

peculiarity that features in the writings of the second generation is the proliferation of female literary expressions, as Susheila Nasta points out in her *Home Truths*. Nasta, at the same time, warns of the cultural politics and strategies of the publishing industries to eclipse, sideline and suppress their works for the reason that they seemed ‘unfit’ for the ethnic tag ‘Asian’, to echo the fashionable trends of neo-orientalist exoticism.⁴¹

Among the writers of second generation British South Asians, Farrukh Dhondy, Salman Rushdie, Haneif Kureishi, David Dabydeen, Ravinder Randhawa, Leena Dhingra, Meera Syal and Rukhsana Ahmed occupy a significant position among many others. Dhondy’s *East End at Your Feet* (1976), Randhawa’s *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988) and Syal’s *Anita and Me* (1996) appeared to document the diverse Asian British lives along with many other anthologies published by women writers such as *Charting the Journey* (1988), *Watchers and Seekers* (1987) and *Walking a Tight Rope* (2004). Unlike the first generation writings which primarily exposed the harsh realities of early diasporic life expressing nostalgia, and an intense fervour for a return, the younger generation’s writings charted an authentic cartography of social realities of Asian Britain which transformed of the desire for ‘return’ into an impossible myth. It was during the late 1980s that the South Asians were provided with a separate political identity under the umbrella term ‘British Asian’, by the Commission for Racial Equality, to replace the term ‘Black’.⁴² As said earlier, there was an upsurge in women writing about women within the British Asian literary realm. One example is

⁴¹ Susheila Nasta observes that the period was marked by a number of works and anthologies by young female British South Asians like Ravinder Randhawa, Rukhsana Ahmed, Leena Dhingra, Meera Syal, among others published with ‘The Women’s Press’ and ‘Virago’. For more details, see Nasta, 2002.

⁴² <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/menu/com1987.htm>

Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), the first Asian British novel that traces the lives of younger generation females in the diaspora.⁴³

In 1984, Randhawa founded the Asian Women Writers Collective to promote Asian women's writings in Britain. Randhawa's character Kulwant (Kuli) in *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987) inhabited both worlds to assert her bi-cultural identity of belongingness and deviation from the English life. Meera Syal's writings resemble those of Randhawa in their themes, especially her novel *Anita and Me* (1996), film script *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and essay *Finding a New Voice* (1990). The passion of the new generation British Asians to integrate into British society is exhibited clearly as Meena, the protagonist in *Anita and Me*, says:

I knew I was a freak of some kind, too mouthy, too clumsy and scabby to be an Indian girl, too Indian to be a real Tollington wench, but living in the grey area between all categories felt increasingly like home.⁴⁴

The efforts of the second generation to fit well into Anglo-British lives were represented in the creative works, to break out from the stereotypical notions prescribed by the Anglophone fictional world. Suresh Renjan Bald, in his *Images of South Asian Migrants in Literature* gives a vivid survey of postwar English fiction where he notes the deliberate attempts of the Anglophone literary world to subjugate the Asian writings, writings which moved away from the definitions of 'Eastern exoticism'. Following the inflammable xenophobic rhetoric and the riots in the 'inner cities', the British State had tried to reinforce their view of a single national identity through such measures as the teaching of national history and promoting national citizenship. On the other hand, by remaining steadfastly nationalistic and promoting the integrity of national borders and

⁴³ Ranjana Ash and Aamer Hussein, quoted in Nasta, 2002.

⁴⁴ Meera Syal, *Anita and Me* (London: Flamingo, 1996), pp. 149-50.

governance, eschewing any suggestion of the erosion of sovereignty and by attempting to deny the interdependence brought by globalisation, they appear to lag behind the current reality of their communities.⁴⁵ These political repercussions found aesthetic manifestations in the stories of Hanif Kureishi, commenting on his embarrassment and struggle to come out of the image of an ‘intruder’ under the nickname ‘Paki’. Similarly, Leena Dhingra in her essay, ‘Breaking Out of the Labels’, describes the wounds of her agonized self in being imprisoned in the labels like ‘a girl from India, an Indian girl, a coloured, a Paki, a black, a wog, an Asian’.⁴⁶ The failure of the state policies to address the core value of ‘tolerance’ that forms the base of multicultural philosophy, as Bhikhu Parekh states,⁴⁷ is skillfully portrayed in the stories.

Both Kulwant and Meena, the heroines of Randhawa and Syal’s stories respectively, plan and enact various tricks to carve out a definite identity to escape their culturally ‘suspended’ position to make themselves connected firmly to the larger world outside. Kuli’s casting off of her old, ethnic Indian clothes which she finds unfitting to the English culture could be read as her deliberate attempts to step out of the ‘ethnic label’ imposed on her by the mainstream English society. Meena searches frantically outside her familial space to find a way to somehow ‘belong’ to the English society. In her essay, ‘Finding my Voice’, Syal emphasises the helpless situation she felt as a child to make deliberate actions to make up stories and even tell ‘lies’, to prefabricate a safe space of identity ‘fired by a process of self-discovery’⁴⁸. Meena, in *Anita and Me*, denotes her pain of ambiguity:

⁴⁵ Roshi Naidoo, ‘All In the Same Boat?’, *Soundings*, Autumn (10) (1998), pp.172-79.

⁴⁶ Leena Dhingra, ‘Breaking Out of the Labels’, in *Watchers and Seekers: Creative Writing by Black Women in Britain* ed. by Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins (London: The Women’s Press, 1987).

⁴⁷ Bhikhu Parekh, *The Future of Multiethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 2000); Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp.151-2.

⁴⁸ Meera Syal, ‘Finding My Voice’, in *Writing Black Britain*, ed. by J. Procter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.254.

The gap between what is said and what is thought, what is stated and what is implied, is a space in which I have always found myself...I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history, sometimes need to turn to mythology, to feel complete, to belong.⁴⁹

Randhawa and Syal narrate their stories from within the *bildungsroman* frame, but they deviate from the traditional lines of *bildung* where the author shapes the character's manoeuvres 'along controlled lines of a predestined plot, living through a succession of picaresque, ...which result in their accomplished transformation from dubious strays into worthy citizens.'⁵⁰ Their characters continuously engage in negotiating a space to 'disrupt the seamless pattern of social positioning',⁵¹ to come out of the *unheimlich/uncanny*.⁵² As Freud states, the state of uncanny arises when one does not know where one is, an attempt to make the hidden and secret visible. The contemporary writing from the oppressed, as Kureishi suggests, ignores the central concerns and major conflicts of the larger society which pushes itself to be rendered invisible and marginalised as a sub-genre.⁵³

As Roger Bromley observes, Syal's *Anita and Me* is:

an initiation narrative, a rite of passage and transition from the rural idyll of an eternal summer perspective to the dark and conflicted experience of a racialised and sexualized world...distancing itself from the stereotypical migrant narrative which it mocks...the Windrush moment.⁵⁴

Meena, in *Anita and Me*, says:

according to the newspapers and television, we simply did not exist. If a brown or black face ever did appear on TV, it stopped us all in our tracks. [...] But these

⁴⁹Syal, 1996.

⁵⁰Berthold Schoene, 'Herald of Hybridity: The Emancipation of Hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's 'The Buddha of Suburbia'', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1(1) (2008), pp. 109-28.

⁵¹Nasta, 2002, p. 195.

⁵²Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003). Freud notes his usage of *uncanny* as the English translation of *unheimlich* meaning 'unhomely'.

⁵³Hanif Kureishi, 'Dirty Washing', *Time Out*, November, (1985), pp. 14-20.

⁵⁴Roger Bromley, *Narratives for a New Belonging* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 144.

occasional minor celebrities never struck me as real; they were someone else's version of Indian, far too exaggerated and exotic to be believable.⁵⁵

Syal and Randhawa try to 'use the performative as a literary device'⁵⁶ to record the societal realities and Governmental multicultural policies of integration that proved ineffectual and opposed to an 'egalitarian, integrationist, multicultural Britain, where equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance',⁵⁷ as envisioned by the then Home Secretary in the mid 1960s.

Many artistic and literary expressions (in the form of films, film scripts, documentaries, music and TV shows) which embraced hybridity in order to explode the established notions of 'ethnic fixity' followed subsequently. Haneif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), Gurinder Chaddha's *I'm British But...* (1990), Meera Syal's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *Goodness Gracious Me* (1998), *Life Isn't All Haha Hehe* (1999), Rukhsana Ahmed's *Hope Chest* (1996), Ayub Khan-Din's *East is East* (1999) and hybrid music (*Bhangraragga*) by Apache Indian (*No Reservations*, 1993), are only a few to mention.⁵⁸ The works have meticulously captured the heterogeneity of Asian British diasporic lives, deconstructing the static perception of the so-called label of 'exotic' to problematise the definition of 'home' within a contested topography of identities. As Brah⁵⁹ points out, identity is a process and not a fixed category, where the

⁵⁵ Meera Syal, 1996, p.198.

⁵⁶ Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ The Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, delivered this speech on 23 May 1966 to the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants. (See *Race*, VIII, 3 (1967).

⁵⁸ Later many of the novels like *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *Anita and Me* (1993), *Life Isn't All Haha Heehee* (1999) were filmed both for cinema and television and won wide public appreciation and awards. *The Buddha of Suburbia* was made into a four-part drama series by the BBC in 1993, which was directed by Roger Michell. *Anita and Me* was directed by Metin Huseyin and released in 2002. *Life Isn't All Haha Heehee* was adapted into a BBC TV mini-series in 2005.

⁵⁹ Avtar Brah 'Non-binarized Identities of Similarity and Difference', in *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion*, ed. By M. Wetherell, M. Lefleche and R. Berkeley (London: Sage, 2007).

question of home is intrinsically linked to the political and personal struggles over the social regulation of belonging, a contested cultural and political terrain where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure.⁶⁰

Describing her dilemmas and demarcations of being a hybrid subject, British Asian writer Atima Srivastava has commented on the policy of ethnicity census in her short story 'I Can't Find any Turmeric':

It's filling out the sheet of identity that takes up all your time...British Asian or Indian British?...Of more than one country of origin? Or, my favourite: Am I the Other?...Identity becomes synonymous with difference.⁶¹

The extreme dissociation of identity that Srivastava represents is reflected in the work of the majority of writers born and brought up during the period. Similarly, Rukhsana Ahmad, who is also a British Asian author, has stressed in her novel *The Hope Chest* (1996) the identity politics of South Asian women and their strategies to survive racism, patriarchy and class divides. Ahmad depicts the lives of three young women in Britain, Rani, Reshma and Ruth and their psychological experiences when they step into womanhood. The novel navigates the ambiguity of spaces like home and gendered bodies as main sites 'of conflict as well as of repose'. Ahmad, in her interview with Christiane Schlote, comments: '...*The Hope Chest* is about that how you know the context that you are born into completely separates you from all other people and all other experiences'.⁶²

Unlike the diasporic women's writing of the late 1980s and 1990s, the dawn of the millennium witnessed a major shift in the mode of articulation of diasporic narrative poetics. The

⁶⁰ Brah, 2006.

⁶¹ Atima Srivastava, 'I Can't Find Any Turmeric', *Cross Culture Archives: The British Council*, <http://www.britishcouncil.org/professionals-crossculture-turmeric2-2.htm> (accessed on 03/09/2012).

⁶² Christiane Schlote, 'Keeping Body and Soul Together', in *Bodies and Voices: The Force-Field of Representation and Discourse in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Borch and others (New York: Rodopi, 2008).

9/11 terrorist attacks have made the world restructure into a 'New Order'. America's 'war on terror' and the subsequent 'power gap' it has created in shaping the major strategic and international questions between Europe and America have deepened the existing transatlantic divide of international affairs between the two.⁶³ Britain's decision to be an ally of the 'Global War on Terrorism' has brought wide implications and consequences on international and domestic policy documentation. Along with this, the 7/7 London bombings as well as the race riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the summer of 2001 forced the British government to switch to a new policy thrust of 'community cohesion', where religious minorities are engaged through the incorporation of faith-based groups in models of representation and stakeholder advocacy in consultative arenas.⁶⁴ The attacks have triggered serious repercussions in political discourses, theory, media, art and literature to capture the implications of such disturbances in stimulating an aggressive nationalism which in turn created a hiatus in social coherence.

My focus moves to Asian Muslim women writers to analyse the direct impact of 'terror' on the people and the ways it is reflected in British South Asian women's narratives to underscore the Huntington thesis of the clash of civilisation.⁶⁵ I maintain that the literary reflections show how the post 9/11 multi/intercultural British State policies proved detrimental to British Asian women. The 'muscular liberalism' policy, declared by the British Prime Minister David Cameron at the Munich Security Conference in 2011, has caused the diasporic groups to deviate from the venture of integration. The rise of anti-Muslim racism combined with the questions of terrorism and national security have created 'faultlines' in the cohesion agenda. As

⁶³ Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Political Review*, (June- July), (113) (2002), pp. 3-28.

⁶⁴ Tariq Modood and Nasar Meer, 'Multiculturalism, Interculturalism or Both?' *Political Insight*, April, 3(1) (2012), pp. 30-33.

⁶⁵ Samuel. P. Huntington proposed his 'Clash of Civilisations' theory in 1992, which states that people's religious and cultural identity will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. See Samuel Huntington, *Clash of civilizations and Remaking the World Order* (New Delhi: Penguin,2003).

stated earlier, the British Asian writers share a preoccupation in charting the diasporic dilemmas and a desire to carve out a literary space through a constant negotiation with the present.

In contrast to the 1990s narratives, which unveiled the racial and ethnic pigeon-holes produced by articulation of a 'spatial' politics of identities, the new writers rejuvenate their ambivalent existential positioning by making 'memory' the centre point around which the narrative revolves. Besides the crafting of reminiscences, recent Asian British women writing aim directly at contemplating the inner problematics within and outside their ethnic communities, imaging and imagining 'home' from within the diasporic space as well as the 'place of origin'. Rather than affirming the impossibility of a permanent 'return', the contemporary narratives reflect a yearning for a re-connection with their 'roots' in the present world of advanced technologies, modes of travel and social networks that have facilitated and made the cross-border connections finer.

Monica Ali, the British Bangladeshi writer, in her novel *Brick Lane* (2003), signals broad diasporic concerns set in the 9/11 British context. The titular location of the novel is in London's East End, known as 'Bangla town' inhabited by British Bangladeshis. It tells the story of Nazneen, a seventeen year old Bangladeshi girl who arrives in London as the bride for the forty year old Chanu. Nazneen's survival against the odds and her dilemmas between her traditional and immigrant life, knitted together by fragments of memory, form the crux of the novel. Ali beautifully portrays the pains of South Asians in Britain when their dreams of integration remain unrealised. She spreads her plot beyond the domestic realm of diaspora to showcase the contemporary politics outside with acute vividness. The 9/11 attacks and the reverberations and reactions it has created in the British society are impressively described. Monica Ali skillfully portrays the character of Karim (Nazneen's secret lover) and his extremist group of British

Muslims named ‘Bengal Tigers’ who engage in a global *jihad* to fight against the anti-Muslim White Britons. Although the novel is built in a light tone to deal with broad and heavy themes, Ali succeeds in engaging with the forceful topics to reveal the inner politics of South Asian patriarchy as well as the complicated diasporic lives outside.

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed’s memoir *Love in a Headscarf* (2009) registers the Muslim experiences in post-9/11 Britain. Even though the main storyline is woven around a young British Asian Muslim girl’s (Shelina herself) search for an ideal partner, the narrative spreads out the numerous ideas and debates connected to Asian culture, arranged marriages, Islamic principles and the question of gender within Islam. The post-9/11 segment in the memoir clearly describes how ‘otherness’ is constructed in relation to the Islamic ‘signifiers’ like *Hijab* and *Burkha*. The work meticulously captures the socio-cultural politics concerning female British Asian Muslims after 9/11.

The post 9/11 counter- terrorism legislation and the impact of ‘Stop and Search’ powers of policing on Asian Muslims are well-caught in Rosie Dastgir’s debut novel, *A Small Fortune* (2012). Rosie Dastgir is a British Pakistani novelist and radio playwright who lives in London Fields. In *A Small Fortune*, Dastgir handles a number of motifs like the conflicting English ways of life and Pakistani cultural norms, the sense of filial responsibility and the usual theme of ‘home’ along with the post-9/11 experiences of British Muslims. The work gains relevance with its depiction of Islam and its radical tones and young British Muslims’ veneration of extremism.

The imaginative explorations of the South Asian women writers in the post-9/11 era reveal yet another mode of literary expression that is fuelled by the silences imposed on females in the inner quarters of Asian communities, as a way to reconstruct a cultural and literary

landscape, an aesthetic refuge, a 'house where the unhomely can live'⁶⁶. A short reference to this facet of Asian British female aesthetics is provided as a clue to the enormous reservoir of themes addressed through the novels such as *Belonging* (2008) by Sameem Ali, *Breeze from the River Manjeera* (2008) by Hema Macherla and *Daughters of Shame* (2009) by Jasvinder Sanghera. They rehearse and re-inscribe an overt description of the difficulties in disentangling the diasporic female individual selves from the enforced decrees of outworn traditions. All the three writers shape their 'narrative poetics of home' through profound inward meditations that echo the haunting experiences of domestic violence, forced marriage and abuse. Their characters evolve from their individual cultural backgrounds demonstrating the agonised screams of their silenced selves. Despite the compositions of domestic spheres of life – both in Britain and their place of origin (be it India, Pakistan or Bangladesh) – the novels 'brew political, ethnic and religious turmoil' which affect the diasporic lives considerably. As explained in the earlier section, the new writing reflects the themes of writers like Attia Hosain, the concepts of 'izzat/honour' and 'sharam/dishonour' and the cultural impositions of slavery and forced marriages that silence South Asian women.

Hema Macherla's *Breeze from River Manjeera* (2008) focuses attention on a similar theme of domestic violence and confusion through the character of Neela who questions her subjugated position within the trap of her ethnicity in Britain. Sameem Ali's *Belonging* (2008) and Jasvinder Sanghera's *Daughters of Shame* (2009) exhibit the hidden stories of South Asian womanhood and the extreme alienation they suffer inside their home, stories which are often brushed under the carpet. The novels expose the subtle emotional realms of the female diasporic psyche to map the search for a stable identity. Apart from this, the novels share a subjective

⁶⁶Homi Bhabha, 'The World and the Home', in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. by A. McClintock, A. Mufti and E. Shohat (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p. 446.

representation of the cultural geography of their ancestral nations (India and Pakistan respectively), elucidating the dual vision of modernity and post-coloniality. Moreover, all the four novelists express their inability to navigate easily through a bi-cultural terrain. At the same time, they admit their dependence on ‘writing’ as a means to convert the personal into the political.

The British experience of the South Asian literary diaspora stands apart from other diasporas due to its colonial ties with the Empire and the political consequences that led to ‘partition’ resulting in the division of the ‘Hindustan’ which has played a prominent role in shaping its diasporic character and sensibility. Unlike other diasporas across the globe, South Asian diasporas carry a ‘subcontinental tradition’ of a multicultural heritage. Although the ethnic term ‘South Asian’ implies a homogenous, unified group of shared political-cultural-linguistic histories, it also suggests inner refractions of subtle differences that demarcate the ‘brown eyes’⁶⁷ in the imperial White land. The literature of the British Asian diaspora has exhibited specific characteristics along a specific timeline, charting out the finer details of the concerned ethnicities. As described in the chapter, the beginning of a tradition of ‘neo-diasporic’⁶⁸ women’s literature – the term Susan Koshy proposes to distinguish the South Asian diaspora from others – in the 1950s represented by writers like Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya mapping the agonies of a lost tradition, along with the hardships faced by the immigrants in the new land, locating their works within the parameters of gender and racial politics. The works display the

⁶⁷ The term is taken from Prafulla Mohanty’s work titled *Through Brown Eyes: South Asian Presence in Britain*. Prafulla Mohanty, *Through Brown Eyes: South Asian Presence in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁶⁸ The term ‘neo diaspora’ has been proposed by Susan Koshy to distinguish South Asian diasporas from the classical form of diaspora and to clear discursive space to consider its distinctiveness as a transnational formation. It locates its origin in the modern period, highlights its embeddedness in 3 major world historical forces that have shaped global modernity—capitalism, colonialism and nationalism. See Susan Koshy and R. Radhakrishnan, *Transnational South Asians: The Making of a Neo-Diaspora* (Delhi: OUP, 2008).

South Asian immigrant identity politics based on the assimilation policies of the 1950s that determined the positioning of the 'new arrivals' in post-war Britain inflamed by racist rhetoric. Though all the South Asian women writers share a preoccupation with depicting diasporic women's concerns, their literary aesthetics are painted in variegated colours reflecting the political transitions.

Moving on to the discussions of the literary strategies employed by the second generation women writers like Ravinder Randhawa, Meera Syal, Atima Srivastava and Rukhsana Ahmad to convey a hybridised reinscription of 'home' and 'subvert and destabilize' a conferred static 'ethnic ghetto' as well as presenting the official policies of integration to convert a less tolerant Britain to an 'inclusive community of communities'⁶⁹. However, the controversies and debates on the efficiency of 'multiculturalism and multicultural policies' reached a turning point with the 9/11 and 07/07 terrorist attacks followed by race riots in the inner cities of Britain. The political ideas of multiculturalism were modified and transmuted in the new garb of social cohesion and interculturalism to construct a tolerant public identity. But, the essentialist notions of culture favoured the male cultural elite, strengthening patriarchy that proved oppressive to females within the community. It is clear that this shift in the political orientation has also created a shift in the British South Asian fictional themes. Many works by women writers such as Monica Ali, Shelina Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir have addressed the political agendas post-9/11 directly, while many others like Qaisra Shahraz and Jasvinder Sanghera have come forward making bold attempts to break open the walls of the private ethnic spheres to reveal the repressed female diasporic lives within.

⁶⁹ See Parekh, 2000.

Susheila Nasta rightly suggests the repetition of ‘old racisms’ within the ‘new ethnicities’ to chart a canonical tradition of South Asian women writing in Britain, where she concludes with the observation that:

the story of South Asian diaspora has belatedly come full circle... to reiterate the fact that the West has finally come to accept the wisdom of a viewpoint which has always been a lived reality in the historic experience of many marginalized diasporic communities: namely that to be different in a ‘world of differences’ is ‘irrevocably to belong.’⁷⁰



⁷⁰ Nasta, 2002, p.245.

Chapter Three. (Re)Writing Britain: The Politics of Assimilation in Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya.

Different times and different spaces are combined in a here and now that is everywhere at once.
Octavio Paz

Introduction

The historical experience of the Empire was influential in producing a suitable space for cultural setting and rearrangements, an intercultural space where variegated cultural/epistemological encounters and fusions influenced the genesis of new literary genres and compositions. In locating the departure points of South Asian diasporic literature, it is significant to recognise the ‘schizophrenic’ mode of imagination, which is, as Nayantara Sahgal explains, a ‘state of mind and feeling that is firmly rooted in particular subsoil, but above ground has a more fluid identity that doesn’t fit comfortably into any single mould’.¹ Sahgal is undoubtedly indicating the complex configurations of the literary topography of diasporic writers from the subcontinent, their fabric of imagination fringed with colonial affiliations and laced by cross-cultural interactions. The ‘complex counterpoint between cultures raises the old question of the mystery of ‘oneness’ and the mystery of ‘otherness’²; ‘the condition of the double disjunction of a hybrid simultaneity and of the economic and ideological deformations of neocolonialism within which the real is perceived and also the condition within which both authors and texts are

¹ Nayantara Sahgal, ‘The Schizophrenic Imagination’, in *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial*, ed. by Anna Rutherford (Australia: Dungaroo Press, 1992), pp. 30-36 (p.30).

² Wilson Harris, ‘The Fabric of Imagination’, in *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial*, ed. by Anna Rutherford (Australia: Dungaroo Press, 1992), pp. 18- 29 (p.20).

produced’.³ Diasporic literature becomes an active site where, as the epigraph says, ‘different times and different spaces are combined in a here and now that is everywhere at once.’⁴

As already discussed in chapter two, the influx of non-white immigrants after the Second World War disturbed the ethnic make-up of a ‘homogenous’ white Britain. From 1948 until 1962, Britain maintained a laissez-faire stance towards the massive waves of immigration from the new Commonwealth states. But a majority of mainstream whites considered the proliferation of coloured ethnicity as the main cause for shortages in resources and a threat to the economic order of British society. As Mike and Trevor Phillips point out, ‘natives of the British Isles saw themselves as being at the head of the hierarchy of the British nations [and] the idea which underpinned this role and held the whole structure together was a belief in the racial supremacy of whites born in Britain... [and hence] the British had a destiny to rule over ‘lesser races.’’⁵ The increasing demands and the resulting strains on the society’s resources as well as the threat of upsetting the social composition led to overwhelming white hostility towards the ‘coloureds’. The Notting Hill riots of 1958 made the Conservatives to make immigration policies stricter as a way of improving race relations. Therefore, in 1962, the British government laissez-faire policy ended with the enactment of the Commonwealth Immigration Act.⁶

This chapter attempts to expose the link between the diasporic literary and the political rhetoric in which it is embedded, by analysing the works of two early British South Asian women writers, Kamala Markandaya and Attia Hosain. The chapter is built on the theoretical dialogues that develop from the selected texts that imagine various versions of *home* in Britain,

³KumKum Sangari, ‘The Politics of the Possible’, *Cultural Critique*, Autumn, (7) (1987).

⁴ Octavio Paz, *Alternating Current* (United States: Arcade Publishing, 1990), p.21.

⁵ Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.

⁶<http://jimmyatkinson.com/papers/british-immigration-policy-race-relations-and-national-identity-crisis/#1s> (accessed on 25/03/2015)

particularly just prior to and following the post-war South Asian mass migration. The texts chosen include Kamala Markandaya's *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972) and Attia Hosain's *Phoenix Fled* (1953) and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961). The fictional texts selected for the study are, certainly, not chosen to display an extensive understanding of the massive literary output of South Asian diaspora in Britain. Neither do they represent the variety of themes handled in the selected authors' oeuvre. The selected works feature the important characteristics of immigrant writing, revealing the emotional space as well as the historical realities they have confronted and come to terms with. The writers meticulously link the 'inner emotional' and the 'actual historical' with the 'outer political' terrain to narrate the migrant stories of past and present lives and imaginary futures. The chapter pays particular attention to the conceptions of alterity in the British South Asian women's diaspora within the realm of colonial constructions of difference⁷ which loom large in British immigration policies and polemics.

Attia Hosain's texts reveal the poignant realities of subjugated women in the inner quarters of the Muslim community. Moreover, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* was the first literary novel in English by an Indian Muslim woman in Britain to powerfully narrate the patriarchal domains within the Muslim households in pre-independence India, attracting a wide English readership.⁸ Her works have relevance today, as a controversy still arises about the civil liberties of British Muslim women who are still enslaved within the shackles of tradition and faith. Her works form a platform to understand the contemporary literary articulations of South

⁷Edward Said, 'Jane Austen and Empire', in *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Terry Eagleton (Boston: North Eastern UP, 1989), pp. 150-164.; Stuart Hall, 'Culture, Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁸Susheila Nasta, in her *Home Truths* (2002), discusses about the earlier vernacular versions of the tale of Partition and Independence by Ishmat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (1944) and Qurratulain Heyder, *River of Fire* (1957).

Asian Muslim writers, especially in post-9/11 Britain, which I will discuss in the final chapter. In post-9/11 Britain, when the Muslim situation is critical, Hosain's works are extremely significant to measure the ripples of change inside Muslim communities, especially with respect to the question of women. Hosain has also commented elsewhere about the policy of *divide and rule*, which did not mean just Britain, but all those who sought power. The comment is significant in the current political tug of war between the West and its Muslims.

In order to understand the political traits of post-war literary representations by immigrant Asian writers, it is important to turn the gaze backwards in imperial history towards representations of Britain by writers from Asia. These could be considered as predecessors of contemporary compositions along with the imperial vestiges in post-war immigration policies. Research evidence such as Rozina Visram's *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes* locate the presence of 'Asians' in Britain long before the beginning of Empire in the Indian subcontinent. As she says:

It is often forgotten that Britain had an Indian community long before the Second World War, and that the recent arrival of Asian people in Britain is part of the long history of contact between Britain and India. The arrival of Asians in Britain has taken place precisely because of these long-established connections.⁹

The wave of Indian migration to Britain had started as early as the seventeenth century, as ayahs (maid servants), seamen or pedlars who served their 'white masters' and also as students in pursuit of quality education. It is not surprising that since then Indian diasporic literary narratives were encapsulated by the question of 'Indianness', inflected and negotiated by inhabiting the dual worlds of Indian and English. The early narratives in the form of letters, travelogues and diaries penned by noted Indian migrants of the time, such as Sake Dean

⁹Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.1.

Mahomet, B.M. Malabari and T.N. Mukharji¹⁰ 'prefigure the imaginary homelands constructed by Britain's late-twentieth century and contemporary postcolonial writers'.¹¹ The writings create a literary site to challenge and critique the imperial display of the metropolis, where the subjective narrations of the colonial souls expose their manoeuvres and negotiations to balance their cultural and racial roles in Britain; a process of 'colonizing Englan in reverse'.¹²

A handful of journals were published in war-time London which brought South Asian literature, culture, religion and news of the independence struggle back home to the heart of the imperial metropolis. The journals activated the literary-political network that connected British, South Asian and other colonial writers, intellectuals and activists in and around the publishing houses, public halls and student haunts in Central London.¹³ *The Indian Sociologist* (published in London between 1902 and 1922)¹⁴, *The Islamic Review*¹⁵ and *Indian Writing*¹⁶ and *Asian Horizon*¹⁷ were the main publications that came out from London. Some of the British

¹⁰Sake Dean Mahomet's *Travels of Sake Dean Mahomet* (1794), B.M. Malabari's *Indian Eye on English Life* (1893), T.N. Mukharji's *Visit to Europe* (1899) are significant counter-inscriptions to the Empire through the ambivalent position of colonial citizen-subjects.

¹¹Nasta, 2002, p.21. Nasta traces a detailed account of the early South Asian fictional narratives in Britain. She insists that the works exhibited the characteristics of modernist tradition, though they were not conventionally accepted as such in Europe at that time.

¹²Jamaican poet Louise Bennett addresses in her poem, *Colonization in Reverse* (1966), the critical coloniser-colonised connection against the backdrop of the Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in Britain in 1948.

¹³Rehana Ahmed, 'South Asians Writing in Wartime London: Indian Writing (1940- 1942)', *Wasafiri*, June, 27(2) (2012), pp. 17-24.

¹⁴The journal was an Indian nationalist publication that faced severe criticism for its inflammatory revolutionary articles. See Visram, 1986, pp. 150-51.

¹⁵The original name of *The Islamic Review* was *Muslim India and the Islamic Review*. But by 1914, the name was changed to *The Islamic Review and Muslim India*. In 1921, it was shortened as *The Islamic Review*. The journal was founded by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the Imam of the Shah Jehan mosque in Woking, Surrey. He also ran the Ahmadiyya newspaper named *Badr*. The main aim was the propagation of Islamist teachings in the British public arena. For more details, <http://www.wokingmuslim.org/history/is-rev/founding.htm> (accessed on 11/11/12).

¹⁶*Indian Writing* was edited by South Asian literary activists Iqbal Singh, Ahmed Ali, K. Shelvankar, Alagu Subramanyam and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. The magazine showcased short literary pieces and book reviews by South Asians predominantly. It produced only five issues in total due to a shortage of paper and economic restraints. The journal was strong in its anti-colonial stance.

¹⁷*Asian Horizon* started shortly after Indian independence, in 1948. It was edited by a British lady named Dorothy Woodman and focused on literary works from the whole of Asia.

periodicals such as *Life and Letters*¹⁸ and *Left Review* also accommodated South Asian literary works that expressed keen political observations and stances.

Along with the post-war South Asian immigrant historic writings, this chapter demonstrates the *politico-literary* engagement between the South Asian female diasporic imaginary and British government multicultural policy norms. It charts the ambivalent images of a *home* printed in the diasporic imaginary of British Asian writers who composed an alternative dialogue with the Imperial metropolis, thereby providing a base to read the contemporary contextualisations of British Asian writing. These early inscriptions could be regarded as the direct descendant of the radical insights of Anglophone postcolonial theoretical discourses. While the English literary canon was strategically sealed against the entry of diasporic voices into the British literary domain, marking them as ‘undesirable ethnics’, they successfully registered cross-cultural anti-racist narratives of resistance, ‘from national bonding to international wanderings, from rootedness to peregrination’.¹⁹ As Susheila Nasta observes, ‘the Western reviewers... were unable to read the innovative cross-cultural experimentations of such writers from outside the narrow confines of a Eurocentric gaze’.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, the early South Asian women’s voices in Britain such as Attia Hosain arrived in London in 1947, just prior to the Partition, to escape the pain of divided national loyalties.²¹ It is doubtful whether

¹⁸The periodical produced three special Asian issues under the editorship of Desmond McCarthy, Hamish Miles, Ellis Roberts and Robert Herring in 1939, 1942 and 1948. It had close ties with *Indian Writing* and featured South Asian writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Sankar Menon, Marathi, Narayana Menon, Balachandra Rajan, J. Vijayaratna and Alagu Subramanyam <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/life-and-letters-today> (accessed on 11/11/13).

¹⁹Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 235.

²⁰Nasta, 2002, p. 22.

²¹Attia Hosain, ‘Deep Roots’, in *Voices of Crossings*, ed. by Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2000), p. 22.

Hosain 'escaped' the pain of Partition, as her national loyalties became literally divided not between just two nations, but three: India, Pakistan and Britain.

Post-war Immigrant Britain: The Writings of Kamala Markandaya and Attia Hosain

Attia Hosain's literary narratives unfold the interdependent construction of the public and private domains in nationalist discourse by structuring the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, Eastern and Western, and community and nation. Although expressed in a different way to Markandaya, a cosmopolitan vision of universal concern and respect for legitimate differences and cultural diversity become the maxim in Hosain's literary writings as well.

Attia Hosain was born in 1913 in Lucknow into an aristocratic, upper-class Muslim feudal family which had long and constant political, educational and cultural interactions with Britain. Hosain's father, Shahid Hosain Kidwai, was a Taluqdar who came to England in his late teens and had strong political involvement in pre-independence India. He was educated at the University of Cambridge and had close contacts with the English. He was also a close associate of Motilal Nehru, father of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. This later created an atmosphere for Attia Hosain to mingle and interact with many important luminaries of the time, including Nehru and Sarojini Naidu. These associations brought her into the domain of social-activism, from where she realised her inner deep desire to voice the concerns of the under-privileged and unheard sections of society. Hosain's mother, Nisar Hosain Kidwai, who came from a distinguished intellectual family in Kakori, had moved to Pakistan after Partition. Hosain had her schooling in La Martiniere School in Lucknow, a school for educating the domiciled Europeans and the Anglo-Indians.

Hosain's close affiliation with the Indian National Congress and its leaders did not prompt her to adhere to political dogmas or partisan positions as she believed power and corruption to be the harmful 'diseases' that impaired a society, leading to its malfunction. Attia Hosain's elite social status, her expertise in traditional knowledge, especially in the Koran, Persian and Urdu, as well as the progressive, multicultural, intellectual and emotional environment in her family and outside had enormous influence in shaping her identity as well as her writings. The family had intimate connections with British officials, litterateurs of the time and the leaders of the Indian National Congress.

Hosain's writing career took off in the 1930s when she became a regular contributor to newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The New Statesman*. Her collection of short stories *Phoenix Fled And Other Stories* became her first major publication came out in 1953, after her migration to London. *Phoenix Fled* describes in detail the stories of an underprivileged, oppressed class of Indians and their struggles against subjugation. Throughout *Phoenix Fled*, the stories focuses upon the issues of gender, which is also the main theme conveyed in her novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Attia writes:

Phoenix Fled is a title taken from a little known poem of Shakespeare's, and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* from Eliot's 'The Hollow Men'. I suppose I thought of both titles as symbolic, trying to find some hope in situations that were tragic to me in their wider context.²²

Both *Phoenix Fled* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* largely deal with the historical moment of the Partition and Independence, which have caused deep pain and the dilemma of choosing a national loyalty. As Hosain has said:

²² Aamer Hussein and Shama Habibullah (2013) *Attia Hosain: Distant Traveller*, New Delhi: Women Unlimited, p.11.

Together with the raising of flags, and celebrations came the enforced migrations of more millions than ever before, of massacres and infinite loss. That we were in London did not lessen the anguish. It sharpened it...What then became of choices? There were not just two – India and Pakistan – but a third, Britain. There was to be no renouncing of nationality; everyone from the Indian subcontinent had British Passports in 1947. We had the legal right to be British citizens.²³

For Hosain, Britain was a neutral area where she found a suitable space to dwell, meeting people who were not divided by the borders of nationality and an artificially nurtured hostility.²⁴ But, ‘the imaginary refuge was to overturn’, as Nasta quoted Hosain in her *Home Truths* (2002), ‘particularly after the Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968 and the xenophobic political rhetoric of Enoch Powell that created a new, ethnic tag and stereotype, *the Asian woman*’.²⁵

Attia Hosain’s writings have been viewed largely as a criticism of social hypocrisy and the class inequalities that were prevalent in the feudal system of society. At the same time, she writes passionately about her fondness and nostalgia for her feudal heritage, a lost *space* to which she cannot return after her self-imposed exile to Britain. A thorough analysis of the characters in her short stories in *Phoenix Fled* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* reveals Hosain’s intimate concerns and carefulness in displaying the intricate details of a fading system of society in the social and political turmoil of Indian independence and the Partition. As Anita Desai writes in her introduction to *Phoenix Fled*, while Hosain reflects her pride in her upper-class Muslim heritage and expresses pain at social injustices, her greatest skill lies in representing the whole of the society: both men and women of upper and lower classes.²⁶ Her work exposes the painful realities of ‘a world lived within the secluded *zenana* (women’s

²³Hosain, 2000, p.22.

²⁴Hosain, 2000, p. 23.

²⁵Nasta, 2002, p.35.

²⁶Anita Desai, ‘Introduction’, in *Phoenix Fled* by Attia Hosain (London: Virago, 1988).

quarters), behind the doors of tradition in which she grew up'.²⁷ Neither of her works *Phoenix Fled* nor *Sunlight on a Broken Column* serves as a direct link with immigration or immigrant life in the 1950s and 1960s Britain. Instead, she has written largely about pre-partition India, moulding her female characters in various frames such as East/West encounter, patriarchal structures and the Partition.

Most of the stories in *Phoenix Fled* are noted for their elliptical style of narration, which adds strength to the themes conveyed, such as the exploration of politics and power embedded in all relationships, particularly between servants and mistresses. Hosain draws on a variety of subject positions in *Phoenix Fled*, from rural to cosmopolitan, where the voices of her characters cross the temporal and spatial borders and continue to correspond closely with the socio-political manipulations of power, entailing the broader questions of South Asian Muslim community and their religious politics. The title story 'Phoenix Fled' tells the story of an old woman who is stuck in time due to her old age, whose complete world was inside the four-walled, straw-thatched house, with her string bed and a doll's house.²⁸ The title 'Phoenix Fled' implies a symbolic meaning of the resurrection of the phoenix (here, the old woman) from the ashes (of history), a survival from the violent past, afflicted perhaps by the 1857 mutiny. As in many other stories, a precise setting of time and space is also absent in 'Phoenix Fled'. The old woman, the protagonist of the story, is a living monument who was a silent witness to the horrors of the past Mutiny, as well as the present realities of the Partition and communal violence. As her grandchildren press her to narrate a story, she 'dips deep into the well of her memories' to cull the fearful days of the mission of 'red-faced...monkeys in red coats, [when] no village woman is

²⁷Nasta, 2002, p.36.

²⁸Attia Hosain, *Phoenix Fled And Other Stories* (London: Virago, 1988), p.10.

safe when they pass by.’²⁹ Hosain refers to the British soldiers of the 1857 mutiny as ‘red-faced monkeys’ who were blood-thirsty and vicious, indulging in looting and rapes. In the beginning, we are told:

Everyone in the village and the hamlets nearby knew her. In their minds they associated her deathless years with the existence of their village. Both were facts accepted without question since the birth of consciousness.³⁰

Hosain’s narration, which deliberately omits a precise time-space link, is suggestive of the perpetual nature of communal violence that continues to haunt the village. At the same time, the villagers’ unquestioned acceptance of the old woman’s existence, long-lasting endurance and survival of the horrors point towards a hopeful future of a peaceful and secure village. As the story proceeds, Hosain skillfully interweaves the profound disturbances of past and present rooted in religious hostilities throughout the entire warp and weft of the story. The stable mud house is a safe haven for the old lady, with its ‘wooden arches’, ‘sloping thatched roof’, ‘the doll’s house’ and ‘the heavy wooden door leading outside’³¹. Although the infrequent visits of her grandchildren are denoted as ‘alien’, there was no conflict of worlds as they share an ‘invisible bond’ and a ‘private world’ of stories, a world of their own where the old woman breaks her silence to dig out her ‘buried treasure’ of words. The ‘doll’s house’ is the ‘visible bond’ between the woman and her grandchildren which makes her happy with them, to live ‘in their time’³².

Hosain conveys the power of the story when the grandchildren find it difficult to reason why ‘violence had changed its face, why they feared the departure of soldiers as once she had

²⁹ Ibid., p.13.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

³¹ Ibid., p. 9.

³² Ibid., p.12.

feared their arrival'.³³ Finally, the story is left open-ended with an appalling image of the 'flaming thatch' of the old woman's hut, as the shadows of her past horrifying memories invade her present. The story does not convey a solid idea of who the shadows were or what happened to the woman, but it details her act of resistance and confidence to face the reality. Throughout the story, Hosain reiterates the theme of communal violence, the pains of the villagers and the atrocities of British soldiers to incite riots and chaos through the British policy of *Divide and Rule*.

In 'The First Party', the apparent focus is on tradition versus modernity: the disharmony caused by the meeting of Eastern and Western values, as experienced by a young Muslim bride at her Western-style wedding reception. The story opens with an indication of the protagonist's entrance to a world of difference. As the woman (unnamed as any other character in the story) enters, she stumbles over the unseen threshold, dazzled by the 'bewildering brightness' of the room. She is alarmed at the self-confidence of the tall woman with scarlet painted nails which look like 'claws dipped in blood', [holding] a wine glass in one hand and cigarette in the other'.³⁴ More than the disparities between tradition and modernity or East versus West, Hosain draws on the confusion and dilemma that the bride faces 'by the reversal of values'. Hosain mocks the 'westernised' Indian ladies as 'wicked and contemptible' as they emulate foreigners blindly by discarding their own cultural values. At the close of the story, the bride in confusion and despair longs for the 'sanctuary of the walled home'.³⁵ She realises the patriarchal situation within which she is trapped, from where there is no escape.

³³ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁴ Hosain, 1953, p.17.

³⁵ Ibid., p.22.

The female characters in *Phoenix Fled* are caught up in the tangled network of tradition, class and gender. Hasina, the servant girl in 'The Street of the Moon', is a defiant character who boldly resists the patriarchal norms as well as her serfdom in the feudal Muslim household. In the beginning, Hasina scoffs at Kalloo, the opium-addicted cook in the house, but marries him, only to cheat him by seducing other young men in the house, including Kalloo's son from his first marriage. The amorous behaviour of Hasina is a symbol her unconscious rebellion against her suppressed status as a low class servant, which finally prompts her to run away from the house to become a prostitute. She is banished to a social system whose activities and behaviour are considered a perfect contradiction to the long-established concept of *Izzat* (honour) of the community.

Like Hasina in 'The Street of the Moon', Hosain portrays a similar rebellious character in Munni, the ten-year old daughter-in-law of Nasiban, in the story 'The Daughter-in-Law'. The story exposes the psychological trauma of a child who is trapped in an early marriage even before she attains puberty. Nasiban, the ayah at the feudal household and mother-in-law of Munni, is forced to bring the girl with her due to Munni's mother's continuous demand to increase the monthly wage of five rupees for keeping the child with her. Once Munni arrives in the household the daily chores become disrupted. The disappearance and reappearance of many familiar items in the household becomes a regular incident for which Munni is suspected. The older servant women lock up Munni, persecute and beat her brutally and finally label her as mad and possessed by 'spirits'. Munni feels scared, lonely and insecure in the household; she is an 'other' to all, including her own mother. Moreover, she is haunted by the memory of a sexual assault in her early childhood. Finally, it is only in Nasima Begum that Munni finds solace when she takes Begum's photograph away with her. Through the character of Munni, Hosain criticises

the norms of patriarchal structures in the early Muslim household and the frequent marginalisation that lower class females faced at that time.

Phoenix Fled reflects various facets of rural life in pre-Partitioned Oudh. With the exception of 'The White Leopard', all the stories are expressed from the angle of an omniscient third person, cutting across the aspects of gender, class and religion to expose the hierarchical feudal settings of the time which form the backdrop of narration. In *Phoenix Fled*, Hosain tries to build a narrative sequence in order to 'realise' a certain formulation of the world to which she aspires. Here, many of the narratives signal the writer's ardent desire to invent a realisable world, a world which 'works'.

All the women protagonists in the stories, the old woman in *Phoenix Fled*, the bride in 'The First Party', Hasina in 'The Street of Moon' and Munni in 'The Daughter-in-Law' are rebellious in one way or another. They could be considered as metaphor for the interior spatial and temporal variations of Hosain's subjectivity, the folds and faults that arise from leaving a 'comfort zone' (India) to an ambiguous space (Britain) in search of more comfort, but which has proved to be otherwise³⁶. *Phoenix Fled* displays the unsuccessful struggles that underprivileged Indians wage against their oppressed status and subjugated position. Hosain's female characters, of varied ages and socioeconomic standings, confront and react variously to the corruption, abuse and harassment they face. The problems uncovered in the stories are:

...of inside and outside, visible and invisible, transcendence and partiality of perspective - point to the primary position of the body... [as a] mode of perceiving scale and as the body of the other, becomes antithetical mode of stating conventions of symmetry and the balance on one hand and the disproportionate on the other.³⁷

³⁶ Attia Hosain, 2000, p.13.

³⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir and the Collection* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), p.xii.

Fictiveness or exaggeration takes place in relation to the scale of values offered by the body which functions as the instrument of life experiences dependent on the loci of authority that are invested in the domains such as the State and the policy-making bodies. Hosain's protagonists, thus, tend to represent her own 'body' of otherness which is resistant to the outdated conventions in the homeland and the political formulae of discrimination in Britain.

Not all stories in *Phoenix Fled* deal with gender directly, but women's issues form a strong undercurrent throughout the work, and later formed one of the central themes in her novel, *Sunlight in a Broken Column*. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* follows the same elliptical style of narration as *Phoenix Fled*, with its marvellous inscriptions of nineteenth-century realism grounded in the political and historical formation of the two nations, India and Pakistan. According to Jill Didur,³⁸ Hosain's novel provides the long view of the gendered structure of the traditional feudal world, to which the protagonist belongs, with the 'thematic concerns of love, education, and domesticity unsettling the monolithic nationalism that comes to dominate India and Pakistan in the time of Partition.'³⁹

The political partition of India caused one of the greatest human convulsions of history. Within a time period of a few months, about twelve million people crossed borders. A larger proportion of these border crossings consisted of the more than ten million refugees who traversed the western boundary which divided the Punjab, Muslims travelling west to Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs travelling east to India. The division was not just a political separation that happened in August 1947, but a violent racial, ethnic and religious differentiation that culminated in the loss of home, massacres, rape, abduction, and massive displacement of and

³⁸Jill Didur, *Unsettling Partition. Literature, Gender, Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

³⁹Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (London: Virago, 1961), p. 124.

trauma, for thousands people from both sides of the Radcliffe line.⁴⁰ These difficult events happenings of loss and sharing, friendship and enmity, grief and joy, nostalgia, and an equally strong determination to create them afresh were dominant in the psyche of the victims of the partition.⁴¹ The period of 1945-47 witnessed the end of the British Empire and a considerable portion of the population migrated to Britain. Although in different dimensions, both the dislocations share certain aspects in common: parting with families, how people coped with the trauma, how lives were rebuilt and the experiences of ‘othering’ both in India and the UK.

Sunlight on a Broken Column is considered as one of the earliest novels that opens the disjunctures in the understanding of a painful past that are equally mediated by and seen through the apparatus of various kinds of domination, turbulence and fractures ratified by reactive nationalism.⁴² As the novel begins, Laila, the protagonist is an orphaned young girl of fifteen who grows up under the care of her elderly relatives, Aunt Abida and Hakim Bua, the ageing patriarch of the family. Through the character of Laila, Hosain expresses strong criticism against the social hypocrisy and the class inequalities prevalent within the feudal system of the time. Antoinette Burton claims that *Sunlight on a Broken Column* illustrates the highly dependent status of upper-class women on their female servants, who suffered oppression on class and caste lines. Burton asserts that the subjugated female servants in the novel highlight the roles of caste and class systems in defining their womanhood.⁴³

Whilst Laila grows up as an orphan, she maintains close connections and continuous interactions with the female servants of the household, which crystallizes her awareness of the corruption and violence that are involved in the traditional mores. Laila’s intimate friendship

⁴⁰ See Tarun.K Saint, 2010; Mushirul Hassan, 2001; Ayesha Jalal, 2001, Gyanendra Pandey, 1996.

⁴¹ See Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from Partition of India*, New Delhi: Viking, 1998.

⁴² Nasta, 2002; Sangari, 1987; K.S Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1994).

⁴³ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.123.

with Nandi, the servant girl, is pivotal to her growing consciousness and courage to question the discrimination and divides within her household. In one of the powerfully emotional scenes, Laila questions Uncle Mohsin's conservative punishment of Nandi for alleged immorality. Laila steps forward courageously to stop her Uncle's violent behaviour, breaking the codes of conduct. When Mohsin calls Nandi 'a slut of a girl, a liar, a wanton,' Nandi replies, 'who are you to say it who would have made me one had I let you?'⁴⁴ The reply fans Mohsin's indignation to fury as it reveals his hypocrisy and guilt despite the notions of his own moral superiority:

Uncle Mohsin's face was distorted as he raised his stick to hit her across the shoulders. She fell forward, and as I ran towards her the next blow glanced across my arm and I screamed, "I hate you, I hate you", and ran blinded by tears to my room... "I'm ashamed to call him uncle".⁴⁵

The episode maps a new dimension of female sexuality as Laila is portrayed as a character transgressing the transcribed gender and class rules of traditional Islam.

Mulk Raj Anand, famous writer and a close friend of Hosain, calls the novel 'a pioneer work', as it reveals the possibility of 'the struggle for women's prospects for emergence as human beings, who would not remain any longer in purdah, or on sufferance, from belonging to the feminine gender'.⁴⁶ Laila suffers from intense isolation and loneliness both within herself and her world outside. Whilst her cousin Zahra confines herself within the limits of traditional mores and decorum, Laila feels a sense of unease and conflict, unable to fulfil the role of a silent traditional daughter of an aristocratic *Taluqdar* family. She finds duplicity in her English governess, Mrs. Martin's claim of England as her 'home' as she had spent a few months in England with her husband. When Aunt Majida asks her in Urdu to whom she would return as she

⁴⁴Hosain, 1961, p.28.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp.28-29.

⁴⁶Mulk Raj Anand, 'In Appreciation of the Poetry of Courage of Attia Hussain (sic)', *Commonwealth Quarterly*, 3 (9) (1978), <http://www.vads.ahds.ac.uk/x-large.php?uid=47626&sos=0>. (accessed on 24/11/2013).

has no one of her own alive, Mrs. Martin replies: 'our customs are hard for you to understand. I must go back to my own people...my bones must rest in *my own land*.'⁴⁷ (my italics) Hosain hints at the hypocrisy of English governesses of the time through the character of Mrs. Martin. Alongside, she universalizes the intense longing one has for one's home country where one finds a perfect sense of belonging. No wonder Attia Hosain exempted herself from claiming to be a diasporic subject, but one who always had a passionate love for her homeland, India. Hosain furnishes multi-dimensional descriptions of the home space to make the fault lines of class divisions in the society visible. When Zahra's marriage is arranged with a wealthy civil servant, Asad, one of the orphaned poor cousins of Laila expresses his agony about living in a society corrupted by money and power. He laments:

Money or power, that is all that matters, everything else [is a]... lie... I feel my whole life wasted... I tried to believe that humility is a virtue, but forced humility is degradation!... Do you understand me Laila? ... You cannot [find]... between us there stands a wall of silver rupees.⁴⁸

As Anuradha Needham states, such perceived 'differences' that demarcate Laila from her relatives 'is productive of a vision of people and positions that simultaneously understands even as it critically examines their investments'.⁴⁹ It has equally made Laila critical of the notions of 'honour' and 'duty' that usually defined women's role in the family and society of the time.

Narrated in four sections, the novel juxtaposes the public and private spheres of Laila's family to show the fractures created by the contemporary political upheavals influenced by the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the decay of the *zamindari* class structure and the British Raj. After the family moves from Ashiana (the rural family house) to Hasanpur, Laila's

⁴⁷Hosain, 1961, pp.48-49.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp.54-55.

⁴⁹Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, 'Multiple forms of National Belonging: Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Spring, 39 (1) (1993), p.105.

idealistic political vision widens. Her constant interaction with her poor cousins like Zainab and her sick elder brother reveals the reality of the oppressed class in the society. When she engages in a conversation about nationalist politics with Zainab's brother, he asks Laila what difference would independence from the British make in the lives of poor like him, who have suffered from centuries of exploitation at the hands of various rulers. Hosain provides meticulous sketches of a society in transformation, afflicted by gender conflicts and political corruption. These sketches become a compendium of her autobiographical reflections, or souvenirs intimately mapped against Hosain's own life history. As Susan Stewart argues, 'the double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past...and at the same time, to discredit the present.'⁵⁰ Hence, by the process of writing a souvenir, Hosain metaphorically compares her alienating present to that of her intimate experiences of Partition which itself become a reference of authenticity.

Repressed female voices are heard through the characters of Nandi's mother, Saliman and Zainab who become central to reconstruct and channel Laila's developing awareness of the dehumanising atrocities of the feudal affluent. As Laila reflects, 'I was filled with anger at the murderous hypocrisy and bigotry that had let Saliman die and nearly killed Aunt Abida.'⁵¹ Through her nostalgic narrations, Hosain tries to fill the gap or void which marks the radical separation of her past and present, an oblivion created by being here and there. The novel suggests that the concept of dignity and honour can prove ineffectual for women, especially those without the economic means to gain respect in a classist societal system. The social conventions drawn in the novel could be viewed as her literary strategy to establish a continuous personal narrative of disruption that is perpetuated in her present. In the final section of the novel, Laila returns to Ashiana, which has been converted into a refugee abode after the

⁵⁰Stewart, 1993, p. 139.

⁵¹Hosain, 1961, p.61.

Partition. It looked like ‘the skin of a once beautiful woman struck by leprosy’⁵². As Needham says, ‘the different vectors of Laila’s identifications are multiple, that are more gender centric as well as determined by her bourgeois class status within a minority community within India.’⁵³ The significance of reading the novel as a juxtaposition of history with a personalised diasporic present lies in determining Hosain’s efforts to fix what is called ‘diasporic intimacy’. Svetlana Boym states:

Diasporic Intimacy can be approached only through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets...Diasporic intimacy does not promise an unmediated emotional fusion, but only a precarious affection – no less deep, yet aware of its transience. In contrast to the utopian images of intimacy as transparency, authenticity and ultimate belonging, diasporic intimacy is dystopic by definition; it is rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging...Diasporic intimacy is haunted by the images of home and homeland, yet it also discloses some furtive pleasures of exile.⁵⁴

Hosain’s descriptions of Partition experiences become a powerful metaphorical choice to convey her particular diasporic mental landscape. Hosain draws a conceptual level of ‘metaphor... jumbling together the abstract with the concrete, the physical with the psychological and ...reorganizes it into uncommon combinations.’⁵⁵ Here, Hosain’s mental agony becomes a metaphorical creativity to cull the underlying conceptual meaning of her discomfort in the space of diaspora.

As cited earlier, Hosain’s novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*- which takes its title from T.S. Eliot’s ‘The Hollow Men’- can be seen as a formal means to knit together the disjunctures and temporal discontinuities of a colonial country and feudal community in transition at a

⁵² Attia Hosain, 1961, p.241.

⁵³Needham, 1993, p.107.

⁵⁴Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 255.

⁵⁵James Geary, *I is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012), p. 2.

specific moment in history, the time of Independence and Partition in Lucknow, a moment which witnessed the uneasy alliances, juxtapositions and discontinuities of both old, and new traditions and modernities.⁵⁶ Thus it creates an imaginative space where memory, however partial, is able to fill and transform the dualistic fault lines of received versions of history, and language becomes the subversive vehicle of translation itself. In her attempts to make the reader understand her excruciating pain in the division of her home country, she aims for some kind of a translation to enable the readers achieve a parallel understanding of 'division' that she felt as an immigrant.

Sunlight on a Broken Column is narrated through the orphaned consciousness of Laila and the historical context is set in the turbulent years prior to Independence. The novel could be approached as the writer's attempt to discover a narrative poetics by which to open up the unresolved discontinuities of a painful past through the filters of memory restrict as well as liberate perception.⁵⁷ The assertion of 'fractured memories' could be read as a metaphor for the author's attempt to establish a parallelism between her two domains, the past and present, and how both the experiences converge in conceptual terms: the loss of a home land and the (re)making of a home. The ancestral house, Ashiana, features prominently in the novel as a thread that weaves Laila's memories through her divided consciousness fraught between tradition and modernity. Jasbir Jain suggests:

Ashiana in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* serves as a microcosm of the world at large... [that] has a living relationship with the past...[and] symbolizes continuity and permanence.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Nasta 2002, p.33

⁵⁷ Nasta, 2002.

⁵⁸ Jasbir Jain, *Attia Hosain: A Diptych Volume*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001, p.193.

Ashiana is not merely itself; it represents a much wider realm of meaning, signifying metaphorically a 'home' which Hosain longs to reconstruct in her life in Britain. Hence we might pursue the theme of the ancestral house as metaphor, for homeliness, for coherence, for a sense of continuity, which in a crucial way, Hosain searches.

Laila is an orphan who feels distanced from the conflicting expectations of her Western education as well as the corrupt customs of the traditional world that surrounds her. Laila always dwells in a sense of being 'torn apart' and lives in two worlds as an 'observer in an outside world...solitary in my own'.⁵⁹ The doppelganger aspects of the narrator's self, more importantly, shows a version of the disintegration of the author's subjective mind itself. Hosain tries to portray herself through the character of Laila who is concerned with covering up and dismissing her fears about the disintegration and fading out of the traditional values which she finds intimate. When asked in an interview with Nilufer Barucha if *Sunlight* was an autobiographical novel, Hosain replied, 'All first novels are autobiographical...Its not purely fictional, it is factional. Laila has something of me in her'.⁶⁰

Sunlight on a Broken Column can be assessed in a variety of ways. Since the novel is a coming-of-age story of Laila and the development of her consciousness, it could be read as a *bildungsroman*.⁶¹ It is through the development of Laila's persona that the author makes the readers enter into the inner quarters of Ashiana as well as the socio-political complications of the time. Susheila Nasta warns that 'Sunlight' is often critiqued for lacking a firm structure to consider as an immature *bildungsroman* for being indulgently 'nostalgic' and barely disguised

⁵⁹ Hosain p.124

⁶⁰ Nilufer Barucha 'An Interview with Attia Hosain', *Biblio: A Review of Books*, 3.7-8, 1998, p. 20-21.

⁶¹ A *bildungsroman* is also known as 'novel of formation', a story of an individual's physical, psychological and intellectual maturation within the context of a defined social order. See MH Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (10th ed.) (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), p.255.

autobiographical mirror of its author's own divided selves.⁶² The novel was published in 1961, though the narrative's setting is from 1932 to 1952, a crucial period when the whole background of the Indian sub-continent was changing: socio-political events such as World War II, the end of the empire, mass migration to the Mother country, Independence and Partition.

In the editorial comment of *Sunlight*, Cecil Day Lewis assesses the novel as 'very autobiographical' to which Hosain replies that the novel is a part of herself.⁶³ Mulk Raj Anand views the novel as 'a jigsaw puzzle of [Hosain's] memories'. Jameela Begum views it as a conscious attempt to expose the 'closed women's quarters...joys, sorrows, and experiences of unsung Muslim woman'. The novel is also about the protagonist's quest for identity. Laila's keen observation and experiences of the strict patriarchal system in her household sharpens her awareness of gender discrimination in the Muslim society at large. Laila remarks about her soon to die grandfather, Hakiman Bua as a 'powerful man who lived the lives of so many people for them, reducing them to fearing automatons.'⁶⁴ Laila's reaction to uncle Mohsin's abuse to Nandi predicts her future rebellion. Laila is the only person in Ashiana who treats Nandi with humane consideration.

Hosain depicts the character of Mushtari Bai, the courtesan, to satirize the turpitude of the elite Muslims males for their hypocrisy in utilizing courtesans for their pleasures and marginalizing them in the name of notions of morality. Courtesans were hired in elite households for dance performances which were attended by '...young men and old, in silk brocaded and

⁶² Nasta, p.40.

⁶³ See editorial note, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, London: Virago, 1961.

See also interview of Omar Khan with Attia Hosain <http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosaininterview.html> (accessed on 12/04/2015).

⁶⁴ Hosain, 1961, p.31.

embroidered *achkans* and rakish caps.’⁶⁵ The dance performance arouses their sensuality that is expressed through their ‘naked eyes’ Attia glorifies the artistry of these singers in terms of ‘dignity of profession’⁶⁶, though as a matter of fact, the profession of a singer was subjected to the worst type of exploitation in the form of prostitution.

Hosain echoes a number of voices in the novel to dramatize the shifting socio-political equations and gender conflicts. Although Laila is portrayed as an objective persona who seldom identifies with any one perspective, Hosain knits together the ‘entire fabric of a multiple history of interlocking social, cultural and political relationships spanning the varied locations of her character’s lives. In *Phoenix Fled*, the character of the old granny is depicted as an aged self who sticks to her cultural roots and refuses to migrate. The old woman’s attachment with the doll’s house is a metaphor for her love for traditions and culture. The element of Partition reflects towards the end of the story:

Terror silenced the women’s wails, tore their thoughts from possessions left behind; it smothered the children whimpering and drove all the words from men’s tongues, but Hurry, Hurry.⁶⁷

Amidst the communal frenzy, the old woman is hopeful about the return of the people who flee the country. But as the story ends, the doll’s house shatters and she dies charred inside her hut which is set on fire. The old woman stands for tradition and human values that get destroyed due to ignorance, hatred and violence that engulf the society of the time.

Phoenix Fled and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* present the themes of various facets of human life that cut across the lines of religion, class and gender. Aamer Hussain views the narratives as ‘a celebration of and, a lament for the author’s undivided country. She articulates its

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 65.

⁶⁶ Hosain, 1988, p. 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1988, p.14.

contradictions- wealth and despair, conservatism and accelerating change, past and independent future. Hope and horror mingle in her vision.’ Hosain narrates the disintegration and eventual break down of a family caught amidst the turbulence of the ethnic anxieties caused by a society in transition. It signifies the ‘unhomely’, in the sense of which is strange, and perhaps frightening, reminding of something which has ‘gone before’ Hosain’s present status as an immigrant.

Sigmund Freud says that the ‘uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar’.⁶⁸ In analyzing Hosain, in terms of theorizing through uncanny metaphorical expressions, one of the important features to be considered is that they are in some sense autobiographical. Hosain has expressed elsewhere that she never felt herself to be a part of any diaspora even though she lived in Britain for about half a century.⁶⁹ As said earlier, her writing is about a lost past with which she is, in some ways, ‘at home’. She uses this sense of *heimlich* with her memories as a metaphor to convey her inexplicable ‘otherness’ as an immigrant which she holds as secret and unrevealed. She uses the images of her characters’ psyche: Laila’s unfolding of consciousness in a highly tensed socio-political situation, Aunt Abida’s courage to transgress the non-progressive social customs, the idealistic national fervour of Asad and Zahid, the old woman’s devotion to tradition and heritage, the young bride’s bewilderment of being caught in the imprisoning bond of loyalties, Munni’s and Hasina’s unconscious self-determination to protest against the outdated socio-cultural norms, as vehicles for communication between herself and her readers. As Freud puts, ‘analogies may decide nothing, but they have the capacity for making one feel more at home’.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Freud, *The Uncanny*, 1991, p.220.

⁶⁹ Nasta, p.44.

⁷⁰ Freud, 1991, pp 210-11.

In one of her interviews, Hosain makes it clear about her nostalgia and psychic disintegration in Britain:

I was... suffering deeply from homesickness. I did go back in 1951 to India ... for a month or six weeks because I had begun to lose hair which falls out with nervousness and unhappiness and the specialist said this ... She is obviously a very unhappy person here [in England].⁷¹

One could alternatively read the above-said experiences as Hosain's insistence on an unavailable space, her homeland, which is possibly *not there*. Hence the distance from a 'home' to a non-existent space, in whatever state the author is imagined to be inhabiting- be it sickness or depression- serves to sharpen a sense of *unheimlich*, of not being at home; of, perhaps, never being able to feel convincingly at home again. Again, Hosain says how her writing was analogous to her present discomfort:

I wanted to write about that agonizing heart break when we were all split up and a brother could not see a brother and a mother could not be with her dying son and families that had been proud to always collect together when there were weddings or deaths or births or anything, cannot be together.⁷²

There is also here, perhaps, an uncanniness of time. For example, Hosain, through the narration of Partition, seeks to capture and lays out large-scale historical scenes, the subcontinent in transition; simultaneously she presents a particular moment, i.e. Partition. Thus, the author displays the general and the specific tied together, which immediately suggest ambiguities, paradoxes of her loss and reconstruction of home/homeliness. Here, one could possibly identify a seamless connection between the narrative texts and the concept of multiculturalism. Partition was not just about the division of Hindustan, but also about the ethnic, racial and religious

⁷¹ <http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosaininterview.html> (accessed on 14/04/2015).

⁷² <http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosaininterview.html> (accessed on 14/04/2015).

differentiation, when the differences of race, creed and the distinctions of caste formed an important element in the socio-political life of India.⁷³ The period witnessed Hindu- Muslim riots, abduction, slaughter which attracted a great deal of public resentment. The empire was on the verge of ending and there was definitely a heightened sense of racial awareness among the people. At the same time, migration from the New Commonwealth was making Britain multicultural; a time when the concept of multiculturalism has not taken its proper shape and a multicultural policy was unborn. The changing relationship between the colonizers and the people they conquered and enslaved were central to the emerging beliefs both about difference and the about the characteristics of racial hierarchy.⁷⁴ In such a context, there are some common aspects of transition, though in different dimensions and proportions, that both the subcontinent and the Mother country were facing. During the time, the vast subcontinent underwent divisions with eruptions of hostility accompanied by a divisive erosion of social relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.⁷⁵ The period witnessed the complex interplay of historical and political forces, class compulsions, the question of cultural assimilation and social intermingling.⁷⁶ In Britain, at least in some similar ways, the race problem was shoring up with a combination of civilization and violence. All Her Majesty's subjects had the right to residence in the Motherland, and increasing numbers of them chose to exercise the right as the 1950s progressed. But this flared the anger of successive governments (Labour and Conservative) who feared that they carried in their cheap suitcases not only their few clothes and personal possessions but also the 'race problem'.⁷⁷ John Rex notes that 'race relations situations' were characterized by the

⁷³ See S.M Ikram, *Indian Muslims and Partition of India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1992), p.47.

⁷⁴ D. Mason, 2000, p. 19.

⁷⁵ Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in Partition* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁷⁶ Hasan, *India's Partition*, p.36

⁷⁷ See Joshi and Carter, 1984; Solomos, 1989.

presence of a racist ideology. Hence the struggle against colonialism could be pursued within the Mother Country 'herself'.⁷⁸ Thus the sense of being home is invoked here through two different historical events of the twentieth century: one relates to the nation as a homeland, a place of birth which is also 'politico-legal identity based on some invented tradition of exclusive ethnic origin, a locus of *jus soli*', the other sense belongs to a discourse in which race functions as a 'primordial way of being at home in one's own body, while trying to make Others feel uncomfortable in theirs, a locus of *jus sanguine* as an imagined community of kith and kin'.⁷⁹

Popular sentiment and perception of despair, anger or profound unhappiness get reflected in literary representations. The futility and tragedy of demarcating boundaries, and the impossibility of dividing homes and hearts are the theme of story after story, as is the terrible violence that accompanied forced migration. Jason Fransisco, reviewing recent anthologies of Partition writing- fiction, memoirs, poetry, testimonies, diaries and fragments- identifies three thematic concerns in these texts: rupture, protest and repair. These three motifs, he says, 'form a natural response to Partition, a continuum from pain to healing and via stories of repair, to the healing power of memory'⁸⁰. Hosain narrates the fissures of a tortured political history through the aesthetic power of memory as a device to both contain and expose the heterogeneity of a broken past and fragmented present. The voices and symbols of pastness in her short stories and novel provide a unifying thread to link the 'flashback and suggestive splinters of nodal

⁷⁸ John Rex, *Race Relations in Sociological Theory* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1970).

⁷⁹ Phil Cohen, 'Homing Devices' in *Re-situating Identities: The politics of Race, Ethnicity, Culture*, ed. by Vered Amit-Talai and Caroline Knowles (Canada: Broadview Press, 1996), p.70.

⁸⁰ Jason Fransisco, 'In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly' (A review article), *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, XI, (1996), p.238.

moments...to reconstruct a world, which like the old house [in 'Phoenix Fled'] if only in its stillness, continues to breathe'.⁸¹

In the introduction to the 1988 reprint of the novel, Anita Desai stresses the significance of the past reflected in the novel. Hosain has attempted to convey that the mummified ideas of marginalisation in her past are stretched to exist in her present in a different garb of racism and discrimination. Though Hosain has revealed that she chose to write *Sunlight on a Broken Column* because of her awareness that the 'other world that [she] actually lived in'⁸² was disappearing gradually and to fill the gap created by her migration to Britain, her elite class status has played a definitive role in publishing and the reception of the work both in India and in Britain. Her association with the leading critics of the time, including Cecil Day Lewis who edited the novel, Mulk Raj Anand who wrote preface to the Indian edition of the work, Leonard Woolf who was instrumental in publishing it and her involvement with the Progressive Writers' Movement helped to reserve the label of being an Indian writer in English.

Unlike the writers of 'younger British generation' (who include Salman Rushdie, Atima Srivastava, Ravinder Randhawa, Meera Syal and Hanif Kureishi) whose work, she has said celebrated the notion of being unhoused, 'I am rooted in India. My branches might be spread all around, but my roots are firmly planted in the earth. I belong to India, to England, to the Universe'.⁸³ This shows Hosain's reluctance to take on the dogmas of any political labels or partisan positions; always seeing power and corruptions of power to be as much the disease of the East as the West, of men as of women, of Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, Hosain was much influenced by the notion of the traditional Muslim home, Urdu, Persian and the Koran as well as

⁸¹ Nasta, p 42.

⁸² Omar Khan, *Growing Up in Gadia*, Interview with Attia Hosain, <http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosaininterview.html> (accessed on 12/04/2015).

⁸³ Quoted in Nasta, 2002, p.44.

the revolutionary politics of the Left and the ‘internationality’ of the Progressive Writers Movement led by her family friends such as Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjaad Zaheer.⁸⁴

Hosain, thus, reveals her cosmopolitan attitude of life, a philosophy that urges to be ‘citizen of the world’⁸⁵, a worldwide community of humanity committed to common values. But it is important to note that her philosophy of cosmopolitanism seems to reconcile with patriotism or loyalty to her home country. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, one can be a ‘cosmopolitan patriot’ through celebrating different human ways of being while sharing commitment to the political culture of a single nation-state. Georgios Varouxakis’ believes that ‘patriotism can be expressed in a cosmopolitan language and can seek to promote pride in what one’s nation is contributing to the universal fund of humanity’. Hosain’s connection with the Progressive Writers’ Association has prompted her to develop a cosmopolitan perspective of openness toward divergent cultural experiences. Moreover, the main aim of the group was to maintain connections with the progressive literary movements abroad, to represent Indian literature in the West and to interpret for India the thoughts of Western writers and the social problems which were profoundly influencing Western literature.⁸⁶ A sense of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’, as Bhabha puts it, is ‘an intervening space...of translation as transformation particularly apposite to the difficult, transnational world’.⁸⁷ Bhabha disagrees with Martha Nussbaum’s image of the self at the centre of a series of concentric circles, with universal liberal values privileged above family, ethnic group or nation. Reflecting on Appiah’s vision, Bhabha

⁸⁴ See Nasta, 2002, p. 34. Nasta makes clear that she uses the term ‘internationality’ to refer to the broad cosmopolitanism of the Progressive Writers’ Group.

⁸⁵ Immanuel Kant *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan View*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm> (accessed on 03/04/2015)

⁸⁶ See <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/progressive-writers-association> (accessed on 31/03/2015)

⁸⁷ Bhabha, 1996, p.198.

proposes a ‘cosmopolitan community envisaged in marginality’, a border belt which he terms vernacular cosmopolitanism.⁸⁸ He says:

...[T]he vernacular shares an etymological root with the “domestic” but adds to it- like the “Un” that turns *heimlich* into *unheimlich*- the process and indeed the performance of translation, the desire to make a dialect: to vernacularize is to “dialectize” as a process; it is not simply *to be* in a dialogic relation with the domestic, but it is to be on the border, *in between*, introducing the global- cosmopolitan “action at a distance” into the very grounds- now displaced- of the domestic.⁸⁹ (italics in original)

Bhabha uses the term to refer to the ways with which writers who ‘translate between cultures renegotiate from a position of ‘locality’ which enters into larger national and social discourses. Hosain inhabits this in-between space, a space of dislocation between home and exile. It is also the space where the process of translation and reinvention happens continuously. In *Sunlight* and *Phoenix*, Hosain’s theme of Partition is a means of translation, a way of carrying through her ‘otherness’. According to Ulrich Beck, the cosmopolitan perspective is an ‘alternative imagination’, an imagination of alternative ways ‘of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the other’. As discussed earlier, both the works of Hosain address a particular moment in history, with a delicate painting of the deep and intimate details of the transformation of a society following the socio-political turbulence caused by British Raj. Hosain incorporates the silenced issue of gender into the discussion of history and politics of the time:

Aunt Abida withdrew into a tight cocoon of anxious silence, while aunt Majida dissolved into tearful prayers. The quarrels of the maid-servants’ voices did not now carry over the wall...Zahra and I felt our girlhood a

⁸⁸ Bhabha, 1996, p. 195-96

⁸⁹ Bhabha 1996, p.202.

heavy burden. Our minds had no defences against anxiety; we were uncertain and afraid.⁹⁰

The fear Laila refers to is the anxiety of the family members about the disintegration of the family after the death of her grandfather who lies in his death-bed. The female members in the family are portrayed as recognizing their dependence on patriarchal patronage in order to maintain their class status and well being. The novel has been celebrated as offering a window into the feudal *taluqdari* lifestyle in colonial India.⁹¹ Antoinette Burton analyses the novel as ‘an alternative archive of partition, *Sunlight* reshapes the landscape of the historical imagination, offering a modest corrective to local and in turn national history’⁹². Burton further notes that Hosain’s narrations may have been borne out of a deeply personal experience of diasporic longing [where] the shadow of history in the form of partition was ever-present in Attia’s narratives of alienation and belonging’. Hosain herself comments that ‘subconsciously, to console myself for the maiming sense of loss of identity, I began to write. In this at least, I had the best of both my worlds’. Thus, it becomes apparent that Hosain’s immigrant experience and liminality have influenced and shaped both her life and her literary vision. Hence the narrative function in the author’s own mind is in a continuously metaphorising process, turning the elements of the past stories into explanations or interpretations of events in her present life.

Attia Hosain has skillfully kept herself away from the state of being ‘unhoused’ by clearly constructing an abode of memory through the process of writing to translate her lived realities and framing an alternate account of her lost home. Although Hosain’s works gained impressive acclaim both in India and in Britain, she disappeared from public view until her

⁹⁰ Hosain, p.14.

⁹¹ Jill Didur, p.96.

⁹² Antoinette Burton, p. 134.

works were republished by Virago in 1988, following the resurgence of public interest in Indian English Writing in the wake of the Rushdie era.

Unlike Attia Hosain, and some other Indo-British literary figures of the time whose creations were undervalued amidst the politics of publishing, Kamala Markandaya strove to survive the disdain of the English literati with a strong literary oeuvre of ten novels published consecutively between 1950 and the late 1970s. All her novels were acclaimed as well-crafted, intricately plotted and polished realist stories set in India, Britain and traced the connections between the two nations and their people. Her fiction inhabits a range of thematic planes: the deprived rural and urban twentieth-century India (*Nectar in a Sieve* [1954], *A Handful of Rice* [1966]), gender, identity and sexuality in Indian society (*The Silence of Desire* [1960], *Two Virgins* [1973]), race relations and the politics of identity of British Indian immigrants in the immediate post-War migration period (*Possession* [1963], *The Nowhere Man* [1972]) and the politics of nineteenth and early twentieth-century royal courts of an Indian Kingdom and the British Empire (*The Golden Honeycomb* [1977]). Although her India-centric literary output received a wide reception both in India and abroad, she withdrew from her writing career and became reclusive in the early 1980s.

Born as a traditional Brahmin in 1924, in Chimakurti, a small village in South India, Kamala Purnaiya (referred to by her pen name, Markandaya) was devoted to traditional Hindu culture and values. She was born and raised in rural India and married Bertrand Taylor, a native English man. Her cross-cultural background and cosmopolitan life opportunities enabled her to juxtapose Indian and British culture, giving her an insight into the complicated details of traditional Indian social hierarchy and Western urban lifestyle and the implications prevalent in both systems. Like Hosain's, Markandaya's writings elucidate the insignificance of the idea of

‘caught in between’. She states, ‘You belong to one side – if you don’t, you belong to the other...There is no in between’.⁹³ Although Markandaya does not position herself in the 1950s as a member of the later emerged ethnic tag ‘South Asian diaspora’, most of her works are symbolic of her own life of duality and dilemmas, reflecting many of the literary traits featured in the writings of later generations with similar interracial and cultural backgrounds. Contrary to Hosain, who intentionally avoided ‘Britain’ in her literature for fear of being classified as an ‘outsider ...a person here looking for something’⁹⁴, Markandaya mirrors an accurate account of alienated immigrant life in post-war Britain swamped with colour prejudice, racism and the wider political considerations that influenced the psychological and social predicaments of expatriate Asian souls. Similar to Hosain, Markandaya’s works exemplify the sensitive experiences of women, signifying outspoken female voices that validate their position as individuals with all rights to life which are simultaneously representative of a larger collective.

The question of nation and nationality was the prime political and literary concern in the pre-Indian and post-Indian independence era. According to Rosemary Marangoly George, Indian literature (especially in English) was invested with the duty of consolidating the image of a unified, modernising India for consumption both at home and abroad. Many of Markandaya’s novels fit in perfectly with the requisites; she meticulously stepped out of the frame, displaying her metamorphosis from her role as an Indian ‘literary ambassador to the world’⁹⁵ to that of an Indian expatriate in Europe. Her novels *Possession* and *The Nowhere Man* deal with the theme of post-war immigration and immigrant life in Britain. The stories of Indian immigrants in Britain, their alienation and their frequent encounters with blatant British racism aided by the policies of

⁹³ Kamala Markandaya, *Some Inner Fury* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009), p.169.

⁹⁴ Nasta, p.44.

⁹⁵ Rosemary Marangoly George, 2009, p.401.

race relations law added a fresh flavour to Indian writing in English and are markedly different from the set of works produced by Indian expatriate novelists of the time such as G.V Desani, Mulk Raj Anand and Aubrey Menen who dealt with India-centric male-dominated stories.

In *Possession*, Markandaya focuses on the issues of immigration, intercultural tensions and chaos due to the British policy of enforced assimilation caused by increased incidents of racial discrimination. The novel was immediately published in the year after the Commonwealth Immigrants Act⁹⁶ was introduced. The steep rise in the numbers of immigrants from South Asia between 1958 and 1962 and the outbreak of race rioting in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958 contributed indirectly to the controlling ‘coloured’ immigration legislation. ‘Assimilation’ was the policy adopted by Britain when ‘New Commonwealth’ immigrants came to help rebuild the war-torn country. The idea was essentially that the ‘new comers’ were expected to leave their culture and customs behind and adhere to and absorb the dominant British culture and lifestyle. In the 1950s and 60s, the policy of assimilation proved itself to be ineffectual as inequalities abounded because of the stark realities of racism and discrimination in every sphere of life.

Possession powerfully depicts the social realities of the time through the plight of Valmiki, a traditional South Indian artist who becomes a commercial puppet in the hands of Lady Caroline Bell, a rich, wicked, insolent British woman who takes him to England to exploit his artistry to reap commercial benefits. The novel dramatises the alienated self of Valmiki who feels a ‘permanent outsider’ in England. Lady Caroline dominates and possesses Val (the

⁹⁶The Commonwealth Immigrants Act was introduced in 1962. It made all those seeking to enter the United Kingdom for settlement from the Commonwealth and colonies after 1 July 1962 subject to rules which required them to have been issued with a job voucher in particular categories. In the White Paper of August 1965, ‘Immigration from the Commonwealth’, the government announced the abolition of non-priority vouchers and the reduction in the total number of vouchers issued to those with a job offer or special skills. Restrictions were imposed on the entry of dependants to exclude nephews, cousins or children over 16 without an entry certificate or appropriate documents to establish proof of identity at the port of entry. For more details, see Ian. R.G Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997).

imposed name of Valmiki in the novel) physically, psychologically and culturally. Val turns out to be a victim of the onslaught of an alien, dominant white mainstream society, where he experiences emotional isolation and alienation. He longs terribly for his lost homeland and makes strenuous efforts to belong to the alien milieu that he is in. He finds that he could not develop into a fully-fledged human being within the clutches of Lady Caroline, but has been reduced to an exotic object of 'clay' in her hands to be 'moulded and caressed to an image she could love'⁹⁷. He laments, 'she does not care for me... when I do nothing, I am nothing to her, no more than a small insect in a small crack.'⁹⁸ Valmiki's estrangement leads him to a licentious life where he makes love with Ellie (a Jewish refugee who conceives Val's child), Lady Caroline and Annabel (a poor English girl).

The characters of Lady Caroline and Valmiki becomes allegories of Great Britain and India respectively, where at a time of labour shortage immigrants were brought in bulk as 'human cargo' to Britain for post-war economic recovery. Val leads a promiscuous life in London which is only a disguise to cover up his insecurity in the strange land. His alter ego remains firmly rooted in the spiritual ethos of India to which he returns in the end. As Rosemary Marangoli George suggests, Markandaya is neither an assimilationist nor a rebel; instead she is both and more at different periods in her life, as are Naipaul and Rushdie. Val, thus, is revealed as a product of an enmeshed culture, a disoriented soul demoralised in the cloud of cultural collisions and political equations of the time. His identity crisis as an immigrant temporarily 'possessed' by the West makes him reject the frivolous materialism of the West rooted in racial prejudice and discrimination. Politically, the novel is a fictional parallel of Indo-British relationships. Uma Parameshwaran rightly comments:

⁹⁷ Markandaya, 1984, p.149.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 55.

Lady Caroline Bell is an autocrat, typical of the British Raj in India. She sets about getting possession of Val with the same dedication and ruthlessness with which the British subjugated India. She moulds him into a man, an artist...and in the process, ruins him, depleting him of independence and spiritual strength, though in her opinion he gains more than he loses.⁹⁹

Possession makes a scathing comment on the political tactics of the British government towards its newly arrived colonial subjects which were based on racial prejudice and isolation. The novel mirrors the conflicting interrelationships of different cultures, further heightened by the partisan political tactics of the administration, which cause the complex manoeuvring of immigrant life in Britain. *Possession* portrays a miniature Britain of the 1960s which was broadly irritated by the inflow of blacks and Asians. Lady Caroline Bell, through her assertive attitudes, tries to control Val and assimilate him into British culture. Her love of Val is only to exploit his artistic talents for her own benefit. Although Val has come to England in search of a better life, he fails to shed his 'Indianness' and 'become British'. Markandaya provides a true picture of 1960s racist Britain which had adopted a policy of assimilation to receive her coloured immigrants. Markandaya lays out the character of Lady Bell as a metaphor of a hostile Britain who exploits the immigrants to do unskilled jobs. While Lady Bell tries to possess Val, she identifies him as socially degraded and behaves with prejudice. Eventually Val has to return to India, unable to merge with an alien West. Markandaya's characterisation of Val could be read as symbolic of the Indian immigrants who migrated to Britain in the post-war period. Although 'assimilability' was the criterion to absorb the 'coloureds', they were viewed as causes of social tensions and danger which resulted in the enactment of Commonwealth Act of 1962.

⁹⁹ Uma Parameshwaran, 'India for the Western Reader: A Study of Kamala Markandaya's Novels', *Texas Quarterly*, 11 (2) (1968), p.239.

The immigrant sensibility and politics of identity in *Possession* (1963) is also reflected in Markandaya's 1972 novel *The Nowhere Man*. The novelist's personal experience as an immigrant is evident in her portrayal of racial interaction in *The Nowhere Man* (1972), a penetrating and convincing study of the troublesome life of Indian immigrants in Britain who become alienated from both the cultures they inherited by birth and the culture inhabited later. The protagonist, Srinivas, migrates to England as a young man and eventually makes it his home. His two sons fight under the Union Jack in World War II and the younger son dies. Nearly half a century later, Srinivas finds himself to be a stranger in British society. He realises that racial prejudice, discrimination and intolerance, caused by socioeconomic pressures, have made him a 'nowhere man' in a white dominant society. The story carries occasional melodramatic undertones to highlight the theme of cultural disparities between the East/Indian and the West/British that often lead to chaos and conflicts. Indian critic, B. Krupakar states that '*The Nowhere Man* is a compassionate and distressing tale of an aged Indian immigrant who becomes martyr to racial hatred'.¹⁰⁰ British racism is at the centre of the mutilated expatriate lives that Markandaya's characters lead.¹⁰¹ The novel provides a detailed exploration of migration from the Subcontinent to Britain in the specific post-war historical context. Neither Srinivas nor his wife, Vasantha, make a self-conscious effort to integrate into the mainstream British society. They lose their sense of belonging and societal ties they had in their homeland upon arrival in England. Their divided selves neither succeed in forging a new connection with the English lifestyle, nor find an alternative value system and norms for stability.

¹⁰⁰B. Krupakar, 'Race Relations and *The Nowhere Man*', *The Literary Endeavour*, 2 (2-3) (1980), p.24.

¹⁰¹Emmanuel S. Nelson, 'Troubled Journeys: Indian Immigrant Experience in Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*; Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness*', in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial*, ed. By Anna Rutherford, (Australia: Dungaroo Press, 1992), pp.53- 59.

Markandaya effectively draws the identity crises of the characters through their fragmented articulation and crippled usage of the English language. Srinivas feels himself to be an ‘alien, whose manners, accents, voice, syntax, bones, build, way of life – all of him – shrieked alien!’¹⁰² The inefficiency of the early immigrants to handle the English language fluently proved a real handicap for them to mingle with the larger society, take normal labouring jobs and respond effectively to situations.¹⁰³ Markandaya points towards the inadequacy of the British government policies and race relations legislation enacted at the time to offer a comfortable social milieu to the Asian immigrants.¹⁰⁴

Like Val in *Possession*, Srinivas also becomes disoriented and is considered an unwanted entity. But unlike Val, Srinivas decides to stay in England as he has no other choice due to his old age and disease. His leprosy is symbolic of his status as an outsider, considered undesirable. The ravages of the disease on his ageing body are symptomatic of his failed attempts to discover personal and cultural wholeness. The disease is illustrative of his exhaustive isolation; a grim testimony to the unwholesome metamorphosis that his migration has spawned.¹⁰⁵ He hides his excruciating pain of estrangement by trying to consider Britain as his own land. He says to Mrs. Pickering that ‘This is my country now... my country! I feel at home in it, more so that I would in my own.’¹⁰⁶ The characters such as Fred Fletcher, Mike, Joe and Bill represent British youth who find immigrants from Asia and Africa to be ‘snatchers’ responsible for their miserable

¹⁰²Kamala Markandaya, *The Nowhere Man* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008) p.230.

¹⁰³Spencer, 1997, p.92.

¹⁰⁴The Race Relations Act 1965 was passed by the Home Affairs Committee to make discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origin unlawful in places which are open to the public at large or in the provision of services which are available to the public at large. The Act was amended in 1968 extending its scope to the areas of housing, employment and public services. The Community Relations Committee was established to promote harmonious community relations.

Cabinet Race Relations Legislation <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-134-c-196.pdf> (accessed on 10/11/2013). Also *Race Relations Act 1968*, Chapter 71, London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.

¹⁰⁵Nelson, 1992, p.55.

¹⁰⁶Markandaya, 2008, p.58.

plight as unemployed. They express their hostility, 'they came in hordes, occupied all the houses, filled up the hospital beds and their offspring took all the places in schools.'¹⁰⁷

Markandaya hints at the appalling structural inequalities that widen the gap between the minorities and the mainstream and the fight for the 'crumbs of the society'.¹⁰⁸ Fred is, undoubtedly, an extreme racist who yells at the coal-black man who is sweeping the street: 'Here you. You got no right to be in this country. You bugger off, see.'¹⁰⁹ He repeats his indignation towards Srinivas to which he replies that he is British 'by adoption'.¹¹⁰ As the contempt against the 'outsiders' intensifies, public expressions of racism become apparent in the form of posters displayed with heavy letters: 'man-sized messages of hate, BLACKS GO HOME, creating a terrorised atmosphere of 'fear and desolation in those at whom they were aimed.'¹¹¹ Laxman, son of Srinivas and Vasantha, attempts assimilation by marrying an English girl, only to realise that his individuality in England is determined largely by his Indianness that is unchangeable. Laxman becomes a punch bag of Fred, who places faeces and dead mice on his doorstep. Finally, Fred falls a victim to his own savagery when he sets fire to Srinivas's house.

The attitude of Vasantha, Srinivas's wife, towards England is not identical to his. Vasantha belongs to the typical first generation immigrant who is traditional to the core, carrying a 'Ganesha icon, a dog-eared copy of the *Ramayana* or the *Quran*, an old sari or other deshi outfit, a photograph of a pilgrimage and so on.'¹¹² Vasantha never attempts to assimilate into English culture, retaining her deep-rooted Indian traditions and rituals. She is always clad in a sari and her hair is tied in bun. She worships the water from the Ganges, which she brought from

¹⁰⁷Markandaya, 2008, p.163.

¹⁰⁸Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁰⁹Markandaya, 2008, p.164.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p.165.

¹¹¹Ibid., p.168.

¹¹²Vijay Mishra *Diasporic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 4.

India, as a strong visible link with her motherland. She gives an Indian name – Chandraprasad – to her house in London, but to her neighbours the house is a mere number 5. In short, Markandaya points towards ‘the East-West encounter in the specific milieu of Indo-British relationship in a country of chequered history.’¹¹³

In the novel, Markandaya suggests that the racial divide, violence and aggression are an inevitable consequence of the history of Britain’s Imperial domination. The existing gaps – cultural, economic, social and political – between the mainstream and the immigrant communities further remove the possibilities of assimilation and harmonious co-existence. Markandaya’s cautious descriptions of immigrant experiences and racism are indicative of an emergent literary genre to displace the ‘established categories, through which the West has construed other cultures either in its own image or as alterity’.¹¹⁴ Although Markandaya faded from the rostrum of British Indian writers in the late ‘70s, her prescience on immigrant life and British societal norms is to be appreciated. Rosemary Marangoly George rightly presents Markandaya as trading in universalisms as a means to transcend all prescribed borders, of nation and national affiliation, and the categories she is invited to join, commonwealth writers, women writers and Indian English writers.

Markandaya is often seen as belonging to the set of writers from the 1940s and 1960s encompassing Hosain, G.V. Desani, Dom Moreas and Nayantara Sahgal. They were all elite, English educated, well-travelled and wrote for an international audience. As Uma Parameshwaran has discussed, Markandaya’s writing received a thunderous silence when she moved away from the themes of poverty and grief in India to write about racism and minority politics in the West. According to Caryl Phillips, from the 1950s to the 1970s mainstream British

¹¹³Margaret P. Joseph, *Kamala Markandaya* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1980).

¹¹⁴Sangari, p. 162.

literary and critical groups were not eager to deal with the issues of race and difference that were very much apparent in the social mores of British urban society of the time. Markandaya held aloft a cosmopolitan, humanistic view of a world which is devoid of sectarianism, bigotry and discrimination similar to Attia Hosain.

Conclusion

Both Hosain and Markandaya have been acclaimed for a humanist universalism, which made them too quickly marginalised from the literary canon in the late twentieth century. Markandaya and Hosain do fit under the new rubric with their 'India-centric' narratives. As said earlier, Hosain was reluctant to write about Britain for fear of being labelled as an outsider¹¹⁵. At the same time, Markandaya was disinclined to confine herself to the space of 'non-Western nationalist literature' who writes about 'homeland' for a global audience and was viewed as turning her back on both the nation and its people. Although both writers have keenly displayed their cosmopolitan outlook in their works, interviews and elsewhere, one could consider their failure to register a steady success in their writing career as their inability to bridge wholly the gap between their positions as 'Indian writers in English' and 'Indian diaspora' writers. When we revisit these writers, it is evident that neither of them has eschewed explicitly composing nation-centric themes, nor adopting a universal voice with a political edge that insists on demanding a global conception of judicious, ethical behaviour from all humanity. 'Migration', as Salman Rushdie stated, 'offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age':

¹¹⁵ Hosain, 2000, p.21.

The very *metaphor*...describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants- borne-across humans- are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us.¹¹⁶

The writers of the diaspora are the carriers of the 'migrant metaphors' in translating artistically ideas into images of migratory existence: 'the creation of a new world from bits of the old'.¹¹⁷ Hosain and Markandaya have created a new world of their migratory experiences, reflecting upon their personal and historical experiences to expose new roots and routes, traversed through the political terrain. The scene was modified with the flow of time along with the changes in the circumstances and attitudes. The 1980s and 1990s South Asian diasporic literary topography witnessed fresh reflections on what had been said before, dealing with the questions of interracial relations and identity politics making careful considerations of generational differences and dilemmas. The next chapter throws light on these themes.



¹¹⁶ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991).

¹¹⁷ Satyendra Nandan, 'Migration, Dispossession, Exile and the Diasporic Consciousness: The Body Politic of Fiji', in *Shifting Continents, Colliding Cultures*, ed. by Ralph Crane and Radhika Mohanram (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p. 35.

Chapter 4. Multicultural Hybrid Aesthetic: The Writings of Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal

...there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces: and a new way of being British after all this time.

Hanif Kureishi¹

Being 'Asian' is always already a hybrid form, a condition of cultural bilingualism, or perhaps... polylingualism.

Robert Young²

... at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world.

Homi Bhabha³

Introduction

Having discussed the writings of Kamala Markandaya and Attia Hosain and how they mirrored the influence of multicultural policies of the 1950s and 1960s on the first generation of the South Asian diaspora, the present chapter traces the works of second generation South Asian women's writings and their responses to the anti-immigrant sentiments in the 1970s and '80s. Despite being an entity of the newly emerging Asian British culture, which is otherwise considered to be a new form of 'Englishness' to the British born and bred second generation blacks and Asians, in her essay, 'Finding my Voice' (1990), Meera Syal shares her experiences and frustrations of inhabiting the uncomfortable, *silenced* space of hybridity. The sculpting of a *new empire within Britain*, as Salman Rushdie describes in his 1982 essay, is precarious and difficult due to the intrinsically prejudiced and racist spirit embedded in Britain's revised immigration laws⁴. The word 'immigrant' always means 'black immigrant' and even British-

¹Hanif Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), p.38.

² Robert. C. Young, 'Writing Race: Ethnicity as Otherness', in *On Writing and Race in Contemporary Britain*, ed. by F.Galvan and M. Bengoechea (Universidad de Alcala: Servicio de Publicaciones, 1999), p. 22.

³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.13.

⁴ http://public.wsu.edu/~hegglund/courses/389/rushdie_new_empire.htm (accessed on 30/10/2013).

born blacks and Asians are thought of as people whose 'real home' is elsewhere.⁵ The emergence of a new 'buppie'⁶ (black yuppie) culture or an Asian British society is highly syncretic and:

tied as much to Western rock' n' roll [as] to the mosque, and dynamic in its resourceful appropriation and reconfiguration of a number of differently inflected languages, whether Yorkshire English, Asian British English, Urdu, Punjabi, or the popular iconographies of the movie world, whether of East or West,...a condition of cultural bilingualism or perhaps... polylingualism⁷.

Therefore, the cultural motifs such as language, religion, exotic dress, cuisine, family structures and art forms become a part of the meaning of 'Asians' and why Asians, which in Britain means South Asians, are marked as stereotypical.⁸ These motifs and stereotypical physical characteristics are apparent in excluding or discriminating Asians, both in constituting them as a homogenous group and in justifying a negative treatment of them.⁹ Hence, the diasporic entertainment industry – commercial films, theatre, novels and other media – becomes a visible, resistant, complicit public arena. It charts an alternative visible diasporic public sphere that tells the stories of miscegenation, inter-generational conflicts, cultural hybridity, cosmopolitanism and family politics. An active cultural domain makes its distinctive contribution to British Asian popular culture by satirizing the parochialism and conservatism of the South Asian community politics as well as the larger British socio-cultural politics.¹⁰

The British Asian literary domain continuously attempts to break the prevalent monolithic notions of citizenship and ethnicity, expanding all patterns of Asian British diasporic

⁵ Salman Rushdie, 'The New Empire Within Britain' in *Imaginary Homelands* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p 132.

⁶ Ravinder Randhawa, *A Wicked Old Woman* (London: The Women's Press, 1987), p. 140.

⁷ Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 174.

⁸ Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p.7

⁹ Ibid. p.7.

¹⁰ Pnina Werbner, 'Theorising Complex Diaspora: Purity and Hybridity in the South Asian Public Sphere in Britain', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30 (5) (2004), pp.895- 911.

lives and recording the anti-immigrant political rhetoric by Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher that accentuated the birth of 'new ethnicities' in the 1980s and 1990s racist Britain. The hybrid voices are, as the epigraph says, 'at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world'; 'shaping a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces: and a new way of being British after all this time.'

In view of this new facet of Britishness, which is multi-ethnic and at the same time racist and xenophobic¹¹, this chapter attempts to explore how the political stories of the time have been reflected in the literary narratives of two Asian British women writers, Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal. It is interesting to explore how these writers have displayed the politico-cultural ambience of the time, addressing the questions of intersectionality of race, class, gender and ethnicity, which reveal the connection between diaspora, literature and real life experience. I analyse the novels *The Wicked Old Woman* (1987) by Randhawa and Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996) to detail the intricacies and complex configurations of the hybrid entity of 'Asian British female'. Both the selected writers share certain common characteristics, being bi-cultural from their very childhood. Although an array of female writers have come to public attention during this time, Randhawa and Syal have gained acclaim for framing their stories within the *bildungsroman* genre in subverted, re-angled versions of second generation Asian British women, displaying celebratory attitudes to diasporic life.¹² Both the novels are set in a diasporic context, positioning their characters in the contemporary racial discourse mainly pertaining to the socio-political realities of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Moreover, Randhawa and Syal have presented their female characters far removed from the usual stereotypical image frames, placing

¹¹ See Sarah Isal and Klara Schmitz, *Racist Violence in Britain* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2007).

¹²Nasta, 2002.

themselves amidst the articulation of a politics of hybrid identity within the received political rhetoric encircling the Immigration Acts and Race Relations Acts.

Before moving on to discuss Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal, I wish to elaborate the term ‘hybridity’ and the political and policy debates around multiculturalism and integration in the 1980s, which form the basic conceptual tools to unravel the inner critical paradigms of the works selected. In the 1980s Britain witnessed the evolving discourse on the existential question of identity of its black and Asian ‘minorities’ and the new formulations of what came to be called the ‘hybrid’. This was a new space for agency at the interstices of the nation’s borders, where formerly antagonistic and polarized versions of cultural identity could be realigned and renegotiated.¹³ In fact, ‘hybridity’ is ‘celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference.’¹⁴ Susheila Nasta reads ‘hybridity’ as a strategic renaming of the negative signifiers of miscegenation or contamination.¹⁵ She further explains the development of the concept of ‘hybridity’ in postcolonial circles to question the old, imperialising and hegemonising forms of ethnicity which is often considered static or stagnant, long experienced by ‘minorities’ within Western Metropolises.¹⁶

In the late 1970s and early ‘80s, the politicisation of the term ‘Black’ was redefined to break down the ethnic differences between black and Asian groups and recognise the racial divides of the two; to resist racist stereotyping and false essentialism. Tariq Modood defines the

¹³Bhabha, 1994.

¹⁴A.Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 158.

¹⁵ Susheila Nasta, 2002, p. 178.

¹⁶Ibid., p.178. See also Stuart Hall, *Race: the Floating Signifier*, lecture delivered at Goldsmiths College, London, available at http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript_407.pdf (accessed on 02/12/2013). Hall refers to ‘race’ as a *floating signifier*, where he emphasises that racial differences are neither static nor uniform. He details the shifts and slides that culture would speak about physical racial differences (for example, visible differences like skin colour, hair) to explain how historically these were given many different meanings over the years. He tries to dismantle the generic view of racists to essentialise race and ethnicity as being solid.

use of the term 'Black' as janus-faced, encouraging 'double-speak' as it falsely equates racial discrimination with colour discrimination, thereby obscuring the cultural antipathy to Asians and understating their size, needs and distinctive concerns.¹⁷ Modood hints at the risk of obscuring the vast heterogeneity within the Asian population which would further lead to a confused identity status if brought under the label 'Black'. The questions of identity are, however, closely tied to the intersectionality of nation, class, gender and body. As Radhika Mohanram suggests, terms such as 'racial diversity', in twentieth century Western multicultural/multiracial countries, reinforce non-Western subjects' feeling of 'being displaced'. These terms are used as indicators to mark non-Westerners as the 'other'; to keep them out of the place to which they 'naturally' belong.¹⁸ She further expands her argument by stating how 'black' presence has informed and given meaning to white embodiment that Eurocentric whiteness studies have deliberately rendered void.

It is interesting to explore how the notions of difference and discrimination are transcribed in different semantic layers in the domains of social, political and economic life within Britain in relation to its immigrant colonial subjects. The claims of a liberal-minded Britain, which asserts its 'multi-culturalist approach' to education, race relations and government policies on immigration, remain antithetical when it comes to the issues of recognition and respect of black and Asian minority ethnic communities. The antagonistic attitude was apparent in the government policies on immigration since the pre-war and immediate post-war periods. After the War, when most colonies, including India, were freed from the chains of colonial rule, administrative arrangements were designed clearly on racial lines to restrict the flow of settlers to the United Kingdom. While the English lords, white memsahibs and other British officials in the

¹⁷ Tariq Modood, 'Political Blackness and British Asians', *Sociology*, 28 (4), November, (2004), pp.859-876.

¹⁸ Radhika Mohanram, *Black Body: Women, Colonialism and Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

colonies were given special provisions to return to their 'home', the poorer classes from the Asian and black Empire or Commonwealth were treated unsympathetically. The intending emigrants were not clearly informed of their right to free entry to the United Kingdom.¹⁹ Stuart Hall in one of his seminal essays rightly states:

Ethnicity can be a constitutive element in the most viciously regressive kind of nationalism or national identity...It insists on difference- on the fact that every identity is placed, positioned in a culture, a language, a history. Every statement comes from somewhere, from somebody in particular.²⁰

Hall explains the capricious semantic layers that 'ethnicity' and the communities it refers to convey. a questioning of the essentialist notions associated with the term, problematising any 'homogenous', 'pure' or 'authentic true self', thereby modifying the rigid boundaries of the term to make it porous and permeable. Hall formulates the fluidity of cultural identities where the person 'who speaks and who is spoken of, are never identical.'²¹ He pushes his arguments further by correlating the amorphousness of cultural identities to the historic experiences of slavery, colonialism and displacement already inhabited by Britain's Black and Asian diaspora. As Patricia Williams states, 'one of the things passed on from slavery, which continues in the oppression of people of colour, is a belief structure rooted in a concept of black (or brown, or red) anti-will, the antithetical embodiment of pure will.'²² Susheila Nasta observes the tectonics where the 'margins' were propelled to occupy what has been referred to as the 'frontline'.²³

¹⁹ After 1947 until 1962, both in India and Pakistan, intending emigrants could, in theory, apply for a passport either to the British High Commission or to the concerned government passport offices. But, in practice, passport applications made to the British High Commissions in the sub-continent were generally accepted only from people who were 'pure' whites. For more details, see Ian. R.G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997) p.24.

²⁰ Stuart Hall, 'Minimal Selves' in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p.118.

²¹ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-237 (p.222).

²² Patricia. J Williams, 'On Being the Object of Property', *Signs*, 14 (1), Autumn (1988). p. 8. Mohanram hints at the strategic positioning of the UK to highlight itself as anti-slavery since 1807, despite being one of the largest slave-

Robert Young, in his *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995), has clearly explained the notion of ‘hybridity’ as being central to many critical deliberations and discussions in the nineteenth century, which revolve around the ideas of race, difference and othering. Young argues that cultural hybridity in post-war times has been entangled with the question of colour as a visible signifier of racial difference. Contemporary postcolonial critics have rejected the pessimistic views associated with the term, thereby, casting ‘blackness’ in new colours of possibilities. As Young states:

Hybridization as creolisation involves fusion, the creation of new form, which can be set against an old form, of which it is partly made up. Hybridity as ‘raceless’ chaos by contrast, produces no stable form but a... radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, the permanent revolution of forms.²⁴

Katheryne Mitchell views that ‘as concepts such as hybridity become disarticulated from the historically shaped political and economic relations in which identities and narratives of nation unfold, they take on a life and trajectory of their own making.’²⁵ Thus, the genre of the novel that is so closely knit with the construction of the nation can display itself only through hybridity, where the trope of diaspora becomes central to the packing and unpacking of the hybrid relationship between Britain and the subcontinent. The radical shifts in the meaning and comprehension of ethnicity and identity are constituted by the notion of difference and the

trading nations in the early 17th century. See Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), p.xviii.

²³ Nasta, 2002, p. 179. Nasta points out here a number of Asian literary works that were mainly published by The Women’s Press or Virago. She includes Rukshana Smith, *Sumitra’s Story* (London: Bodley Head, 1982), Leena Dhingra, *Amritvela* (London: The Women’s Press, 1988) and a few anthologies that came out during the time, namely, *Watchers and Seekers: Original Anthology of Creative Writing by Black Women Living in Britain*, ed. by Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins (London: The Women’s Press, 1987), *Let It be Told: Essays by Black Women Writers in Britain* ed. by Lauretta G. Ngcobo (London: Virago, 1987).

²⁴ Young, 1995, p. 148.

²⁵ Katheryne Mitchell ‘Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15 (5) (1997), p. 258.

Other.²⁶ Moreover, identities are produced, negotiated and re-negotiated in the interstitial spaces where the categories of race, class, gender and place meet. These ‘in-between’ spaces, Bhabha says, provide:

the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of these interstices- the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.²⁷

The active sites of interstitial spaces become a ‘contact zone’²⁸, as Marie Louise Pratt comments, leading to auto-ethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, imaginary dialogue, etc. Although ‘hybridity’ has produced a ‘fresh breed’ of Britishness, reading a utopian version of the term is problematic, as Susheila Nasta warns, because there is a danger of failing to identify and analyse the specific histories of individual writers and their locations that determine the character of their writing, no matter if they are in or outside the hybrid space.²⁹ According to Satya Mohanty, the interests of different social groups or different political visions of the world remain incomprehensible without historical specification;

²⁶Radhika Mohanram, ‘Postcoloniality and the Canon’ in *Shifting Continents/ Colliding Cultures: Diaspora Writing of the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. by Ralph. J. Crane and Radhika Mohanram (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), pp.169-185. Mohanram, 2007. Avtar Brah suggests that ‘Difference’ may be understood as comprising several conceptually distinct modalities, each constitutive of and embedded within the other. Generally, ‘difference’ may be construed as a ‘social relation’ constructed within the systems of power underlying structures of race, class, gender and sexuality. Brah, 1996.

²⁷Bhabha, 1994, pp.1-2.

²⁸ Pratt says that among the cultures within a “contact zone”, an asymmetrical power relation is often observed. This asymmetric relationship often leads to problems such as, oppression, “miscomprehension”, “incomprehension”, and “absolute heterogeneity of meaning”, all expressing the effects of long-term contact and intractable, unequal conflict. Intertextually speaking, Anzaldua’s ideas of “contact zone” are derived from those of Pratt, ways in which the dominants influencing the subordinates. However, Anzaldua’s ideas of “contact zone” are more specific and concentrate on a smaller scale of interaction, for example interaction between the Chicano, the Spanish and the American, interaction between male Chicano (the hegemonic group) and the Chicanas (the subordinate), and also interaction between religions). See Marie Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 1992. See also Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

²⁹Nasta, 2002, p.180.

a general rhetoric of alterity reveals structures and systems, not the terms and conditions through which individual and collective experiences can be identified.³⁰

The concept of the 'Other' is designed as a subjugated, repressed entity not just in literary criticism, but in policy rhetoric as well. The 'Us/Them' question is clearly visible in the policy language of the British government and the Home Office, especially in representing its 'black and Asian' minority communities. The major policy implementations during the late 1960s and 1970s were the Commonwealth Immigration Acts 1968 and the Race Relations Act 1976. The policy language in these statutes was strictly anti-immigrant and unsympathetic. The political 'othering' through the public policies intensified the hostility of the white mainstream towards the coloured 'aliens'. Racial prejudice and discrimination were apparent in all spheres of life, especially in policing, such that the entire Metropolitan Police force of the time was referred to as a racist police force.³¹ Such biased policies and attitudes have triggered anger and resentment amongst Britain's Black and Asian communities which gave rise to racial disturbances and uprisings (especially in the inner city areas such as Brixton, Bradford and Oldham).³²

This chapter analyses how the policy rhetoric of the post-Powellian era is represented in the female British South Asian creative literature to carve an alternative diasporic literary domain. The British Asian writings published during the 1980s and 1990s attempted to list the changes in immigrant life and emphasise the celebration of difference and heterogeneity. The writings of migrant female 'Brown Eyes'³³ in Britain in the immediate post-war years, as we

³⁰Satya P. Mohanty, 'Us and Them: On the Philosophical Bases of Political Criticism', *New Formations*, Summer,(8) (1989), p.76.

³¹ Police officers were highly racist as they picked on black people, especially young blacks, disproportionately and did not behave to them with due respect. The behaviour was mainly viewed as the result of a tendency on the part of the police to stereotype all of the black community as criminals. Lord Scarman, *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders, 10-12 April 1981* (London: Penguin Books, 1982).

³² Lord Scarman, 1982, p.77.

³³Prafulla Mohanti, *Brown Eyes: South Asians in Britain*. He used the term 'brown eyes' to refer to the South Asian presence in Britain.

have witnessed in the previous chapter, were more concerned with elaborating the uneven realities of immigrant life determined by the racist attitudes apparent in all spheres of British public life and less concerned to form a separate ‘genre and classification’.³⁴ With the recommendation of the Commission for Racial Equality on the general politics of the term ‘black’ to exclude the category of ‘Asian British’ in 1988, the new writings of the second generation British South Asians were concerned to ‘explore new routes for maintaining and domesticating ‘the other within’’³⁵ rather than concerned with the nostalgia for a ‘lost home’ and search for their ‘roots’. Apart from sharing certain common features to record the dialectics of a highly racialised Britain, Black and Asian writing marked the beginning of separate trajectories postulating their specific situations of being the ‘nation’s inlaid other’ from within, influenced by their own particular national histories.

While the earlier generation of Asian British writers displayed an unquestioned prominence of male writers such as G.V Desani and Aubrey Menen among others, the 1980s British South Asian literary scene was enriched with many women writers with their numerous anthologies³⁶ and single literary works³⁷. Sarfraz Manzoor, writer and critic, opines that British Asian writers, especially female writers, were forced to operate inside a gilded cage, remaining within the confines of stereotyped themes. The second-generation British Asian authors have dared to leave the cage, to persuade white editors to see beyond skin colour; to have a rich seam

³⁴Nasta, 2002.

³⁵Ibid., p.181

³⁶ Many anthologies published by women writers appeared during the 1980s including *Watchers and Seekers*, ed. by Cobham and Collins, 1987; *Charting the Journey*, S. Grewal et al., (eds.), 1988; *Right of Way*, the first anthology published by the Asian Women Writers Collective in 1989; *Six Plays by Black and Asian women Writers*, ed. by Kadija George, 1993; *Flaming Spirit*, ed. by Rukhsana Ahmed and Rahila Gupta, 1994.

³⁷ Ravinder Randhawa’s *The Wicked Old Woman* (1987), Leena Dhingra’s *Amritvela* (1988), Farhana Sheikh’s *The Red Box* (1991), Meera Syal’s *Anita and Me* (1992), *Life Isn’t All Haha Heehee* (1996), Atima Srivastava’s *Transmission* (1992), Rukhsana Ahmad’s *The Hope Chest* (1996) are some of the major literary works of the time authored by British South Asian women.

Susheila Nasta has pointed out that any bibliographical survey would reveal that the majority of Asian British novels published during that period were by women. See Nasta, 2002.

of inter-generational conflict, cultural dilemma, religious tensions and multicultural politics to mine for literary purposes.³⁸ In spite of such precursors as Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya, whose attitudes towards immigrant life and public life in Britain we discussed in the previous chapter, the next generation of female British South Asian writers, like Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal, attempted to map a new route of immigrant life specifically placing them in the 'hybrid' space of diaspora. Nasta suggests that Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987) is arguably the first explicitly Asian British novel.³⁹

Unlike the early writers such as Attia Hosain who wrote about the Partition, refusing to write about her migrant status and Kamala Markandaya's historic novels *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972) which were explicit expressions of the harsh life realities of the first generation Asian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s racist Britain, the second generation female writers like Randhawa and Syal sharply focused on unveiling the 'confused' lives of female Asian youths enmeshed in tradition and modernity, for whom a 'return' to a homeland, literally or metaphorically, is a myth or mirage. The voices of Randhawa and Syal proved to be powerful initiatives to assert the representation of diverse Asian British lives. Yet Randhawa's work obtained little critical attention initially, being bracketed by critics as a typical 'ethnic novel' written by an unknown female writer of Asian descent. On the other hand, Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996) gained high appreciation from critical quarters, as an expression of Asian life in the new garb of 'ethnic *Bildungsroman*'⁴⁰ flavoured with social realism, vaguely compared with Harper Lee's 1960s classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* by the press and the media.⁴¹ Moreover,

³⁸Sarfraz Manzoor, Review: 'Too Asian, Not Asian Enough', ed. by Kavita Bhanot in *The Guardian*, Friday 4 November 2011. [Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/nov/04/too-asian-kavita-bhanot-review> (accessed on 16/12/2013)].

³⁹Nasta, 2002.

⁴⁰Nasta, 2002.

⁴¹Dunphy, 2004.

Syal's multi-talented persona and public popularity as a TV/film/theatrical luminary have contributed considerably in the furtherance of articulating a counter-discourse to the Western hegemonic notions over South Asian diasporic literature and popular culture.

The different critical responses to the two writers imply the parochial attitudes of the mainstream literary circles to suppress them by ghettoizing into neat 'ethnic boxes'. This also reveals the impediments faced by diasporic writers to break and come out of the stereotypic images of race and culture, as well as the 'ethnic', 'exotic' labels stamped on them. Nevertheless, the double-edged diasporic sensibility was powerful enough to register the realities in the political contexts, where British Asian women suffer multiple marginalisations. Randhawa's and Syal's works could be read as indicative of Asian British lives and community politics – minoritarian/majoritarian, ethnic/xenophobic – in post-Powellian and Thatcherite Britain. Both writers were involved with the Asian Women Writers' Collective, an organised group of Asian women writers in Britain set up with a view of articulating 'real' images of Asian life and characters 'as fully realized human beings, as complex creatures, good, bad, bad, good.'⁴² The new generation female voices represent celebratory hybrid tones of Asian British immigrant life highlighting the undertones of their 'flattened' and stereotypical images that have been the currency in the political rhetoric surrounding British multicultural policies and the Immigration Acts.

Celebrating Hybridity: Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal

Ravinder Randhawa's *The Wicked Old Woman* (1987) and Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996) showcase Asian British stories during the turbulent period of social and political alterations in the post-Powellian and Thatcherite England. While Syal's novel is a *Bildungsroman* set in the

⁴²Salman Rushdie, 'Minority Literatures in a Multi-Cultural Society', in *Displaced Persons*, ed. by Kirsten Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherford (Mundelstrup: Dangaroo Press, 1988).

late 1960s-'70s, the period after Enoch Powell's inflammatory racist, anti-immigration rhetoric, Randhawa's narrative is woven in 'the pre-time to Beatle-time'.⁴³ Both the novels position themselves between the 1960s and 1980s and represent the difficulties in encountering racism in all domains of British society. The two novels underscore that heterogeneity is the common characteristic of any community or society, that the differences are to be accepted and accommodated amicably. As Shanthi in *The Wicked Old Woman* laments to Maya:

The English with their fears have made a deity of youth and degraded experience and age into the dustbin...our children believe that by rushing into the English life they will leave behind all the Asian problems...it's only an exchange. An English set of problems for an Asian set.⁴⁴

Randhawa, through the character of Shanthi, expresses the first generation Asian Britons' dissatisfaction at the English lifestyle and their fear about the influence it has on Asian children. Meera Syal speaks about the concept of cultural transmutation in an alternate style through the character of Meena. Meena, in *Anita and Me*, expresses her deep desire to merge with the White mainstream. She says:

I wanted to shed my body like a snake slithering out of its skin and emerge reborn, pink, and unrecognizable. I began avoiding mirrors, I refused to put on the Indian suits my mother laid out for me...I took to walking several paces behind or in front of my parents when we went on a shopping trip, checking my reflection in shop windows, bitterly disappointed it was still there.⁴⁵

Randhawa and Syal explore the British Asian female identity to capture the complexities of a female subject caught between the pressures of bicultural dilemma, and gender discrimination, the 'seeming contradictions of being Asian, British and female.'⁴⁶ Ravinder Randhawa was born

⁴³Randhawa, 1987, p.16.

⁴⁴Ibid. p.38.

⁴⁵Meera Syal, *Anita and Me* (London: Flamingo, 1996), p.146.

⁴⁶ C.L. Innes, 'Wintering: Making a Home in Britain' in *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction*, ed. by Robert Lee (London: Pluto Press, 1995).

in Punjab and came to Warwickshire with her family at the age of seven where she felt uncomfortable in a discriminated life shaped by the propositions of race, class and gender. Meera Syal was born in Wolverhampton, England. This has accentuated her childhood experience of 'otherness' and her strategic efforts to manoeuvre herself successfully in an environment that was mostly hostile and reductive. She explains how she had to construct colourful stories and even tell 'lies' to make herself fit comfortably in a frustrated space. Syal states:

As the cast list for class 6's production of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* was read out a certain precocious seven year-old listened to the announcements with disbelief. 'The Rose – the bleedin rose! Ten lines and a stupid frilly costume. But I know I'm the best actress in the class. Why haven't I got a bigger role?' The director (alias the woodwork teacher) took her aside and said kindly, 'Now then Feroza [Syal's previous name], we can't have an Alice with a brown face, can we?'⁴⁷

Syal's characters are carefully crafted to explode the established stereotypical versions of British Asian female identity. Through Meena Kumar, the protagonist in her semi-autobiographical novel *Anita and Me* (1996), Syal tries to bring out the creolised voice of a hybrid Asian adolescent girl who feels misplaced and confused within the highly racist society of Tollington. Randhawa introduces her Kulwant Singh (Kuli) in *The Wicked Old Woman* as an alienated woman who is emotionally distressed by being considered an 'outsider' in spite of her long time in England. In the opening scene of the novel, Kulwant is signalled by the NHS nurse 'carefully wanting Mrs. Singh to understand and go away...hoping she'd understand the sign language if not the Anglo-lingo.'⁴⁸ Meena earnestly seeks to 'belong' to the idealized 'White' world by stealthily making Anita make her up with her mother's powder compact to get the look

⁴⁷ Meera Syal, 'Finding My Voice' in *Writing Black Britain- 1948-1998: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. by James Procter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 252.

⁴⁸ Randhawa, 1987, p.3.

of ‘...Babs, the blonde pouty one, from Pan’s people.’⁴⁹ Interestingly, Kuli in *Wicked* also tries to step out of her Asian ‘looks’ by ‘procuring right accessories’ from the ‘local Oxfam boutique’. Kuli ‘had wanted everything, wanted to be Indian and English...Thinking of all that, she rubbed the colour of her skin, which wasn’t ever going to rub off...’⁵⁰

In both texts, the efforts of the characters to live out of the prescribed shells of ‘home’, whether levied compulsorily as a cultural stereotype like Randhawa’s Kuli, or a hybrid Asian like Syal’s Meena, help them to create a separate ‘diasporic space’ which is fluid and evolving. *Anita and Me* (1996) offers a celebratory discourse of the dispossessed in the South Asian British diaspora by laughing at the usual diasporic stereotypes; for example, when the narrator tells of her early life to ‘settle down’ in a *home* as ‘the years of struggle and disillusion, living in a shabby house with another immigrant family’.⁵¹ Syal, in fact, operates a reverse stereotyping or caricaturing by making the Asian British characters the fulcrum to control the story line, whereas the English characters are almost muted. The Asian families in the story make fun of English ways of life, trying to negotiate a *space* of their own in a conflicted, hostile social environment. The term ‘home’ gets further complicated when placed in the ‘centre/periphery’ paradigms where the sense of ‘belonging/non belonging’ originates. Meena engages with the white teenage neighbour, Anita Rutter, to ‘belong’ and ‘become British’. Meena fantasizes hanging out with Anita, whom she finds to be the epitome of beauty with her white complexion, blonde hair and make-up. The notions of presence and difference strengthen the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy, through which Meena’s diasporic self tries to construct a meaning about its existence. At this point, the re-examination, re-evaluation and re-configuring of the stereotypes and formulaic

⁴⁹ Syal, 1996, p.144.

⁵⁰ Randhawa, 1987, p.29.

⁵¹ Syal, 1996, p.9.

images are performed through ‘continuous critiquing discourses of fixed origins’⁵² where the ‘compulsory perennial liminality’ of diasporic character is put in question. Randhawa describes the ‘diasporic space’ of hybridity as a ‘dangerous territory’, which is an embroiled gap of confused desires and responsibilities. As Kulwant’s mother reminds her, ‘This country has put you in one of its mixers and whirled round till you can’t tell your inside from your outside, your duties from your rights, your needs from your responsibilities.’⁵³ Kuli feels emotionally hurt by the awareness that the fraught relationship between India and Britain has always kept her in the disadvantageous position of an ‘outsider’.

Both Randhawa and Syal meticulously chart the political terrain of a racist England, especially after the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1968, the Immigration Act 1971 and the Race Relations Act 1976.⁵⁴ *Anita and Me* portrays a racist Britain that has taken different directions which undermine Britain’s claims of civilised benevolence, proving that acceptability by the English is highly conditional and, concurrently, questions the false claims about the transcendence of racism.⁵⁵ When Meena overhears her Papa and family friends talking about Enoch Powell and his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, her doubts about her instability and insecurity deepen. Meena says:

I had always assumed that [it was] some kind of ancient Punjabi custom...to display several dusty, bulging cases overflowing with old Indian suits, photographs and yellowing official papers...Once, after I heard Papa and the Uncles getting very angry over someone they referred to as ‘That Powell Bastard with his bloody rivers’ and had added, ‘If he wants to send us back,

⁵²Brah, 1996, p.193.

⁵³Randhawa, 1987, p.54.

⁵⁴Rushed through parliament in three days, The Commonwealth Immigration Act 1968 amended sections of the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962. The new legislation subjected all holders of UK passports to immigration controls unless they, their parents or a grandparent had been born, adopted or naturalised in the United Kingdom. The Race Relations Act 1976 was an Act to make fresh provision with respect to discrimination on racial grounds and relations between people of different racial groups; the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 made amendments to bring provisions in that Act relating to its administration and enforcement into conformity with the corresponding provisions in this Act. [22nd November 1976].

⁵⁵ Roger Bromley, *Narratives for a New Belonging* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 163.

let him come and damn well try!' I had asked Mama if the cases were ready and packed in case we had to escape back to India at short notice.⁵⁶

Syal aims sharply at the double-tongued, hypocritical tones of immigration policies of the time which sounded 'favourable' and 'fair' superficially, but hostile in reality. The Immigration Act 1971 abolished the rights of non-white Commonwealth citizens to migrate to and settle in the United Kingdom, whereas the rights of the white settlers in the Empire/Commonwealth were strengthened.⁵⁷ While the Race Relations Act 1976 makes illegal any kind of discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins as unlawful, the worst form of racist expressions were clearly apparent in all domains of British public life.

Syal recasts the gruesome realities of the then racist England in her *Anita and Me*. The village fete incident dislodges Meena's self-positioning among the white majority to reveal the reality of 'strangeness' in between. Sam Lowbridge, a close associate of Anita and the leader of the bullies speaks harshly to Mr. Olmerod about his charity work, echoing Enoch Powell, '...give everything away to some darkies we've never met. We don't give a toss for anybody else. This is our patch. Not some wog's handout.'⁵⁸ The wide chasm that Sam reveals through the firm division of 'us' versus 'them' shatters Meena. She 'felt as if ...punched in the stomach. [L]egs fe[eling] watery ...It was as if the whole crowd had turned into one huge eyeball which swivelled slowly between [her] and papa.'⁵⁹ Meena feels shattered when she realises that she is a 'stranger' to her associates who are skinheads with strong racist undercurrents and definite boundaries in their minds towards 'others' like her. The expressions of implicit racism are more evident at the beginning of the novel. With the exception of the welcoming neighbours, Mrs and

⁵⁶Syal, 1996, p.267.

⁵⁷ Ian R.G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.144.

⁵⁸Syal, 1996, p.193.

⁵⁹Syal, 1996, p.193.

Mr. Worrall, other whites in the locality exercise discrimination towards the non-whites. Meena's mother feels disturbed at hearing Anita's mother calling her dog 'nigger'. While Meena's father pays less attention to this, Daljit comments, 'Just because it doesn't happen to us, does not mean it is not happening! And they leave us alone because they don't think we are really Indian. "Oh, you are so English, Mrs. K!" Like it is a buggering compliment!'⁶⁰

Likewise, Randhawa's *The Wicked Old Woman* describes the discrepancies of living in an aggressive Britain and creating a 'hybrid' homely space. Nevertheless, the kaleidoscopic identity patterns 'inscribed through experiences, subjectivity and social relations'⁶¹ in the novel are voiced through a middle-aged Asian British woman who has already lived in many places in Britain. At a party, when a white boy compels Kuli to reveal her ethnic background, he openly expresses his paternal link with India, boasts and brags of his annual family visits to India. Kuli feels hateful, '...consumed with envy, jealousy and malice. Her parents could hardly afford to go themselves, let alone take the children; intellectual glasses had probably seen more of India than she ever had.'⁶² When Kuli asks the boy about his connections with the locals, he replies, 'You know how it is with ex-patriot communities...but I've managed to pick up a few words of Hindi from the servants...'⁶³ Kuli painfully recognises her status as an alien element, excluded from British community.

While Syal's Meena adopts a celebratory attitude to balance between her multiple identity positionalities, Randhawa's Kuli is overall sceptical in her attitudes, with a radical political consciousness to effect change from both within and outside the Asian community around which the novel is largely woven. Unlike Meena in *Anita and Me*, Kulwant is initially

⁶⁰Syal, 1996, p.172.

⁶¹Brah, 1996, p.123.

⁶²Randhawa, 1987, p.18.

⁶³Randhawa, 1987, pp.18-19.

half-hearted in re-fashioning her Asian image in a new garb of Britishness, stepping out of the traditional boundaries of the Asian custom of arranged marriages and the norms of motherhood responsibility. Kuli presents herself in many different personas, initially shaking off her 'ethnic' looks by skilfully changing herself into an Oxfam bag lady, befriending Caroline, the English lady, or as a radical, disinclined member of the 'Asian Centre' which is a 'simulation of the sub-continent...with the flotsam of travel posters, batik work, ...cow bells...a home from home for the Asian woman trapped in the isolation of her house'.⁶⁴ Her multiple manifestations are a means to convey her 'split' identity of being not 'Asian' or 'British', but rather a mixture of the two. As she feels: '...turned inside out and forced to choose. No more trying to walk in the middle. There were too many pot-holes and she was like a blind woman without a stick.'⁶⁵

Randhawa, like Syal, communicates that identities are 'fluid' and not fixed; capable of re-definition and re-interpretation. Randhawa gives a striking opening to the novel by describing Kuli's attempt to put a 'bindi' with nail paint on a Russian doll:

Kulwant hadn't known that playing with nail polish would be a playing with fire and that in trying to give her doll a bindi scarlet blob would slip from the loaded brush and landing on the cheek run a red streak all the way down to the chin and...come to a quivering full stop. Tears come in doubles. Load the brush again and carefully drop a scarlet blob on the other side...A pretty disjunction.⁶⁶

Randhawa furnishes the various possibilities of expressing a familiar image through the doll's 'decorated' exterior. It also points to the 'possibilities of art as a form of political empowerment, a means perhaps of transforming the fixed face of the doll's exterior.'⁶⁷ In fact, the doll could be viewed as the alter ego of Kuli, who struggles hard to present herself as a traditional Asian and at

⁶⁴Randhawa, 1987, p.30.

⁶⁵Randhawa, 1987, p.29.

⁶⁶ Randhawa, 1987, p.1.

⁶⁷ Nasta, 2002, p. 207.

the same time keeps a secret wish to be anglicised – a strategic behaviour in ‘Kuli’s Cover- Up’ and ‘Kuli’s Double-Up’. Randhawa emphasises the differences of the seemingly similar dual images of a female Asian diasporic self, as C.L.Innes states, the ‘poverty stricken recipient of European hand-me-downs, the Oxfam Indian, an old and crippled victim... [also] an older British image... the Oriental Princess’.⁶⁸ As an Asian female living in Britain, Kulwant is well aware of her ‘invisibility’, of more unacknowledged existence, that the doll has more acceptance than her. The sense of ‘invisibility’ is highlighted by a discussion between Asha and Maya in the ‘Asian Centre’:

We’re making ourselves invisible, which is precisely what they want us to be. It’s like the old nigger in the book who says, “Please massa, you’re right massa, I’m not here massa”.

Asha scrapes back her chair, looking ostentatiously at her watch. Warming to her subject Maya is not to be silenced: “If we have a right to be here, don’t we have a right to be human, warts and all!”⁶⁹

Similarly, Meena in *Anita and Me* points out:

...according to the newspapers and television, we simply did not exist. If a brown or black face ever did appear on TV, it stopped us all in our tracks...But these occasional minor celebrities never struck me as real; they were someone else's version of Indian, far too exaggerated and exotic to be believable.⁷⁰

The Race Relations Act 1976 promised equal justice and fairness to all, irrespective of their colour and racial group.⁷¹ The rules remain intact in official papers, while the shocking

⁶⁸ C.L. Innes, ‘Wintering: Making a Home in Britain’, in *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction*, ed. by A. Robert Lee (London: Pluto Press, 1995), pp.30-31.

⁶⁹ Randhawa, 1987, p.105.

⁷⁰ Syal, 1996, p.165.

⁷¹ In relation to racial discrimination- (a) section 4(1)(a) or (c) does not apply to any employment where being of a particular racial group is a genuine occupational qualification for the job ; (2) Being of a particular racial group is a genuine occupational qualification for a job only where- (a) the job involves participation in a dramatic performance or other entertainment in a capacity for which a person of that racial group is required for reasons of authenticity. See Race Relations Act, 1976 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74> (accessed on 24/12/2013).

realities of racism and prejudice make the immigrant life a terrible tragedy. Saggar and Somerville have suggested that the British model of integration has never been clearly defined.

Further, they observe that:

the immediate implications for integration *policy* are limited in that building a sense of national identity is not the subject of tangible initiatives or public policy programs, and is more located in the arena of public debate and political rhetoric. The most obvious concern is that immigrants — by not sharing certain values or ancestral connections — will weaken a sense of British or national identity. This anxiety has been a staple element of critiques of immigration in Britain over several decades.⁷²

Randhawa's and Syal's females are British Asian hybrids who are continuously defined by the larger society in terms of their race and ethnicity. In *Anita and Me*, Meena grasps that her 'worship' for Anita's 'white status' is naïve and it crumbles when Sam attacks an Asian man causing his death, a racist attack which makes Meena ambiguous about her space of 'home'. She wonders, '...if Tollington would ever truly be home again.'⁷³ At the same time, Meena's parents constantly assure her about the possibilities of educational opportunities, which help her navigate easily through unfavourable social situations and view racist threats as transitory. The appearance of Harrinder.P.Singh, the local Asian who has lived secretly in Tollington for years gives Meena more confidence about the possibilities of being successful as a British Asian. Harrinder describes the history of Asian settlement in Britain, highlighting the struggles and sufferings that Asians had to undergo in a racist white town. Later, he emerges as the owner of the mysterious 'Big House' representing monetary power against the disruptive economy of working-class Tollington.

⁷² Shamit Saggar and Will Somerville, *Building a British Model of Integration in an Era of Immigration: Policy Lessons for Government* (London: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), p.6.

⁷³ Syal, 1996, p.275.

As the novel progresses, Meena slowly realises her real ties and bigger responsibilities to fulfill the unrealised dreams of her parents. Meena feels the close connection with her 'home' while she starts to recognise the importance of Indian food, Punjabi songs and language amidst the boastfulness of her Birmingham accent. During one of the family get-togethers, Auntie Shaila ridicules Meena saying, 'She speaks Punjabi with a Birmingham accent.'⁷⁴ When Meena hears her parents and relatives singing Punjabi songs she feels that it is 'evocative of a country I had never visited, but which sounded like the only home I had ever known. The songs made me realize that there was a corner of me that would be forever not England.'⁷⁵ Through her writings, Syal represents the constant attempts of diasporic families to re-create 'home' in various ways. The novel throws light on the diasporic endeavours to create a third space, a multicultural space of hybridity. Syal elucidates, 'I think being able to be humorous about who you are, and that dilemma, is a sign that you're at ease in the end with who you are. And there are so many people like Meena who move very fluidly from one culture to another, and you can hardly see the join.'⁷⁶

Further, Syal highlights the intricacies of female selfhood to dispute the stereotyped views of Asian females as passive, frivolous creatures. Her answer to Western misconceptions (here of Indian and Indian-British culture) are her counter-stories in which her (female) characters' identities are neither limited to a status as victims, nor are they torn between two worlds⁷⁷. Daljit communicates her bias towards Indian culture and at the same time advises Meena to 'take the best from [English] culture, not the worst.'⁷⁸ Meena's family celebrates Diwali and Christmas with equal spirit, attending Church services. They make clear their belief

⁷⁴Syal, 1996, p.114.

⁷⁵Ibid., p.112.

⁷⁶ as quoted in Schlote 1999, p.116

⁷⁷Schlote, 1999, p.116.

⁷⁸Syal, 1996, p.53.

that 'every path leads to the same God.'⁷⁹ Aunty Shaila's comments reveal a different attitude, 'you will confuse that girl.'⁸⁰ Although Meena rejoices at all the festivals and celebrations, she is sceptical about the attitude of the mainstream towards Indian culture. She comments about an 'anglicised' Diwali, 'no-one else in the world seemed to care that today was our Christmas...there was no holiday...no tinsel, or holly or blinking Christmas trees...nobody, not one person had wished me a happy Diwali.'⁸¹

Syal reinforces the influence of cultural elements in the formation of 'hybridity' which puts identity in perplexity. According to Homi Bhabha, 'hybridity displays... the displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.'⁸² Bhabha explains the process of redefinition of identity within a colonial space where mediation between the dominant and the dormant happens, deconstructing the stereotypes. The 'third space' ascribed to the immigrants/diaspora is an alternative space where hybrid identities emerge. Bhabha's concept of the 'third space' connects with Stuart Hall's theory of 'cultural hybridity'. Stuart Hall⁸³ postulates that the active construction of identities involves 'recognition of a necessary heterogeneity, diversity and hybridity'. Bhabha and Hall define identity as unstable and 'fluid'⁸⁴.

Meena tries to negotiate between her Englishness and Indianness to locate herself between the two, which is the third space that is not fixed, producing something which is neither the one nor the other, contesting the terms and territories of both.⁸⁵ Meena's fantasies about a white boy as her partner are constructed through cartoon characters. She says, 'The boys I fantasized about were invariably white, clean shaven, tall and yet insubstantial, exactly like the

⁷⁹Ibid., p.92.

⁸⁰Ibid., p.92.

⁸¹Syal, 1996, p.92.

⁸²Bhabha, 1994, p.36.

⁸³Hall, 1996, p.405.

⁸⁴Mishra, 2007, p.1.

⁸⁵Bhabha, 1994, p.41.

cartoon heroes'.⁸⁶ Initially, alienated from her parents and extended family, Meena strongly desires to identify with the local white community incarnated in the boisterous Anita Rutter. For Meena, Anita is an apotheosis of beauty. Meena is compelled to throw herself into the domain of the local whites, placing herself as a shadow of Anita. Anita's white skin, long, golden hair and blue eyes arouse a deep, racially and ideologically inspired desire in Meena to *become* a white girl. Meena finds herself uncomfortable in her own body which makes her a subject of 'situational ethnicity'⁸⁷, allowing the social configuration of white Tollington to affect her mental perceptions and actions. At one of the family gatherings, Meena tries to evaluate carefully herself against her body, 'I was admiring myself in mama's dressing table mirror, whether I liked this unfamiliar reflection staring back in a purple *salwarkameez* suit, stiff with elephant embroidery around the cuffs and neckline. I liked the suit, but it quite did not go with the pudding basin haircut and chewed-down fingernails.'⁸⁸ The parallel psychological correspondence of whiteness with place makes Meena experience her own body as unusual and unhomely.⁸⁹ On the other hand, Meena expresses her deep and intimate relationship with her parents as, '...I could not imagine existing without them although I hated them interfering in my upbringing.'⁹⁰ Meena's ambiguity and confusion, resulting in her hybrid identity, is simultaneous with a constant awareness of what is happening within her; a conditioning of self which helps her to balance, accommodate and move successfully in her hybrid space.

Randhawa's female characters also traverse the 'hybrid space' by displaying varied images of their persona for a successful manoeuvre. Kulwant's disguised appearance, her relationship with Michael who tries to win her as the exotic 'Mata-hari of his Heart', her image

⁸⁶Syal, 1996, p.285.

⁸⁷Okamura, 1981.

⁸⁸Syal, 1996, p.107.

⁸⁹Crane and Mohanram, 2000.

⁹⁰Syal, 1996, p.30.

as a homeless wanderer and her travels throughout the city, weave a coherent past to reveal the instability of her hybrid identity as a powerless 'Asian British' female. When Michael, her boyfriend, offers her a ring, she rejects it on the grounds of asserting her individuality: 'Rescue me! How dare you. You're the dream come true, aren't you? Galahad on his white horse! Is that what this ring's for?'⁹¹ However, Kulwant often reveals the diversity within the ethnic group called 'Asian'. When Ammi comes to England she fails to manage on her own, whereas her two daughters attempt to assimilate and get on with English life.

Randhawa marks the generational attitudes as well as the class differences. Unlike the younger characters such as Kulwant's brother, Parminder/Pauli and Kulwant's son, Arvind/Arnold, characters like Kurshid and Big Sis find difficulties in 'belonging' to Britain. As part of the process of 'belonging' Arvind marries a white working-class English girl named Shirley while Anup, his brother, prefers to be an 'invisible Indian buppie' (black yuppie)⁹², which Randhawa denotes acronymically as D.E.A.D (Doctors, Engineers, Accountants and Dentists). Many other characters like Rani/Rosalind who takes up a dual identity, fail to survive the pressures of the community, both internal and external, and run away to live an anonymous nomadic life, 'a ticket to hide...breathe and live in anonymity.'⁹³ Rani formulates her life to live with the lower class white community; a private life, unrecognised, lived on the threshold of both British and Asian communities. Rani's psychological loneliness points to the stereotypical versions of cultural collision and the incompatibility of the new generation Asian British females who try to flee from the shackles of tradition and ties of 'home'; a futile attempt to efface their discontented past. Rani succeeds initially to slip away physically by shedding off her 'Asian roots' but she fails to escape any exploitation. When her flatmate Rosco rapes her, she kills him

⁹¹Randhawa, 1987, p.26.

⁹² Ibid.,p.100.

⁹³Ibid., p.138.

and secludes herself completely from society, ending up in a hospital with a wide-eyed fixed gaze into limitless space:

Sister was murmuring sedatives when the door opened and Shanti stood framed in the doorway, her closed eyes on Rani and Rani's eyes opened on her, the laughter rising to a higher pitch....Albino eyes blanking everyone with their stare.⁹⁴

Randhawa has designed the character 'Rani' and her experiences to position other female characters neatly in the narrative. Rani becomes a cohesive force that brings out the community camaraderie and collective efforts resulting in the creation of an alternative space to reiterate their 'hybrid' existence.

Both *The Wicked Old Woman* and *Anita and Me* can be read as *bildungsromane* which trace the developments of the protagonists while exploring in varying degrees of complexity the issue of taking freedom on one's own terms and not giving in to the condescension of the dominant culture, which is more often than not based on ... racist stereotypes.⁹⁵ *Anita and Me* is about the growing-up of a British-Asian girl, the development of her cultural cognition in terms of the realities of the world she inhabits; a narrative which displays the complex interconnections of the race, class, gender and ethnicity circuit. The novel contains all the classic elements of a diasporic narrative: displacement, trauma, generational conflict, school experiences and struggle between rural and urban lives.⁹⁶ The 'transformative potential held by the protagonist', as Stein argues, becomes true, as Meena is never trapped in a *trishanku*⁹⁷, and

⁹⁴Randhawa, 1987, p.199.

⁹⁵Christine Vogt-William, 'Rescue Me? No, Thanks 'A *Wicked Old Woman* and *Anita and Me*', in *Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Society in a 'post'-colonial World*, ed. by Geoffrey V. Davis et.al (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 373- 387.

⁹⁶Stein, 2004.

⁹⁷King Trisanku is a character in the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*. Trisanku is commonly referred to through the phrase "Trisanku's Heaven". Trisanku was suspended up-side down in a state of unstable equilibrium between heaven and Earth when Sage Viswamitra sent him to heaven to fulfil Trisanku's wish to go to heaven with a mortal body which

successfully sails through the two cultural domains by creating a new ‘hybrid’ space which she celebrates. She finally comes into possession of her identity in Tollington as she tells her local hero, the racist Sam, ‘I am the others, Sam.’⁹⁸ She further says, ‘the place in which I belonged was wherever I stood and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forward and claiming each resting place as home.’⁹⁹ Therefore, the ‘diaspora self’ in *Anita and Me*, is seen to ‘reterritorialize itself and thereby acquire a name’.¹⁰⁰

Marie Louise Pratt argues that there exists ‘contact zones’ within a transnational context where ‘cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, as such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.’¹⁰¹ In the novel, ‘Tollington’ acts as an active physical site for cultural fusion and merger, where diverse cultures meet and mingle, while the friendship between Meena and Anita becomes a psychological terrain of cultural synthesis. Meera Syal demonstrates that her diasporic female identity rests at the crossroads of different cultural, geographic and linguistic planes as the title itself suggests a sort of self-imposed subordination. ‘Anita and Me’, where ‘Anita’ indicates the white superiority and ‘Me’ is Meena’s half-soul, which is in a tremendous inner-battle to find fixity. Syal challenges the traditional canon and dominant white culture by the successful reversal of Anita’s character into a mere narrative supplement, a cul-de-sac which is lifeless, symbolising Englishness, while Meena embodies dynamism, continuity and progress signifying incessant diasporic potentialities. Meena, through her aloofness from her family at the first stage and from Anita Rutter at a later

was against Nature’s Laws. Here the term is used to refer the ‘in-between’ position of immigrants caught between two cultures.

⁹⁸Syal, 1996, p.344.

⁹⁹Ibid., p.302.

¹⁰⁰R. Radhakrishnan, 1996, p.175.

¹⁰¹Pratt, 1992, p.102.

stage, transcends and avoids all rigid norms and ideas imposed on her, being a subject of two worlds. She gains the strength to absorb the reality to celebrate her existence and the 'in-between' space she is in.

The novel ends with Meena's letter to Anita which reads: 'Dear Anita, We're moving on Saturday. I'm going to the Grammar School, so at least you won't be around to tease me about my tam-o-shanter. See you around. Meena.'¹⁰² The 'moving' suggests that the diasporic identity of Meena is fluid and continuous while the ineffectual, static Anita remains silent. Syal reverses the established notions of hegemonic whiteness that portrays 'the Caucasian [as] disembodied, mobile, absent of the marks that physically immobilise the native.'¹⁰³ She deconstructs 'the idea of black bodies as being trapped within the web of nature where [only] the white body has the freedom of movement.'¹⁰⁴

Anita and Me, thus, is an exploration of a migrant subject's attempts to construct a 'bi-racial' identity, unveiling the categories of 'black' and 'white' as politico-cultural constructs. Syal designs a new sense of racial identity through the character of Meena, who acquires a new awareness of herself as an Asian female to form a defensive reaction to the overt and covert racism of British society. It connects the irrepressible capacity of the dispossessed selves to move beyond the odds with which they are confronted. The note of steady optimism throughout the novel creates an imaginary aura that strengthens the diasporic characters to navigate successfully in an unfavourable landscape.

As in *Anita and Me*, *The Wicked Old Woman* also ends on a celebratory note denoting the success of collective efforts of Asian British Women's camaraderie. Maya's making of a

¹⁰² Syal, 1996, p. 328.

¹⁰³ Mohanram, *Black Bodies*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

documentary on Rani symbolizes the diasporic endeavours to dismantle the perceptions of the supposed 'ethnic ghetto' and answers the questions posed by the political rhetoric of the time. Randhawa wraps up the novel with the director shouting "ACTION!"¹⁰⁵ The closing words of 'action' signals the invention of an alternative hybrid space for Asian British female community engagement to confront the political discrimination and the pigeon-holed images of being passive, non-progressive and to present them to British society in a new garb of their own choosing. The ending of *The Wicked Old Woman* posits a counter-narrative of the 'nation' which 'enables and promotes varied perspectives...new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference.'¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Many female narratives in the form of essays, poems, film scripts and novels appeared during the 1980s and 1990s that have focused on articulating the questions posed by the political domain of a racist Britain. Gurinder Chaddha's *I'm British...But* (1989), Meera Syal's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and *Life Isn't All Haha Heehee* (1999) have all engaged in discussing the heterogeneity of Asian British lives. Randhawa's Kuli and Syal's Meena are the first ground-breaking characters to articulate the new discursive spaces of their hybrid identity. It is important to note that Randhawa and Syal did succeed in making the female voices heard amidst the highly politicized time of the 'Rushdie Affair'. Moreover, they have successfully scaled the barriers raised by the unquestioned supremacy of male writers like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi. As said earlier, the period witnessed the presence of a number of Asian female writers, affirming their existence where Rushdie as a literary figure stood as a giant tower blocking the conspicuous

¹⁰⁵ Randhawa, 1987, p.207

¹⁰⁶bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York: South End Press, 1999), p.205.

visibility of the writers queuing behind him. Both the writers discussed have triumphed in translating the 'previously static notions of 'home' and 'abroad', 'native' or 'immigrant' into a series of differently conceived possibilities within the contested terrain of 'Englishness' itself.'¹⁰⁷

In the wider arena, it is imperative to note that in the 1990s the major international political crises such as the Rushdie Affair, the Gulf War, and more recently, the 9/11 bombings have brought a different mode of diaspora politics into the public sphere in Britain – the Muslims in Britain, who are marked as the 'enemy within'/ 'the dangerous Others'. The fear and terror induced by the over-scale images of terrorism and fundamentalism have sounded the death-knell for multicultural policies in Britain. The literary maps from the intellectual factories in the metropolises have produced images that articulated this deviation to analyse the shift in the concerns and attitude towards British South Asians (Muslims in particular) by the larger public as well as the political power centres. The next chapter throws light on this alternateness.



¹⁰⁷Nasta, 2002, p.211.

Chapter 5. Post-9/11 Britain and Female Muslimist Imaginary: Monica Ali, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir.

La Ilaha Illallah, Muhammad-ur- Rasulullah

— Holy Quran¹ (47:19).

*Anityam Asukham Lokam
Imam Prapya Bhajaswamam*

— Shrimad Bhagavad Gita² (9:33)

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest

— Holy Bible³ (11:28)

How does one write ‘home’ when one is confined within the tight frame of a ‘veiled’ stereotype?

In this chapter, the focus will be on the narrative poetics of British South Asian women who write ‘home’ in the highly ‘charged’ political environment of the post-9/11 ‘War On Terror’.

Although South Asian British fiction has gained wide public attention due to its hybrid character and cultural credentials, the recent writings point towards the opening up of a new geography of Asian Britain that charts contemporary political developments, transforming and energising the cultural politics of the global North. These texts make their own ethnic communities the focus of new concerns about multiculturalism, immigration, religious extremism and political radicalism.

In my readings of the post-9/11 voices, I analyse the questions of transnational and community politics, religious trends and the socio-cultural dynamics of South Asians in Britain, along with

¹ *Lá iláha illalláh is the Muslim credo in Holy Quran which says there is only one God and Mohammed is His prophet..*

² *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* is the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the battle field of Kurukshetra. In this verse, which is from chapter 9, Krishna exhorts Arjuna telling him that all sufferings in this world are temporary and that eternal bliss could be attained only through selfless devotion to *Me* (Krishna).

³ In the *Holy Bible* Jesus says all those who are suffering from misery should come to Him and repose in Him. The above verse is from the King James Bible (Cambridge ed.).

the alternative ways of writing to sketch the inner compartments of memory that shape a concrete concept of 'home'.

Imagining and representation of the British Muslim subject as an alarming 'other' clearly existed prior to 9/11. The 'Rushdie Affair' in 1988 and the upsurges that followed fanned the manufacture of distorted shapes and images of Islam and its believers. Hanif Kureishi's *Black Album* (1995) which narrates 1980s London through the story of Shahid, a Pakistani immigrant, and his chaotic life caught in the dilemma of Islamic fundamentalism after the 'Rushdie Affair' and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), which tells the story of Islamic militancy in England, have contextualized a London in turmoil because of a 'confused and angry group that believed in the doctrine of vengeance'.⁴ The adumbrations of Islam in these works have concretised the concept of the 'Orientalist stereotype',⁵ casting the Muslim position as ignorant, irrational and inflexible.

In the debates and deliberations of East versus West and 'the idea of Europe'⁶ versus the Orient, radical nationalism in the Islamic world has placed Islam as a 'crescent of crisis',⁷ portraying Muslims as anti-democratic and pre-modern. Aside from these scenes of literary (mis)representation, the 9/11 terrorist attacks have acted as a catalyst to inflate and exaggerate a reductive, hostile attitude towards Muslim extremism. Sara Upstone observes that 'post-9/11 content [in literary representations] is a continuation of pre-existing Orientalism. 9/11

⁴ Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber&Faber, 1995), p.103.

⁵ M.M. Ahsan and A.R. Kidwai, eds, *Sacrilege versus Civility: Muslim Perspectives on the Satanic Verses Affair* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1991).

⁶ Denys Hay's 'Idea of Europe'- a collective idea of identifying 'us' (Europeans) as against all 'those' non-Europeans. 'Idea of Europe' is an ideological representation of the ethnocentric discourse about the construction of the centrality of Europe and a sense of being periphery for the rest. Denys Hay, *Europe: the Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh: Harper Torch Books, 1966). In the post-9/11 era, this notion has strengthened in which Muslims are placed as the 'Others' against Europe.

⁷ Daalder and others, eds, *Crescent of Crisis: U.S- European Strategy from the Greater Middle East* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

transformed these stereotypes, but it did not bring them into being,...with resulting reciprocal increase in the strength of the “imaginary identity” of Islam’.⁸ One cannot deny the importance of 9/11 as being a remarkable event after the Cold War (the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989) that has undoubtedly brought about a major shift in international politics and the global system, bringing religion to the forefront. According to Steve Smith, 9/11 marked the end of the unipolar moment, a period in international relations when the US reigned as the superpower and the restructuring of power that resulted in the emergence of a New World Order⁹ that categorised militant Islam as the fulcrum of the ‘axis of Evil’.¹⁰

Great Britain, being an ally of the US in the War on Terror, had to join hands with America in terms of public policies to suppress a nascent uprising of the ‘enemy within’.¹¹ Subsequently, a plethora of provocative publications and discourses on the ‘enemy other’ came out such as Melanie Phillip’s *Londonistan: How Britain is creating a Terror State Within* (2006), Bruce Bawer’s *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (2007) and H.A.Hellyer’s *Muslims of Europe: The ‘Other’ Europeans* (2009), reinforcing the ‘other question’ where ‘subjects are always disproportionately placed in opposition...[as] terrifying stereotypes of savagery...and anarchy which are the signal points of identification and alienation ...[where] precisely the function of stereotype as phobia and fetish ...articulates the

⁸ Sara Upstone, ‘9/11, British Muslims, and Popular Fiction’, in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the ‘War on Terror’* ed. by Birkenstein and others (London: Continuum, 2010).

⁹ Steve Smith, *The End of the Unipolar Moment: September 11 and the Future of World Order* (University of Aberystwyth, 2002). <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/smith.htm> (accessed on 03/05/2013).

¹⁰ ‘Axis of evil’ is a term initially used by the former United States President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, declaring a ‘crusade’ against the governments that he accused of helping the terrorist underworld of militant Islamist groups and seeking weapons of mass destruction. Iran, Iraq and North Korea were portrayed by George W. Bush during the State of the Union as building nuclear weapons. ‘Axis of Evil’ denotes the common enemies of the United States and its allies in support of the war of terror.

For a complete transcript of the address, log on to:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/> (accessed on 04/05/2013).

¹¹ Tahir Abbas, ed., *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

question of power and desire'.¹² These encounters produce a repository of literature that functions as the lens through which the 'other' is experienced. At this point, 9/11 and its after-effects form a critical platform in carving out 'imaginary geographies' that represent Muslims in cramped frames of danger and insecurity. The representations of post-9/11 could be viewed as 'neo-Orientalism' at play which is an 'extension of the 'othering' of the Muslim subject throughout history'.¹³ British Muslim women authors belonging to the new emerging genre re-write the traditional, ethnic views of Islam and Muslims in terms of the new political rhetoric related to Islamic extremism and rising Islamophobia. They employ recycled Orientalist tropes to express the genuine voices of the insiders.

However, Said's 'Orientalism' proves its relevance in the post-9/11 context, even in Britain where South Asians as opposed to Middle Eastern people comprise the majority of the Muslim population.¹⁴ The misrepresentations of their Muslim identity as monolithic put them repeatedly within the bracket of 'fundamentalist/ exotic/ Eastern'. As a result, a predominant 'cultural clash' framework is strengthened in which Muslims become the sharp focus of anxieties in an increasingly globalised world. In his *Covering Islam* (1997), Said exposes the distorted perceptions of the Western media's monolithic images of Islam to present and re-present the Orient in the garb of 'villainous Arab terrorist' and 'black-masked Orientals'.¹⁵ Hence, prior to 9/11 the reporting of Islam in the West was rooted in disseminating negative images of Muslims.

¹² Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', available at http://courses.washington.edu/com597j/pdfs/bhabha_the%20other%20question.pdf (accessed on 29/04/2013).

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

¹⁴ Two-thirds of Muslims (68 per cent) are from an Asian ethnic background, including Pakistani (38 per cent) and Bangladeshi (15 per cent). Nearly half of all Muslims were born in the UK. Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2011.

¹⁵ Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (London: Vintage Books, 1997).

9/11 has replaced the media-coined term of 'Islamic fundamentalism' with 'Islamic Terrorism'.¹⁶

The process of 'Othering' has sought to move British Muslims further away from the mainstream, making the concept of 'integration' a mirage.

Other than the media, it is important to analyse how British literary and cultural representations have captured the tensions of nationalistic, religious and racist conflicts and the resulting imagined identities of stereotyped Islamic images. What is clearly evident from a thorough analysis of the immediate post-9/11 canonical and popular literature is the upsurge of stories with 'Islamic terrorism' as the central concern, bringing South Asian Muslims under the spotlight. In the broader context, descriptions of Islam after 9/11 by white British writers such as Martin Amis, Jeanette Winterson et al. present a hegemonic literary discourse on Islam, conditioned by a liberal-secular ideology. In contrast, there are a few literary and on-screen representations that write back to the Centre, disrupting the political and economic interests of the West in describing Muslims as the 'troublesome Other'. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam's *Map for Lost Lovers* (2004), Kenneth Glenaan's film *Yasmin* (2004), Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman seeks One* (2009), Roma Tearne's *Brixton Beach* (2009) and Rosie Dastgir's *A Small Fortune* (2012) are the major literary responses that incorporate the 9/11 attacks and the radical sentiments that followed in Britain. The works serve as a symbol of the current cultural and political tendency, problematising idealistic visions of multiculturalism and highlighting a more complex account of multicultural reality. They illustrate a parallel style in British Asian fiction to point out the validity and weaknesses of the British State policy prescriptions and formulas of 'celebratory' multicultural co-existence.

¹⁶ It was found that there was a year on year increase in the British Press and media coverage of British Muslims from 2000 to 2008 with exceptional peaks in 2001 and 2006. For more details see Moore, Mason and Lewis (2008).

As 9/11 is identified exclusively as a ‘male-operated’ affair, the majority of the 9/11 based writings concentrated on describing their male protagonists as variants of the stock image of the young, fiery Islamic fundamentalist who encourage ‘jihad’¹⁷ to fight against Western hegemony. At the same time, it would be a mistake to read them simply as augmenting the repertoire of clichéd figures of ‘bearded jihadists mumbling some anti-Western verses’.¹⁸ Rather, they symbolise a broader, complex political state of affairs where the more restrictive British State policies tend to push Muslims away from integration, putting them in the ‘conservative’ bloc that backfired in the form of extremist Islamism. On the other hand, the female Muslim characters tend to adopt markedly different strategies to survive the psychologically and emotionally stressful experiences to prove their allegiances in a politically confused situation.

My interest lies in an exploration of the gendered spaces of femininity that construct meaning and experience in the post 9/11 British South Asian society. Hardly any attention is paid to the impact of the post-9/11 national security era on Muslim women and specifically on those who wear a ‘headscarf’. According to Kandiyoti, two ways are open to feminists in the Muslim world: ‘either by denying that Islamic practices are necessarily oppressive or asserting that Islamic practices are not necessarily Islamic’.¹⁹ The second proposition speaks for an ‘uncorrupted original Islam against which current discriminatory practices may be denounced as falling short of truly Islamic ideals’.²⁰ The chapter focuses sharply on British South Asian Muslims having become specific targets of racist prejudice and hatred after 9/11 and 7/7, considering the literary works *Brick Lane* (Monica Ali, 2003), *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim*

¹⁷ Jihad is the protest against injustice and cruelty, which can be verbal and peaceful, but can develop into armed conflict. Armed jihad must be duly authorised by a designated religious leader.

¹⁸ Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p.9.

²⁰ Kandiyoti, 1995, 10.

Woman Seeks One (Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, 2009) and *A Small Fortune* (Rosie Dastgir, 2012). All from a South Asian lineage, these writers are of a similar generation to Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal discussed in the previous chapter. However, their concerns centre on an ongoing search for a comfortable position of being British Muslim women, rather than employing a wide-angle lens in exploring a politics of place and the inherent ambivalences in their cultural locations.

Monica Ali was born in 1967 in Dhaka, Bangladesh (then part of East Pakistan) and moved to North London in 1971 at the outbreak of the Civil war.²¹ She graduated from Oxford University. Shelina Zahra Janmohamed is a South Asian British Muslim, an Oxford graduate who grew up in North London.²² Rosie Dastgir is a British Pakistani writer who also graduated from Oxford.²³ All three have claimed the influence of a reputed university education in shaping their literary consciousness, identity and vision to form an antithesis to the cultural expressions and caricature of Islam as an embodiment of despotism, violence and oppression of women. It is notable that being Oxonians of hybrid Asian female Muslim identity, they consciously write out of the tradition of migrant and mainstream canonical English literature. Their narratives produce a poetics of diaspora where fragments of memory no longer provide a smooth base to construct an imagined homeland where return is no longer possible.²⁴ Instead, they decode the inner realms of their diasporic subjectivity through the process of writing as an agency of ‘making- up [their] memory’,²⁵ enabling ‘the possibility of a ‘return to selfhood through [a] dialogic and

²¹ <http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2007-A-Co/Ali-Monica.html> (accessed on 06/06/2013).

²² http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/muslimwomen/bio/shelina_zahra_janmohamed/ (accessed on 06/06/2013).

²³ Refer <http://www.rosiedastgir.com/> (accessed on 06/06/2013).

²⁴ Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

²⁵ Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1993).

interrogative encounter', that is both a confrontation with an 'internal/external other' as well as the 'site' of an existential and 'unfulfilled journey 'home'.²⁶

Nasta's view is relevant to examine how the boundaries of 'home' have actually been moved to reconfigure new homes in the imagination while inhabiting the multiple interstices of diaspora, to analyse the 'real' tumultuous political terrain. The writers change their approach to the subject matter from the usual, early thematic planes of diasporic ambivalence and cultural baggage to a more concrete display of the problems enveloping diasporic life. They narrate the acrobatics of diasporic selves, balanced between the implosions of the inner spheres of memories and the violent political outbursts, in a number of diverse imagined geographies, both within and outside the framework of their community. Reflections of 'home' still form a discernible aspect in these stories, though their imagination straddles different worlds of experience. They echo a dystopian tone to explore the impact of British State legislation on terrorism post-9/11, shifting the reader's gaze to the direction of racial politics and multiculturalist values based around their ethnic communities. It is inappropriate to examine the texts mentioned without laying out the real political scene in a post-9/11, post-07/07 climate that provided their inspiration.

Post 9/11, 07/07: The British Political Scene

Since the 9/11 attacks, the epithet 'Islamophobia'²⁷ has increasingly become a buzzword that brackets 'Muslims' together as a monolithic, violent, non-progressive, anti-Western religious group reluctant to embrace 'internal development, diversity and dialogue'.²⁸ A persuasive

²⁶ Nasta, 2002.

²⁷ 'Islamophobia' means 'irrational fear of Islam'. The term generally denotes 'dislike/hatred towards Muslims and Islam by the West'.

²⁸ In 1997, the Runnymede Trust produced a report entitled *Islamophobia: a Challenge for Us All*. The report highlights the root causes and subsequent consequences of Islamophobia in Britain and recommendations for

vindication of this denomination lies with decisive foreign policies and their repercussions. The USA and the UK, being two influential nations of the world, influence the international scene with their geopolitical strategies to tackle their ‘enemies’. The ‘war on terror’ invasions on Afghanistan and Iran, as well as the longstanding support by the West of Israel’s continued oppression of Palestine, have earned enormous antipathy and revulsion in Muslim communities worldwide, as these were viewed as tantamount to anti-Islamist warfare by the West. The UK, with Muslims as the largest religious minority group,²⁹ has been severely affected by the question of the extremist character of Islamism. It has placed the country at the terrorist threat level of ‘substantial’.³⁰ The events of 9/11, 07/07³¹ and the subsequent convictions and arrests of Muslims have fuelled the conundrum, leaving the question of the limitations of British state legislation and public policies of integration unanswered. To tackle the issues through a counter-radicalism mode, the British government has implemented a variety of policies that formulate newer strategies to build more cohesiveness among communities in a globalised and super-diverse British society. The plan of action also encompasses the frameworks of policing, security-intelligence services, the criminal justice system and the law to manage risk in terms of threat, vulnerability and consequence.

practical action. For more details, see The Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: its Features and Dangers* (1996) and *Islamophobia: Challenge for Us All* (1997).

²⁹ According to the 2011 census data, Muslims constitute 4.8% of the total population, i.e. an increase of 1.8% since 2001. For more details refer <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-286262> (accessed on 20/07/2013). See also appendices V, VI & VII.

³⁰ The terrorist threat level indicates the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the UK. Of the five levels of threat, ‘substantial’ indicates that an attack is a strong possibility. In mainland Britain, the threat level is substantial from international terrorism. Refer <https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency/terrorism-threat-levels> (accessed on 20/06/2013).

³¹ On July 5, 2005, London became a victim of her first ever home-grown terrorist attack operated by second-generation British Muslim youths of Pakistani, Kashmiri and Caribbean descent. This has undoubtedly disfigured the credibility of Islam as a peaceful religion, placing Muslims in the bleak position of a ‘fearful other’.

As a result of the tragic events that followed 9/11 in the U.S. and Europe, radical political Islam has been brought to the forefront of the interest of national security. Islam has been branded as monolithic and anti-Western and Muslims carry the ‘terrorist’ stigma. As a counter-measure to curb violent Islamism anti-terror legislation has been enforced throughout the U.S and Western Europe. This has confirmed a new barbarism³² and strengthened neo-Orientalist³³ attitudes towards Islam, as Samuel Huntington has reflected in his *Clash of Civilizations*³⁴ thesis. In Britain, New Labour introduced five anti-terror statutes: the Terrorism Act 2000, the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, the Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.³⁵ The laws were enacted to counter the threat

³² Paul Richards has used the term to criticise representations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing that violence, and present the violence as resulting from traits embedded in local cultures.

³³ Neo-Orientalism is a pejorative term to describe modern incarnations of Orientalist thinking. The term is often used in academic literature to critique Western attitudes to Islam and the Islamic world post 9/11. See Dag Tuastad, 2003; Paul Richards, 1996; Samuel Huntington, 1996; Daniel Pipes, 2003.

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington in his work “Clash of Civilisations” analyses contemporary conflicts in the world, suggesting that civilization and identity would be increasingly key determinants in international relations and the ideological differences would create fodder for a clash between civilisations. He concludes with a prophecy that civilization divides and misunderstandings would stir the debates to come.

³⁵ *The Terrorism Act 2000* is an Act to make provisions about terrorism and to make temporary provision for Northern Ireland about the prosecution and punishment of certain offences, the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order. This was the first counter-terrorism legislation to be passed since 1989 with the main aim to outlaw terrorist groups in Britain. The *Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001* is an Act to amend the *Terrorism Act 2000*; to make further provision about terrorism and security; to provide for the freezing of assets; to make provision about immigration and asylum; to amend or extend the criminal law and powers for preventing crime and enforcing that law; to make provision about the control of pathogens and toxins; to provide for the retention of communications data; to provide for implementation of Title VI of the Treaty on European Union; and for connected purposes. The main features of this Act were based on tightening immigration policies and increasing police powers to ‘stop and search’ suspects with a provision to imprison them for up to a minimum period of 14 days. The *Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005* is an Act to provide for the making against individuals involved in terrorism-related activity of orders imposing obligations on them for purposes connected with preventing or restricting their further involvement in such activity; to make provision about appeals and other proceedings relating to such orders; and for connected purposes. The Act caused wide controversies as it cited the granting of permission to extend the detention of the suspected terrorists without charge up to a period of 28 days. The *Terrorism Act 2006* makes provision for and about offences relating to conduct carried out, or capable of being carried out, for purposes connected with terrorism; to amend enactments relating to terrorism; to amend the Intelligence Services Act 1994 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; and for connected purposes. The Act followed the 7/7 attacks, proposing an increase to a 90 day pre-charge detention, influencing the rule of habeas corpus. The *Counter-Terrorism Act 2008* is an Act to confer further powers to gather and share information for counterterrorism and other purposes; to make further provision about the detention and questioning of terrorist suspects and the prosecution and punishment of terrorist offences; to impose notification requirements on persons convicted of such offences; to

from ‘denationalised’ groups like Al-Qaeda, who have religio-political ideologies and are thought to conduct terrorism on a global level.³⁶ Jason Burke, in his book, *Al-Qaeda*, indicates that Al-Qaeda operates purely through an ideology without any national affiliation attracting persons *en rapport* to carry out the ideological struggle of *jihad*.³⁷ The anti-terrorism Acts as well as the bilateral extradition treaties³⁸ were passed by Parliament to ensure a safe and secure society, to block terrorism and related crimes from both within and outside. By contrast, the enforcement of laws, targeting Muslims for ‘wider stop and search powers’,³⁹ lack justice and a fair trial. This has contributed to a further drift of Muslims away from mainstream British society and culture. The discriminating attitude has not only increased radical behaviour and a climate of fear in the country,⁴⁰ but also trampled human rights.⁴¹ The media has magnified the news of

confer further powers to act against terrorist financing, money laundering and certain other activities; to provide for review of certain Treasury decisions and about evidence in, and other matters connected with, review proceedings; to amend the law relating to inquiries; to amend the definition of “terrorism”; to amend the enactments relating to terrorist offences, control orders and the forfeiture of terrorist cash; to provide for recovering the costs of policing at certain gas facilities; to amend provisions about the appointment of special advocates in Northern Ireland; and for connected purposes. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled the ‘stop and search’ under the Terrorism Act 2000 as illegal and a breach of the right to liberty and privacy. See also European Court of Human Rights case of *Gillan and Quinton v. The United Kingdom*. (2010), European Court of Justice case of *Kadi and Al Barakat v Council of the European Union and Commission of the European Communities*.

(For original documents visit: www.legislation.gov.uk) (accessed on 19/05/2013).

³⁶ Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multiculturalism: The British Experience* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

³⁷ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 1994).

³⁸ The UK-US extradition treaty was signed on 31 March 2003 and came into force in April 2007, following the US Senate's ratification of the Treaty. The UK's arrangements for extradition to the US set out in the Treaty came into force in advance of this date as they were included within the Extradition Act 2003. As with the European Arrest Warrant, a person can be extradited under the Treaty for any offence with a minimum sentence of one year.

The Treaty provides for the UK to refuse extradition where the offence for which extradition is sought is punishable by the death penalty except where "the Requesting State provides an assurance that the death penalty will not be imposed or, if imposed, will not be carried out." <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/> (accessed on 02/06/2013).

³⁹ Guardian Unlimited, ‘Stop and Search Powers Illegal, European Court Rules’, *The Guardian*, 12 January 2010. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/12/stop-and-search-ruled-illegal> (accessed on 20/07/2013).

See also European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Gillan and Quinton v. The United Kingdom* (2010).

⁴⁰ Peter Mandaville, ‘Muslim Transnational Identity and State Responses in Europe and the UK after 9/11: Political Community, Ideology and Authority’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(3) (2009), pp.491-506.

arrests of Muslims under the anti-terrorist laws. Since 9/11 and the subsequent 7/7 bombings, Muslims were specific targets of suspicion and arrest without charge.

The case of Muslim women in the post-9/11 environment becomes more problematic as they are trapped at the intersection of the prejudice against Islam, civil liberties and law; they face unique forms of discrimination within their communities unlike their male counterparts. It is important to highlight that there is no unitary category such as 'Muslim women' to denote and contain the diverse experiences and grievances of women who represent themselves as 'Muslim'.⁴² They come from different ethnic, racial and class backgrounds with different political views and levels of religious conviction, i.e. from being secular to strict orthodoxy. Muslim women are often stereotyped as oppressed, powerless and silent, or, after 9/11, as in favour of terrorist sentiments. Prior to 9/11, the female Muslim religious attires like the hijab (headscarf), jilbab, burkha and niqab were interpreted as 'exotic', but 9/11 has overturned this notion to make them a dangerous symbol, marking the women wearing them as the most obvious targets.⁴³ The intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and religion produce a wide range of

⁴¹ The European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) protocol Section I states the prohibition of torture (Article 3), Right to a fair trial (Article 6), Prohibition of discrimination (Article 14). The Human Rights Act 1998 was passed by the UK Parliament to give further effect to rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act was passed by the Parliament to give powers to hold any foreign national suspected of terrorist activities. This did not comply with the Article 5 of the ECHR which states the Right to liberty and security. It was almost a 'ruling out' by the UK legislation on grounds of possibility of 'threatening the life of the nation'. The UK was the only country in the European Union to take the stand. In 2004, the Court of Appeal, under Lord Woolf, repealed the law stating that detention without fair trial was incompatible with British and International law. The Home Office was reluctant to give a formal validation to the Court's rule suggesting that a non-custodial response without charge would be adopted, applying to both British and foreign nationals, for an indefinite period if an individual is suspected of being engaged in domestic or international terrorist actions. http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/data.pdf>, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmconst/323/323i.pdf>, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/60UDHR/bookleten.pdf>

⁴² Sahar. F. Aziz, *The Muslim 'Veil' Post 9/11*, Institute of Social Policy and Understanding and the British Council, November (2012).

⁴³ <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/08/12/generation.islam.hijab/> (accessed on 23/07/2013). In 2006, Shabina Begum, a 17 year old British Muslim girl, filed a case against her Head teacher at Denbigh High School, for obstructing her

engagements with the ‘cultural racist’ attitude of the mainstream population towards the so-called ‘Islamofascists’.⁴⁴

Along with this, the British government policy of multiculturalism has been perceived as a ‘failure’ to respond properly to the changing composition of society. It is argued that multicultural policies have ‘failed to deliver fair, stable and harmonious societies, at least as judged by both the objective reality (significant levels of inequality, racism and community tensions) and the subjective reality (continued emotional resistance to diversity and a desire to halt or reverse the trend)’.⁴⁵ In the current political and international context, the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism has been related to the suggestion of ‘strained’ relationships between Muslim communities and Western nation-states.⁴⁶ In 2001, following the race riots⁴⁷ in the inner cities of England, the multicultural model of managing diversity was called into question. The concept of ‘community cohesion’⁴⁸ replaced multiculturalism with a view to encouraging a broader consensus in support of diversity. It emphasises the need for more explicitly articulated ‘shared

religious obligation to wear a ‘jilbab’ at school. Begum filed a case stating Article 9 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of ECHR, but she lost her case when the House of Lords decided in the school’s favour. For more details, see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldjudgmt/jd060322/begum.pdf>. See also, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/mar/23/schools.religion> (accessed on 22/07/2013).

⁴⁴ The term ‘Islamofascists’ was first used by the then U.S President George Bush in his 2001 “War on Terror” speech.

⁴⁵ Ted Cantle, *Interculturalism: The New Era Of Social Cohesion and Diversity* (London: Palgrave, 2012), p.53.

⁴⁶ In the Munich Security Conference 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron declared that “the doctrine of State multiculturalism has failed”. For a full transcript of the speech, go to <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology> (accessed on 20/06/2012).

⁴⁷ The 2001 riots in England were between the South Asian minority ethnic communities and the neo-fascists like British National Party and the National Front in the cities of Oldham, Leeds, Burnley and Bradford.

⁴⁸ Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. Integration is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another. This is a key contributor to successful Community Cohesion. A cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

For more details, see Local Government Association (LGA) and others (2002). See also National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), *Cohesion Guide*; Ted Cantle, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (London: Home Office, 2001).

values' and community relations. The 'cohesion strategy' was criticised for its failure to address unequal gender and other power relations within minority communities.⁴⁹ Community Cohesion, as a social policy formula, adopted a 'multi-faithism' approach to manage race relations between the State and minority communities.⁵⁰

Paul Gilroy suggests that in the race-class-ethnicity connections, the status of 'race' should be dealt with differently 'as a distinct order of social phenomena *sui generis*'.⁵¹ Cohesion was criticised for its inability to address the real problems of racism, instead focusing on the relations between groups in order to gloss over fundamental inequalities.⁵² The concept faced a severe setback after the London bombings in July 2005, bringing the debates on extremism and Muslims into sharp focus. In response to the eruption of civil disturbances, as well as home grown terrorist activities, the integration policy was re-designed as 'Interculturalism',⁵³ to provide active integration modes to diverse communities. Interculturalism promotes 'cross-cultural interaction, intercultural dialogue and communication'.⁵⁴ The evolution of Social Cohesion and Interculturalism policies has stimulated a renewed interest in the 'contact hypothesis',⁵⁵ encouraging different communities to come together and interact to reduce

⁴⁹ Pragna Patel and Hannana Siddiqui, 'Shrinking Secular Spaces: Asian Women at the Intersect of Race, Religion and Gender', in *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities: Issues for Policy and Practice*, ed. by Ravi K. Thiara and Aisha K. Gill (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010), pp. 102-127.

⁵⁰ Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

⁵¹ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.19.

⁵² Cantle, 2012.

⁵³ Interculturalism is a term giving a name to attempts to find a compromise between the polar opposites of multiculturalism and assimilation. It is sympathetic and respectful towards ethno-cultural-religious diversities. Its roots can be traced back to the late 1950s. See Ted Cantle, 2012.

See also Michael Emerson (ed.), *Interculturalism: Europe and its Muslims in Search of Sound Societal Modes* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2011).

⁵⁴ James Malcolm *Interculturalism: Theory and Policy* (London: Baring Foundation, 2008).

⁵⁵ The Contact Hypothesis was put forward by Gordon. W. Allport in 1954, in which he stated that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1954). See also Marie Louis Pratt (2002).

intergroup prejudice.⁵⁶ However, Arun Kundnani warns about the drawbacks of Social Cohesion and Interculturalism as:

On a local level, the new solutions are as banal as the analysis: cross-cultural contact, interfaith dialogue, twinning of schools, fostering understanding and respect. Not so much celebrating diversity as kissing-and-making-up; reconciliation without remedial action. The report laments the decline of civic pride but offers these towns nothing to take pride in – no hope of economic development or revival of local democracy, just more ‘neighbourliness’.⁵⁷

Kundnani hints at how interculturalism should not prove itself to be a leitmotif of the early multiculturalism, which only had a superficial thematic paradigm of ‘celebrating differences’ rather than straightening the creases related to structural and gender inequalities. While interculturalism fosters a faith-based intercultural-dialogue, it positions itself somewhere between assimilation and multiculturalism. While the tenets sound promising, their practicality is doubtful when the majority of the Muslim community is opposed to any form of assimilation. The claim for the incorporation of Islamic Sharia law alongside the current English legal system has invited stormy debates in the British political and cultural dialogue.⁵⁸ The outcry that ‘multiculturalism is bad for women’⁵⁹ gets repeated with interculturalism, as the ‘faith-based’ approach facilitates the concentration of power in the hands of community leaders. Thereby, the status of underprivileged women within the minority communities remains stagnant, as they are caught in the crosshairs of gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion. Therefore, British Muslim women, especially in the post 9/11 era, become a *separate* demographic group that has been

⁵⁶ Cantle, 2012, p.145.

⁵⁷ Arun Kundnani, *The Death of Multiculturalism* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2002). <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-death-of-multiculturalism/> (accessed on 23/07/2013).

⁵⁸ The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, supported the inclusion of parts of Sharia law into the UK law system to maintain social cohesion. This was rejected by the UK ministers declaring the proposal as “unacceptable” as it would affect the social identity of Western democracy. See BBC News, *Incorporating Sharia into legal Systems*, February 8, 2008.

⁵⁹ Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

largely ignored in civil rights, national security law and policy debates.⁶⁰ At this juncture, various difficult questions arise about how the government's multi and intercultural policies would be effective to deal with gender-based discrimination and illegitimate practices such as domestic abuse and forced marriages in relation to minority women.

The *separatism* is widened when media discourses (news print, television, mainstream cinema, canonical and popular English literature) deliver a discourse of demonization of Islam and its followers, placing them within stereotypical frames.⁶¹ However, it is important to identify the current of an on-going alternative discourse in diasporic literature by British South Asian Muslim writers, to deconstruct the prevailing position of Muslims as the 'other' or the 'enemy within'. These discourses are firmly based on the current political climate and negotiations, unveiling different angles of the 'Muslim' concept in the UK, providing a conceptual illustration of the diverse aspects of the Muslim organisational structure through well-knit stories of their literary imaginary.

Creative responses post- 9/11: British South Asian women's writing.

The shadow of post-9/11 terror and vulnerability has penetrated contemporary British cultural productions influencing the aesthetic mood of creative responses. While the mainstream literary

⁶⁰ Sahar. F. Aziz, 2012.

⁶¹ Recent research conducted by Cardiff University, School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies on media coverage of British Muslims identified that the coverage of British Muslims has increased significantly since 2000, peaking in 2006, and remaining at high levels in 2007 and 2008. This rise is partly explained by the increase in coverage devoted to terrorism and terrorism related stories - 36% of stories about British Muslims overall are about terrorism. This is especially notable after the terrorist attacks in the US and the UK in 2001 and 2005. The study also notes the increasing importance of stories, in recent years, focusing on religious and cultural differences between Islam and British culture or the West in general (22% of stories overall) or Islamic extremism (11% overall). In summary, the research found that the bulk of coverage of British Muslims - around two thirds - focuses on Muslims as a threat (in relation to terrorism), a problem (in terms of differences in values) or both (Muslim extremism in general). For more details, refer to Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis, *Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008* (Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, 2008).

canon tries to capture the new world order and its associated 'traumaculture', foregrounding the devastating spectre of terrorism post-9/11, a major portion of contemporary British South Asian literature continues its preoccupation with exploring new imaginative landscapes to compose improvised versions of 'home', 'memory' and re-discovering the essence of 'Britishness'.⁶² On the other hand, British South Asian Muslim authors write about the narcissistic views of the West that deliberately position Islam as a 'zombie Other', unveiling the deeper semantic layers of 'difference' in the post-9/11 era. A parallel pattern of narrative style is also active, which explicitly articulates the oppressive regime within the communities as well as the struggles, challenges and abuses that deprived British South Asian Muslim women face.⁶³ Despite a long

⁶² Roma Tearne's well-received novel *Brixton Beach* (2007) tells the story of Alica Fonseka, a precocious nine year old girl who finds happiness residing in her grandparents' house on the Sri Lankan coastline. The novel is woven with the Srilankan Civil War in the 1970s and the strife between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. When Alice's parents immigrate to London in her early childhood to escape the political commotion, the memories of her homeland, grandparents' love and the sea become a safe haven for Alice to escape her loneliness in London. Tearne passionately draws the beauty of Sri Lanka, in contrast to the cold realities of a grey London. 'Srilanka' forms a powerful secure space even when the characters shift to London and their world disintegrates. The novel begins with the panic-stricken London on the day of the 07/07 terrorist attacks. Though Tearne doesn't deal with its implications in the work, the starkly hinted 'insecurity' element in both the *homelands* (Srilanka and London) is noteworthy. Roma Tearne is a British South Asian writer, who immigrated from Srilanka to London during her early childhood. Roma Tearne, *Brixton Beach* (London: Harper Press, 2007).

Hema Macherla is an acclaimed British Indian writer whose *Breeze from River Manjeera* (2008) has won several awards and praise. The novel is about an Indian girl called Neela who arrives in London as her husband's dependant. Neela becomes a victim of domestic violence and abuse in the household of her in-laws in London. The cruel treatment she receives from her husband and in-laws makes her feel London as dark and gloomy while the fresh memories of her village and the river Manjeera in Hyderabad provide solace. The novel powerfully portrays the echoes of home along with the issues of domestic violence and arranged marriages within South Asian communities and the struggles of young women to escape tradition in pursuit of freedom and happiness.

Hema Macherla, *Breeze from River Manjeera* (London: Linen Press, 2008).

⁶³ A number of semi/autobiographical narratives by British South Asian Muslim women display the theme of domestic violence, abuse and forced marriages within the diasporic Muslim communities. Sameem Ali's *Belongingness* (2009) is her autobiography which tells the cruelties she had to face in her own home while she grew up. Being a British-Pakistani, she had to follow strict religious rules to which she felt 'alien'. She was continuously tortured by her mother and elder brother which eventually pushed her into self-harm. At the age of 13 she was taken to Pakistan for the first time where she was forced to marry a relative. Finally she eloped with her love abandoning her family.

Jasvinder Sanghera is a British-Indian Muslim activist in London. Her work *Daughters of Shame* gives a true account of the torture that British South Asian Muslim women suffer. She highlights the issues of forced marriage and abuse in the name of 'izzat' or community honour. In a way, the problems within the diasporic minority communities point towards the disadvantages of top-down UK policy implementation. Jasvinder Sanghera *Daughters of Shame* (London: Hodder, 2007). Qaisra Sharaz is a well-known British-Pakistani writer and educationist. Her novels like *The Holy Woman* (2001) and *Typhoon* unfold the painful realities inside Muslim

list of well-documented, male-dominated fictional discourses on the post-9/11 British politico-cultural climate, surprisingly, there is a remarkable absence of female voices on the theme.

A thorough survey of the invisibility of female South Asian Muslim presence in post-9/11 British literary narratives demonstrates the existence of a conservative disposition, reluctant to disclose the radical character of the religion. The repressed/ controlled/ oppressed status of Muslim women within the male-dominated household defines their absence from the public domain. It is often implied that Muslim women could come out of the cocoon of traditional community norms only by casting off the burka/hijab, going out to work, claiming their rights, effecting their enfranchisement from the stricter rules of Islam. The complex dynamics of the publishing industry also put pressure on Muslim women writers in the West to conform to this normative homogenized representation.⁶⁴ A few South Asian female representations have appeared that write of Muslim experience in post-9/11 Britain, placing their articulations neatly in the received political rhetoric surrounding the British governmental public policies, Immigration Acts and Human Rights legislation. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Muneeza Shamsie's *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women* (2008), Shelina Zahra Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman Seeks the One* (2009), Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009), Safiya Husain's *Three Thousand Miles for a Wish* (2011) and Rosie Dastgir's *A Small Fortune* (2012) are some of these literary works.

The narratives depict the various ways in which the 9/11 and 07/07 attacks have disturbed the British politico-cultural make-up, addressing feelings of intense alienation that result from

community life. Qaisra Shahraz, *The Holy Woman* (London: Black Amber, 2001). Shahraz, *Typhoon* (London: Arcadia Books, 2007). There are numerous short stories and anthologies by British Asian Muslim women which reveal the darker areas of Muslim community life.

⁶⁴ Mohja Kahf, 'On Being a Muslim Writer in the West', *Islamica Magazine*, 17 (2010), p.78. Available at <http://islamica-magazine.com/?p=561>. (accessed 25/07/2013).

being labelled as ‘unfit’ to conventional social expectations. While Monica Ali, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir provide explicit details of post-9/11 British Muslim experiences, the others mentioned above just give a fleeting reference to 9/11 to explain the Islamic terms such as *Jihad* and *Ummah*, painting the religion in secular colours.

Post- 9/11 and the Politico-Cultural Zeitgeist: Monica Ali *Brick Lane* (2003), Shelina Zahra Janmohamed *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman Seeks the One* (2009) and Rosie Dastgir *A Small Fortune* (2012).

On the closing page of Monica Ali’s haunting and critically acclaimed novel *Brick Lane*, Razia says to Nazneen that ‘this is England. You can do whatever you like’.⁶⁵ The novel ends on a positive note with two generations of British Asian Muslim women declaring aloud their British Asian female sensibility and freedom to make their own choices. But the novel, as a whole, contains a general mood of gloom and defiance. *Brick Lane* was published in 2003 and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the George Orwell Prize for political writing and the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. It is an epic saga of British Bangladeshi diasporic life whose major preoccupation is as much with the fragments of memory, loss and recollection of a lost homeland, as about a politically tumultuous Britain.

It is set in Tower Hamlets, between 1985 to 2002, a period of brewing political, ethnic and religious violence. Nazneen is a Bangladeshi migrant who lives in Brick Lane with her husband Chanu and two daughters. The other prominent characters in the novel are Nazneen’s friend Razia Iqbal and Karim, the secret lover of Nazneen, who is a British-born young Bangladeshi Muslim. Nazneen confronts severe difficulties in coming to terms with British life in her early days in London, but she refuses to return to Bangladesh in the end. Chanu, her

⁶⁵ Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Doubleday Publishers, 2003), p.413.

husband, goes back to Dhaka after several years in Britain, emotionally stirred by the ‘Going Homeland Syndrome’.⁶⁶

Despite the definite frames of its dual locations – whether in Dhaka or in London – the novel encompasses diverse aspects of British Bangladeshi lives. Monica Ali meticulously captures the extravagant nostalgic notions of the diasporic psyche that help them to safely anchor their lives caught in the dilemma of dual worlds. *Brick Lane* also powerfully exposes the political encounters that British Bangladeshi Muslim communities are confronted with, in addition to their vigorous engagement to redefine the concept of ‘Britishness’. Through the character of Nazneen, the text describes the conventional model of an alienated migrant self that is afflicted by intense inner distress. Ali portrays Nazneen as a typical migrant defined by an initial traumatic arrival from a lost homeland, an intense desire to return and a strong sense of alienation and resistance to assimilate into the mainstream. Nazneen’s extreme boredom and loneliness in her council flat in Tower Hamlets are described figuratively by comparison with the tattoo lady in the next flat: ‘Every time Nazneen saw [the tattoo lady] she wore the same look of boredom and detachment. Such a state was sought by the sadhus who walked in rags through the Muslim villages.’⁶⁷ The ugly tattoos on the body of the lady serve as a metaphor to denote Nazneen’s detachment, discomfort and displeasure in the new circumstances. When Dr. Azad speaks to Chanu about immigrants’ psychology, Chanu replies that ‘the pull of the land is stronger than the pull of blood’.⁶⁸ He says, ‘They don’t ever really leave home. Their bodies are

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.13.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.24.

here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just recreating the villages here.’⁶⁹

Brick Lane lacks the positive tones of hope and confidence throughout that it conveys towards the end. Contrary to the celebratory moods in the novels of Meera Syal, as described in the previous chapter, the overall mood in *Brick Lane* is that of depression and defiance. In the beginning of the novel, Nazneen is a depressed soul struggling to free herself from the chains of the Asian culture of arranged marriages and suppressed desire for freedom. She is a practising moderate Muslim whose focus on Islam shifts to a radical, protesting extremist Islamism due to her association with Karim, the radical leader of the ‘Bengal Tigers’. The novel deals largely with the effects of Bangladeshi mass migration⁷⁰ to Britain in the late 1960s, i.e. after the implementation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962.⁷¹ *Brick Lane* tries to chart the changes in diasporic lives in Britain (from 1985 to 2002), both in terms of self and community psyche, as well as the government policy and the factors of discrimination in public sectors. It is interesting to note Chanu’s briefing of the Tower Hamlets Council housing official with the 1985 statistics on overcrowding: ‘Three point five Bangladeshis to one room. That’s a council statistic... All crammed together. They can’t stop having children, or they bring over all their

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.24.

⁷⁰ South Asian presence was visible in Britain even before the formation of the East India Company in 1599. One of the earliest South Asian migrants was Sake Dean Mahomet, a Bengali Muslim, famously known as the “Shampooing Surgeon”. He introduced ‘shampooing baths’ and therapeutic massages in Britain and Ireland. Arguably, he is also the first South Asian to have written a book in English and introduced the Indian Curry House Restaurant in Britain. Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes* (London: Pluto, 1986); Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.17.

⁷¹ The Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed in 1962 to restrict the flow of Commonwealth immigrants to Britain. Only those applicants with government-issued employment vouchers (issued to limited skilled migrants like medical doctors) were allowed to settle in Britain.

See <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/nationalityinstructions/nisec2gens/ec/immigrationacts?view=Binary> (accessed on 31/07/2013).

relatives and pack them in like little fish in a tin.’⁷² He hints again at the issue of *overcrowding* in the community in the second half of the novel set in 2001: ‘It’s *Overcrowding*... *Overcrowding* is one of the worst problems in our community. Four or five Bangladeshis to one room. That’s an official council statistic.’⁷³

Ali points out the static local socio-economic and demographic context of the Borough of Tower Hamlets which has been marked as an ‘ethnic ghetto’ with deprived living conditions since the period of South Asian mass migration. *Brick Lane* throws light on the deep-seated inequalities that British South Asians face in the public sector. The cross government strategies⁷⁴ to improve quality, increase race equality and community cohesion and the gentrification of the ethnic minorities prove totally inadequate. When Chanu discusses the issue with Dr. Azad, he says: ‘This is the tragedy. When you expected to be so-called integrated. But you will never get the same treatment. Never.’⁷⁵ He explains to Nazneen about the unemployment rate among the Bangladeshi youth in Brick Lane who have turned themselves into extremists. In the demonstration by the Bengal Tigers chanting ‘Workers United’, Chanu ridicules: ‘See those people down there, chanting? All aged about –what? – forty-five to sixty-five. Workers United? They are not even workers! Ninety-nine percent, they are unemployed’.⁷⁶ In the inner city areas crowded with the lower working class diasporic communities and mainstream whites, structural disadvantages cause undesirable competition among them for what are often called the crumbs of

⁷² Ali, 2003, p.39.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 273.

⁷⁴ The cross government strategy is the Government’s commitment to create a society in which every individual, whatever their racial or ethnic origin, is able to fulfil his or her potential through the enjoyment of equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities. See Communities and Local Government, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: A Progress Report on Government’s Strategy for Race Equality and Community Cohesion* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007).

⁷⁵ Ali, 2003, p.204.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.388.

society.⁷⁷ This has resulted in explicit expressions of racism and violence, which is an indication of the widening gap between the minorities, especially Muslims, and the mainstream, where ‘celebration of differences’ gets translated into the ‘death knell’ of multiculturalism.

Monica Ali’s British-born characters in the novel exhibit a defiant, alienated stance from British society and culture. Ali demonstrates this proposition by mentioning the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent politico-cultural responses and discourses in Britain that have affected Muslims in particular. It is surprising that the first British Asian literary narrative to respond to and incorporate 9/11, above all the existing pre or post-9/11 stereotypic Muslim images, is by a female; *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. This is perhaps indicative of the intensity of the physical, psychological and emotional trauma and enduring a victimized status of mistaken identity borne by British Asian Muslim women in a post-9/11 context.

Ali reflects on the implications of state-sanctioned racism and the strong resentment of multiculturalism by the far-right when Shahana (Nazneen’s elder daughter) picks up a leaflet flung into their hallway that reads:

‘Multicultural murder’: In our schools... in Religious Instruction, what will your child be taught? Matthew, Luke and John? No. Krishna, Abraham and Muhammad. Christianity is being slaughtered... When Muslim extremists are planning to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic, using a combination of immigration, high birth rates and conversion... We urge you to withdraw your child from Religious Instruction. This is your right as a parent under section 25 of the 1944 Education Act.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics: The British Experience* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.186.; David Garbin Cronem, *Bangladeshi Diaspora in the UK: Some Observations on Socio-Cultural Dynamics, Religious Trends and Transnational Politics* Conference on Human Rights and Bangladesh, SOAS, London, June, (2005).

⁷⁸ Ali, 2003, pp. 206-208.

In this context, the optimism resonated at the end seems unrealistic, as throughout the novel Ali underscores the collusion of political, economic, social, cultural and religious forces that make the position of ethnic communities ‘vulnerable’. As Sara Upstone suggests, the opportunities for cross-cultural interaction have been undercut for the British Muslim by a new and insidious form of religious discrimination.⁷⁹ In the novel, even before the 9/11 attacks, police visit the mosque and question the Imam, while everyone doubts if a church has ever been treated with such flagrant disrespect.⁸⁰ *Brick Lane* represents the Oldham and Burnley ethnic riots in 2001, as well as the post-Gulf war tensions and the 9/11 attacks. When Chanu, Nazneen and Shahana watch television coverage of the Oldham riots, they find the:

pictures of hooded young men, scarves wrapped Intifada-style around their faces, hurling stones, furious with the cars that they set alight. Between the scarves and the hoods it was possible to catch glimpses of brown skin...In Oldham, the roads were pocked with holes and houses packed together, tight as teeth.⁸¹

The mention of the ‘Oldham riots’ is indicative of cultural identity politics and polarised religious ethnic stratification. The descriptions of these riot scenes serves to set out a suitable context to mention the impact of 9/11 within a wider discourse of race relations in Britain. This is influenced considerably by external politics, including Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan. Ali, at this point, directly signals a ‘politics of fear’ of Islamophobia and the cultural essentialist notions, mainly fomented by the British media. *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*, the report by the Runnymede Trust says that unemployment and social exclusion breeds

⁷⁹ Sara Upstone, *British Asian Fiction: Twenty-First Century Voices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.172.

⁸⁰ Ali, 2003, p.169.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.228.

territoriality, gang formation, anti-social conduct, including criminality which form a fertile seed bed for extremism.⁸²

In the wake of 9/11, violent protests erupt as if ‘a pinch of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on the Dogwood Estate.’ Chanu augurs a violent ‘backlash’ that proves true. Razia wears her Union Jack sweatshirt and it is spat on; Sorupa’s daughter has her hijab pulled off on her way to college.⁸³ The conflict between the ‘Lion Hearts’ and the ‘Bengal Tigers’ (the far-right and Muslim extremist groups, respectively) worsens after the 9/11 attacks. The ‘Lion Hearts’ flyers keep fluttering throughout *Brick Lane* with anti-Islamic words defining Islam as a religion that gives birth to evil mass murders abroad and spawning vicious rioters in English towns.⁸⁴

Karim, the British-born Bangladeshi who is one of the ‘Bengal Tigers’, has a stutter, which reveals his self-doubt and diffidence. The anti-Islamist execration of the rough youths of the ‘Lion Hearts’ pushes Karim into the public arena. He expresses his resentment against the marginalisation of British-Asians, reclaiming his British Muslim identity. The description of a female protest group, the *Bethnal Green Islamic Girls’ group*⁸⁵ taking part in the demonstration along with their Bangladeshi patriarchs symbolizes the sprouting of new subsets of extremist Islamic expression. Ali, here, tries to narrate the production of new gendered spaces of ethnicity; a redefinition of their ethnic make-up against the conventional religious structures. This makes Ali’s text a British South Asian narrative with feminist overtones. In the final section of the novel, Nazneen’s decision to remain in Britain and her ice-skating in a sari provide clues to the psychological conditioning of her diasporic self to position herself comfortably amidst the

⁸² The Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1997), p.14.

⁸³ Ali, 2003, p.305.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.339.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.386.

hyphenated identities of being a 'British Asian Muslim woman'. She tries to carve out a fresh and rejuvenated zone of individuality by being a 'female British South Asian Muslim':

The plane would leave tomorrow and she would not be on it... She looked up at the wallpaper, shyly turning in on itself. Nothing would stick to those walls. They would have to be scraped clean and begun afresh. Three, four, five, six kameez folded. What else to pack?... A cracked mug bearing a picture of a thatch-roofed cottage... It was a picture of England. Roses around the door. Nazneen had never seen this England, but now, the idea formed that she would visit it.⁸⁶

Ali conveys the gradual process of psychological conditioning happening within Nazneen. The 'wallpaper' stands as a symbol for her desire to 'return' which is scraped off and has turned into a myth. At the same time, the 'folding of 'kameez' denotes that part of her *diasporic cultural self* which will remain unaltered. The picture of the 'English cottage and garden on the mug' suggests the possibility of Nazneen's freedom from the imposed cultural ties and the wish for assimilation that is sprouting in her mind. On the other hand, her daughter Shahana is totally disinclined towards 'Bengali culture':

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 dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than a poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care. Shahana did not want to go back home.⁸⁷

Shahana shows herself to be assimilated into Britain, in contrast with the attempted situational hybridity of Nazneen. In contrast to Hanif Kureishi's *Black Album* or Nadeem Aslam's *Map of*

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 365-366.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.144.

Lost Lovers, Ali's *Brick Lane* effectively argues for a possibility of forming successful grafts of ethnic identities, i.e. being British with specific religious beliefs, gender and cultural norms. Unlike Attia Hosain, whom I discussed in Chapter 3, who impressively captured the muted female Muslim lives inside the 'zenanas' in the pre-Partition era, Monica Ali neatly delivers the image of 'modern' diasporic Muslim South Asia. While Hosain positions her characters in the axis of class divisions in the South Asian cultural maps, Ali centres her characters with 'class' as a powerful determinant on a changing platform of 'Britishness' at the crossroads of ethnicity, religion and gender roles.

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* defines a distinct identity in British Asian literature, claiming a new identity in British Muslim women's writing. Ali tries to present an authentic picture of a post-9/11 Britain, where Islamic fundamentalism and far-right politics equally hinder effective social cohesion. The novel observes that the persisting structural inequalities between the minorities and the whites as well as the class divisions within the communities are the major reasons for the disharmony. However, Ali notes 9/11 as a watershed, bringing 'Muslims' into the forefront as a reason for accelerating the strident disagreement between a secular 'us' and militant 'them'. After the 9/11 and 07/07 events, the stringent policy and legislation have widened the gaps between the communities and the blind fight against terrorism has been used as an excuse to trample upon human rights. *Brick Lane* warns against the inadequacy of British policy measures to tackle the existing disparities and the failure to bridge the gaps, in post-9/11, post-07/07 Britain.

The particular experiences of 'othering' of brown bodies as explained in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* interestingly coincide with the politicization of South Asian identities and reinforcement of racial and cultural 'borders' in post-9/11 Britain featured in *Love in a*

Headscarf. 'It was 11 September that marked the date of the very first time that I felt sub-human in Britain, and the first day that I felt scared to live in my own country,'⁸⁸ writes Shelina Zahra Janmohamed in her memoir *Love in a Headscarf*. The memoir tells of the author's efforts to find a suitable partner through an arranged marriage. During the search process, Janmohamed explores the mystic realm of Islamic faith to discover her real Islamic self and gain fresh perspectives on life and culture. She questions the inconspicuous cultural norms and procedures while trying to navigate between South Asian culture, Islam and her British identity. She challenges and disrupts the conventional codes that both her religion, culture, as well as the mainstream British, attribute to the Muslim female subject, by addressing the issues boldly through her efforts to break the cultural fetters and stereotypic perceptions. She goes mountaineering, drives a sports car and goes on a pilgrimage to Mecca with her female cousins. She presents a mature reflection on the complexities of faith, culture and identity without losing the sense of herself.

Janmohamed is a British-born Muslim of Indian descent. Her memoir, *Love in a Headscarf*, moves beyond the prescribed contours of a narrative of personal experiences of a Muslim woman, born and bred in Britain. Within the realms of diasporic writing, Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf* is 'a form of restless interrogation, undoing its very terms of reference as the point of departure lost along the way. If exile presumes an initial home and the eventual promise of a return, the questions met with *en route* consistently breach the boundaries of such an itinerary.'⁸⁹ *Love in a Headscarf* deconstructs any fixed frames or patterns of traditional diasporic narratives to claim a cultural identity and/or regional association. The voice of the

⁸⁸ Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman Seeks the One* (London: Aurum Press, 2009), p. 146.

⁸⁹ Iain Chambers, *Migration, Culture and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

writer thickens at the articulation of the religious identity – Muslim – dwelling at the junction of race, class, culture and gender, carrying a sense of *being* and *difference* in a politically afflicted environment.

9/11 escalated the misrepresentations of Muslim women, which prompted Muslim women writers to inaugurate a separate ‘writing culture’ to paint a truer picture of Muslim feminist characters. Within this corpus, they strive to shake off the stigma of ‘Oriental odalisque’ conferred by Western popular literature and the media. Janmohamed writes emphatically about the position and treatment of Muslim women in contemporary discourses:

The views that I had seen on television as a young child, painting Muslim women as oppressed and abused, had changed very little in the intervening years. Islam was held almost entirely responsible for all the violence conducted in non-Western countries against Muslim women, even though such horrible acts were usually driven by culture, the cycle of under-development and a lack of education... the public discussions about Muslim women... rarely included the voices of Muslim women themselves.⁹⁰

Here, the author points out the need to leave the trajectory of constantly dwelling on distorted images. The post-9/11 policy briefing conducted by the British Council shows that shortly after 9/11, Muslim women became marked objects of attacks with their *hijab* as religious semiotic markers. Several women had their headscarves ripped off and were subjected to acts of violence.⁹¹ As portrayed in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, Janmohamed shares the post-9/11 experiences of her female Muslim friends:

One of my headscarf-wearing friends was punched and her nose broken as she sat quietly on the train home. Her aggressor muttered profanities about her faith and her ‘terrorist activities’ as he went on to terrorise her himself. He inflicted

⁹⁰ Janmohamed, 2009, pp. 150-151.

⁹¹ Sahar.F.Aziz, 2012.

shattering pain on her face and then walked off... Even when he was gone, the other passengers left her to bleed.⁹²

The Muslim woman's status as a 'woman' deems her an easy target, one presumed incapable of physically defending herself against violence. In *Love in a Headscarf*, Janmohamed seems to express her adoration to her *traditional* and *cultural roots* which has 'rested so pleasantly on [her] Asian Muslim shoulders since [her] birth.'⁹³ The narrative is basically about *finding* a partner, where the story line conveys the writer's personal stories relevant to contemporary social-cultural politics. Whether we encounter Janmohamed through the fantasies of a youthful woman in search of a suitable partner, or as a *victim* caught up in the stereotyped frames of a 'targeted' religion, or later, as a 'cross-eyed' critic of age-old cultural traditions engaged in a 'new gender reconstruction',⁹⁴ she is motivated by an urgency to unravel the more stigmatized denotations of her religion, Islam, in a tense socio-political climate; a spiritual quest, in which she herself becomes a subject. While she expresses a language of desire to perfectly 'belong' to the British society with the sensibilities of a global citizen whose cross-cultural values form a currency to enhance her sense of faith,⁹⁵ she admits her uncomfortable position in inhabiting a series of disjointed, separated worlds of hyphens.⁹⁶

So many labels were stuck onto me without me having a voice: oppressed, repressed, subjugated, backward, ignorant, violent, extremist, hateful, terrorist, jihadist, evil, radical, weakling, moderate, sell-out, self-hating, apologist. Labels and boxes, I hated all of them. I was none of the above...Nice Asian girl. Overly pious, sour-faced Muslim hijabi. Smarty-pants, bossy-boots. Boring, always praying, stay-at-home dullard. Non-traditional, modern rule-breaker, independent, unsuitable, unmouldable...I was weighed down by expectations and labels from

⁹² Janmohamed, 2009, p. 150.

⁹³ Ibid., p.5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.223.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 232.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.43.

so many cultures and narratives, each trying to tell me what I should or should not be, each pretending to speak on my behalf. As just one person, how many stereotypes could I shatter?⁹⁷

The memoir is more concerned with gender politics and the social issues suggested by deracination that British Muslim women like Janmohamed face after 9/11, than with the imaginative psychological maintenance provided by the memories, myths and legends of a multicultural, cosmopolitan Indian cultural bond. She disrupts the usual diasporic trait of dwelling in a *lost past* by firmly anchoring herself in the present realities of all her worlds; to break all the boxes and create a voice of her own, to say '*I am Me*'.⁹⁸ Yet, Janmohamed, like Nazneen in *Brick Lane* (though not with the same intensity), dives into that space of her memory to gather the origins of her roots of being a 'British East African Indian Muslim girl':

My grandparents had travelled from Gujarat in India to settle in East Africa...My parents grew up in Tanzania...Their communities were mainly Indian, but across the religious spectrum – Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh...The blood thirsty Idi Amin was a cautionary tale for migrant Asians who had been exiled...in the early 1970s...Now they found themselves in a...minority situation in the UK...My first holiday memories are of a trip to Tanzania to visit my extended family. We still have old projector film with movie clips from this trip.⁹⁹

She tries to create an inward recreation of 'home' to punctuate her umbilical relationship with her 'roots' in a voice of 'stream of consciousness'. The memoir offers Asian wisdom culled from the cultural archives to stimulate a process of *self*-invention. The opening of the narrative with the 'frying of samosas into a perfect brown and cinder black' reveals the attempts of migrant selves to find security in comforting culinary recipes and cultural rituals to erase the thought of

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.151.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.152.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp.37- 40.

being *unstable*, and *homeless*. She states, ‘we were making samosas every weekend.’¹⁰⁰ Janmohamed admits her inability to ‘pull back the layers of culture, while a youthful revulsion and teenage rebellion stirred inside her to extinguish the flames of stuck-in-time stereotypes of women that the buxom aunties supported and all that they represented of tradition’.¹⁰¹ While Nazneen in *Brick Lane* tries hard to free herself from the traditional structures of Bangladeshi community and arranged marriages, Janmohamed does not exhibit any kind of resistance; she accepts the traditional patterns and merges them with her modern ideals to re-fashion a contemporary, up-to-date whole. She states:

[I]n my younger years I struggled with those different perspectives... to keep the different parts of my identity quite separate. But actually as I grew older, I started to feel as though they helped me to gain a richer perspective on the world, because I could analyse problems and situations that I faced through these three different positions. When you grow up as an immigrant you are amidst people who try and belittle the culture where your family comes from. A lot of immigrants struggle with that, but actually it gives you a different view on where you are now and that was an accommodation I have come to accept. I learned that there was a value in the other culture and it gave me some new ideas to contribute to the culture that I live in now.¹⁰²

Janmohamed claims herself to be an ‘inadmissible feminist’.¹⁰³ She makes clear her sympathies towards her abused fellow-sisters, as oppression and subjugation occur continuously. She fills in ‘the gaps between the silence and scream’,¹⁰⁴ as Aamer Hussein puts it in his short story, with her considerations to reopen the space for women’s rights in Islam:

How could we see the physical abuse, suffering and torture of Muslim women around the world and not ask why this was happening? We didn’t believe it to be

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁰² Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, Telephonic Interview, (25/08/2012). See. Appendix II.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁰⁴ Aamer Hussein, *Mirror to the Sun* (London: Mantra Lingua, 1993), p. 223.

part of our faith, but how should we stop it?...*You have to know where you've come from to know where you are going.*¹⁰⁵

Like Hussein, Janmohamed negotiates the cross-cultural linguistic terrain through a rhythmic handling of English, Urdu and Arabic to engage in a process of negotiation, to bridge the gaps and fissures that she faces in her diasporic present at the cross roads of race, culture, gender and faith. She considers religion as a way of reconciling the cultures she was a part of.¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, in a text that draws explicitly on the negative focal points of conventions of culture, the female protagonist is constructed and shaped by the deliberate stereotyped versions of a 'vilified' faith. She demonstrates how the television channels were 'inappropriate, inaccurate, plain and wrong about the tenets of Islam, painting Muslims as a horde of vampires sucking blood from the necks of children'.¹⁰⁷

She explains how Islam became a topic of discussion after 9/11. The exploration of migrant subjectivity is powerfully represented through the focus on identity politics generated in the discourse on post-9/11 Muslim experiences:

After September 2001, and again after the events of July 2005 in London, my colour, my name and my headscarf marked me out and tagged me with the label 'terrorist'...My friend Shahnaz was stopped ten times in a multi-destination trip 'for no reason'...Another friend was detained on his way to an interview 'for no reason'. My friends who worked in banks were told to freeze accounts of people with 'Muslim sounding names'. As I disembarked from a flight returning to London after a work trip, a woman from immigration...barked at me to step aside, uninterested in any of the other passengers. She insisted on looking at my passport, and I asked ...why she wanted to see my British passport but she ignored me. 'If you don't show me, we'll have to take you for questioning. Who knows how long that might take,' she whispered ominously.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Janmohamed, 2009, p.133.

¹⁰⁶ Janmohamed, *Telephonic Interview*, (25/08/2012). See Appendix II.

¹⁰⁷ Janmohamed, 2009, p.34.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.146-148.

As this extract demonstrates, Janmohamed's narration hints at the incompatibility of the new government policies designed 'under the mantle of the War on Terror'¹⁰⁹ with basic human rights. It builds a cumulative series of events experienced, unveiling the hidden semantic layers of government policies such as 'Stop and Search'. Janmohamed identifies the racial subtext of the terrorist 'other' linked with her headscarf especially in the post-9/11 era. She points sharply at objectifying Muslim women within the grander political conflict between two patriarchies that are different in form but similar in substance.¹¹⁰ Although Janmohamed's memoir provides an explanation of the tenets of Islam and the sub-concepts related to the religion, she does not reflect upon the 'radical' character within the religion. However, it is essential to note Janmohamed's position as the only daughter in a progressive, educated British Muslim family. This plays a prominent role in enabling her to move easily beyond the narrow confines of a cultural mosaic that she inhabits. Thus *Love in a Headscarf*, like *Brick Lane*, confidently constructs a multicultural landscape where political ideologies influence new forms of female identities, while actively articulating new versions of inherent collective cultural and religious codes from a new perspective. Janmohamed, in the interview, expresses her view that multiculturalism creates an atmosphere for people with different backgrounds and faiths to come together and interact with one another.¹¹¹ The female protagonists in both the works convey the strength of female selves, believing and realising that they are capable of taking charge of their destiny.

The concern with political transformation, radical identity politics and multiculturalism that appears to be one of the main fictional strategies of post- 9/11 British Muslim poetics, is also

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.147.

¹¹⁰ Aziz, 2012.

¹¹¹ Janmohameed, Interview, See Appendix, II.

a major preoccupation in Rosie Dastgir's *A Small Fortune*. Dastgir's story is set in one of the towns in the north of England inhabited mainly by British Pakistanis. The novel tells the story of Harris Anwar, a Pakistani immigrant in Britain, who gives away his fortune of £53000, received from his divorce settlement with his English wife, to his conniving cousin, Nawas. Harris becomes dismayed by his well-assimilated daughter Alia's live-in English boyfriend and her dropping out from Medical school. He becomes further squeezed between his wealthy, ruthless friend Omar who tries to start a multinational business and the confusion in marrying the secular-minded college lecturer, Dr. Farrah Idrees, who chafes at Harris' moral traditionalism.

The plot moves adeptly, portraying the life of British South Asian Muslims from multiple points of view, gliding from Harris to Alia to Dr. Farrah and the post-9/11 realities through the character of Rashid who is caught in the sticky web of Islamic extremism due to his association with the dubious Imam, Mohsin Begg. Dastgir, herself born in England to a Pakistani father and an English mother, has given a true portrayal of British-Pakistani life in post-9/11, post-07/07 Britain. Before publishing her debut novel, *A Small Fortune*, in 2012, Dastgir worked at the BBC, authored several screenplays and has directed docu-drama and short digital films. *A Small Fortune* juxtaposes the attempts of British Muslims to assimilate into a hostile mainstream society with the hidden networks of Islamic radicalism with Mosques and Imams as the bastions, suggesting the inadequacies in the religion as well as the government policies. Very much in contrast to *Brick Lane* and *Love in a Headscarf*, Dastgir weaves a descriptive narrative concerning chiefly the different views of British Pakistanis living in various parts of multicultural England.

Harris Anwar (formerly Haaris), the educated, culture-oriented father of British-born Alia, a moderate Muslim whose English wife has abandoned him, runs a Spar corner shop taken

over from a cousin. At the outset, Harris makes clear the change of his real name upon his arrival from Pakistan in the 1970s as the people in Britain balked at its pronunciation.¹¹² He cut off an ‘a’ to add an additional ‘r’ as the new name sounded very British. The *change* denotes his attempt to assimilate as well as his discomfort in carrying a name that demarcated him as the ‘Other’. He uses smart branded clothes with British labels although he had to settle down in one of the northern town ‘ghettos’ like his less fortunate relatives from Pakistan who had come during the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹³ Dastgir presents the South Asian life replicated in Britain in various frames:

Come rain or shine, the women threw on rubber flip-flops, pulled flimsy emerald and fuchsia dupattas about them, and pegged out the washing in the forlorn hope that the English north wind might blow it dry before the next downpour. One or two elderly ladies tended brass cooking pots on open fires in their handkerchief-sized front yards.¹¹⁴

In *A Small Fortune*, Dastgir draws the territories of nostalgic memories to lay out the predicament of diasporic selves leading *two* distinct lives. Her novel affirms Susheila Nasta’s statement that fiction ‘enacts a form of time travelling, a journey of discovery in which the migrant self is not only inscribed within the furniture of one room.’¹¹⁵ The constant attempts of the diasporic groups to hold on to the essential cultural rituals and the continuous reconstructions of the *homeland* are highlighted in the novel, reflecting ‘the Indias of the mind’.¹¹⁶ *A Small Fortune* seems to embrace a number of features distinctive to novels of diasporic reclamation.

¹¹² Rosie Dastgir, *A Small Fortune* (London: Quercus, 2012), p. 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.3.

¹¹⁵ Nasta, 2002, p. 233.

¹¹⁶ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta, 1991), p.10.

The story centres on characters like Harris Anwar, his daughter Alia, his friend's son Rashid and his fiancé Dr. Farrah. Although the novel works with nostalgia, memories, loneliness and attitudinal differences between generations, it zooms in on a different agenda: the clash between Islamic radicalism and multicultural politics in contemporary Britain. The novel meticulously charts the life in two different countries, Pakistan and Great Britain, stretching the story across a series of events in the life of two generations of Pakistani Muslims in post-9/11 Britain. We are given accurate-sounding details of all the characters' lives. Harris' feeling of alienation intensifies when Alia seeks a licentious, care-free life, emulating 'the English way of putting freedom and pleasure before family and duty'.¹¹⁷ Alia is a drop-out from the Medical school, a fact which she conceals from her father in the beginning. Rashid, who came to England in his late teens, is compelled to compromise with his job as an estate agent, inspite of having a British university degree to his credit. What becomes clear is that Dastgir is precisely aiming at disclosing the dilemma of British Muslim lives caught in the time sequence of changing political equations, rather than dealing solely with the questions of psychological and physical derailment arising from a melancholic desire for a 'lost home'.

Dastgir draws our attention to the misleading representation of Islam and Muslims by the media, as she portrays the bafflement of Dr. Farrah's sister, Naela, about the vulnerable position of Muslims in a hostile land after the 7/7 tube bombings:

If you read the papers or see the TV shows...I hear there is a crusade against the Muslims now, and things have got much worse in these so-called nice places like England. There's a backlash over there, don't deny it – arrests and detentions, raids on the mosques...You should move back home.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Dastgir, 2012, p.17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

However, the novelist gives an insightful revelation into ‘Islamic slaughter’ (the ways in which the extremist Imams conjure up jobless Muslim youths to spread ‘jihad’ and extremist Islamism), through the character of Rashid, who is caught in a deep depression and the anxiety of being jobless in England, and how he gradually falls prey to Islamist extremism through his association with the Imam, Mohsin Begg. Rashid ‘finds himself oddly envious of the Muslim camaraderie’¹¹⁹ he felt during the Islamic lecture in the mosque by Mohsin Begg. Dastgir focuses sharply on the mullahs and Imams as the agents disseminating extremist tendencies within Islam. As Begg orates:

It’s all distraction from jihad, from the struggle, my friends, fighting the oppressor. Building the Ummah is why we are here, right? We’re not on earth to waste time...Westerners are so proud of being free...It’s the excuse they use when they invade our lands, murder our sons and daughters in the name of fighting terrorism...They never tire of lecturing us about how we aren’t free, how we oppress our women...We’re all ‘fundamentalists’, all of us...They make laws to crush us. They detain us in their prisons without charge in case we *might* commit a crime.¹²⁰

Dastgir points out here the concept of *difference* which is ‘crucial in making a distinction between ‘Muslim’ as a discursive category of ‘representation’ and Muslims as embodied, situated, historical subjects with varying and diverse personal or collective biographies and social orientations’.¹²¹ As Brah further points out, identities as inscribed through culturally constructed experiences in social relations where subjectivity becomes the modality in which the contradictory nature of the subject-in-process is signified or *experienced* as identity.¹²² The axis of differentiation becomes obvious when Jerry Stone, Rashid’s boss, complains about his

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

¹²¹ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 131.

¹²² Ibid., p.123.

neighbourhood being swamped by illegals, overrun by foreigners and their teeming families. He complains:

Gone were the days when East Enders were free to leave their back doors open so the neighbours could pop in and out of each other's kitchen for a cup of sugar or a natter. Gone, too, were the days when you could let your kids play safely on the streets. It was all Asian kids these days, gangs of them, running around unsupervised.¹²³

Here, 'Otherness' is perceived as 'an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity',¹²⁴ denoting how racial and cultural Otherness becomes a trope to marginalize the foreigner in the dominant discourse. The process of 'Othering' further widens the gap between communities, thereby causing a deliberate resistance to assimilation and expressions of social violence.¹²⁵ When Rashid replies to Jerry that he wasn't from Bangladesh, Jerry utters: 'Maybe not, but you're all, as it were, under the same banner, religion-wise. Goes beyond national boundaries'.¹²⁶

Dastgir observes that the pronouncement of the concept of *ummah* which binds together all Muslims across the globe becomes a reason to bracket all Muslims as fundamentalists. This eventually gives way to Islamophobia and anti-Islamist feelings, especially when all the terrorist attacks are proved to be perpetrated by extremist Islamists with different ethnic and national affiliations. On describing Rashid's association with Mohsin Begg, Dastgir unveils the *other side* of Islam, 'religious bigots... laying down an ugly version of Islam'.¹²⁷ Rashid opens a new website as exhorted by Begg to disseminate Islamic aphorisms and doctrines to make the British Muslim youth aware of 'the importance of the *ummah*, the thing that unifies all Muslims,

¹²³ Dastgir, 2012, p.63.

¹²⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.63.

¹²⁵ J.Armstrong, 'Mobilised and Proletarian Diasporas', *American Political Science Review*, 20 (2) (1976), pp.393-408; D. Laitin, 'Disciplining Political Science', *American Political Science Review*, (89) (1995), pp.454-6.

¹²⁶ Dastgir, 2012, p.177.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.275.

bringing [them] together',¹²⁸ wherever they are. When Alia questions Rashid's shabby ways of life within the grubby four walls, patched with a collage of cuttings, maps, notes about Islam, quotations from Islam, he replies:

I might work in the service of Islam... Helping the troubled neighbourhood youth... Mohsin tells me I have crossed over into something purer and deeper... We'll cast our web wider. Reach brothers and sisters in East Ham and Walthamstow, Dagenham and the Isle of Dogs. Why stop there? The struggle will reach all four corners of the globe.¹²⁹

Mohsin Begg, at one point, indoctrinates Rashid to catch up with Muslim youths as he finds 'the places of higher education are where they retreat from Islam and become assimilated and lost.'¹³⁰ Rashid's website and his 'Crescent Islamia Centre' gain wide public participation of British Muslims from different quarters where they find a space to register their fears, complaints and discomfort in a hostile English society. 'Everybody felt under attack, under scrutiny. Their faith excited endless comment and hostility from English people on all sides, ugly stories spattered across tabloids'.¹³¹ Rashid is supported by a group of British-born Muslim youths striving to spread Islamic tenets, and the 'final crusade' as referred to by Begg. Rashid, who is dejected in his initial years unable to find a proper job, expresses the comfort he feels in the company of his young Muslim friends. Dastgir hints at how boundary-maintenance becomes an indispensable criteria within the Muslim diaspora post-9/11, to form themselves into a 'distinctive community', held together by a collective, distinctive religious solidarity, that cut across all forms of boundaries to link their members into a single unified religious whole.¹³²

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.261.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.260-261.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.268.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.268.

¹³² J.Armstrong, 'Mobilised and Proletarian Diasporas', *American Political Science Review*, 20 (2) (1976), pp.393-408; W. Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, 1(1) (1991), pp.83-89; Tololyan 1996; R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London: Routledge, 1997).

About his young Muslim friends, Rashid says, ‘they were as kind as they were devout, sharing everything they had with him – their possessions, their time, their company. Nobody English ever did that, or not in his experience; and they made him laugh’.¹³³ Dastgir’s vision, here, could be read as the migrant sensibility to inhabit a space built to feel *at home*, with total belonging, sharing and caring. The narrative dramatizes the inability of the State policies to permeate into the lives of the diaspora, ensuring a safe and secure life located in the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Yet the narrative opens up an interesting ambivalence through the female characters. Although separatism and preservation of a fundamentalist religious identity are disclosed through the character of the Imam, Mohsin Begg and his young followers like Rashid and Hamid, a strong counter-current of hybridity, syncretism and creolisation is revealed through the female characters of Dr. Farrah, Alia, and Rashid’s mother and sisters.

Dr. Farrah who teaches Shakespeare at a college in London is well acculturated. She pays less attention to mosques, the Koran and Salat and feels contented in England as her own home. But at one point, she discloses her alien self afflicted by loneliness after her husband’s death: ‘It certainly was home, for a while. We had a good life here, Idrees and me, and the boys. But that time’s gone. It’ll never come again’.¹³⁴ Her diasporic self wanders without a true sense of belonging in Britain, at the same time trying to find happiness in all aspects that come her way.

Alia, on the other hand, is very English with short hair, sleeveless T-shirts, pub culture and smoking. Alia, like Shahana in *Brick Lane*, does not feel an obligation to the ideals and practices of Islamic faith and ‘home’ culture. Alia dislikes Hindi or Urdu and Pakistani culture. During her visit to Pakistan with her father, she confesses that she never felt herself at all while she was there. She is a lone child who never misses *home* or her parents, a teenage girl broken

¹³³ Dastgir, 2012, p. 271.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.215.

due to her parents' estrangement. For Alia, there is no space of comfort called *home* in her life until she rejoins her father in the end after her break-up with her British boyfriend, Oliver. Dastgir's creation of *home* through Dr. Farrah could be read as a 'luxury enabled by migration',¹³⁵ as Pakistan is portrayed realistically with all its poverty, a thousand mosquitoes and mass protests.¹³⁶ Alia, however, finds it difficult to locate a perfect point to anchor herself in a space called *home*, as she fails to establish belongingness with any historical, religious, cultural or familial traditions. Dastgir suggests that the strong emotional ties of the first generation diaspora to their native land and culture are not replicated in the subsequent generations.

When Rashid's family comes to England for the treatment of his sister's leukaemia, England becomes an escape-zone for them from all deficiencies: poverty, cramped conditions, strict madrassas, lack of proper medication, lack of education, lack of freedom and arranged marriage at a very early age.¹³⁷ Rashid, instead, gets trapped in mosque politics by receiving money from the Imam for his family's immigration clearance. Later, when the plot to bomb the Court of Human Rights building in Strasbourg by Islamist extremists is shown on the TV, Rashid's friends vanish. He realises Begg's trap to make him an instrument to raise money for jihadis abroad, while Begg assures him of a reward in paradise. Rashid rescues himself from his attempt at suicide and surrenders to the police. The police assure him that Britain is 'a civilized country where people's rights were respected and the rule of law prevailed. The trouble was, he was tainted by association, deemed a potential threat to national security, and his presence was undesirable'.¹³⁸ Dastgir's desire to sharpen the focus of the lens and to open up the double

¹³⁵ Nasta, 2002, p. 216.

¹³⁶ Dastgir, 2009, p. 56.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.257.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 373.

standards of British Law enforcement powers becomes clearly evident. The same aspect has been closely followed and powerfully represented in *Brick Lane* and *Love in a Headscarf*.

In her novel, *A Small Fortune*, Rosie Dastgir has successfully captured the conflicts between the politics of boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion in British Muslims in post-9/11 Britain. The process of assimilation of diasporic people always comes through justice and fairness, while resistance to assimilation occurs due to asymmetrical modes of treatment towards the diasporic groups through unfavourable government policies and denial of equitable amount of rights.

The shock of 9/11 has caused communities to drift away from a constructive social cohesion. In a highly advanced world, no liberal state can absolutely seal its borders. On balance, however, the world's poor who seek work or refuge in prosperous and peaceful countries encounter a tighter mesh of state regulation and have fewer opportunities for migration than they had a century ago.¹³⁹ A paradigm shift occurred in contemporary politics and the relationship between the British State and its Muslim diaspora. We detect the presence of an active channel of South Asian Muslim women's literature capable of capturing, responding to and representing the Muslim migrant subjectivity and thereby, generating a new aesthetic poetics. All the three works analysed, *Brick Lane* (2003), *Love in a Headscarf* (2009) and *A Small Fortune* (2012), recite the stories of post-9/11 British Muslim experiences. Although the selected works deal with three different subsections of British South Asian Muslim communities, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani respectively, the language in all the three shares a common intention to break down any fixed, stable and stereotypic views of British Muslims, as suggested by the obscene innuendoes of the media, State and Law enforcement powers that seem incongruous to the tenets of human

¹³⁹ P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalisation in Question* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 30-31, 267).

rights. The narratives discussed aesthetically mirror the various facets and correlations of contemporary politics and Islam in Britain.

The writings powerfully portray the changing dynamics of Muslim diasporic femininity when the women protagonists abrogate the rigid rules and order within their communities. Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, Shelina Janmohamed, the writer herself, in *Love in a Headscarf*, and Farrah and Alia in *A Small Fortune* navigate successfully through the chaotic, amorphous, disorder within and outside their personal and community *space*. The three works echo a positive conclusion of hope and confidence for an objective and impartial, liberal Britain. In *Brick Lane*, Razia utters loud, 'This is England. You can do whatever you like'.¹⁴⁰ Dastgir, in *A Small Fortune*, declares an identical principle when Farrah reminds Harris, 'This is Great Britain in the twenty-first century. We can do what we like'.¹⁴¹ Shelina explicitly expresses her happiness as a British-born Muslim woman: 'I am a European, born in London,... studied at Oxford'.¹⁴² The texts constantly draw attention to the female sensibility's conscious artifice to tide over stressful experiences in a politically agonised scene.

Each writer has turned her fictional lens inwards, giving a personal version of Islam and Muslim Britain, articulating a politics of location and identity in post-9/11 Britain. They have opened up a new critical geography to question the 'labels and boxes' that are trying to constrain them. The women characters in all the three works selected convey their urge to come out of the cultural fetters and declare a happy, free life. Nazneen, in *Brick Lane*, connects her happy, carefree childhood days with her present despairing life in Tower Hamlets. Nazneen's process of psychological rewinding to her happy past itself conveys the onerous condition she is in and her

¹⁴⁰ Ali, 2003, p.413.

¹⁴¹ Dastgir, 2012, p. 289.

¹⁴² Janmohamed, 2009, p. 190.

yearning to acquire a free choice. Janmohamed, on the other hand, follows a middle-path, complying with the norms set by her tradition and faith. She skilfully moves along, happily by making her identity a source of strength and positivity. Alia and Dr. Farrah, in *A Small Fortune*, display their courage to jump beyond the hurdles that their culture and faith seem to impose upon them.

The female characters in all the three texts powerfully voice the combination of liberal principles with those of radical Islam in post-9/11, post-07/07 Britain, generating an alternative solution of cosmopolitanism. Here, all religions spread out the same semantic layers of a 'one world family' (as cited in the epigraph) in the discourse, where the boundaries of binaries and dichotomies are blurred. The epigraph of this chapter has the credos from the three major religions of the world, namely Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. All religions proclaim to establish peace, love and harmony between living beings. But the concepts of religion itself have been so much politicized and inverted that it has been blamed for generating hatred and violence instead of wisdom. The literary representations throw light on such crucial issues and propose solutions for a social reconditioning. While they reinforce the forcefulness and powerful political impact of Muslim female literary writing, it has been proved true that 'wherever in the world the little room of literature has been closed, sooner or later the walls have come tumbling down'.¹⁴³



¹⁴³ Rushdie, 1991, p. 149.

EPILOGUE

Does conclusion indicate the end of something? No, not always. Here, conclusion denotes the beginning, which is continual. It signals fresh beginnings by laying out a firm platform of what has existed in the past and what still exists; a starting point to anticipate future happenings. This thesis is about the figuration of the politics of *power* and identity in its multiple modes. It is an effort to grapple with intersectionality across different modalities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, politics, nation, home and generation. My attempt is to forge a connection between literature and life; to expand the role of these multiple modalities in influencing political power centres in the shaping of public policies and vice versa, thereby effecting a transformation of social relations, identity and subjectivity.

The previous chapters highlighted the influence of British multicultural policies in configuring the literary landscape of British South Asian female writing since the post-war era. The selected authors have considered the questions of how power, in the form of specific State policies, has penetrated their diasporic lives and cut across the equations of the multiple modalities mentioned above. The writings inscribe the process of construction and articulation of their identities and subjectivities within the interstices of definite structures of power and governance. They present the dynamics of power in hewing out identity politics and the inherent ambivalences and contradictions exhibited. In brief, the significant question arising from the analysis is: how are the varying operations of power – cultural, political or social – influential in determining the changing character of literary compositions, mapped by an alternative cartography of diasporic female existence and experiences in post-war Britain?

The present work is ‘multidisciplinary’ in its character, borrowing conceptual tools and theoretical insights from various disciplines and government policy documents. The chapters in the text have the concepts of *difference/commonality* at their heart, to understand all forms of intersectionality between the *literary imaginary* and the *political real*. South Asian diasporic writings become the souvenirs of the fluctuations in policy behaviour, thereby inscribing diasporic strategies of adaptation, assimilation, integration, hybridity or otherwise, struggle and resistance. The image of ‘homelessness’ becomes the ‘protean metaphor’ of the experience of the South Asian literary diaspora; an experience which is ‘an ancient odyssey in modern historical guise.’¹ While this has been the central image of many other diasporic writings, the South Asian diaspora stands out owing to its ‘systematic diversity’ and multicultural heritage that have made it ‘an infinitely reducible empty space, mapped purely by words’² in varied aesthetic forms and behaviour.

The concepts of diversity and multiplicity figure prominently in many of the writings, displaying the variegated colours of individual elements in the cultural mix. The problematised notion of homogenization of ‘Asians’ as a single cultural group complicates the social and political discourse on managing differences triggered by immigration since the 1950s. This has engendered bitter debates on multiculturalism and the ways to tackle concerns such as difference, segregation, exploitation, identity crisis radiating from the heterogeneity of diverse societies.

As stated earlier, the post-war British discourse on multiculturalism arose after the labour migrations following the world wars which unloaded ‘human cargos’ from former colonies on

¹ Satendra Nandan, ‘The Body Politic of Fiji’, in *Shifting Continents, Colliding Cultures: Diaspora Writing of the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. by Ralph.J. Crane and Radhika Mohanram (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p.46.

² Amitav Ghosh, ‘The Diaspora in Indian Culture’, *Public Culture*, (1989), pp.73-78.

low wages to mend Britain's mutilated economy and industry. Avtar Brah notes that although the labour shortages were partly met through the recruitment of British women in the labour market, along with persons displaced during the war or workers from less 'developed' economies of Europe, it was the presence of Afro-Caribbean and South Asian immigrants that generated the most anxiety in Britain.³ Brah's observation reveals the character of 'colour politics' in Britain, where 'blacks' and 'brownies' were always the 'Others'. The enrolment of British women in the labour sector also points towards the 'white feminist' politics where women of 'colour' suffered multiple marginalisation. The policies and administration strategies of the government (both Labour and Conservative) were executed on racial lines. The tactics were to prevent the movement of Asian and black British subjects to the United Kingdom for settlement and to block loopholes as they appeared. The torturous and lengthy debates on 'coloured' immigration led to the enactment of the 1962 Immigration Act, visible proof of Britain's racist behaviour to keep the country 'white'.

Although discrimination was a common fate of all immigrants, in practice the white inhabitants found it much easier to sail through the obstacles, as 'colour' acted as a significant factor in determining their fortune. Meanwhile, there were considerable differences in the forms of racism that the African-Caribbean and Asians experienced. Blacks were placed on the lowest rung of the social-cultural echelons.⁴ Racism was evident in some of the policies on immigration and policing, targeting blacks and Asians specifically. The making and implementation of British immigration policies from 1962 to 1981 finally ended the possibility of black and Asian entry

³ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 228.

⁴ In the 'colonial sandwich', Asians constituted the middle layer as Asian households led a lifestyle that was comparatively more affluent than that of the majority of Africans, and substantially less affluent than that of Europeans. For details see Avtar Brah, 1996.

into the United Kingdom, but did so in a way that enabled multiracialism to become an established fact of British life.⁵ The practices were designed with an anticipation of ‘assimilation’, expecting immigrants to merge and be absorbed into the imagined British national culture. The portrayal of ‘British’ culture as homogenous was itself an enigma into which the highly heterogeneous immigrants were expected to integrate by leaving behind their cultural baggage that was considered ‘inferior and archaic’, incompatible with the modern British ways of life. This disproportionate equation within the problem of cultural differences caused the failure of the assimilation policy of the 1950s and the 1960s.

Roy Jenkins’ integration policy in 1966 was a marker of equal opportunity, cultural diversity and mutual tolerance’.⁶ Following liberal multicultural policy rhetoric, Britain found herself in turbulent times due to the sequential eruptions of race riots, violence and disturbances. Although structural inequalities were visible in all sectors of life between whites and blacks, the policy language (both of assimilation and integration) echoed the terms of ‘cultural differences and integration’ of minorities. Hence, strategically, immigrants were perceived as an ‘unending problem’, posing a threat to social harmony and integration. The policy discourse became solely a discourse on the ‘Ethnic Other’, concealing ‘othering’ processes around class, gender, ethnicity, etc.⁷

Since the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks and the race riots of 2001 there has been a major shift in the policies, as ‘religion’ has been brought to the forefront as a criterion to ensure equal rights and representation for a harmonious life. While multicultural policies in the previous

⁵ Ian. R.G.Spencer, 1997.

⁶Jenkins, 1966, Ch 1.

⁷ Brah, 1996.

decades were shaped on the basis of social and cultural relations in Britain, post 9/11 and post 7/7 religion was brought in as a significant factor on the definitions of identity and belonging of British Asian minorities, especially British South Asian Muslim youth. 9/11 induced the homogenization process through segregation, not only along class and colour lines, but also along ethnic and religious lines.⁸ Multiculturalism received severe criticism for its defensive mode and was labelled as a ‘failure’, encouraging segregation among communities,⁹ without acknowledging differences such as gender, sexuality and age. New policies of Social Cohesion and Interculturalism¹⁰ were introduced to recognise all forms of difference, including those based on social class, age, disability and sexual orientation.¹¹

However, as has been evident from examination of the British experience, the South Asian diaspora has produced a considerable body of literature in varied forms and expressions, displaying all facets of Asian diaspora life – social, political, psychological, economic and so on. The literary compositions are the visible examples, not only of the variety of subject positions and historical contexts from which they are written, but also the symbols of marginalisation and the conniving politics prevalent in publishing industry. The broad range of literary and cultural

⁸ Ulku Guney, ‘Multiculturalism and its Legacies: Identity Construction among British Asian Muslim Youth’, *Essex Graduate Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1) (2007).

⁹ *Cohesion, Integration and Openness*, Institute of Community Cohesion, www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/.../BC-Cohesion-Integration-and-Openness (accessed on 03/01/2014). See also Ouseley, H. *Community Pride not Prejudice* (Bradford: Bradford Vision, 2001).

¹⁰ Community cohesion emerged as a response to the defects in the policies of multiculturalism, promoting interaction and developing a sense of belonging between different communities, on a local basis, and by creating a more positive picture of the nature and value of diversity. Interculturalism, however, recognises that super diversity can no longer be considered on a simple national or local basis and that the State must adjust the way it mediates between many different groups and recognise the impact of transnational and diasporic influences. Interculturalism therefore builds upon previous phases, but actively develops dynamic identities through the encouragement of broader networks, learning about others and collaborative styles of open leadership, which transcend insular patterns of identity. See *Cohesion, Integration and Openness*, Institute of Community Cohesion, 2001.

¹¹ For details of the development, policy and practice of community cohesion, See Ted Cantle *Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race And Diversity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). See also Ted Cantle, *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity* (London: Palgrave, 2012).

settings of these texts – East and/ or West, oral and/or literary, modernist and/or traditional, compliant and/or defiant, makes them impossible to identify easily with a single formulaic term. Yet, there are striking similarities, especially the authors’ shared preoccupation with composing a ‘homing desire’; to negotiate a path between the two very different homes: the diasporic home and the homeland.¹²

My selection of female narratives exposes the literary strategies in the process of reconfiguration of their selves and their adaptation in highly ambivalent diasporic situations. The feminist aesthetics of Asian literary diaspora unveil an alternative feminism at work, voicing the concerns specific to their gender, enabling them to take charge of their subjectivity, to refigure and reinscribe the imposed stereotypical subject positions and roles.

As has been asserted throughout, political and cultural geography illustrate the focal events and issues associated with racism, religious nationalism and so on, while the political/cultural labels applied to contain ‘black’ and ‘Asian’ identities produced a two-fold effect. The political aspect of the labels nurtured a sense of unity and solidarity among the so-called ‘non-white’ communities in 1960s and 1970s Britain. The bracketing of blacks and Asians into a single category concealed the problem of the highly intense heterogeneity within and outside both the communities.¹³ The politics of marginalisation was visible in the literary domain as well, especially in keeping non-white female articulations peripheral. However, the writers presented, clearly and succinctly, the varied versions of their specific diasporic communities.

¹² Nasta, 2002; Sam Naidu, 2008.

¹³ Organization of Women of Afro- Caribbean and Asian Decent, ‘Black Women Together’, in *Spare Rib Reader* ed. by Martha Rowe (England: Penguin, 1982), p. 589.

They employed different literary modes – from semi/autobiographical to *Bildungsroman*, charting the realities of political repercussions and policy interventions of specific times.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya wrote in the 1950s, '60s and '70s England. Both Hosain and Markandaya registered the diasporic realities in entirely different tones: as a direct representation of racial divides in English socio-political domains and metaphorical expression of the pain of being 'unhoused'. Similarly, Ravinder Randhawa and Meera Syal, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, display the multiple strata of 'hybrid' Asian female identities to negotiate a path between their dual 'homes' and conflicting situations: their struggle for integration. They have firmly located their narratives within the dynamics of contemporary gender and racial politics, highlighting the questions of ethnicity and female selfhood by exploding the established stereotypical versions of what it means to be an Asian British female. Chapter 5 analyses the literary texts that consider the Muslim question, Islamic political radicalism and the complex relations that exist between a secular neo-liberal Britain in the post-9/11, post-7/7 contemporary era. Analysing and scrutinizing Britain's approach to her public policies (anti-terrorist legislation and intercultural policies), the chapter details the major socio-political, community and cultural questions concerning female British Muslims through the writings of Monica Ali, Shelina Zahra Janmohamed and Rosie Dastgir.

The British South Asian diasporic literary landscape follows a distinctive pattern mirroring the political reverberations that keeps it closer to real-life realities. As with the varied facets and phases of diasporic life, the writers have resorted to different literary strategies and different genres to offer a kaleidoscope of visions and versions of expatriate lives, explicitly

investigating, questioning and ‘reshaping the canonical terrain of received narrative genres’.¹⁴ They do not attempt to produce comparisons between the Asian British immigrant or diasporic writings since the post-war period, but map a separate sequence of Asian British female writings on the strategies and skills employed by diasporic women in manoeuvring safely amidst a highly hostile political and social environment. As pointed out by Nasta, it is apparent in the final and penultimate chapters that there is an absence of nostalgia; the umbilicus of the past is fractured and destroyed for the second and third generation writers, the symbolic no longer signifying the possibility of either a return or settlement, instead invoking a desire to build fictional *homes without walls*, whose boundaries are always deferred, always in translation.¹⁵

In this globalised world, diaspora has gained currency and so also diasporic writings. British South Asian female writings are widely included in critical discussions throughout the literary and cultural discussions worldwide. Analysing the history of its evolution and the struggles experienced by the writers to make their way in a highly opaque, and densely antagonistic Western literary canon, it was never easy for them to make the voices of border crossings heard. While the ‘new ethnicities’ display changing modes of articulation to reveal ‘the deeper and more unconscious dimensions of our social imagination’,¹⁶ they still follow ‘old racisms’ and racial axioms, perpetuated and consolidated by political policies. The political rhetoric in Britain concerning her immigrants and diaspora has always been drawn on ‘colour’ lines. This sounds absolutely ludicrous as scientific studies prove that ‘variations in human skin colour are adaptive traits that correlate closely with geography and the sun’s ultraviolet (UV)

¹⁴ Nasta, 2002, p.245

¹⁵ Ibid.,p. 244.

¹⁶ Phil Cohen (ed.), *New Ethnicities, Old Racisms?*(London: Zed Books, 1999), p.1.

radiation’.¹⁷ Mohanram has clearly explained in her *Black Body* how the black body is metonymically linked to the woman’s body in the power/knowledge system of the Western Enlightenment, progress and modernity. She argues:

The residents of equatorial regions invariably have darker skin. Their skin looks and functions best in the humidity of these regions. Transplant these bodies to colder climates and skin turns ashen. Bodies are marked by the peripatetic movements which all humans participate in. The body also grants a subject a sense of personal identity, a sense of belonging to the normative group, or of being the other. The body is perceived as origin and signifies the place of origin.¹⁸

Mohanram’s claim could be correlated to the discourses surrounding black and Asian migration to Britain. The view proves the existence of the highly diverse backgrounds of Britain’s complex mosaic of immigrants, where they were grouped together as ‘coloured’ in the policy documents and societal attitudes.

As Professor Ted Cantle has argued, Britain has adapted to the changes of the world. Since the 1950s, Britain has updated herself, especially in policy rhetoric, to the changing patterns of migration and the changing character of populations.¹⁹ The new policy of ‘Interculturalism’ seeks universal women’s rights, universal justice and recognition for women, which ‘multiculturalism’ could not ensure.²⁰ While the death knell for multiculturalism has already been sounded, it is important to observe that immigration (especially from South Asia) is favoured by the British state mainly for skilled jobs, whereas immigrants/settlers are perceived as

¹⁷ <http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/genetics/skin-color/modern-human-diversity-skin-color> (accessed on 04/01/2014)

¹⁸ Mohanram, 1999, p.200.

¹⁹ Ted Cantle, Key-note Lecture in the seminar on *Connecting Interculturalism Cymru* conducted at Cardiff University on 26/05/2013.

²⁰ Excerpt from the interview conducted with Prof. Ted Cantle taken by the researcher at Pier Head building, Cardiff, as part of this PhD project. For a full version of the interview, see Appendix I.

excessiveness, illegitimate, illiberal and burdensome. Although Britain has transformed the guise of its policy language, it remains a solid fact that the fundamental character of policy framework remains the same; i.e. old wine in new bottles. Will Kymlicka, in his recent policy brief on multiculturalism, suggests the possible reasons for the ineffectual functioning of 'multiculturalism:

*Desecuritization of ethnic relations. Multiculturalism works best if relations between the state and minorities are seen as an issue of social policy, not as an issue of state security. If the state perceives immigrants to be a security threat (such as Arabs and Muslims after 9/11), support for multiculturalism will drop and the space for minorities to even voice multicultural claims will diminish.

*Human rights. Support for multiculturalism rests on the assumption that there is a shared commitment to human rights across ethnic and religious lines. If states perceive certain groups as unable or unwilling to respect human-rights norms, they are unlikely to accord them multicultural rights or resources. Much of the backlash against multiculturalism is fundamentally driven by anxieties about Muslims, in particular, and their perceived unwillingness to embrace liberal-democratic norms.

*Border control. Multiculturalism is more controversial when citizens fear they lack control over their borders — for instance when countries are faced with large numbers (or unexpected surges) of unauthorized immigrants or asylum seekers — than when citizens feel the borders are secure.

*Diversity of immigrant groups. Multiculturalism works best when it is genuinely multicultural — that is, when immigrants come from many source

countries rather than coming overwhelmingly from just one (which is more likely to lead to polarized relations with the majority).

*Economic contributions. Support for multiculturalism depends on the perception that immigrants are holding up their end of the bargain and making a good-faith effort to contribute to society — particularly economically.²¹

Britain's multicultural policies have always highlighted 'difference' to tackle the incongruities between communities. Incongruities arise from *being different* from the 'norm'. The irony is that the 'norm' is set by the power centres (dominant/hegemonic White) to position the 'other' (blacks or browns) as static and perpetual. In order to reduce the gaps and divides, it is important to emphasise the commonalities between various communities, in terms of culture, language, religion and so on, to nurture a sense of belonging, to promote cohesion and integration; policy rhetoric should go hand in hand with life realities. The real creases lie in the structural inequalities in society which need to be straightened to prevent communities engaging in rioting and conflicts. We need to accept that there are complexities involved in the process. Moreover, the focus should be on how to manage the risks involved. Along with the promotion and acknowledgement of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, erasing racism and xenophobia, policies should be firm on the protection of minority rights, and marginalised, weaker sections of society (based on gender and sexuality). Policies should be designed to ensure the comfortable co-existence of liberal democracy, and human rights. Also, they need to be

²¹ Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute: 2012).

supplemented with a fuller acknowledgement of the moral risks involved, and with some account of how those risks will be managed.²²

Art is a strong medium for the expression of the varied facets of life. Diasporic literary texts are the artistic records of the pains and pleasures of their ‘dispersed’ life. As Satendra Nandan notes:

The work of art remains a touchstone of integrity and growth. That is an incalculable challenge to writers everywhere, but especially to those who know the searing pain of losing the innocence of paradise, even if it was a myth. We live by myth and *maya*, and become exiles in the loss of our innocence. Only in our banishment do we begin to re-imagine the vanished world.²³

The world keeps changing, as do the policies and art, especially in the form of literature, automatically detects and records the intensity, direction, and duration of the change. Here and now, a platform of the literary past is set to capture the beginnings of a new story ...



²² Kymlicka 2012; Huntington, 2010.

²³ Satendra Nandan, 2000, p. 48.

Appendices

INTERVIEW

Multiculturalism or Interculturalism? A Conversation with Ted Cante.

[**Key words:** *British Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Ethnic Minorities, Public Policy engagement, Community Cohesion*]

Introduction



Prof. Ted Cante is the man credited with introducing the term ‘Community Cohesion’ which was subsequently adopted by the UK government as a new policy framework. In 2001, Prof. Cante was appointed by the Home Secretary to Chair the Community Cohesion review team. The pioneering Report, known as the ‘Cante Report’ (2001), made around 70 policy recommendations. In over thirty years of public service, Prof. Cante has held a wide range of senior positions, both in local and national bodies, focusing on urban regeneration and social and economic issues. He was the chief executive of Nottingham City Council from 1990-2001 and the director of housing for Leicester City Council (1988-90) and for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (1979-83). He served as undersecretary at the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (1983-88) and has also worked for Manchester City Council. At present he chairs the Institute of Community Cohesion which is Britain’s leading authority on community cohesion and intercultural relations and is also the associate director of IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency). He has a wide range of publications and regularly contributes to journals. Prof. Cante’s work exhibits an interdisciplinary approach which combines normative political theory of inter-cultural relations, sociology of post-migration ethnicity, environmentalism and energy management. He also serves as the Chair of *Sustainability First*, which is particularly focussed on energy management techniques. Cante has developed a significant contribution to

the field of inter-cultural relations, as well as to the Anglophone intercultural policy debates. His work *Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race and Diversity* (2008) provides a historical background and review of current policy and practice. His work has been aimed at rethinking the efficiency of multiculturalism in promoting social cohesion and reinforcing harmony in the society. Interculturalism, for Cante, is based on intercultural interaction, dialogue and openness along with seeking gender and ethnic equality (Martyn Barrett, 2014). Through his public engagement, Cante has contributed to British public and policy issues on ethnic minorities to reduce segregation between communities, thereby, fostering and emphasizing the need for establishing a sense of belonging in British society.

In the interview presented here – conducted at Pier Head Building, Cardiff, in October 2013 – we discussed some of the issues indicated above among others, in relation to his intellectual and academic trajectory. We discussed, for instance, the criticism he has received, on the one hand, for the position he has developed regarding the policy of Interculturalism, and on the other hand for his role as a public intellectual. Given his leading position in the field, and his interdisciplinary approach, Prof. Ted Cante's is a very interesting one for studies in contemporary Social Sciences and Cultural Studies as well as policies on immigration and cultural diversity.

Cardiff, 25 October 2014.

Divya Girishkumar (DG): Prof. Cante, Thank you very much for this interview. Let's begin with the terms 'Community Cohesion' and 'Interculturalism'. How are they different from the concept of 'multiculturalism'?

Ted Cante (TC): Well, what we are trying to get to is a state of community cohesion; we want our communities to be cohesive. But, in order to do that we need to have a set

of policies and those policies, in my view, should be intercultural policies rather than multicultural policies. Multiculturalism worked for a time – in the ‘60s and ‘70s, but it took little account of the growing international and global world that we were entering into. It really thought diversity was restricted within one country, between white communities and minority communities. It took no account of diasporas and international events. It also took no account of other forms of difference like sexual orientation, gender, disability; a whole range of differences which people now experience. So, multiculturalism was really wedded to a view of race and class within each individual country. Interculturalism is about looking at this from a much more international perspective and seeing difference in a much wider connotation. It has a much wider conception of difference and recognises that what we regard as difference is constantly changing. There was a static view of difference in the 60s and 70s that’s now completely gone! People’s identity is much more plural. It changes from time to time, in different contexts. So interculturalism recognises the fundamental changes in our social and economic conditions. As Prof. Barrett has stated, there are many differences between multiculturalism and interculturalism. One of the important points to note is that there are multiple multiculturalisms existing; for example; symbolic multiculturalism, which upholds the idea of celebrating ethnic differences; structural multiculturalism, which focuses on the race relations other structural inequalities existing between minorities; and dialogic multiculturalism, which is basically to ensure the well-being of all cultural groups through dialogue and establishing amiable relationship in the society. Lord Parekh is an advocate of the dialogic form of multiculturalism. At this same point,

multiculturalism shares some of its features with that of interculturalism. Interculturalism places much importance on intercultural dialogue and various kinds of institutional support that the process demands.

DG: Here I am a bit doubtful about the question of women. Multiculturalism is criticised as being ‘bad’ for women. How do you address this gap with interculturalism?

TC: Yes, interculturalism is much less forgiving of cultural relativism, which usually means that any sort of universal sense of justice and rights for women is downplayed or trumped by this idea of cultural sensitivity. Women’s education, forced marriage and all of the other terrible problems that women experience from domestic violence, rape, objectivisation, all of these have been allowed to continue under multicultural policies; so cultural difference is trumping gender. Interculturalism is based on the notion of universal women’s rights and the universal justice of recognition for women.

DG: What are the real reasons that you identify for the fractures along racial and faith lines?

TC: Well, there has been a number in the past. Obviously, when multicultural societies first became evident in the West it was very much based on ethnic, racial minorities who were, I suppose, coming up against the white majority communities. So race almost became a subclass of working class existence in Britain. It was based, I guess, not just on an ethnic difference, but also on an economic difference as well. The two became almost inseparable, race and class. That obviously has changed fundamentally, but it is not to say that it has gone away, because race still represents a disadvantage in many communities. But, it became newer, much more complex

and now we see 350 languages spoken in Britain; we see a whole range of difference including gender and sexual orientation and so on. So, we have to recognise that poverty and disadvantages are much more layered than they were previously.

DG: How do you see the role of structural inequalities in the society in inciting racial tensions? Do you see ‘culture’ as the problem?

TC: Yes. Of course, structural inequalities are still there but there are many other inequalities, and there are many other perceptions of difference upon which prejudice and discrimination depend. So yes, structural disadvantages exist and part of interculturalism has to be tackling those structural disadvantages, but we also have to look at other aspects of disadvantage, other causes and other problems associated with it.

DG: What do you feel about the tendency of ‘ethnic clustering’ in particular inner city areas in Britain?

TC: Yes, segregation is a problem in Britain as it is in most Western societies. It is a problem because the different ethnic groups, and I include the white group within ethnic groups, have little experience of people from different backgrounds. Segregated communities, segregated housing, segregated schools, segregated work places – all deny people the possibility of meeting somebody who is different from themselves, interacting with them, learning from them. So in my view, segregation really begins to structure prejudice and stereotyping which leads to disadvantage and discrimination. Obviously, segregation is also a product of some socio-economic conditions as well, they become mutually reinforcing. Part of the problem

is that we've almost got into a vicious cycle where particular sections of the minority communities are reluctant to identify themselves with Britishness so they go more into themselves and the white community views them with suspicion, we're found them living parallel lives. So I feel that we have to create societies which are much more mixed and much more shared.

DG: The Cohesion report discusses education and faith schools. What do you think about the role of state-funded faith schools in promoting 'cultural interaction'?

TC: Faith schools are part of the problem, yet they are not the only problem in the British education system. They may not even be the major part, but they do contribute to the segregation of children, they do tell children that they are different one from another and they do contribute to the heightening or the raising up of difference. I would much rather that we saw integrated faith schools and integrated schools of all types. Unless there is integration in all sectors, I believe it is not possible to have mutual trust and reciprocity in society.

DG: What are your notions on far right extremism and Islamist fundamentalism in the UK, especially in the post-9/11 environment?

TC: Obviously, Western society has focused particularly on Muslim communities since 9/11. Prior to that, in Britain, most of the racism and discrimination were targeted on Asian communities and Black communities. Since 9/11, it is Muslim communities that have been singled out. I think that we have made the problem worse in the West, by somehow type-casting, stereotyping all Muslims in all communities and creating the impression that there really is a clash of civilization between the Muslim and non-Muslim world. This is heightened by the far right, whether it is the far right in America through the Tea Party or

the far right in Europe through popular extremist parties. They play off each other, they are constantly building this divide, which all sorts of extremists feed off and therefore they can pretend that there is a fundamental difference between minorities and Muslims on the one hand and majority communities on the other. So it is counter-productive in my view. We have to begin to deal with these basic barriers.

DG: Why do you think the Home Office is so unsympathetic to immigration, especially from South Asia? The visa rules are made stricter and stricter year by year!

TC: Well, the language used by the Home Office is not terribly helpful really. Clearly, diversity is good for Britain; migration has been good for Britain, particularly in economic terms. We need to be able to explain to the British population at large that all societies are becoming global. This is an inevitable process and it is not just happening to Britain, British people are going to other parts of the world too and all societies are becoming more global. We have to begin to speak more positively about migration and diversity, not just see it as a threat, but see the opportunities that it provides. Only last week we saw our Chancellor welcoming Chinese migrants; why does he do that? because there is an economic advantage! But that is a contradiction; welcoming one set of migrants and then saying to others that we don't want you! I am not in favour of open borders because I think borders do have to be managed. We do need to talk about migration, but in a completely different sort of way.

DG: Indians form the highest set of immigrants in the UK. At this point, I would like to ask if you have ever compared Indian multiculturalism with that of the UK?

TC: Not specifically, India tends to have totally different traditions to those of the UK, and therefore the notion of multiculturalism is different. But India does have some similarities, of course, because there are huge divisions within India; it might be on the basis of caste, social class, religion and, indeed, on ethnicity. There are huge divides within India, as there are within China and some South American societies. India, like Britain, has to be able to come to terms with the change through globalisation, where these differences really have to be addressed. India has to learn to live with difference, not just from within. If India is going to become part of the globalised world, which I am sure it is already part of, then it also has to undertake programmes and activities to change the way Indian society thinks about difference. There is just as big a challenge for Indian society as there is for British society, but the challenges will be slightly different.

DG: Do you think India can offer any practical ideas of multiculturalism to the UK?

TC: Well, I think we can learn from each other. All societies shouldn't be trying to solve the problem of globalisation and difference within each country; we need to learn from each other. So there will be good practice in each society that we need to draw upon and at the moment there isn't any international institution that allows us to do that. We need to develop those ways of coming together. There are interesting projects going ahead in many countries such as the US, Canada, and Australia as well. There is much emphasis on nation building process. But no one brings the positive aspects together and asks what they mean. Citizenship is something we shy away from. When you move to Canada, you hear the slogan, 'we all belong to

Canada'. This notion is highly valuable and it is this rethinking on citizenship that I've recommended to the UK government.

DG: Is Interculturalism similar to the ideology of Cosmopolitanism?

TC: Yes, to some extent it is. I am not suggesting that British people give up their British identity, or Indian people give up their Indian identity, or Americans give up their American identity and become just a global cosmopolitan. What I am suggesting is that they hang on to their roots, to their identity, but they also need to have another identity, which I will call 'cosmopolitan'. So, you can be more than one thing; you can be Indian and part of the global world. You can be British and share a common humanity with people across the world. The problem with our politics at the moment is that we ask people just to choose one identity and ask them to stay in that one box. We have to make sure, in a globalised world that people do have a global identity, but that doesn't mean they have to give up whatever aspect of their faith or nationality they want to hang on to. They have to have a global identity as well.

DG: This sounds similar to the Indian spiritual philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam* (One World family)!

TC: Good (laughter)

DG: Could you please explain a bit about the Institute of Community Cohesion and what you do exactly?

TC: Yes, I set up the Institute of Community Cohesion in 2005. Our aim was to spread good practice and develop new policies, because multicultural policies have become stuck. The idea was to develop new techniques, find ways of bringing people

together, bridging divides, dealing with some of the structural inequalities. I now carry on that work through the Community Cohesion Foundation, which is really simply there to try to advance new ideas, look across the world, see what is happening elsewhere and promote a more intercultural view of the world. There are other agencies who also attempt to do this, so it is also about collaboration with them. I think it is trying to innovate, develop new ideas and show people that there are alternative policies to some of the ones we have been stuck within the past.

DG: Thank you very much, Sir.

She writes in many-coloured headscarves!

A conversation with Shelina Zahra Janmohamed

[Keywords: British South Asian women, Muslim Writing, religion, culture, Love in a Headscarf, Spirit-21]

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed is a British South Asian Muslim writer and commentator with many credits to her name. As the author of her memoir, *Love in a Headscarf: Muslim Woman Seeks the One* (2009), as a regular contributor to leading dailies such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Muslim News* and as the creator of the award-winning blog ‘Spirit-21’, Janmohamed has indeed produced a body of work that both evokes and sustains novelty and surprise. An Oxford graduate who grew up in North London, Janmohamed has deliberately, sometimes resplendently, fused her several backgrounds and impulses to fashion a new diasporic literature crossing genres of memoir and ‘chick-lit’ that embodies her sense of what it means to be a female British Asian Muslim. In the process of defining her multiple selves, she has disrupted all the clichéd expressions of Muslim womanhood, refusing to limit herself within easy categories. She considers herself as an explorer- of new worlds, experiences, and literatures- and coextensive with her mission to unfold the essence of her religion, ‘Islam’. *Love in a Headscarf* is an interesting, humourous take on growing up as a Muslim woman in Britain and she wrote the book as a reply to the numerous works recording the plight of Muslim woman. Winning the Muslim Writers’ award in 2009 for best published non-fiction, Janmohamed delights to nudge Islamic culture away from the stigma that has amassed around it, while offering insight into the daily lives of Muslim women. Janmohamed is the Vice-President of Oglivy Noor, the world’s first bespoke Islamic global consultancy for building brands. She is also listed one of the 100 most influential Muslim women in the United Kingdom and one of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world by *The Times* and the UK Equality Human Rights Commission.

In the interview that presented here, we utilized a conversational strategy that negotiated the intersections of Janmohamed’s artistic vision and the questions and concerns rose about her role as an activist. Shelina Janmohamed, a writer who also prides herself on being a humanitarian and scholar, responded graciously to the challenges of such a conversation. Conducted during the summer of 2014, the interview addresses a constellation of questions and issues on the process of writing, reading, and interpreting fiction as well as the critical sites of

possible alliance between her religion, cultures and gender. Together, these locations map the beginnings of a productive and exciting literary as well as religio-cultural cartography.

Cardiff, August 2014.

DG: Shelina, thanks so much for agreeing to the interview. How do you feel when you are categorised as a ‘British Muslim woman writer’?

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed: I think what is really interesting is the emergence of ‘Muslim writing’ in general and particularly for people who are just minorities. One of the big questions in the area is: should the writer be categorised as Muslim or not? What I think most interesting is when we have mainstream writers who just happen to be Muslim; that really is the sign of successful writers from the diaspora. I find myself in a slightly different position, which is that I began writing, and at the moment I continue to write, as someone who actively wears the label ‘Muslim’. So I actually want people to know that I write from a Muslim perspective, but together with that I also want them to know that I write from an insider’s Western perspective as well and I carry all those labels with me.

DG: *Love in a Headscarf* is definitely a new story about British Muslim experience. How did *Love in a Headscarf* come about?

SJ: I don’t come from a writing background; I used to work in marketing. When July the 7th happened, I thought very passionately that there weren’t any real voices in the public space about what it really meant to be a ‘British Muslim’. So I started writing a blog named *Spirit 21*. This was my response to things that were happening in the news. The more I wrote, the more people would say to me: “Oh! You must write a book about what it is like to be a Muslim woman”. I would just think that this is a ridiculous idea, because what I did have to say was remotely disinteresting, the story of an ordinary normal Muslim woman. But the more I thought about it, the more there was something to the idea. I remember one day when I went into a bookshop, the books about Muslim women were all misery memoirs. I thought this is not my story, I need to write my story and that is really where the idea of writing my own book took shape. I was very conscious that I didn’t want to write a counter-book. In my view, if you write countering an idea that actually reinforces the idea. So what I wanted to do was to write a book about something totally different, which has a universal appeal and that’s why I told a story about ‘love’.

DG: Fiction is the most popular genre of writing to appeal the reading public. Why have you chosen a chick-lit memoir style?

SJ: It’s very interesting that you talk about the idea that the book is chick-lit, because when I wrote it that was the genre that the publishers in Britain wanted to choose. But at the same time, I didn’t want my work to be positioned as a kind of laughter tale about

looking for love and chick-lit is obviously the way it's seen. But they found the audience was interested in a fun, humorous, romantic memoir and hence the cover was itself very bold, in an attractive pink. It was interesting when the book went to America, they decided that they specifically didn't want it to be chick-lit and the publishers changed the cover, with a strap line that ran something like 'when Islam meets the West'. In itself it's quite a contentious issue – whether it's chick-lit or not. But I have kind of embraced all of these issues because I'm really excited about the book being available across the world.

DG: Did the multiple dislocations of your parents and ancestors that spanned three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) inform or shape your identity as well as your writing?

SJ: The simple answer to that is yes. I guess in my younger years I struggled with those different perspectives. I talk about it in my book, how I tried to keep the different parts of my identity quite separate. But actually as I grew older, I started to feel as though they helped me to gain a richer perspective on the world, because I could analyse problems and situations that I faced through these three different positions. When you grow up as an immigrant you are amidst people who try and belittle the culture where your family comes from. A lot of immigrants struggle with that, but actually it gives you a different view on where you are now and that was an accommodation I have come to accept. I learned that there was a value in the other culture and it gave me some new ideas to contribute to the culture that I live in now.

DG: I am interested to hear about your idea of separating culture from religion/faith or culture v/s religion. May I ask you to expand on this?

SJ: For me, religion is a way of reconciling the cultures that I was part of, because when I looked at Asian culture, for example, I found a lot of double standards, discrepancies, especially when it came to women. So the acceptance of a submissive wife or that there is no way to be a fully bounded human being unless you are married, all show that somehow women are discriminated against in the process. I found my faith actually helped me to understand better what I really wanted from my Asian culture and my British culture. For me, religion is a set of principles that underpinned what I take from each of those cultures. All cultures are different around the world. I was taught to be a committed British citizen; I was born and brought up here. Simultaneously, I slowly started to appreciate more and more, as I grew older, the richness of my Asian culture too.

DG: You have given hints of humorous sarcasm at Asian culture and marriage, especially through the characters of 'buxom aunties' in the first half of the book!

SJ: When I was writing the book, one of the strongest sets of voices that were coming to me were of these older women who were laying down the principles upon which marriage and women should live their lives. It's really interesting that this is an Asian phenomenon, but people have written to me after the book was published and said that these characters seem to exist in almost all cultures. These kinds of slightly possessive older women, who try to maintain the status quo, somehow terrify younger girls into obeying the traditions, at the risk of somehow missing out on marriage or relationships. It was funny that I could hear their voices when I was writing, but as the book progressed I started to realize that they too were going on their own journey, as I was. As the book continues, there is a shift in my tone towards a more compassionate understanding about them. They have gone from a society where the norms about promoting women and marriage would have helped them to live better lives, to a place like Britain, and as a result they too have kind of undergone their own changes about how society works. It was interesting for me to follow their journey in the same way I was following myself.

DG: In *Love in a Headscarf* I felt you were trying to disrupt or deconstruct the stereotyped notions or representations of Islam and Muslim women. At the same time, you exposed the subjugated position and discrimination that most Muslim women face, to suffer the burden of family. How do you explain these dichotomies?

SJ: I think most cultures have an aspiration of what equality should look like or how society should be constructed, but reality is quite different. Muslim society is no different. What I found very frustrating is that Muslims will say that Islam is equal and treats women fairly. There is obviously material in the Islamic texts about that and yet the reality of it is quite different. I talk about this in stories in the book, like climbing mountains, which Muslim women aren't supposed to do and yet we have it in the tradition of the wife of the Prophet. The idea that all Muslims are equal and yet, it would be horrible and unthinkable for an Asian girl to marry someone who is black. All of these are the kinds of double standards that I am talking about – what religion is and actually applying the principles of the faith. Going through the marriage process is such an intimate thing for people to do that you can start to see their actual values, because they don't compromise on what they feel is the right the way to live, as opposed to the lofty standards that they claim. I think this really highlights the difference between what people say they want and what they actually do.

DG: Where do you think there is a need for reformation?

SJ: I think 'reformation' is a very loaded word. Obviously it comes with a history, given what happened to Christianity. There is a huge discussion going on in the wider Muslim world about the rights of women and their place, how equality should be achieved and even what does equality mean. These are all very positive signs and helpful to women

who find their rights taken away. It is really hard and horrific when it comes to violence, mistreatment, abuse and so on. What is important is that these changes are coming from within Islam. This means they are more likely to take root and create lasting changes rather than something that is brought in from a different culture and just imposed from above. That will never have any effect at all.

DG: You have expressed ‘Hijab’ as a symbol of liberty. Many Westerners see it as symbol of oppression and lack of freedom. What do you think is the reason behind this?

SJ: It is funny how the ‘headscarf’ has many meanings to different people. What I find fascinating and makes me uncomfortable at the same time, is the idea that it is some kind of political statement about freedom, making a political identity statement to society around you. I actually reject all of those. For me the hijab is none of those. It happens to sometimes take on those roles. It’s about expressing certain values that I live by, which is about being modest and being a little bit less conspicuous often in the way I present myself. Now for other people they might see it as a political statement; they might see it as an accentuation of liberty or independence. I think, in certain places, it can take on that role. I don’t agree when women are forced to wear it, whether that is by social circumstances or by the law. But, I think it’s an empty, misleading argument that just because women in one place are forced to wear it that means if you wear it somewhere else somehow it’s a betrayal of that argument. The hijab is a symbol of modest dressing that the West still can’t accept.

DG: Have you, at any point of time, thought of a ‘Home’ (maybe in India or Tanzania) where you might get a sense of perfect belongingness?

SJ: I think if immigrants have an immediate link back to the country they may be able to find an idea of home. For me, that simply doesn’t exist and that is why Britain is my home. I have spent barely any time in East Africa but even then our family connections with India were almost totally cut off. I went to India just 3 years ago; it was my first visit and it was obvious I am not Indian. At the queuing up in the tourist attractions, there were 2 queues: one for Indians and the other for foreigners. So I queued up in the Indian queue trying to be a bit cheeky. I was saying to my husband, “Oh! I’m pretending to be an Indian”. He looked at me in a very funny way and said, “You are not pretending, you are Indian”. Yes, my genes come from India. ‘Home’ is a very contentious issue for me.

DG: What is your opinion of the tendency towards Radical Islamism in a post 9/11 world? What are your views on ‘homegrown’ terrorism and how do you think that is occurring and happening in the West?

- SJ:** It's very interesting how an ordinary Muslim woman like me gets asked about radicalisation, *jihadis* and terrorism. There is no reason why somebody who is a Muslim should have any expertise on these matters at all. I think it is part of the wider problem, which is that Muslim = terrorist = *jihadi* = somehow, an outsider. I think that is a very dangerous characteristic, if your status as a Muslim is somehow that of an 'outsider', you must know everything about how Muslims who become radicals, radicalise. I don't know anything about counter-terrorism or why people become terrorists. I lead an ordinary Muslim life.
- DG:** You have given a beautiful and clear description of the tenets of Islam and the concept of *Jihad*, but what the world experiences today is entirely contrary to the teachings. What do you feel?
- SJ:** I think Muslims are generally quite clear about what *Jihad* means. I think it's the western notion of *Jihad* that has become politicised. If you ask any Muslim what is the great *Jihad* and the small *Jihad* they will tell you: the great one is against your inner soul and the smaller is one you fight on the battle field. There was a very interesting social media campaign a few months ago called '#My Jihad'. The 'My Jihad' campaign is to express what *Jihad* means to ordinary Muslims; a personal challenge to overcome as opposed to politics and war.
- DG:** Do you think integration is still possible or will parallel worlds still exist? What is your opinion about the UK public policy of multiculturalism especially in the post-9/11 era?
- SJ:** We have to be optimistic that people of different backgrounds and faiths will interact and live peacefully together. I always maintain that Muslims, activist or otherwise, will work hard towards bringing changes. I think lots of western leaders have started to say 'multiculturalism is dead', David Cameron and Angela Merkel for example. It seems to be a response to winning the faith from the far right, where this idea of rejecting the immigrants is taking hold. Multiculturalism is always better than trying to establish a monocultural society. Europe should know about its terrible history from the Second World War and should keep plugging away at it and holding leaders to account.
- DG:** You have expressed your desire to get married to any practicing Muslim who could support, understand and move together in life's journey. Were you trying to say that all Muslims across the world are uniform and alike – a monolithic entity? Aren't there any distinctions between Muslims, like sub-castes or class differences? I have heard about the clashes between the Sunnis and the Shias. In South Asia, caste difference is very much apparent and distinct. Could you please explain?

- SJ:** This is really a good question. I think what I was referring to in the book was the idea that a lot of Muslims have to marry based on culture, class and ethnicity. That's the case for Muslims the world over and has become very apparent in countries where Muslims are minorities. Therefore, the availability of somebody from your own very small, pocket of the world, if *Ummah* is non-existent, is that we have to look at how we are going to decide who we marry and how we find somebody. I think lots of the older generation like the 'buxom aunties' come forward and insist that you have to marry somebody from your own extended family or somebody from the village 'back home' or at least of the same ethnicity. I think I'm not alone as a young Muslim saying actually that for me is a completely meaningless way of finding a spouse. What's important is that somebody shares the same experiences; that is what I was trying to communicate.
- DG:** I am eager to know about British South Asian marriages as a gateway to the ticket to British passports for the ones 'back home'. I am equally interested to know your ideas about forced marriages, abductions happening within the community to sell girls into a marriage to maintain the extended family lineage, dowry, domestic violence and related abuses that women suffer even within their diasporic status. What do you think are the major causal factors? And the solutions?
- SJ:** I think some people see it like that. Unfortunately, some principles of Islam might sound a bit stricter. I wanted to be adamant and clear that whoever I marry has not asked me for my passport. I was checking that those people were already citizens of the UK or at least a country like the USA or Canada that would have some connections with the way that I lived and were not after me for a western passport.
- DG:** Can you speak about your blog 'Spirit 21'? What is the meaning of 'Spirit 21'?
- SJ:** The aim is really encapsulated in the strap line which is about not living in boxes that people create for me. It is about stepping outside the western view of subjugated women who don't have views about things. But, it is also about talking to Muslims about the fact that as women we can actually be critical of ourselves, that it is very good for us to express deeper feelings. I was trying to climb out of that box. You can get all the details at <http://www.spirit21.co.uk/>. The name (laughter), I leave that one as a mystery for all readers. I never explain that to anyone (laughter).
- DG:** What do you still hope to achieve as a writer and currently are you working on any new writing project?

SJ: As a writer, I take the view that, particularly when I write from a personal perspective, which is my favourite way of writing; it is really to give people a different perspective on the world, just to be able to stand in my shoes and understand different views. I don't set out necessarily with the idea that I want to change people's perspectives, though that, somehow, this might sound polemic, I mean, an argument. I just want people to enjoy reading with a different view and perhaps even then it doesn't change. My favourite discussions with people are when they combine their comments with why they disagree. After a discussion, it is exciting when people say, "I don't agree with you but I have learned something and I can understand why you think that now". That is one of the most positive things for me, that they can actually understand and empathise a bit more. I write in weekly columns and it's quite nice to talk about news issues and hopefully there will be a comment or two.

DG: Do you wish to visit India?

SJ: I would love to. I really enjoyed my stint in India three years back and hopefully, I will visit again.

DG: Thank you Shelina for your time.

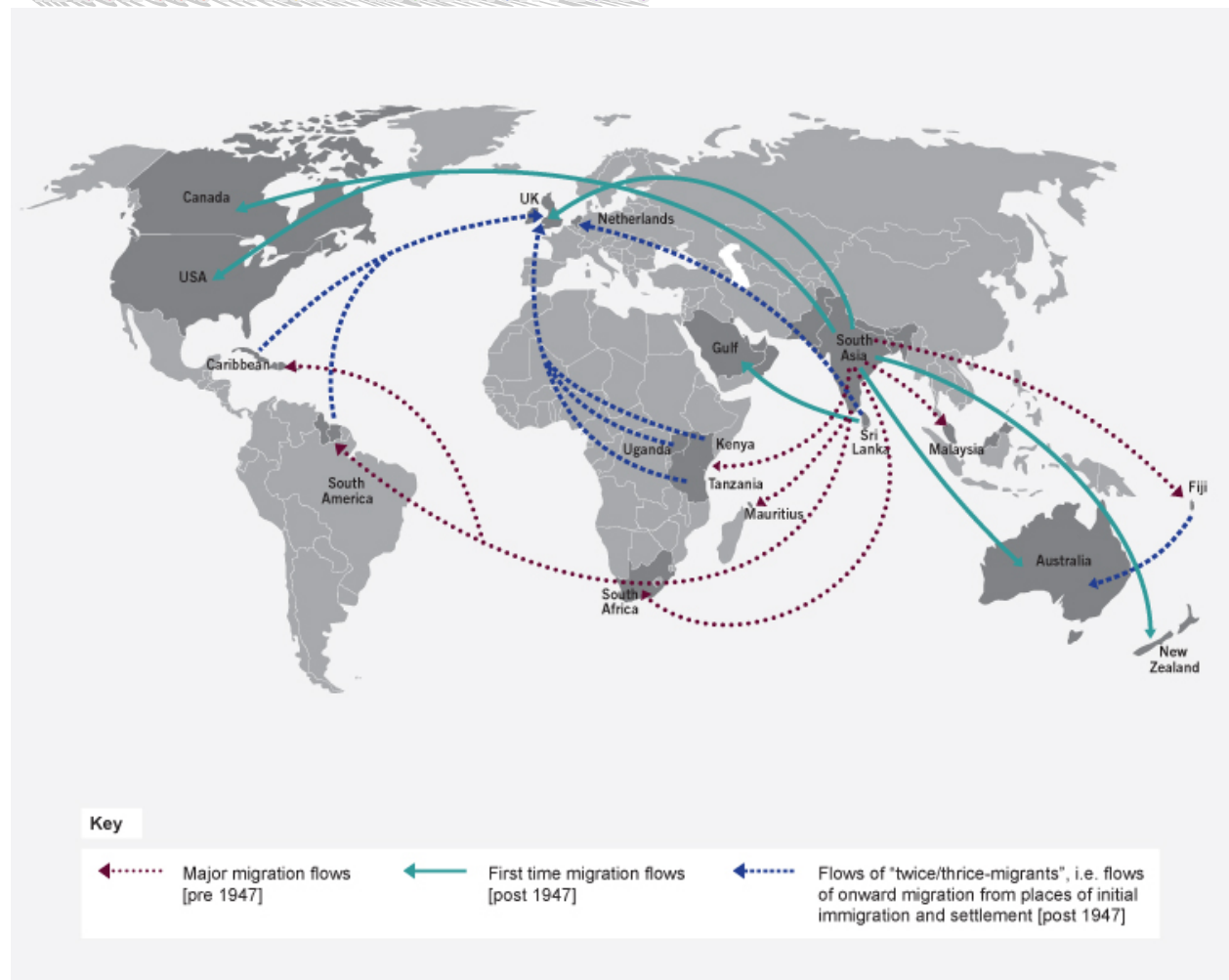
SJ: Thanks to you too.



SOUTH ASIA



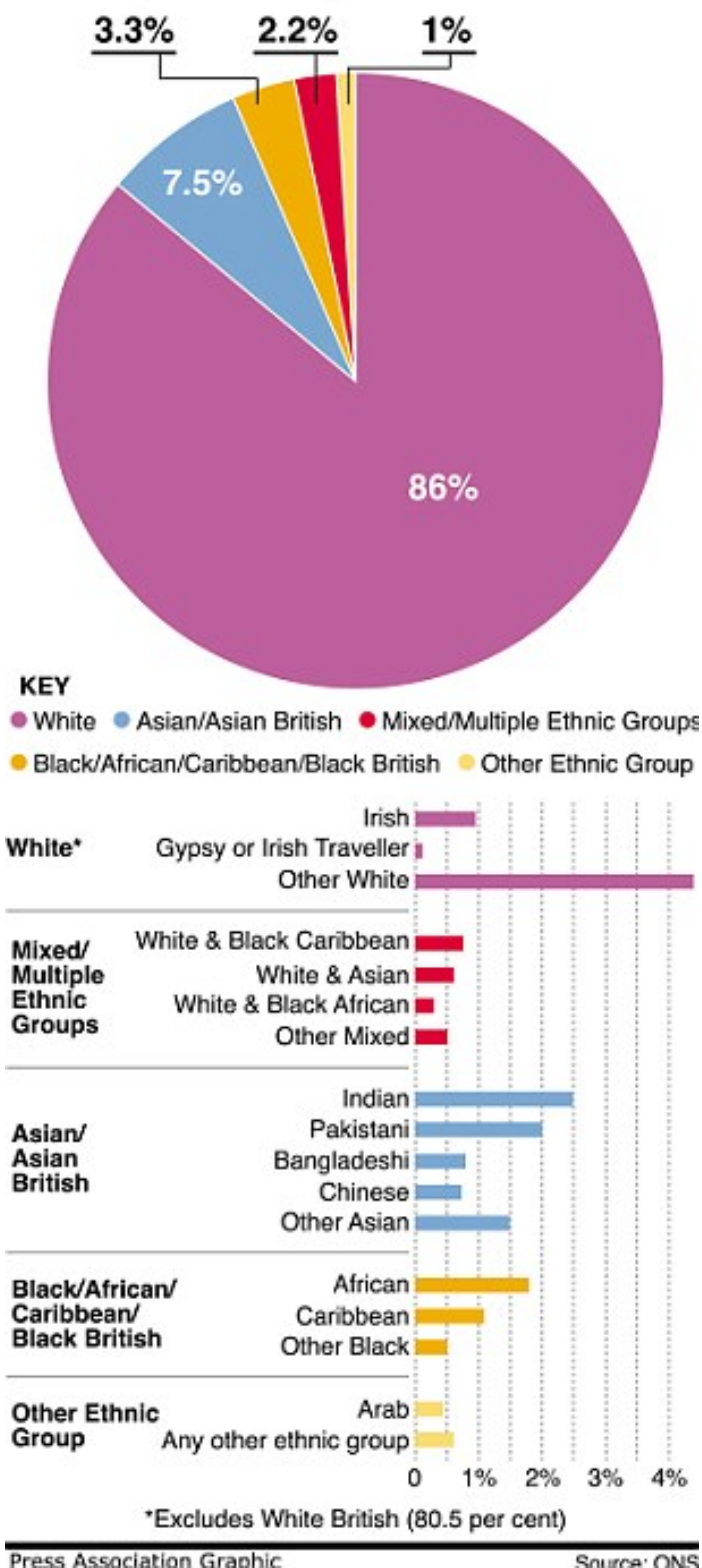
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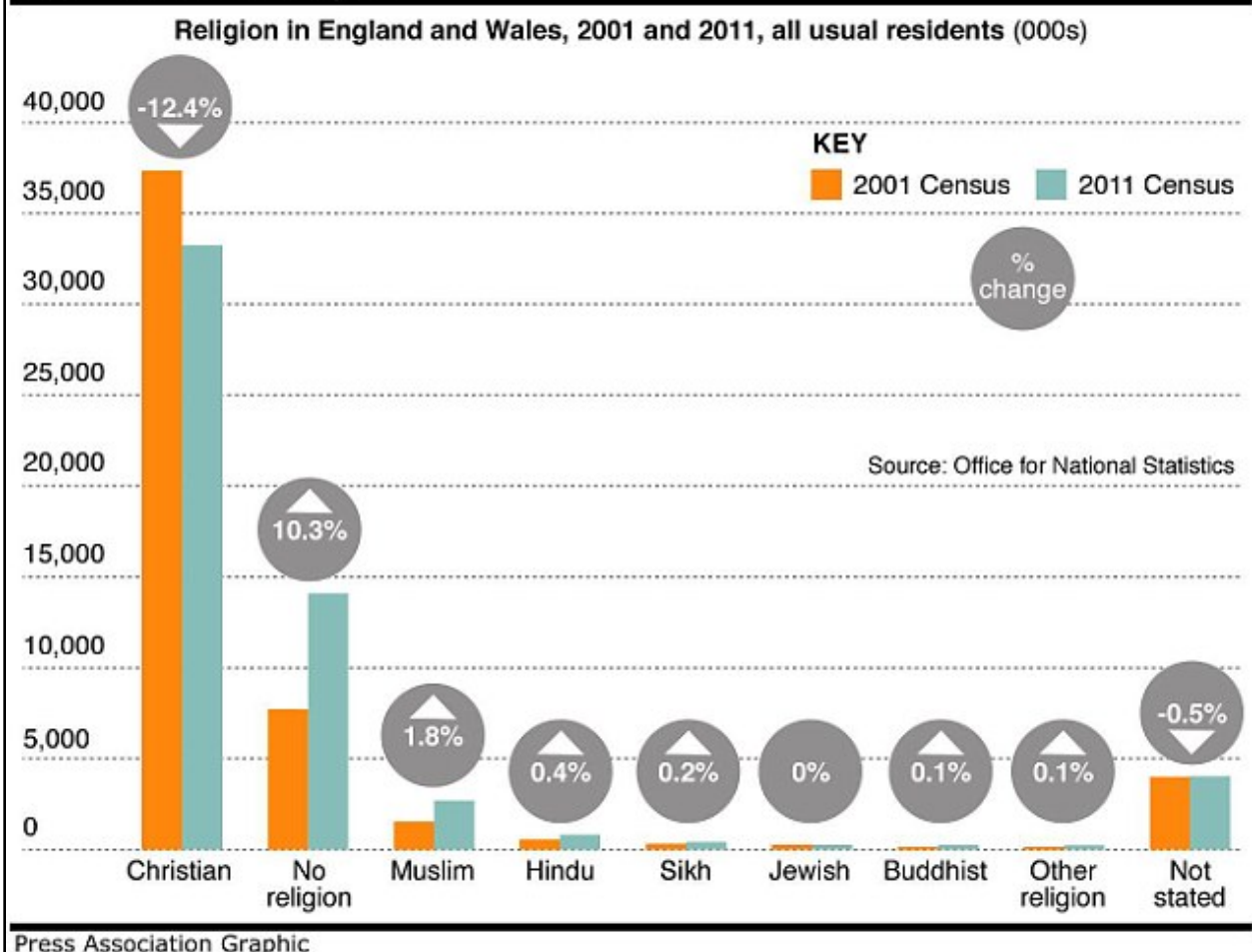
[SOURCE: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/strikingwomen/migrations>]

2011 Census Ethnicity

Ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2011



2011 Census Religion





SCOTLAND AT A GLANCE

- The total minority ethnic population is just over 100,000. This is an increase of 62.3 per cent in the past decade.
- The largest non-white group in Scotland is people of Pakistani origin, with 31,793 people - two thirds of one per cent (0.63 per cent).
- The second largest non-white group in Scotland is people of Chinese origin - 16,310 people - one third of one per cent (0.3 per cent).
- 28 per cent of people in Scotland describe themselves as not religious.
- 65 per cent of the population describe themselves as Christian. 45 per cent of people in the Church of Scotland denomination are aged 50 or over, compared to 32 per cent of Roman Catholics.
- The second largest religious group is Muslim, despite accounting for less than one per cent of the Scottish population.
- Muslims have the youngest age profile of any religion in Scotland, with 31 per cent aged under 16 years.
- Nearly half of the 6,400 Jews resident in Scotland live in East Renfrewshire.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- There are 14,279 non-white people living in Northern Ireland from a population of 1.68m - less than one per cent.
- There are 737,412 members of the Catholic community as defined by upbringing (43.8 per cent).
- Protestant faith communities, defined by upbringing, number 895,377 (53 per cent).
- Chinese are the largest non-white community, numbering 4,145 people.
- Asian communities - including Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi - number 2,679, while Black communities number 1,736.
- There are 234,800 people who either speak, read, write or understand Irish.

HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF MIXED ETHNICITY

More people in Princes Park, Liverpool, describe themselves as mixed race than anywhere else - 11 per cent.

HIGHEST PROPORTION OF MUSLIMS

Three quarters of the population of Moseley and Camp Hill, Birmingham follow Islam. One third of all Muslims live in the West Midlands.

LOWEST CONCENTRATION OF CHRISTIANS

Only 13 per cent of people describe themselves as Christian in Moseley.

Index of ethnic diversity

- 0.50 to 0.85
- 0.26 to 0.49
- 0.12 to 0.25
- 0.02 to 0.11

Experts devised a "diversity index" - based on the probability that any two people chosen at random from a particular area would be from different ethnic groups, even if neither of them are white.

A score of 0.5 means there is more than a 50 per cent chance of this happening - and the area is classed as highly ethnically diverse.

LEAST ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

If you bump into someone in the street in Easington, Co Durham, there is just a two per cent chance they will be from a different ethnic group.

Newcastle
Easington
Middlesbrough

Frizzinghall, Bradford
Princes Park, Liverpool
Salford
Rusholme

Nottingham
Leicester
Peterborough

Moseley, Birmingham
Luton

Harlow
Slough
Brent

Brighton

MOST ETHNICALLY DIVERSE PLACE OUTSIDE LONDON

In Slough there is a 62 per cent likelihood that any two people will come from a different background.

LEAST RELIGIOUS TOWN

Four out of ten people in Brighton described themselves as having no religion.

MOST RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

In Harlow there is a 62 per cent chance that any two people will practise a different religion.

HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF PAKISTANIS

Frizzinghall, Bradford has the biggest concentration of Pakistanis in England and Wales, making up 73 per cent of the population.

HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF JEWISH PEOPLE

Broughton in Salford has the highest concentration of Jews outside London - they make up 49 per cent of the population.

HIGHEST CARIBBEAN CONCENTRATION

One in four of the population of Rusholme, Manchester is Black Caribbean, the highest concentration outside London.

MOST ETHNICALLY DIVERSE AREA

In Brent, London, there was an 85 per cent chance that any two people chosen at random in the street would belong to different ethnic groups.

BIGGEST CONTRAST IN NEIGHBOURS

In one ward in Camberwell, London, Black Africans make up 41 per cent of the residents - yet in the neighbouring ward covering Heme Hill they account for just two per cent.



Graphic: Kristina Ferris

THE RACE MAP OF BRITAIN

• UNPRECEDENTED VIEW OF A DIVERSE NATION, PAGE 2

THE MAKING OF MULTICULTURAL BRITAIN

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
1823	The Merchant Shipping Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Made compulsory for ship owners of major British ports to provide customs authorities with a list of their 'Asiatic' sailors. ♣ The Act made owners liable to a fine if Asiatic sailors were left in ports.
1905 - 1919	The Aliens Act (The Aliens Order)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ The first legislation designed to limit aliens' entry to the United Kingdom. ♣ The government tightened up the supervision of aliens living in Britain and further restricted the settlement of alien immigrants who were unable to provide proof that they could support themselves.
1919-1939	<i>de facto</i> immigration policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ The policies of inter-war years constituted undeclared immigration policies whose clear intention was to keep out Asian and black settlers.
1948	The British Nationality Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ The Act recognized all citizens of territories that made up the Empire/Commonwealth-Britain, the colonies and self-governing member states of the Commonwealth- a British subjects. ♣ The Act created 'Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies' which was available to all those who could not lay claim to citizenship of an independent Commonwealth country.

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
1962	The Commonwealth Immigrants Act	<p>♣The Act made it compulsory to all those seeking to enter the UK for settlement from the Commonwealth and colonies after 1/07/1962 subject to rules which required them to have been issued with a job voucher in of the three categories:</p> <p>a) they could have a job to come to;</p> <p>b) possess special skills which were in short supply;</p> <p>c) be a part of a large undifferentiated group whose numbers would be set according to the labour needs of the UK economy.</p>
1968	The second Commonwealth Immigrants Act	<p>♣The Act subjected all holders of British passports to immigration controls unless they, a parent or a grandparent had been born, adopted or naturalized in the United Kingdom.</p>
1968	Race Relations Act	<p>♣An Act to make fresh provision with respect to discrimination on racial grounds, and to make provision with respect to relations between people of different racial origins.</p>
1969	The Immigration Appeals Act	<p>♣Dependants of existing residents who wished to gain entry to the UK had to obtain an entry clearance certificate, a stamped endorsed on the passport of the prospective immigrant by the relevant office of the High Commissioner.</p>
1971	The Immigration Act (became law in 1973)	<p>♣The effect of the new legislation was to bring new permanent primary migration from the Indian sub-continent, the Caribbean and Africa to the UK finally to a halt.</p> <p>♣The historic categories of ‘alien’ and ‘British subject’ were replaced by the essentially racially defined categories of ‘patrial’ and ‘non-patrial’. Patrials were free from restrictions and non-patrials were liable to controls.</p> <p>♣The Act abolished the last vestiges of the old Empire-embracing concept of British citizen or subject.</p> <p>♣On the same day the Act was legalized, Britain entered the EEC, which gave the EC citizens an easy entrance and settlement rights in the UK. New signs and boards appeared at the entry points, such as Heathrow Airport: ‘United Kingdom citizens and EEC nationals’.</p>

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
1974	Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ An Act to proscribe organisations concerned in terrorism, and to give power to exclude certain persons from Great Britain or the United Kingdom in order to prevent acts of terrorism, and for connected purposes. ♣ The Act was introduced by Roy Jenkins, then Home Secretary, as a severe and emergency reaction to the Birmingham pub bombs.
1976	Race Relations Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ An Act to make fresh provision with respect to discrimination on racial grounds and relations between people of different racial groups; ♣ to make in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 amendments for bringing provisions in that Act relating to its administration and enforcement into conformity with the corresponding provisions in this Act.
1981	The British Nationality Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ It established the 'Primary Purpose Rule' which forbade the entry of affianced or spouses unless the British citizen partner could show that the primary purpose of marriage was not settlement. ♣ For elderly dependants to be allowed in they had to show that they had no relatives who could support them, that they lived abroad at a standard substantially below the average and they had to be mainly or wholly dependent on their children in Britain. ♣ The new rule made it much more difficult for people entering as students and visitors to obtain permission to settle.

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
1989	Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣An Act to make provision in place of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; ♣to make further provision in relation to powers of search under, and persons convicted of scheduled offences within the meaning of, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; ♣to enable the Secretary of State to prevent the establishment of new explosives factories, magazines and stores in Northern Ireland.
1998	Crime and Disorder Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣Introduced enhanced penalties for racially aggravated offences in the case of common assault, actual bodily harm, malicious wounding and criminal damage.
1999	No Recourse to Public Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣The ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ (NRPF) requirement , under Section 115(9) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 denies people with insecure immigration status access to any ‘public funds’ including Income Support, Housing Benefit, public housing and other benefits and entitlements. ♣Under this requirement, women with insecure immigration status who have experienced domestic violence (DV) cannot access refuges or financial support that would enable them to flee an abusive relationship.
2000	Race Relations Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣An Act to extend further the application of the Race Relations Act 1976 to the police and other public authorities; ♣to amend the exemption under that Act for acts done for the purpose of safeguarding national security; and for connected purposes.

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
2000	Terrorism Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣The Act was enacted to make provisions about terrorism and to make temporary provision for Northern Ireland about the prosecution and punishment of certain offences, the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order. ♣This was the first counter-terrorism legislation to be passed since 1989 with the main aim to outlaw terrorist groups in Britain.
2001	The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣The Act amended the <i>Terrorism Act 2000</i>. ♣It made further provision about terrorism and security; ♣provided for the freezing of assets; ♣made provision about immigration and asylum; ♣amended or extended the criminal law and ♣powers for preventing crime and enforcing that law; ♣made provision about the control of pathogens and toxins; ♣provided for the retention of communications data; ♣provided for implementation of Title VI of the Treaty on European Union and for connected purposes. ♣The main features of this Act were based on tightening immigration policies and increasing police powers to ‘stop and search’ suspects with a provision to imprison them for up to a minimum period of 14 days.
2005	The Prevention of Terrorism Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣An Act to provide for the making against individuals involved in terrorism or a related activity orders imposing obligations on them for purposes connected with preventing or restricting their further involvement in such activity. ♣ To make provision about appeals and other proceedings relating to such orders; and for connected purposes. ♣The Act caused wide controversies as it cited the granting of permission to extend the detention of the suspected terrorists without charge up to a period of 28 days.

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
2006	The Terrorism Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣made provision for and about offences relating to conduct carried out, or capable of being carried out, for purposes connected with terrorism; ♣amended enactments relating to terrorism; amended the Intelligence Services Act 1994 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; and for connected purposes. ♣The Act followed the 7/7 attacks, proposing an increase to a 90 day pre-charge detention, influencing the rule of habeas corpus.
2008	The Counter Terrorism Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣an Act to confer further powers to gather and share information for counterterrorism and other purposes; ♣to make further provision about the detention and questioning of terrorist suspects and the prosecution and punishment of terrorist offences; ♣to impose notification requirements on persons convicted of such offences; ♣to confer further powers to act against terrorist financing, money laundering and certain other activities; ♣to provide for review of certain Treasury decisions and about evidence in, and other matters connected with, review proceedings; ♣to amend the law relating to inquiries; to amend the definition of “terrorism”; ♣to amend the enactments relating to terrorist offences, control orders and the forfeiture of terrorist cash; ♣to provide for recovering the costs of policing at certain gas facilities; ♣to amend provisions about the appointment of special advocates in Northern Ireland; and for connected purposes.
2009	The Sojourner Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣The Home Office launched the Sojourner Project, a pilot scheme to assist women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) who are eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Violence Rule. ♣The project funded refuges to support victims while they submitted their applications for ILR to the UK Border Agency (UKBA).

YEAR	POLICY	PURPOSE
2010	Ministry of Justice: Proposal for the reform of legal aid in England and Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣To cut 350 million from legal aid in civil cases. ♣To abolish public funding for legal help and advice in areas of law including welfare benefits, immigration, employment, divorce and child residence, and school exclusion appeals.
2012	The Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣The UK Border Agency (UKBA) introduced the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) concession to replace The Sojourner Project. ♣A person who successfully qualifies for this concession will receive temporary leave for three months, which allows them to apply for access to public funds (including jobseeker's allowance, income support and housing benefit). ♣During this three month period the person should make a separate application for indefinite leave to remain under the Domestic Violence Rule.

Assimilation	1950s-1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This view of Britain, in which there is one dominant culture and/or religion into which new ethnic groups have to fit and be absorbed, is called assimilation. • Assimilation was the expectation when 'New Commonwealth' immigrants came to help to rebuild the war-torn country. • The idea essentially was that people were wanted for their labour and were expected to leave their customs and culture behind them and adhere to British customs and culture instead. • By the mid-1960s the policy of enforced assimilation was rejected in favour of a more egalitarian policy of integration.
Integration	1960s-1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was defined by the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, as 'not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'. • Integration held out the promise that people had a right to their particular cultural expression. • It was the basis for a multicultural society.
Multiculturalism	1980s- 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Multiculturalism simply means cultural diversity and that diversity can either be a good thing, leading to integration, or a bad thing, leading to separatism. It is the social and political context that determines in which direction multiculturalism develops.' • It was after the 9/11 attacks and the London bombings that questions began to be asked about the effectiveness of 'multiculturalism'. • Multiculturalism faced criticism as a failed policy that had helped to build up segregated communities, especially of Asian Muslims, who lived in separate, ethnic enclaves.
Social Cohesion	2001-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The concept of "community cohesion" aimed at bringing people from different backgrounds together. This is where the debate starts to develop about segregation being created by Muslims choosing not to mix.' • values diversity • positive relations across all forms of difference • A strong sense of national, regional, or local belonging
Interculturalism	2010- Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More geared toward interaction and dialogue. • Less 'groupist' and more yielding of synthesis. • Committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of societal cohesion and national citizenship. • More likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices. • Interculturalism is criticised for its assimilationist overtones.

Sources	<i>Ian R.G Spencer (1997); Institute of Race Relations Briefing Papers Nos: 2, 6, 7 (2007); Ted Cantle (2012);</i> www.legislation.gov.uk
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