

## **CONCLUSION**

However, the process of identification as “becoming American” coexisted, in some conflictual and non-conflictual ways, with multiple other allegiances to other nationalisms, identities, and networks. As identities are always in process rather than fully formed or stable, this “becoming American” could be understood as changeable, contingent, and historical.

(Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America* 8)

Immigrant literature addresses and interrogates the very nature of its hyphenated existence. This thesis deals with hyphenation both as condition and consequence of migration in American literature and culture. Migration fiction operates with an eye towards resistance on the one hand and acceptance on the other. Another aspect which the work of these writers manifests clearly is their conscious internalization of a hyphenated identity, very much American but bridging two cultures across a wide divide.

The thesis shows that the retention of ethnic identities amongst the diasporic/migrant communities is not a defensive strategy but aimed at distinctiveness and empowerment within the host country and also the country of origin. This happens naturally in children in the form of a transcultural identity combining parental tradition and the new culture/cultures. With the older generation operating between nostalgia and hope in the American present, assimilation into American society is never complete.

Despite looking forward to life in America, they cannot shed or outgrow the cultural ties to their place of origin. Consciously or unconsciously, they remain hyphenated Americans. In the case of the younger generations, their natural inclination towards a pan American identity notwithstanding, there is a renewed interest in their parents’ cultural ties to the erstwhile homeland in Asia. This interest, fanned by the politics of ethnic difference and the resurgence of the community in democratic America, encourages them to think of themselves as bearers of hyphenated identities, American and Korean, or Chinese, or Pakistani or Indian at the same time. This hyphenation, interestingly, does not signal a return to Asia, or whatever their place of origin, but an attempt to bridge two cultures to lend a wider dimension to the earlier sense of American identity.

Chapter 2 shows that displacements necessitated by migration and settlement elsewhere—America in this case—lead to the discoveries of new frontiers both literally

and in terms of American identity. Each wave of migration to America is connected with and controlled by communities facilitating the entry of people sharing similarities of culture, gender, class, nationality, race, and so on. This is the 'affiliative practice' of displacement and freshly instituted belonging, encouraging subjects to become initially attached to provisional identities. This process made its impact on the American social scenario with its production of provisional national subjects out of immigrants to the country.

Chapter 3 shows the limitations and constraints of the workplace for Asian immigrants in America. They are pushed into certain types of jobs, thereby leaving them with little option of choosing an occupation close to their heart. Another disturbing find in almost all the novels taken up for study is that people educated in their own country have little value in America as qualified engineers and other skilled workers are reduced to the level of unskilled workers as they run or help out at green grocery shops, act as drivers and janitors and other lowly occupations. This proves that migration to America does not end as a success story for those skilled workers whose expertise is undermined or taken advantage of without proper remuneration in the corporate or business world.

Moreover, Asian immigrants—both men and women—are discriminated against in matters of rewards and promotions or even small benefits, while less capable white people are given undue benefits. In the case of Asian immigrant women who are a major presence in factories as well as in the domestic sector, racial discrimination and sexual harassment are part of the hazards that they have to encounter from time to time. Those women who are highly educated and skilled, find that they are not only not treated without prejudice but also not taken seriously. A lawyer, for instance, cannot avoid being reduced to a sex object when confronted by the roving male gaze.

Chapter 4 shows that human beings not only inhabit spaces, but also make or mark spaces, that create specific sets of meaning in given contexts. Places mutate as people and communities change over time. The migratory process is linked to permanent residence in some place for some time at least. In the case of immigrant/settlers, it is seen that they look for places which are conducive to their occupations. At the same time, they check if they can connect with similar places with their kind of people within a certain range.

It is seen that practice produces place. But the character of a place can inspire practices too. The texts covered in the thesis show that place also produces the individual. More particularly, a place can sustain only a particular type of people, increasingly based on their work skills. This is why a high-tech region like the Silicon Valley necessitates the large presence of highly skilled workers and an even larger number of menial workers. With the presence of two such economically disparate groups, crime becomes a common practice in the area. This is a familiar motif that is seen in almost all big cities like California and New York which thus become hotbeds of crime.

Some places, for instance, ethnic ghettos like Chinatown or Koreatown in New York, are ideologically constructed and managed as places of difference. While such places offer both physical and emotional shelter to its residents as well as the newer immigrants, they also tend to control the mindset of the community to the extent of leaving its members emotionally and intellectually ill-prepared as far as assimilation with mainstream American society is concerned. Life in such enclaves implies strict conformity to the values of the community. This has led to immigrants in contemporary times opting out of such enclaves. Although the texts portray different ethnic enclaves, the primary characters are seen to have moved away or emotionally dissociated themselves from the parochial confinement of such places.

The same place may appear unfeeling to newcomers but show great resilience amidst crises. Residents lend character to a place just as a place helps to shape people's identities. Thus place, like space, is seen as the product of interrelations. In time the same place may have different levels of significance for the same individual. It is also possible for him or her to relate to other places, emotionally as well as socially, and link them through established common counters of negotiation.

Chapter 5 looks at the link between identity and community. It shows the changing role of community in contemporary migration fiction and what it means for the individual living within such communities. Neither identity nor community can be taken as complete or fixed or stable. Rather, there is a process of continuous negotiation between the past and a present which is in a state of becoming.

Instead of having their cultural identities imposed from without, these people can look into their shared pasts and retrieve and reclaim their ethnic identities for a hyphenated identity.

The thinking subject emerges out of a conflict of values between the community and one's personal desires. The novels show that often this emergence of the individual is cut short by the very values that the community forces on the individual. As the self is shaped by one's perception of the other, the individual identity too is shaped by the community identity. The community thus acts as a repository of values for the immigrant despite the very different groups of people that come to represent "community" in these texts. If the community provides invaluable emotional support to fill the social vacuum while relocating to a new land, it is seen that Americans also try to fall back on community values to make their actions seem more legitimate. This is seen in the way American immigration and deportation laws are implemented: a person's social acceptability depends on his adherence to community values. More than that, an American identity acquires credibility if supported by social values acceptable to either or both communities.

As seen in each of the chapters, the characters are caught between two cultures with a troubled sense of identity. In the case of earlier immigrants, the claims of their original cultural identities were strong enough to have a retroactive effect on their attempts at assimilation with American society. With the later generations, especially the children of these settlers, there is a greater inclination towards a general American identity, irrespective of racial or cultural markers. This generation has to negotiate between the pulls of the identity they prefer and the ethnic cultural and religious values instilled on them by their parents at home, leading to tacit submission or clear-cut disavowal as the case may be. However, with greater political awareness and sensitization, most Asian Americans are seen to adopt a more hyphenated identity as they try to signal their ethnic difference within American society. Contemporary immigrants are seen to do the same, without any pretence at outright assimilation as it allows them the benefits of both culture worlds through hyphenation. In the world of Asian American fiction, hyphenation therefore, is a major key of migrant self fashioning and disavowal.