

**LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY CONFLICT: A POST-
COLONIAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SELECTED TEXTS
BY MONICA ALI AND KAMILA SHAMSIE**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Dissertation entitled “**Language, Culture And Identity Conflict: A Post-colonial Approach to the Study of Selected Texts By Monica Ali And Kamila Shamsie**” submitted by **Miss Sonali Maurya**, Centre for Linguistics, School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution. This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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Dedicated

To

My Beloved Parents

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INTRODUCTION

Unquestionably in postcolonial discourses or texts, the notion of ever transforming identity occurs frequently. As post-colonialism itself has been defined as reconsideration and reformation of our history and as well as of identity.¹ Further, postcolonial critique is also concerned with the contemporary politics of identity; race, ethnicity, class, and gender; of anti-racism and liberal multiculturalism. In addition, Homi Bhabha argues that colonial discourses produce stable and fixed identities. In his view this is the failure of these texts and suggested that crossovers of various sorts of 'hybridity' and 'ambivalence' more adequately describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter.² Therefore, in postcolonial discourses we see the changing and ever transforming mode of identity that is the outcome of hybridity and ambivalence. This postcolonial hybridity is simply described as the mixture of two or more different cultures, races, as well as of languages. This dissertation is an attempt to look at the dynamism, mobility, and to see the instability of an identity that comes into being through the intermingling of two or more cultures. The problem of postcolonial identity is more or less identical to the phenomenon of language where meaning keeps deferring through time and space. An identity can also be understood as a double movement that follows what Derrida calls the play of the supplement. However, the fluctuation of identity takes places not only in the cross-cultural space but also within a culture. My purpose in dealing with the question of identity is to show that an identity translates or transforms at both diasporic and anasporic³ levels.

To make the scope of my research more focused, I intend to choose for study only two narratives by two different South Asian women writers. The primary texts selected for the proposed dissertation are Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* (2005). These exemplary works have been chosen to highlight

¹ Young, R., 2001, p. 61. "Concepts in History." In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, 13-70.

² Quoted in Loomba, A., 1998, p. 105. "Colonial and Postcolonial Identities." In *Colonialism/postcolonialism*, from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994).

³ Riggs, Fred W., 1998. "The Modernity of Ethnic Identity and Conflict." *International Political Science Review* 19 (3): 269-288. This term is first introduced by Riggs as the antonym to diaspora.

postcolonial identity both at anasporic and diasporic levels. Though, both have different issues regarding language, diaspora and identity. By 1970s, the phenomenon of diaspora, the trauma of being uprooted, the loss of home and the resultant identity crisis have been dealt with many South Asian writers. These writers are often haunted by some sense of loss, urge to reclaim, to look back with the knowledge that they will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost. Naturally they take their readers into a world filled with fragmentation, rebirth, transformation and lost memory where the characters face everyday problems of definition and identity. This research focuses on issues of post-colonial narratives, especially the problem of identity. These writings highlight the conflict of identity which is the result of multiculturalism and multilingualism due to diaspora and persistence of colonial institutions in the former colonies those are now independent.

The texts I have selected are all very recent writings and they are less studied. Both the works selected here are caught up in a search for meaning and identity where language and culture play a vital role. Monica Ali, born in Bangladesh in 1967, but at present she is known as a British writer due to her immigration to London. She is a mixed child of Bangladeshi father and English mother, herself being in diaspora, settled in London and has undergone bitter experiences of settling in London. Her novel portrays hardships in transforming or recreating identity in diaspora which comes into conflict between the native and an alien culture. She was selected as one of the “best of young novelists in the British” by Granta Magazine in 2003 for *Brick Lane*. It is her debut novel; and in 2007 a movie was made with the same title. *Brick Lane* is the first comprehensive fictional portrayal of the Bengali community in contemporary England. This novel is entirely based on diaspora or transnational experiences where mainly protagonist’s as well as those of other characters identities are subjected to transformation due to the shift in language and culture. It can be seen therefore, diaspora is a socio-linguistic phenomenon which meets with the issues of shifting of language and identity, and maintenance or loss of indigenous language and identity in a different socio-cultural space. People are free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in an irregular

intertextual temporality of cultural differences. *Brick Lane* is the partial reflection of writers' own experiences. Further, it explores the serious questions concerning the status of women and the position of patriarchy in the diasporic Bengali society. Monica Ali clearly suggests that the diasporic space offers possibilities and rights which are denied to a Bengali woman in her native country and therefore, it is natural that women are more willing to carve out their identities in British-Bengali terms that are indicative of transitional and dynamic structure of an identity.

The other, Kamila Shamsie is a young Pakistani novelist, born in Karachi in 1973. Since 2007, having settled in UK, she is identified with two nationalities of Pakistan (native place) and UK (the country of settlement). Shamsie's *Broken Verses* her fourth novel, won the "Patras Bokhari" Award from the Academy of Letters in Pakistan. Shamsie too was affixed in the Granta list of 20 best young British Writers in 2013. Thus, both the writers came across transcultural experiences which are reflected in their narratives. Although *Broken Verses* does not come across the experiences of diaspora at first hand, rather they have been narrated by the protagonist as well as by other characters as the backdrop of the story. Here, the identity of the protagonist is not the subject of transformation through transcultural event but rather through her own decisions, actions or performance in the social set up beyond the traditional Muslim society of Pakistan. This is because the question of identity is an undecidable space between desire and fulfillment, between perpetration and its recollection. Identity of the protagonist in *Broken Verses* seems to be neither fixed in the past nor in the present, but between the two, it is to mark the transitional nature of an identity. Here the transformation of the protagonist's identity as well as of others is in fact linguistically driven. Thus, in this narrative language is the main facet of my study, where the protagonist undergoes transformation from one identity to another. It is an attempt to see that how the representation of language is intertwined with the identity of its protagonist.

Both the authors chosen for study are relatively new, Kamila Shamsie's first novel was published in 1998 whereas, Monica Ali was published in 2003; they are comparatively less studied. I have not seen many research articles on Kamila Shamsie

particularly on her writings, though there are some articles, reviews and comments on Monica Ali's writings. Interviews and personal writings of the chosen writers give us insight about the issues I have proposed to study how and to what extent their actual experiences have affected their fictional narratives. Here, Monica Ali's essay "*Where I'm Coming From*" (2003) and her an exclusive interview with Kaiser Haq (2003) is particularly helpful. There is massive research on diaspora, culture, language, identity and on post-colonial issues in general. However, the issues that I have addressed have not been taken much worked upon. Therefore, my primary approach is to explore these issues in detail and to come up with new dimensions in this field of study.

The research is one of the textual reading-based exegesis along with literary-critical reading of the significant works and their analysis. Deliberately some technicalities are involved in the selection of both these texts and the proposed issues with a view to provide a comprehensive study by means of contrasts and parallelisms. One of the writers is from Dhaka (Bangladesh) and other from Karachi (Pakistan). One talks of identity as a matter of becoming in diaspora and other in anaphora respectively. In both these narratives 'letters' became the means of expression and communication. Further these letters became the sources of inspirations and translation of the identity of Shamsie's protagonist. This dissertation has also taken into consideration some contemporary Indian women writers, which deal with the postcolonial issues, for instance, Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989).

This dissertation is divided into four chapters followed by a conclusion, in order to understand the notion of identity and some interrelated questions thoroughly. And each chapter is further classified into sections.

The *first chapter* is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the concept of post-colonialism because, before delving into the long discussion on the contemporary phenomenon of question of identity, it is important to understand what the

term post-colonialism signifies. And how the notion of identity is interrelated with post-colonialism. It is because postcolonial texts deal with transnational issue, and the issue of cultural differences that emerges at points of social crisis, and the question of identity that it rises is problematic. Further, it discusses the historical framework of such concepts as colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism so that term post-colonialism can be easily understood. The second section covers the theoretical structure of the process of identity translation, linking it with Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' and John W. Berry's idea of 'acculturation.' It is because in diaspora or in transcultural space the phenomena of acculturation and hybridity evolve. Both theory of hybridity and acculturation initiate the project of political thinking by constantly differing an identity into the state of instability and dynamism. However, in the next section the writings of some Indian women writers have been dealt with precisely in order to see the differences and equalities between them and the writings of their contemporary South Asian women writers.

The *second chapter* deals with the notion of literature, which is important to explore in order to describe the relevance of literature to human lives as well as to society. It explores the idea of literature and its significance. Moreover, this chapter dwells on the interrelatedness of language, literature, and identity. Sartre's view on the question of literature or on the motivation behind one's writings has also been discussed. Further, this chapter also expounds different stances of some well known theorists and philosophers such as Derrida, Blanchot and Barthes on language and literature. In the later part of this chapter, South Asian women's writings have been analyzed in terms of literature in order to see the approaches of these women writers and of those theorists on language and literature. It investigates women writings to see how and why an act of writing is an imperative phenomenon for women self and identity.

The *third chapter* is divided into two sections. The first section undertakes an analysis of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, that looks for elements of 'acculturation.' It also engages with the most discursive issue of hybridized identity in diaspora that highlights the fluctuating and transitional identities of Bangladeshi immigrants. And it has been

shown that identity is not a stable or fixed thing but an ever unceasing phenomenon, whether it is of an individual or collective identity, which is constructed in time and space. The next section investigates the factors behind the breakdown of native language and culture. It explores the stance of diaspora in the process of identity shifting, especially of women and most importantly it shows how one's perceptions and expectations change after resettling in an alien land. Furthermore, it examines how the sense of belongingness or nationality works in finding out this long debated phenomenon of identity; how the attitude of the country of settlement and of indigenous land locates one's identity into a transitional space.

The *fourth chapter* explores Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* deals with some of the significant issues of post-colonialism, where the emphasis is drawn upon postcolonial identity. This chapter is also divided into three sections. The first section encounters the idea of language and hybridized identity in *Broken Verses*. The novel investigates the political and cultural situation of Pakistan through an unfolding of personal life issues in the public domain. The second section explores interdependence of language, translation and identity that presents identity as an ever fluctuating and evolving phenomenon that gets hybridized when translate from past to present within a culture as well. Further, the next section discusses the contemporary politics of language and identity in Pakistan. Finally, the *Conclusion* draws the overall assessment of the entire research.

CHAPTER - 1

POST-COLONIALISM, IDENTITY AND INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

1.1 Post-colonialism an Overview:

This chapter engages with the historical structure of post-colonialism where the question of identity is located. In order to address this long discursive contemporary phenomenon of question of identity, it becomes imperative to understand what the term post-colonialism signifies; what the notion of identity implies in itself and how it is related to postcoloniality. Further, it explains some concepts such as colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, neo-colonialism in order to make the term post-colonialism lucid and comprehensive, and to further see how it is associated with diaspora and transnationalism. Moreover, it extensively deals with the theoretical framework of the process of identity transformation, introducing and relating it with Homi Bhabha's theory of 'hybridity' and John W. Berry's theory of 'acculturation.' The writings of some Indian women writers have also been dealt with in this chapter precisely to draw contrasts and parallels between them and the writings of their contemporary South Asian women writers.

Before entering into the subject of post-colonialism some interrelated concepts such as colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism needs to be explained. It is because post-colonialism is the product of resistance to colonialism and imperialism, and as the term itself indicates "the postcolonial is post, that is, coming after, colonialism and imperialism in its first sense of domination by direct rule. It is not, however, post to imperialism in its second sense, that is a general system of power relation of economic and political domination."⁴ Although it has been suggested that the 'post' of post-colonial includes historical form of resistance to colonialism, it is a critical account of the past which came to expose consequences of violent history of British rule over India.

⁴ Young, R., 2001. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, p. 44.

Colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably, it means sometimes people use both the terms without making any distinction. But both terms have different contexts of history or contextually both are somehow distinct. For instance, According to *the Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the term colonialism, comes from the Roman who settled in other lands but retained their citizenship. It is defined as “a settlement in a new country . . . a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up.” Therefore, colonialism is the conquest and control over one’s land and goods, and further it can be defined as the domination of one country over the other economically, culturally, politically and geographically. But fundamentally it may be classified into two types: physical domination or colonization, (it covers geographical area and economic benefit), and colonization through mind. This concept is best understood not only by concentrating on a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes. It suggests that it could be easily comprehensive or we can lucidly take this term in a broader perspective if we are not just stuck with its semantic meaning. For example, “In European sense originally the term colonization was first used, which signified not the rule or domination over native people, or the extraction of wealth, but primarily the goal was the transfer of communities who sought to maintain their allegiance to their own original culture, while seeking a better life in economic, religious or political terms - very similar to the situation of migrants today. Colonization in this sense comprised of people whose primary aim was to settle elsewhere rather than to rule others. However, in most cases, it also involved the latter; this was the byproduct of the former, the result of the land being already populated, though usually not ‘settled’ in the European sense.”⁵ In addition, colonialism has marked the beginning of capitalism, it was mutually related with capitalism and imperialism and they might be conceived as different forms of colonialism. In Ania Loomba’s words “colonialism was the midwife that assisted the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in

⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

Europe.”⁶ Because it was a kind of commercial operation and the basic desire was economic profit, which gave impetus to capitalism.

To differentiate between colonialism and imperialism, and how they are interrelated with each other, we need to understand how both concepts have emphasized forms of subjugation and suppression of one person by another. On the one hand “colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose project of power.”⁷ It can also be described as political system of territorial domination or it could be defined as economic domination in the broader sense, while by contrast colonialism signified the material condition of political rule of subjugated people by the old European colonial powers. However, for Joseph Conrad a Polish novelist, any difference between what is now characterized as colonialism and imperialism had become blurred; because the first almost seemed to have become the practice of the second.⁸ As a matter of fact the practices of both terms are similar in many ways as they are based on the same policy of political and cultural domination; and exploitation of economic and natural resources.’ And to rule over the other countries for their own prosperity and riches and for expanding their geographical space for the sake of making impact on the other countries too. According to Young the term imperialism, generally, used to describe since eighteenth century onward, the question of relations between Britain and its settler colonies, and the relations between the so-called ‘Mother - country’ and the colonies about how they were related since that time.⁹ Hence, it can be said that colonialism is basically a set of unequal relationships between colonists and native people or of colonizers and colonized, or of the colonial power and colony. And as I think that colonialism can be considered as a practice and imperialism must be thought as an idea leading to that practice.

⁶ Loomba, A., 1998, p. 15, “Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies.” In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 1-104.

⁷ Young, 2001, p.17.

⁸ Quoted in Young, 2001, p. 25. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* from Joseph Conrad’s *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* (1923).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Now we can move forward to the next concept of ‘neo-colonialism,’ a term of political science which became popular due to the continued economic and cultural exploitation of African countries despite being decolonized during the Second World War (1939-45). This term was first coined by the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah.¹⁰ Generally, this term is used to describe the immediate set up of the postcolonial era which denotes unceasing economic hegemony that means the postcolonial state remains in a situation of dependence on its former masters, and the former masters keep up to act in a colonialist manner towards formerly colonized states.¹¹ This suggests that after being officially decolonized we are still colonized through various ways, such as economically, culturally and as well as mentally. Likewise, according to Bhabha colonies (colonized countries) of British Empire are still dependent over colonist countries in the form of ‘mimicry’ and it is a kind ‘repetition’ rather than representation.¹² As for the technical and financial back up and along with it our culture is highly influenced by theirs. Which is basically resulted what a Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o claims due to our psychic colonization.¹³ In other words, these decolonized countries are mimic representations of colonial countries. The former colonies of British Empire got independence in the disguise form of mimicry; it is because we are much more inclined towards their cultural and traditional values. Bhabha argues, “Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. [And] the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence”¹⁴ Thus the neo-colonial practice could be defined as an interruption of rich and developed countries in the affairs of the poor or developing countries by way of governing them culturally, politically and economically. It censures the present situation of colonialism on the one hand because developing countries seem to crave or demand for the help indirectly from the former colonial powers. Or we can say that the

¹⁰ This term is first used in his *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of the Imperialism*, 1965.

¹¹ Young, 2001, p. 45.

¹² See, Bhabha, H., 1994, p. 88. “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” In *The Location of Culture*, 85-92.

¹³ In his *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), Thiong’o strongly criticized African people for writing their literature in European languages instead of their indigenous languages.

¹⁴ Bhabha, 1994, pp. 85-86.

dependency over the former colonists for getting back up is the main issue, and on the other hand, we are officially emancipated from their oppressive and suppressive conditions only for the name sake, though the same set up of colonialism is still in practice.

Further, neo-colonial critics underline the humanitarian and ecological devastation by the multinational corporations which had been established during the colonial period by colonists because the reason behind it was only the exploitation of natural resources and labourers of the poor developing regions. In neocolonial phase the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were the major sources which gave it impetus for the development. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah writes that “in place of colonialism, as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism, like colonialism, is an attempt to export the social conflicts of the capitalist countries.”¹⁵ Further, he said optimistically, that “neo-colonialism is not a sign of imperialism’s strength but rather its last hideous gasp.”¹⁶ It is a very useful term from the postcolonial point of view because it insists on a primarily economic account of the postcolonial system from the Marxist view point. It enabled the writers and activists to develop a sense for cultural and political analysis, for example, Ngugi wa Thiongo paid a huge attention on the continuing presence of the cultural effects of the settlers over the indigenous culture, sway of colonial languages such as English or French. English became an international language of communication, of westernized educational system, legal and political institutions that were originally initiated during the colonization period, and, they are still in practice all over the world. Mainly, his emphasis is to portray the cultural resistance towards the colonial system. Here, again I would like to mention what Thiong’o stated in his *Decolonizing the Mind*, that his own Kenya remained western in orientation even after getting independence from the shackles of colonial powers and the question of dependency rises which became problematic in many ways. According to Young since 1950s and 1960s the newly independent developing countries, did not function in separation from developed nations in the area of economic system. It is

¹⁵ Nkruma in the “Introduction.” In *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965.

¹⁶ Nkrumah, 1965, p. 253.

because they are much more influenced by them, although they are formally independent, the major cause was that the longing for economic development so that they may become wealthy and rich. That is why they had given preference to the alliance with the west and remained economically dependent. However, the underdevelopment of the colonies fostered the economic growth and industrial power of western countries as they had already destroyed the local industries and kept the economic growth in the condition of stagnation along with the exploitation of the natural resources of the non-western countries. Consequently, these countries retained the condition of ‘underdevelopment’ and it became the byproduct of the developed nation’s diplomacy. In other words it was the policy and somehow strategy of the European countries to leave non-European countries under this situation through unequal exchange and exploitation in trade and labour.

As we know neo-colonialism is the initial stage of post-colonialism therefore turning from this I would like to discuss post-colonialism which has been the subject of discussion for a long time since 1947 when India got freedom from the imperial British. It follows from colonialism and imperialism. It is a dialectical term which has vast historical facts of decolonization and throws light over the achievement of the sovereignty but also the present realities of nations and the emergence of people in the new imperialistic state of economic and political domination. The term post-colonialism describes transformed historical and cultural conditions that have emerged through the changed political circumstances in the former colonial power. While, “the term ‘post-coloniality,’ by contrast, puts the emphasis on the economic, material and cultural conditions that determines the global system in which the postcolonial nation is required to operate.”¹⁷ It can also be understood as a period which came into existence after colonized countries got freedom in the mid of the 20th century. Although, nowadays it is apparent not only in history, literature and politics but also in the approach of culture and identity of both the countries of colonial power and the countries that were colonies, that how they get affected or transformed through the process of colonization. Therefore it

¹⁷ Young, 2001, p. 57.

could be said that it is a discipline which studies and tries to address the cultural practices of colonialism and imperialism. Further, it draws our attention over the basic question of racial difference and unequal practice of colonial era where the colonialist became representative and indigenous peoples were represented by them. Consequently, native cultures get suppressed and their culture became the object of domination. Hence, it aims to familiarize us with all those historical, political and cultural complications that were encountered between West and East during the colonial era. It also portrays the aftermath of colonization period, particularly from those perspectives who suffered it as well as describing its contemporary social and cultural impact. This is the main reason for the interconnection of postcolonial theories to the past with the present. For instance, postcolonial scholars argue that “the postcolonial refers to cultural serfdom necessitated by the imperial process from the moment of colonialism to the present day.”¹⁸

Here, again I shall reiterate that as post-colonialism’s ‘post’ indicates historical relation after the colonial period, likewise the term postcolonial also suggests chronological signification. It is a critical response to the unequal and unjust practices of the colonial period against colonized people. It is a strong resistance against the colonial racial difference, legal inequality and cultural suppression in colonial social order. According to Young, post-colonialism both constitutes an analysis of the systems of economic and political domination, and develops means of resistance to it. Whereas, Nkrumah argues that for the global system of economic imperialism, a special category like neo-colonialism was necessary to analyze the economic situation of formerly colonized countries.

In the present day, post-colonialism has become associated with concepts such as diaspora, transnational migration, forced migrancy, transnationalism, and anti-colonialism. Because as Young says that “like post-colonialism, anti-colonialism was a diasporic production, a revolutionary mixture of the indigenous and cosmopolitan, a complex constellation of situated local knowledge combined with radical, universal

¹⁸ Aschroft, B., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back*, 1989.

political principles, constructed and facilitated through international networks of party cells and organizations.”¹⁹ Definitely, both the novels I have chosen for my study, deal with postcolonial diasporic aspects. Firstly, we need to know that what does the term ‘diaspora’ signify? Generally it marks ‘scattering’ or ‘dispersion’ of native populace to settle in an alien land individually or by a group of people. It also intended to mean as migration of inhabitants from their original homeland as a voluntary or involuntary process. Historically speaking, it was an involuntary event because they (people) didn’t want to go on their own desire although they were expelled and exiled from their indigenous land. But nowadays, diaspora might be variously interpreted. Such as, for Robin Cohen, a social scientist working in the field of migration and diaspora observed that “migrant scholars were increasingly using gardening terms like ‘uprooting,’ ‘scattering,’ ‘transplanting,’ and then newly-fashionable word ‘hybridity’ for defining diaspora.”²⁰

Diaspora could be better understood by three possible characteristics and each characteristic sub-categorized in older and newer forms of usages. The first feature is related to the causes of migration or dispersal. In the older sense it refers to forced dispersal for instance, if we look at the experiences of Jews and of Palestinians. However, newer sense of this notion refers to any sort of dispersal. Secondly, William Safran²¹ argues that it links cross-border experiences of homeland with destination and this older notion clearly indicates a ‘return’ to an (imaginary) homeland. By contrast, newer uses often replaced ‘return’ with the continuous linkages across borders, as in the migration-development nexus. It suggests that the newer notion is not bound with the return to imaginary homeland instead they wish to keep relationship with abroad. Here a migrant’s desire to return home has been replaced by transnational mobility. The third characteristic deals with integration of immigrants with the host countries or the countries of settlement. Although, the older sense of diaspora implied that immigrants do not integrate themselves completely with the social practices and values of the country of settlement. It

¹⁹ Young, 2001, p.2.

²⁰ Cohen, R., 2008. “Introduction.” *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, p. xiv.

²¹ William’s *Diaspora in Modern Societies* (1991) marked the beginning of the contemporary diaspora studies.

suggests the maintaining of boundaries between two different cultures. At this point I would like to refer to sociologist Thomas Faist, who argues that “assimilation would mean the end of diaspora, whether ethnically or religiously defined.”²² It is because assimilation is a process in which immigrants completely get transformed into other group of culture and language and they would not have desire for their lost homeland or past identity. In this way diaspora would not exist anymore. However, in Bhabha’s view the newer notion of diaspora underlines cultural hybridity in the wake of ‘dissemination.’ Thus, both notions of diaspora emphasized the fact that immigrants do not assimilate entirely. Additionally, for Safran the vital importance of homeland in defining one of essential characteristics of diaspora are that members of diaspora retained a collective memory of ‘their original homeland,’ they realized their ‘ancestral home,’ were committed to restoration of ‘the original homeland’ and continued in various ways to ‘relate that homeland.’²³

To comprehend diaspora in a transnational viewpoint, it becomes important to understand the kinds of diasporas, for making difference between experiences of transnational migrants such as when people get exiled for some political reason prohibiting them from their native place. However, nowadays people go outside their states or countries willingly in order to obtain some personal benefits, for instance, in search of good job, to gain scholarly education from foreign universities or for being popular. Diasporic transnationalism refers “to the ties of migrants and their collectives who entertain sustained social formations across borders while being settled in countries of immigration.”²⁴ Additionally, it was also the outcome of imperialism which became the starting point of diaspora. Consequently, it emerges into different forms, such as forced and economic diaspora. The most common feature of it is that people migrate with the desire to come back their native place soon after accomplishing their goal or whatever ambitions they have. Diaspora might be about exile, detachment, displacement, identity

²² Faist, T., 2010, p. 14. “Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance partners?” In *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, 9-35.

²³ Safran, W., 1991, p. 83.

²⁴ Faist, 2010, p.18.

conflict or identity recreation and homelessness. And further it explores the process of acculturation and hybridization.²⁵

Subsequently, here the question is not only that when does the post-colonialism start or what is meant by it? Though the major question is that where does postcoloniality prevail? Through these selected narratives such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* (2005) I shall try to address the aspects of postcoloniality which are still prevalent in various countries. For instance, how the practices of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism are apparent in the present day situation, despite independence. How women are doubly marginalized or doubly colonized and how they came to resist this patriarchal society? What are major tools for their resistance? It would be appropriate to illustrate here what Loomba says that "post-colonialism could only be useful if we use it with caution and qualifications and where it can be compared to the concept of 'patriarchy' in feminist thought, which is applicable to the extent that indicates male domination over women. Though, the ideology and practices of male domination might be historically, geographically and culturally different."²⁶ It would be right to say that the forms of domination could be different according to the customs and traditions because most of the time women are marginalized and subjugated on the basis of culture and tradition. It suggests that the moral pressure of tradition, and sometimes women themselves are responsible for their suppressive condition. Because they never raise their voice against patriarchal society as well as never demand for their rights, they have to face social disability which is actually an effect of socio-cultural set up.

1.2 Postcolonial Transforming Identities:

The most crucial and apparent problem of the postcoloniality is the problem of 'identity' that has been a subject of discussion for many years. It becomes problematic

²⁵ Both the terms 'hybridity' and 'acculturation' have been explained and discussed in detail in the next section.

²⁶ Loomba, 1998, p.18.

whenever it comes into contact with different cultures or geographic spaces. The cross-cultural encounter and mingling of different languages gave rise to the problem of 'conflict of identity.' When a person leaves his own culture and enters into another culture, then his own original or indigenous culture and tradition comes into conflict with the new one. This cultural and language change leads towards a kind of conflict of identity for which diaspora, and transnationalism becomes responsible. It is clear with this exposition that "the construction or demolition of houses or building in postcolonial locations is a recurring and evocative figure for the problematic postcolonial identity in works from very different societies."²⁷ As a postcolonial theorist Stuart Hall says, "the cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exist, transcending place, time, history and culture."²⁸ It suggests that identity is not a fixed entity but it gets changed or transformed through past, present and future, from one culture to another, from one language to other. Thus, it undergoes constant transformation or change. It is far from being eternally fixed in the past or present; they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Language can present and construct identity. In Hall's view meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are, with whom we belong. And he further argues "identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses . . . [until recently, we have incorrectly thought that identity is] a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action . . . the logic of something like a 'true self.' (But) Identity is a process, identity is a split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of Other to oneself."²⁹ Because identity is not an end product but is a constitutive process or it is always in flux and keeps changing throughout the life. It is suggestive of dynamic structure of identity which always changes according to the language and culture. The major issues which emerged in the postcolonial literature are the problems of language and identity; both are interconnected because language becomes the constitutive factor for an individual as well as national identity. In addition,

²⁷ Ashcroft, B., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 1989, p. 27.

²⁸ Hall, S., 1997, p.112, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Contemporary Postcolonial theory: A Reader*, 110-121.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Salman Rushdie describes that, “our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fallen on two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not infertile territory for a writer to occupy.”³⁰ He further argues “We are. We are here. And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage.”³¹ At the time of immigration and due to the influence of colonialism, the essence of the past identity comes to merge with new identity by getting exposure at a new land or with new cultural practices, together with it, some immigrants fall into two cultures or become part of the two cultures while living in one place, and this shifting tendency of identity is an unceasing process.

In the context of colonialism and post-colonialism, language has often become a site for both, colonization and resistance. In particular, a return to the indigenous language is often advocated and used as a tool for political mobilization since the language was suppressed by colonizing forces. The use of the European language is a much debated issue among post-colonial literature. Such as “Abrogation is a refusal or denial to use the language of the colonizers in a correct or standard way. Appropriation is the process of reconstruction of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege.”³² For instance Ngugi wa Thiong’o censures African-European choice of their linguistic practices. Further in Thiong’o’s view “language was the important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. Language was the mean of spiritual subjugation.”³³ And further, he claims that any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Thus culture has an important role in the formation or transformation of one’s identity.

In addition, if we speak of postcolonial discourse, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) became the starting point of postcolonial studies. Said introduced a new kind of study of colonialism by claiming that the formation of authoritative knowledge about

³⁰ Rushdie, S., 1991. *Imaginary Homeland*. p.15.

³¹ Ibid., p. 15.

³² Ashcroft, B., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 1989, p. 37.

³³ Thiong’o, 1986, p. 9.

non-European “other” cannot be separated from the event of maintaining power over them. As he explores *Orientalism* as a remarkable discourse, such as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the orient’ and ‘the occident’ and as a ‘western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient.’”³⁴ One common thing that I have found in different postcolonial literatures is that, they just project on their native or pre-colonial practices, always demand for their past identities and desire to restore their indigenous culture and tradition. It happens due to the process of acculturation, through the mingling of two cultures and languages of different countries. Acculturation³⁵ basically refers to the cultural change, integration, appropriation or assimilation caused by desire of the colonized or of indigenous people. It takes place in both the cases, whether through colonization or by the process of immigration. But this acculturation phenomenon takes place variously because it depends on individuals’ perceptions, as people marked by different attitudes. Moreover, John W. Berry, a professor of psychology has further propounded this term as “acculturation psychology” and this phenomenon of acculturation includes four strategies, they are assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization.³⁶

Assimilation can be defined as the process when the native or indigenous people positively adapt the language and cultural practices of the dominant or colonial country over their original and they do not wish to maintain their original culture. However, separation is the complete reverse of the first one. Here native people are not able to adapt the cultural norms and tradition of the host country in order to preserve their own indigenous language and cultural practices. It basically exists in the case of immigration; it is because immigrants are highly conscious of their own original custom and tradition. Now if we take into account the process of integration, it is a mixture of the both above mentioned strategies, where indigenous people neither resist colonial practices nor

³⁴ Said, E., 1978, *Orientalism*, pp. 2-3

³⁵ This term is introduced by W. J. Powell in his *Introduction to the study of Indian Languages, with words, phrases, and sentences to be collected*, 1877.

³⁶ Berry, John W., 1997a, p. 9. “Acculturation and Adaptation.” *Handbook of Cross- Cultural Psychology* Vol. 2.

wholly accept them, it means they adapt the culture and language of the dominant country as well as they keep in practice their own native culture and language too. It can be said that in the process of identity formation, the psyche or desire of colonized subjects or immigrants play a very crucial role.

Consequently, this practice of intermingling of cultures emerges which is known as 'hybridization' and this hybridity of colonial identity became problematic when it comes into conflict. Bhabha argues that "colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two cultures which can then be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism. Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of recognition."³⁷ Further elaborating this idea he said that it is a disguise or reverse form of colonial domination through hybrid colonial identity. As he states, "hybridity is the sign of the productivity of strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original of authority)."³⁸ It suggests that hybridity maintains the real resemblance of colonial power but adapting its presence in a new form denying its original essence by recreating difference. Subsequently, it unfolds what Bhabha calls the mimetic or narcissistic desire of colonial authority or power. Thus an individual or collective resistance to colonial power is not necessarily an oppositional act in regard of political intention nor is it a simple negation or exclusion of the content of another culture, as a difference once perceived. But it is the effect of ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses.³⁹ The term ambivalence first used in postcolonial discourse by Bhabha is the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized. And this is a sort of an ambivalent relationship because colonized people neither completely oppose nor accept the colonialist practices

³⁷ Bhabha, 1994, p. 114. "Sign Taken for Wonders." *The Location of Culture*, 102-122.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

but it is assumed that some (colonized) subjects might be complicit and some might be resistant.

Returning to the continuing discussion of acculturation theory, its fourth strategy or model is ‘marginalization’ that might be described as the rejection of the culture and language of the dominant country as well as of the native country. In other words, people have little interest to preserve their own native cultural practices as well as little interest into the language and culture of the host country. On the basis of these models I have looked upon in this dissertation that how these postcolonial acculturation strategies and hybridity of postcolonial identities are functioning in both the narratives. Further how they would vary from person to person because a person can reject or accept the values and norms of other countries. In this way I shall discuss that how different characters of the narratives are falling in these aforementioned categories and how they are fitted in a particular model.

From the very beginning of the postcolonial studies the concept of ‘hybridity’ has been a key term in postcolonial discourse, coined by Homi K. Bhabha and hugely dealt with it in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) as well as this term used variously by other postcolonial theorists such as, in Gayatri Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1999), Robert Young’s *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in theory, Culture and Race* (1995), Stuart Hall’s *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* and many others. Hybridity is the mixture of two separate cultures or languages which resulted from colonialism and immigration. For example, Bhabha argues that “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of the colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.”⁴⁰ In this way, hybridity opens up the space for a new culture out of two or from many cultures which emerges in the form of disguise dual face of an image at the same time belonging from two different places. Here, Bhabha is right in his own way because immigrants living in other places, some of them accommodate themselves in a different

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 112.

land, along with it they retain their original culture too, where the two cultures (native and alien) find expression in a new separate form at the same moment of time, and the process of integration takes place. According to Bhabha, hybridity in postcolonial discourses is a trick for the opposition of colonial power by denying it. Furthermore, he suggests that “the kind of hybridity that I have attempted to identify is being acknowledged as a historical necessity.”⁴¹ It is clear from the above description that essence of identity and culture are not fixed because they keep changing throughout time and space. It is caused by cultural difference, as in case of British rule, firstly, they began to popularize their culture and language which became means of domination. A hybridized identity and culture both could be analyzed in terms of past and present. They are hybrid entity of historical past and contemporary present which get mixed up. It might be said that identity and culture both are uncertain phenomena because a sign of a culture might be interpreted or appropriated in various way at the same moment of time. Therefore, Bhabha made emphasis on the necessity of history. Although, the importance of language in cultural difference is definitely enormous, for example, “it is this difference in the process of language that is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures, at the same time, that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent.”⁴² Colonized or immigrant people consider an alien culture with psychic identification, because they have different tastes for recognizing it. It means some find it easy and some has a strong resistance towards it as I have already mentioned it in the context of four strategies of acculturation. These are some fundamentals which I shall discuss further at a great extent in the following chapters with a number of illustrations from the texts to prove the thesis.

Returning on the continuing debate of the postcolonial discourse, I would like to discuss purpose and common features of this literature. According to Amilcar Cabral “the object of post-colonialism is the pursuit of liberation after the achievement of political

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴² Ibid., p. 36.

independence.”⁴³ Additionally it aims towards the resolution of aftermath of colonialism which includes the creation of equality in material, natural and technological resources; the contestation of forms of domination, whether economic, cultural, religious, ethnic or gendered, and the articulation and assertion of collective forms of political and cultural identity. These discourses mainly throw light over the politics of anti-colonialism and neo-colonialism, race, gender, nationalism, class and ethnicities along with oppressive conditions and forceful domination in the contemporary world. That is why; the present situation is always analyzed in relation to the past or a history.

Akhil Gupta, an anthropologist talks of the postcolonial condition by exposing the lives of rural people in north India and answers that underdevelopment has become a form of identity in the postcolonial world which became a big problem in the contemporary world, he illustrates, “developmentalism, agrarian, and technological change fundamentally transformed not merely the structural and material conditions of the lives of rural people, but, very important, their epistemologies and identities as well. It is the mixture of ingredients that I have indexed with the notion of the condition of postcoloniality.”⁴⁴ This mingling of material, historical and hybrid discourses and its analysis of cultural effects on individuals’ identities and epistemologies form the constitutive feature of the postcolonial as a form of knowledge.

Another important thing in the postcolonial discourses is that the end of colonialism marks beginning of a new form of postcolonial domination. Such literature never endorses the new world system but rather gave rise to critical response to its situation. It struggles for autonomous identity and real freedom. However, Aijaz Ahmad, a Marxist literary theorist criticizes post-colonialism that in spite of unceasing internal colonialism its extreme focus is over the significance of the influence of colonial power

⁴³Quoted in Young, 2001, p. 11. “Colonialism and the Politics of Postcolonial Critique.” In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* from Amilcar Cabral’s *Revolution in Guinea: An African People’s Struggle* (1969).

⁴⁴ Gupta, A., 1998. *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of India*, p. 388.

on the colonized countries.⁴⁵ It suggests that colonialism has both positive and negative impact upon the colonized societies because their contribution in the progress of developing nations is unprecedented; together with it they are equally responsible for their devastation. It also attacks the status quo of hegemonic economic imperialism. Postcolonial critique unfolds the political and cultural experience of marginalized or subjugated periphery which emerges into a more general theoretical position that could be set against western political, intellectual and academic hegemony. It exposes the undoing of colonial power or of colonizers, and these discourses are created to undo the ideological violence of colonialism. As Young argues that if the process of political decolonization has taken place, it must be followed by cultural decolonization.⁴⁶ Such as, Ngugi wa Thiongo says that it has become a question of 'decolonizing the mind' and 'moving the centre.'⁴⁷ His book *Decolonizing the Mind* is all about the decolonization of culture and language through decolonization of minds of Kenya's people because they are still mentally subjugated and he appeals for the freedom from colonized mind. Because their literature was written in European languages such as French and English instead being written in Gikuyu, one of their indigenous languages. He emphasizes that a perfect literature could be written only in one's own native language in which it finds a huge expression, and preserves culture and tradition, and it would be able to transmit it to the upcoming generations.

Thus postcolonial critique is enormously concerned with the role of culture in the entire activity of imperialism, moreover, in the formation of national revolt; and between the past and present independence struggle; the role of religion and culture in new nationalism, politics of identity, race, class and gender. One commonality of these discourses is that they all are concerned with violent injustice of disparity on material level in the world and longed for radical social change at a transnational level. Its conceptual vocabulary became point of discussion which came into postcolonial theories

⁴⁵ Quoted in Young, 2001, p. 60. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* from Aijaz Ahmad's *Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1992).

⁴⁶ Young, 2001, p. 65.

⁴⁷ Both these books as the titles indicate talks about the decentring of the intellectual sovereignty and dominance of Europe. It is the critique of eurocentrism. Thiong'o argues for the struggle for cultural freedom through decolonizing the minds.

from various disciplines and theoretical agendas, including anthropology, feminism, history, human geography, Marxism, philosophy, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and sociology and has been inspired by many radical groups of protesters. Historically speaking, the postcolonial theory emerged from western and tri-continental anti-colonialism towards past (colonialism). It is not only western phenomena but is a hybrid product of the interaction between the two. The theory and practice of post-colonialism through domination and the transformation of indigenous cultures, or the hybridization of domestic (native) cultures as a result of immigration, it can be said that the postcolonial theories functioning is multidimensional because it deals with many issues such as political, cultural and linguistic contradictions, assimilation and appropriation.

1.3 Indian Women Writings in English:

This topic might mean literature written by women about women in India, and it might mean literature written by Indian women writers about male and about other contemporary issues. It might also suggest what kind of literature is written by women writers in India and how women are portrayed by a woman in literature. Although, considering all the possibilities of this thesis, I would like to begin with Elaine Showalter though she is an American critic and writer who described three phases of women's writing in English literature⁴⁸ such as feminine, feminist and female. She divided women's writing not only chronologically but also on the basis of content. These three categories represent the writer's awareness about women's social and cultural position in different time frame.

The feminine phase is considered since 1840 to 1880, in which "women's writing in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture...the distinguishing feature of this period is the male pseudonym...which exerts an irregular pressure on the narrative, affecting tone, diction, structure and characterization."⁴⁹ It is very true about this phase that women's work get published under the disguise of male name because no

⁴⁸ See, Showalter, E., 1979. *Towards a Feminist Poetics*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

publisher were ready to take risk, both readers and publishers had a stereotype of image of women that it is not a women's job and they cannot produce their own writing because they do not possess such ability. Next, the feminist phase marked from 1880 to 1920, where it is mentioned that "women are historically enabled to reject the accommodating posture of femininity and to use literature to dramatize the ordeals of wronged womanhood."⁵⁰ Basically in this phase women's protest and resistance against male set up or standards and values are portrayed. Along with it they demanded for their rights and represented their values. They also raised their voices for autonomous identities. Finally, the female phase dated from 1920 onward, regarding this phase Showalter says that "women rejected both imitation and protest - two forms of dependency - and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature."⁵¹ By analyzing some Indian women writings I would make an attempt to draw a sharp line between Indian women writers and South Asian women writers, in order to explore that in which domain of women writings in English literature they are falling, concerning the contents of their writings.

The contemporary Indian women's writing has taken a revolutionary turn through making a huge transformation in the content of their writing. This turn is all about their resistance towards male dominated society. They stopped talking about their emotional and victimized image in works, instead of it; they began to crave for their basic rights in each domain for what they are equally responsible. They raised their voice against patriarchal society and it could be considered as a kind of resolution for their past state. At this stage feminism has taken place in women's writing and these women writers known as feminist writers throughout the world. Such literary works became the tool where their internal voice got a full expression and in which their repressed desire were expressed to a large extent. Most of the novels consist of the mental trauma of Indian women writers and many of them are autobiographical. These women's writings in English heralded a new epoch for women in Indian society. They gained popularity

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 39.

within India as well as in abroad and proved their value both quantitatively and qualitatively producing worthy literature and, currently, they are showing their ability in each genre of the literature. Such as the works of Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhumpa Lahiri and many others have written excellent texts. Rapid growth of women centered fictions which dealt with women's consciousness and of their points of view, for instance, Patricia Meyer says that, "there seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries."⁵² Most of the women writers have examined female subjectivity in the search of identity. It is true of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *Desirable Daughter* (2002), Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1994), Geetha Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1985), Manju Kapoor's *A Married Woman* (2003), Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), and many others deal with female experiences, feelings and their desires. Indian women writers gradually began to gain enormous attention when Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* won Booker prize in 1997.

Anita Desai once said about her novels that "my novels are no reflection of Indian society, politics or character. They are my private attempt to seize upon the raw material of life."⁵³ It has been an attempt for the expression of female's inner life. Her *Fire on the Mountain* is based on the claustrophobic life of women in Indian sphere, helplessness of a girl child and violent murder of a poor fragile and harmless woman. In an interview Desai said "specially in my earlier work I found myself addressing the same things over and over again: very much about the life of women who are confined to home and family, also a solitude from which a person can not suffer even if living within a big family or surrounded by crowds."⁵⁴ And her *Fire on the Mountain* is consisting of the same aspect of a woman's life. After writing a number of books, getting exhausted with the same

⁵² See, Spacks, Patricia M., 1989. *Stage of Self: Notes on Autobiography and the life cycle in American Autobiographies*. p. 48.

⁵³ Quoted from Singh, A., 2007, p. 195. "Anita Desai's Recent Novels: A critical Study." In *Indian Literature in English: Critical Views*, 193-244.

⁵⁴ It was held in 2001 with Magda Costa.

monotonous issues, she turned toward new themes and began to write about male characters and the demolition of traditions. She also takes the issue of 'space' for women in the same aforementioned work. Similarly, Virginia Woolf, although, she is not an Indian, raised very aptly the same question⁵⁵ that for becoming a writer for a woman must have three fundamental things: time, space (room) and money, what they are deprived since antiquity. Major theme in most of the Anita Desai's works is the psychic analysis of the search of identity on the part of the existentialism. For instance, N. R. Gopal says that "she tries to introduce a modern psychological vein and projects a sensibility generally not encountered in other Indo-Anglian writers of fiction. She insists on analyzing her characters and the story is important only in so far as it reflects the obsessions of her characters. Mrs. Desai makes each work of hers a haunting exploration of the psychic self."⁵⁶ Nonetheless, she also has drawn readers towards an Indian immigrant who remains in the conflict of preserving their indigenous culture and tradition as well as trying to seek a new identity in an alien land where the process of integration or assimilation (a postcolonial phenomenon) takes place. In contrast Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1985) depicts equal rights and opportunities for women with political background.

In modern writing of women writers there is a great turn from women's sacrifice to their revolt and a strong quest for equality on the basis of gender. They are no longer subordinated to male. Now the women's portrayal is freed from the shackles of typical tradition and emancipated from patriarchal desire. They are not represented as the victims of sexual or domestic violence. However, they emerged as the counterpart of male. For example, if we take into account Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* that best illustrates contemporary women writings. In this novel the main protagonist is represented not as a typical stereotype of female identity. And her resistance towards patriarchal assumptions stands her apart from the traditional type of women. It has postcolonial diasporic aspects which is characterized by the cultural hybridization, acculturation and shifting of identities. In this novel identity of Jasmine remains in flux throughout her life such as

⁵⁵ In her essay, *A Room Of One's Own*, 1929.

⁵⁶ Gopal, N.R., 1999. *A Critical Study of the Novels of Anita Desai*. p. 5.

when she gets married with Prakash, her husband gave her a new name after migrating from a village to city: “he wanted to break down the Jyoti as I’d been in Hasanpur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past he gave me a new name; Jasmine....Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities.”⁵⁷ The protagonist’s identity oscillated between the past and present, between East and West. She shuffles between the two worlds of nativity and immigrant. Nevertheless, when Jasmine murders her rapist at the ship she transforms herself into a new vengeful identity of Goddess Kali. Mukherjee has drawn light over the protagonist’s practice of free choice. She was driven by her own will. It draws our attention towards female strength; it is not an emotional and pathetic story of an immigrant woman but of a woman who fights for her own protection bravely into a new world throughout her life. This narrative somehow relates the story of novelist itself. It is partially autobiographical in content. What I have found in this narrative is that the concept of assimilation finds expression at its best through Jasmine’s adaptation into a new western culture (American). Mukherjee being an immigrant writer is concerned with multiculturalism or hybridization. She says in an interview that “I’m against the retention of ‘pure culture’ for the sake of purity,” further she stated that, “I, as immigrant writer, hope for is to transform as well as to be transformed by the world I’m re-imagining and re-creating through words.”⁵⁸

However, women writers have produced a huge literature regarding women’s bitter experience, about child marriages, predicaments in women’s education and the problems they face during their writing. Many literatures have been written in order to spread consciousness in women for their fundamental rights and how one can come to demand them in patriarchal society. Some have been written in order to transform conventional and traditional values of Indian society. But the most prominent problem is that as we know English is not our own mother tongue while it is the result of imposition by British rule in Indian education system and it became a tool for cultural imperialism in India, consequently, indigenous people easily get affected by English language. Though, Indian writers in English have given English a new structure of Indianized English by

⁵⁷ Mukherjee, B., 1989. *Jasmine*. p. 77.

⁵⁸ Mukherjee in her interview with Tina Chen and S. X. Goudie at Berkeley, University of California, 1997.

deliberately using number of words from vernacular Indian languages. As Shashi Deshpande argues that English language might be harmful in some way to Indian culture but not because of that it is a language of colonial power but because it has become the language of the privileged and of elite class in India

In Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), mother-daughter relationship gets a huge space. There is a clash between a traditional mother and free soul daughter. Where mother gives preference to son over daughter as well as there is no submissiveness of women towards family or male counterpart is displayed. Here women take initiative for their ambitions and aspirations. It also highlighted that how Indian society has privileged male child on the cost of deprivation of female child's wishes, desires and rights. For instance, in this novel a traditional mother opposes to her daughter's education when her daughter was supposed to go for medical study. Finally, her daughter breaks down all traditional barriers by getting married against her parents will with a lower caste boy whom she loves. Satbir Kaur argues that Indian women also have courage "to expose, question and challenge the age-old-traditions and prejudices in the male dominated society."⁵⁹ Other notable point is that the clash between Saru and her husband when she ensconced herself as a popular lady doctor in the society because her husband felt himself inferior to her in social position. Moreover, "Deshpande's *The Dark Hold No Terror* (1980), *That Long Silence* (1989) both novels are a searing portrait of Indian womanhood in distress. Both protagonists – Saru and Jaya invariably undertake an arduous journey which transports them from a state of self-effacement to one of self-realization."⁶⁰ Thus, everywhere aspects of postcoloniality are existent in various forms because patriarchy never wish to women get placed higher rather than them. They always want to reign over women and never acknowledge that women have their own identities too. And my exposition is that identity of human being is not only matter of becoming in the cross-cultural or immigration phenomenon but also matter of self identification, of individuality, of resistance in a time frame. Similarly, Saru gradually, transformed

⁵⁹ Kaur, S., 2009. *Shashi Deshpande: A feminist Interpretation*, p. 15-20.

⁶⁰ Kapoor, M., and Seema Singh, 2012. "That Long Silence: A Feminist Narratological Study of Shashi Deshpande." *Journal of Postcolonial Cultures and Societies*. 3 (2), p. 66.

through self assertion and determination, from peaceful victimized identity into revolting voice, from bound to freedom.

Nevertheless, Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1989) where the protagonists of both the novels accomplished 'personhood' transcending the 'female phase' of Showalter with the inclination towards family and society. While female phase is described as the self investigation, opposing dependency, and move in order to seek their identities standing independent apart from men. And these protagonists might be called feminist in the second phase not of the first stage. For instance, "The second stage cannot be viewed in terms of women alone but also in terms of the separate personhood or equality, with men. The second stage involves coming to new terms with the family, new terms with love and work."⁶¹ Further, as Ramesh Gupta says that "Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with women's quest for 'self,' an exploration into the human psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and protagonist's place in it."⁶² Deshpande is typical Indian in her orientation particularly in terms of her writings which are rooted in Indian contexts. It is suggestive of her consciousness for her identity as a woman and further her concern for women issues and complications is only in order to realize an Indian woman about her own 'self' and 'identity.'

Many Indian women writers have made emphasis over the feminine sensibility in order to overcome women's pathetic situation and to transform patriarchal attitude towards females. And they wrote upon women's longing for self and individuality and exposure of female psyche. Particularly, their writings are the outcome of the resistance against male governed society. An effort has been made by contemporary women writers for the betterment of women or to enable them to break their silence. It is also an attempt to fill the gap which existed in the past literature due to the absence of women literature in the history in both context whether Indian or western. Resolution of the entire problem

⁶¹ Showalter, 1979, p. 13.

⁶² Gupta, Ramesh K., 2004. "Image of Woman in Shashi Deshpande's novel, '*Roots and Shadows*': A Critical Study." *Poetcrit* 15 (1), p. 42.

might be that women must take courage for their self recognition, self evaluation and fight for change or to improve their social, political, and economic status through sharing their subjectivity in their writings. As Simone de Beauvoir opines “She cannot think of herself without a man. And she is simply what man decrees ---- she appears essentially to the man as a sexual being. For him she is sex - absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her: she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential.”⁶³ Therefore, it is the time for women to take a turn for a new separate individuality without reference of men and create a self and an autonomous identity. This has been a recurrent theme for what Indian women writers directed. It became inevitable for a woman to decolonize herself from patriarchy and as well as decolonize their mind too from men’s support and think independently. A Malayali feminist writer K. Saraswathy Amma once stated in an interview with a critic and writer T.N. Jayachandran about her works that “who can say that society has not been influenced in taking a healthy attitude towards women? Has society not changed its approach to career women? My stories have helped to create this change. This is just a social perspective of my fiction.”⁶⁴ And she is definitely right because as we know that literature is a medium of instruction and guidance. In the present day a change in women’s situation is very apparent this somehow became possible through the writings of women. Finally, as I have observed that the most recurrent theme in the postcolonial narrative is the women’s longing for their individual and separate identities.

⁶³ Beauvoir, Simone de. 1970. *The Second Sex*. p. 25.

⁶⁴ See, K. Nirmala, 2001, p. 173. “Feminism in Indian Context: The Contemporary Relevance of K. Saraswathy Amma.” In *Indian Literature* 45 (5): 166-176.

CHAPTER - 2

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND IDENTITY

Before examining the proposed narratives by two women writers - Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* (2005), it is pertinent to explore some important questions such as what does literature imply and what is the significance of literature in itself? Further, what do women writings entail and why an act of writing is an imperative phenomenon for women self and identity? Moreover, this chapter is also an attempt to investigate the interrelationships of language, literature, and identity. Since the classical times, literature is designated as the representation of the world. In other words, literature is considered as the mimesis or imitation of world's reality or the reflection of the society in the art forms. Questions relating to the aim of the literature or motivation behind one's writings can be best understood by taking into account Sartre's view point on literature. Sartre dwells on questions such as what is writing, who writes and for whom does one write?⁶⁵ Further, this chapter will explore different stances of some well known theorists and philosophers such as Derrida, Blanchot and Barthes on language and literature in order to associate them with aforementioned writers.

So first and foremost, I would like to begin with the question of literature. This question of literature is vital to anyone who is concerned with literary studies. It has been a long discursive topic since the classical times of Plato and Aristotle. Literature has been variously defined by theorists, critics and writers. The meaning it denotes is infinite and distinct with the respect of time, space and individual understanding. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary "literature is pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially, novels, plays and poems."

Each genre of literature - legend, fable, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, and painting comprises of narratives. Narratives are intrinsic to every period and society. Literature is the privileged vehicle of narrative. Narrative is notably a novel and a

⁶⁵ See, Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1950. *What is Literature?* Translated by Bernard Fretchman.

narrative cannot exist without a character. There can be no narrative without narrators and readers. It can be described variedly because of its infiniteness and multiplicity. They can be analyzed with different standpoints such as historical, political, cultural, psychological, sociological, ethnological and aesthetic, etc. As Barthes argues “narratives reconstitute syntax of human behavior and its fundamental function is to show the relationship between narrator and addressee or human beings and society.”⁶⁶ It shows the interdependence of narrative and human beings, and it is explicit that literature is for human beings, in which both writer and reader fall. Novels consist of narratives and these narratives have nothing more than language, means a narrative can only be narrated through language. As, Blanchot states “to write is, to withdraw language from the world, to detach it from what makes it a power according to which, when I speak, it is the world that declares itself, the clear light of the day that develops through tasks undertaken, through action and time.”⁶⁷ However, for Mallarmé, literature does not exist and it only takes place when it becomes concerned with its essence. And it is the language that is affirmed in literature with more authority than in any other form of human activity. But language wholly realized in literature, which is to say that it has only the reality of the whole and that is all and nothing else, it is always on the verge of passing from all to nothing.⁶⁸

However, the function of narrative that Barthes argues is not to represent the world but to constitute an enigmatic spectacle for us and that is not in the mimetic order. So, in his view, narrative neither shows nor imitates. And the passion which may excite us in reading a novel is not that of a ‘version’ or the actual fact of anything instead, it is that of meaning, that emerges from a higher order of relation which also has its emotions, its hopes, its dangers, its triumphs. “‘What takes place’ in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally nothing.”⁶⁹ Thus, in this perspective, narrative that is a form of literature which does not imitate the world or it is only referential reality

⁶⁶ Barthes, R., 1982, p. 252. “Introduction to Structural Analysis of Narratives.” In *A Barthes Reader*, edited by Susan Sontag with an Introduction, 251-295.

⁶⁷ Blanchot, M., 1955, “The Work of the Solitude.” In *The Space of Literature*, translated by Ann Smock. p. 26.

⁶⁸ Blanchot, 1955. “Mallarmé’s Experience.” In *The Space of Literature*, p. 43.

⁶⁹ Barthes, 1982, p. 295.

that is not the direct reflection of the reality. Through this referential reality it becomes multiple or it can be variously interpreted. As Barthes argues that an ideal literature is open-ended and polysemous in nature, it is because multiple opening and multiple ending makes it distinguished and polyphonous as much as possible. That's why he considers its critic as the creator of literature and inventor of meaning of that literature. According to him the purpose of literature is "to put 'meaning' into the world but not 'a meaning.'" When a critic decides a point of criticism of literature, it is done in order to alter and relocate meaning of it by adding, subtracting, multiplying it."⁷⁰ Here, the reader response theory comes into being that enables a reader to read a narrative or literature with the realization of his own subjectivity.

The question of literature has also been very important to Derrida. For Derrida, it is a philosophical phenomenon rather than a literary question. His question of literature is much more philosophical rather than sociological, political, and psychological. This sheds light over the essence of literature that makes distinction between literature and non-literature forms. He claims that literature has often been read in terms of a dominant meaning of a dominant form. Or it has been read as understandable in terms of an origin such as biographical, historical, socio-economic, psychoanalytic, or in terms of a goal such as aesthetic, moral, spiritual, political, or as fundamentally mimetic.⁷¹ For Derrida, literature is not presented apodictically⁷² but contextually and dramatically. Thus, in his view, literature is not the presentation of certain reality or absolute truth but it is embedded in context that is represented in dramatic manner. He further claims that the concept of literature is like writing or law, capable of destabilizing the discourses and institutions within which it has its being. As he argues literature is not given in nature or

⁷⁰ Sontag, S., 1982, p. xi. "Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes." In *A Barthes Reader*, vii - xxxvi.

⁷¹ Derrida, J., 1992, p. 3-4. "Introduction." In *Acts of Literature*, edited by Derek Attridge, 1-29.

⁷² Apodictic or apodeictic is an adjectival expression from Aristotelean logic that refers to logical certainty. Or it refers to nature of necessary truth or absolute certainty. However, Derrida argues that literature is not the representation of absolute reality or certainty, it is because, it emerges from a particular context in a dramatic manner. As it is always the case with Derrida's writing, to wrench a piece out of context is to transform it.

in the brain but is brought into existence by processes that are social, legal, and political that can be mapped historically and geographically.⁷³

Moreover, for Sartre those who are dealing with political activities and agendas in their works, are writers of 'engaged literature.'⁷⁴ Undoubtedly, the arts of any period are reflections of the social condition that Sartre describes as mutually influencing each other and are conditioned by the same social factors.⁷⁵ It shows the interdependence of literature and society on each other which affects each other. Sartre argues that literature is only concerned with those who are subjected to it. And he counter argues to his critic who condemns him as being concerned with literature as political demonstration rather than as an art. For Sartre, literature is an art but this art must be for human sake rather than 'art for art's sake.' It is because literature is the byproduct of the socio-cultural and economic circumstances. Similarly, Barthes argues that "It is hardly possible any longer to conceive of literature as an art that abandons all further relation with language the moment it has used it as an instrument to express ideas, passion."⁷⁶ Here, Barthes seems to be agreeing with Sartre's notion, as Sartre claims if someone writes out of passions and emotions, it is only for author's sake, which makes the work of art worthless. It is because this particular work is rooted in author's aim and immediate choice. He argues that the writer is a man who neither foresees nor conjectures but can only projects. Thus, when the author is only the source of existence in his work, this act of creative writing becomes incomplete and abstract moment in the work of art.⁷⁷ It would never be the work of object. And it cannot be considered as the work of art that is for human sake.

Now the questions arise, why does a writer write or what inspires him to write such a piece of work and what is the goal of the literature? Here, I would ponder over the different approaches of Sartre, Barthes and Blanchot, regarding above mentioned questions. If we look at Sartre's perspective, he says the goal of literature may depend on

⁷³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁴ Sartre, 1950. "Foreword." In *What is Literature?* He defines 'engaged literature as a sort of an old socialist realism, unless it is revival of populism, only more aggressive.

⁷⁵ Sartre, 1950, p. 7. "What is Writing." In *What is Literature?* 7-37.

⁷⁶ Barthes, 1982, p. 257.

⁷⁷ Sartre, 1950, p. 41. "Why Write?" In *What is Literature?* 38-66.

the writers' intention as what they have chosen to portray the world. Particularly its aim is to portray an individual to other men in order to make realize the latter to assume their full responsibility and duty before the object which has been thus laid bare. The task of the writers is to operate in such manner that no one can be ignorant of the world reality, its law and ethics. Writer's main function is to convey message to his readers. Sartre states that if a writer speaks of archetypes and 'human nature,' it is in order to convey something such as to reflect real world.⁷⁸ He further argues that the contemporary writers must deliver messages, they must be voluntarily expression of writers,' restricting involuntarily expression or emotional feelings of their souls in their writings, and this involuntarily considered as dead and worthless.⁷⁹ Thus, his emphasis is to convey the deliberate meaning to the world despites its virtue and fallibility that depends over time and space.

Barthes also argues the responsibility of literature relating it to the terms of which were set up by Sartre as "the demand that the writer be in a militant relation to virtue, which Sartre described by the tautological notion of 'commitment'."⁸⁰ Moreover, Barthes concedes a good deal to Sartre's view of literature and language, for example, putting poetry with the other arts' and identifying literature with prose, as Sartre did. For both Sartre and Barthes the writer's vocation of writing has an ethical imperative. However both have been charged for overestimating literature, treating literature as 'everything,' but at least Barthes made a good case for doing so, that is not the case with Sartre. For Barthes, literature is everything that is embedded in language, means literature is language. And whatever this literature portrayed from this world it is through language.⁸¹

Barthes divides writers into those who write 'something' (what Sartre meant by a writer) and the real writers, who do not write something but, rather, 'write.' This intransitive sense of the verb 'to write' Barthes endorses as not only the source of the writer's felicity but as the model of freedom. Thus, for him it is not the commitment that

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

⁸⁰ Barthes, 1982, p. xix.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. xx.

writing makes to something outside of itself (to a social or moral goal) that makes literature an instrument of opposition and subversion but a certain practice of writing itself.⁸² For him, writing is a gratuitous and free activity, it is his political view. He thinks of literature as a perpetual renewal of the right of individual assertion; and all rights are, finally, political ones. Barthes found writing as both “with a generous relation to the world (writing as ‘perpetual production’) and with a defiant relation (writing as ‘a perpetual revolution of language,’ outside the bounds of power). He wants a politics and an anti-politics, a critical relation to the world and one beyond moral considerations.”⁸³

Nevertheless, Sartre argues that “the contemplation of work of arts. Thus, “this is “true,” “pure” literature, a subjectivity which yields itself under the aspect of the objective.”⁸⁴ Defining literature, he says that “when the internal contradictions of the life and the work have made both of them useless, when the message, in its imponderable depth, has taught us these capital truths, “that man is neither good nor bad,” “that there is a great deal of suffering in human life,” “that genius is only great patience,” this melancholy cuisine will have achieved its purpose, and the reader, as he lays down the book, will be able to cry out with a tranquil soul, “All this is only literature.”⁸⁵

According to Barthes an autobiographer must refer himself sometimes as ‘I,’ while sometimes as ‘he.’ And this “‘he’ must be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel.”⁸⁶ In this way this act of writing invents new forms of dramatic stress, of a self-referring kind and becomes the record of compulsions and of resistances to write. Moreover, writing itself becomes the writer’s subject. It can be considered as the unceasing production of writer’s voice. For Barthes, writing is not a matter of teaching to us something specific but is the only aim to make us “bold, agile, subtle, intelligent, detached”⁸⁷ Further, it can be said that the inventor of the narrative is only the writer and the narrative is simply the expression of an ‘I.’ As Barthes argues that the narrator is a

⁸² Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.

⁸³ Ibid., p. xxxi.

⁸⁴ Sartre, 1950, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

⁸⁶ Barthes, 1982, p. xv.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. xvii.

sort of omniscient, apparently impersonal, he/she sometimes appears inside his/her characters.⁸⁸ The presence of the author can be assumed through language of the novel.

Today many novels can be seen as the mix up of both modes of narration of personal and impersonal together within one narrative. As a matter of fact, Ali's *Brick Lane* and Shamsie's *Broken Verses*, both represent this form of mingling. Both these novels have been written in first person 'I' and third person 'he/she,' narratives they speak are both personal and impersonal account of both these writers. That is all the enigma of the narrator's language. For Barthes, narration has strictly two systems of signs to narrate such as personal and impersonal. But in modes of narration, whether it is first person 'I' or third person 'he,' it is only expression of writer's subjectivity. However, the appearance of the signs of the narrators are more frequent than that of the readers, it is because the narrator likes to narrate events through 'I' rather than 'you' or 'he/she.' Although, he says that narration in 'first person' is a sign of reader which is very close to him, resultantly, reasoning conducted by reader's gaze.⁸⁹ In this manner, narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it. As he claims the act of narration is to describe "the code by which narrator and reader are signified throughout the narrative itself."⁹⁰

However, for Kafka, when the writer gives up writing in the narrative mode of 'I,' he enters into literature as soon as he substitutes 'he' for 'I.'⁹¹ Because the writer belongs to language, but he cannot express himself instead can appeal to others and further can express another's voice into his writing. But Kafka says if the writer wants to surrender his work to the interminable, in order to retain his writings' essence he loses the power of 'I.'⁹² Further, he talks of the tone of a work, which is suggestive of 'great writers,' though it is not writers' voice through tone, but the intimacy of the silence it imposes upon the word indicates that the silence is still of writer's presence. In this way he retains his

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 282.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 281.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 281.

⁹¹ Blanchot, 1955. "Kafka and the Work's Demand." In *The Space of Literature*. p. 26.

⁹² Ibid., p. 27.

effaced 'I' through silence in the form of tone. And the writer keeps his presence within the work of art. But this substitution of 'I' to 'he' brings the solitude to the writer on the account of the work, it is because this 'he' does not directly addresses to author's personal account. While, this third person narration does not mark the objectivity; it is only realized by the spectators or readers. As Blanchot says that "the third person is myself become no one, my interlocutor turned alien; it is my no longer being able, where I am, to address myself and the inability of whoever addresses me to say 'I'; it is his not being himself."⁹³ Thus, like Barthes, Blanchot also argues that the presence of the writer in the work is inevitable but it exists in the disguise of 'he' through language. Blanchot argues that the work of art/literature is the construct of solitude which is infinite. Even writer itself does not know whether it is finished or not. This infinite nature of work of art is just the result of the infiniteness of the mind. According to him, "the work – the work of art, the literary work – is neither finished nor unfinished."⁹⁴ He argues that a writer does not belong to the work of art, and since he finishes his work, he dies at that moment. Even he never knows what he has written. While, this solitude makes the work of art interminable and incessant.⁹⁵ Though he seems agree with Kafka's view on writer's presence through his silence on words in the work of art.

Blanchot expounds Kafka's experience regarding writing that for Kafka writing has its origin in not anything else except in the 'true' despair.⁹⁶ So if someone starts writing it is because of despair. Kafka's inclination towards writing is not just entirely literary; however his huge preoccupation with it is in order to get the salvation that can be obtained by the mean of expression into literature. Blanchot argues that "but, it no longer blends with literature, it tends rather to use literature. And, since literature never consent to become means."⁹⁷ Further, he says that "everything can be expressed, that for everything, for the strongest of ideas a great fire is ready in which they perish and

⁹³ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹⁴ Blanchot, 1955, "The Work of the Solitude." In *The Space of Literature*, p. 22.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

disappear.”⁹⁸ For the expression of solitude, literature has become sole vocation and in literature whatever has been done is only the outcome of solitude. Furthermore, for Kafka, everything else is more unclear because he seeks to fuse the work’s demand with the demand which could pertain to his salvation.⁹⁹ On the other hand he claims that if this writing too condemns him to solitude which he considers that it will appear at least for a long time. Further, it might justify him; it is because “solitude threatens in any event, both within him and outside.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, initially this effort of act of writing can be considered in order to offer him psychological salvation or consolation. It has not been taken to express an artistic desire.

Further, it has always been said that the writer/artist find their life to live in much more convenient way in their writings or work of arts in order to eschew themselves from the unreal world’s responsibilities and duties. And they protect and escape themselves from the world as Sartre argues that “action is difficult by establishing himself in an unreal world over which (they) region supreme. This is, in fact, one of the risks of artistic activity to exile oneself from the difficulties of time and of active pursuits in time without, however, renouncing the comfort of the world or the apparent easiness of pursuits outside of time. The artist often seems a weak being who cringes within the closed sphere of his work where, speaking as master and acting without any obstacles, he can take revenge for his failure in society.”¹⁰¹ In writing, the writer protects himself not only from the problems of the world but also from the requirement which draws him out of the world. This writing or work of art procures ‘outside’ by obtaining an intimacy to it. The expression of this outside intimacy in writing considered as the ‘language of the original experience.’ Through writing the writer tries to establish or maintain a contact between the world and himself with the help of language, in this way he can use “I.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰¹ Sartre, 1950, p.52.

Sartre states that “if he loses himself, the work too is lost. But, if, too cautiously, he remains himself, the work is his work; it expresses him.”¹⁰²

Nevertheless, Sartre further argues that all literary works of art are a sort of appeal. For him “to write is to make an appeal to the reader that he leads into objective existence the revelation which I have undertaken by means of language.”¹⁰³ An author cannot escape from subjectivity while writing and even cannot make a reason for his objectivity. However, the appeal writer brings through his works of art is to “the reader’s freedom to collaborate in the production of his work.”¹⁰⁴ The writer’s aim of liberation to reader through his writing fulfills the aim of writer’s creation. Here, freedom has been used in terms of creating means to reader and this freedom only can be obtained through its recognition and having confidence in it. Therefore, Sartre states that “freedom is not experienced by enjoying its free subjective functioning, but in creative act required by an imperative.”¹⁰⁵

Sartre argues that the act of writing is correlative of two different acts- of writer and of reader. For him reading is the synthesis of ‘perception and creation,’ which considers the essentiality of both acts such as of the subject and that of the object. Sartre claims that “the writer meets everywhere only his knowledge, his will, his plans, in short, himself. He touches only subjectivity; the object he creates is out of reach; he does not create it for himself.”¹⁰⁶ That is why, it is reader who creates meaning out of the words because meaning does not consist in the words; it gets the signification through readers’ interpretation. Further Sartre claims that the literary object can only be realized through language which is never given in language.¹⁰⁷ It is because, meaning might be silent and opposite of the word. Writer’s silence in the literature is subjective and very close to language. It is the absence of words, the undifferentiated and lived silence of inspiration, which the word will then particularize, whereas the silence produced by the reader is an

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

object.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in Sartre's view, it is important to note that the literary object has not any other substance except the reader's subjectivity.¹⁰⁹

The act of reading can be considered as the act of creation and it does not exist to itself as pure autonomy but as creative activity through readers gaze. This aesthetic consciousness proffers the feeling of security to readers which emerge in the way of writing keeping strict harmony between subjectivity and objectivity.¹¹⁰ Thus, the act of writing includes both tasks of disclosing the world and to introduce it as a task to the generosity of the reader. According to Sartre literature which introduces human freedom cannot be thought as "gloomy literature." Here the question of good or bad literature rises. So defining the good and bad novels Sartre says that bad novels comprise the elements to please by flattering, while good novels contain an exigency and an act of faith.¹¹¹ In fact, the novels of South Asian women writers fall into Sartre's second category of literature as far as the issues of the novels concerned. They have certain demand for human freedom; certain appeal to readers.

In fact, Sartre gives an example of a good novel which is being written by an American Negro which shows hatred for white American, and demands for the freedom of his race through this hatred.¹¹² Through this novel, writer invites the reader to accept the attitude of generosity, and the moment reader feels himself a pure freedom he cannot bear to identify himself with a race of oppressors. Thus, he requires of all freedom that they demand the liberation of coloured people against the white race. Likewise, both the novelists through their narrations came to resist and longed for absolute freedom by decolonizing the minds recognizing the race of oppressors. As Ali's *Brick Lane* censures hegemonic power relation between white and non-white people, or between the orient and the occident. Sartre states that whether a writer is an essayist, a pamphleteer, a satirist, or a novelist, whether he speaks only of individual passions or he attacks the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 63.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 64.

social order, “the writer is a free man addressing free men has only one subject – freedom.”¹¹³ The writers get easily affected by social disorders both in his life and in his art. For making it clear Sartre gives an example of Blacksmith and the writer through the problem of fascism which affected Blacksmith only in his craft but an author gets affected at both levels. Thus, we see that writing is a certain way of wanting freedom.

We see that literature is not the representation of reality but it is the construction or constitution of the world reality in language. As the theorists argue that language is neither an instrument nor a vehicle but it is a structure, and Barthes claims, the author is a person who loses his own structure that of the representation of the world in the structure of language. Hence, according to him, literature is always unrealistic, but its very unreality permits it to question the world.¹¹⁴ So literature is the outcome of solitude, despair, depravity and resistance, but it is the expression of writer’s subjectivity in objective manner that transforms it in the work of art. While this objectivity constitutes the piece of writing as the work of art what Blanchot argues in an interminable and incessant form. Literature offers a shelter to the writer’s self that is beyond time and space, and this place is interminable, that is retained through its objectivity.

Now I shall consider both the South Asian women writers, in order to explore what their writings are all about, and why did they write? Further, how the writings of these writers are equivalent and deviant from the approaches of above mentioned theorists and philosophers to writing or literature? Novels of both these South Asian women writers’ are manifestation of the difficulties and struggles of their life; they make a sort of appeal to readers for freedom and individual rights. As we know literature is the reflection of the world through writers’ subjectivity and it does not matter whether they write in ‘I’ or ‘he.’ In fact, Blanchot and Barthes both have asserted that the writers retain their presence in their writings in any possible way, while their approaches to this fact are slightly different as I have already mentioned.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹⁴ Barthes, 1982, p. 187.

Novel is a form of literature where human experiences find expression at large extent. A novelist portrays the world through his subjective account by replacing 'I' to 'he,' or the use of this third person 'he' and first person 'I' both make the literature open-ended phenomenon. Here, this 'he' makes the author's work much more objective; as during the act of reading the work of art provides experiences of both objectivity and subjectivity to readers. The novel is the source of manifestation of the self in the form of literature. Narrative is the demonstration of the flux of human experiences and their identities, as I shall draw light upon these issues through the analysis of these selected novels for the study. Narratives major function is to acknowledge interrelationship between form and content or substance. It also interprets the events of real and non-real world or it is the explanation of fictional and non-fictional world of a particular time, space, culture and historical context. While, the fact is that novelists write the histories of human situation in a context in both objective and subjective manner. It is the subjective account of their (writers) life at a particular time which they present more like fiction in creative manner to investigate realities of the world.

Indeed, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is the saga of discrepancy of two different worlds. It revolves around Bangladeshi immigrants living in London. It sheds light over the condition of women in diaspora and their homeland. This novel is a critical reflection of postcolonial society. It makes a strong case for decolonization of the mind, as Bangladeshi women have been represented doubly colonized and oppressed. It appeals for gender equality and women rights. This novel is partially autobiographical. Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* is the portrayal of writer's 'personal' which becomes 'political.' It draws our attention towards women's condition in Pakistan and shows persistence of colonial mindset in the country even after independence. Further, both the novels make a strong case for autonomous identities of women. It is because, an identity has been shown as fluctuating phenomenon which changes through language, culture, and human actions. It can be said that the narratives of both the novels consist of socio-political, cultural and historical contexts and they reflect neo-colonial and postcolonial periods. According to Priya Raghav "for women writers, the narrative in the form of

novel, satire, letter etc., genres become a strategy for exploring historical, cultural and literary records of female experience.”¹¹⁵

While, for Derrida and Barthes, novels’ study is based on the structure of language which includes such approaches as, structuralism, post-structuralism, and discourse analysis. When a novel contains real people experiences and events, its form becomes unimportant and these types of narratives Barthes called as ‘personal experience narrative.’¹¹⁶ Sometimes the author or narrator of a novel appears as one of the characters of the novel what Barthes mentioned as ‘paper being,’¹¹⁷ and their thoughts are expressed through characters, these characters have been called as the mouthpiece of the author or of the narrator. Likewise, in *Brick Lane*, Ali’s thoughts and critical views towards post-colonialism and the problems she faces during her own immigration to London have been expressed through Nazneen, the protagonist of this novel. Further, Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* captures divisive political reality of Pakistan, which is narrated through the lenses of a young television journalist who is the protagonist and mouthpiece of Shamsie. As Barthes argues “when the author’s work becomes its own end that it regains a mediating character and he conceives of literature as an end, the world restore it to him as a means: and it is in this perpetual inconclusiveness that the author rediscovers the world, an alien world moreover.”¹¹⁸ It throws light on astounding experiences of one family of Pakistan since 1970s onward. It comprises of compelling narratives such as love, politics and religion in Pakistan, particularly, the politics of language which is evident by the violent and brutal murder of the Poet (one of the character in the novel) due to the act of writing. We see that literature shows human condition and world reality but in a constitutive form what Barthes called ‘referential reality.’ Nevertheless, Sartre’s interpretation of literature is suggestive of an existential approach which gives meaning to the human’s lives that is the main aim of the literature to him. It is because literature is portrayal of vividness of human minds and thoughts.

¹¹⁵ See, Raghav, P., 2013. *Personal Narratives: interpreting select Writings by ‘Women of Colours.’* Ph.D thesis, North – Eastern Hill University. p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Barthes, 1982, p. 283.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 282.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 187.

According to Blanchot the need to write something emerges or relative to the approach of the word when nothing can be done through words. He says that one begins to write “through a ruse, through a propitious burst of energy, or through life’s distractions, one has succeeded in evading this impulse which remote control of the work must constantly awaken and subdue, protect and avert, master and experience in its unmasterable force.”¹¹⁹ But for him this act of writing is very difficult and dangerous for each and every writer. The writer/artist surprised when he accomplishes his work of art without problems. Here, I would like to discuss a long pertaining controversy of Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*. After launching this novel, Ali has become a matter of contention due to this novel that brought her career into danger when Bangladeshi people were protesting against Ali for portrayal of Bangladesh and Bengali’s as backward people as well as patriarchal outlook of Bangladesh in her novel.

If further we look at Kamila Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* where the major cause of the Poet’s death in the novel is his act of writing or revolutionary poems. Thus, when the writer writes a piece of work he/she dangerously exposes himself/herself through the guise of language. But at the same time, he/she protects himself/herself against those pressures which compels, demands, or instigates him/her to write such a piece of work. Moreover, Blanchot argues that Kafka realized that he has been banished from this real world, because of his act of writing which introduces him into a new another world. As he puts it, “he is perhaps already a citizen of another world where he has to struggle not only for himself but for that other world, then writing will begin to appear to him merely as a means of struggle – sometimes disappointing, sometimes marvelous, which he can lose without losing everything.”¹²⁰ Thus, it can be said that the act of writing is personal as well as impersonal, subjective as well as objective. In fact, the writer struggles within two worlds, one belongs to himself and other for common mass or for the readers for whom he writes. Similarly, Barthes interprets “writing is an ideally complex form of writers’ consciousness. Which offers a way of being passive and active, social and

¹¹⁹ Blanchot, 1955. “the Need to Write.” In *the Space of Literature*. p. 52.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

asocial, present and absent in one's own life and ideal self-portrait – the portrait of the self as writer.”¹²¹

The women writers such as Monica Ali and Kamila Shamsie relate self-experiences of their lives in their narratives in impersonal way. Both the narratives are partial representation of the self in generalized form. These narratives have the capacity to render the life experiences, both personal and social in meaningful ways. Both these texts are the criticism of the socio-cultural and economic problems of a particular time. Priya Raghav argues that “personal narrative can help to define the identity of a generation, a nation, or a culture or, for that matter, a gender.”¹²² Thus, these texts are the portrayal of the reality rather than focusing on the objectivity. Women writers write in order to locate their individual struggles, actions and identities by speaking through their works and the connectivity between struggles, actions and identities have been represented within political and social structures of power. It is because, women's experiences seem marginalized and relegated to culture. Here it would be appropriate to argue what Blanchot argues of literature. He claims that writing is an effort to create something “which might be linked word for word with his life, which he draws into himself so that it might draw him from himself.” He expresses this most naively and most forcefully in these terms “today I have great yearning to write all my anxiety entirely out of me, write into the depth of paper just as it comes out of the depths of me, or write it down in such a way that I could draw what I had written into me completely.”¹²³

Likewise, the act of writing for women writers is the narration of their subjugation, despair, solitude and marginalization into the male dominated society, as I have noted in the novels of South Asian women writers, who demand for their rights and independent identities. Further, the major question in both the novels is the human freedom whether it is from colonialism or from patriarchal set up of the society. Both women writers demand for freedom of non-white people from the exploitation by white

¹²¹ Barthes, 1982, p. xviii.

¹²² Raghav, P., 2013, p. 19.

¹²³ Quoted from Kafka's *diaries* December 8, 1911 in Blanchot, 1955, p. 63. “Salvation through Literature.” In *The Space of Literature*.

in diaspora. Both narratives appeal for women liberation in both the countries whether it is homeland or abroad. Moreover, Priya Raghav has used the phrase ‘women of colour’,¹²⁴ for non-white women writers who used to spread personal narratives in order to attack the socio-cultural, political, and literary systems that attempt to silence them.¹²⁵ Description of personal experiences of author through narration in the form of writing is the source of exploration of identity in multiple guises and in different contexts. Particularly, for the manifestation of the self, women find the huge space in literature. Through literature the reality of the world is represented as well as constructed around us in various ways.

Priya Raghav claims that “in written forms, the reader hears the narrators’ voice both through the choice of content and the style – the author can encode voices for different emotions and situations, and the voices can be either overt or covert. These written forms leave clues that reveal the author’s belief, values, and ideological stances, as well as their attitude towards people, events and things.”¹²⁶ Novels which consist of personal narratives or events may also go beyond the past-tense, first-person narration of events to include past, present and future stories. Moreover, these events portrayed in generalized manner or as fictionalized or imaginary events. While, critics claim that narrative/novel is an ontological condition of social life; their study shows us that stories guide action through which people construct their identities. Priya Raghav says that “identities might be multiple by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that ‘experience’ is constituted through narratives.”¹²⁷

Through writing and thus sharing their stories, women writers come out from the trap of pre-existing identities and construct their fluctuating and ever evolving identities. The investigation of identity construction through the concept of narrative is driven by recent developments and situations. It can be said that selfhood or identity is the outcome

¹²⁴ Raghav, P., uses this phrase in her Ph.D. thesis which refers to that group of women who share the attribute of being non-white, the political term which is used in late seventies to unify all women experiencing multiple layers of marginalization with race and ethnicity as a common issue.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

of the interaction through the social performances (actions) and decisions. Although women writers' main subject has been the resistance towards cultural oppression and they demand for their own self representation which has been long denied to them. Desire for the self quest is an imperative to these texts.

The historical avoidance from the literature and traditionally pre-imposed identity motivated women writers to construct their self-identity into writing. For instance, Virginia Woolf argues for women's absence in the history of writing and reasons for their absence. For her, women can accomplish their place and self, only through writing.¹²⁸ However, Sartre states that for the engaged writer "words are action and he knows that to reveal is to change and he reveals only in order to change. He gives the impartial picture of Society and the human condition."¹²⁹ This power of representation of self as separate identities is new forms of their identities which gives power to them. These texts are not only the portrayal of self but also the contradictory description of selves.

As women's writings basically encounter the complicated issues of ethnicity, gender inequality, and self identity which are embedded in the plurality of telling of the contemporary texts. While writing, they face many struggles, such as they cannot write just about their own selves but have to foreground the cultural and political history too. According to Priya Raghav "women's narratives illuminate the construction of a gendered self-identity, the relationship between the individual and society in the creation and perpetuation of gender norms, and the dynamics of power relations between men and women."¹³⁰ Thus, the major subject of women writing is to depict an ever evolving identity through continuous deferral of any final identity. Going through Barthes, Blanchot and Kafka, we can say that both modes of narration, for instance 'I' and 'he' are neither unified nor stable; but rather, they are split, fragmented, and indicative of multiple referents basically readers and writers. They are sign of both, of narrators' as well as of readers' subjectivity. Thus, when Novels have both subjective and objective

¹²⁸ Woolf, V., 1929. *A Room of One's Own*.

¹²⁹ Sartre, 1950, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Raghav, P., 2013, p. 29.

characteristic, it can be considered as multi-phonetic, multi-voiced or poly-semantic that are embedded in contexts and narrated through language. Author's intention of writing a novel might have to convey different narratives, as with many words in English language have various meanings. In the same way, a novel's narrative might have infinite interpretations in a different time and space. Through authors' representation of the world in the writing, we come to know the essence of social world and it constitutes our social identities being located or locating ourselves in socio-cultural space in the form of narrative as well.

For theorists, an autobiographical novel contains the presence of the author in the text and it must not be fictitious. While, the autobiographical 'I' can reinforce the dominant oppressive ideologies of the writers' that they meant to challenge through their writings. When a woman begins to write about her personal life which is traditionally embedded in the culture, through this act of writing about her-self, she transcends this traditional sphere introducing her personal into the public sphere of history and literature. The act of writing by women writers and particularly writing about their personal experiences provides them more flexibility in identities through the way they are portrayed in the texts. Here, the main focus is to see that how women of different ethnic groups, race and class have presented themselves and created their own selves and identities. Both the texts are the description of historical background, politics, race and gender. Autobiographical or partially autobiographical novels are inevitably construction of authors' identities and to appeal readers for the same act as well.

When women do not have their self representation and identities in the texts, they also do not have power. Now the feminist writings provide women the structures for writing about the multiple roles and experiences. The major issues of women writings are identity, voice, representation, empowerment, oppression and social change. Further, the goal of these writings is to demonstrate new perspectives for women's identities and experiences. Both the writers which I have chosen for study are from different cultural backgrounds, such as one is from Bangladesh and the other is from Pakistan. Moreover, the analysis of the notion of the fluctuating identity is embedded within the broader

concepts of diaspora, anasphora, and politics of location, dislocation, displacement and the negotiation of identity. Here the women writers writing in first person 'I,' and third person 'he/she' transform not only their own selves but it also becomes a socio-political and cultural concern. In this way, the expression of subjectivity in the texts transforms into objective form.

Both South Asian writers' narratives unfold the personal experiences through political lenses and explore the challenges they face within different societies. Shamsie's main focus is to find the autonomous identity in patriarchal society of Pakistan. According to Priya Raghav "the writing of personal narrative - is not a matter of turning a life into text, it is matter of construction of an identity for women writers."¹³¹ Further, it is an appeal to the readers for the liberty, particularly from the restrictions of Islamic traditions and customs. It is an attempt to construct women as courageous, self dependent women who can assert and fight for their individual rights. As Sartre argues that every book has its object in the source of human freedom, if the writer writes a work of art out of passion and also in passion that may be considered having no confidence of reader and may not support the order of causes by the order of ends.¹³²

While Ali sheds light over the fact of identity construction in diaspora concerning women position in male governing homeland (Bangladesh). Both the novels are the critique of the society which authors portrayed in a figurative manner, in order to transform it into a work of art. Ali explores women's position from silence to voice which has been considered as the most powerful act for those who are colonized, oppressed and exploited, for instance Ali's women characters in *Brick Lane* have been represented in the state of victimization in their homeland. It might be helpful to offer them freedom from these circumstances of violence which is the result of their silence and tolerance.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 59.

¹³² Sartre, 1950, p. 54.

Thus, the act of writing or to portray their own selves into the texts is locating the women in the history, because, this is a place where they seem absent. The women writers' writing about their cultural and historical background is an act of historicizing them. Both the chief protagonists of the novels have been portrayed as the representative of their socio-cultural environment; as the account of the cultural context is important in order to locate women's selves and identities. Accomplishing their identities in writing women might think of their own selves as powerful and liberated. Thus, it is right to say what Sartre argues that the main and final aim of the art is "to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but as if it had its source in human freedom. But, since what author creates take on objective reality only in the eyes of the spectator."¹³³ This recovery is accomplished particularly through the act of reading. While Barthes states that literature is not a grace, it is the body of the project and decisions which lead a man to fulfill himself, in a sense to essentialize himself, only in language.¹³⁴ Thus, we can say, literature is the construction or constitution of the reality of the world in language what Barthes claims. Here it becomes clear that art must be for human sake not 'art for art sake' that has been a long debatable question since nineteenth century. As we know, the art that has no concern for humanity and for its betterment, it would be without virtue as well as without end. Because human subjectivity can only be expressed in the work of art, that is constituted in language; that is all literature or the work of art. As far as the matter (subject) of these narratives concerned we can say that the approaches of both these women writers are more or less equivalent to the approaches of Sartre, Barthes, Blanchot as well of Kafka. For making it explicit and overt I shall examine the selected narratives, such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* in detail in the following chapters.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 55.

¹³⁴ Barthes, 1982, p. 188.

CHAPTER - 3

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY TRANSITION IN *BRICK LANE*

3.1 Identity as a Constructive Product:

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), formulating John Berry's fourfold theory of 'acculturation,' engages the most discursive issues of acculturation and hybridized identity in transnational culture or diaspora to highlight the fluctuating identities, both at anasporic and diasporic levels. Monica Ali, a mixed child of Bangladeshi father and English mother, herself being in diaspora settled in London, has undergone bitter experiences of settling in London. Her novel portrays hardships in transforming or recreating identity in diaspora which comes into conflict between native and an alien culture. There is an inseparable relationship between fluctuating identity and immigrant's desire for acculturation into the country of their settlement. It may, however, vary from person to person based on individuals' attitude towards an alien culture and language. Together, this chapter is an attempt to address this hybridity by exploring each character in detail and how immigrant's identity get hybridized in diaspora as Bhabha argues that cultural identity always emerges in the ambivalent space which he calls 'the third space' and this third space is 'in-between' cultures and out of that emerges a transnational or transcultural 'new identity.' Moreover, for Bhabha the cultural clash in the form of hybridized cultural values, language and identity marks a sort of resistance towards colonialism. As we know identity is not a stable or fixed thing but an ever unceasing phenomenon whether it is an individual or collective identity. It is created or constructed within time and space. Further, it explores the stance of diaspora in the process of identity shifting, especially of women and most importantly it shows that how one's perceptions and expectations change after resettling in the dream land of career advancement which finds a huge space in this proposed narrative for study. Furthermore, it investigates that how the sense of belongingness or nationality works in finding out this long debated phenomenon of identity. As Ludmila Isurin puts it.

Depending on the individual's nationality and the strength of his initial self-identification one country could provide a better environment for identity transformation or reinforcement than another. The role of the host country in the process of the immigrant's re-conceptualization of his 'self' is important indeed.¹³⁵

Identity is used as a way by which a person or community defines itself on either one of the following basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture. So first and foremost, I would like to begin with the most vital question of transforming identity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* where Chanu, the major male character migrates from Dhaka (Bangladesh) to London getting married with Nazneen. Though, in order to examine the phenomena of acculturation and hybridization it is important to keep in mind that whether it is voluntary or forced diaspora. It is because how an individual places himself/herself in diaspora experiences which would determine one's identity in better way. As far as Chanu's immigration is concerned, his immigration is for economic benefit which he can materialize by getting standard job that he deserves by virtue of his education with many degrees in English literature what he claims. Likewise, in the case of Sylhetis (a Bangladeshi community coming from Sylhet district) has also been shown as immigrants settled in the same locality of Tower Hamlets' Brick lane¹³⁶ of London where Chanu lives. However, these people from the same village of Chanu came for a menial job or for money. Moreover, the type of diaspora marks different degrees of acculturation in immigrants. In the case of *Brick Lane*, it is a kind of economic or voluntary diaspora. It's very apparent when Chanu said to Dr Azad about his Sylhetis community who came for money (employment) that:

They don't ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just recreating the villages here. [And further he says that] 'It is natural.' These people are

¹³⁵ Isurin, L., 2011. *Russian Diaspora: Culture, Identity, and Language Change*, edited by De Gruyter Mouton, p. 162.

¹³⁶ It is the name of a locality in London where Bangladeshi Immigrants (Sylhetis community) live. Tower Hamlets is an apartment name in which Chanu lives.

basically peasants and they miss the land. The pull of the land is stronger even than the pull of blood.¹³⁷

There are many immigrants who adapted London's cultural practices and in fact some of them are even reluctant about their own culture. So, first I would like to consider Chanu and other immigrants who became victim of discrimination on their firsthand experience reflecting for instance in biasness in wages on the basis of gender; resultantly women were exploited in industries in London. Immigrants' community and particularly Chanu face a huge discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity. While Chanu never thought of himself inferior belonging from Bangladesh (a sylhetis community) or about his ethnicity. He always boasted accomplishing degrees from Dhaka University and having knowledge of literature. Despite his possession of esteemed degree and achievement to realize his dream he waited much but did not get promotion in his job in London. Chanu never underestimated himself in comparison with Wilkie who is from host country and does not have inferiority complex. Once he says to Dr Azad:

Within months I will be a fully fledged academic with two degrees. One from a British university. Bachelor of Arts degree...With honours. No, I don't have anything to fear from Wilkie. I have a degree from Dhaka University in English Literature. Can Wilkie quote from Chaucer or Dickens or Hardy?¹³⁸

However, white people's attitude towards Chanu happens to be that of discriminatory in the office on the basis of colour and race. His knowledge and many certificates disqualify him for being a respected member of British society as well as for promotion in the office. And this unwelcomeable conduct towards him spoiled his dreams which kept him away from integration with the host country. It becomes clear when Nazneen tells Razia what her husband says about his promotion:

My husband says that they are racist, particularly, Mr. Dalloway. He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white

¹³⁷ Ali, M., 2003. *Brick Lane*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-38.

man. He says that if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem.¹³⁹

Chanu claims that discrimination, and racism is entrenched into their system. This shows the superiority of the occident over the orient, while Chanu always argues for the orient's superiority over the occident. According to Ania Loomba race has functioned as one of the most powerful and yet as the most fragile markers of human identity which is hard to explain and identify and even harder to maintain. It is because, today, skin color has become the privileged marker of races.¹⁴⁰ In the case of acculturation, it becomes important to note whether the attitude of other lands towards immigrants is comforting or not, in other words, it can be said that whether the impact of the host country over migrated people is positive or negative. This prevalent discrimination in British society compels Chanu to change his perception towards this country and for him this London has always been 'their country.' He has never been able to adapt their culture and language, although, he is a fluent speaker of English language and he came to London with big aspirations as he mentions:

When I came I was a young man. I had ambitions. Big dreams. When I got off the aeroplane I had my degree certificate in my suitcase and a few pounds in my pocket...I was going to join the Civil Service and become a private Secretary to the Prime Minister.¹⁴¹

Until the end of the novel he keeps trying to preserve his culture when his wife said that she cannot leave London for Bangladesh, Chanu replied that he cannot stay in London. Thus, it is visible what Dr Azad claims in the very beginning of the text "Going Home Syndrome"¹⁴² which has bothered not only Chanu but to the entire Bangladeshi Sylhetis community excluding some of the young immigrants. Now it is crystal clear that Chanu falls into the domain of what Berry called 'separation.' This happens to Chanu due to his reiteration to keep the purity of his own culture which is a very common

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁴⁰ See, Loomba, A., 1998, p. 121. "Colonial and Post-colonial Identities." In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 104-173.

¹⁴¹ Ali, 2003, p. 34.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 32.

phenomenon in the postcolonial literature where this tradition becomes central in order to maintain their nationality in the country of settlement. And here the concept of identity becomes rigid and it doesn't transform into the model of assimilation or integration. However, Irony is that he considers himself westernized as well as he tried much to preserve his Bangladeshi culture and pressurize his wife and daughters to do the same. He never wants her wife to go outside the house alone, where women are free to go anywhere and to do anything. He comes into conflict with environments by entering into other land; hereby he reiterates the orientalist regards of the East in essentialist terms as well as allows the Occident to keep exerting their authoritative power over him. It would be appropriate to put here what Octave Mannoni argues:

To my mind there is no doubting that colonization has always required the existence of the need for dependence. Not all people can be colonized: only those who experience this need.¹⁴³

It is very apparent if we look at Chanu who does not want to be dependent on the British society and he left his job and eventually decided to leave this other country too for his own indigenous place. Moreover, this factor of desire has also played a vital role in the Ludmila Isurin's study of Russian diaspora (their language, culture, and identity) and in John Berry's exploration of immigrant's psychology too. We can see that Chanu does not fall into the category of integration and assimilation. It is because of the bitter experiences of diaspora which transforms his 'when' he will get the promotion into 'if' and he began to criticize this biased British society and stopped to talk about Wilkie, his successor Gerard and Howard who got the promotion, even though they joined the office after Chanu. However, these people cannot beat Chanu in the knowledge of Dickens and Thackeray. They got the promotion because they were white and pink in colour. He observes the authoritative power and influence of Mr. Dalloway as if he puts a word on Chanu's behalf, promotion will be automatically in his favour. On the one hand, in case of Chanu, who is an educated man with numerous degrees from Dhaka and one he is about to get from British makes him too much concerned about his native language and

¹⁴³ Mannoni, O., 1956. *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. By P. Powesland, p. 85.

culture. He is accustomed with his cherish homeland, unlike these peasants (immigrants) who are uneducated and illiterate from Dhaka, can be easily caught up in English society's abuses. However, Chanu always wants his daughters to eschew from this British degraded culture. After resigning his Clerk job at the council he can be seen addressing colonial legacy, assimilation, alienation and transcultural identity through cultural clash. During the conversation between Chanu and Mrs. Azad, Chanu, noting her daughter who has been completely assimilated into British values, he claims:

Behind every story of immigrant success there lies a deeper tragedy. 'I'm talking about the clash between Western values and our own. I'm talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage. I'm talking about children who don't know what their identity is. I'm talking about the feelings of alienation endangered by a society where racism is prevalent. I'm talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family.'¹⁴⁴

Forced and voluntary diaspora, attitude of host country towards migrants, personal choices of immigrants and opportunities in the host country raise high degree of variability in adaptation. For Bhabha, this hybrid identity in new form of integration or assimilation is a problematic colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal. Here it clear what Bhabha claims that hybridity maintains the originality of coloniality by adapting its presence into a new form denying its true essence by recreating difference.¹⁴⁵ This hybrid identity is used as a trick in opposition to colonial authority in postcolonial discourses by denying its real essence. It is because the essence of identity and culture is not fixed and it keeps changing throughout time and space and the theory of culture is very close to the theory of language where meaning is constituted in difference. In the same way, cultures are only constitutive in relation to that of otherness. The Phenomenon of acculturation presumes that a person can appreciate, practice or identify with two different cultures independently of one another. Likewise, when Chanu enjoys beer with Mrs. Azad, he says:

¹⁴⁴ Ali, 2003, p. 113.

¹⁴⁵ See, Bhabha, H., 1994, p. 112. "Sign taken for Wonders: Question of Ambivalence and Authority under a tree outside Delhi." In *The Location of Culture*, 102-122.

It's part of the culture here. It's so ingrained in the fabric of society. Back home, if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don't drink you risk the same thing.¹⁴⁶

Sometimes, Chanu seems practicing both the cultures as in London he drinks alcohol while in Bangladesh it is considered a bad thing so he escapes it. This is indicative of his transitional identity. Ali has presented a perspective of colonialism through Chanu's diaspora in a form of resistance against British rule who colonized us. He says to Nazneen, that when the English went to our country, they didn't go to stay there. They went to make money and the money they made, they took it out of the country and they never left their own homeland. And that is what he is doing now in London. He allegedly describes the aftermath of colonialism which destroyed Bengali Weavers' employment and made them dependent for money upon British, he asserted that of course, it was the British, who destroyed our textile industry and it was largely a matter of tariffs, export and import duties. Silk cotton goods had seventy or eighty percent tax slapped on them, and he is not allowed to retaliate. Moreover, the Dhaka looms were destroyed in order to establish mills of Manchester. Thus, he does not want his children to go through racism, ignorance, poverty, dominance, discrimination and all of that which he had to fight in London and wants them back to Dhaka. Additionally, looking at a famous artist Abedin's painting who painted the famine which came into Bangladesh in 1942-43, it depicts aftermath of the famine where entire Bangladeshis seem to be dead, only the crows and the vultures are there. He tells Shahana that three millions people died in starvation and argues that it is due to the British, our rulers exported grain from Bangladesh which left the native people starve to death.

However, perceptions seem varying between first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants. Some have positive and some have negative perceptions towards host country. In first-generation immigrants, most importantly Chanu and Nazneen are portrayed struggling with social, and cultural clash problem; while the second-generation immigrants such as Shahana, Bibi, Shefali and Dr. Azad's family and

¹⁴⁶ Ali, 2003, p. 110.

Karim they were all born in London, that is why they acculturated extensively in comparison to first-generation immigrants from which their parents and Bangladeshi community come. This second-generation immigrant community hates Bangladeshi culture, language and tradition. Through Shahana's portrayal, elder daughter of Chanu Ali has drawn light over the second group of immigrant who were born in London and learnt English as her second language but she is able to speak English language fluently, although Chanu does not allow his daughters' to exercise their freedom of speech in English at home, but they speak English at school and in the absence of Chanu his daughters switch to English in the house as well. Shahana's resistance towards Bangladeshi values comes in this manner:

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. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana didn't care. Shahana did not want to go back home.¹⁴⁷

The kind of assimilation which has been shown through Shahana and Bibi marks the hybrid identity, and these differences between children and parents made the children critical and disobedient of their parents. Shahana wants to live her life according to British society and as her British friends. She wants to wear short skirts, tight jeans and short hair cut, and unlike, her mother she demands for shampoo and moisturizer. She has been portrayed as a completely westernized girl in conflict with her parent's cultural values and tradition, who struggles a lot for assimilation into English culture. She hates everything associated with Bangladeshi culture and custom as above mentioned. Once Chanu played a famous song by a Bangladeshi singer during the preparation for mela, she abruptly closed her ears with her hands and gave an uncomfortable look to her father. She wants to get her lip pierced and her body tattooed. However, she considers Chanu's plan of going back to Bangladesh as a sort of 'kidnap' and stated that she would prefer to run away rather than go back to Bangladesh. Her assimilation has come up with extreme

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

hardships and constant fighting with her father. It is because she straddles between two cultures in conflict with her parents Bangladeshi cultural values and of English culture where she was born. She faces several difficulties while negotiating between two irreconcilable value systems. Problem is that, her parents might not have been integrated smoothly into the British culture, and her parents' old fashioned culture deemed gripping them back, does not enable her to hold on. In this way one can see that Shahana's identity is located 'in-between' cultures or in 'third space' which is neither British nor Bangladesh.

Unlike, Shahana and Bibi, Dr. Azad and his family, Shefali, Tariq, Razia and Karim who fluently speak English with freedom in a much better way than their mother tongue. Shefali used to wear short clothes while her mother Razia complaints about her clothes. Similarly, Shahana doesn't want to wear traditional clothes from Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the big problem is that some immigrants such as Tariq, Razia's son get addicted to drugs, alcohol and other abuses. He started an illegal business of drug selling. Eventually this habit brings him in a situation that forced him to sell his house furniture such as TV and other things in order to get money for buying drugs and alcohol due to addiction. This problem with young immigrants brings shame on their families. Dr Azad wants their family to send them back to Bangladesh. While their family and Bangladeshi community is not able to help these people. However, Chanu says:

But for my part, I don't plan to risk these things happening to my children. We will go back before they get spoiled.¹⁴⁸

Albeit, Nazneen and Chanu belong to the same group of immigrants but they have different tastes and perceptions about their self identification in diaspora. Though, Nazneen too, keeps trying to follow her own Bangladeshi culture for many years, gradually she comes to realize her own identity in different manner. She settled in London marrying with Chanu, a middle-aged man who remains in a space of permanent dislocation staying in London for many years, might be described in the condition of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

transition as well as in conflict. It is because, Chanu has never seemed entirely attached with any land or culture. It can be seen in these lines:

No, the degree would never be finished. The promotion would never be won. The job would never be resigned. The furniture would never be restored. The house in Dhaka would never be built. The jute business would never be started.¹⁴⁹

It shows Chanu's various dreams and desires which have not fulfilled that leave him into conflict and suspension. This transnational new space which is located in-between cultures and his discontentment in 'third space' portrays his transitional or fluctuating identity. The transcultural identity is remarkably constant which never finds the stability of destination. It is because of diasporic identities fluctuate between the binaries of homeland and an alien land. Sometimes he positioned himself in the acculturation model of 'separation,' while the above mentioned lines located him in the forth strategy of 'marginalization.' This marginalization did not get much expression in this narrative which involves rejection of the dominant country and the loss of one's own culture too. In other words, it shows a person's little interest in the dominant country as well as in the native culture. Likewise, Initially, Bangladeshi customs and traditions have been presented through Nazneen in diaspora, gradually they seem to be eroded by diasporic people. Though, she tries much to keep her present identity associating herself with homeland. As Stuart Hall says that identities are formed and reformed by multiple experiences, not just where we come from and who we are but also what we will become in the future. He claims that identity is a process which keeps translating beyond time and space.¹⁵⁰ This transcultural space provides dynamism of multiple identifications which comes up through time and nationalities. Nazneen's inclinations to learn English and to become an independent woman like Razia (an immigrant), and like white women. Her imagination for ice skating, moment she watches skating in television, as Ali mentioned that her imagination transforms her into new Nazneen. And at that time she was no longer

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ See, Hall, S., 1997, p.113. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Padmini Mongia, 110-121.

a collection of the hopes, random thoughts, and petty anxieties and selfish wants that distinguished her, but at that moment she was whole and pure:

The old Nazneen was sublimated and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory. But when it ended and she switched off the television, the old Nazneen returned.¹⁵¹

Moreover, Nazneen's perception of her 'self-identification' as a traditional woman, it is because initially her life was ruled by fate, as her mother Rupban says "we must not stand in the way of fate. Whatever happens, I accept it." Nazneen was caught by this superficial artifice until her immigration to London that, "what could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne."¹⁵² That is why for Karim and Chanu, Nazneen is a 'real thing' which is indicative of a pure Bengali wife, a Bengali mother, who carries an idea of home. But she is not a real thing, that both soon realized when she transformed into English culture. Now, she is not 'an unspoilt girl' from the village anymore. Further, sometimes Nazneen thinks about claustrophobic situation at Tower Hamlets and becomes nostalgic and retrospects her imaginary homeland and golden memories at Dhaka, as illustrated in the novel:

You can spread your soul over a paddy field, you can whisper to a mango tree, you can feel the earth beneath your toes and know that this is the place, the place where it begins and ends. But what can you tell to a pile of bricks? The bricks will not be moved.¹⁵³

Here Nazneen seems much engaged with her native culture, she asserts that her own culture is so strong. She undermines the British culture, as she questions that what is their culture? As far as British culture is concerned for her it is only television, pub, throwing darts, kicking a ball, which is bloody white working-class culture to her.¹⁵⁴ Here Nazneen's shows superiority of the orient over the occident. She shuttles between two cultures; it is because her fascination and resistance for both countries and here her

¹⁵¹ Ali, 2003, p. 41.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 14-16.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 254.

identity falls into the phenomenon of ambivalent hybridity. Hybridized identity and culture both can be analyzed in terms of past and present that comprise experiences of homeland and abroad. They are hybrid entity of historical past and contemporary present which get mixed up. It might be said that identity and culture both are uncertain phenomena because a sign of a culture might be interpreted or appropriated in a various way at the same time. And the importance of language in cultural difference is definitely enormous, as Bhabha states:

It is this difference in the process of language that is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures, at the same time, that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent.¹⁵⁵

I have found immigrant women more flexible in adaptation rather than men in diaspora. Nazneen, Razia and Mrs Islam first they all seem to be uncomfortable and unwilling “mixing with all sorts.”¹⁵⁶ Nazneen seems to find herself by the end of the novel when her initial inertia “nothing could be changed everything had to be born” soon get changed while reaching London in a form of rejection to conventional identity, having joined a new garment company both Razia and Nazneen obtained a greater financial independence leaving Chanu and Karim (Nazneen’s lover in London) behind. Both transformed from traditional and anonymous migrant wives on the periphery, become ambitious and independent business women making transition from their identities of anonymous wives to autonomous women. Razia is one of the best assimilated woman who thinks of herself much westernized rather than others belonging to the second group of immigrants. Her desire and tastes are much similar to those white people, such as her life style, clothing, language and culture. However, transition or mobility in Nazneen came after several difficulties such as her own sense of inertia and Chanu’s unwillingness to encourage her towards outer world mobility. Though sometimes she longs to visit tattoo lady but never went to see her due to fear and hesitation. Nazneen, from being a representative character of the Bangladeshi migrant community in Tower Hamlets, her skating, dance on a pop song and her traverse of

¹⁵⁵ Bhabha, 1994, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ Ali, 2003, p. 29.

London via metro to visit her lover (Karim) as well as her navigation of a riot zone, and her ultimate decision that “staying or going, it’s up to us three”¹⁵⁷ indicative of her social and cultural mobility. It declares her transformation from confine and fearful agency to confident and determined identity. There are two most important events in the transformation of Nazneen’s identity, one is her affair with Karim, and secondly, her business with Razia which reconstruct her suppressive identity into a powerful identity. By denouement of the narrative, Nazneen finds definition of her own self by engaging herself into a market labour. Thus, it can be seen that Nazneen and Razia are not passive and fearful but they seem to be confident, outspoken and accomplished new identities by autonomous agency. Their social mobility can be seen through their participation in ‘fusion fashion’¹⁵⁸ which is indicative of hybridity between white and non-white people where a white woman can wear a traditional Bengali kameez paired with a western - style (English culture) flared salwaar. Razia has a very optimistic vision towards transculturalism and British society. Ali has presented Razia as the spokesperson of the British society. It is visible in the below cited lines which give a contrastive outlook of both home and abroad. During a conversation between Razia and Nazneen, Razia says:

If you don’t have job here, they give you money. Did you know that? You can have somewhere to live, without any rent. Your children can go school. And on the top of that, they give you money. What would happen at home? Can you eat without working? Can you have a roof above your head?¹⁵⁹

Moreover, Razia’s dressing as the Union Jack shirt and salwaar pants portrays the fusion or hybrid identity of British and Bangladeshi culture simultaneously. Sometimes she becomes furious when low prices are paid for her garments by white people. She complains to Nazneen that look how much these English are paying for their kameez. Although she embraces hybridity and applauds the multicultural setup of London and Canada nations, but she resists the hypocrisies in the English culture. Ali seems to portray resistance to colonialism and its abuses through second-generation immigrants as they are

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 480.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 394.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

acculturated and hybridized in a manner which shows their revolt against British culture. It came into light through Karim who united Bangladeshi immigrants to organize a group (Bengal Tigers) to fight against racism and other brutalities in English culture towards the diasporic community. While, Chanu tried much to establish himself in London but this racism pushed him back and finally he decided to go back to Bangladesh. In transcultural English society he did not integrate culturally. However, for Karim, London is his country and he has never planned to go back to Bangladesh. Further, when he spoke in Bengali he stammered, whereas in English he found his best voice which did not give him any trouble. Unlike Chanu, he is determined to stay and fight against racism. We can see it through these lines what Karim says “we are for Muslim rights and culture and we are protecting our local ummah¹⁶⁰ and supporting the global ummah... We are against any group that opposes us.¹⁶¹” However, this attitude emerges through immigrants’ problem as being born in London they feel alienated and barred from opportunities which are supposedly only for the white race in British society. Consequently, they raised their voice against Lion Hearts¹⁶² a racist organization which opposed Bangladeshi immigrants and multiculturalism in London. This Lion Hearts decided to campaign through leaflets in order to oppose mullahs and militants, which transformed into a kind of March. Notably, Bengal Tigers decided to oppose this March by organizing “the March against the March.”¹⁶³ Moreover, Islam can be seen as the affective motif transcending this oppositional organization (Bengal Tigers) for these young generations of immigrants who fought against white caste. Although, these young immigrants consider this alien country as their own but they seem to be much ingrained in Islamic principles of Bangladesh and its rules and regulations which can be seen when they raise their voice against white people during their violent attacks upon Bangladeshi immigrants. Their concern to fight against injustice and racism in London is enabled by Islamic unity which gave them a unique community identity. Here, one can observe that these people, who had earlier considered themselves as westerners, now seem to be concerned with their indigenous homeland. Though these immigrants have been discarded on the basis of colour and race,

¹⁶⁰ It is an Arabic word used to describe the entire Muslim community which is tied through religion.

¹⁶¹ Ali, 2003, p. 241.

¹⁶² A violent political organization of white people which has been formed against ‘Bengal Tigers.’

¹⁶³ Ali, 2003, p. 406.

excluded and stigmatized for their Islamic religion, still, they do not wish to leave this country. It is because they have not ever been in their own land. In this way, their identities come up into conflict and oscillate between two cultures being at one place. Here I would like to argue what Bhabha says is right in saying that cross-cultural identity which emerges in third space is one that neither belong to one country nor the other, while it is 'in-between' these two cultures. This hybridized ambivalent identity has come up as a resistance towards colonialism. For instance fusion of two cultures can also be seen during the pre-march meeting where some boys wore jeans or tracksuits and few were in traditional Bengali garb with a twist, and Panjabi-pyjama customized with denim on the leg and sleeve cuffs. Further, it can be noticed that this hybrid identity is neither embedded in the past nor in the present but it seems a matter of becoming which remains in flux and transition as Stuart Hall argues. As a matter of fact, these second generation immigrants' identities seem to be fluctuating or can be seen in the phenomenon of transition between two cultures of their indigenous Bangladeshi and the English culture, the country of the settlement. These immigrants were already worried and infuriated with race riots, and due to the incident which happened on 11th September in which according to the United Nations Statistics, thirty five thousand children died through hunger. Moreover, the violent attacks of white people upon Bangladeshi men and women in direct and indirect ways, such as Sorupa's daughter get pulled her 'hijab' off, by a person from British society. Similarly, Razia's Jackshirt is pulled by a racist person from England. This torturous situation transformed them into anti-colonialists and inclined some of the immigrants towards their native culture. Eventually, Karim has given up his western clothes and started to wear traditional Bangladeshi dress such as kurta and Panjabi-pyjama and skullcap. Thus we can say that this acculturation varies in degree from individual to individual and their hybridized identities have been shown as their resistance towards colonialism or white people of the host country. Thus, they were struggling to get a new identity in English culture and keeping their native culture alive. Karim's acculturation into the dominant culture is much concerned with assimilation rather than integration. After a lot of violence and destruction these young immigrants who permanently settled there seem to benefit from the British government.

Dr Azad and his family seem to be wholly acculturated into British culture and are perfectly assimilated immigrants. Dr Azad is a physician in London, coming from Bangladesh who never wishes to visit his homeland. Mrs. Azad thinks of herself as part of British society, as she says “I work with white girls and I am just one of them.”¹⁶⁴ That is why, the assimilation of Azad’s family has been without any hardship and their identities have not been shown as fragmented. Moreover, Mrs. Azad shows her attitude and perception towards diaspora and its impact upon their children in a positive manner. For her assimilation and alienation is not a big deal and a thing of worry, she argues that “we live in a western society and our children will act more and more like westerners and it is not a bad thing.”¹⁶⁵ As such, her daughter is free to come and go anywhere. Further, she says that, when she was in Bangladesh she was very traditional, such as, she used to wear a sari and kept her head covered. While in London she does not carry that traditional attire, keeps her hair short like men and takes beer in order to show herself as modern and adapted in English culture. Although she knows that this society is racist, with many drawbacks still her attitude towards British culture is very positive as she claims we people must transform ourselves according to it, it is because we need them or in other words we are dependent on them economically. Even they can make use of us, and they would not change even one of their policies for our sake. That is not problematic at all in her view. It reflects her colonized mind or psychic difference to be dependent on British and allow them to rule over. It represents the vision of neo-colonialism in *Brick Lane*.

However, Nazneen tries much to negotiate with her identity through the different sites of her subjectivities between home and abroad. By the denouement of the narrative we found women immigrants comparatively much more flexible than that of the male immigrants such as Chanu and Karim. Chanu could not be able to negotiate, and remain suspended in a new third space. He seems shuttling between two lands, as he came with few ambitions and getting unsuccessful, returned to Dhaka. Karim became a political leader to unite Bangladeshi immigrant community to fight against social abuses which

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

ironically turned into riot and distorted the community. In this way they seem unable to cooperate, in comparison to women.

3.2 Breakdown of the Native Language, Culture and Identity:

As we know the breakdown of the native language and culture has been a matter of huge concern in postcolonial literature particularly in the context of diaspora. This section maps the very specific issues which have been encountered in 'diaspora' in Ali's *Brick Lane*. Most importantly, it addresses the causes behind the breakdown of native language and culture and the role of the language and culture in the transformation of the identity/identities of an individual(s) or of a particular community as the most conspicuous contemporary phenomenon of diaspora. Further, it explores women in diaspora and anaspora and how they get affected by this phenomenon of transculturalism or how they accommodate themselves in cross-cultural nation. Moreover, whether women are finding themselves easy in other land or struggling for their emancipation. Though, diaspora has already been discussed at a great length in the first chapter. Now it is important to know what the term 'anaspora,' signifies. To explore the women position in diaspora it becomes imperative to know them at anaspora (homeland) which gets unfolded by the technique of letter writing and sending from Dhaka to London and vice versa by duo Hasina and Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Anaspora is defined by Riggs as:

Anaspora, to refer to members of any ethnic nation who are not in diaspora – they are the people who remain at home. Who have not scattered from home as being in anaspora. The use of this novel term would help us to compare the position and attitude of the home people (anaspora) and those who have left home (diaspora), contrasting those who have not dispersed with those who have.¹⁶⁶

Though, there might be some specific reasons for the breakdown of the native culture by getting entirely transformed or hybridized with foreign land and language. So first let me introduce the causes which are responsible for the breakdown of the native

¹⁶⁶ Riggs, 1998, p. 286.

language and culture. As I have already discussed that diaspora is a sociolinguistic phenomenon which emphasizes the major issues such as, shifting in language and identity and maintenance or loss of indigenous language and identity in a different socio-cultural environment. Ludmila Isurin has mentioned some relevant factors which have been very prominent during her study of Russian diaspora such as, native society and its attitude to ethnic groups, attitude of the host country towards immigrants, place of origin, age, education, and the length of time in diaspora. According to her these are the factors which have played a vital role to find out the breakdown of indigenous culture and language.

Through these factors I have intended to explore the breakdown of Bangladeshi culture and language in *Brick Lane*. So I would like to begin with the factor of native place and its attitude. Ali portrays Bangladeshi experiences through Nazneen's nostalgia for homeland which sheds light upon several incidents that shows patriarchal outlook of Bangladesh. By the opening of the narrative we came to know about Nazneen's mother Rupban's death committing suicide caused by her husband's cruelty and dominance. As Rupban says to Nazneen "if God wanted us to ask question, he would have made us men."¹⁶⁷ After Rupban's death Nazneen gets married with an educated man who has frog like face and twenty years older than her but it was her father's will. She thinks that "she had submitted to her father married her husband and further submitted to her husband."¹⁶⁸ While Hasina, Nazneen's younger sister is not like her mother and sister (Nazneen) as she never submitted to her father. As she writes in her letter to Nazneen:

Amma always says we are women what we can do? ... But I am not like her. Waiting around. Suffering around. She wrong. So many ways. At the end only she act. She who think all the paths is closed for her.¹⁶⁹

Noticing the domineering attitude of her father Hasina eloped with her lover to Khulna in Dhaka, in order to escape her father's choice for her to marry an old man, like

¹⁶⁷ Ali, 2003, p. 80.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 434.

her elder sister Nazneen. However, Hasina and Nazneen remain in contact through letters. Through Hasina's letters we get the minute's description of women's position in Dhaka and unequal distribution of wages between men and women, and opportunities for women in factories. And how women are treated by men in Bangladesh? Further, they are pressurized for keeping purdah or hijab and to remain in their houses. Hasina writes to Nazneen in her letter about many instances regarding her women friends in Dhaka which depict some Dhaka women as courageous who fight against these abuses, while some silently bear them. She mentions Aleya's case whose husband says 'why should she work? If she works it looks bad and people will say that her husband cannot feed her.'¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, in Dhaka, if men and women are working together in a factory it is considered sinful by mullahs. That is why Aleya's husband wants her to wear burkha inside the factory. Hasina's another friend Shahnaz raised her voice against dowry and says, that 'why should we give dowry? She is not a burden and she makes money, she considers herself as a dowry.'¹⁷¹ Moreover, Hasina's friend Renu became victim of a mismatched marriage like Nazneen and Chanu. Renu was married at fifteen to an old man who died within three months. As Renu says:

My life! My life! Over at fifteen. And anyone says anything they like because I am woman alone. I am put here on the earth to suffer. I am waiting and suffering. This is all.¹⁷²

Additionally, immigrant men from Bangladesh keep practicing the same set of rules and dominance over their wives and daughters in the British context. Razia describes her husband's cruelty 'if she gets a job her husband will kill her. He will kill her kindly. Jorina, Razia's friend, can get her a sewing job, but her husband will go to the factory and slaughter her like a lamb.'¹⁷³ Thus when her husband was killed in an accident and she came to know she became happy instead of being sad. She groaned and says that now she can get that job. She further says that "no slaughter man to slaughter

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 123.

her now.”¹⁷⁴ And claims that she does not need anyone, now she can live like the English. Sometimes Nazneen thought and questions that:

Why did her father marry her off to this man? He just wanted to be rid of me, she thought. He wanted me to go far away, so that I would not be any trouble to him. He didn't care who took me off his hands. If I know what this marriage would be, what this man would be...! I would have wept on my wedding day. I did! I did weep. What good did it do?¹⁷⁵

Now it becomes clear that this patriarchal structure of Bangladesh and its attitude towards women compel them to get assimilated in a higher degree in diaspora rather than men. Ali seems to suggest that this diasporic space provides better possibilities and rights which have been denied to Bangladeshi women in the native place, and therefore, women are more longing for their selves and independent identities in British-Bangladeshi terms. Women seem doubly marginalized and dominated in London but adapted themselves and feel comfortable at the so called liberated place. They are doubly marginalized and dominated, because, firstly, they are struggling in a hegemonic power relation in the diasporic society. Secondly, they are dominated in their own houses by their patriarchal husbands in diaspora. Men rule over women's bodies and desires. That may be the specific cause for their easy assimilation and integration. As Razia says to Nazneen, that it is London you can do anything whatever you like and no one is going to bother you. However, this London is just exploiting women immigrants for the sake of employment using them as informal cheap labour with disparity in wages between men and women in industries. However, this permanently available unskilled low-paying labour is the policy of British society which is significant to increase their 'capital.' In London, every woman immigrant considers herself liberated. For example Mrs. Islam never keeps purdah and says that she is 'adapted' now and free to go anywhere outside her house though she is a widow. Women's assimilation can be considered a strong reason for the breakdown of the native culture and language; it is because in the phenomenon of assimilation a person completely adapts an alien culture and leaves his own culture behind. Consequently, indigenous language and culture gradually diminished. Nazneen and her both daughters

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

accommodated themselves easily because their desire for freedom and to live life in their own accord was impossible in their native place. For Mrs. Islam, Razia, Shefali and Mrs. Azad, this English culture has become their native place and they never wish to leave it. Even these people never want to talk in their native (Bengali) language because of their fascination towards English.

Though, Nazneen is not able to speak English fluently but she can understand it better. Her longing for English language seems extremely high when she says to Chanu that she wants to go to English classes with Razia. As I have noted that Nazneen has a strong desire to learn English because coming from Bangladesh to London she knew only two expressions of English such as, 'sorry' and 'thank you', so the major cause behind it is that most of the time she finds herself incomprehensible when Chanu and her neighborhood ladies talk to her in English. Although she respects her native language but the factor of communication and understanding others inclined her towards English. Accordingly, the native language and culture is restricting to get exposure in London. Further, Inclination and consciousness for the indigenous language differ according to the types of immigrant generations because there is a conflict between first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants regarding their desire for their own language and culture. They have different attitudes towards native and British language and culture.

Next I would like to shed light on the attitude of the host country towards immigrants. Host country's attitude has played a crucial role in identity shifting. When a person experienced problem of discrimination between white and non-white in diaspora he/she might change their way of self-identification in order to eschew from other possible problems or to deflect negative reactions. As happened in the case of Chanu who personally experienced the sense of being discriminated as a non-white in the office and gets shifted to the non-stigmatized identity. As Isurin says:

Discrimination that the individual experienced prior to his immigration may influence his identity transformation towards the non-stigmatized one.¹⁷⁶

As I have already dealt with the issue of discrimination in detail in the first section and its impact on Chanu. He never felt comfortable being self-identified as English it is caused by his extreme humiliation on the basis of colour which demolished his ambitions and he was left apart from his dream of being civil servant of British society and finally had to become Dish Washer and a Taxi Driver. For women this place is much more liberating than their indigenous place which is rooted in patriarchy. We see that Mrs. Azad and her daughter, Mrs. Islam, Razia, Shahana and Karim fall into the domain of 'assimilation.' However, Nazneen and her younger daughter Bibi qualify the acculturation category of 'integration,' and both are considered as positive models. It can be seen in the following lines:

Acculturation strategies have been shown to have substantial relationship with positive adaptation: integration is usually the most successful; marginalization is the least; the assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate.¹⁷⁷

The birth place and age of immigrants became imperative to take into account when we consider the phenomenon of acculturation and in the context of those who are brought to another country in their childhood. These young generation immigrants becoming separated from their native place in a very small age and the children of immigrants born in the host country may not be able to keep a direct attachment with their homeland. It is because they lack firsthand knowledge and history of their indigenous place. Whatever they know it might be through their parents and going through the books regarding their homeland description. In the case of Shahana's inferiority complex regarding her native culture pushes her back from her Bangladeshi cultural values. She is aware about the discrimination which her father Chanu faced in his office due to colour and culture, that is why she does not want to conform it. Her

¹⁷⁶ Isurin, L., 2011. *Russian Diaspora: Culture, Identity, and Language Change*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁷ Berry, John W., 1997. "Acculturation and Adaptation." *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (2), p. 24.

contempt and self awareness is visible during a trip by bus when she worries that her parents may “stink the bus.”¹⁷⁸ It becomes clear that she has a stereotype image of sub continental stink. She is not content with her parent’s culture and life style, and for her Bangladesh is a foreign land with several drawbacks, where exploitation of women is everywhere. She has a very pessimistic perspective about her native land. She thinks, in Bangladesh people use twig instead of tooth brush and use water in place of toilet paper. Moreover, comfort of being self is an important element that whether an individual feels comfortable with his nationality or not. It is because Shahana does not feel comfortable at all with their parents’ old fashioned culture that is why she has become anglicized. She never wants to be identified with her parents’ indigenous place and in order to be identified as a member of British society she adapted British accent of English language.

Further, she is much concerned about the women’s situation that how they are put under oppression in Bangladesh. She thinks that Bibi, her younger sister, would be married with an old man who would keep her “locked up in a smelly room.”¹⁷⁹ She says in a very pathetic way to her parents that ‘she didn’t ask them to be born her in London.’¹⁸⁰ Since her birth, she is exposed to British culture, which gradually makes her anglicized. While Chanu tries to permeate his culture as he says to Shahana to read Rabindra Nath Tagore’s *Gitanjali*. Nonetheless, he says, in order to get the attention of his daughters towards Bangladesh, that ‘Bangladesh ranks Number One in the World Happiest Survey, India is fifth, and USA is forty sixth,’ according to a newspaper research survey led by a professor at the London School of Economics, makes links between personal spending power and perceived quality of life has found out that Bangladeshis are the happiest people in the world; whereas, Bangladeshis are the most deprived ethnic group in the whole of the UK and this is the immigrants’ tragedy. But it does not affect his daughters, because the hegemonic English culture decreases its affect upon Shahana. Her resistance in favor of English life style is the hegemonic influence of British society. Ali presented her as entirely receptive to the British culture though with a

¹⁷⁸ Ali, 2003, p. 209.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 395.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 181.

lot of effort. Furthermore, the imposition of British culture takes her into the process of assimilation of acculturation. She has accepted it and positively becoming responsive for it. That is why, Nazneen says if they go back to Bangladesh, she can compromise there but children would not be able to do this and Shahana will never forgive them. Likewise, Karim was born in London does not seem like a Bangladeshi and he decides to fight with the racist society. Karim had never even been in Bangladesh. He is born as a foreigner and never wanted to go back Bangladesh and says that 'London is his country.' Here, the factors of age and place of birth are somehow responsible for their identities transformation and acculturation and as well as for the breakdown of the native cultural orientations.

Now I shall look at the factor of education which has also been an important component in acculturation. During Dr. Azad's conversation with Chanu, he mentioned the sorry condition of some of the immigrants who became liver patient due to alcohol. Dr. Azad tells about young immigrants from Bangladesh who caught up with the habit of drinking alcohol and taking drugs and argue out the reasons that it is just in order to copying what they see in the British society. Nevertheless, they used to go to pub, nightclubs, and drink in their bedrooms. However, Chanu argues regarding this issue about his peasant immigrants' community that the main problem is that his community is not perfectly educated about these things. Chanu considers this Sylheti immigrants' community consisting of peasants and uneducated men who know nothing of the history of Bangladesh. He says that they even do not know that in the sixteenth century Bengal was named the "Paradise of Nations."¹⁸¹ And their imitation of the English society particularly of alcohol and drugs are just bringing temporary pleasure to them, however, degrading their health and cultural values of Bangladesh. Thus, education factor can also be seen contributing to the breakdown of the native language and culture.

Additionally, fascination for and consciousness of the mother language is also depend on the fact that how much time one has spent in the land of one's origin as well as

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 185.

in the country of settlement. The most important aspect for the consciousness towards native language in immigrants is the knowledge of their own language. As Chanu says that Shahana too does not know about the “Paradise of Nations,” she only knows about the flood and famine whatever this bloody country (London) is teaching to her in the school. It is because she has not ever been in Bangladesh. The length of time decides the emotional attachment for native language, and whether one feels privileged or embarrassing while speaking in his/her mother language. How much they know about their language, culture, and tradition is important, because it would be a positive factor to keep holding on his/her native language and culture and may help in its preservation. Ludmila Isurin finds in her study of Russian diaspora that to exploring acculturation: age, first language contact, second language contact, ethnicity, education, and length of staying in the host country are important components.¹⁸² These factors also seem helpful to explore the breakdown of the indigenous language and culture. As we know that language is an inseparable part of culture and of one’s identity formation. Even there is no culture without a language and an individual or community identity without the existence of language.

However, Shahana, Razia, Nazneen and Mrs. Azad feel proud of being English which brought a liberating sense of freedom to them like white women. As Mrs. Islam says ‘the white people do what they want and it’s nobody’s business. That is how the white people live.’¹⁸³ While Razia, showing her different attitude towards the English society, says to Nazneen to ask her husband (Chanu) whether ‘is it better than our country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?’¹⁸⁴ Her perception has now changed she is no longer a traditional woman and does not think that she needs to return to Dhaka and she began to consider this host land as her own native land. While Chanu experienced differentiated and other. He never forgot that he is from Dhaka, came only to save some money and will be back as soon

¹⁸² Isurin, L., 2011. “Language Change and Language Maintenance.” In *Russian Diaspora: Culture, Identity, and Language Change*, p. 204.

¹⁸³ Ali, 2003, p. 89.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 72.

possible that is the promise he made to himself, the moment he migrates from Dhaka to London.

The sense of belonging has also been a very crucial aspect regarding transforming identity as well as in the breakdown of one's own homeland tradition. We see in this narrative some first-generation immigrants' sense of belongingness is very close to Bangladesh. However, the second-generation immigrants such as Karim and Shahana explicitly draw their sense of belonging from the British society and claim that London is their home and they feel much more comfortable here rather than in Bangladesh. However, the first-generation immigrants' community is located in order to accept entire challenges of acculturation and hybridity, whereas second-generation immigrants fought against those challenges. For Bhabha 'third space' avails transformations and changes within two or many cultures and this negotiation he states "is neither assimilation nor collaboration" while introduces the possibility of creating meaning within the dominant culture.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, Shahana feels ashamed to be Bengali by conforming to Bangladeshi values and traditions. After observing lot of violence of white people on non-white immigrants, Karim's sense of belonging in England seems diminished but still he is reluctant to leave this dominant country in order to fight against it. In the case of Karim, religion has been an important aspect in his identity transformation. For him, his Bangladeshi Islamic religion has played a vital role in his self-identification in the English culture when the white people began to oppose Islamization. For Karim, the Islamic religious belief and Bangladeshi culture have been very important in forming the essence of his identity in the host country. He fought for the liberation of Bangladeshi community which gives him a separate national identity which is a mixture of Bangladeshi cultural values and humanist Islamic values. Additionally, I can say that Chanu, Nazneen and Karim's identities are half-Bangladeshi and half-English. It is because after spending much time in one's own country, it becomes difficult to negotiate and compromise in other country as it can be seen in the case of Chanu, who migrated in his forty and he never comes to locate himself in any land completely. He remained in a

¹⁸⁵ Bhabha, Homi., 1996, p. 58. "Culture's in-between." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and P. de Gay, 53-60.

state of homelessness, and neither felt at home in London nor in Bangladesh which became responsible for his transitional identity on the one hand, and diminished the values of native land on the other hand.

However, for some Bangladeshi immigrants the sense of having Bangladeshi identity seems higher in degree of diaspora recreating their experiences which were left behind rather than the feelings of those who are in anaspora. Being hybridized and acculturated in English culture, emphasis has been made over the retention of Bangladeshi culture in transnationalism. Along with it, Ali tries to stress the British colonial domination over Bangladesh which resulted in the form of dependence such as economic, political and socio-cultural. Further, it can also be seen through Bangladeshi immigrants' anglophile and their cultural imperialistic lens. Chanu underlines the significance of pure culture which has already been mixed with the British culture being colonized by it. It is visible through Hasina's letters who is in anaspora or in her native place but never writes in Bengali though her English is unexpectedly poor. Thus Chanu seems only to preserve the illusion of purity of culture in opposition to the cultural imperialism of the British society. The ambivalent relationship between Bangladesh and British culture which is prominent in the postcolonial literature is represented by Ali in an effective manner.

Thus going through all the immigrants in London from Bangladesh we see the transitional or dynamic nature of one's identity and self-perception in the diaspora. Further we can see that how the past experiences intersecting with the new culture can transform one's perception as well as identity. Moreover I found that the phenomenon of identity transition or transformation through the acculturation process is determined by social identity, social cognition as well as by social stigma. These three elements are essential in acculturation framework in order to understand its entire mechanism. The social realm seems very important in the very process of identity negotiation and compromise among immigrants. However, social cognition can be looked here in terms of change in self-perception, and self-identification caused by environmental changes.

The phenomenon of self-identification came into light through the acculturation process in immigrants.

CHAPTER - 4

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND POLITICS IN *BROKEN VERSES*

4.1 Language and Hybridized Identity

Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* (2005) deals with some of the remarkable issues of post-colonialism, where the emphasis is drawn upon postcolonial identity. She is one of the well known young Pakistani novelists and who has the experiences of diaspora of her own and she could not escape from reflecting it in her narratives. Though, *Broken Verses* is not entirely based on diaspora or transnational experiences, some parts of it definitely show transcultural influences. She was born and raised in Pakistan, and now, she lives in London. This novel investigates political and cultural situation of Pakistan through an unfolding of personal life issues and correlating those with politics. My focus is to show, albeit through an engagement with the above mentioned novel, identity as an ever fluctuating and evolving process that gets hybridized when translated from past to present and this is a never ending phenomenon. Stuart Hall argues:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think of identity as a 'production' which is never complete.¹⁸⁶

So, in this narrative the language and decoding of letters come to play a crucial role, as a way of reconstructing or transforming the identity of its protagonist and redefining her relationship with the past and its politics. This text links the process of decoding or deciphering the coded letters with the question of history and language. These letters have been written in a coded language that was formulated by protagonist Aasmaani's mother and the Poet.¹⁸⁷ The purpose of writing letters in coded language was

¹⁸⁶ Hall, S., 1997, p. 110. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, 110-121.

¹⁸⁷ It is a character in *Broken Verses* who is satirically called 'the Poet' by Pakistan's anti-colonialists. However he got the pen name as 'Nazim' that stands for 'Poet.'

to keep the communication confidential between Samina Akram (Aasmaani's mother) and the Poet. Here decoding of letters metaphorically taken up as translation, through which protagonist's identity transforms into a new one. Bhabha states:

The process of translation is the opening up of another contentious political and cultural site at the heart of colonial representation. In the very practice of domination, the language of the master becomes hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other.¹⁸⁸

In Bhabha's view translation is an event in which texts or identities could be transformed because it opens up a new space which he called 'third space,' which exists 'in-between' cultures. Albeit, I have made an attempt to deal with translation which is much more metaphorical rather than literal, and in that case likewise, ambivalent hybrid identity has also been dealt metaphorically. Because here main protagonist's identity is not subjected to translation from one culture to another culture, but in the case of some other characters such as Ed and the Poet transnational culture becomes inevitable. At some points, Shamsie has drawn light on the colonial influences in Pakistani society. It is concerned with the conflict of identity due to the language and culture which have been major sources in transforming the protagonist's (Aasmaani) identity as well as others. I have located Aasmaani as oscillating between past and present with the quest for finding her own 'self' or 'identity.' I can mention here Hall again. He further states:

Identity is not the rediscovery but the 'production' of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the 're-telling' of the past.¹⁸⁹

It is because one's identity is derived from one's past and its present socio-cultural surroundings in which one grows up. The pull of the past always remains very high, and one might not be easily able to leave it behind, though, it must be revisited and related with the present for self - perception and self assertion to a large extent. However,

¹⁸⁸ Bhabha, H., 1994, p. 33. "The Commitment to theory." In *The Location of Culture*, 19-40.

¹⁸⁹ Hall, S., 1997, p. 111.

Ania Loomba has argued that identity of the colonized people must be considered as a negotiation or a compromise between the past and future.¹⁹⁰

This narrative basically deals with the desperate love, politics, activism, and present day life of Karachi of early 2000. It particularly depicts the life of a 31 year old girl Aasmaani Inqalab, an educated research assistant at an independent television station in Pakistan. I observed that an analogy has been drawn with the help of past (history & politics), poetry and women's rights movement. Most of the characters seem to be affected by the phase of military dictatorship that happened at that time in Pakistan. For instance, government censorship of writing, political rallies and protests for women rights came into light as the back story of this narrative. The Poet had been exiled and then murdered by the Pakistan government for his revolutionary poetic writings. Similarly, Aasmaani's mother Samina Akram, a feminist activist had been imprisoned for rallying for women's rights and equality. These issues were encountered more like the past and historical issues which become the vital cause for the reconstruction of Aasmaani's identity. As Kirkus review of Shamsie's *Broken Verses* states that "the political backdrop – criticism of America, anxiety about the role of the fundamentalists in Pakistani government – just that a backdrop; it never overshadows, but rather somehow expands, the story."¹⁹¹ It attempts to explore that how does these aforementioned historical (past) facts intersect the present?

Further, Shamsie having diasporic experiences represented the hybridized cultural identity. Both eastern and western sensibilities have been portrayed through the presentation of Americanized culture in Pakistani society. It is visible when Aasmaani commented on Ed's Americanized identity, when he introduced himself to her at the television station that he is "Mir Adnan Akbar Khan, (as) he said, in mock-grandiose tones. But my (Mir Adnan Akbar Khan) friends call me Ed." And she retorted that

¹⁹⁰ Loomba, A., 1998, p. 175, "Colonial and Postcolonial identities." In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 104-183.

¹⁹¹ Kirkus Review: 2005, online posted on 2010, Harvest/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

“nicknames and friendship rarely go together.”¹⁹² Aasmaani is much more concerned about language and particularly for its meanings, that is why her father named her as ‘scrabble girl.’¹⁹³ Ed seems to her more like a hybrid of colonial identity, as Aasmaani describes:

Those curved eyes straight out of Mughal miniature, that sensuous mouth. How strange that they should be masculine on his face. I wasn’t sure if that was flattering or sleazy. He was one of those men who straddle the line between dazzling sexy and somewhat repulsive. All due to the heavy hoods of those Mughal eyes.¹⁹⁴

Aasmaani on the one hand seems to be fascinated by colonialist’s outlook, while on the other hand, has strong disgust for Ed’s intended use of ‘a Hollywood drawls’¹⁹⁵ which appears unauthentic as a mere repetition of coloniality but her simultaneous attraction and repulsion for mixed culture or hybrid (American-Pakistani) identity of Ed is because of ‘ambivalence.’ Mir Adnan Akbar Khan, who shows himself much westernized, while restrained and confined in Pakistan’s traditional society as well. He used to tell everyone that “all mothers should stay at home with their children; otherwise the children grow up like him.”¹⁹⁶ His mother Shehnaz Saeed, a famous actress and darling of the theatre and the cinema, had retired at the zenith of her career because of her son. Gradually, he realizes his mistake and Shehnaz resumes her career again. Nonetheless, the letters which were supposedly written by Aasmaani’s mother or the Poet were in fact written by Ed in order to appeal to Aasmaani to keep her mother’s heritage alive. His act of writing letters to Aasmaani, to take the social and ethical responsibility shows his progressive thinking towards women. Here, it might be seen that Ed is a mixture of both eastern and western values. On one hand, he had social and political concern, while on the other hand much embedded in his traditional culture of Pakistan. Bhabha is right to say that ‘liminality’ and ‘hybridity’ are obligatory element to ‘the’ colonial condition. And further he argues that colonial identities are always a matter of

¹⁹² Shamsie, K., 2005. *Broken Verses*, p. 9.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

flux and agony. Where the colonized subjects can never attain the whiteness what they have been taught to desire or want to become.¹⁹⁷ Ed coming back to Pakistan from New York, is still fixated at the western felicity and luxuries, described through these lines:

New York. Yeah.’ He shook his head. ‘God, I loved it. Really, truly. I had the best life there; I had my job, my friends, rent-controlled apartment, my local gym, a place round the corner for Sunday brunch which made Eggs Scandinaeve you would not believe.’¹⁹⁸

Moreover, Ed’s memories of New York City are both pleasant and resentful which marks ambivalence. However, he left it because he was made to feel there so powerless. And further, he left that ‘great life’ in New York working in an advertizing company due to all the suspicion and prejudices. But sometime he says ‘God, I miss. That damn city, that New York attitude. I miss snow in the West Village, and summers, and New York summers.’¹⁹⁹ Ed too gets captured in his past as Aasmaani argues ‘when someone thinks about one’s past, now history will happen and you can do nothing but be caught up in it.’²⁰⁰

Shamsie has portrayed colonial and anti-colonial aspects in a very impressive manner. During Aasmaani’s description of her small suffocated room in a new office, she notes her mother Samina’s anti-colonial statement when she thinks of Aasmaani as fortunate and stated that ‘how many political prisoners could be squeezed, like pomfret, into prison cells this size. She’d refuse to say, ‘Like sardines,’ because sardines are a colonial residue.’²⁰¹ This refusal shows her anti-colonial and nationalistic view point; she does not use even a word that is suggestive of coloniality. While, Aasmaani’s experiences of the colonial presence in Pakistan’s culture as she observes the locality of Shehnaz

¹⁹⁷Quoted in Loomba, A., 1998, p. 139. “Colonial and Postcolonial Identities.” In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* from Homi Bhabha’s *Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism* (1983).

¹⁹⁸Shamsie, 2005, pp. 45-46.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 146-49.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 12.

Saeed's house as the colonial part of the town and her old house keeper looked at Aasmaani with extreme shock as 'descended'²⁰² from one of Sikandar's soldiers.'²⁰³

Another instance of colonial presence could be seen considering the Poet who came from Punjab to Karachi and became popular in Lahore's Mushairas, and his Ghazals drove the crowd to raptures, not just through the power of his imagery and his ability to mine a word for all its layers of meaning, but also for his capacity to surprise. During this time he took the pen-name 'NAZIM' because it meant 'POET.'²⁰⁴ Eventually, he abandoned the Ghazal due to the transnational sway going through exile; he inclined towards western ideas of poetry and wrote sonnet, pantoums, villanelles, and canzones. However, by early 1950 this shift has been taken as a betrayal in regard of nationalistic and anti-colonial view points. Hereby, Pakistanis satirically began to call him 'THE POET' instead of 'NAZIM'. People censured and blamed him as the passage shows:

Under western influences he forgot politics and social concerns in favour of obscenity and was hauled up in court for this crime. Although, it was not the real reason for his jail was his poem *Ufuq* which condemned the Generals and politicians he held responsible for the tragedy of the civil war.²⁰⁵

Ngugi wa Thiong'o a Kenyan critic and writer has invoked the multiple connections between language and culture, and argues that colonialism made inroads into the latter through control of the former.²⁰⁶ Albeit, the Poet seems to follow what the postcolonial theorists such as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue, use English language in the form of 'appropriation' which is considered as the form of resistance towards

²⁰² Aasmaani gets the horrific look from the house keeper lady of Shehnaz Saeed, whom she imagines as one of the soldiers from Sikandar. Here the term 'descended' signifies the sudden attack from that soldier upon Aasmaani or colonized people that marks the prevalent hegemonic existence of colonialism in an independent country like Pakistan.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 84-90.

²⁰⁶ Loomba, A., 1998, p. 92, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies." In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 1-103.

colonialism.²⁰⁷ Though, the Poet wrote in English because of Shakespeare's impact upon him, while before writing in English he phrased and got it shaped in Urdu in his mind. He wrote in English rather than Urdu. And his choice of shift to Urdu is neither considered as a politics for more accessibility to the public nor for it has less influence of colonization. The major cause of shift from English to Urdu was 'the grandeur of Shakespeare's language has gone out of English, now it is a language that learned to use a knife and fork, though once it ripped chickens apart with its bare hand. However, Urdu still allows lushness.'²⁰⁸ He states:

I cannot bear the absence of the physical beauty in the lines of the English alphabet. English has lines; Urdu has curves. Perhaps my use of English is mere a sign of a dead libido. It's the sort of statement my critics would make. But no, haven't I resorted splendor to this language with my near calligraphy flourishes? I learned to hone phrases in my mind, and write what I was sure of.²⁰⁹

It shows the hybrid identity of the Poet's attraction towards colonial language as well as for Urdu language. Once Aasmaani came across through the scrawl of Omi's²¹⁰ handwriting in a postcard he had sent her mother (Samina) from Colombia when he was in exile, where he claimed that curves, loops do not matter for him. For him the aesthetic of language was in its sound, not its visual appearance. This polarity in his view is caused by ambivalence in hybridity that is inevitable for Bhabha. And further, his fascination for his favorite English language word 'Intrinsicate' used by Shakespeare to describe bond between Antony and Cleopatra. The Poet says 'he could do what he wanted with words and no one would use the awful phrase 'experimental,' with all its connotations of impending failure. Intrinsicate. Both intricate and intrinsic.'²¹¹ Here, it is important to

²⁰⁷ Ascroft, B., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have introduced an anti-colonial policy in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) for using English language as 'appropriation' to show resistance against colonialism. English language must not be used by former colonies, the way colonizers used it. They introduced two terms: 'Abrogation' which signifies denial to use of English language, while 'appropriation' emphasizing the use of English language in much Indianized form rather than British.

²⁰⁸ Shamsie, 2005, pp. 114-15.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

²¹⁰ Aasmaani used to call the Poet as 'Old me' that became 'Omi,' who is her mother's lover and her stepfather.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 116.

take into account what Hall said that the European presence is not simply as the site or 'scene' of integration where those other presences which it had actively disaggregated were recomposed – reframed, put together in a new way; but as a site of a profound splitting and doubling.²¹² Likewise Bhabha has argued that the ambivalent identifications of the racist world...the 'otherness' of the self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.²¹³

4.2 Language, Translation and Identity:

Aasmaani's account of past and present events comprise of discursive journey - a search of her mother, who mysteriously disappeared two years ago, which made her life miserable and worthless. Although, during this ordeal of searching for the dear one she finds many versions of her mother's life and identity, and she acknowledges her own self too. Indeed, she did not have a clear outlined identity. That is why she has had to struggle throughout her life in order to construct an identity of her own. The combining aspects of mysterious story through decoding of letters, Aasmaani's attempt of realization of her mother's loss and the death of the Poet (Nazim) her mother's desperate lover. This narrative shows the way for addressing postcolonial problematic identity and its recreation through the process of deciphering coded letters. The letters have written in the coded form for clandestine communication between the Poet and Samina during the exile of the Poet and political upheavals. But Aasmaani was also aware of these codes. So during the translation of these letters, Aasmaani gets compelled to go through her pathetic historical past and has to embark on alternative narrative of the past. As Nyman says this novel attempts to show the connection between the phenomenon of translation and the question of history and language as well as with the reconstruction of identity.²¹⁴ Hereby, it can be said that by the process of deciphering the coded letters leaving apart her existing self, she is forced to translate or transform herself from the past to the present and get buttoned herself in a different identity position. This chapter is an attempt to

²¹² Hall, S., 1997, p. 118.

²¹³ Bhabha, in "Foreword" to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1986).

²¹⁴ See, Nyman, J., 2011. "Íjc Anonkoh efac fyfno ikrfb: Language, Translation and Identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses*." *Otherness : Essays and studies* 3 (1).

demonstrate that how language and translation are responsible into the construction of one's identity, mainly of the protagonist as well as of the Poet and Samina. Carol Anne Douglas says that "Shamsie creates a character who believably sounds like a great poet in love with language; her young heroine also loves language and word play."²¹⁵

As we know, translation has been a matter of huge controversy in postcolonial discourses particularly in translation studies and it mainly deals with the question of superiority and inferiority as a matter of authority and domination. However, the stress has been made over the transcultural or crosscultural impacts of translation. It can be so because the postcolonial scholars seem to argue: "translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems, and in history."²¹⁶

Further, arguing for the escape from unequal power relations by the metaphor of translation which defines the superiority of European languages over the languages of colonies. That is why, Homi Bhabha has introduced a new politics of 'in-betweenness'. For him this is an 'inter' and 'liminal space' and the 'third space' used for eschewing the problem of polarity in translation which emerges as other through this in-betweenness. Additionally, it is described as hybridity which is used as a strategy for resistance to the colonial authority, akin to Bhabha's own use of mimicry.²¹⁷ At the same time, he opines that by the event of translation we are not losing anything as it has been traditionally thought, as it is a gain of something new. Hence, through translation his emphasis is laid upon the theory of hybridity rather than textual transmission. In the same manner, when the cultural translation takes place, an individual or a community identity also gets translated along with it. One controversial instance of translation has been portrayed in the novel which describes Aasmaani's mother's past life during her search for the proof of Omi's death and Samina's disappearance. She found one audio which contains a

²¹⁵ "A Novel Experiences." 2005. *Off Our Backs: A Women's Newsjournal* 35 (11/12): 52-54.

²¹⁶ Bassnett, S., Harish Trivedi, 1999, p. 6. "Introduction: of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars." In *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, 1-19.

²¹⁷ Mimicry is one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognized other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. The discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence. It emerges as the representation of difference that is itself a process of disavowal. It is thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power.

conversation between Samina Akram and Maulana Moin Haq happened during a public gathering, held on 2 January in 1986. It revealed the fact that Samina demanded Maulana for an eye-to-eye contact during the talk, while Maulana argued:

Mohtarma, if you don't respect yourself and laws of the Quran enough to keep your head covered in public, I at least respect you enough to keep my eyes averted.' [She makes a counter argument], Within the Quran itself, as you well known, there are two verses which refer to the apparel of women. Verse thirty-one of Surah An-Nur and verse fifty-nine of Surah Al-Ahzab. In one, the word 'khomoorehenna' is used and in the other the word 'jalabib.' Your translation, I'm afraid, seems utterly unaware that khomoorehenna comes from the word 'khumar,' which simply means 'a covering' rather than 'a veil.' It doesn't specify what is covered or how. And 'jalabib' means a shirt or cloak.²¹⁸

Here I shall argue about the 'gain' of translation that Bhabha has claimed. What is the gain that has come up by Maulana's translation of Quran which confines Muslim women through an act of misinterpreting the original text as 'hijab' or 'veil' into his own whimsical translation that can be imposed over women and it indeed causes a deterioration of society? Here this translation has been shown as a dangerous zone for women. Thus, it can be said that Maulana's translation of the Quran can be deemed as affecting the synchronicity of social harmony. Furthermore, it shows how this phenomenon of translation of a particular text also affects in a deviated way the human values. However, Bhabha further argues:

Translation is also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense – imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be stimulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never complete in itself. The originary is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalized prior moment of being or meaning – an essence.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Shamsie, 2005, p. 284.

²¹⁹ Rutherford, J., 1990, p. 210, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 207-221.

In this narrative, cultural translation has been addressed to a large extent during the portrayal of one of Shehnaz Saeed's interview which had been held in 1982 regarding *Macbeth* staging in Urdu translation. And in this interview Saeed is shown giving her view points on her Urdu (speaking) performance of *Macbeth* during the festival in Italy. However, Italian journalist, who does not have command over Urdu, noted an Italian word *sprezzatura* which means "the illusion of ease with which the most gifted artists imbue their most complex performances."²²⁰ He asks Saeed, whether she is aware of this word? Further he asks whether she could name performers with the similar characteristics. She answered using another Italian word *grazia*, and for making it more comprehensive she illustrates one of Samina Akram's public speeches.

A: I can think of a number of actors. But, correct me if I'm wrong, there's an Italian word which is applied to performances which are level above mere *sprezzatura*. Q: you mean *grazia*. Divine grace. The feeling that something almost out of this world is happening through the performer. You can admire *sprezzatura*, but in the presence of *grazia* you feel actually honored, you feel you've changed. You've glimpsed something of the immortal mysteries. I've only witnessed *grazia* once – and it wasn't while watching a play. The feminist icon Samina Akram, I heard her addressing a crowd in Karachi once. In the interaction between her and the audience and some ineffable presence, *grazia* happened.²²¹

These above illustrated lines further throw light over the importance of bond between performance and transformation, here the artistic performance of *Macbeth* translates and transforms Shehnaz Saeed into the 'immortal mystery.' And this translation is suggestive of both the linguistic as well as the cultural because elaborating the meaning of the Italian phrases in English and the effect which has been experienced in Italian words present the translation respectively in such a manner. And it is much more visible in the case of the Italian journalist, who cannot understand Urdu; experienced the performance through *sprezzatura*, however, the public gathering for Samina's speech translated themselves by experiencing *grazia* into politically inclined group. Though, it is not only language's impact that they identified themselves with her speech into a new

²²⁰ Shamsie, 2005, p. 32.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 32.

identity, as the member of a political community. Judith Butler says “to ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other”.²²²

Coming back to my continuing discussion that how the translation is functioning in Kamila Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* particularly translating protagonist’s identity by her decoding of the coded letters which metaphorically transforms her position. My purpose in dealing with the theory of translation is to emphasis on the fact that identity is not a fixed entity but this is a process. As Bhabha argues:

The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.²²³

Identity is neither something entirely imposed by others nor is it the consequence of the subject’s choice to identify himself/herself with a certain image projected upon him/her by someone else. As I have observed that language has been a crucial object in this novel and especially to Aasmaani since her childhood when she didn’t know to read and write, but was fascinated towards language. Nonetheless, more surprising is the fact that she was not only very keen about the language but also for its meaning, when she thinks about herself naming as Aasmaani Inqalab by her mother Samina. She censures her mother’s politically naming of her and refutes her mother’s values, and draws a contrast with her step-father’s aesthetic explanation of her name. Let me bring in this paragraph to illustrate her:

Aasmaani Inqalab my first and middle names, self-important trisyllables that long ago pushed my shorter name off everything expect the most official documents. My mother’s choice, my name. My mother had made all the important choices regarding my early life; the thing she left to Dad and Beema was the actual business of raising me. Aasmaani Inqalab:

²²² Butler, J., 2003, p. 31, “Violence, Mourning, Politics.” *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4 (1): 9-37.

²²³ Bhabha, 1994, p. 45.

Celestial Revolution. Such a name never really admits the notion of childhood. But Beema used to whisper in my ear, 'Azure.' Aasmaani can also mean azure revolution.²²⁴

The two different meanings of the protagonist's name signifies two distinct identities, one denotes revolution or politically inclined, while the other signifies aesthetic meaning relating it to the Celestial revolution or Azure revolution and comparing it with Picasso's blue period by her father and her step mother, Beema. Moreover, when she interacted with Ed she said that "My name is Aasmaani Inqalab. My friends call me Arse-Many Inflagrante."²²⁵ The third disclosure of her name talks of a meaning that is completely different from those two. The literal meaning of 'Arse' - is 'an irritating or stupid person,' 'Many'- denotes 'large in quantity,' and 'Inflagrante'- means in Latin -'in blazing or flaming' and this blazing is used as a metaphor for vigorous or highly visible action. Hereby, it could be said that Aasmaani, who is obsessed due to the abandonment by her mother since her childhood, and her mother's mysterious disappearance as well for following her lover in exile and for activism. She eventually walked away from the Poet's life and went in search of an identity that was not caught up in his shadow and also left her husband too for her own independent identity. That is why Aasmaani always raises this question as to how one could forgive her mother who left her own child? And since the childhood till the age of thirty she remains stuck with the same problem, so allowing her friends to name her as 'Arse-Many Inflagrante' which signifies 'a person who is vigorously stupid, irritating or worthless.' In addition, language has an immense importance in this narrative. According to Nyman: "The sea (of language) in the novel is a dangerous element haunting the protagonist throughout the novel as likely site of her mother's suicide – an unexpected loss of her fixed identity as mother."²²⁶

Moreover, the protagonist's identity is located in the instability of language and its meaning through the metaphoric use of dictionary which underlines the significance of the various definitions or meanings of a particular word. I am trying to show this by

²²⁴ Shamsie, 2005, p.3.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

²²⁶ Nyman, 2011. p. 4.

citing a passage regarding the word 'current' that has been used to demonstrate the impossibility of fixed meaning because meaning occurs in difference or it could be said that as the use of metaphor creates the impossibility of a stable meaning, as Aasmaani puts it:

I walked over to the boxes of books which surrounded the empty bookshelf in the living room, and opened the one marked 'REF.' On the top of the dictionary I'd had since I was a child. I closed my eyes, opened the book, and ran my fingers down the page. Opened my eyes. My finger was halfway down the definition of COMBUST. I flipped past CONTRA MUNDUM and CORUSCATE and CUMULAS until I reached CURRENT.

Currents. I knew something of them already. I knew the currents of the oceans include the Agulhas, the Humboldt and the Benguela, I knew currents move in gyres, clockwise in the northern hemisphere and anticlockwise in the southern hemisphere. I knew the Poet had told me, years ago, that if we could only view the motion of currents as metaphors for gyres of history – or the gyres of history as metaphors for the motion of currents – we'd know the absurdity of declaring the world is divided into East and West. My mother's voice at the beach, cautioning me against undercurrents.²²⁷

The instances of instability of language and meaning have been addressed affectively in this narrative by different approaches such as in the following passage the idea of language supports the Poet's discourse regarding classical opera mentioned by Aasmaani. He argues that incomprehension or lack of understanding of a particular language also provide pleasure. It could be said that as the illustration indicates that language cannot introduce fixed meaning. It can be compared to the manner of music as music behaves and produces particular affects in us and in this regard we can say that the cognitive identification of words and their intervening meanings is an impediment. While, if you would not be able to understand its meaning it might fill us with feelings, emotions and the sublimity of classical music:

²²⁷ Shamsie, 2005, p. 24.

I engulfed with the opera he had tried to teach me love – here, here, he’d say, listen, and he’d make me sit through as much as I could bear of *Carmen*, *The Ring Cycle*, *Otello*, *Madama Butterfly*, or whatever else it was that he was listening to at the end of a session of writing. But what do the words mean, I would demand, and he’d shake his head. Never learn Italian, he warned me, why do you think I prefer opera to qawaali? They both have the same degree of passion, but with qawaali I understand the words and that ruins it. As long as you don’t understand the words of opera you can believe they match the sublime quality of the music, you can believe words are as capable as music of echoing and creating feeling, and you need only search hard enough, long enough, for the right combinations to create that perfection. Before the babble of Babel, Aasmaani, people spoke music.²²⁸

Additionally, meanings are subjected to be buttoned in difference, as the impossibility of fixed meaning in language has been encountered in the narrative again and it can well be exemplified by Ed’s discussion about the dictionary man in Multan, who found ‘*Boond*’s²²⁹ meaning vulgar, and that dictionary man came up to Ed holding an Urdu dictionary and argues ‘I’ve found your dirty secret. You TV people with your loose morals. Why *Boond* of all names, I wondered. Why a drop of rain? What sort of title is this? And now I see you’re having your vulgar jokes at the country’s expense’. And he points to the definition of *Boond*, though Ed didn’t know whether it suggests rain or blood and what Kiran²³⁰ had in mind when she came up with the title, it also means ‘Semen’. Shehnaz further speaks about one of the Poet’s early ghazals has “*Boond*” as the radif.²³¹ It also means spotted silk. Here I would like to argue what Bhabha says:

The meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other. This ambivalence is emphasized when we realize that there is no way what the content of position will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way can that context be mimetically read off the content.²³²

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 177.

²²⁹ It is one of Shehnaz Saeed’s television shows and she is the leading actress of this program.

²³⁰ She is the TV shows producer and director at the television station (STUDIO).

²³¹ It is an Arabic word indicating a set of rule in Persian, Turkic and Urdu poetry, particularly in a Ghazal. It marks the ending of the second line in each couplet must be with the same word that is known as ‘radif,’ this repetition of the word is radif in Ghazal.

²³² Bhabha, 1994, p. 37.

While in the very beginning of the first chapter the novelist portrays a dream in which Aasmaani seems to fail in saving the life of a stranded mermaid. This is metaphorically presented as the loss of her mother before she can accept it, and only the impression of her performance (as activism) has been left upon society and particularly on Aasmaani, to illustrate this we can cite as:

I run out. Her body is caught in the surf...but not whether I saved the creature. It is evident nothing will save this one. When I look back she is gone, only her impression remaining. I know what necessary. I must cut out the sand which is imprinted with her body, lift it up and bury it. But the sea is coming in again, faster than I can respond; weaves will wash away the contours of her body, the graceful curve of tail.²³³

However, in the last chapter she seems to write her mother's name in the sand and then take the sand to the sea as an acceptance of her loss. It suggests that she relinquishes her fixed construction of her mother which also reconstructs her identity by accepting her mother's and Omi's (the Poet) set of values what her mother wanted her to have since she had politically named her daughter and once when Samina advised her to learn Arabic in order to translate the Quran into English and Urdu which must be free from patriarchal interpretations. However, her approval of loss is best illustrated in this passage when the frail letters on sand marks her (Samina) to get dissolve into the water that is suggestive of her death which is realized by Aasmaani.

I take the block of sand in my palms and walk forward until I am knee-deep in the cold, clear water. The bright winter sun throws a net of silver between the horizon and me. I bend my back lower my cupped hands just below the surface of sea. Her name and the sand stream out between my fingers, dissolve into the weaves, and are carried away.²³⁴

By now, it appears to be true letters which have been written in the codified language sent by Shehnaz Saeed to Aasmaani, first appearing to her as some foreign language but gradually remembering the code devised by Samina Akram and the Poet she comes to decipher it, which marks her translation into a new identity. As she puts it:

²³³ Shamsie, 2005, p. 338.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 338.

I reached the paper, lifted it up.
Ijc Anonkoh efac fyfno ikrfb.
The letters stepped out of their disguises- haltingly at first, but then all in
rush and swirl of abandon-transformed the word into words:
The Minions came again today.²³⁵

These letters comprise of knowledge which forced Aasmaani to believe that the Poet and her mother are still alive which energize her with hope. So, she began to follow the Poet's language in order to link it with the traumatic past along with the loss of her mother and Omi. Eventually, she came to know that these letters were written by Ed to make an appeal to her. The following passage illustrates:

I picked up a felt-tip pen, and traced the twirling letters on to the overlying paper. It took much longer than I would have thought to follow every line and loop of that intricate hand. I began to feel as though I were replicating an abstract painting, each stroke of my nib inscribing my inability to understand how a mind could conceive of those shapes and combinations. What was I hoping for as my pen moved in and out of curlicues? That the act of tracing would bring me closer to whoever wrote those sentences, allow me to slip between the words and understand the mind that placed them on the page?²³⁶

Through, the quiz show research question Aasmaani seems to address her past which need to resolve, because of her refusal to mourn on her mother' loss and to accept Omi's death. She thought of her mother as if her mother chose the politics over motherhood because it was more glamorous. So, she enquires these questions for those alternatives that could make her mother stay. In which sort of identity, Aasmaani must have position herself, whether this or that?

Who, or what, would I need to be to make her stay this time?

- a) member of parliament
- b) a political quiz show researcher
- c) capitalist corporate girl
- d) translator of obscure Urdu diaries by day, party animal by night

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

Answer: this is trick question. All depends on who she is now.²³⁷

Furthermore, it suggests two different things based on the same idea that Samina had different identity positions because she has been a mother, a lover, an activist, a dancer and a mourner, and it also signifies that one could not have a well defined stable identity. That is why, she came up with this conclusion that regarding who she is now may decide Aasmaani's positioning of an identity.

It is clear that, she, finally positioning herself in the role of a television reporter²³⁸ and acknowledging the hidden meaning and inspiration thoroughly by decoding those words of letters, and by accepting and mourning mother and the Poet's death, metaphorically has translates her own self from the past into the present. Generally, mourning of an individual or a community marks the consent for the past or for something or someone that has been lost and cannot be restored in present. The ultimate grief and lamentation of Aasmaani after many years of Samina's disappearance is suggestive of Aasmaani's approval of her mother's loss. According to Judith Butler mourning over something or for something shows a kind of agreement and through mourning one is subjected to transformation. Further, she argues:

Many people think that the grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility.²³⁹

According to Butler mourning is not an individual decision but it's a community choice. Through Aasmaani's mourning the entire community is at a position to accept her mother's loss and that can translate her legacy of politics making her a member of the community. It shows that she had a fraction of her mother's fire and through the acceptance of politics she gets intertwined into a new identity by carrying her mother and

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 187.

²³⁸ A political show started by Ed for conducting interviews with the newly elected Pakistan's ministers.

²³⁹ Butler, J., 2003, p. 12.

the Poet's legacy forward. Aasmaani enhancing her own poetic wit being a Quiz show researcher negotiated with her restrained and conservative culture for addressing political issues of historic as well as cultural context like her mother. Eventually, it is justified what Hall says that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past."²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, towards end of the novel we find her engaged in making some documentaries of her mother's historical and heroic past and still fixated at the past through memories and still worried about westernized impact over Pakistani society and its modern life too. It is because, as she can be quoted here saying that "there is difference between seeing a façade as a façade and seeing past it."²⁴¹ Moreover, Hall argues:

Cultural identities have the past histories- and histories have their real, material and symbolic effect. The past continues to speak to us. But it no long addresses us as a simple, factual 'past.' Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a 'positioning.'²⁴²

Thus, identities are embedded in the language and translation and in phenomena, meaning and essence of one's identity keep deferring. At the time of decoding the letters, the protagonist left her worthless and traumatized past behind by mourning and accepting political path as she actualizes simultaneously her ethical responsibility here. We can refer to the words that suggest the responsibility of a letter's reader or receiver as "the Minions came again today. What else to say? Can it be you, out there, reading these words?"²⁴³ Albeit, this strong appeal compels Aasmaani to face the harsher truth that everything that happened was 'Mama's doing and mama's choice.'²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Hall, S., 1997, p. 112.

²⁴¹ Shamsie, 2005, p.15.

²⁴² Hall, S., 1997, p. 113.

²⁴³ Shamsie, 2005, p. 104.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

4.3 Language, Identity and Politics:

Shamsie has beautifully portrayed the politics of language as it has been remarkably initiated through the instance of the Poet's death. It is seen that language becomes reason for the entire conspiracy of his murder. It is in this sense that his heart stirring writings might not only arouse anger and sensitize people against the corruption and dictatorship but also persuade them to fight for their rights. The novelist has definitely represented a bond between performance, agency²⁴⁵ and identity here. Performative²⁴⁶ feature of identity is a basis for providing 'liminal space'²⁴⁷ through which one's identity is recreated and at this point, phenomenon of self construction does take place. What is very apparent is the case of the Poet (Nazim or Omi), Samina Akram and her friend Shehnaz Saeed as well as of Aasmaani. As I have already discussed Aasmaani's account of performance through her journey of the past and present events and her translation into a new identity. Shehnaz Saeed's account of her artistic performance of Macbeth speaks volume of this apparentness. Nevertheless, for the Poet, his artistic form in terms of poetry becomes a sort of political resistance, while, for Samina her activism turns out to be a kind of art and performance. And we see both the poetic and the political forms depend on language as a vehicle which is also inevitable for one's identity. Further "the voice that guides us around this world darts with wit lightness in a way that is unique and often lovely."²⁴⁸ The government agency of Pakistan exiled the Poet and imprisoned several times during the 70s during the tenure of the Bhutto government for his political verse including '*Ujala*' (Dawn) and '*Aik Aadh Lamha*' (A

²⁴⁵ It refers to the ability to act or perform an action. In contemporary theory, it hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed. It is important in postcolonial theory because it refers to the ability of postcolonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting the imperial power.

²⁴⁶ Performativity used to signify the capacity of speech and communication not simply to communicate but rather to act or consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity. Judith Butler argues in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990) that even common place communication and speech acts are performative, in that they serve to define identity.

²⁴⁷ The term used in Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), which come up through the phenomenon of 'in-between' and it is the negotiation of cultural identity across difference of race, class, gender, and cultural tradition. In other words it's a transitional place for identity.

²⁴⁸ From *The Guardian*. 2005, review of Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses*.

Little Distance).²⁴⁹ However, the anti-Bhutto movement apprehends the poet which pulled the religion from its veil into realm of politics. Later that year, Zia hanged Bhutto and the Poet wrote *Jeher* (poison).²⁵⁰ That time freedom of speech was all very well, but no one was permitted to exercise it against a government that was helping in the fight against communism. It had been the implicit message back in those days. Ultimately, they murdered the Poet because they were afraid of his national popularity and international reputation. However, in order to express honour on his death, when military government in power strategically declared a national day of mourning for that “flower of our soil,”²⁵¹ it becomes very apparent that how the authoritarians are playing a game of politics for language and by language respectively, on the one hand, even though they have killed the poet because of revolutionary language, while, on the other hand, they have declared a day of celebration for him by naming this mourning day in a much more aesthetic, artistic and figurative manner. It was only for maintaining the public sympathy and support. Against these activities by the government people, who were in opposition boycotted the government’s day of mourning and decided to mourn on the death of their great nationalist as a “voice of resistance.”²⁵² The Poet is absolutely right in defining the language and his circle “as a living, dangerous entity.”²⁵³ It suggests the immortality of the written language, while it might become a dangerous zone for the author’s physical life. Similarly, Samina Akram who was a famous social and feminist activist at that time gets jailed because of her strong and powerful slogans during women’s movement. The potency of the language might compel others to come forward and protest against the despots. Guardian that viewed that “Aasmaani is assailed by the memories of 1970s and 80s, when the nation could be made to buck and rear at the sound of her mother’s political speeches or the biting allegories of the poet.”²⁵⁴

Gayatri Spivak argues in her work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* that the agency and liberty to act is a linguistic construct, because one’s subjectivity formed in the domain of

²⁴⁹ Shamsie, 2005, p. 90.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 37.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁵⁴ Kamila Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* review published in *the Guardian*, 21 April, 2005.

language. In this way she follows what Derrida said that language transforms one's identity and as well as ideology. It is language through which women might be able to get authority and power and could shape themselves into an individual identity as a free autonomous agency. According to Asma Mansoor "women's identities and their respective cultures configure their places in their societies. However, their identities and cultures collimated with each other, this mingling brings them in a state of cultural relativism."²⁵⁵ Shamsie has presented women with various ideological frameworks which deal with cultural and political issues and women seem to be destined to suppressed inside the patriarchal structure of society. As Loomba claims:

For feminists, the question of culture and ideologies was vital for variety of reasons: women's oppression had hitherto been seen as simply a matter of culture.²⁵⁶

Turning towards Samina Akram who is one of a major female characters in *Broken Verses*, raised her voice for women's rights which have been violated by government and Pakistani society. It can be observed that, she could not fight for so long, and it was caused by the grief after the murder of her lover Nazim (the Poet) by government. However, Samina and Aasmaani both have defied the stereotypical identities of women, who were deprived of autonomous agencies. Therefore, their resistance against this situation of victimization and oppression are the major hidden issues of this novel. Culture of a particular society may subjugate and confine women while language and the passion for activism may liberate them. In order to liberate her own self, Samina had fought all those years against Zia's government; both she and the Poet stood with rallies and spoke out through speeches and revolutionary poems. Nevertheless, "it had got them nowhere. It had got him tortured and killed; it had got her well."²⁵⁷ Aasmaani argues on the Poet's death by government:

²⁵⁵ Mansoor, A., 2014, p. 50. "Exploring Alternativism: South Asian Muslim Women's English Fiction." *South Asian Review* 35 (2): 47-65.

²⁵⁶ Loomba, A., 1998, p. 24.

²⁵⁷ Shamsie, 2005, p. 139.

All the way to the very seat of power - that the poet had died. Wouldn't it make sense, then, for government agencies to move in immediately to destroy his poems, knowing that his death would only argument their power? Yes, of course. His death would make his poems so much more powerful than his life ever could be. How could a government be stupid enough to kill him while everyone knew he was working on a collection of political poems?²⁵⁸

We can say that, female characters of the Shamsie's narrative have broken the cultural taboo of traditional women exemplified in activities such as Samina's passion for activism for women's right which was very daunting. Aasmaani, who finally follows her mother's path and becomes politically active resuming her mother's half way destination of women's movement by understanding her mother's choice of her naming as Aasmaani Inqalab, a politically embedded meaning as I have already mentioned, herself realizes what her mother wanted her to become through performativity and the only way through which culture could be changed and negotiated, for her, becomes the language and politics, and hereby, an identity gets translated from dominance to resistance and from victimization to power through the active participation into politics. Language indeed thus plays a very crucial role because language of the revolt accumulates power with public performance and demonstration which becomes responsible for giving a new shape to Samina and Aasmaani as persons having autonomous identities. Aasmaani states:

That's what they did Omi and Mama: they gave meaning to the world when it seemed senseless. It's true, of course, that I'm just creating another story for myself, another version of my mother's life, and Omi's, and mine. But if, in the end, the ways in which we apprehend the world are merely synonymous with the stories in which we feel comfortable, then this is a story I am willing to claim for my world. And one I'm determined to spread.²⁵⁹

Consequently, coming up with the domain of politics both the women have challenged cultural marginalization and going through this they empowered themselves with well defined self definitions as well as meanings. Samina fought against Hudood

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 174.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 335.

Ordinance introduced in 1979 by General Zia which made a rule for the appearance of four witnesses to prove the rape of one woman and it became much more complicated due to the edict that two women's evidence is equal to that of one man. Nevertheless, in 1983, opposing, from the desk of the Woman's Action Forum, Samina came forward to help Safia Bibi who is a blind rape victim, and who was:

Sentenced to fine, imprisonment and public lashing on the charge of adultery. [However, with the help of Samina's effort,] Safia Bibi was acquitted by the Federal Sharia Court and the Islamic Law of Evidence and the Ansari Commission's recommendation never became law.²⁶⁰

Hereby, Samina is breaking down a kind of fixed stereotypical identity of a Pakistani woman defined her own complete selfhood. The freak of voice or the effort of articulation using an impressive language which might mobilize people at large could be considered to construct one's identity as I have noticed regarding Samina and the Poet. They have had a unique voice of resistance, I would like to say, the issue of political abuse and cultural constraints must be considered to be very important in creation and recreation of one's identity. Identity or self definition is not a matter of individual selection, but in the case of activism, it seems to concern with personal vocation. The archivist argues this way during Aasmaani's collection of evidence of Omi's death. She asked "Do you enjoy it? Doing what you do? [He replied,] 'this's not what I do. It's who I'm.'"²⁶¹ Likewise, Samina's choice to fight against social inequalities and injustice is her individual agency to construct her autonomous identity out of what the world had created a space for her; similarly, it is the case with the Poet's identity construction too. Aasmaani says that her mother had been practicing (performing) shedding the skin that was her character and assuming another identity, right there, and the world had been simply no reason for her to stay within her old identity.²⁶² In Frantz Fanon's words:

The liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 99.

identity. They caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation, in the sense in which I have been recasting these words.²⁶³

By the end of the novel Aasmaani seems to be on the way of her mother's path and destination, who formerly never wanted to become a woman like her mother because she always thought of her mother as a person, who left her daughter many a time for her own lover (the Poet) as well as for politics. That is why she hates her mother and after her disappearance she never mourns thinking that she will be back again as happened earlier. Once Rabia²⁶⁴ asks Aasmaani:

Tell me just one thing, Aasmaani. It is that you don't want to be your mother, or that you are afraid you'll fail so dismally to live up to her that you won't even try?²⁶⁵

Additionally, the Poet's love for politics and his heroic performance by writing poetry as mentioned in the novel through a discourse as the below given passage demonstrates, is one of the Poet's interview which had been first reported in 1971 and again published at the tenth death anniversary of the Poet. Unlike any other character in the novel the poet's identity is explicitly depicted from the very start which has survived through Aasmaani's exploration and her analysis of his language and politics. Moreover, his identity oscillates between two domains as the desperate lover of nation on the one hand and the darling lover of Samina on the other and this fact cannot escape any reader's careful attention of the implicit address through lines like these:

Q: The acclaimed Colombian novelist Rafael Gonzalez has said to you [the Poet]: 'He is my twin, in political and aesthetic temperament. It's a good thing he writes poetry because if he ever turned his hand to the novel he would write my books faster than I myself write them.' Has fiction ever lured you? A: I'm lured frequently and indiscriminately. But in my life allure is always fleeting, well, always except twice. The first, the allure of poetry. The second I'm too gallant to mention.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ From Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), quoted in Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 38.

²⁶⁴ Rabia is a daughter of Beema, Aasmaani's stepmother and of her own father.

²⁶⁵ Shamsie, 2005, p. 28.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Nonetheless, it was the danger of the language which has compelled Samina and the Poet to communicate in coded words. Aasmaani mentioned “Why? And why, again in, code? Because she was in danger. That had to be it. They only used the code when there was danger of the words being intercepted.”²⁶⁷ This is suggestive of the tyranny of the dictatorship where no one can exercise his/her right of speech. Mirza a friend of the Poet made a reason regarding the Poet’s death that he (the Poet) mocked at their (people who were in power) occupation, their manhood, their attempts to frighten him and also mocked at any possible violence. That became the reason of his death. Aasmaani says:

Mirza and I would do nothing about it. We would do nothing because we knew that in our refusal to fight for language with bombs or lies lay our defeat. No, it was nothing so grand as that. We knew how voices could be silenced. We knew that most shameful secret which Mama and Omi had tried so hard to keep from us: violence is more powerful than language.²⁶⁸

Although, Samina with blazing eyes and fiery rhetoric could pull crowds and her followers used to chant her name as if she was the mantra of a particular religion. Her activism has nothing to do with the personal glory, for it was only the power of language which offered her recognition of a feminist activist and the position of a celebrity in public eyes. While she thought that she has accomplished only futility rather than anything else, in activism, in protest, in peaceful resistance, in all those things she had actually built her identity around. It is because, in this censored and censorious world there are limitation for poetry, and what language can do and cannot do. But for the Poet the power and immortality of language is higher above everything, even including the violence. He says:

We were the Phoenix and the fire, the flight to the sun and the radiance at the end of it. Even when thorns pierced us, they were plucked from Yggdrasil. Only language of legends can suffice for our lives.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 304.

Thus, it is clear that language has the power to construct and translate one's identity irrespective of transcultural experiences, and language is much more powerful than any violence. Further, the murder of the Poet and Samina committing suicide, do not mark the futility of their performances, actions in the form of poetry and public speeches in the guise of language, while it makes their values and principles eternal.

CONCLUSION

The postcolonial literature is concerned with the culture of colonized countries after the departure of colonial power. It is located in-between two cultures, the culture of colonial period and of the postcolonial era. Homi Bhabha suggests that “post-colonialism, operates through the dimension of time or history, and space, both geographical and the other, third space of cultural reconceptualization, the reordering of the world through forms of knowledge reworked from their enlightenment in long standing coercive relations.”²⁷⁰ Since post-colonialism is coupled with diaspora, it is concerned with displacement and dislocation which in turn resulted in the conflict of identity that is evident through the analysis of these narratives. The fluctuation of identities is irrespective of the fact that whether it is in diasporic or anaphoric sphere. As a matter of fact, identity of Nazneen, the protagonist of Ali’s *Brick Lane*, is a matter of becoming through entering into British culture, leaving apart her traditional Bangladeshi identity, but it seem to be oscillating between the two. Identity of Aasmaani, the protagonist of Shamsie’s *Broken Verses*, is a matter of becoming into her own culture through the passage of time, from the historical past to the contemporary present. However, as Shamsie’s protagonist transforms her identity within a culture by decoding some coded letters, she metaphorically translates her own self and identity from the past to the present, and from a worthless person to a politically responsible individual whose concern is social justice and gender equality. In the phenomenon of transforming identity, human actions or performances, language and culture have been constitutive factors, as we have seen in both the narratives. Now it has been proven that identity is a constructive phenomenon that is neither embedded in past nor in present. It is a process that keeps fluctuating through time.

Notably, ‘identity’ which is described as the process of becoming, always keeps deferring, resultantly, an identity never finds stability in any culture whether it is native or abroad as it is shown through the character of Chanu, an immigrant living in London.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Robert Young’s *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, 2001, p. 66, from Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994).

It always transforms into a new form that remains 'in-betweenness' or 'third space' that is located in two cultures, which exists in the form of hybridization. However, for Bhabha, the importance of the hybrid moment of political change is the central point to discuss. Here, the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation or translation of elements that are neither the one nor the other but something else besides, which contest the terms of territories of both.²⁷¹ Here Bhabha emphasizes the ambivalence that portrays the values of both the countries together. As we have noted in the case of both protagonists, for instance Nazneen's identity is the derivative of two different cultures of Bangladesh and England. Though settled in London, she keeps the essence of her native cultural tradition and tries to adapt to English culture also. This brings her identity into a new transitional 'third space.' Identity and culture can only find their meaning through otherness as meaning is relational that exists only with reference to the other. Bhabha too states that cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of alterity.²⁷² Further, identity of Aasmaani metaphorically translates within a culture that becomes a matter of self-identification, individuality and resistance against traditional society as recognizing her own identity with her mother Samina Akram, a feminist and a famous social activist. Here, language plays an important role in her identity transformation; it has been shown by several illustrations in *Broken Verses* that since the language can have different meanings or can be interpreted variedly at the same time, likewise, an identity keeps changing, transcending time and space. For example, Samina's identity can be interpreted in different positions, such as that of mother, lover, an activist and a mourner. Thus, identities of both Aasmaani and Samina are located in the instability of language.

Further, it is clear that, through language, performance and an autonomous agency, one can construct or recreate identity within a culture. For instance, the Poet and Samina constructed their identities through artistic poetry and activism respectively. And, in both these forms, language is only the source of their identity construction. It is apparent that any action is linguistically driven and one's subjectivity can only be

²⁷¹ Bhabha, 1994, p. 28.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 175. Alterity refers to the state of being other of different, diversity, otherness.

constructed in and through language. Through language, a woman can be powerful by recreating her autonomous identity. But identities of those who step out against traditional culture for freedom also get hybridized.

Agreeing with Bhabha, the hybrid identity must be considered as the outcome of resistance to colonial power. But, this hybridity, as we have seen, is also a new form of domination, since post-colonialism itself is considered as the beginning of a new form of domination. This hybridized identity, language and culture is a deception of colonial power for domination of former colonized subjects in the disguise of hybridity and ambivalence. As Bhabha claims that “the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions.”²⁷³ Thus, the hybridity has no such perspective of depth or truth to provide. Bhabha further argues, it is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures.²⁷⁴

In addition, we see that the theory of acculturation and hybridity go hand in hand. The phenomenon of acculturation, which also shows repetition of British culture by colonized people through its two models such as integration and assimilation, produces new forms of domination akin to hybridity. The model of assimilation is the complete repetition rather than the representation of coloniality that comes across in *Brick Lane*. Moreover, Chanu after being discriminated in the racist British society began to criticize it, while Karim comes to resist the hypocrisies of this country of settlement. Hybridized identities of women in diaspora through acculturation must be considered as the outcome of patriarchal set-up of their homeland. These women immigrants find their individuality through self-identification in London. It has been shown through the presentation of Nazneen, Razia, Shefali and Shahana. For example, Razia and Nazneen became independent business women by entering into labour market.

²⁷³ Bhabha, 1994, p. 112. “Sign Taken for Wonder.” *The Location of Culture*, 102-122.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Moreover, in *Broken Verses*, identity of Mir Adnan Akbar Khan (Ed) seems hybrid of American and Pakistani culture due to his migration to America from Pakistan. Although, he comes back to Pakistan facing complexities in adaptation in other culture, he adores his indigenous land but still seems fixated for that alien culture. While identity of the Poet became hybridized due to his exile as the sway of English language, the language of colonizers compels him to quit ghazal and his orientation towards western forms of poetry; but later, he begins to write in Urdu, switching from English. The Poet's fascination for both English and Urdu marks his transitional identity. He also claims that he wrote in Indianized English that is considered as the resistance against coloniality. Here, it can be said that identity of Ed and the Poet seem to be in transitional spaces between the native and diasporic culture. Additionally, Aasmaani and her mother Samina Akram and some Pakistanis have been represented as nationalist and anti-colonialists. And, the Poet can also be seen as the great patriot, who sacrificed his life for Pakistan.

Examining both these South Asian women writers in detail, we see that they have extensively dealt with postcolonial issues; they are critique of postcolonial period and demand for the true freedom from colonization, especially for the decolonization of minds that is problematic in many ways. Further, these texts are concerned with the positive and negative effects of the mixing of people and cultures in diaspora. Both the texts are the demonstration of resistance towards colonialism and imperialism. And, they unfold the policy of hybridity and acculturation which have been introduced as new ways of domination to former colonies through the partial repetition of coloniality. In both the narratives, the hybridized people can be seen only Bangladeshi and Pakistani in blood and colour, but they are English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellects.

Ali's *Brick Lane* portrays the unequal relationships between the colonizers and the colonized, which were in practice during colonialism and still continue in postcolonial period. It is disclosed by the disparity in wages in London between white and non-white and the prevalent discrimination on the basis of race and colour that is exposed by Chanu's debarment in promotion in the office and his promotion is replaced by Wilkie, a white man from London. As Bhabha describes "the difference of object of

discrimination is at once visible and natural – colour as the culture/political sign of inferiority or degeneracy, skin as its natural ‘identity’.”²⁷⁵ Moreover, there was discrepancy in wages between men and women immigrants from Bangladesh in the labour market of London. And also, they did not receive the adequate cost for their local garment business from the white, which provides evidence to uneven exchange in trade and labour between the colonizer and the colonized. It can be said that the post-colonial texts are also concerned with the problem of privilege through racism and patriarchy. Equally, Shamsie’s portrayal of the government’s tyranny in Pakistan is analogous to the context of English period, where colonized people were not allowed to speak against their masters.

Despite lots of struggle and exploitation, the majority of the Bangladeshi immigrants do not wish to leave London, the country of settlement. That marks the dependency of the orient over the occident that is the result of colonization of minds. In this way, the British society still seems to be dominating and exploiting the former colonies. However, Karim’s resistance against these unjust practices towards immigrants gives impetus to anti-colonialism. Thus, we see that the material and epistemological condition of postcoloniality is very apparent in *Brick Lane*, though Ali seeks to resolve the continuing legacy of an imperialist system of economic, political and cultural domination. It is because post-colonialism is both contestatory and committed towards political ideals of a transnational social justice. Ali, speaking through Chanu, seems to attack the status quo of hegemonic economic imperialism of London. This narrative seems to be concerned with the injustice and disparity at material level of people from different countries and, it demands for radical social change at a transnational level. Similarly, Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* can also be considered as a critique of colonialism. It is visible through the way in which Aasmaani, who is spokesperson of Shamsie, censures the hybridized (American-Pakistani) identity of Ed. And, some anti-colonialists and nationalists of Pakistan seem to criticize Omi or Nazim for his fascination towards

²⁷⁵ Bhabha, H., 1994. “The Question of Other.” In *The Location of Culture*, p. 79.

English language. However, the Poet has been portrayed as an opponent to Bhutto's and General Zia's despotic governments.

In brief, examining some Indian women writers such as Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande and South Asian women writers in detail, I found some commonalities in their writings. All these writers have dealt with issues of women to a large extent. In most of their narratives, women have initially been presented with traditional identities, while their identities seem to be transformed and liberated into the autonomous individuality by the end of the narratives. Further, both Indian and other South Asian women writers have drawn our attention towards women's condition in the present day society in different socio-cultural spaces which demand for control over their selves and their identities. They raise their voices against patriarchal set up. However, some women have been presented as independent with their own separate identities such as Mukherjee's Jasmine, Deshpande's Saru. Similarly, Shamise's Aasmaani who has been portrayed as liberated from the very beginning of the text, fights for the freedom of other women in the Pakistani society. Ali's Nazneen affirms her self-identity by the end of narrative and becomes an independent woman, leaving Chanu and Karim behind. Most importantly, in all these women writers' narratives, the protagonists are undergoing transformation of their identities from the past to the present within a culture or translated from one culture to another, and their identities remain in a transitional space. Now, we can say that these women writer fall in Elaine Showalter's second and third phase of women writing in English literature, named as 'feminist phase' and 'female phase' respectively. It is because these narratives illustrate resistance towards the patriarchal set up, and they express female experiences in an autonomous art form. These women writer dwell on their 'self-investigation,' equality with men, and for separate independent identities, which also represents postcoloniality in terms of women's domination.

Moreover, we see that women's writings are the creation of their subjectivities. Having been deprived of their fundamental rights in socio-cultural spaces, they found this place in their writings where they could construct their autonomous identities. Women, portrayed by South Asian writers, seem doubly colonized and marginalized in patriarchal

set up of Bangladesh and Pakistan in terms of British rule. As Loomba says, the black/colonized women were doubly oppressed. In this view of a 'double colonization,' race and gender categories are not analogous but they remain mutually intensified.²⁷⁶ Both these narratives emphasize the politics of anti-colonialism, neo-colonialism, race and gender issues.

Literature aims to portray the world around us that can be in both fictionalized and non-fictionalized forms. Post-colonialism is very relevant in the sense that it offers an opportunity to writers to develop the capability to critique and analyze the socio-political and cultural situation of the times. These narratives dealing with postcolonial issues throw light on realities of the world and the existence of people in these new imperialist conditions of economic, political and cultural domination. Ultimately, through these texts, we can say that, the emphasis has been put over pre-dominant existence of postcoloniality in the forms of culture, language, and identity.

²⁷⁶ See, Loomba, A., 1998. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 166

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