

**THE SUBALTERN ALTERITIES: DIASPORIC
NARRATIVES, THEORIES, AND PRACTICES (1991-2020)**

*A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Award of the Degree of*

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BY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis, “**The Subaltern Alterities: Diasporic Narratives, Theories, and Practices (1991-2020)**” submitted by **Srnita Bhattacharjee**, bearing registration number **15SIPD01** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in the **Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora, School of Social Sciences** is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Part of this thesis has been:

A. Research papers published in the following publications.

1. “The Global Precariat: Refugees and COVID 19” has been published in Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities E-ISSN - 0975- 2935.
2. “Immigrant/ Diaspora: A Subaltern Illustration in Contemporary South- Asian- American Literature” has been published in the book, Indian Diaspora and Transnationalism: Trends and Issues in the 21st century, edited by Ajaya K. Sahoo and P. Venkata Rao. Serial publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 2020.

B. Workshop/Conference Proceedings

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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirement for PhD and was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by the Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during her M.Phil. program and the M.Phil. degree was awarded.

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DECLARATION

I, **Srinita Bhattacharjee**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The Subaltern Alterities: Diasporic Narratives, Theories, and Practices (1991- 2020)**” Submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Professor/Dr. **Ajaya Kumar Sahoo** is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

“When we came to America, though, we didn't know what the right thing was. Here we lived with no map. We became invisible, the people who swam in between other people's lives, bussing dishes, delivering groceries. What was wrong? We didn't know. The most important thing, Abba said, was not to stick out. Don't let them see you. But I think it hurt him, to hide so much.”

(Nadira)

Marina Budhos, *Ask Me No Questions*

“...You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight, since the shadow class was condemned to movement. The men left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home, changed names. Sometimes someone came popping around a corner again, or on the subway, then they vanished again.”

(Biju)

Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*

“In this group, everyone was foreign, and so, in a sense, no one was.”

(Narrator)

Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*

The vignettes bear the fundamental essence of what this study underscores through its research objectives, review of existing literature, problematizing certain canonical conceptualizations, formulating alternative modalities, before drawing upon a conclusion. Human mobility, as a phenomenon entails multitudinous dimensions- the historical-empirical, demographical, spatial, economic, political, social, cultural, legal, phenomenological; however, one aspect that is crucial to the study of human migrations, especially in the current

geopolitical milieu and that which has provoked questions, reflections, concerns illustrated in this thesis is the ‘humanitarian’. The aspect of ‘being human’ while humanity being threatened by neoliberalism is what I reiterate in every argument and statement I broach here. Every human who experiences displacement does not naturally become an immigrant or a refugee or an undocumented. The causes of displacement and the post-displacement experiences significantly determine and contour the labels pertinent for the displaced individual. Being diasporic underlines a privileged status of recognition from the host nation-state, while being a refugee or an asylum seeker or an undocumented means exclusion from popular nation-state discourses. These provocations are an attempt to probe the alternative modes of displacement in the neoliberal era.

The onset of neoliberalism in the nineteen-nineties in India was not simply restricted to economic reformations in the following decades. Neoliberalism cemented and further enriched India’s connections with the diaspora abroad. There was a growing nation-state interest about the diaspora. The Indian government inaugurated the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in 2003 as a gesture towards establishing a prolific economic, socio-cultural, and political engagements of the nation-state with its diasporas. Indeed, with such nation-state interventions, the diasporas have enjoyed more living connections with the homeland than their precursors had ever experienced. The Indian nation-state started recognizing the value of the diaspora. For the latter was no longer considered a liability. The diaspora’s role in contributing to the growth of the homeland economy through hefty investments and its advocacies for homeland interests in the host land proved that it could be an asset for the Indian nation-state in the long run (Anand, 2021). The diaspora took this opportune moment to enrich its connections with the homeland. Whether it is the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, an annual event celebrating diasporic connections or the nation-state actors invoking the diaspora in their host lands on a state visit, every instance

underlines the convergence of the ideologies of neoliberalism and nationalism with diasporic engagements. The host land, especially countries like the U.S., have been propagating multiculturalism; welcoming immigrants apparently embodied a multicultural, tolerant political strategy. The U.S. has always welcomed immigrants who proved to be a source of financial and human capital. That is why the wealthy and talented Indians have earned the diasporic status. This practice is a part of a larger neoliberal agenda, a trend that continues even today.

However, the myriad experiences of displacement and their diverse historical genesis cannot be amalgamated into 'diaspora' as a singular federal category. With the increasing number of humans subjected to various kinds of displacements in the recent years, it would be quite appropriate to state that not every displacement is diasporic in nature. Apart from diasporic displacements there are several cases in which displaced individuals confront human rights abuses, are often coerced into illegality or refugeehood, and voices are systematically silenced by immigration regimes governed by neoliberalism. The fact that diasporic displacements are recognized by nation-states and diasporic subjects have political and cultural provisions makes it an exclusive category quite distinct from other forms of displacement.

Displacement and migration are not mutually exclusive; however, 'migration' is often a self-induced choice; whereas 'displacement' underlines coercion and fear- the fear of survival. Diasporas are formed when after the process of dislocation, the migrants re-anchor themselves in the host land, gains its recognition, and establishes connections with the homeland, actively participates in the socioeconomic and political functioning of both countries- in a way, they engage with every possibility of 'being visible'- the key to diasporic existence and thriving. Visibility is an important element for migrant recognition; diasporic visibility renders them the

status. Tololyan (1991) refers to diasporic formations as “...ethnonations existing across the boundaries of the existing nation states.” (4) and further states that “...these dispersions...acquired a different meaning...in the context of the triumphant nation-state, which as a polity claims special political and emotional legitimacy...” (ibid). However, in this study, I deliberate upon those displaced individuals who are invisible; who are in a constant search for refuge, and the human rights violations that recurrently occur in such contexts. I refrain from using the terms ‘migrant’ or ‘immigrant’ while referring to the humans under scrutiny; instead, I establish that ‘displaced subaltern’ is apt. Employing a critical humanistic approach, I focus on the narratives of dissonance and dispossession ensued by the embedded neoliberal processes through an exploration of how the less-privileged humans in displacement re-structure their lives in adversities and redefine their identities amidst alterities.

Unlike the diaspora, for some displaced individuals, the aim is not to be recognized by the host nation as recognition would result in deportation or detention; their existence is doomed. Pejoratively termed as ‘illegal’/ ‘illegal aliens’/ ‘illegal immigrants’ or even ‘criminals’, immigrants residing within the national perimeters of the host land without its permission are considered outlaws even though they might have no record of criminal activities. Alluding to the excerpts from Budhos (2007) and Desai (2006) where the narrators employ evading vocabularies- ‘invisible’, ‘not to stick out’, ‘hide’, ‘disappear’, ‘shadow class’, ‘vanish’- would clarify that for certain displaced individuals, invisibility is the key to survival. Hence, they hardly engage in activities that would unveil their undocumented statuses. The repeated acts of disappearance while continuously uprooting themselves signal a displacement that is forced. Neoliberal nationalism or neo-nationalism induces a fear of deportation coercing them into mobility.

The fountainhead of this topical investigation is the neo-nationalist attitudes and xenophobic rhetoric blatantly proliferated by the heads of neoliberal nation-states namely Donald Trump, the former President of the U.S. (2016-2020); Theresa May, the British Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party (2016- 2019); the right-wing representatives Dutch politician Geert Wilders, and his French counterpart Marine Le Penn. Neoliberal nation-states work on the market logic of profitability and accumulation of capital which is largely concentrated among the elite populations. The neoliberal ideology has visibly influenced the nation-state regulations on border crossings. The policies adopted exhibit the nation-state's favoritism for certain categories of migrants while brazen disregard for others. The alterities or 'otherness' within the migration discourse manufactured by neoliberalism is revealed in the nation-state's decisions of permitting entry to financially affluent migrants who would eventually contribute to the market while rejecting those on whom the nation-state would have to incur social expenditures namely the refugees, asylum seekers, and the undocumented seeking asylum. The neoliberal nation-state is typically interested in overseas wealthy investors and highly skilled migrant workers because the nation-state economy gains from their potential benefactions. A neoliberal host nation deploys the mechanism of migrant selectivity and discrimination based on relative financial stability. The individuals who try to enter the host nation with the aim of better economic prospects are not desperately seeking shelter or escaping from their respective homelands. These migrants, who can afford to purchase the permit, are allowed entry usually because the host nation is perfectly aware of their nature of residence—largely temporary. They have permanent homes and establishments in the countries of their origin with extended families. While residing in the host nation, these migrants immerse in nostalgic reminiscences of the home left behind, harboring a strong intention to return. They don't usually wind up settling in the host nation. The neoliberal host tends to welcome these migrants as they would labor for a thriving economy without being a burden on it.

On the contrary, the neoliberal host is quite cautious of displaced individuals who desperately seek refuge or shelter. These individuals who flee from their homelands rely on the humanitarian benevolence of other nation-states and international organizations for survival. They are considered detrimental to neoliberal market ideology (Lueck, Due, & Augoustinos, 2015; Mavelli, 2018). The host nations are quite aware that they do not want to be hosted; they want to be adopted which entails residence for an indefinite period. Sustained attention to the several terminologies used in the migration discourse would highlight the inherent disparities. For instance, in case of a migrant or immigrant the destination country is usually referred to as the ‘host’ land or ‘host’ country, whereas, in the context of individuals who have experienced arbitrary displacements and are hence seeking asylum or refuge the destination is termed as the ‘adopted’ country. Being a host is a provisional choice, a momentary occasion as the guest (migrant) would eventually leave after a prescribed tenure, whereas in case of adoption, the individual adopted ceases to be a guest¹. The adopted individual becomes a part of the family or in this matter, if granted asylum, the outsider/foreigner becomes an integral part of the host country. The neoliberal nation-state dreads the presence of such individuals and hence often discriminates against them.

Humans have always been on the move. Human mobilities cannot be ascribed to globalization alone. The movement termed as ‘migration’ is not a linear process; in the neoliberal era, migration echoes a conscious choice unless prefixed by a descriptor ‘forced’ in which case ‘displacement’ is rather appropriate. My research probes ‘displacements’ especially the

¹ Guest- alluding to Derridean categorization of host (nation-state) and guest (the displaced individual seeking refuge) and the laws of hospitality inscribed in his *Of Hospitality: Anne Duformantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (transl. by Rachel Bowlby). 2000. pp. 75-155.

phenomena where humans are ‘forced - into - displacement’ and also ‘forced - to live - in displacement’. Displacement in both these cases has been imposed. They did not choose this displacement. My research pivots on the precarities of the forcibly displaced individuals and those immigrants who were once legally recognized but are compelled to embrace the undocumented status due to the expiration of valid documents. In both these instances, the underlining factor is the quest for refuge or shelter.

When the nation-state system is structured on neoliberal principles, the forces operating behind human displacement are rather involuntary in nature. Often, individuals are left with no choice but to remain in displacement. Such displacements underscore “an aspiration to survive, re-work the material conditions of existence, and re-spin the threads of belonging in new contexts” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). I have argued in a paper presented at the Research workshop, conducted by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG) in November, 2020 that juxtaposing the displaced individuals seeking shelter and the group of migrants who have already acquired the diasporic status, it could very well be inferred that “there is a sizeable number of migrants everywhere whose journeys happen beneath the surface and in broken ways, migrants who exist in the new world in a way where rehabilitation remains far” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). These displaced individuals encounter subordination both culturally and economically. Since their existence is quite unacceptable for the neoliberal nation-state, their larger welfare often skips the nation-state immigration policies. Due to the glaring subalternity underlining their displacement narratives, this study identifies them as the displaced subalterns. The primary aim is to comprehend the problems inherent in their excruciating experiences of displacement. I have contended elsewhere and continuing the stream of argument here I would state that “...it is these displaced subalterns and not the successful diasporic community, who get branded as the dreaded stranger in the wake of neo- nationalisms that neoliberal nations have come to

embody today” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). The self-proclaimed democracies, today, have transformed into totalitarian political states, dwelling on and concerned with the growth of national economy and military strength. The Republican administration (2017-2020), for instance, had introduced ‘American state interests’² or ‘America First’ policy by “recommending refugee reinstation in homelands, and withdrawing cooperation for alleviating global humanitarian crises” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Research Hypothesis

In the neoliberal era, border crossings do not naturally engender diasporic populations. I contend that not every displaced individual essentially achieves the diasporic status. This study hypothesizes that every subaltern is displaced, however, not every displaced individual is necessarily a subaltern. The phenomenon of ‘being diasporised’ and studying the diasporic subjectivities would not do justice in an era when nation-states’ policies towards non-citizens bear the imprint of the neoliberal value system. Diaspora studies have tended to focus on legal migrants³, and have been oblivious to the fact that the asymmetrical relations of power that structure the dynamics of migration also configure in the complex relations of hierarchical settlements among the displaced population. This study proposes that apart from the undented popularity enjoyed by the Indian diaspora, hailed as the ‘model minority’ in the United States, there are Indians for whom the American Dream has altered into a bitter narrative. This is largely the case for many South Asians who have experienced the migration blues.

² American state interests- The former U.S. President had scathingly attacked the undocumented immigrants and encouraged refolement of the refugees who sought shelter in the U.S. By signing the Executive Orders barring refugees, expanding detention, and restricting asylum status, Trump declared that he was protecting the American working-class citizens who are negatively impacted by immigration.

³ Legal migrant- in the context of the U.S. immigration system, a legal migrant is an individual who is a non-citizen but has been recognized and given permission for residence under lawful conditions for a stipulated period of time.

Aims and Objectives

My research aims at establishing the induced subalternity reflected in South-Asian American displacement narratives by citing the instances of ‘irregularity’ and ‘refugeehood’. The perennial goal of this study is to assert that every individual who experiences displacement is not necessarily diasporised. This aim would be accomplished through an exploration of the following objectives:

- To identify the presence of the displaced subalterns of South-Asian origin in the historical records and statistical database of U.S. immigration and underline the disparities inherent in the terminologies ‘diaspora’, ‘transnational’, or even ‘immigrant’.
- To probe how neoliberal nation-state ideologies engender renewed interests in wealthy and talented migrants while implementing rigorous border controls in case of the displaced subalterns and how they challenge these hegemonic immigration regimes.
- To explore how cosmopolitanism could be used as an analytical tool in designing an approach to determine the fundamental essence of a cosmopolite in the neoliberal era.
- To perform a literary inquiry and explore how the figure of the displaced subaltern pose problems to the normative modes of immigrant representations in diasporic narratives.

Subalternity in Displacement: A Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the postcolonial theory of subalternity. Postcolonial theories have attempted to critique and decolonize the established canonical discourses on power and

identification. The postcolonial position serves as the framework for theorizing the cynosure of my research— subalternity in displacement— as it reintroduces the concept of agency in the context of dispossession encountered by displaced individuals. The subaltern approach provides the analytical frame as a means to encapsulate the essence of precarious displacements and understand the struggles and resistance the displaced individuals deploy as they negotiate the hegemonic and invidious constructions of diasporic identity. The diasporic and transnational frameworks have addressed the complexities engendering from the privileged mobilities of elite immigrants who migrate, often consciously, with a desire of upgrading the quality of life and largely to pursue economic ambitions, who achieve the diasporic status through nation-state recognition. The definitions and theoretical conceptualizations on migration formulated upon diasporic experiences have limited coverage on the concurrent dislocations. This research highlights the limitation of diasporic ambit, fundamentally, as an epistemological problem.

The transnational mobilities are experienced by migrants who have investment capacities and these mobilities are typically on the rise, because, nation-states governed by the neoliberal ideology of profitability, encourage and even sponsor these mobilities. The diasporic models have been implemented to discourse upon remittances, engagements with homeland and host-land, achievements, nostalgic reminiscences, cultural reprogramming and manifestations, technological interfaces, but glossed over the fundamental subject— the displaced individual and their stoical quandary while in displacement.

While investigating the displaced subjectivities from the Global South in the neoliberal times, I found the diasporic framework quite inefficacious in scoping the subalternities inherent in certain modes of alternative displacements. Hence, my critical techniques are neither limited

to reading and applying theoretical frames manufactured in the Western metropolises for interpreting the selected oeuvre, nor do I intend to confirm the absoluteness of the subaltern theoretical approach about the displaced subjective position. Rather, I draw from subaltern studies, the frame required to comprehend and theorize the lived realities of displaced subjectivities and their ongoing conversations with neoliberal nation-state ideologies. I have attempted to adhere to the intellectual tradition foregrounded by Aditya Nigam called “import-substituting theorization” (2020, 18) which involves creating theoretical infrastructures that would engender new “vocabularies, concepts, categories of thoughts and frameworks” (Nigam, 2020, 18) to study the emerging fields in the neoliberal world. Instead of referring to the individuals and/or populations under scrutiny as either refugees or illegal immigrants— these terminologies are neoliberal tropes – I deploy the term ‘displaced subaltern’.

This study applies the subaltern theoretical framework to radically critique the existing neoliberal discourses on immigration. These hegemonic discourses tend to allow the entry of highly skilled migrants but disrespectfully forbid the displaced subalterns. The ‘other’ is a powerful nationalist rhetoric often constructed as a binary to the nation-state; denoting an entity constructed outside the nation-state discourse. In the neoliberal era, diaspora is not the essential other; they have proved to be an asset to the neoliberal practices of both home and host nation-states. The subaltern theorists (Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakravarty, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Gyanendra Pandey,) suggest that we need to uncover histories, the historical events that have eluded the records of the socio-political elites. We need to find alternative sources to locate the voices of the subalterns. This study specifically derives its framework from the projects of these subaltern theorists and endeavors to study neoliberal immigration discourse employing the ‘history from below’ approach to highlight the disciplinarian limitations of

diasporic historiography in unraveling the displaced subaltern narratives carefully suppressed by neoliberal accounts.

Methodology

The methodological choices, I have encountered, as a researcher were quite complex in nature. An inquiry ensues a gamut of components that require to be integrated within the procedure. As far as my experience is concerned, I never met with well-defined territories while conducting this investigation. I have encountered innumerable routes in this methodological pursuit which were again not very clearly sketched and sometimes I even toggled along these routes to grapple with the concepts and issues on human displacement.

A typical social science assessment of displacement of human population oscillates between empirical data collection, statistical analysis of that data, and structural specificities including the ebb and flow of refugees and its numerous patterns, asylees, undocumented immigrants, measures of controlling borders, nature of imposed restrictions, instrumentalizing strict screening processes, settlement policies strategized by host nations, the impact on the national economy and the continual enactments to minimize the tide of immigrants. Literature, however, instead of over-emphasizing these investigative attitudes on policies and measures, seeks to humanize the tendencies. Deliberating upon relationships of solidarity paving the way for cosmopolitan futures, Robert Spencer (2015) emphasizes the importance of literary medium as cultivating an aesthetic experience of conflicting perspectives and voices engendering such relationships. He argues “Not only can plays, poems, and novels serve to focus our minds on situations of conflict and forms of struggle, they foster in addition the habit of attention, the faculty of self-consciousness as well as the practice of dialogue with surprising and unsettling points of view” (38) The avenues of inquiry I adopted would mirror

a similar approach indicated by Aditya Nigam in his introduction to *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* (2020) where he argues that

... our access to 'materials' for knowledge production cannot be instrumentally about visiting a field or an archive... but should be geared to defining another kind of relationship with it. The field... made up by specific histories, languages and cultures and comprising words, categories and concepts that are lived by people. All of this constitutes the field or the archive and it will begin to have a different resonance once we start relating to these directly. (20)

Empirical data is important but as a researcher concerned with the violation of human rights, I certainly could not have evaded the humanist element being distracted by large-scale data. The proliferation of data tends to flatten or universalize human experiences. South-Asian migrant experience in the United States is intersected by various socio-political phenomena. The subjectivities are structured accordingly. In the case of legal migrants, a 'permit' or permission has been granted by the host to reside whether permanently or temporarily within its nation-state borders. Whereas in the case of the displaced subalterns- refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented, this 'permit' is contingent on the factors deemed by the host nation. Whether it is an asylum seeker or an undocumented, the sole concern is to acquire the right to 'refuge' or a haven. There are monumental differences in the experiences of displacement for a skilled and legal migrant and that of the displaced subalterns seeking asylum.

I have opted for qualitative desk research since it was an efficient option given the limited financial resources for conducting an empirical study in the United States. Also, the neoliberal crisis which mires the displaced subalterns requires a sustained critique from a wide range of

perspectives— academic and non-academic. Conducting certain primary forms of research would have required establishing a direct connection with the displaced subaltern subjects which in this case was infeasible due to the cautious obscurity of the immigrants residing on expired documents and their extreme yet reasonable reluctance to share any information that might cause potential anguish. As a former major in literature and subsequently housed in a social science climate for over six years, my thesis displays a wide range of attitudes and perspectives developed towards the functions of research accompanied by significant radical changes in the socio-political milieu over this period. I have combined intellectual tendencies, fictional accounts, philosophical reflections, historically relative paradigms, and various modes of theoretical and technological interfaces to unearth the findings. Implementing a qualitative paradigm of social inquiry, my methods are critically constructive and highlight the integration of literary and social science methodological approaches.

This research has predominantly used qualitative content analysis method. This particular method systematically analyses texts of various kinds. Content analysis is a repetitive process that involves coding and is used to investigate how content could be retrieved and communicated in a condensed yet comprehensive manner. In qualitative inquiry, a code is a keyword that refers to a word or a group of words or simply a phrase. The codes or keywords are used to determine the presence of certain themes or concepts within the identified sources of data. Content analysis is implemented to investigate the meaning of themes or concepts and establish their relationship with the research objectives. In qualitative content analysis, the sample size is relatively smaller since it is rather concerned with the thematic representations and the meaning conveyed. I have attempted a qualitative content analysis of the news articles, author interviews, and editorials on undocumented immigrants published by leading dailies in India and the United States to justify my claim regarding their presence. I have roped in the

method to decipher the content of publicly available online data, for instance, the official statistics and reports on displaced subalterns available on the websites of International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), South Asians Americans Leading Together (SAALT), Migration Data Portal.org, Nolo.com.

This study examines how subalternity is induced in displacements. To discern the patterns of this phenomenon within the existing modes of displacement in the neoliberal era, this study first established the presence of the displaced subalterns and then scrutinized the neoliberal rhetoric and discourses to understand how displaced individuals are relegated to subalternity. Embarking upon the exercise of reiterative investigation, a general search was conducted using Google Search with keywords such as ‘undocumented’, ‘illegal’, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘Indians’, ‘South-Asians’, ‘U.S.’. The initial search, enclosed with years ‘2016-2020’, resulted in more than 50 news articles. This was followed by a search with the keywords ‘neoliberalism’, ‘Trump’, ‘electoral speeches’, ‘executive orders’, ‘policy’, ‘immigration’, ‘border control’ resulting in around 100 articles and social media posts. Around 15 articles from the initial search and another 15 from the second phase were selected, downloaded, and systematically coded which formulated the description and discussion on displaced subalterns. For logistical reasons, this study accessed 30 items in total which considered alternative modes of displacement in the South-Asian – American context without any overt repetition. Also, the materials selected, display a fine balance between news articles, publications by government organizations and think tanks, and social media posts. This careful selection was done not only to capture the factors responsible for inducing subalternity in displacement but also the divergent perspectives and opinions concerning the same. After the coding procedure, the articles were categorized into two broad themes- ‘displaced subalterns of South-Asian origin in the United States’ and ‘neoliberal framing of the immigrants’.

Qualitative content analysis is not concerned with statistical analysis. Rather, it addresses, "... not only manifest content but also the themes and core ideas found in texts as primary content." (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, 82) Qualitative research methods describe the textual content often summarizing the key themes and conceptualizing the contents of the text (85). Since, this study examines a complex phenomenon like subalternity in displacement while distinguishing it from its diasporic counterpart, analyzing the content of textual data qualitatively, found on different print and digital mediums, seems appropriate. In this context, especially, the qualitative content analysis is pertinent, as this method attempts "... to understand not only the manifest... but also the latent content of data." (Sandelowski 2000 cited in Drisko & Maschi 2016, 87)

My research is concerned with describing the heinous human rights exploitations encountered by the displaced subaltern subjectivities who are often eluded from not only nation-state but also major diasporic discourses. The qualitative analysis is suitable to address the descriptive approach in qualitative research. The penchant for research grounded in empirical realities (Watson, 2011) in social sciences underlines its sheer reluctance to consider fictional narratives or the related genres as data. The primary aim of qualitative research is to convey meaning. Conveying meaning should not be limited to the recording of facts, but there should be a democratic approach to meaning-making. Increased attention on interdisciplinary research involving both humanities and social science perspectives would provide the required democratic approach to formulate new meanings.

This study aimed to map the subjectivities who are excluded from diasporic knowledge production. I have conducted a sociological analysis of the literary narratives namely– *Ask Me*

No Questions, The Inheritance of Loss, The Sky at our Feet, and Ext West— pivoting the displaced subaltern subjectivities followed by a critical deliberation on the conceptualizations of home and identity in the context of forced displacement and irregularity. The plots, characters, settings in each of the novels embrace and foreground the alternative modes of human displacements and the ensuing disenfranchisements. Though their protagonists the authors subjectively reflect upon the socio-political and cultural implications of displacement. I deploy close reading and interpretive methods to scrutinize and interpret the underlying purpose of each narrative— perceiving and expressing the socio-political realities where displacement is not exactly a choice-based activity and does not feature a linear progression towards privileges.

Chapter Preview

This thesis consists of six chapters together with introduction and conclusion. The introduction is followed by the core chapter which traces the phase-wise migratory settlements from different parts of the planet in North America. The next chapter further elaborates upon the theoretical framework. It probes the United States federal policies and legal structures implemented by the Republican administration disempowering the undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers while highlighting the loopholes in the landmark definitions and theoretical assumptions inherent in the Diasporic field of study. I attempt an intersectional investigation of diasporic theories, neoliberal nation-states policies, and public debates relating to the displaced individuals under scrutiny. The fourth chapter examines cosmopolitanism as a philosophical category that has described certain behavioral attitudes, emotional perspectives, and practices of social life since the Classical era. It presents the pre-existing indicators of neoliberal cosmopolitanism which is largely limited due to its reliance on the Western model.

Its inflexibility to include within its scope the relevant convictions towards displaced subaltern propensities engenders the ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ approach as a resistance against the asymmetrical neoliberal policies governing the immigration system. The fifth chapter analyzes the literary narratives pivoting the displaced subaltern subjectivities followed by a critical deliberation on the conceptualizations of home and identity in the context of forced displacement and irregularity. The selected works of Kiran Desai, Marina Budhos, Nadia Hashimi, and Mohsin Hamid are concerned with the irregular and involuntary (human) displacements in the neoliberal era. This is followed by a concluding chapter where I have descriptively summarized my research findings, highlighted the limitations of the study and enumerated the scope for further research.

Chapter-II

IRREGULARITIES AND REFUGEEHOOD: A HISTORICAL APPROACH

*“Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from
immigrants and revolutionists”*

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

*Remarks to The Daughters of the American Revolution, Convention, April 21, 1938,
Washington D.C.*

The 32nd American President made this declaration during his fifth term while enunciating the very essence of American democracy. Indeed, it is quite impossible to understand the history of the American population without taking into consideration the influx and settlements of its immigrants. The country got its fruit of population from the immigrants. The Europeans, in their quest for the Orient, had reached the continent as early as the fifteenth century. This was soon followed by a gargantuan influx of the human population from the European colonies and Arabia. The demographic constitution of the United States is indeed a variegated display of human ethnicities. This chapter traces the historical settlements of the European and Asian populations briefly and successively establishes the presence of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers of South-Asian origin in the US territory by referring and transcribing the data statistics available on the official websites of Migration Policy Institute (MPI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), South-Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), and media reports. The chronicling is followed by an investigation of the fundamental irregularities

in the migration process which engenders the compulsion of seeking refuge in case of certain displaced individuals.

A Brief History of European Migration and Settlement

Migration is a mechanical process that is a part of the larger socio-economic-political and cultural structure. The process of uprooting followed by subsequent translocation of an individual or population groups have engendered a series of theoretical conceptualizations such as ‘Immigrant/Emigrant’, ‘Expatriate’, ‘Diaspora’, ‘Transnational’, ‘Borders’, ‘Refugee’, ‘Asylee’, ‘Exile’, ‘Alien’, ‘Home/Host’, ‘Citizenship’, ‘Displacement’ ‘Regular/ Irregular’ ‘Legal/Illegal’ and so on. Migration as a historical process became a mass phenomenon with the European colonization of the Orient, the Americas, Africa, and later down south crossing the Equator. But pieces of evidence of non-European, intra-, and inter-continental migratory communications could be found in the historical accounts of Indian Ocean historiographers (Vora, 2013) preceding the European conquests. The Asia, Middle-East, Africa, and Mediterranean regions were connected by expansive networks that largely featured territorial invasions and later discoveries, extensive travel, cultural exchanges, and commercial transactions. Networking caused the dissemination of language and religions which furthered kinship ties and as Neha Vora suggests, “...the pre-oil cultures of the Gulf and coastal South Asia were anything but homogeneous.” (2013, 53) South-Asians were not restricted either culturally or territorially and their cosmopolitan presence during the pre-colonial era in the region which is now termed as the ‘Global South’ is a glaring example. Yet, their transportation to the geographical territories of ‘Global North’ was indeed triggered in the colonial period (Vora, 2013).

The European Renaissance witnessed a mammoth capitalistic growth. This period was the precursor of modern trade. With the burgeoning trading structures inaugurating new avenues for the Renaissance entrepreneurs, businesses spread from being just at the community level to across the territories, at first, within the continent itself. In the late sixteenth century, the exportation of products flourished and so did the navigators as they too benefitted from the voyages. This new mercantilist tendency facilitated colonialism. The expansion of overseas trade was legitimized by royal sanctions and this had stark implications on both economic and social spheres. Another corollary to these developments was the exploratory attitude of the ‘Renaissance Man’, evident in both socio-political and literary dimensions (Daniels, 1990).

The merchandise voyages followed by curious expeditions opened a whole new world to the Europeans. The Industrial Revolution had opened up new trade routes, the Europeans branched out in search of new geographical territories and embarked upon journeys braving the vast expanses. Portugal was the first nation that was involved in the discovery of new lands, sending ships along the coast of Africa as early as 1415 (Daniels,1990; Hoerder, 2014). The Portuguese success story paved a similar track for other Europeans too. Therefore in 1492, Columbus who desperately wanted to set foot in India sailed further west and eventually landed on the Bahama Islands. Although he made successive voyages along the same route, he could never realize that he had discovered a new land. During the period marking the end of the fourteenth and the first decade of the fifteenth century, an Italian named Amerigo Vespucci voyaged to the new-found-land and entered the mainland, now known as the Americas (Cox & Albala, 2010; Daniels, 1990 & 2001). America was a European discovery and a very prominent European immigrant settlement. Since then, there had been a gradual entrance of population groups from various parts of the European continent into the ‘New World’ and by the end of seventeenth century, the American landscape was dotted by the ethnic patches of

European immigrant communities- Florida (Spanish), New England and Virginia (British), New York and New Jersey (Dutch), Delaware (Swedish) to name a few (Daniels, 1990). These Europeans also brought along with them a multitude of chained Africans for enslavement (Hoerder, 2014).

The Early Phase of Asian Immigration

The eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth centuries saw the first major influx of immigrants and this time not only from Europe but also from the Mediterranean and northern/north-eastern parts of the Asian continent. The post-second world war era saw thousands of Syrians and Lebanese being hurled across the ocean (Daniels, 2001). Although these new population groups were later communalized as Muslim Arab-Americans, it was Christian tradesmen from the Ottoman Empire who had first set foot on the new land to sell their wares. Multiple factors heaped on to engender migratory phases from Mount Lebanon to the United States (Daniels, 1990). These Arabs were predominantly occupied with the peddling of exotic items imported from the Mediterranean terrains which were not only popular among the Western consumers but also maximized profits. They were always on the move, not settling anywhere, in particular, seeking out patrons for their stock on the way. These Arab peddlers who had an economic stake in hand learned to acculturate in the American language and mannerisms for financial gains. Initially, New York, due to its geographical viabilities became the hub for these peddling transactions while gradually moving towards Detroit (Daniels, 1990).

Following this phase of migration from the Mediterranean coastlines were the Armenians from northeast parts of the Asian continent or erstwhile Asia Minor. With the Ottoman invasion,

the Armenians sought their way into several parts of the New World but it was only in the late nineteenth century there was a significant movement. They too found New York convenient but unlike the Arabs, they settled in the eastern cities working in factories (Daniels, 1990). The Chinese were presumably the first immigrants from Asia and the Gold Rush of 1849 in California initiated this migratory flight. The hundreds of Chinese population groups, who came as sojourners, ultimately chose the West coast for settlement and thereby attained the status of immigrants (Daniels, 1989).

Migration from the Indian Subcontinent

The earliest instance of immigration from the Indian colony to the United States happened in the late nineteenth and the initial years of twentieth-century that is between 1899-1920 when around 8000 agricultural laborers had landed on the West Coast (Hess, 1982). But very little evidence of this early phase of immigration is documented because of the prevalent anti-Asiatic sentiments, exclusionary policies and practices, and the nullification of the economic and political rights of immigrants heralded by the Congressional Legislation which not only ended Asian-Indian immigration but also denied citizenship rights to the residing immigrants (Chandrashekar, 1982, 11).

These Indian immigrants had landed up on the coasts of America when in 1909 the Canadian government put an end to the erstwhile process of intake of 'contractual labor' from the colony. Facing expulsion in Canada (Komagata Maru) and South Africa (ethnic cleansing) around the same time, the population groups of Indian origin, already set sail, arrived in America, albeit in high spirits and great expectations as if they were "... coming to the world's newest civilization for asylum". (Hess, 1982, 29)

This earliest phase of Indian immigration bears resemblances to the population group that I would be hinting at in this thesis- the disenfranchised or the subaltern. Now why I stipulate this designation to them shall be discussed at length in the next few chapters. But probing the ancient history of Indian immigration especially the ones which are glossed over, it can be said that the dazzle of NRIs since the 1960s in America is certainly preceded by a traumatic narrative of mainly agricultural workers, whose voices have failed to reach the ears of the historiographers.

Very little and often repetitive information is available regarding immigration from the subcontinent (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) to North America in the colonial period. The laborers who had voluntarily migrated were younger generation men from the Sikh middle class, largely agricultural families, who either were debarred from entering Canada or upon facing violence there took a detour to the western shores of America (Rangaswamy, 2007, 20; Leonard, 1985, 549). They worked in sawmills and were employed as crews for the maintenance of railway tracks (Daniels, 1990). Apart from encountering mob attacks, "...they were persistently discriminated against: ... commonly called ragheads, for their turbans... most who stayed found niches...near the Mexican border..." (Daniels, 1990, 360).

There is a debate on the economic backdrop of these immigrants who entered America during the colonial period. Even though the immigrant is stereotypically portrayed as economically downtrodden, this was not the case always. According to Arthur Helweg (2002), the immigrants who originally hailed from rural districts of Punjab were from the landowning classes, not the poor workers who were hired to work on farms. But since these landowners had troops of inheritances, the shares of the financial bargain were quite strong among the

extended families, the inadequate income accelerated immigration of the youth following the traditional notion of earning a livelihood.

The imperial powers had launched check posts across the empire for controlling the mobility of the colonized but the staunch regulatory measures, which were often racial, could not thwart the immigrant ambitions and their access to work. And population groups “... confronted, navigated, and resisted these racialized imperial and nation-state obstacles... journeyed on a circuitous route...” (Shah, 2013, 26) and eventually landed in America. But towards the middle of the twentieth century, due to restrictive immigration policies, racial violence, and hostilities and mostly the restraints on bringing families dwindled the Asian-Indian inflow (Daniels, 1989; Chandrashekar, 1982; Hess, 1982; Helweg, 2002; Rangaswamy, 2007; Shah, 2013).

Apart from resisting the violence incurred upon themselves and fighting for their rights in the New Land, the immigrants’ main objective during this period was to mobilize and gather enforcement to fight for independence back in the colony. Predominantly composed of menfolk, the Asian-Indian community launched the Ghadar Party to support India’s independence, and these political mobilizations were not just restricted to the western and southern coastlines but attracted supporters from all over the United States. Most of them were deported, trialed, and even shot dead without a trial (Daniels, 1989).

The 1965 Immigration Act⁴ (Daniels, 1989; Dasgupta, 1989) was an impetus to the creation of a thriving and diverse community which later came to be glorified as the Indian Diaspora. As

⁴ The 1965 Immigration Act- the Immigration or Naturalization Act of 1965 repealed the national origins quotas and increased the immigration ceiling from Asia- the most favoured being the skilled immigrants and the relatives of earlier immigrants as a part of the family reunification policy.

Sathi S. Dasgupta states, “this Act opened up a floodgate of immigration from Eastern hemisphere countries” (1989, 1). These migrants shared hardly any links or connections with their predecessors. In fact, and quite ironically, they came to be known as the first-generation immigrants undermining the imperial legacy at once. The fact that immigrants in this phase largely hailed from urban centers of independent India whereas their predecessors came from rural colonial setups clearly distinguished the current lot. The post-1965 immigration phase is known for the influx of highly skilled and educated Indians (Daniels, 1989; Dasgupta, 1989). They were largely professionals or students who were attracted to the Ivy Leagues and other renowned public sector universities across the country.

The remarkability was in the educational achievements and economic status of these Indians who not only outstood among other Asian immigrants but also garnered national attention, thereby paving the path for growing skilled migration that lasted over the following decades. The U.S immigration laws and policies in the pre-1965 era were ultra-racist and harbored inequality. 1965 saw the implementation of a remedial act that was not only pro-immigration but opened a new spectrum for the Asians to dismantle the earlier prejudices and negotiate their rights in the new country (Dasgupta, 1989).

The Asians, especially the surmounting influx of Indians, during this period justified the Act and was called the New Immigration Act. The 1970s witnessed the landings of the most educated lots (Dasgupta, 1989). In the eighties, however, largely due to the family reunification clause unskilled and less-educated immigrants especially the spouses of the skilled migrants entered the U.S. The new Act dissolved the prevailing race and colony-of-origin-based quota system, instead prioritized qualifications.

Towards the end of the 20th century, there was a surge in the Asian-Indian population in the U.S. from 175,000 to 815,447. (Helweg, 2002, 24) These foreign-born were trained doctors, scientists, and engineers, who were attracted by the opportunities that were on offer from the automobile industry to pharmaceuticals. The new immigrants were skilled in dealing with corporate structures and fluent in the English language; there were no cultural brokers involved. They were given preference because they could plan out different patterns of settlement and assisted in the restructured modeling of many American urban sectors, namely- Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Ohio, and so on (Helweg, 2002).

Since they were already primarily trained from their country of origin, they largely engaged in the managerial, technical, medical, and professional categories, while excluding the students, their income was graphed to be 25% more than any American household. (Helweg, 2002, 26) Many were entrepreneurs as well setting up enterprises of ethnic wares to cater to these nostalgic ridden diasporas and acquiring leases of motel franchisees, which in turn generated employment especially for the unskilled relatives who had joined later but contributing to the community's growing economy. The immigrants employed in the highly skilled position had undergone the strict immigration process. They were educated and ambitious with a strong determination to make it big in America and they were the primary source of contribution to the adopted economy.

Undocumented Indians in the United States

Analyzing the online accessible data from MPI Data Hub and SAALT estimations, the South-Asian unauthorized population is currently around eleven million (Migration Policy Institute Data Hub [MPI], n.d.). Indians account for over 630000, Bangladeshis 41000 and Pakistanis

56000 approximately (South-Asian Americans Leading Together, 2019). These reports suggest that New York, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, California, Michigan, and Virginia are the leading states that house these unauthorized South-Asians. Most of the unauthorized statuses are due to the expiration of visas when they overstayed their legal work/residence permit or left the company which had originally granted them the work visa, in search of a dream assignment but eventually failed to engage in the sector. Not just work visas, such unauthorized instances could be drawn from student and tourist visas as well. The well-heeled ones are sometimes pauperized employed for menial jobs such as cab drivers or at supermarkets, eateries, and apparel shops that are owned by immigrants from their ethnicities. This is done consciously under the garb of hiding from law and deportations.

Recently, a new trend could be seen emerging. In an article, *The Guardian* (Monday, February 3rd, 2020) reported that Indians are also sneaking into America through the Mexican borders and the main reason they identified is the rise of Hindu nationalism in the subcontinent. Whether it is the religious violence or the downtrodden economy that is compelling Indians to take such restrictive measures is truly debatable but it cannot be ruled out that many immigrants deported at the southern border crossing of the United States are Indians, 9000 approximately according to the media estimation in 2018 (*The Print*, September 21st, 2019).

The image of the Indian, especially, as an ‘ideal immigrant’ or the ‘model minority’ holding the highest academic degrees and executive positions in white-collar sectors is flouted with the parallel presence of an alternative narrative of Indians trying to cross the US border from the south along with other immigrants from the Latin American countries, Asia, and Africa. In the United States immigration discourse, the Mexicans had largely occupied the center stage in topics related to illegal border crossings but it is pretty evident from recent reports that

Indians too have started emulating the Mexicans. These immigrants are trailing around the world- Europe, Mexico, parts of Central and South America in search of an entry point into the United States- seeking an asylum- mirroring the exact strategies which were once adopted by their predecessors, not ancestors, during the colonial regime (*The Print*, September 21st 2019)

In the year 2016 alone around a little over 250,000 Indians were deemed as undocumented who had once entered the country lawfully (*Mint*, June 18th, 2019; South-Asian Americans Leading Together, 2019). Most of these undocumented Indians who acquired the illegal status by overstaying their visas largely work in low-skilled service sectors owned by their legal brethren. It does not require frequent exposure and they can keep their unauthorized identities well hidden within their community by working at diners, grocery stores, restaurants, and Uber drivers. But it also cannot be ignored that they suffer exploitation perpetuated by their legal ethnic fellows as well. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (D.H.S), tracking visa overstayers is quite a difficult task and even though the government's raising concern is on building a wall to restrict illegal crossings, there is no reliable system or a tangible measure yet formulated for curbing the increasing ratio of immigrants who entered legally but became illegal. Often this transformation to illegal statehood is unintentional and it is also considered utterly disgraceful to break the laws of the country, something that brings shame to the family. According to an eminent immigration lawyer Kalpana Peddibhotla, a member of the South-Asian Bar Association of North America, immigrants often enter with a specific purpose but fall out of their visa statuses due to various circumstances unknowingly only to realize that they cannot revert the violations. There are occasions when students after graduating from American universities transcend the work permit and even at times employers fail to update the paperwork of their immigrant employees which cancels their status (*The New York Times*, December 1st 2019) In 2019, within a month after the Howdy Modi event in

Houston, around one hundred and fifty Indians, who had either violated the permitted visa norms or were trying to sneak into the U.S. territory illegally through the southern borders of the country, were deported by the United States and sent back to India (*The Economic Times*, November 20th, 2019). Both the events made national headlines of almost all the leading national newspapers and news channels. They had either attempted clandestine crossovers through the borders or had flouted the visa norms. Quite ironically the nation-state always avoids mentioning them in narratives on immigration and its policies.

The presence of unauthorized South-Asian immigrants in the United States is not post-colonial or a phenomenon pertaining strictly to the globalized era, although it is soaring in the neoliberal era. During the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century, even with the imposition of exclusionary regulations at and beyond its borders, the United States could not impede the clandestine sojourns of migrants from all over the world especially "... through the Panama Canal Zone, Central America, and Mexico to enter the United States." (Shah, 2013, 29) and engage as workers. Around 3000 Asian-Indians entered the United States illegally through Mexico between the 1920s and the 40s. (Helweg 2002, 11)

Asylum-seekers of Indian origin in the U.S.

Citizens are often compelled to strive for refuge transgressing the political borders of the home nation-state when the latter becomes a source of immediate threat or muzzles them by devising afflictions. While the independent India has had engaged in combats with her neighbors, the victims found harbor within its national perimeters. Indians— academically inclined and highly skilled— were lured largely by the economic prospects the U.S. had to offer. They were joined by their families when the U.S. started the 'family reunification policy' (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

However, in recent years, Indian citizens are pursuing for refuge in the U.S., the predominant threat cited is the escalation of “far-right extremist Hindu nationalism” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). Shoshanna Mallet, an attorney specializing in immigration from New York states that, in the years after the Sikh persecution of 1984, thousands of Indians had sought asylum in the U.S. (Malet, n.d.). Even today, “the Sikhs of separatist groups like Akali Dal Mann advocating Sikh homeland in Punjab, who directly join the Sikh communities in New York and San Francisco and then file for asylum status in the U.S.” (Malet, n.d.). However, in the absence of substantial evidence of violence, asylum status is usually denied. The Indians hailing from conflict-ridden zones like Jammu and Kashmir and even Gujarat have reportedly sought for shelter due to the deep-seated fear of discrimination based on religious affiliations and gender orientations. *The Guardian* reported that “Several individuals of the LGBTQ community have also sought asylum until 2018” (Sundaram, 2020). At present, the emerging tendency is that, Indians are travelling to Central America and then attempting to seek refuge at the southern borders of the U.S. It has been reported by *The USA Today* that “these Indians who usually arrive without legal visas spends thousands of dollars to be smuggled into the United States borders” (Gonzalez, 2013)

The Annual Flow Report on Refugees and Asylees, published in 2017, by the Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (D.H.S), substantiates this argument. According to the Report, the number of asylum seekers of Indian origin in the recent years has witnessed a steep growth. It gives an estimate of the fiscal years 2015-2017. In 2015, the number of cases filed with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Asylum Division was 2,276 (2.7%); it became 3,230 (2.8%) and 4,057 (2.9%) in the years 2016 and 2017 respectively. The Report also approximates the number of Indian citizens granted asylum affirmatively or defensively— 493 (1.9) in 2015; 483 (2.4) in 2016 and 700 (2.6) in 2017

and there are about 11% follow-to-join asylees of Indian nationality authorized for travel to the United States in 2017. The number of Indians coming to the U.S. in search of shelter or overstaying their permits is quite insignificant in comparison with Latin American influxes. Having said that, we can hardly gloss over the fact that besides the Indian Diaspora, there are individuals of Indian origin residing in the U.S.– who are not included in the diasporic community and also eludes the emigration statistics or policies.

Migration from Bangladesh

Since this study considers South-Asian displacements, it would be rather arbitrary if I limit my deliberations to Indian immigrants solely. Bangladeshi immigrants or Bengali-Americans, not to be confused with Indian-Bengali-Americans, emerged as a diasporic community in the U.S. in the years following the Immigration Act of 1965 (Rahman, 2011). Until 1947 Bangladesh was a part of the Indian colony and was the eastern province of the Bengal Presidency. It should be not ruled out though that a certain amount of immigration did happen from the Bengal Presidency during the colonial regime but the people of Bengali descent who exited the Calcutta Port and landed in America were quite negligible in comparison to Punjab (Ahmed, 2011).

The voluminous flight of immigrants from Bangladesh to the U.S occurred after Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan in 1971 and the numbers amplified throughout the seventies and eighties. The post-1965 era did see a small number of Bangladeshi students and skilled migrants entering the States employed in professional sectors but there were also a proportionate number of Bangladeshis who were less educated and unskilled who are concentrated in densely populated urban cities and are recruited for the service sector jobs like sales in small stores, cab driving, serving in restaurants and take-away outlets (Rahman, 2011;

Ahmed, 2011). From the 1980s to the early decades of the present century, the immigrant population steadily rose from a mere 5000 to 143, 619 according to the U.S Census Report of 2007.

Most of these Bangladeshis are first-generation immigrants and therefore are quite connected to their homeland language and culture. According to academics Nazli Kibria (2008) and Shafiqur Rahman (2011) Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States was not visible until 9/11, the mishap which hardened a negative attitude towards Muslims settled there and from being ‘invisible citizens’ they turned into ‘visible subjects’ (2011, 2)

It was reported by D.H.S in 2008 that a few thousands of refugees and asylees hailing from Bangladesh are currently in residence in the U.S. These people were probably victims of political discord in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2011, 117) There are quite a significant number of Bangladeshi undocumented immigrants who mainly entered as students but consistently regularized their stays. These undocumented immigrants around 150,000 (Ahmed, 2011, 119) countrywide adopt tedious and rather complex measures to procure legal papers for residence but most of the time their hopes remain unfulfilled.

Migration from Pakistan

According to the studies conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD) as a part of their diaspora series, published by Migration Policy Institute in 2015, there are around 453,000 immigrants from Pakistan residing in the United States including first and the second generations. Strewn across the country, large concentrations of Pakistanis could be found in the major urban centers of the East Coast- New York, New Jersey,

Texas, California, Houston, Washington DC, and Chicago (MPI-RAD, 2015). Since the first South-Asian presence goes back to the imperial era with mainly Punjabi men as settlers, the Punjab Province included some parts of present-day Pakistan as well. Therefore, these Punjabi men were not only comprised of Sikhs exclusively, although might have been the majority, a lesser percentage included Muslims as well (Moore, 2011).

Just like the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis were also squeezed on entering after 9/11 but recently such a trend is on the decline (Moore, 2011). Those who are educated with primary degrees responded to the demand for high-end IT professionals, doctors, engineers, and some came on student visas. But along with them came another stream- the less-educated and less-skilled who ended up in small employment sectors-retail stores, gas stations, cab services, cafeterias, and other menial jobs. They entered on diversity visa lottery program and through other channels (MPI-RAD, 2015).

In a crackdown on foreigners residing in the United States on expired visas initiated by the Trump administration in early 2019, around 52 Pakistanis were deported for staying illegally in the country (*The Hindu Business Line*, 16th May 2019). The overwhelming presence of the Taliban fundamentalist regime since the twentieth century had led to the displacement of many Pakistani citizens. In the initial decades of this century, over half a million people from Pakistan had sought for asylum in the U.S. (Moore, 2011).

Migration from Afghanistan

Afghanistan has always been racked by political upheavals, wars, and invasions. Since the 1970s the Soviet invasion till the Taliban regime the country and its citizens have been facing

life-threatening turmoil regularly and fleeing their homeland. Most Afghans who entered the United States had arrived only to seek safe refuge from the threats back home (Oeppen, 2011). Just like other South-Asians, a small batch of Afghans had come before the seventies as students but since then it's mostly the refugees. Of about six million people living in the refugee camps, fifty thousand sought refuges but only half of them, mostly elites, were admitted by the U.S government (Oeppen, 2011).

These educated Afghans never returned to their homeland but instead sponsored family members to join them. The lack of security in the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan discourages return and increases the number of refugees. There prevail both political and economic reasons such as poverty and lack of employment opportunities forcing mass migration. In the early twenty-first century, with the increasing awareness of Taliban abuse of human rights and subjugation of women, America expanded its quota of acceptance. The new arrivals were mainly victims of incessant torture, even potential persecution- men and women who have been abused or threatened with death. California, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and Virginia are the hubs of the Afghan population but again they are strewn across the country as well (Oeppen, 2011).

Keeping in tune with the other South-Asians, in the initial decades, the Afghan influx also consisted of primarily well-educated and high skilled professionals as well as from the lower socioeconomic groups. But unlike the other South-Asian immigrants where the high skilled could easily find employment, it was certainly not the case with the Afghan counterpart (Oeppen, 2011). As the Afghan degrees were not accredited, the Afghan educated males who belonged to the upper classes experienced a slack in the employment sector. Women found slow-status employment, though. For the Afghans it was very difficult to keep up with the

socio-economic statuses, they were involved in more than one job at a given time. But many Afghans are involved in the welfare sector of rehabilitating and resettling refugees (Oeppen, 2011).

According to the Report on Refugees and Asylees, of 2017, published by D.H.S, Afghanistan is the leading South-Asian country in sending citizens as refugees to the United States. In the fiscal years 2015-2017, the number of Afghan refugees increased from 910 (1.3%) to 1311 (2.4%). According to the authorities, the total number of Afghans who entered the United States illegally and were subsequently charged with detention is approximately half a million. Thousands of Afghans anticipate resettlement in the United States after fleeing their country waiting for years to find a permanent location to live.

Irregularities in Migration

There is hardly a universal or an officially established exposition on irregular migration. The International Organization for Migration defines it as a “movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving country” (IOM, 2019). The distinction between regular migration and irregular one is often blurred. In most cases, as registered, stocks of migrants undergo the process in a regular mode but later become irregular either by choice or due to circumstances (LeMay, 2015; Chomsky, 2014). The transformation of a regular migrant into an irregular one is by default administrative in nature, that is, typically when the migrant overstays the stipulated period in the destination country or tries to cross the borders without its permission. A migrant opts for irregularity largely because the option of returning home is minimal and at the same time the procedures and implementations of immigration in the host country are extremely bureaucratic. There are practical physical

barriers as well like a dearth of legal access, heavy costs of visa renewal, language barriers, and so on (Chomsky, 2014).

Irregularity in the migration process ensues whenever the regular mode of migration is undermined. Irregular immigrants are the unauthorized immigrants who when residing in the host nation do not have the documents that validate their residence. This irregular mode does not hatch a uniform category of individuals or population groups. Based on the predicaments encountered, there could be a variety of immigrants who adopt this mechanism. The neoliberal policies have created a tendency of often demarcating labor migration (except for high-skilled) as 'irregular'. Hence Piyasiri Wickramsekera states that "... labor is not a commodity...all workers are equally important irrespective of their skill levels." (2000, 6-8) It is a popular myth that the low-skilled and unskilled labor are taking up the jobs in the host country rendering the citizens unemployed. The fact is that menial jobs, meager pay scales, and long working hours are far from attractive to the citizens. So, they cannot be regarded as a competition in any manner. Since the citizen workers deny the job descriptions, labor migrants of recessing economies are hired on a contractual basis for these jobs. Whether skilled or unskilled, migrant labor's contribution to the host economy cannot be ignored. The inherent problem is, explicitly elaborated and illustrated in the next few chapters, workers in the host nation are meted with differential treatments and choices based on their skill set. Due to their high-bred academic qualifications, financial status, and negotiating power high-skilled immigrant labor is less likely to face issues when compared to the un/low/semi-skilled counterpart. Moreover, the former's interests are a prerogative and hence protected, since the latter is occasioned only for a temporary period and are involved in jobs that are "...dirty, dangerous and difficult." (2000, 8)

These un/semi-skilled immigrants often violate the immigration norms and stay back in the host nation even after the expiration of the contractual period. They, then, come under the category of irregular migrants, pejoratively called ‘illegal’. But there are other sub-categories as well- tourists, students, people fleeing persecution, and so on. Even though they are collectively branded as ‘illegal’ in the host country, there is the various level of irregularities that have ensued from their flights. Their journeys are quite distinct too as they are products of miscellaneous quagmires of uncertainties.

In this thesis, I shall be discoursing upon the irregularity that is engendered by overstaying the visa permits. This chapter shall outline the various renditions of these sub-categorizations before proceeding to contextualize the referential database. There is another term that requires special attention in this context- Alien. “An Alien is a person who resides within the borders of a country and is not a national of that country, though definitions and terminology differ according to nations.” (UNHCR, n.d.). The term "Alien" is derived from the Latin ‘*alienus*’, meaning stranger, foreign: one who inherently belongs somewhere else. Etymologically, its scope includes a broad range of sub-categories but an ‘illegal immigrant/alien’ is an individual “who is residing on a non-temporary basis in a country where s/he has no legal right to reside. A non-citizen who has entered a country through irregular migration that is entered illegally, or an alien who entered a country legally but who has fallen "out of status" due to expiration of papers.” (“Illegal Immigration”, 2021) In this context, I shall also establish the legal alien since I endeavor a comparative analysis of these two categories in the course of this project.

“A legal alien is a non-citizen who is legally permitted to remain in a country for a certain period. This is a very broad category that includes tourists, guest workers, legal permanent residents, and student visa resident aliens. A non-resident alien is a non-citizen who is visiting

a country, for example as a tourist, on business, entertainers, sportspeople, or as patients to receive medical treatment. A resident alien is a non-citizen who has permanent resident status in a country. An enemy alien is a non-citizen who is a national of an enemy country” [“Alien (Law)”, 2021].

Another type of displaced individual that has been wrecking the tabloids and reigning in the policies of developed and developing countries of Global South and North, is the ‘Refugee’, the forced migrants who have fled their potential persecution in home countries. Before making further substantiations with the officially accepted definitions, in simple terms, I formulate refugee as an individual who is seeking refuge or a shelter that ensures safety to life and security of survival in the context when the individual’s current geographical location or political perimeters are not in a position to guarantee the same anymore. Hannah Arendt (1994) however, disapproved of this ‘refugee’ nomenclature. She articulates that in the globalized world the very connotation of the term has undergone alterations and even the individuals seeking refuge under trying conditions would abhor being labeled as ‘Refugee’ instead, “...We ourselves call each other newcomers or immigrants” (Arendt, 1994, 110). Indeed, every individual who has left the home country and is seeking refuge in another country cannot be clubbed as a community and enforce a label on them. The precariousness of each should be considered. Glossing over their inherent equivocality will only leave us with scant and oblique references of their predicaments.

In the UNHCR vocabulary, “A Refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and

ethnic, tribal, and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.” (UNHCR, n.d.) Wars and political conflicts have always forced the human population to flee their own homes, own nation-states, seek refuge in another country and if prohibited occupy the peripheries or keep moving unless met with death.

The next terminology that requires a mention is an ‘Asylee’ or ‘Asylum Seeker’. Asylum means shelter, albeit a safe and secure one, and hence refers to an individual who is seeking that shelter. UNHCR defines “An Asylee as someone who is seeking asylum or who has been granted the same under the legal conditions of the host country that is if an individual or a certain population group are threatened with grave threats to life and thereby seek refuge or protection from another country in order to escape persecution, then the person(s) concerned has to apply for asylum status in the host country.” (UNHCR, n.d.)

These terms according to me are not mutually exclusive. A refugee could also be an asylee and an asylee was once a refugee. An asylee is also an alien. In the United States, an asylee refers to an alien who is found to be “unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on the person’s race, religion, nationality, allegiance to a particular social group, or political opinion. Asylees are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the United States” (D.H.S, n.d.). Whatever the denominations, they are all pejoratively considered undesirable to the nation-state and its citizens and a burden on the national economy.

In this context, it would be pertinent to broach the formulations of ‘migrant’ and ‘immigrant’. These terms appear synonymous but there is an entire gamut of connotations underlining them.

Once a citizen is uprooted from their origin and experiences a certain kind of dislocation, the status of migrant/immigrant ensues. For individuals belonging to both these categories movement is imperative but these movements may be voluntary or involuntary according to established definitions; although every kind of displacement is involuntary in nature, the intensities of this involuntariness might differ and at times camouflaged as voluntary. Migrants respond to calls of seasonal work facilities largely within the perimeters of the home country, occasionally crossing borders but only for a temporary period after which the return is imminent. On the contrary, immigrants decide to move to a new country not only for better employment opportunities and economic accomplishments but also with a strong will for settlement in the new land (IOM, 2019). They are driven by the latter emotion on a large scale. They are not impelled to leave their country of origin. Their native lands have not provoked any kind of political or/and social fear or anxieties of survival in them. They persistently participate in complex screening and surveillance investigation processes to procure permanent and lawful residence and/or citizenship. Even though they are free to return home at any given moment, they tend not to. A migrant leaves the country of birth responding to the immediate calls for work only to return slightly more financial empowered but an immigrant makes rigorous inquiries about the potential destinations, studies their economies and markets, ensures prolific professional pursuits, learns the official language and cultural traits of the destination country so that they can easily assimilate with the indigenous population groups. Of course, both these categories are attracted by capital, and both select destinations where the currency rate is higher than the domestic counterpart (Bailey, 2008).

While a migrant looks for capital gains solely, so he/she could migrate to any country which is a tad bit economically developed, an immigrant is intrigued by several other factors apart from currency rates and capital gains. Migration in the case of an immigrant also becomes a context

of social status to be observed, so they target the developed countries of the West and since there are hardly any language barriers unlike in the migrant case, they more than often enjoy a success rate. Immigration involves transportation from one's country of origin to another country with the aim of permanent settlement. During this movement, the individual is termed as an immigrant in the host country and the very act of arrival is referred to as immigration (Bailey, 2008). From the perspective of the home country, the same movement, rather the act of leaving the land of birth is termed as emigration and the individual who left is an emigrant. Migration is an umbrella term whose scope includes all these detailed specificities and generally refers to prolonged movement from one location (country, city, town, village, region) to another location, whether for a temporary duration or permanently. Human mobilities also occur within the political boundaries of a country. This intra-movement is termed domestic or internal migration and individuals experiencing this kind of migratory displacement are known as internal migrants.

These categories differ from refugees and asylees on the note that the latter does not seek financial advantages solely. Their decision of leaving the home country is not driven by capital achievements but to pursue the basic human right for survival as their native land essentially poses unfathomable life risks for them. Their motives are not driven by ambitious accomplishments rather by seeking a protected shelter, safety, and security for themselves. They too leave behind their homes, belongings, and even intimate relations, but unlike an immigrant, who can return or temporarily visit the homeland in accordance to his/her choice, a refugee's hope of a visit or permanent return depends on the alleviation of circumstances that had forced the abrupt departure in the first place.

An immigrant leaves by choice but a refugee does not. 'Leaving' is a conscious decision and hence not the appropriate terminology to describe the predicament of a refugee or an asylee. A refugee does not 'leave'; a refugee 'escapes' or 'flees' to be liberated from the hazardous shackles that had encroached upon in the home country. Becoming an immigrant is a welcomed and premeditated move on the part of an individual but a refugee status is inadvertent and unforeseen. Irregularity could ensue from any of these categories or might characterize the passage itself when people break through the borders without a visa or necessary paperwork. Since the seventies, about 15 million have either arrived or have become unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. The current estimate in the United States is 11.5 million (LeMay, 2015, 3)

Immigrant 'Illegality' and Statelessness

Illegality in immigration was initiated with the invocation of the Immigration Act in 1965 – the legislation which relaxed immigration norms was also responsible for engendering illegality because it initiated some radical overhauls. In the United States, illegality is a crime when a non-US citizen tries to enter the nation-state territory without official permission. This is one type of illegality that immigrants adopt at the very outset of making the journey. This type does not allow the immigrant to even apply for the naturalization process and hence they remain illegal. There is no such remedial measure for this illegality (Chomsky, 2014). Illegal immigration in the United States is more popularly used for Mexicans and other Latin American nationals who cross the southern borders of the country without proper documentation and this is increasingly viewed as a 'problem' which the American nation-state policies have been desperately trying to curb through stringent border controls to the extent of building a wall, penalizing employers for contracting them, instead of criminalizing the

smugglers who are responsible for illegalized crossings. This is a less popular option for South-Asians, however, there have been instances (*The Print*, September 21st, 2019) in the recent past where Indian citizens have attempted to enter the US by seeking asylum at its southern borders.

Intriguingly enough, it is the other type which despite being rampant in the country is nevertheless untraceable and even the nation-state and immigration bureaucrats are far from being able to control it. The one in which illegality is adopted after the validated expiration of legal status. This means the migrant when embarking on the journey of dislocation did procure permission from the emigration and immigration offices at home and host countries respectively for the crossover but for a temporary period, at the end of which the migrant had to return to the home country. The illegal status supervened when the migrant in possession of the legal documents undermined the stipulated regulations and failed to return at the end of the period mentioned in the visa. This might occur on two occasions- either the migrant makes a conscious choice of not returning or is compelled to make that choice under circumstances beyond human control. The migrant then applies for asylum citing reasons for not able to return.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the concept of illegal immigration had not crystallized because there were fewer restrictions in the immigration process (Daniels, 2001). The regulations, if any, were mostly health reasons and the statutes of limitations from one to five years meant that even the immigrants who had entered with injuncted restrictions would not stay there permanently. Illegality came into existence when in 1924 entering the country without undergoing proper health inspection was deemed illegal and hence any individual caught in the act was deported (Daniels, 1990; Dasgupta, 1989; Chomsky, 2014). In addition

to this, the law also debarred certain classes of people from entering and if an individual is found to belong to those classes, he/she technically turned illegal. Exclusively denying the Asian entry and restricting the large-scale European incursion, the term was used intermittently on discursive occasions. The earliest reference of illegal immigrants were the Chinese workers who emerged immediately after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882⁵ (Daniels, 1990; Chomsky, 2014). It was only after 1965 that the coinage gained notorious popularity. Since the nineteenth century, the first-world nation-states have tried to build infrastructures to curb the human incursion from the third-world. The United States has also revised and altered the existing immigration laws and policies, devised new ones, merged the existing ones, now and then, creating a confusing mesh for the migrants who are not eloquent with the immigration language and rhetoric. Illegal or undocumented immigration is accursedly seen as a ‘problem’ in the host country and that is mainly because there are certain myths and stereotypical assumptions attached to it. Therefore, it becomes convenient to blame the immigrants for all kinds of social malaise existing in the host society. Some of the prejudiced assumptions against unauthorized immigrants (Chomsky, 2007; Portes, 1978) in the United States could be enlisted as:

- illegal immigrants steal the jobs exclusively reserved for American citizens
- since they compete in the labor market, competition soars thereby depreciating the wage structures
- their presence harms the American citizens especially the working class
- they do not pay taxes to the host nation-state and send most of their income to their country of origin as remittances
- they leech on the host economy and eventually puts a strain on it

⁵ The Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882- The legislation was passed to prohibit large-scale Chinese immigration owing to White nativism. It was repealed in 1943 because of its racist overtones.

- illegal immigrants overwhelm the American citizens in numbers and resources
- they are criminals because they break laws
- illegal immigrants should be deported
- the only way to stop illegal immigration is by sealing the nation-state borders and imposing stringent restrictions on the process itself.

Such misconceptions regarding their legacies and the reasons for displacement are often fabricated deliberately and deployed by officials and the public to marginalize and discriminate against them. Aviva Chomsky, deconstructing these myths, affirms, "...many American citizens today believe passionately in the need to divide ...immigrants between those deemed 'legal' and those deemed 'illegal'...the latter categories should be denied rights... (should) become citizens or become 'legal'..." (2007, xxiv) It could be seen in the context of labor and economy, that illegality rather solved the problem which is largely labor shortage in sectors repelled by the dominant classes of citizens and thereby met the paucity the nation-state was encountering. (Portes, 1978, 470) The other allegations are also far from true. The existential realities of these immigrants are colored by arbitrariness and constant precarity. They are largely ignored, threatened, deported; only on rare occasions seems to be welcomed. Illegal is a type of irregularity but refugeehood is not. However, asylum seekers who have been rejected for asylum fall in the irregular category. Irregularity is largely caused by nation-states rigidly controlling the borders. In the pursuit of making their border zones impenetrable for foreigners, nation-states impose strong measures exercising their right over the national territory. Irregularities in migration ensued due to the restrictions imposed by nation-states. The dramatic politicization of human mobilities by the right-wing neoliberals establishing a need for curbing migratory flows to ensure national security results not only in an exaggeration of citizen's ideas regarding the volume of irregular migrants but also induces insecurities

among them. Moreover, neoliberal nation-states do not treat migrants in the same manner. ‘Selectivity’ and ‘Differentiation’ are two methods deployed to permit certain entries while denying others (Castles et al, 2012). Migrant selectivity is an elemental aspect in global transnations. Neoliberal nations like the United States have been acting on a primordial set of proclivities, privileging the entry and prolonged residences of highly skilled migrants whereas discriminating against entrants by evaluating them based on an economic criterion, education, professional skill-sets, and crucially on the type of migration. The different categories of permits and their prescribed tenures issued by the US could be cited as an example.

Welfare Regimes for the Undocumented Immigrants and Refugees

In the context of welfare benefits, the immigrants living on expired documents are entirely at the receiving end. They are not eligible for important federal benefits such as “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the former Food Assistance Program, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)” (Fix & Haskins, 2002; Broder, Moussavian, & Blazer, 2015; Broder et al. 2021). Even if eligibility is granted under temporary schemes, these immigrants are less likely to avail the benefits because that would require certain bureaucratic procedures involving enrolment and registration, and unauthorized immigrants, intimidated by the persecutory measures of the law, would evade the scenario altogether. Hence any kind of cash assistance program, critical health care, even job training possibilities remain far from realized.

The earliest reformation policy came into existence in 1996 which categorized immigrants into two important sub-categories namely- 'qualified' and 'not qualified' (Fix & Haskins, 2002). The former category included legal immigrants, refugees, asylees, and immigrants who are victims of abuse and survivors of trafficking. Undocumented immigrants were relegated to the second category. It is quite clear that even though refugees had access to minimal federal benefits, at least the law permitted them, the undocumented ones had no access whatsoever to any kind of benefits. According to the law, the only federal benefit the undocumented were deemed to be eligible for was the Emergency Medicaid Program on the condition that the state they are residing in facilitates them with Medicaid (Broder et al., 2015). Additionally, they are not restricted from all those public health programs that provide treatment and immunization of contractible diseases and their symptoms. Moreover, short-term non-cash emergency disaster assistance and lunch programs in schools were accessible to all irrespective of the immigration status. In 2001, a list of in-kind services meant to protect the life and safety of individuals were barred from restrictions- child and adult protective services, weather emergencies and homelessness, programs providing shelter and food, specific health services designed to protect life, substance abuse services, and programs to protect and serve nutrition to women and children (Broder et al., 2015).

One important provision in the 1996 law was that non-profit charitable organizations were not restricted from serving immigrants based on their status. Apart from these benefits, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), United States of America, (Broder et al. 2015) undocumented immigrants are also eligible for certain other federal and state benefits, enlisted as "nutrition assistance programs– Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service program, Special Milk Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program

(CSFP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)” (Broder et al., 2015).

Free public education and prenatal care and services are also available for the undocumented immigrants. In the Obama regime, one more restriction was lifted off with fifteen states and the District of Columbia amending statutes permitting undocumented immigrants to procure driver’s licenses (Broder et al., 2015). These states issue a license only if the applicant can provide proof of his identity or allegiance to a nation-state, documents such as birth certificate, passport, or consular card and evidence of current residency in the state. In 2019, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon enacted laws which would permit undocumented immigrants to acquire identification cards and also be eligible to apply for driving license (Broder et al., 2015).

But the real concern is how many of the total undocumented population are aware of these programs or are even availing them. Approximately five million immigrants in the United States are of South-Asian ancestry and roughly ten percent of them live in utter poverty (South Asian Americans Leading Together, 2019). Among these South-Asian Americans, Bangladeshis (24.2%) and Pakistanis (15.8%) have the highest poverty rates (ibid). They also have the lowest household incomes in the immigrant community. According to the report published by SAALT in 2019, the number of Indians as active DACA recipients is shown to be 2,550; 1300 Pakistanis and roughly around 500 non-citizens were of Bangladeshi origin in the 2018 survey demographics.

Conclusion

The key objective of this chapter was to establish the presence of undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers of Indian and South-Asian origin in the United States so that a new discourse scrutinizing the less-privileged displaced subjectivities could emerge. The data statistics accessed from the online database of international organizations and the welfare regimes enumerated here underpin my design. I explore the connotational scopes of several terminologies used in the Diasporic arena to distinguish and thereby highlight the several categories of displacement experienced by humans in the neoliberal era. In the next chapter, I shall probe the laws and policies curated by the American nation-state in the context of the refugees and undocumented immigrants and elaborate on the justification of the term ‘displaced subaltern’.

Chapter-III

LAWS, POLICY, AND DEFINITIONS: DISPLACED SUBALTERNS IN THE NEOLIBERAL TIMES

The previous chapter has attempted to show that apart from the ‘shining’ South-Asians living in the U.S. celebrated for their achievements, there are the undocumented and asylum seekers of the same origin– the unsung displaced humans whose lives are shrouded in obscurity. The statistical representation and the data transcriptions substantiate their growing numbers. While continuing the investigation, this chapter shall first scrutinize the responses, executive actions, and policies in the neoliberal host nation-state in this context. Since, these individuals and their broken journeys, the nuclei of this project, are essentially the products of catastrophes caused by neoliberalism, the chapter shall re-visit the definitions and theories stemming from the diasporic canon to highlight their inadequacies in addressing the plights of these individuals before elaborating on why ‘displaced subaltern’ is more applicable as a term to denote the subjectivities without claiming any absoluteness of this terminology.

Laws and Policy in the context of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and the Undocumented

...

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand

Glow world-wide welcome; ...

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she

With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Emma Lazarus (*The New Colossus*, 1883)

A critical appraisal of the policies of the American nation-state for the undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers would prove inefficacious without alluding to the sonnet entitled *The New Colossus* penned by Emma Lazarus in 1883. Enshrined on the pedestal of The Statue of Liberty is Lazarus's vow that supposedly reflects the American sentiment on immigration and is a formidable element in the formation of the American identity. Lazarus, an American poet of Jewish descent, was involved in assisting the Jewish refugees who were illegally detained by immigration officials. The poem was prompted by the plights of the refugees in detention camps in the late nineteenth century. In the poem, Lazarus transforms Lady Liberty into a beacon of motherhood welcoming wretched humans from across the shores into the American territory. This is significantly symbolic as neoliberal attitudes in the current era have overpowered this essence of Americanism. While the generalized assumption is that the Lady is welcoming all immigrants, I contend that the metaphors and analogies deployed here refer to only a selected few. The 'Mother of Exiles' embraces those who are fleeing from disasters; the ones who have been refused shelter; the monumental population groups who have been rendered homeless and stateless; the ones who have been forced into mobility; the distraught humans who are in search of a haven. However, the concern is whether these words, inscribed in bronze, still represents the nation-state sentiments about the victims of displacement even today? Lazarus's poem has often been revisited during the tenure of Donald Trump by social and academic critics. The Republican

administration (2017-2020) espoused policies that contradicted the historic moment pivotal in the poem.

In the context of the refugees and asylum seekers in the United States, I shall consider the acts and laws that came into existence only after the Second World War, the massacre which was largely responsible for creating the homeless population across the planet. Moreover, it was following the war that the country had for the first time categorized the refugee population as a category distinct from the immigrants and hence formulated policies and laws that were fundamentally concerned with refugees and their intermittent crisis, independent of the immigration policies.

The Second World War engendered millions of human displacements across Europe and its colonies in the south. America had reportedly admitted a large number of displaced Europeans by enforcing The Displaced Persons Act of 1948⁶ for permanent residence. Following the expiration of this Act in 1952, the United States Congress introduced a new one for admitting more refugees from the southern part of Europe. This was the Refugee Relief Act of 1953⁷ or the Emergency Migration Act following which around 214,000 immigrants including Italians, Greeks, Dutch, entered the United States (Zolberg, 2008, 580) on the condition that they were guaranteed home and a job by an already U.S. resident.

⁶ The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 & 1950– the two Acts were passed by the Congress initiated by the then American President Harry Truman that opened the national gates to the millions of survivors of the Second World War. The legislation focused on refugees instead of the immigrants and breached the earlier quota system. (Daniels, 2001; Bayor, 2011)

⁷ The Refugee Relief Act of 1953– this legislation was passed in continuation of the two previous acts for admitting more refugees into the American territory. Asians were also admitted now. (Daniels, 1990; Zolberg, 2008; Bayor, 2011)

The U.S. is one of the largest immigrant-receiving countries (Daniels, 1990; Bayor, 2011). Even during the Obama administration, the U.S. has provided asylum to the casualties of conflicts, violence, and persecution from across the globe. The Republican administration after assuming power in 2016 rolled out policies truncating the refugee admission ceiling. Also, “the new system of security checks and vetting process introduced by the federal government, instead of accelerating the process of admission, significantly delayed it and kept them hanging with a lingering hope for shelter” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Several bureaucratic bodies come into play with this entire system of admission of refugees into the United States also known as the USRAP (United States Refugee Admission Program) or RAP (Refugee Admission Program). It is jointly administered by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). But it is the President who in consultation with the sitting congress decides upon the ceiling for refugee admission every fiscal year (FY). The State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) form the primary agencies which set up and investigate this entire admission procedure and assessment of refugees from across the globe. Refugees who fall into the decided ceiling in each FY and whoever among them successfully clears the security screening only become eligible for the resettlement program but that does not guarantee them resettlement (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). The individual screening or the vetting process is conducted by the USCIS (the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services), a part of D.H.S.

The eligibility criteria for the Refugee Program are based on three principal categories. Since the United States federal law recognizes a refugee on the same terms and conditions that set by

the United Nations Convention of 1951 and the Protocols of 1967⁸, ‘the fear of persecution’ becomes the deciding factor in every category. The first priority is given to the individuals who are themselves victims of persecution and are recommended to the United States by the UNHCR for the possible intake in the absence of a durable solution or could also be identified by a U.S. Embassy or an NGO. In the second priority, people requiring ‘special concern’ from the regions of former Soviet Union, Burma, and Iraq and are recommended by the UNHCR, USCIS, and the NGOs designated by the United States Government. The third priority focuses on the rehabilitation of the immediate relatives (parents, spouses, and unmarried children below the age of 21) of refugees who have already been inducted and resettled in the U.S. Under this scheme, the U.S based refugee must file an application of AOR (Affidavit of Relationship) with the DHS for sponsoring the relative (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019).

As mentioned, eligibility under these categories does not ensure shelter in the country even for a potential refugee. According to the statutory norms published by D.H.S in 2019 “every individual to qualify as a prospective refugee has to undergo a rigorous screening and vetting process where it is necessary to prove that the individual is indeed engulfed with fear of life-threatening tyrannical badgering in their current location and therefore requires a comparatively sheltered turf to dwell on. Moreover, the prospective refugee might be denied resettlement under the US policies if any other country had already extended similar assistance. They might also be vetoed on aspects such as previous criminal and/or deportation records,

⁸ U.N. Conventions of 1951 & 1967– The U.N. Convention of 1951 is concerned with the Status of Refugees. Hence also known as the 1951 Refugee convention. It is a United Nations multilateral treaty. It is significant for defining the terminological perimeters of ‘refugee’ and charting their rights to asylum and responsibilities of nation-states towards granting them asylum. The crux of the 1951 convention is the non-refoulement principle enshrined in Article 33, which prevents the deportation of refugees to the location where he or she has fear of potential persecution. The 1967 Protocols is a means to further widen the geographical relevance of the 1951 convention. (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 2021)

health issues, manipulation of facts on application, smuggling, and polygamy” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Although, the number of instances in which humans are being forced to displacement are proliferating worldwide, it was quite appalling to see that the U.S., under the Trump administration, uninhibitedly capping the influx. A survey conducted by the American Immigration Council stated that there has been a significant decline in intake since 2016. The ceiling in financial year 2018 was 45000 whereas only half the number was admitted the same year and it hit a record-low in 2019 with 30000. Africa has the maximum share with a little more than 45% followed by 17% approx. from the East, the Middle East, the Southeast, and South Asia (including Iran, Iraq, Syria, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia), and Europe and Latin America accounting for 16% and 4.5% respectively (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019).

I have argued elsewhere that “data and statistics might have varied but it clearly shows that the hopes and prospects of resettling in the largest immigrant nation for the refugees have dwindled since 2017” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). I had also stated that “the refugee resettlement program that was once a global model of how neoliberal countries as powerful as the United States should be assisting and supporting with basic sustenance for the vulnerable populations of the world has taken a U-turn, since the federal government after assuming duties in 2016 has implemented executive orders to filter out refugees and asylum seekers from the U.S. territory. Even after the 9/11 the then-Republican government led by George W. Bush had lowered the refugee admission ceiling but it was still significantly above the current rate” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

The neoliberal governments have often propagated that, refugees and undocumented immigrants “are responsible for initiating terror-driven activities is one such popular myth propagated globally. And extremist governments play with the sentiments of their citizens with these insinuations strategically to get their support in further declining the refugees and asylees, after all, no citizen would ever want to compromise with their safety and security because humanity is not the primary priority” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

The policies advocated and executed by the Trump administration since assuming office in 2017 exhibit this jaundiced countenance. The administration argued that by accepting a smaller number of international refugees they would be able to better rehabilitate the refugee-turned-asylum seekers already existing in the national perimeters. But this is far from true, the federal protocols rather suggest the implementation of exclusionary measures against the resident asylees as well. In 2017, at the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters, Trump declared that “the United States is a compassionate nation” but “for the cost of resettling one refugee in the United States, we can assist more than ten in their home region” (UNGA, 2017) It is quite ironic that at a global convention whose thematic structure actively focusses on ‘people’, where dialogues are pro sustainable development and peace, the President argued to resettle refugees in the same location from where they are trying to escape.

In 2017 the compassionate nation inducted only 18000 Syrian refugees whereas Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon hosted 4.8 million (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Trump, while running as presidential candidature, had rebuked his Democratic predecessors for admitting Syrian refugees in the United States because refugees are threats to national security. Keeping true to his electoral campaign promises, Trump drafted executive orders banning immigrants from seven countries within two months of getting elected (Thrush, 2017). This

came at a time when Syria was encountering a massive humanitarian crisis, the repercussions of a six-year-long civil war. The order banned the refugee absorption for four months leaving them stranded and vulnerable. The policies, the President claimed, “were a cautionary measure for the protection of the American citizens from any kind of terrorist penetration by foreign nationals, completely oblivious to the fact that there is a colossal population of humans—victims of same violence and bigotry from which he wants to protect his citizens and his policies have suspended these victims from a potential haven” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

In a tweet by MSNBC, Trump proclaimed immigration (of refugees) is a “fault” and the cause of all problems in the United States and he blamed his preceding Democratic administration for not censuring immigration. He asserted, “The United States will not be a migrant camp and it will not be a refugee holding facility ... you look at what's happening in Europe and you look at what's happening in other places we can't allow that to happen in the United States – not on my watch.” (@MSNBC TWEETS JUNE 18, 2018) He reproached the plights of the refugees without and did not even display the humanitarian solidarity unlike some of his European allies. Instead, he lambasted Germany’s open-door policy and Chancellor Angela Merkel’s ardent pleas earlier at the 72nd United Nations Convention in 2017 where she had urged global leaders and politicians to host Syrian refugees and protect them from the plaguing war. Merkel’s policies, the American President claimed, have increased the crime rates all over Europe because it has been sheltering refugees and providing them asylum.

Apart from lowering the ceiling of refugee admission, increased vetting and additional scrutinizes for nationals of ‘high-risk countries, there have been several disparaging contrivances in policies about refugees and asylees. A third of the refugee resettlement offices, the total being 350, countrywide had closed down since the commencement of the

administration (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). Trump considered asylum ‘loopholes’ in the American security system that poured into the American interiors largely because of the lackadaisical nature of the Democratic administration. Hence his administration had actively deployed “policies deterring asylum seekers from entering the US territory by limiting the number of applications and restricting the grantees” (Bhattacharjee, 2020)

Limiting asylum hearings, disqualifying the victims of domestic violence from seeking asylum, raising standards of ‘credible fear’ (during interviews the applicants have to prove the credibility of their fear), banning illegal entries from applying for asylum, detaining families and children during immigration proceedings, removing asylum backlogs instead of affirmative proceedings are sufficient evidence of America’s disengagement with the global humanitarian issues. What he propounded is that patriotism is preferable to globalism and multilateral issues can take a backseat because the United States would rather operate and survive in isolation.

Discoursing on illegal immigration was the fundamental motive of Trump’s electoral campaigns. He targeted the invisible, voiceless, and projected them as a mere nuisance for the American society and its natives. All illegal immigrants are potential criminals and his speeches are replete with regressive comments hurled at them and proposed reformation attempts at ousting them from the American territory. Not only did he propose constructing a wall on the U.S- Mexican border (*The New York Times* February 28th, 2017) barring the illegal entries but also suggested capping the legal entries from various other countries especially on the number of non-immigrant visas, short term travel visas, temporary guest worker visas because according to circumstantial evidence, entries are not only illegal but sometimes acquired after the expiration of the legalized entry.

In one of his executive orders on immigration, the ex- President claimed that unauthorized immigrants “present a significant threat to national security and public safety”. (The *New York Times* February 28th, 2017) Therefore, he called for the absolute removal of unauthorized immigrants. The rhetoric was further employed to reach the nativist sentiments and tarnish the image of these invisible immigrants, whereas studies have provided a contradictory picture. The reality is that crimes committed by immigrants are far fewer than American citizens and undocumented immigrants are enmeshed in everlasting fear of deportation, so it is quite illogical to even suppose that they would venture into such criminal activities that would eventually get them deported.

Saskia Sassen (1999) had opined that “racialization of the immigrant population is a common condition” (xvi) in the West, the U.S is no exception either. Apart from racialization that had inherently instructed the US immigration history, the problem also spheres from the ambivalences of border control. Immigration has perpetually been considered a threat to the native population whether in the sectors of causing unemployment or brandishing public security, hence the neoliberal nation-states like the US for instance have clamored for ‘unilateral state action’ (1999, xvii) to control the influx of population groups. However, when a sovereign state’s laws interface with the human rights regime, the immigrant becomes the subject of international law, the state no longer remains the sole perpetrator. This certainly puts a constrain on the state’s regulations of policing immigration. That is why we see strong resistance against the existing unilateral sovereignty. The withdrawal of international cooperation from addressing the global immigrant crisis by the Trump administration exemplifies my argument.

In the U.S. immigration policies, an individual who is not an American national is an ‘alien’. But again, the alien category is further subdivided into two- temporary and permanent. Temporary aliens are non-immigrants whereas permanent aliens, including lawful permanent residents (LPRs), are immigrants. According to Kevin R. Johnson, “By definition, aliens are outsiders to the national community. Even if they have lived in the country for many years, have had children here, and work and have deep community ties in the United States, undocumented immigrants remain illegal aliens, an institutionalized other, different and apart from us.” (1996, 264), and there exists socio-political and legal implications to the denomination of alien. They do not enjoy the entire gamut of rights granted by the American constitution. Moreover, the risks of deportation for any criminal activity are far intense in the case of an illegal alien whereas the citizen is constitutionally protected. A U.S. citizen may face charges but cannot be deported. Constructing the image of the alien or foreigner as the outsider, the nation-state has maintained a kind of hegemonic sovereignty. The ‘crisis’– global displacement of individuals– in majoritarian nation-state discourse, refers to the presence of undocumented immigrants and refugees. The term ‘refugee crisis’ is extremely problematic. It seems that refugees are the source of crisis; they have hatched the crisis and nation-states have to resolve it. In reality, the lived crisis is endured by the people forced to seek refuge. The atrocious enforcements of national borders, attuning to the myth of security of citizens, draws on the narrative of the outsider and according to Sassen this narrative further helps “...to define refugees as not belonging to national society, as not being entitled to the rights of citizens...refugees in the twentieth century were identified as a distinctive category; the (nation) state now had the power and the institutional legitimacy to exclude refugees from civil society.” (1999, 78)

The term ‘alien’ is often used in a pejorative manner imbued with racial overtones, nevertheless, a regular in the American immigration discourse. Currently, this neologism has popular synonyms– ‘undocumented worker’– most often than not it is the popular social culture that largely determines the rights accorded to the aliens sanctioned by the law. Even though aliens receive far fewer constitutional rights compared to citizens, legal aliens are still favored and sometimes even granted permanent resident status because of their legal status whereas it is the ‘illegal aliens’ who are rendered vulnerable owing to their invisibility and unapproved status. They are the ‘uninvited guests’, ‘intruders’, ‘law breakers’, ‘trespassers’ (Johnson, 1996, 276) in the national discourse. Hence laws are stringent, uncompassionate, and merciless with hardly any reformation policies working in their favor. This terminology which characterizes immigration debates, often in an uncritical fashion, eludes from the 1986 Immigration Act⁹. The Act does not clearly outline the defining characteristics of an illegal alien. The illegal alien linguistically embodies a sense of criminality essentially highlighting penalization instead of legal protection whether the illegality was induced by overstay or uninspected border crossing. The anti-illegal immigration sentiment had resulted in public benefits being denied to them.

The Diasporic Ambiguities: A Critical Intervention

According to the classical definition, diaspora refers to any population group that has residence and settlement in a country but has originated from another; diasporic is a condition of being away from one’s nation. However, the Biblical connotation concerning the Jewish prototype has proved inadequate to include within its scope the distinct and innumerable ways of

⁹ The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)– this legislation was signed by the American President Ronald Reagan to ensure strict border controls and restrict U.S. employers from giving work permits to undocumented immigrants.

displacement that have characterized the neoliberal era. And this is the cue for further inquiries in this chapter. The interests and actions of global capital, international and national politics, citizenry, exclusions, and deportations have intersected the phenomenon of population dislocation. Hence, 'displacement' now has much broader implications, and its scope is not limited to merely diasporised.

The term 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek word 'diaspirein' meaning 'scattering or dispersal of seeds' and is used to refer to an individual or ethnic population group which resides outside their homeland. In the Biblical context, the terminology refers to the Jewish population exiled from Judea by the Babylonians in 586 BC and by the Roman Empire from Jerusalem in 136 AD. Therefore, the term has been used to denote the historical movements of the dispersed ethnic population.

William Safran (1991) suggests that the phenomenon of Jewish diaspora cannot be cited as an example for its sheer generalization on their dispersion and simultaneous oppression; certain specificities are missing from this Jewish tragedy, that which is contemporary. Even 'diaspora community' could hardly be used as it is a sweeping statement on the segment of people living outside their homeland and it could be "...expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities..." (Safran, 1991, 83). Safran makes this valid argument without attempting any categorical distinctions between these designations. He enlists certain characteristics, claiming that "...the concept of diaspora be applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of (these)...characteristics" (ibid) and according to him "...we may legitimately speak of the Armenians, Maghrebi, Turkish, Palestinians, Cuban, Greek, and perhaps Chinese diasporas at present and the Polish diaspora of the past, although none of them fully conforms to the 'ideal type' of the Jewish

Diaspora” (1991,84). However, Safran here attempts to deviate from the ideal notion of diaspora and make a breakthrough underscoring the simultaneous irregularities in displacement, he still misses out on the inherent ambiguities of each of these enlisted communities. What I am trying to highlight is that within these diasporic communities of Armenians, Turks, Polish, or even Chinese there are both documented and undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylees. Would all be referred to as diaspora? Echoing Safran, Tololyan (1991) too had deployed the term diaspora to include “... immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (4). Problematizing such a conceptualization is apposite in the current era as it could be witnessed that financial, intellectual, and political endowments are the foundational criteria for bestowing the diasporic status on a dispersed individual.

The diasporic formation does not occur at the very first instance of dislocation nor does it happen soon after the dislocated population groups are provided shelter by another nation-state. First, the dislocation occurs from the place of origin; the dislocated individuals disperse territorially either legally seeking shelter or applying for asylum that is they seek permission for entrance and residence and under limited conditions and if they are granted asylum or allowed entry, they settle within the political perimeters of the adopted nation-state. Then gradually over the years of successfully flourishing in the host nation, they get recognized as the diaspora on account of their achievements and valuable contribution to the host and subsequently to the home nation-states. It is quite evident that a migrant community is recognized as a diaspora only after it proves itself an asset to the host country. In the neoliberal world order, not, every displaced individual belongs to the assigned diasporic community. Some, irrespective of their allegiances to specific ethnic diasporic communities are designated as illegal immigrants and not diaspora and this is the case that I am specifying in my study.

There are “three core elements” (2015, 121) as Rogers Brubaker points out, that constitute a diaspora. More than ‘dispersion in space’ and ‘homeland orientation’, it is the third criterion ‘boundary maintenance’ that saliently substantiates my contentious position against diasporic denomination. Maintaining a distinctive identity in the host land is absolutely indispensable for a diasporic community to survive and thrive and therefore historical, cultural, and political relationships are cemented for a “distinctive community” (124) recognition. However, establishing a distinctive identity would prove fatal for an undocumented immigrant, while for the refugees it would be a matter of time and fate, until they can discard the label.

An immigrant to be recognized as diasporic must essentially own legal documents that prove the approval of the host country to work or reside under certain conditions. In the absence of these documents, the immigrant is no longer a diasporic individual, the immigrant status is simply depreciated to that of an illegal and considered a threat to the host nation and its law-abiding citizens. Safran does not seem to consider that an immigrant can acquire the diasporic status and identity only if the host nation concedes to it otherwise the immigrant is an illegal or an alien. The role of the host is imminent in creating a diasporic subjectivity. Even Brubaker’s claim that “The study of diaspora has become coextensive with the study of social formations emerging from any kind of migration...” (2015, 120) is attenuated because every instance of migration in recent years does not necessarily entail a diasporic status to the migrant. Forcibly displaced individuals, for example, uprooted from their homelands, after migrating are not immediately acknowledged as ‘diaspora’ but a ‘refugee’ or an ‘asylum seeker’. A legal immigrant on the occasion of the expired validity of documents loses the diasporic reputation and becomes illegal or undocumented while being physically present in the host country. The enumerated characteristics of diasporic individuals elude the host nation’s involvement and certainly its accountability. Moreover, these characteristics also do

not partake of refugees or asylum seekers apart from the fact that “...they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland- its physical location, history, and achievements.” (1991, 83) This observation might be incompatible with the refugee subjectivity in certain cases when they consciously make desperate attempts at erasing the past due to its oppressive inflictions. Safran uses the term diaspora as a metaphorical design to include all types of individuals and population groups who have experienced the process of dislocation. He eludes the inherent anomalies in foregrounding a collective diasporic consciousness- an aspect that remains subverted by the particularities of individualistic experiences of displacement. However, he also clarifies that there are certain categories of displacement which humans have experienced but could not be called a diaspora. For instance, the Poles in Nazi-Occupied Germany, Palestinians in Occupied Territories, and Hungarians in Transylvania. Safran enumerates them as populations under oppression. Here again, the theorist evades an explanation of why these nationals living in another geographical location are not recognized as diasporas. In my perspective, these ethnic population groups were victims of human rights violations at different junctures in history; whether it was the Polish nationals or the Palestinians, their homelands were coercively occupied and they encountered brutal threats to survival. While the Poles were hurled to concentration camps by Germans, the Palestinians were rendered stateless which prevails till date. Human populations forced to escape their homelands and seek refuge elsewhere hardly consider themselves as temporary residents or nurture the intention to return. Rather, as Hannah Arendt (1994) reiterates, they want to forget everything about their homelands because of the immense trauma associated with their memories. They aim at integration with the adopted land and its culture, they do not want to demarcate themselves as different from them; they want to be one with the citizens in the new-found land. Safran too echoes a similar instance regarding the Polish immigrants who entered the United States in the 1880s who could never form a Polish diaspora because they

were aiming at integration and disengage themselves from anything Polish including the hope of re-instating their homeland. Although Safran maintains that every dispersed community cannot be called a diaspora, he does not attempt at categorically demarcating the various forms of displacement which do not necessarily implicate a projectile image of diaspora. His theoretical elucidation glosses the fundamental differences between exilic and diasporic subjectivities. Moreover, apart from dedicating a few sentences, Safran does not highlight the involuntary and subsequently voluntary flights of populations from the Indian subcontinent to various corners of the erstwhile first-world during the colonial regime and in the neoliberal era. He also happens to overlook the Partition of 1947- a phenomenon that engendered and affected the concept of forced displacement in South Asia. He never mentions the categories ‘refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’, or even ‘illegal’; while also ignoring the role of nation-states and their political actions instigating forced displacement of human populations and concurrently statelessness.

Harping on the examples of the Jews, the Armenians, and the Palestinians, Robin Cohen (2008) at the outset of his thesis deploys the terminology ‘victim diaspora’ and mentions that there are several instances in the contemporary era “...where forced displacements have created incipient victim diasporas...” (2008, 4) Secondly, echoing Safran, he further maintains that the “...wrench for home must survive so powerfully in the folk memories...” (ibid) of the victim diasporas that their key objective of socio-political mobilizations becomes restoration of the homeland and a possible return. There are instances where diasporic members have been the targets of racial and xenophobic hatred in the host land. However, governed by neoliberal ideologies a victim of forced displacement is not referred to as the diaspora in the current academic endeavors. The study of the diasporic phenomenon was mainly confined to a limited number of variables (Jews, Armenians, Palestinians, Chinese)- the Jewish experience being paradigmatic. Coercion and cataclysmic events led to an exodus in each case. These

are the earliest instances of forced displacement and statelessness. Considering the disciplinarian technicalities, studying the population groups now in their current socio-political ambiance, their evolutions, achievements in the host land would foreground the key objective of diasporic studies.

I problematize the theoretical stances because of their recurrent usage of the term diaspora to formulate any kind of displacement. Diaspora, the expression, has been used in quite an uncritical manner symbolizing every single human who has at some point of time in life experienced a permanent displacement and whose spatial existence is not the nation of origin/ancestral roots. This seems to be an ideologized conceptualization for it does not even make a tangential reference to the status of the displaced individual which is determined by the bureaucratic machinery of the nation of residence. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, that the terminology 'in diaspora' is more appropriate as it underlines a living condition and also unambiguously hints at the status after displacement. In the neoliberal world, every human who is displaced does not become a diaspora or cannot be described as living in diaspora either. Living in diaspora highlights the fact that an anchoring process has been accomplished or is ongoing. However, the concern here is since every displaced individual is unable to accomplish this anchor(ing); when many often remain in the offing; then, we cannot certainly maintain that they are living in the diaspora. They might be residing in a nation that isn't their homeland but that does not specifically imply that they are 'in diaspora' for even while residing in this 'other' nation they might still be refused shelter or permanent residence; they might still be living in dispossession that had incurred the displacement initially. And this dispossession is about not having typically diasporic achievements but the absence of the fundamental (human) rights.

Diaspora and Transnationalism are viewed and studied in the context of international migration and shifting of nation-state borders engendering macro-societal concepts such as globalization and multiculturalism. Transnationalism is a much broader concept as it refers to the durable connections forged and maintained by migrants across nation- state borders. The prefix ‘trans’ (cut across or beyond) does not limit itself to the identification of certain communities but widens its scope to capture the social formations in which these communities participate to form transnationally active networks, groups, and organizations. Diaspora and transnationalism usually underline the processes that transcend nation-state borders and are used in discourses involving forced and/or voluntary migration; however, these terminologies reflect upon diverse conceptual and theoretical strains.

Both diaspora and transnationalism are crucial to the deliberations on political engagements of the nation-state, the dialogues on foreign policies as well as in academic research. The concept of diaspora has often been used by nationalist groups or governments to pursue various agendas like nation-state building or controlling the population abroad. The homeland invokes its diaspora to mobilize support for some political project either occurring in the homeland or in the host land, to encourage the diasporic community towards financial investments in the homeland and also to cultivate political loyalty among the diasporised. Multiculturalism underlines equality and emancipation, “... seeking equal rights and recognition for ethnic, racial, religious, or sexually defined groups” (Joppke, 1996, 1). The largest immigrant-receiving democracies, for instance, Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Australia have indoctrinated themselves to encourage people from different cultures to inhabit parallelly maintaining their distinctive features but existing harmoniously.

The older notions of diaspora projected cultural distinctions whereas the new usages blur these distinctions by emphasizing transnational mobility and by focusing upon cultural innovations instead of cultural distinctiveness. This is the point from where diaspora deflects to conciliate the more appropriate and broader term ‘transnational/-ism’ implying the volatile nature of cross-border engagements and mobilities, membership and citizenship, the processes of migrant integration, and cultural distinctions. Stuart Hall (1990) also premised his argument on this new notion, which according to him is characterized by ‘diversity’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘difference’.

... diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all cost return...This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonizing form of ‘ethnicity’... (1990, 235)

While diaspora denotes a specific community, transnational spaces indicate processes that transcend international borders and describe relatively stable spaces characterized by a set of ties reaching beyond the borders of at least two nation-states. Transnationalism underlines the fact that migrant enterprises across nation-state borders are divergent from the relationships forged by transnational companies. Premised on transnational relations, the concept underlines the participation of non-state actors especially the migrants who along with their countries of origin and destination create a triangular social structure based on transnational relations.

Steven Vertovec (2009), exemplifying the transnational transformations, claims that international sports are the major site where transnational engagements are practiced. Citing the example of the French national football team which won the 1998 football World Cup,

Vertovec says that the French team composed of immigrant players is an exemplar of a culturally diverse country (156). He suggests that such instances of multiculturalism have been endorsed by several European countries through the immigrant-integrated composition of national teams. In the 2012 Olympics, Britain had declared their multicultural diversity as a national strength. Transnational ties are indeed forged at such sporting events and according to Vertovec, migration-driven diversities demonstrate that immigrants are unquestioningly accepted and migrant transnational attachments are acknowledged as a facet of the globalized world. Vertovec acclaims the instances of multiculturalism on display. However, such global interconnectedness and transnational lives, I argue, can only be maintained by immigrants whose economic proficiencies and legal status are acknowledged by the host nation-state. I concur with Alejandro Portes' (2001) observation that migrants to be recognized and acknowledged has to be well established socially, economically, and politically in the host nation; their affluence would naturally forge their ties with the home and adopted nations. The athletes of an immigrant lineage have proved their proficiency and hence they are visible; their visibility is again granted by the nation-state, underlining that the politics of visibility in play, which I shall elaborate further in the following section. If what Vertovec had propounded was essentially the case, then in the 2016 Olympics, the International Olympic Committee would not have officiated the Refugee Olympic Team- a category consisting of athletes who do not share allegiance to any nation, in simple terms, they have been ousted by their home countries and no other nation is in charge of them. A similar instance could also be seen at Tokyo Olympics, 2021. They are not accepted or acknowledged as immigrants by any nation-state; they were not integrated into any national teams; they too could have forged transnational or diasporic ties being subjects of migratory journeys but they could not, because to receive either of the statuses, a nation-state must have adopted them and since such was not the condition

they are consigned as refugees and stateless people- individuals bereft of nationalities and experiencing the ongoing process of seeking asylum or refuge.

The case of undocumented immigrants is extremely convoluted. The characters and their narratives I piggyback on in the fifth chapter are South-Asians who were once accepted by the host nation (the United States) on temporary visas and were granted a stay for a certain period. They had legal documents while uprooting themselves and anchoring in the host land but after the stipulated duration and with the expiration of visas they were demoted to the illegal category tout de suite. They are shadow population thereafter. The tangible diasporic and transnational ties of belonging, as Vertovec imagines, cannot be manifested as their existence is not acknowledged by the adopted nation let alone recognition of their proficiencies.

From the probable origin of the term (diaspora) in *Deuteronomy*, “Thou shalt be a dispersion (diaspora) in all kingdoms of the earth.” (Chapter 28; verse: 25), the connotation was first assimilated into Greek and then into English in the late 20th century when the new academic field called Diaspora Studies was established. It indicates dislocation from the natural place of living or the way of life, that may be a voluntary or involuntary affair as the dislocating force may be direct/coercive or diffused/subtle, depending upon the varied motivations of the individuals/groups in different parts of the world and different periods. According to this conceptualization, any religious group or national group residing out of their homeland can be called diaspora. ‘Diaspora’ etymologically is a verb that refers to the acts of dispersion, scattering, or dislocation- the umbrella term being ‘displacement’. Gilroy (1994) maintains that diaspora signifies a ‘relational network’ that essentially underlines forced displacement and ‘reluctant scattering’ of population groups. The term, according to him, is not just analogous to any kind of movement but a movement that is undertaken or experienced urgently

as a result of a dominant influence, "...diaspora (is) more than a vogueish synonym for peregrination or nomadism ... Slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide, and other unnameable terrors have all figured in the constitution of diasporas..." (1994, 1)

However, when we refer to a diasporic population group in the host land- for instance, Indian Diaspora or Chinese Diaspora or the Jewish Diaspora- 'Diaspora' becomes a noun and Indian/Chinese/Jewish are the various descriptors of the noun. Hence in the case of a population which has experienced dislocation but, in the aftermath, has anchored and emerged in the host land as a community, the term 'in diaspora' is more appropriate because it underlines the action of settling down or being in residence in a territory outside the homeland— and a sense that it is possible to survive and even thrive in the host country while maintain tangible connections with the homeland. As Judith Shuval (2000) argues that "Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland ... At any given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing". (3) Moreover, the possibilities of survival and successive thriving have occurred because the host country has recognized their plights and has permitted them to reside within its political perimeters. The dispersions of the Jews, the Palestinians, the Armenians, stemmed from being victims of cataclysmic circumstances which traumatized them and led to their exodus. These phenomena in which human populations have scattered as they were trying to escape the brutal oppressive regimes are instances of forced displacements. However, considering all the technicalities involved, studying the same population groups (except the Palestinians) in their current scenarios with their evolutions and achievements in the (once) host land would underscore the scope of diaspora studies.

In the neoliberal era, every individual or population displaced from the homeland is not adopted by another nation-state or receive permission to anchor. Otherwise, terminologies such as ‘refugee’, ‘asylee’, ‘undocumented’ would not have been in practice. And the UNHCR would not have expressed concerns over the inflation of stateless population and victims of forced displacement. These phrases were formulated to designate the several occasions when ‘diaspora’ as a concept failed to connote the expressions of displacement and its limited scope could not articulate the quagmire of the displaced subjectivities. Investigating the processes of human displacements that are coerced through neoliberal agendas, a sensitive and conscientious approach is required about the emerging strains, complexities, subsequent expansions, and alterations that the classical connotative ambit of ‘diaspora’ does not inhere.

Refugees, Asylees, and the Undocumented: The Displaced Subalterns

Although illegality resolves the acute shortage of labor supply often satisfying the nation-state demands (Portes, 1978; Wickramsekera, 2002; Diaz, 2019;), the fact that immigrants would be residing without the approval of the nation-state in context is not simply frowned upon but is analogous to criminality. The United States is no exception either. The country which has persistently proclaimed itself as the nation of immigrants— for only the ones who are financially empowered to procure the nation-state permission— scoff at the disenfranchised and ostracize immigrant minorities based on ethnicity, religion, and legality as well.

Aviva Chomsky (2014) declares illegality as a ‘social construction’ (6) and the neoliberal nation-states are at the helm of the ploy segregating humans based on nationality and citizenship. Immigrants are meted out with differential rights depending upon the documents in possession (or not). Since neoliberal nation-states practice hegemonic sovereignty over

geographical territories through an overpowering control on the borders, human entrances, and exits, it thereby legitimizes the differences in the status of the immigrants rationally by structuring laws. Laws are created to restrict and sometimes even manipulate human mobilities while the nation-states continue to assert their superiority by imposing restrictions on people's right to mobility, in a way undermining the fundamental right of humans to have rights and execute them (Arendt, 1973). Illegality is not a phenomenon that had evolved naturally; illegality is consciously cultivated so that the new post-racial societies, the American for instance, could sustain the major shifts occurring due to globalization in the economic, cultural, and ideological terrains (Chomsky, 2014, 8). Also, another reason is that neoliberal market policies are cheap-labor oriented. Hence, they thrive on illegal immigrant labor and refrain from curbing illegal immigration in totality. As S.P. Diaz (2019) argues, "This is an open wound with deep roots that no one cares to heal. Nearly the entire world benefits from undocumented migration: the private sector, social networks, businesses, governments, banks, the economy in general, and also organized crime both legal and extralegal." (167)

Drawing on Lily Cho's (2007) frame of reference, I understand the displaced subaltern as a specific 'subjective condition' and not an 'object of analysis' (14). Although I refer to the individuals in my study as 'displaced subalterns', I re-iterate that I do not dwell on defining them as a population group. Their subalternity is not a collective consciousness since they are not a collection of displaced individuals. It is not their shared history of dislocation, loss, race, or religion; the salient feature is their resilience against neoliberal hegemonic power structures in whose relation they have emerged incipiently. Their condition has been entailed by conflicting neoliberal forces. In the previous section, I have already illustrated why neither of the designations 'diaspora' or 'transnational' is all-encompassing for these individuals. The

following paragraphs shall historically purview the ‘subaltern’. My objective is to understand and emphasize the multiple conditions of subalternities in displacement.

‘Subaltern’– the term had made its first appearance in Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, where Gramsci discussed the origins of the subaltern category in the context of Italian history. This term was further popularized by South-Asian historiographers who used it critically to denote “the colonized population groups who were ousted from the hierarchy of the power structure induced by the state and the other dominant groups” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). This post-colonial elucidation included those individuals “who are marginalized and alienated by the dominant sections of the society and had no autonomous representation in the socio-economic and political superstructures of the state” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Subaltern Studies had inaugurated the tradition of including the political voices and roles played the masses in different historical projects, a detail often eluded by the elites. Dipesh Chakravarty declares, “It (Subaltern Studies) looked for an antielitist approach to history writing, and in this, it had much in common with the ‘history-from-below’ approaches... The declared aim of Subaltern Studies was to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of history” (Chakravarty, 2002, 7).

I have appropriated the subaltern conceptualization in this study to underscore the subjectivities of those individuals for whom displacement seems to be an everlasting phenomenon– the asylum seekers and the undocumented. I have argued earlier in my paper (2020) “that Diaspora Studies conventionally focuses on the accomplishments of the elite members and if they suffer from a social debacle, the homeland, and other fellow communities rush to their aid” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). However, “the parameters of migration are not solely enunciated by the

dominant groups within Diaspora; there exists a parallel of history of migratory struggle as well- one that involves the ‘doubly marginalized’ or subaltern immigrants” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Incorporating the Gramscian methodology of studying the evolution of subalterns whose histories are “... intertwined with that of civil society and thereby with the history of States...” (Gramsci, 202), I have probed the “...objective formation of the subaltern...” (ibid) within the diasporic ambit, “through its essential diffusion and the alterations mechanized in and by the subaltern presence in the social and political spheres” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). Enormous disparities exist in the struggles of the undocumented and the refugees and that of the individuals who have already earned the diasporic recognition in the host land. The avenues of negotiations, in case of the undocumented and the refugees, conducted from the peripheries evokes what Ranajit Guha claims, “...the subaltern as the maker of (their) own destiny.” (1984, vii). I have contended that the struggles of the individuals living in perpetual displacement “have often eluded the diasporic historiography” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

I designate the population under study as ‘displaced subalterns’, not as immigrants or immigrant communities or immigrant population groups. My arguments in reference to the displaced individuals are specific and contextual. I do not assume them as a collective entity because their experiences of displacement are distinct and unique as Gramsci states, “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they can become a ‘State’” (Gramsci, 1991, 202). Now whether a ‘State’ is a unified community especially in this neoliberal era is quite contentious.

I am not saying that they should adhere to an indisputable enclave and in this case subaltern but what I am attempting here is drawing parallels from their experiences, and their simultaneous absence from diasporic metanarratives to that of subaltern predicaments. “Subaltern history has mainly targeted in rewriting the peasant history and those alternatives which did not find any recognition in mainstream colonial history, ruled by the elites” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

In this study, I identify those immigrants as elites who are recognized as skilled and are given legal status and residence by the host country and I strongly opine that South-Asian Diasporic historiography has concentrated on their stories of successful achievements in the host land, hyphenated-throes, and their long-distance nationalism. In the neoliberal state policies, the presence of refugees and the immigrants who are pejoratively called ‘illegal’ or ‘undocumented’ pose a definite threat to the nation and its citizens and therefore should be deported. Hence, I find it imperative to highlight the epistemological knowledge gaps and address the lacunae by approaching ‘history from below’ (Hobsbawm, 1997, 201). Diasporic chronicles have provided very little information on the mammoth populations confined to refugeehood and irregularity. I contend that diasporic history and politics tend to glorify displacement in a manner to assuage the eliciting agony. The throbbing twinge of displacement is perennial. Unlike the preceding centuries, in the neoliberal era due to its prolific connectivity, the discontent of the masses and the activities of the less-privileged tends to threaten the socioeconomic-political order. The nation-states and their neo-nationalist policies cannot be carried on without addressing the contentious issues as subalternity goes way beyond fighting the politics within acceptable bounds. Hobsbawm’s approach involved the history of people at the grassroots or the ‘history of the common people’ (ibid). Displacement entails disenfranchisement but the intensity varies. As I have pointed out earlier, not every displaced

individual is deprived. The people preposterously affected by displacement are the refugees, asylum seekers, and the undocumented because they are stripped of fundamental human rights. The sinister experience of escaping from what was known as home and searching for refuge elsewhere while witnessing utter despair, violence, acute poverty, repugnance, and outright hostility at the doors of their favored nations are not encountered by seasoned professional migrants. Hence, drawing on Hobsbawm's reflections, the refugees, asylum seekers, and the undocumented subjectivities and their incessant struggle legitimizes my deploying of the terminology 'displaced subaltern'.

The abhorrence towards refugees and undocumented immigrants blatantly displayed by the Republican administration and its leader transgresses the realm of racism. The politics of difference is leveled in numerous ways against marginalized displaced populations claiming a thread of belonging and opportunities for survival. The displaced subalterns cannot simply be referred to as migrants for the process of displacement in their case implies hazardous conditions. Surviving without basic human rights is not only despicable but extremely dangerous. The existing legal infrastructures instead of harboring them turn them into criminals. The displaced subalterns are forced to move to prove their identity and belonging, often without documents. Their deplorable pleas are barely audible to the neoliberal managements whose restrictive operations and strict control further violate these vulnerable subjectivities. Human security is and should be a nation-state's priority, however, the coercive policies entailed by neoliberal ideologies in the Global North scream neo-nationalism and xenophobia. Human rights cannot be executed on the limits of humanity. When neoliberal representatives like Donald Trump reiterate on illegal migration-terrorism nexus, it is only to divert one's will from implementing the real political measures to reach the structural roots of the issue. The neoliberal discourses created around these kinds of displacements are extremely

disturbing and problematic. Establishing security for citizens does not mean humanitarian solidarity should be relegated to the peripheries.

The South-Asian diasporic historiography has eluded the struggles of those who are at the bottom of the displaced hierarchy. The individuals I am specifying in my study are subaltern in the Spivakian sense “...persons and groups cut off from upward- and in a sense, ‘outward’ social mobility” (Spivak, 2000, 325). They do not feature in ethnic diasporas. These displaced individuals are marginalized by the nation-states and also face discriminations from their ethnic fraternity. Their presence is hardly acknowledged by the homeland which identifies the diaspora as its own legacy and glorifies the diasporic achievements and contributions. As I have stated that “the neoliberal home and host nation-states are aware of their presence but refrain from acknowledging them because they are considered a burden on the host economy and tarnish on the homeland” (Bhattacharjee, 2020) which has already earned the remittances and reputation from the achievements of its diaspora. So, both the nation-states simply pretend that they do not exist.

Although they want to be recognized as the diaspora, it is unattainable for the undocumented who have already breached the nation-state laws by overstaying. For the refugees seeking asylum status escaping the existing position is a relentless process, implying a stagnant periphery. In a literal sense, they are indeed denied any kind of social mobility but their cultural resistances speak volumes of a different tangent altogether. As Spivak argues, “... the cultural space of subalternity, although cut off from the lines of mobility...was not seen as stagnant...How (culture) is transformed into militancy, and thus produces tangents for the subaltern sphere, is one of the most interesting aspects of subalternist analysis...” (2000, 326).

The acts of survival presented by these immigrants whose physical presence are hidden is an interesting claim of this premise.

The undocumented immigrants and the refugees who remain oblivious from nation-state discourses are products of these nation-states and their modernization/nationalization project nevertheless ousted from the headlines of the modern nation. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) builds an analogy. According to him, modernity is a design blueprint and like every design, there are some waste products churned out during the physical construction of the design. After the design is completed the waste products are discarded.

The modernization design or ‘order-building’ is undertaken by nation-states towards development and progress, economically, socially, and politically. But as Bauman claims this project also leaves certain waste products in the form of human beings “the inevitable outcome of modernization, and an inseparable outcome of modernity” (2004, 8) whom he terms like ‘human waste’ or ‘wasted humans’ because they are either an excess to the national population or a redundant enough not to be considered a part of the nation. The nation-state while rejecting their presence, in the hindsight, wants them to be gone. In the case of the undocumented, they are not recognized while the refugees are not allowed to stay.

The U.S. has been classified as the nation of immigrants and rightfully so, apart from the presence of the native Indians, since Columbus assumed he had reached India, it was the European colonizers who had migrated from across the Atlantic and claimed establishments all over the country. But in the neo-nationalist discourse, we see a detestation for certain displaced populations– the economically deferred ones– the unauthorized, and the refugees. In this context, I want to draw attention to the aspect of subalternity and citizenship in the United

States with special reference to South-Asians. As Gyanendra Pandey (2006) opines that subaltern citizenship is not about acquiring legal citizenship in the American nation-state, rather, it is reflective of the aspects of belonging and having agency within the national perimeters and the contradictories undermining the myth of being a nation for immigrants (4735).

The struggles of the undocumented immigrants and refugees have not simply involved an installation of a sense of belonging to the nation they call home or simply be bestowed with legal residence and therefore be considered at par with the legal migrants; their struggle encompasses the recognition of the vivid disparities underlying the rich and diverse human experiences of displacement. Precluded from the legal and the political discourses, these immigrants, nevertheless, inevitably reign the national headlines since they have been economically and socially integrated into the American society as consumers of culture and capitalism as well.

Conclusion

Examining the policies and laws curated for the undocumented and the asylum seekers, I foreground that some dislocated individuals and populations experience inequitable reception from neoliberal nation-states. These individuals are not the diaspora; they are the displaced subalterns— this argument is chaperoned by a critical analysis of the landmark theoretical treatises on diasporic displacement and delineating the displaced subjectivities through the subaltern lens before embarking on a quest for subaltern cosmopolitanism. The next chapter would further proceed with the ‘history from below’ approach to investigate the nature of cosmopolitical belonging in the neoliberal era. It would attempt to understand and elaborate

the fact that the displaced subaltern subjectivity, as it grapples with the neoliberal hegemonic structures, are the true cosmopolites even in their dispossession rather than the neoliberal elites– the self-proclaimed citizens of the world.

Chapter-IV

THE NEOLIBERAL TIMES AND COSMOPOLITANISM

FROM BELOW

Globalization, technological advances, and increased traveling across nation-state borders have made it possible for individuals to establish global connections surmounting the local ones. Individuals who operate transnationally claim themselves cosmopolites. Since their affiliations, allegiances, and sometimes citizenships are not limited to the political boundaries of their countries of birth, they claim as belonging to the world or citizens of the world. However, the neoliberal era, apart from being structurally transformed by globalization and transnationalism, is also characterized by proliferating borders, border zones, and rampant seizure of nationalities and citizenships rendering certain individuals stateless while some others forcibly displaced. It becomes quite relevant to interrogate the nature of cosmopolitanism that should be cultivated in the context of stateless individuals seeking refuge and those who have been declared illegal and have eventually embarked upon a quest for refuge. Who is a cosmopolite in the neoliberal era? Determining a true cosmopolite necessarily ensues an inquiry about who requires cosmopolitanism?

These inquiries are the nuclei around which this chapter shall deliberate and allude to contextual references and historical debates. This chapter does not aim at drawing an exponential graph of subaltern cosmopolitanism, distinguishing it from the roots and other inflections, but probe into the scenarios where subaltern cosmopolitanism could be established, maintained, and exhibited within neo-nationalistic perimeters. My objective is to understand and locate the alternative modes of cosmopolitan imaginaries for displaced subaltern

subjectivities. I shall briefly preview the historical conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism which engendered neoliberal cosmopolitanism, examine the same in my study to underline its profound limitations in the context of the displaced subalterns. I shall substantiate my core arguments by alluding to the counter-hegemonic cosmopolitan approaches and perspectives of Boaventura Santos, Ulf Hannerz, Silviano Santiago, Homi Bhabha, and Jacques Derrida.

Cosmopolitanism: A Historical Intervention

Loosely derived from the ancient Greek term “*kosmopolite*’ (*citizen of the world*)” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.1) ‘cosmopolitanism’ refers to an array of perspectives on socio-political and moral philosophies. These distinct views however share a nebulous core- that “all human beings irrespective of their (geographical and) political affiliations belong in a single community” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.1) and this community should be cultivated. The essence of this community is again quite contentious; some envisioning it as being structured on moral norms and relationships, or shared market values or forms of cultural expressions, or others focusing on political institutions. Cosmopolitanism, as a socio-political philosophy, profoundly challenges the commonly accepted notions of belonging and “attachments, to fellow citizens, the nation-state, and parochially shared cultures” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.1). Globalization presupposes cosmopolitanism (Gavin Kendall et al, 2009).

Greco-Roman Cosmopolitanism

The Aristotelian and Platonic writings idealized a political culture that identified the man as a citizen of the polis (city/state; in this case Athens) who maintains allegiances to specific institutions and people within the polis, defends the polis from external invasions contributes

to the common welfare by sustaining its institutions of justice. The citizen of the polis does not serve any foreigner outside the polis; however, a good Athenian is only concerned with foreigners residing in Athens and extends his service to them. The Classical emphasis on the polis is un-cosmopolitan. The Socratic ideal of cosmopolitanism thrived on the notion of serving human beings (Athenians and foreigners) within the polis.

Cynic Cosmopolitanism

The first philosopher who explicitly expressed cosmopolitanism was Cynic Diogenes in the fourth century BC. He had declared, “I am a citizen of the world [kosmopolite]” (Diogenes Laertius VI 63). Cynic cosmopolitanism referred to a world (cosmos) citizenship where a man holds allegiance to laws of nature (cosmos) dismissing the local conventions. Diogenes identified himself as the citizen of the world, not the polis thereby rejecting any kind of parochial engagement within the polis. World citizenship presupposes a world-state but Cynicism does not introduce a world-state of orders or any such institution. Cynic cosmopolitanism holds the welfare of all human beings as virtuous. In the fourteenth century, Dante Alighieri in his *De Monarchia* had argued in favor of a world empire or government, explicating the Roman Empire as a model, intending to achieve universal peace, and this was termed as Institutional or Governmental Cosmopolitanism.

Stoic Cosmopolitanism

The Stoics of the third century BC largely influenced by the Socratic and Cynic cosmopolitanism regarded a cosmopolite as a citizen of the cosmos but not essentially divorced from the local conventions. The Stoics believed that the cosmos, just like the polis is also

governed by reason and natural laws; a citizen of the cosmos is also a citizen of the polis. The Stoics maintain that serving human beings is the true nature of a cosmopolite and serving other human beings requires political engagements but these political engagements should not be limited to the polis. The best possible manner in which human beings could be helped according to Stoicism is when a citizen of the polis considers taking a departure from the polis and moves to a foreign environment and serves the foreigners there by disseminating knowledge on political engagements (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019). In doing so the citizen of the polis is moving into the cosmos but not discarding his loyalties to the polis. Stoicism provides a clarified and practical version- a citizen of both cosmos and polis- hence cosmopolite. While the Romans emphasized local citizenship based on the virtue of rationality, the Stoical version of citizenship foregrounds people who hold allegiance to the cosmos and its laws in the larger context.

Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Enlightenment

According to Kleingeld and Brown (2019) “the rise of capitalism, worldwide trade, ... voyages around the world, expansion of empires, renewed interest in Hellenistic philosophy engendered the notion of human rights along with a philosophical focus on human reason” (para.15). The aspect of human rights foregrounded by men of letters who fashioned themselves as transnationals belonging to the ‘Republic of Letters’ being censured by their political states. Due to the strained relationship, they shared with the polis, these intellectuals adopted a cosmopolitan perspective founded upon the principle of estrangement from their own’s polis.

Eighteenth-Century Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism and world citizenship in the eighteenth century denoted “an attitude of open-mindedness and impartiality” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.16). A cosmopolite was “someone who was not not biased by particular loyalties or cultural prejudice” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.16) and neither necessarily let himself be subsumed by a particular religious or political authority. A cosmopolite in the eighteenth century was “a person who led an urban lifestyle, was fond of traveling, cherished a network of international contacts, felt at home everywhere” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.16). The cosmopolite was “a man of no fixed abode” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.16); a man who never perceived himself as a stranger anywhere he went.

Kantian or Moral cosmopolitanism which emerged in this era advocated an international legal order which he named the ‘league of nations’ (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.21). Kant propounded that all rational beings are members of a single world community and everyone belongs to this world community. The members of this community are rational beings who share independence and equality. For maintaining worldwide peace, Kant argued, the human rights of both citizens and foreigners should be respected. The league of nations is governed by cosmopolitan law- a law of morality grounded in reason- extending to both states and individuals. “Individuals have these rights as ‘citizens of the earth’ and not as citizens of particular states” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.23). Moral cosmopolitanism regarded all human beings as brothers dismissing all hierarchies and barriers that distinguish human beings thereby aiming at fundamental equality of all humans.

The century also witnessed the emergence of an economic form of cosmopolitanism. Invoked by Adam Smith as **Economic Cosmopolitanism** in his *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) referring to the modern-day capitalist moguls who make business investments and transactions in other

countries to evade the tax burdens of his own country and hence "...The proprietor of stock is properly a citizen of the world, and is not necessarily attached to any particular country...(who) remove(s) his stock to some other country where he could either carry on his business or enjoy his fortune more at his ease" (Achcar, 2013, 55).

Cosmopolitanism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Economic globalization of the nineteenth century provoked the Marxist notion of cosmopolitanism expounded in 1845. Marx and Engels had opined that the inherently expansive nature of market capitalism had dented nation-state barriers. Market capitalism favors free trade and individual freedom. One idea of cosmopolitanism is related to the effects of capitalism. However, this capitalist order gave birth to the proletariats who had been utterly mistreated by global capitalism and the bourgeoisie ideology of free trade. The proletariats across nation-states share common interests and experiences of capitalist victimization. Hence, ***Proletariat Cosmopolitanism*** derived its label from the working class as a citizen of the world because it labors for capital and not for a particular nation- "The nationality of the worker is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is labour, ... His government is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is capital. His native air is neither French, nor German, nor English, it is factory air." (Achcar, 2013, 55). The proletariat or the proletarian struggle is what constitutes universality or true cosmopolitanism in the Marxist sense and essentially the harbinger of Communism.

Cosmopolitanism(s) in the Neoliberal Era

An extensive appraisal of the several cosmopolitical attitudes at different historical junctures tends to favor the Western idea of developing a community in which all human beings would be citizens or members despite their distinct socio-political and cultural affiliations and the profound hierarchies featuring in the human world. Such cosmopolitical conceptualizations are influenced by European modernity and colonial sentiments. The neoliberal era characterized by neo-nationalistic implementations and hegemonic exclusion policies promotes belonging through citizenship and nationality. Those citizens who acquire transnational status through cross-border ventures and activities are harbored by host nation-states as well. Neoliberal cosmopolitanism is formulated upon the idea of (global) routes and measures of belonging, transnational (capitalist) transactions, and regularized modes of migrations. Rooted in the Eurocentric notions, neoliberal attitudes establish in quite a sophisticated manner a cosmopolitanism that is exclusively elite and elusive of the displaced subalterns. This chapter endeavors to identify and address the lacunae in the neoliberal cosmopolitan project to underscore a substantial research objective on cosmopolitanism in ‘the age of perpetual war’ (Gilroy, 2015, 232) witnessing draconian (human) displacements.

The concept of world citizenship or world (singular) government is quite redundant in the era of neoliberal globalization which is essentially characterized by heterogeneities. Nina Glick Schiller claims that defining a cosmopolite as ‘the citizen of the world’ “is inherently contradictory” and “an act of delusion” (2015, 31). It calls for a different kind of a world or world system that does not exist. In a world infused with differences, an individual cannot be a citizen of the entire world. The term ‘citizen’ necessitates certain allegiances, obligations, and rights to a nation-state and its system of government but there is no one system that governs the world. We must remember that the various systems that run the world are nothing but by-

products of the internal differences and the perpetuation of hegemonical impositions within the system of the human population and by humans. Gyan Prakash (2015) while referring to the Classical cosmopolitanism, argues that the older version had long dwindled as inhuman activities – colonialism, slavery, world wars, Holocaust, and capitalist exploitation – expanded and caged individuals in hegemonic power relations, and thereby, “...put paid to the Kantian ideal.” (27) because “...the Kantian ideal of a worldwide community assumes there is only a single cosmopolitanism, whereas the modern historical experience suggests multiple and discrepant ‘actually existing cosmopolitanisms’” (28). Prakash highlights that there is no singular ‘cosmopolitanism’ rather cosmopolitanism as a concept is characterized by its plurality and hence should be ‘cosmopolitanisms’ (ibid). The Cynic/ Stoic overarching principle of serving the larger world detaching oneself from the local roots is elitist. So was the eighteenth-century cosmopolite, “a man of no-fixed abode, or a man who is nowhere a stranger”, one “who felt at home everywhere” owing to his “urbane-lifestyle, ...fond of travelling...international contacts.” (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019, para.16). Although there are certain historical similarities in terms of (increased) mobilities in the global era, assuming that individuals who travel across nation-state boundaries or have business ventures worldwide are bereft of local loyalties and cultural prejudices and could proclaim the title of global citizen would be blatantly delusive.

Coming back to the question broached at the beginning of the discussion– who needs cosmopolitanism? The answer would entail the constituting elements of a cosmopolite in the neoliberal era. Cosmopolitanism is not inherently a given phenomenon even though an urban elite might as well claim but the cosmopolitanism I am venturing into is premised in the context of displaced subalterns, hence, plurally- particular. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) enumerates the need for cosmopolitanism in the most simplistic terms. He states that

whoever is a victim of local intolerance and discrimination needs cross-border tolerance and support; whoever lives in misery in a world of wealth needs cosmopolitan solidarity; whoever is a non- or second-class citizen of a country or the world needs an alternative conception of national and global citizenship. In short, the large majority of the world's populace, excluded from top-down cosmopolitan projects, needs a different type of cosmopolitanism. (460)

From Santos' argument it could be established that the displaced subalterns summon a different kind of cosmopolitanism but whether this subaltern cosmopolitanism has a contextual relevance is of contentious discussion, because, again, the displaced individuals I have demarcated in this study is not a homogenous composition. They are deprived, not free inhabitants, do not possess any rights and privileges; however, even in their deprivation and disenfranchised quandary, they are distinct from each other, and therein lies the ambivalence. It is the specificities of experiences of dislocation that constitute the displaced subjectivity and in turn, entails a cosmopolitan demeanor.

Attuning to Santos' point of view, subaltern cosmopolitanism, or as he calls it 'cosmopolitanism from below' (2015, 79) "adopts the perspective of victims, victims that are not however passive" (ibid). This kind of subaltern cosmopolitanism posed an open challenge to every form of exploitation and subordination associated with the hegemonic order of neoliberal globalization. Santos claims that the existing iniquitous power relations have manifestations in not only socioeconomic and political but cultural, legal, and symbolic exchanges as well. There should exist alternative modes of structures and practices within these exchanges that would reinforce 'subaltern cosmopolitan politics and legality' (2002).

These alternatives, according to the sociologist, would counter the several implications of neoliberal hegemonic globalization, especially social exclusion, imposed through unequal power relations. The aspect of selecting the economic migrants while discarding those who are in a desperate quest for refuge, who require a protectionist regime and an ambiance to exercise their rights as humans, ubiquitous globally, is an alarming instance of neoliberal exclusionary policy. However, the neoliberal apparatus instead of accepting its accountability practices the politics of coercive dominance. Since neoliberal cosmopolitanism, stemming from hegemonic globalization, has always been a top-down project, Santos argues for ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ which would recognize the displaced subalterns because they have been systematically excluded from the neoliberal emancipatory social projects.

For these individuals who are caught in a never-ending transit, the point of arrival is not specified spatially or temporally. They are always arriving. The past and future hold the same value; they are not nostalgic about the past as there is hardly any point of return and the future will unfurl surprises without any warning because unlike the economic immigrants their trajectories usually follow a road not taken. If transnationalism connotes a phenomenon that involves crossing nation-state borders, then in that sense they are transnationals indeed but they do not receive the kind of treatment a transnational should and does. What differentiates the two— transnationals and the displaced subalterns under study— is the categorical and spatial statuses each occupies in the host society. Transnationalism does not presuppose a cosmopolitanism that grips the displaced subaltern subjectivity. Transnationalism, trans-culturalism, and all the cross-border engagements and negotiations celebrate diversities while inhering “the difference of the other” (Glick-Schiller, 2015, 32). Cosmopolitanism in the neoliberal era cannot be limited to the cherishing of differences alone; if cosmopolitanism is treasured solely for embracing otherness, then otherness is assumingly in practice within

cosmopolitanism. Schiller states that cosmopolitanism that already assumes an otherness “...speaks from a position of unequal and superior power- the power to define who and what is different and to grant or not grant the humanity of others.” (2015, 32) Moreover, such a cosmopolitanism tends to homogenize differences, for instance, it treats individuals belonging to various nationalities as ‘migrants’ naturally and uniformly different from the indigenous population thereby ignoring the inherent inequalities that might arise out of the irregularities in the migration process or during the journeys.

A cosmopolitical project targeting differences engendered solely by nation-state borders and their subsequent transgressions loses its significance in the neoliberal era that commodifies human needs and aspirations. We do not need a cosmopolitical metanarrative undermining the exigencies of the displaced subalterns. The world is flocked by humans desperately crossing borders to escape potential persecution; individuals choosing the demeaning status of illegality rather than returning; nation-states’ reputation of openness and tolerance is stifled by their far-right lurches--- we require a cosmopolitan approach “...of being human together... of kindness and humanity...” (Glick-Schiller, 2015, 32). A cosmopolitan perspective that would recognize the struggle against inequities and invoke a convivial co-habitation without ignoring the racialized and bureaucratic disparities among the displaced.

Silviano Santiago (2017) foregrounds the plights of the subaltern poor whose transnational journeys, although for economic prospects, to the metropolises of the postmodern world remain largely ‘clandestine’ because they remain in the marginalized disadvantageous position in their homeland and even after the passage. They, unlike the skilled transnationals, are recruited for performing menial jobs for the citizens which the citizens have rejected and are willing to risk their lives for transgressing the laws established by the immigration sector as “They are

predetermined by necessity and postmodern profit” (2017, 27). The highly qualified, skilled, white-collared transnationals enjoy increments in their remunerations but the salaries of the displaced subalterns appear languishing. Yet, they embark upon the voyages to the neoliberal global villages which guarantee them nothing except for instability in the name of economic profit/financial gains. These displaced individuals are victims of social inequality in every geopolitical landscape whether local or global, still, they undertake these perilous journeys which debase them to clandestine or illegals and in my opinion, their trajectories underscore a cosmopolitan element.

Neoliberal cosmopolitanism is often assumed the template for modernity. Modernity is not simply restricted to the veins of rationality and progress in terms of capital growth signifying a booming national economy. Modernity cannot be achieved purely on political territoriality and borders either; it must be embodied and commissioned by determinants of human rights. The idea that a nation-state can achieve modernity and development by expelling undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and should advocate migration only through regularized modes, needs to be challenged on a global scale for the individuals labeled under these categories are victims of warfare and convoluted legal structures entailed by neoliberalism. Today’s cosmopolites are the refugees, asylees, and unauthorized immigrants who despite being the discarded products of modernization project implemented by the neoliberal nation-states are constituted as the dangerous ‘Other’. According to Zygmunt Bauman (2004), these migrants who are discarded as waste products by neoliberal nations while constructing the idealistic image of modernity are the true embodiments of cosmopolitanism which the Western model has not acknowledged yet. Every immigrant by the virtue of living in transnational territories and multicultural contexts cannot be termed a cosmopolite. A cosmopolite is an individual who consciously identifies and is solicitous about

the inherent alterities emerging from a diversity of cultures. Ulf Hannerz (2007) foregrounds a similar view:

In an increasingly mobile world . . . not all sheer physical mobility automatically entails cosmopolitanism. Going abroad and encountering otherness might involve not affirmative openness, but a rejection of what is alien, or a narrow, controlled selection from it... rather than embracing it as a whole; others want the distant place to be as much like home as possible... Exiles, having had a foreign haven more or less forced upon them, may prefer to encapsulate themselves as much as possible with other exiles from their homeland. Labour migrants may be in a distant place struggling to earn a living, not for the sake of interesting experiences. Cosmopolitan attitudes can grow under circumstances such as these, but they are hardly inevitable. (74)

The neoliberal cosmopolitanism or ‘cosmopolitanism from above’ is limited to the transcendence of nation-state borders while harboring ethnocentric prejudices, and a sympathetic attitude towards the ‘Other’, which foregrounds the construction of the ‘Other’ within the cosmopolitan purview. Hannerz suggests that cosmopolitanism should be planted on the ideal of “an orientation, a willingness to engage with Other . . . an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences” (1990, 239)

The cosmopolites in the neoliberal era are not those transnationals who feel at home everywhere while in dislocation – in different geographical territories, and amidst multi-cultural settings forging and cherishing imperialistic connections. That is metropolitan cosmopolitanism– the quotidian cross-cultural encounters in global metropolises – typically

thriving under neoliberal tutelage. The new cosmopolites, according to me, are those who despite being in transnational spaces are strategizing and negotiating with the disequilibrium shadowing their lives as they are often forced to remain in displacement. Subaltern cosmopolitanism widens its scope to include the less privileged displaced individuals whose existence in transnational spaces is still clouded by the essential contradictions ensued by neo-nationalistic attitudes of hegemonic neoliberal globalization.

The neoliberal nation-states allow the elite migrants– the ones who can finance their transits legally. The displaced subalterns, who are not explicitly invited or allowed to stay, even after making significant contributions to the economy are considered “a threat to the fundamental aim of neoliberal economic policies since their presence and acceptance foregrounds a social democratic approach in the global arena” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

The formulations of reforms, policies, and laws especially concerning the marginalization of displaced populations and restricting them to the peripheries of the nation-states under the pretext of protecting the nation, its citizens, and the national economy could be seen as a neoliberal exuberance on the nationalist agenda. Unacknowledging the presence of certain immigrants, ousting them from the nationalist discourses, is an acute projection of neo-nationalism.

Subaltern Cosmopolitanism: Critiquing Neoliberal ‘top-down’ Cosmopolitan Project

The present era is concurrently characterized by hyper-globality and neo-nationalist populism. Neoliberalism, as propagated in the current era, is an expression of nation-state narcissism as it “depreciates human solidarity on a transnational level while implicitly aiming for homogeneous sovereignty” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). The U.S. President in his electoral campaign speech in Arizona (2016) had argued that reformations in the immigration system of the United States should be brought forth keeping the citizens of the country in mind connoting that immigrant could be allowed as long as they do not come in direct competition with the natives in the labor market. Priority should be given to natives and then if applicable to the immigrants and only those immigrants who are making the passage in a legalized manner and can finance themselves and simultaneously prove benefactors to the American nation-state and its economy. This was the thematic broaching in all his electoral speeches. Moreover, he invited the family members of deceased citizens assassinated by illegal immigrants to share the platform and recount their harrowing stories to the American public (*The New York Times* February 28th, 2017).

The achievements were three-folds. First, he successfully painted a derogatory picture of illegal immigrants as criminals through sheer generalizations as he had only three samples of such criminal acts; secondly, a successful instigation of fear among the natives regarding illegals who would henceforth encounter increasing hostilities and repulsion and succumb as easy targets to majoritarian political failures; and thirdly, in quite a Thatcherian manner, by repetition of the similar rhetorical approach he craftily acquired democratic consent at least from the nativist citizens in discarding the vulnerable unauthorized immigrants and terminating democratic solidarity. This final mechanism paved the way for his electoral victory which meant solidarity, in its every format, is to be dissolved in favor of American individualism, values, and economic growth. “The cultural nationalism of the working-class natives and their

chronic economic insecurities were targeted through blatant racism, anti-illegal immigration rhetoric, and refugee phobia” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). David Harvey had remarked “Not for the first, nor, it is to be feared, for the last time in history has a social group willingly voted ... for cultural, nationalist and religious reasons.” (2006, 22)

The policies amended by the Trump administration are a typical amalgamation of two ingredients in uneven quantities– neoliberalism and neo-nationalism mixed in ratios as deemed favorable to the nation-state, its federal system, and that which serves the indigenous elite interest. The neoliberal nation-state is anti-democracy even though it is strictly camouflaged by brazen neo-national interests. The displaced subaltern is not welcomed anywhere or contained in any nation-state; because of their inherent differences, they resisted any form of assimilation. They are at once “homeless, stateless, and rightless (since they left home/ the nation-state they were also deprived of human rights)” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). They are “victims of totalitarian politics, unjust cynicism, and abnormal pervasive hatred of neoliberal governments, the elite bourgeoisie, and the working-class citizen-nationals” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). The displaced subalterns “have no shelter or government to protect their interests and rights. Without a nationality, a passport, and valid documents, and financial security they transcend frontiers only to be meted out with the cynical inability of the powerful neoliberal nation-states to guarantee human rights” (Bhattacharjee, 2020). This inhuman condition imposed upon the displaced subalterns by the neoliberal nation-states is what Arendt refers to as “...a practical demonstration of totalitarian(ism)” (1973, 149) which practically highlights the neoliberal “apathy towards sanctifying the fundamental human rights” (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Like what happened in Europe post the World War II, the current era is also witnessing the situation where the stateless minorities have become a permanent institution. Millions are living outside the protectionist legal purview and this is not at all a temporary situation because the global numerical values are on the increase. Enforcement of human rights in the context of displaced subalterns cannot require an exceptional legal jurisprudence; human rights which are denied to them should be the lawful guarantees instead, rights to asylum/residence and work should be elementary rights of humans— citizens or stateless alike.

The neoliberal nation-states like the United States during the Trump regime had mentioned largescale repatriation as an alternative method of dealing with the stateless minorities completely ignoring their predicament which could be described as an inclination towards statelessness and avoid “...being deported to a ‘homeland’ where they would be strangers” (Arendt, 1973, 158). Human rights existing within nation-states are enjoyed by their citizen nationals whereas detention camps are the political reality of the rightless in search of a domicile. Instead of repatriating or assimilating, the nation-states are required to forge international solidarities to safeguard the status of these displaced individuals and realize the true implications of statelessness.

When the economically affluent diaspora encounter trouble in the host land, the motherland rushes to their aid, makes negotiations to protect them, even resorting to signing reciprocal treatise while completely ignoring the presence of her disenfranchised children within the same geographical perimeters. Also, when population groups from other nationalities seek refuge from them, they are denied asylum. The right to asylum or protection is not a written law and hence does not feature in any constitution or international agreements. It depends on the whims of nation-states to grant this status who are in urgent need but in many cases irrespective

of the dire requirement, the nation-states have turned down the deplorably plagued. The right to asylum is considered detrimental to the neoliberal policies of nation-states and that is why in most cases it remains at the level of an appeal.

For the neoliberal territories cashing on the accumulation of capital and consolidating power with the elites, the influx of the stateless or existence of the unauthorized is dreaded but what is shocking for them is the absolute impossibility to get rid of them as in recent times we have seen sealing of borders or constructing walls or even implementing totalitarian policies could not defer their entries or existence as such. So, the countries of potential refuge contrived a recalcitrant ruse- refusing to acknowledge the actuality and permanence of stateless condition, “...thereby making the situation of the refugees even more intolerable” (Arendt, 1973, 161). The problem faced by nation-states with stateless individuals or populations are their ‘un-deportability’ since the countries of origin, countries of refuge or any other country are unwilling to accept them but this un-deportable characteristic does not prevent their expulsion by neoliberal neo-national orders.

The stateless individual journeys back and forth and around sometimes crossing, at other times simply hovering on the frontiers of nation-states. Delineated as an anomaly or an outlaw, these *indésirables* (1939, 602; 1973, 163) who are not buffered by the general laws of the nation-states carve an appropriate niche even in detention camps. The non-existence of homeland and a haven, the sufferings they encounter globally yet surviving and fighting for their basic rights transform them, according to me, into cosmopolites and in this case a cosmopolitan outlaw (not in a pejorative or criminal sense, but the fact that they are not protected by any law – national or international) adjusting themselves to every possibility of a new life, a new world order harking normality but at the same time not succumbing to neo-national gimmicks. The

cosmopolitan entity for these displaced individuals thrives even in their destitutions – the loss of inalienable human rights, loss of homes, unavailability of any protection regimes, and the absolute impossibility of retrieving these losses. They are not just deprived of life, liberty, equality on legal grounds, freedom of speech, and happiness which could be sought if not enjoyed within the perimeters of the national community but “that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever” (Arendt, 1973, 175). In their not-belonging to a nation-state and the condition of fundamental rightlessness, occupying any uncivilized spot on the earth at any given point of time, render them as cosmopolites. Cosmopolitanism is not restricted to the insistence upon national affiliations, political status, globe-trotting, inheritance of a shared past and culture, inalienable rights of man, and belonging to a protectionist order. Cosmopolitanism entails the human condition of all those vulnerable immigrants evicted from national and political communities and in their embracing of all aspects of human existence and establishment of inalienable ties with humanity. The traumas experienced by these displaced people transcribe them global cosmopolitanism. As Giorgio Agamben (2000) aptly opines, “The refugees who have lost all rights and who, however, no longer want to be assimilated...in a new national identity, but want instead to contemplate lucidly their condition, receive in exchange for assured unpopularity a priceless advantage...the vanguard of their peoples” (16.6) – the advantage of being cosmopolites.

Cosmopolitanism in the authorships of many scholars has presupposed universalistic collectivism- collective past, a globally shared present or future. Whether it is an increasing awareness regarding the risks entailed by rational and progressive modernity, cosmopolites today are not the products but victims of the modernization process discarded and forgotten. The diaspora, or the economic migrants, cannot be considered within the scope of subaltern cosmopolitanism. Subaltern cosmopolitans are the undocumented, refugees, asylum seekers,

and the stateless who are ousted from the upward mobility of capitalism and are deprived of national belonging. National affiliation and social identification are insufficient to comprehend the subjectivities of these immigrants as their identities reverberate splits, injustices, and contradictions (Bhabha, 2001, 41)

The following chapter would further elucidate how certain individuals are coerced into displacement in the destination nation-state by citing the broken journeys of the characters in the fictional narratives of Marina Budhos, Kiran Desai, Nadia Hashimi, and Mohsin Hamid. Although, the process of migration had ended, and the characters are located in a new country Nadira and her family, Biju and his co-workers, Rona Riazi, Sayeed, and Nadia still remain displaced; they have not been able to anchor in the adopted land. They remain as displaced subalterns in the neoliberal host society. The cosmopolitan aspect prevalent in such alterities— is their struggle for human rights and equitable justice against consumerist capitalism and blatant neo-nationalism. They are undocumented students and workers; cleaners and janitors; store/restaurant-helpers; washerwomen and men; construction workers— they are aligned in their pursuit for refuge and their key to existence is invisibility. They inhabit quite distinct globalized terrains even within the same country. They have different interests, agendas, and expectations; they are underpaid, nevertheless a chief asset among the working force of a neoliberal economy. Their significant claim to ‘belonging’, not specifically to a nation-state, from the position of invisibility, but the inaccessibility to this belonging elicits the quagmire that clouds their subjectivities conferring upon them a cosmopolitanism, that is distinct from the neoliberal top-down project. The choices they make from the peripheries entitles them to become cosmopolites. According to Will Kymlicka, a cosmopolitan individual does not necessarily conform to ‘homogenous cultural frameworks’ or adapts to the said rules of a ‘cultural integrity’ rather have internalized pluralism and “refuses to think of himself as defined

by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language”, for the cosmopolitan is, “conscious of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self.” (1992, 754) It is not the hybrid lifestyles of economic migrants or the hyphenated identities that formulate the subjectivities of these subaltern migrant individuals but the non-finite dialectical approach to local acculturation and parochialism. Through systematic practices of border crossing, an evocation of a conscious transgressive self, exposing ‘political relations of difference’, and dismissing the apparent secular motifs of tolerance and multiculturalism – the cosmopolitanism in this context mechanizes when the subaltern migrants “views participation in the affairs of society neither as rights-borne privilege nor as charity, but as irrevocable claim” (Gidwani, 2006, 19) to inalienable human rights and justice.

Addressing this contentious issue of cosmopolitanism, Derrida (2002) seeks to analyze the status of refugees in a nation-state. He opines that cosmopolitanism is appropriated for upholding a certain image of tolerance and openness by the nation-state. And when it comes to extending hospitality to refugees, Derrida locates a “...double or contradictory imperative within the concept of cosmopolitanism...” (2002, xii). These imperatives are the inherent conditions within unconditional hospitality that should be extended to immigrants by every nation by the virtue of their right to a refuge and Derrida concludes that “All the political difficulty of immigration consists in negotiating between these two imperatives.” (ibid). Derrida, echoing Hannah Arendt, claimed for a cosmopolitan city or as he states ‘city of refuge’ where every individual seeking asylum must be accommodated and he calls in for a global transformation of city spaces. Derrida calls for a reorientation of the nation-state in terms of its political sovereignty. A transformation of the state structure would revive the concept of hospitality in the cities and their duty of hospitality. Opening these cities of refuge on the global scale would certainly usher in a new cosmopolitics for the displaced subalterns.

Neoliberal cosmopolitanism has flourished on state-sponsored violence. The subaltern migrants have been victims of the nation-state's menacing acts of persecution, deportation, and enslavement. By censoring their entries, the states have relegated the 'anonymous others' to abysmal darkness from where it is really hard to escape. Since nation-states have largely been unsuccessful in guaranteeing protection to refugees and exiles and had inflicted oppressive measures on the undocumented, Derrida pleads for 'cities of refuge' invested with their own sets of rights— especially the right of unconditional hospitality. He states that "...the opening of such refuge cities across the world...very much resembles a new cosmopolitics." (4) The 'cities of refuge' would be a haven for the stateless and the displaced individuals, for the exiled and the deported. These refuge cities would operate freely without the nation-state interventions that is the nation-state sovereign rule would not apply to these cities. Derrida essentially foregrounds this concept of 'free city' which would rise above nation-states and international federations and grant the right to asylum to the refugees and the stateless. Only if the 'city' becomes a sovereign entity, it would be able to confer human rights and justice to the subaltern migrants globally. That would certainly signal towards 'new cosmopolitics'. The neoliberal nation-states have occasionally opened up for foreigners for obvious economic reasons. Since the 1960s, whenever there has been an economic boom and cheap labor was required, immigrants were given entry. The law of the land was motivated by political and economic ambitions; the nation-state policies have never been remotely ethical or hospitable for the refugees and the undocumented.

Homi Bhabha (2017) opines that the idea of cultivating affiliations with the entire humankind and thereby subscribing to an interlinked commonality with fellow dwellers of the world is largely limited in its approach. It fails to represent those individuals who have encountered displacement against their will, the millions who have been conferred the status of refugee,

those who are fleeing violence and poverty. Therefore, he proposes ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’, in which the ‘Others’ who have not been allowed agency and self-representation becomes an essential element in the reconfiguration of the present connotation of cosmopolitanism. Bhabha criticizes the concept of national sovereignty that calculatedly evicts the refugees and deports unauthorized immigrants citing the problem of national belonging. He claims that vernacular cosmopolitanism is a “commitment to a right to difference in equality” (Bhabha, 2017, 145) which is hardly concerned with territorial origins and affiliations or affirmation of past identities but considers cosmopolitanism as an ethical choice and a political practice. Vernacular cosmopolitanism does not merely acknowledge the peripheral entities dwelling on the margins of the neoliberal nation-states as their given identities; it recognizes them as products of democratic nation-states and therefore represents itself as a political process working towards the shared goals of democracy. The main agenda of this cosmopolitanism, as Bhabha identifies, is resurrecting new forms of minoritarian affiliations and solidarities, new trajectories of democratic recognition, and affective representations by creating new modes of agency (2017,146).

Unlike neoliberal cosmopolitanism which stemmed out of a Euro-American dogmatic blueprint (citizen of the world), subaltern cosmopolitanism is rooted in divergent pluralities existing in the peripheries and expresses solidarity by acknowledging these multiple divergences and the ensuing precarity. Moreover, it “... also espouses the fragility and instability layered within its conception.” (Zeng, 2014, 7) The ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ is non-perennial in its approach as it is continuously deconstructed to identify the various subject positions and cosmopolitan articulations of the displaced subalterns. The displaced subalterns are victims of nation-state coercive power and domination within the ambit of the nation-state. Their right to have rights is threatened as they remain unwelcomed. The neoliberal totalitarian politics

playing on territorial sovereignty exploits their homeless, stateless, and rightless condition. The subaltern cosmopolitan framework is required for its democratic approach and as an embodiment of humanitarian rights. When nation-states pledge to treat the displaced subalterns as pariahs targeting them in ‘new wars’ (Kaldor, 2006), elite/neoliberal cosmopolitanism is, but, of little help. Subaltern cosmopolitanism repudiates the doctrine of absolute sovereignty over a territory, instead, it argues for governance based on cosmopolitan principles guided by humanitarian legalities.

Conclusion

The intricate complexities pervading the trajectories of displaced subalterns necessitates a ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ approach because of its “rustic and chaotic charm” (Guan, 2009, 141 Zeng 3) unfettered by the technocratic neoliberal forces from above. The top-down cosmopolitical project or ‘cosmopolitanism from above’ fails to critically engage with the lived realities of disempowered humans who are perpetually in displacement. Hence, cosmopolitanism from above, a specter of the past, should be replaced by subaltern cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitanism from below which essentially proliferates from the deprivations in displacement. Neoliberal cosmopolitanism which is a capitalist tendency evades a political engagement with the exploitation and resistance of the displaced subalterns. We have to understand that violence and racial hierarchies from the colonial era are still reflected in the neoliberal dominance over the displaced subalterns. Hence, a cosmo-political attitude that celebrates the hybridity of cultural inflections while neglecting the nation-states’ flouting of human rights and international laws is not desirable in the twenty-first century. Cosmopolitanism should not be a mere façade for nation-state tolerance. Cosmopolitanisms inscribing the asymmetries of the neoliberal present might serve the purpose, instead.

‘Cosmopolitanisms from the below’ would thrive only after manifesting itself within the neo-colonial power regimes and confronting the repulsive features of neoliberal capitalism –the disconcerting rightist position of the Trump administration symbolized by the acerbic rhetoric of unlawful incarcerations and calamitous deportation of the displaced subalterns– and initiating while within those regime democratic solidarities of equitable justice for the displaced subalterns. Subaltern cosmopolitanism is the metonymy of resistance against the anti-illegal and refugee-phobic rhetoric and practices propagating in the neoliberal era.

This chapter has not defined the contours of subaltern cosmopolitanism. Instead, it investigated the varied displaced phenomena where this conceptualization could be deployed theoretically and as a socio-political agency for subaltern subjectivities who are the victims of arbitrary displacements, thereby, cultivating the possibilities of empowering the displaced subalterns to resist the imposed neoliberal hegemonic regimes. The subaltern cosmopolitan conceptualization shall be considered in the next chapter to sociologically analyze the fictional narratives which embody the several instances of subalternity in displacement.

Chapter-V

DISPLACED SUBALTERN SUBJECTIVITIES IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH-ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Literary narratives mirror the social realities including social values, norms, cultural perspectives in a manner that is not mechanical or passive rather critical and fact-based. Fiction engages with specific differences that exist in society and is being played around. The displaced subaltern subjectivities I investigate in this project are largely distinct from the immigrant communities which have already established themselves as diaspora and those migrants who are temporary given work permits nevertheless legally recognized.

It is often condescendingly assumed that fictional narratives do little than describing the world but as Salman Rushdie declares "...description is itself a political act...redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it." (1991, 13-14) Literature politicizes, it is not just the State, in fact when the latter distorts the historical past for a comforting present, it is these alternative realities like art and literature which politicize the struggle against power and hegemony. The politicians and artists/writers are the polarities perpetuating their occupational rights on the same territory but painting different images. The literary vehicles– novels, poetry, drama– are responsible for instrumentalizing an alternative variation of the truth disseminated by the hegemonic nation-state politics. Mohsin Hamid claims that "All of us who are writers are doing something that actually matters," (*NPR*, March 8th 2017). Forced displacement and irregular crossings are inevitably complimented by violent visions that thrive on the impossibility of conceiving credible futuristic optimism. However, as Hannah Arendt (1994)

suggests rays of hope and strong optimism are nurtured amidst the heart-wrenching climate inhabited by individuals who experience forced displacement. According to Mohsin Hamid, “Fiction can explore this possibility, it can make us feel something other than the sense of either doom or denial that is so prevalent in our nonfiction discourse.” (ibid) Fiction is the need of the hour for it presents an alternative way of thinking about the world and society as it adopts a humanitarian perspective for a more nuanced comprehension of the lived realities often conditioning and involuntary displacement. In comparison to the literary oeuvre on South-Asian diaspora in the United States, which have tended to proclaim diasporic journeys as broken, I contend that the plights of the displaced subalterns who are denied of fundamental human rights, whose struggles of procuring a refuge color their existential reality are therefore in absolute contrast to the spokespersons of the American Dream narrative. A new literary genre called Indian- American Fiction emerged in the nineties that invariably described the pitiful pining of the elite Indian diaspora in the United States. It was largely the case with South-Asian-American literary medium. Indians living in the United States on expired visas is not a recent phenomenon. However, the prolific literary outpours conveniently glossed over this category.

In this chapter, I do not merely compose a critical review essay on the literary authorship of Marina Budhos, Kiran Desai, Nadia Hashimi, and Mohsin Hamid rather I delve into the insightful nonetheless contending issues that these writers try to highlight in their narratives namely *Ask Me No Questions*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Sky at Our Feet*, and *Exit West* respectively, thereby attempting a sociological analysis of the selected fictional narratives. The four authors, instead of wallowing in the sentiments of assimilation or glorifying diasporic diversities, approach the matrix of displaced experiences rationally. Budhos, Desai, and Hashimi display a prolific interest in unravelling the sheer darkness underlying the apparent

prosperity promised by the American dream and the agony of being tagged as an ‘illegal’.

Kiran Desai, the Man Booker-Prize winner of Indian-American heritage, acknowledges that she wanted to write about various kinds of ‘loss (es)’ experienced during the process of displacement –the loss and nostalgic reminiscences of the diasporic subjectivity and the dispossession suffered by the undocumented immigrants. She claims, “... I did want to write about two different classes of people too, who go abroad. One class, which is the educated Westernized class and the poorer people too.” (*The Hindustan Times*, October 12th, 2006).

Desai, commenting on the other forms of displacement which are not diasporic in nature reveals that inflictions caused by displacements are often camouflaged by heroic portrayals. She opines, “... there is a huge amount of cruelty... The fact that they are in America lets them make their immigrant journey a very heroic one... people write novels that look at immigration as a heroic act... In reality I don’t think it is that kind of a journey at all. It can often be a very cruel journey and a very selfish one.” (ibid)

Nadia Hashimi, a second-generation Afghan-American writer, was incited by the struggles of her immigrant parents in redefining their lives in America in the early seventies. Being an immigrant child, she could comprehend the ground realities underlying the diversities as immigrants re-establish themselves in terms of a new culture and a new language and went on to create the vibrant character Jason whose exuberant narration illustrates the plights of being an American child of an undocumented parent.

Marina Budhos, an American writer of Indo-Caribbean heritage, was inspired to craft her novel drawing upon her ethnographic research in a world shuddered by major historical events. She had conducted a series of interviews on Bangladeshi undocumented immigrants post 9/11 in New York, the event which in its aftermath had swirled up the lives of undocumented immigrants overnight, usurped their home (America), and relegated them to seek shelter across the border (Canada). In an interview, Budhos states that “... I had chosen Bangladesh as

opposed to other potential cultures because I had ... visited Bangladesh, so I felt comfortable with Bengali culture.” (*Cynsations*, February 7th 2006)

Mohsin Hamid is a Booker-nominated novelist of Pakistani heritage who had lived extensively in the United States and the United Kingdom before moving back to his homeland. Hamid’s experiences of perpetual mobility and living through porous borders motivated him to delve into the refugee subjectivity and his psychological delineation of forced displacement in the era of neoliberal capitalism. Not as representatives of varied ethnic cultures, but as outsiders and observers in different contexts, these writers have in distinct ways, tried to foreground the specificities of displaced experience in a thought-provoking yet empathetic manner to deftly deal with complexities entailed in displacement, refugeehood, illegal immigration, violence, and human rights abuse.

The rationale behind this selection is, first, their thematic commonality. Their characters are caught in perpetual displacement; displacement which at some point is forced upon them; displacement for them seems to be an everlasting process. Unlike the diaspora which has arrived in the host land, they are always arriving for they are searching for the anchor. They are displaced but their status has not upgraded to diaspora or even a migrant. They are the subalterns who are living in displacement against their will. The novels trace the broken journeys displaced subalterns of South-Asian origin in the United States and the wishful dream of finding a refuge and instead encountering violent circumstances and constant rejections by the neoliberal nation-state. Secondly, each of these four authors have foregrounded the displaced subaltern perspective by rummaging through its political manifestations in the neoliberal times. The authors, themselves, have not experienced illegality or refugeehood. They have not sought for asylum in the U.S. However, each one of them has imagined the

experience of being the subaltern in displacement, from the perspective of a displaced subaltern. They have attempted to make the voices– which have for long been unheard and disregarded by the political, cultural, and literary discourses on diaspora– audible to the readers. Thirdly, the fact that novels published on undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers of South-Asian origin in the United States are rather sporadic compared to the monumental diasporic oeuvre. This chapter shall describe, interpret, and evaluate the sociological relevance of the selected oeuvre before deliberating upon the constructions of ‘home’, ‘belonging’, and ‘identity in the context of the displaced subalterns.

The tales of Budhos’ *Ask Me No Question*, and Hashimi’s *The Sky at Our Feet* dwell on the conundrum ensued by illegality embroiling the lives of the young protagonists –Nadia, her sister Aisha and Jason respectively– as they grapple with the imposing implications of being undocumented immigrants in the United States. Nadia and Ayesha are teen children of Bangladeshi immigrants and are living for years on expired tourist visas whereas Jason was born in America to an Afghan woman named Rona Riazi who too is living there on an expired student visa. In American legal terms, the status reserved for them is ‘illegal’.

In *Ask Me No Questions*, the protagonist Nadira, her parents, and her elder sister Aisha are undocumented immigrants who are skedaddling to the northern border in search for asylum in Canada. They are escaping from the country (the U.S.) where they had wished to nurture a home. For years they have lived on expired visas with the kindling hope of becoming naturalized. But in the wake of 9/11, everything changed. The host which had been welcoming now began to dread their presence and want to get rid of them anyhow. Threatened with deportation, they try to seek refuge in the neighboring country (Canada) only to confront the closed doors.

“We are applying for asylum in your country, sir,”
Abba replies...The man shakes his head
...“Sorry. We’re full up here. Overwhelmed.
People have been coming nonstop, and we can’t
process them all...All the border crossings. It’s
been crazy these past few weeks. (Budhos, 2007,
13)

The author gives the readers an essence of being ‘unwanted’ everywhere through the subtitle itself “*Nadira just wants to be accepted- in her own country*”. This nurturing of a hope to belong eludes people like Nadira who meet with the hostilities of survival within the nation-state which she fondly refers to as ‘her own country’. The subtitle engenders a series of questions regarding the existence of an immigrant in the absence of valid papers. Probing further, the words such as ‘acceptance’, ‘own country’, ‘special registration’, ‘deportation’, ‘green card’ construe the entities of these immigrants. They no longer remain individuals but just ‘papers’ and just like scraps of paper they too are disposed of and their existence denied. The lives of these immigrants are defined by words like ‘What if?’, ‘probably’ or ‘maybe’ as the narrator reflects- “Maybe one day we will get U.S. residency. Or maybe we’ll just be sent back to Bangladesh. But maybe-just maybe- Canada will let us in.” (Budhos, 2007, 5) This signifies the instability and uncertainties that cloud the immigrant psyche. Nadira vents out the immigrant conscience which remains “floating” perpetually “not sure where (they) belong” or if they really belong to any country. Not possessing a valid passport only means that “... (They) don’t really exist here, that this really isn’t (their) home.” (Budhos, 2007, 8)

Unlike their school friends- Risa, Rose, and Kavita who are “... legal, for years and years (Who), are the perfect candidates, the ones you read about in the newspaper”, (Budhos, 2007,

51) Nadira and her sister Aisha are harrowed into oblivion despite Aisha's academic buoyancy. And they cannot even share their unfortunate circumstances with anyone because "That's the way it has always been... Never let anyone know. Never" (Budhos, 2007, 16). Aisha quite unconsciously echoes the predicament of those immigrants who have outlived their visa-stay when she says, "We're not in Canada, we're not in America, we're not in Bangladesh. We're on our own" (Budhos, 2007, 28).

Quite naturally with the expiration of visas and invalid passports, their existence suffers termination. No country oversees them. They cannot affiliate themselves to any nation-state- neither with the country (America) where they had not only dreamt of having a home but considered it home nor the country (Canada) where they desperately sought refuge and not even their land of origin (Bangladesh). Apart from fondly remembering the homeland and cradling stories inside "... like precious glass ..." (Budhos, 2007, 90) their options are limited. Unlike the legally recognized diaspora they cannot go back to their homeland or recreate it autonomously in the host-land- "Since we're illegal we never get to go back to Bangladesh" (ibid)

Nadia Hashimi's *The Sky at Our Feet* (2018) portrays the uncertainties in the life of an adolescent named Jason D or Shah-Jan when he realizes that his mother, an Afghan national had been living in America on an expired visa and could be deported. Hence, commences his picaresque journey for survival through New York City. Jason, seemingly an outlaw, appeals to the readers with his picaro wit and heroic odyssey around New York City to meet his mother whom he thought had been deported to Afghanistan. He was not even remotely acquainted with the term 'undocumented' or 'illegal' until one fine day he witnessed his mother breaking

down while watching an anti-illegal immigration rally on the television and it jolted him with his mother's desolate confession, "...Me and them- we are the same." (2018,8)

Jason's mother had arrived in the United States on a student visa at a time when the Taliban was gaining control over Afghanistan. Jason's father also became a target and the newlywed couple desperately tried to flee. But since the couple could not procure visas for both, it was decided that Jason's mother would leave and should be soon joined by her husband on a special visa. While in the States, she not only discovered that she has conceived but also received the major blow of her life- her journalist husband indeed became a target of the Taliban atrocities and was assassinated. She could not return home because it was too unsafe for her. Thus, began the journey of Rona Riazzi surviving on her own in a new country. Along with her studies, she started working part-time jobs to support herself, even though she was pregnant with a child. Six months later after Jason D. Riazzi was born, Rona Riazzi was informed that her visa had expired and that she had to return to her own country. But she could not return under the circumstances prevailing back in her home country and therefore decided to stay back on an expired visa and dearth of legal documents, thereby depreciating herself to the status of an 'illegal'.

The illegality could have daunted the student Rona Riazzi and on every possibility, she might have reunited with her family back in Afghanistan, but it failed to terrify Rona Riazzi, the mother, who chose illegality because it provided her with a safer option for her son that returning home, where persecution was lurking. The wishful dreams of becoming a doctor were overwhelmed with the struggle for procuring basic means of survival for herself and her new-born- a shelter, food, and a job that pays for all, "She went from store to store in town, looking for a job, a new apartment away from the college and ways to disappear." (2018, 18)

Of course, disappearance colors the undocumented entity. It is as if the disappearance is injected in an undocumented vein and reflected in the personality. At least that is what the characters so far have done- disappear. But how long? That un-fateful day finally arrived in Rona Riazi's life, or at least that is what Jason thought, as he watched his mother towed by two men in navy-blue uniforms one morning from the laundromat where she worked for five years. This ensued the whirlwind journey of her son through the New York city escaping the prying eyes of immigration surveillance at every nook and corner.

Kiran Desai's etching of the character Biju- once a member of the labor diaspora-turned-illegal in *The Inheritance of Loss*, and his sojourn from a developing to a developed nation is an episode that reflects upon the concerns which trigger the emigration process in the context of many South-Asians. But unfortunately, these people cannot come out of their quandary. The reason for migration, therefore, becomes insignificant as they remain unproductive surviving on minimal wages hunched inside crowded basements with the fear of being deported always lurking in their subconscious. Biju felt a void deep inside his soul precipitated while sustaining himself under such conditions and therefore voices the same plight as Nadira's, "You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight since the shadow class was condemned to movement. The man left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home and changed names. . . . Addresses and phone numbers did not hold." (Desai, 2006, 109) Since the displaced subalterns are not protected by the constituted laws of the state, they are often exploited and not only by the nationals but also at the hands of fellow legal immigrants. Harish-Harry, the owner of the Gandhi Cafe, and his wife Malini in Desai's prose sequence are gruesome instances

It had been Malini who had suggested the staff live down the kitchen. "Free-housing" Harish-Harry told Biju. By offering a

reprieve from NYC rents, they could cut the pay to a quarter of the minimum wage, reclaim the tips for the establishment, keep an eye on the workers, and drive them to work fifteen-, sixteen-, seventeen-hour donkey days. Saran, Jeev, Rishi, Mr. Lalkaka, and now Biju. All illegal... (Desai, 2006, 153)

The employers understand due to their undocumented status, migrants like Biju, cannot raise their voices in protest of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. They cannot call the police; they are not protected by the immigrant laws of the host land simply because they do not exist. The instant they seek protection their existence would be questioned and eventually will be deported. This is the very reason I claim the displaced subalterns as doubly marginalized. Their predicaments highlight the insensitivity of the elite, educated diaspora towards the fellow migrants who might have emigrated from the same country but enjoy different status and positions in the host land owing to their legal status.

Although in certain cases certain migrants do autonomously decide to stay back past their visa permit like Nadira's family- "...we knew we were going to stay past the date on the little blue stamp of the tourist visa in our passports. Everyone does it... A lot of Bangladeshis here are illegal" (Budhos, 2007, 7), but again ignorant and naive citizens from developing countries are often duped by fake recruiters in the name of permanent jobs in the U.S. Biju's character as Desai portrays was looted off eight thousand Indian rupees at first and then out of sheer desperation Biju faked all his documents at the U.S embassy in India and ultimately reached his destination, only to live perpetually on broken dreams- "The luckiest boy in the whole world. He walked through a park to luxuriate in the news alone." (2006, 194) As Michael C. LeMay enumerates the different routes of becoming unauthorized, "...another way of becoming...illegal is by entering through fraudulent papers" (2015, 4)

Joseph Carens (1987) argues that individuals must possess the autonomy of settlement across nation-state borders. He states that the citizenship status in the modern, liberal Western democracies is quite like that of the feudalistic privileges of the primitive era of the monarchical regime where inheritance determined the status and enhanced the life chances of an individual (Carens, 1987). He expounds on a communitarian view that immigration should be central to the theory of justice. What he tries to imply is that it is important to perceive this issue of the alien/illegal based on humanity and global justice and should be explored with sensitivity.

Carens argues for “free migration” (1987, 270) which he also states might look like an impossible dream now and unachievable on immediate terms and measures but is worth striving for. Moreover, the developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom should be opening their borders and admitting the destitute population groups because they can do so and have a moral obligation towards them. According to Carens, “The current restrictions on immigration in Western democracies... are not justifiable. Like feudal barriers to mobility, they protect unjust privilege” (ibid)

Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017) is a parable that justifies the waves and velocity of forced displacement in the neoliberal era. It is indeed a statement on the sheer powerlessness of the solid nation-states frozen in its conservative being that could only be liquefied with the crossings of migrants. Refugees are not *the ‘problem’ or a ‘crisis’* as often referred to in terms of international immigration given credibility through posing images by international media they are *in problem*; they are in a crisis that’s often lifelong; they do not even see the light at the other end of the tunnel- precarity and disillusionment color their existence and this is what Hamid illuminates through the peregrinations of his protagonists Saeed and Nadia. The

narrative is not just about the ongoing refugee crisis, as is often claimed, it rather makes a universal statement resonating on various levels and ultimately reveals the fundamental truth denied mostly by nativist conscience, “We are all migrants through time” (2017, 209)

Geographically transporting the main characters through ‘doors’ - the escapes that completely defy logic, the sub-plotlines running parallelly to the main narrative, the dreams of the future while cradling the past, carving imaginary niches, and the telepathic shifts within the story are deeply embedded in social concerns; political events wreaking in the real world and movements ensued due to intolerance and other human frailties. Hamid deploys the instruments of magic realism, in a true Rushdian style, to manifest an ambiance of inventing the migrant self. Salman Rushdie, in an interview once, had claimed that “the magic in magic realism has deep roots in the real.” (*The Telegraph*, April 25th 2014) Despite indulging in the liberty of magical transcendences, Hamid’s superstructure has a deep-rooted base in the inflicted socio-political and economic realities of the displaced.

The main plot is invested in the issues that plague the individuals who have been forced to flee their homeland for potential threats of death and incarcerations. Tracing the trajectories of Saeed and Nadia who undergo the crossovers from their homeland to Greece, Germany (imaginary), Sweden (promised but unfulfilled), London, and finally Marin, California- the author underlines the transiency that characterizes the lives of these individuals and the xenophobic hostilities encountered by them in the course of these routes. Before becoming refugees, the lovestruck couple was citizens of their own anonymous country and the city where they resided was also an asylum harboring refugees from the neighboring countries, “In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war” (2017, 1) However, when their city was occupied by militant extremists who violated human rights, they

were forced to depart. The omniscient narrator informs that it's not just the aforementioned characters inhabiting the Hamidian world, but the entire world is on the move, "That summer it seemed to Saeed and Nadia that the whole planet was on the move, much of the global south headed to the global north, but also southerners moving to other southern places and northerners moving to other northern places." (2017, 167)

The tale at the very outset introduces in a very humane manner the nature of human resilience and resistance against the bizarre that life bestows when it highlights that even in cities that are "teetering at the edge of the abyss" (2017,1) The youth are still pursuing their education because they have dreams and ambitions to fulfill. So even if there is a death knell round the corner, humans by their very nature go on with their lives as usual because "...our eternally impending ending does not put a stop to our transient beginnings and middles until the instant when it does" (2017, 2) Saeed and Nadia too continue with their lives, attending classes and their courtship blissfully aware of the bombardments in the city until one day of course when they decided to escape to save their lives.

At this juncture, the author introduces the 'doors' that pervades not only throughout the story but is the key element in the lives of the displaced characters as well, "...doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed from this death trap of a country." (2017, 69) Hamid in several of his interviews is often heard saying that by doors he refers to a technology which has reduced, if not wholly collapsed, the great geographical distances. Usage of social media platforms and other technologies at disposal, humans have indeed managed, what Saeed's father in the narrative refers as, 'time-travel' (2017, 14) However, 'doors', I contend, in the context of involuntary displacements, significantly highlights the borders or the thresholds strictly controlled by the nation-states, nevertheless transgressed

during the journey. 'Doors' also underscore the (in)hospitality encountered by the displaced individuals at the border zones.

The title 'Exit West' has two different connotations according to me. First, it highlights the protagonists exiting from the East and approaching the West which eventually they do in the course of the narrative but secondly, it could also mean that the trend of human inflow is not exclusively towards the West but it is, as the author in his interview with *The Hindu* states, multidirectional and there are crosscurrents as well, "Migration isn't a one-directional process; it's a colossal process that has been happening in all directions for thousands of years." (*The Hindu* September 27th, 2017)

But whatever the spatial reference is, the main theme of the narrative is 'exiting' and it takes place at all levels- territorial, physical, emotional, and psychological. We all ardently desire to escape our current situation that stifles us, and we try to search for these exits just like the protagonists. Saeed and Nadia, after a strenuous quest, manages to find an escape route that is the first door with the help of an agent who takes them to Mykonos, an island in Greece. Exiting through a few more doors they ultimately manage to reach London and finally Marin. But these journeys do not happen all at once, not even subsequently. The couple undergoes their share of harrowing experiences in each of these locations where they struggle each moment with the status of a refugee for basic sustenance and survival. They emerge at the refugee camps in every destination. The narrator uses the word 'emerged' at every instance when the couple was transported to a new destination. It makes sense too that in the world of magic everything just emerges unexpectedly but on a deeper level, it also points at the predicament of a refugee, who do not meet with an ultimate arrival unlike economic immigrants, as their journeys remain perpetual. They do not choose their destinations but just

land up wherever makes them feel safe even if it is for a while. In the narrative, the young couple lived in tents on the rocky patches after emerging eventually, which is quite difficult and gradually these adversities take a toll on their relationship as well. Escaping from Mykonos with the help of a girl from the hospital whom Nadia had befriended during her regular visits, they reached London only to be constantly threatened by the natives and their xenophobic nationalism. They occupied a large house they had entered through the doors for a while until they headed to move to the government-built rehabilitation settlements. Both worked at the construction sites but later decided to leave to save their relationship which had turned sour over time. They reach Marin in California through another door, an island city, where a large number of refugees had already settled. They set up their home away from other settlements, on a hill, with a view of the sea. They found jobs and spent evenings together smoking marijuana. But this movement could not ultimately save their relationship. They fell apart just like their world had. The novelist successfully portrays the fast-changing world and the effect of these changes in the personal lives and attitudes of humans. Hamid paints an emblematic picture of the *refugian* world through this fictional stream of thought as he claims in an interview with the *Fresh Air* "All of us who are writers are doing something that actually matters," (NPR, March 8th 2017)

Home, Belonging, and the Displaced Subalterns

... no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
...
tearing up your passport in an airport toilet
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back
...

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

Warsan Shire, *Home* (2015)

The excerpt captures the pulse of the violence encountered by individuals coerced to leave their actual and sometimes even adopted homes/homelands.

William Safran (1991) maintains that for expatriate minority communities, the ancestral homeland that has been renounced is regarded as the true, ideal home where the migrants and their descendants would eventually return when conditions oblige. A collective vision of this homeland makes them relate to it on many levels ensuing in a kind of commitment for their original homeland. For the internationally recognized diaspora, this is true since for them engaging in the construction of the home is a project that confirms rootedness. A purposeful and choice-based activity ensuing long-term commitments and attachments that would eventually catalyze the anchoring process in the new location and imbue a sense of ethnic localization. Celebrating ethnic festivals, opening restaurants and cafes catering to ethnic cuisines, engineering ethnic-religious sites are some of the ways in which the diaspora gets involved in reproducing home and making it politically visible in the adopted land.

However, these uncritical assumptions regarding the homeland that naturalize the relationship between a geographical territory and belonging, I believe, should be challenged. The existence of a true/ideal home is a myth for the displaced subalterns. The abandoned homeland is a place

of no return; for the former, who has been forcibly driven away by the home nation and for the latter where the force is metaphorical, nevertheless, abiding enough, the purity of the truth of one home withers after several transcendences. So is the desire to return, as they are completely aware that they would not be accepted by the nation-state which is home in retrospection. We need to look beyond the celebratory approaches of rootedness without dismissing the fundamental linkages. In an alternative mode of displacement characterized by oppressive processes, we should probe the ingredients required for executing attachments to the conceptualizations of home-building. For the undocumented wanting to return that is embarking upon an international journey would involve procuring necessary documents which they are not in possession and a single attempt at it would inevitably steer to detention and eventual deportation. The refugees had to escape the fear of persecution in their homeland, hence, there is hardly a desire to return. The refugees and the undocumented are essentially in search of a refuge/shelter that is an 'asylum'. Asylum status guarantees safety and protection to humans who have encountered conflicts and minimizes the chances of deportation. Warsan Shire's poem aptly delineates the displaced subaltern's apprehensions with home and belonging. Composed especially in the context of citizens-turned-refugees, I believe it resonates with the predicaments of the undocumented as well who are also forced to leave from the fear of deportation.

Moreover, even if the first-generation- who had to leave after spending almost a lifetime in their original homeland- secretly cradles a desire or returning in their hearts as could be seen in the case of Nadira's Abba and Rona Riaz in Budhos' and Hashimi's narratives respectively, the second generation hardly ever nurtures such longings as is the case with Jason, Nadira, and her elder sister Ayesha who believe that they solely belong to the host nation-state. The host-land is their homeland, although they are pretty much conscious of their undocumented status.

They desperately attempt at integrations with the host nation community often by emulating their lifestyles and mannerisms. They want to be one with them. For them, there is no other home except where they are lodged. To address these dichotomies, I have relied on ‘affective dimensions of belonging’ to reconceptualize ‘home’ in the current topical ambiance and pin down the inherent specificities.

It is technically not the rebuilding or physical manifestations of home rather “the building of the feeling of ‘being at home’” (Hage, 1997, 2) is crucial. And as Hage maintains that this feeling of being at home entails four key feelings- the feeling of security, the feeling of familiarity, the feeling of community, and the feeling of a sense of possibility. The possibility of a secured life. The perception of the home which in simple terms refers to the country of birth/origin and where the individual is located and living and shall be so always has lost its aura in the era of mass mobilities and forced displacement. The displaced subaltern encounters the ambivalent impulses of belonging and strangeness/uncanny, in Freudian terms the ‘Heimlich’ and ‘Unheimlich’, for their achievements are also permanently impaired by the loss of something that is left forever. The characters in Budhos, Hashimi, Desai, and Hamid experience this ambivalence because they are in that perilous territory of not belonging yet somehow attempting to grow out of this impending demand of locating oneself.

The meaning of home assumes a complex tangent in the poetics of prolonged exile. The study, therefore, focuses on the understanding of home and its essential deprivation lacing the exilic condition; the process of re-making it elsewhere, and if this process compensates, even remotely, the immense loss that has been experienced. The intense attachment to the home that is lost is never quite erased even after repeated acts of reconstructions but it surely ceases to be abiding especially in cases where the pain of exile is ignored and superseded by desperate

attempts at knitting the chords of belonging; when integration no longer remains a choice but becomes a necessity, as Hannah Arendt enumerates, "...we forget quicker...The more optimistic among us would even add that...their new country taught them what a home really looks like...we rather avoid any allusion to concentration or internment camps we experienced...Even among ourselves we do not speak about this past" (1994, 111)

The displaced conscience is colored with hostipitable¹⁰ inquiries--- 'where/which country are you from?' or 'where do you belong?'--- which inevitably leads to unearthing the past, no matter, how gruesome it might have been. The aspect of belonging is associated with the concept of home. However, home is not merely a place or a geographical space; it is an entity to which a dislocated individual remains attached by the chords of belonging and nostalgic reminiscences and which the displaced individual tries to re-construct in unique ways whether physically or in the memory. There is no singular home for the displaced; multiple belongings engender multiple conceptualizations of home as well. As Wendy Walter states, "The notion of diaspora can represent a multiple, plurilocal, constructed location of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness, and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home." (Walters,1923, xvi) The diaspora often recreates home through cultural constructs and there are copious historical instances that deal with the painful experiences heralded by the migration process, home-making practices of the diaspora, and the forging of their transnational bonds. Most diasporic scholars link the increased mobilities with homelessness and creating a condition where even after being homeless one can feel at home-- nostalgic retrospections of the past home "...that were socially homogeneous, communal, peaceful, safe, and secure." (Duyvendak, 2011, 9) But there are disparities in the construction of homes even among the

¹⁰ Hostipitable: Derridean conceptualization of hospitality infused with hostilities.

displaced populations. Of course, to a great extent, it depends on the causes, intensity, and frequency of the dislocation(s). For the diaspora, predominantly denoted by the educated skilled migrants, whose displacement is voluntary, home is re-constructed through diverse trajectories, physical manifestations, cultural practices, and nostalgic regeneration of fond memories. However, for the individuals under scrutiny, home is a fleeting emotion, which they want to experience nevertheless denied. The *sans-papiers* and the refugees are in search of a 'refuge'. This continuous search for home constitutes their displaced subjectivities. It is through exploring the nature of belonging and invoking memories of the past that we can carve the niche called home in the diasporic context. Comparing belonging with the gravitational force of the earth, Rushdie, a self-described emigrant, intriguingly explores the meaning of home, "Both phenomena observably exist: my feet stay on the ground, ... we know the force of gravity but not its origins; and to explain why we become attached to our birthplaces we pretend that we are trees and speak of roots" (2017, 25). A lot of factors come into play while formulating the idea of home for the displaced subaltern--- What it means to belong? What is the nature of that belonging? Are homelands imaginary indeed? Is there any reality in searching for one's roots? Are these roots real? Does reconfiguring the past imbibing the fragments of memory assist in these reconstructions?

For Budhos' Nadira, Desai's Biju, Hashimi's Jason, and Hamid's Saeed and Nadia constructing a home within a specified geographical location is not a feasible phenomenon. With changing latitudes and longitudes at every instance, their re-invention of home and belonging do not see cultural manifestations or memorial projections, rather the undocumented/fugitive/refugee predicament can forge a home at every shifting site of displacement. Home for them is a shelter, albeit temporary, that would protect them from the immediacy of atrocities rather than a space of celebration of difference. Hence detention tenements, asylum houses, and even

concentration camps turn into homes. In the context of refugees, who are always on the move, identifying a home is difficult for they are either refused or ousted by almost every nation-state. They often inhabit the peripheral zones as they are unable to cross the nation-state threshold and it is this liminality that contours their consciousness. Mohsin Hamid describes the refugee habitat while referring to the victims who have launched themselves in Saeed's cityscape.

Refugees had occupied many of the open places in the city,
pitching tents...erecting lean-tos...sleeping rough on pavements,
and in the margins of the streets. Some seem to be trying to
recreate the rhythms of a normal life...Others stared out at the city
with what looked like anger, or surprise, or supplication, or envy.
Others didn't move at all: stunned, maybe, or resting. Possibly
dying. (2017, 23)

These lines appositely etch the quandary of refugees whose trajectories are characterized by transportation, relocation, adjustment, and adaptation. Either they are subjected to movement or must embrace death. They are rather unfortunate to arrive in a new country without any assistance. They left their country to rebuild their lives and for that kind of rebuilding, they must have enormous strength and steering optimism. Leaving home indicates a loss of familiarity with daily life and venturing into a world of the unknown. Loss of home entails several other losses- occupation, language, self-confidence, natural expression of feelings, ensuing a complete rupture of private lives; expecting to be saved by Refugee Committees (Arendt, 1994, 110)

In Hamid's narrative, Saeed and Nadia are caught up in this ever-lasting process of constructing and demolishing homes only to reconstruct new ones. For Nadia who had left her parent's

home quite early in her youth, as a single woman determined to survive on her own had made a single rented room atop a house her home. This home she had fended for herself did not comprise of a family or any relations as such until of course, she started courting Saeed but "... a record player and small collection of vinyl, a circle of acquaintances among the city's free spirits... and non-judgemental female gynaecologist" (2017, 19) Nadia had practically been moving all her life. After the demise of Saeed's mother, Nadia moved in with him. Saeed on the contrary experienced this mammoth task of moving from a place he cradled as home only on the occasion of leaving the country along with Nadia.

Saeed had lived with his parents; he had been handed a home since birth and probably never had imagined leaving that home unless conflicts infiltrated in the city. The deluxe condominium at a premier location mirrored an erstwhile prosperous era and the jovial times enjoyed by Saeed's family. Once he left that home, he was unable to recreate it at other geographical locations where his flights took him subsequently. The narrator here makes a rather interesting and insightful intervention, "Location, location, location, the estate agents say. Geography is destiny, respond the historians." (2017, 9) Indeed, it is a common human tendency to map a location initially to build a home. The specificities related to the location are of utmost importance undermining the fact that often humans lose the power to choose the sites of creating homes, at times the sites are simply bestowed by fate. And this is exactly what happens with refugees like Saeed and Nadia. They never get to choose the location, they simply arrive where they are destined and every time they arrived at a location, they tried to create a home. And these repeated acts of re-constructing a home further weakens the strings of belonging not only to a geographical location but with fellow humans as well. The sense of loss and injustice produced by the forced act of displacement and the possibility of no return to the home that has been left behind can never be atoned. Hamid's protagonists and their

sojourns reverberate the complexity of home for those compelled to transgress the borders and illustrate the impact of this protracted loss while exiled.

In the current era, millions of displaced individuals like Hamid's Saeed and Nadia are trying to escape genocide, bombing, ethnic cleansing occurring in their homelands and are seeking routes that lead to Europe and the United States. For them options are limited, they have no choice other than to seek asylum which eventually is their only hope for survival. In this context, the importance of home as a physical entity ceases to exist; the term home is characterized by sheer ephemerality, one that is simultaneously eroded yet cradled in the memory. For these displaced individuals home solely means refuge or a safe shelter and procuring a home or the right to call a place their home essentially depends upon the humanitarian efforts and generosity of other nations, unlike the diaspora for whom home is characterized by a linkage or a connection with a nation-state territory.

A refugee is compelled to choose exilic conditions thereby forcing a rift between the individual and the native place (Said, 2000). For the refugees and asylum seekers who are perpetually on the move, home becomes an immaterialist ideal and therefore it is quite impossible to establish any connection with a home in its material sense. The diasporic imaginary often resurrects home as a static entity that remains viable through linkages and correspondences, whereas, in the context of forced displacement, the home remains an unsettling phenomenon. The diasporic home is recognized in terms of the national territory, bounded geographical space which is usually seen as the point of return. On the contrary, for the refugees, home is a point of arrival, where the action of arriving continues. Home for them is a place where they would be treated as humans and not aliens, space where they would be able to enjoy and execute the fundamental human rights and it would not be contingent upon the merciful benevolence of

other nation-states, where they would be treated at par with citizens and not as a burden on the national economy. Unfortunately, the existence of such a space is conditioned by liminality.

Being undocumented infers many challenges and social inequalities are constructed to perpetuate the constraints. I re-establish a different approach to explore the absence of original home and the simultaneous process of home-making in the context of those living in the shadows. The undocumented subjectivity is marred by intense precarity. The English terms undocumented, irregular, illegal or the French term *sans papiers* signify ‘without papers’ or documents that provide the validity of individuals. Papers provide evidence. Right from birth till death, a human individual acquires several types of papers that determine the individual’s existence. Nation-states issue papers or nationalized documents recognizing their citizens and demarcating the foreigners. The most popular being ‘passport’, a document that is issued by the country of birth providing evidence of belonging and nationality of the holder and it is mainly used for international travel. It is a necessary document for individuals who are crossing nation-state boundaries. A visa is also a travel document issued by a national territory to foreigners allowing them to enter, remain, and/or leave the territory. The visa is a document of permission granted to outsiders who are trying to obtain entry and it typically includes all the details about the duration of stay, dates of entry and exit, permitted visits, places allowed to visit, and/or the foreigner’s right to work in the country. All individuals transcending nation-state borders, who are not victims of forced displacement and hence do not require assistance on humanitarian grounds are assumed to have a valid passport and a visa. Undocumented implies that the migrant individuals have outlived their permitted stays as a foreigner and since they have not returned to their own country, their passports and visas have also expired. For the host nation-state, they are criminals, and the nation-state from where they had taken flight do not acknowledge their presence either as they are neither in physical residence there nor do

they execute their citizenship rights. Since they are not recognized by any nation-state, they share a similar fate as those who have been rendered stateless. Although the neoliberal states are in denial, the undocumented sub-consciously sculpts home through a perpetual sense of unbelonging pervading their subjectivities. For Jason (Hashimi) home meant the studio apartment in New Jersey where he lived with his mother until he was reminded of a separate home - Afghanistan. Jason, Nadira, Aisha are children of undocumented immigrants, unlike their parents they have never seen or lived in their countries of origin. They were born in the US; hence they believe that they belong there. Except for Biju, who is quite aware of his ethnic origin, these undocumented children and youth are not aware of any other nation-state where they could essentially belong. They knew that the US is their home unless they were jolted with the reality of living without valid documents within the national territory and at that moment, the sense of belonging they had nurtured for years, evaporated, condensing into a struggle for belonging.

A sense of belonging and warmth hatches when individuals are in proximity of known surroundings, amidst individuals with whom they can share their sorrows, ask for assistance in times of need, and have faith in them precisely secure relationships. There are innumerable instances where members of diasporic communities have relied on each other during some difficult situations in the host land. The undocumented, however, have no such resource except for family members who are also embroiled in the same trouble. Even in desperate circumstances, they cannot rely on other migrants lest their illegality is reported. The problem of belonging is hence acute in this case. They only feel an affinity with the fellow undocumented. They do not want to belong to the shadows; they want to be recognized and enjoy the rights that complement such status. The undocumented migrants are also in search of a refuge- a shelter that would protect them from the fear of deportation; where they would

be able to execute the fundamental human rights and not be living like captives chained to some overcrowded basement. They are seeking asylum just like the refugees. The neoliberal nation-states like the US have often tended to operate on a contradiction between their economic and political claims (Odem, 2008). The country is essentially dependent upon the economic contributions of the undocumented members but excludes them on legal and political grounds. The undocumented immigrants who are an indispensable part of the US labor force and even pay taxes to the federal government are not supposed to have any attachment with the US for they are not recognized as existing on the national territory. Non-recognition on legal and political terms means they are stateless and therefore in search of a home.

Can the Displaced Subaltern Speak? Exploring the Ecologies of Identity

Identities, for displaced individuals, are woven across multiple geographical and political borders and communities. Territorial and cultural dislocations reciprocate multiple allegiances. It has been established by both theorists and actors that identity is never singular; more so for an individual who has experienced dislocation; however, whether it is fragmented in halves, thirds, or fourths, or even hyphenated requires serious illumination. Stuart Hall claims, that identity stitches the subjects to the existing structures. It gives them stability in the cultural world. But this stable, fixed identity having a unified whole, according to Hall is "shifting" or "becoming fragmented" (1992, 276) in the post-modern era. The subject in the post-modern era does not concur to a fixed or permanent identity. It is "composed of ...several sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities." (1992, 297) Identities are not defined by biological inheritance but through their historical alterations. Hall suggests that the identities of a subject cannot be restricted to the self nor can they be characterized by coherency because identities are always in the state of flux.

This is especially the case with the post-modern subject which celebrates the very possibility of the fleeting multiplicity of identities since it is a product of the universal process of globalization. But this plurality of identities also has political consequences. Modern identities have become fragmented or hyphenated because of the subject being dislocated and resisting any kind of integration or assimilation. Hall's (1992) discussion zeroes on the national identity and its cultural implications. The national identity essentially defines an individual with its immediate belongingness and recognizes him as a member of a certain social group. But at the same time, it also limits its identification and territorializes it and in return expects allegiance to the nation-state. As Tahseen Shams (2020) claims that in the transnational and diasporic contexts immigrant identities are theorized on the "... foundational frameworks...(of) assimilation, panethnicity...focus(ing) exclusively on...sending and receiving countries." (5) Discourses on diaspora and migration, too, have largely concentrated on "...the dyadic ties between the societies of origin and destination" (17) However, the pan-ethnic framework does not prove feasible in locating the displaced subaltern identity at the "global geopolitical level" (18). Shams digresses from this homeland-host land contexts and instead employs "a multicentered relational framework" to establish the influence of what she terms as 'elsewhere' in immigrant identity-making. Similarly, I foreground that the vulnerabilities of the displaced subalterns and the labels imposed on them do not contribute to their universal identification. Rather, it underlines the neoliberal inefficacies at addressing the engendering of this socio-political phenomenon. The aspect of identity engenders copious postulations. As Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese-French author remarks,

So am I half French and half Lebanese? Of course not. Identity can't be compartmentalised. You can't divide it up into ... separate segments. I haven't got several identities: I've got just one, made

up of many components in a mixture that is unique to me, just as
other people's identity is unique to them as individuals. (2000, 2)

Maalouf is not in favor of establishing plural, hyphenated identities that so often demarcate migrants on the grounds of national affiliations and which are the parameters of transnational identities. Assertion of identities underlines a hunt for an alleged fundamental allegiance which, as Maalouf further claims, "is often religious, national, racial or ethnic, and having located it they are supposed to flaunt it proudly in the face of others." (2000, 3) An individual with a more complex identity is considered an aberration and hence marginalized, not only because such identification reveals multiple belongings but the fact that there is an amalgam of influences rustling up in a migrant subjectivity. These ingredients provide an enriching experience only if the migrant can embrace this all-encompassing diversity.

The trauma, engendered by outright hostility, associated with the displaced subaltern experience of displacement surfaces due to incomprehensibility and insensitivities of nationalistic parochialism. The proliferations of alterities within a composite identity, displaying altruistic allegiances, pose an immense threat to the caustic radiations of far-right nationalism. Loyalties are envisaged as conflicting rather than synchronizing; confronting and interrogating the displaced entity who nurtures it. The primordially of thoughts and actions deeply rooted in narrow, bigoted nationalistic claims of exclusivity depreciate identity to a singular and monolithic affiliation. Decolonizing territorial identities would mean a reconfiguration of the sense of belonging and excavating the ties that nurtured this feeling. The elements that manufacture an individual's identity alters, it is not absolute or permanent.

For the displaced subaltern the aspect of identity is an aggrandized complex phenomenon, "a complexity sometimes benign, but sometimes tragic." (Maalouf, 2000, 14) They are constantly

questioning their possible place on the planet, their origins, affiliations, and relationships with others.

Investigating the aspects of identity means delving into the displaced subaltern conscience. Analyzing identity is a special case indeed, as it requires to be comprehended not only based on specific or shared allegiances but also as a marker of a simultaneous sameness and difference. Every displaced individual possesses a composite identity that underlines the difference from national citizens but if divergences are considered separately then it would make them kin to many fellow humans. It is this inherent liminality, complexity, flexibility, and uniqueness that underlies the pejorative identities ‘undocumented’/ ‘illegal’/ ‘alien’/‘refugee’/ ‘asylee’, intimidating the immutability of linear and homogeneous identities.

The characteristics that formulate our identities at birth (sex, color, nationality, religion) are not innate- “Identity isn’t given once and for all: it is build up and changes through a person’s lifetime” (Maalouf, 2000, 23) This polemical stance is especially applicable to a displaced subaltern. Removed from the place of birth and transported to a new location in search of refuge, forcibly, an identity status of the individual immediately transforms from being a national to that of a refugee awaiting extrication from the inhuman conditions. If the individual receives the assistance of shelter (asylum), as an act of benevolence from an international organization, then the refugee status is discarded in the process of becoming an asylee. The individual was not born a refugee or asylee, was not even aware of this identification, the individual becomes a national at birth, then a refugee-asylee-immigrant; “he *becomes* what he is... he acquires it step by step” (Maalouf, 2000, 25)

Legal migrant identities are hyphenated such as ‘Indian-American’, ‘Bangladeshi- American’, ‘Pakistani-American’, ‘Sri Lankan- American’, and so on. Diasporas revel in hyphenated identities cultivating and nurturing them culturally, politically, and socially. This in-betweenness or hybrid aspect is celebrated and manifested in the host nation and often used as a trope to reconnect with the homeland that is left behind in the process of migration. I contend that this hybrid space of mushrooming identities for the elite migrants is, to use the Derridean formulation *ontopolological*- identity linked with a specific territorial zone- nation-states, cities, communities, regions. The diaspora and other skilled migrants, on one hand, mourn their fragmented identities which essentially dissociates them from the homeland, while on the other hand, they deploy the hyphenated identifications to culturally and politically exist in the host land. They enjoy the economic and social benefits engendering from being both an emigrant and an immigrant in the respective geographical territories.

However, for the displaced subaltern this is not the case. The refugees and the undocumented immigrants cannot proclaim hybrid identities. Identity production engenders a sense of attachment or belonging. Investigating one’s identity means embarking on a quest for the answers to ‘Who am I?’, ‘Where do I belong?’ ‘Who/What are my relations?’ For humans, territorial identity is the most common feature. Complications infuse in case of the displaced among them; herein lies an ambivalence. The diasporic population groups and skilled immigrants establish a feeling of belonging and commitment to both host and homeland. They have also effectively maintained these ties physically, culturally, and digitally.

In the context of the refugees, however, plural identities lose their scope. Once they come under the purview of international humanitarian aid or the benevolence of another nation-state, they collectively assume the identity of being refugees. The term refugee is derived from

‘refuge’ meaning shelter. An individual who is in search of a protected shelter or refuge is a refugee or an asylum seeker. If the individual succeeds in procuring a shelter, the identification changes to asylee- a person who has been granted asylum or shelter. But refugees or asylees do not revel in these identifications nor do they manifest them in any way. Their main aim is to get rid of these identification labels and instead prefer ‘immigrants’ because immigrants enjoy certain fundamental rights which they have earned while financially endorsing the territorial transgressions. Unlike the refugees, they do not have to depend on the humanitarian goodwill of the host. Moreover, the underlining fact is that the terminologies deployed by nation-states, international organizations, and bureaucratic bodies to refer to different forms of migratory processes and the actors involved are often discriminatory in nature. For instance, the country where an individual travels to and resides after leaving the homeland is called the host country in the case of legal migrants whereas the same country in the case of refugees is called the adopted nation. As Hannah Arendt (1994) remarked,

... we don't like to be called refugees. We ourselves call each other 'newcomers' or 'immigrants' ... We did our best to prove to other people that we were just ordinary immigrants... we had departed of our own free will to countries of our choice... The more optimistic among us would even add that their whole former life has been passed in a kind of unconscious exile and only their new country now taught them what a home really looks like... we rather avoid any allusion to concentration or internment camps.
(110-111)

The excerpt from Arendt's seminal essay 'We Refugees' establishes singular identification, the kind that affiliates refugees to the host country, is desperately sought after. For the victims of forced displacement who are not able to afford a return at any given time, whose countries

of birth are no longer able to offer them protection or shelter; allegiance and affiliation to the adopted nation is the only option. They not only try at establishing new chords of attachments but also weave new identities that align them to the country of refuge, not as refugees though but as immigrants and prospective citizens.

The undocumented identity remains shrouded perpetually. Undocumented immigrants hide their undocumented status due to the fear of deportation. The expiration of permitted stays at once depreciates the identity of a legal migrant to an illegal alien. The host nation which had once welcomed the migrant with valid visa documents would now prosecute the migrant on the grounds of illegally remaining in the country. Overstaying is a criminal offense; deportation is inevitable in this case. The once potential migrant is not only reduced to an illegal whose existence is denied but is slapped with criminal charges as well. The homeland does not come to the rescue of such immigrants either. Illegal immigrants neither belong to the homeland nor to the host land officially. However, they reside in the host land striving to regain their legal status while secretly cradling a wistful longing for the homeland. Nation-state recognition is an important element in the construction of identities for both citizens and migrants. An individual is a citizen by birth because the nation-state issues documents affirming the same. Similarly, an individual becomes an immigrant only when the host nation provides stamped documents confirming the validity of the individual's residence within its national perimeters. The individual residing in the host nation is at once a migrant as well as a citizen of the homeland; the visa issued by the host and the passport from the home nation prove the case. Before the tenure of permitted residence expires the migrant has to return to his homeland that is take a departure from the host country. Back in the homeland, the individual's migrant status is stripped, however, the identity that still prevails pertains to

citizenship. However, if the migrant fails to depart from the host land even after the expiration of the valid tenure, the migrant becomes illegal.

With the onslaught of globalization, homogenous territorial identities are threatened because the myth of national boundaries has been thwarted by repeated transcendences, and thereby new hybrid/hyphenated identities are being generated. These identities are also generated when there is solidarity among the members of the dislocated population group and when they retain a collective consciousness. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the displaced individuals/ population groups who do have a territory but cannot consider belonging to it since the homeland has forced them to leave. National identity is denied to them, so is the hyphenated one. They cannot forge any identity national or migrant because the host country has only provided them the asylum status, not citizenship. Therefore, their cultural markers remain embedded within their conscience since their physical existence is veiled with the terms such as alien/illegal. They represent neither "particularistic form of attachment" nor "universalistic identifications" (Hall, 1992, 304).

Hyphenated identity is underpinned by a duality. The hyphen, apart from highlighting a hybrid aspect, also underlines the intensity of adherence and commitment to either side of the hyphen raising questions regarding the individual's nature of belonging. Being an Indian-American for instance or belonging to the South-Asian-American community– these tags have their advantages. The individual can comfortably choose to assimilate into either culture. The displaced subaltern does not assimilate or even vacillate between two or more cultures. Since the option of transforming into an ethnic minority recognized by the host nation is unavailable with their current statuses, hyphenated labeling seems inappropriate. The displaced subaltern identity, I claim, is neither hyphenated nor fragmented. The individuals are subalterns and

displaced at the same time. ‘Refugee’, ‘asylee’, ‘undocumented’— these labels ensue from neoliberal nation-state policy practices. The brutal upheavals and deep anguish associated with the displaced subaltern experience have grave implications on the mechanism of identity formation. Identity is imposed by neoliberal forces and in the context of displacement, and economically secure migrant is deemed favorable by a neoliberal host nation. Neoliberal ideology formulates an identity that is defined by a disengaging attitude towards social obligations. Since the economic sphere dominates the social, the neoliberal nation-state pursues a ‘nation-state first’ policy; social solidarities are replaced by heightened market attachments. This reinforces glaring distinctions between a migrant and the displaced subaltern. It also highlights the vulnerabilities of the displaced subalterns due to the imposed labels and profoundly how neoliberal enforcements provoke disturbing differences in access to power regimes among the displaced.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the representations of the displaced subalterns in South-Asian American fiction. The diasporic fictional oeuvre had concentrated on the occasional pangs of the privileged immigrant subject and celebrated their hyphenated identities. The fictional narratives selected for this study problematizes the diasporic narrative conventions by critically examining the displaced subaltern subjectivities who pose challenges to the neoliberal nation-state framework socially, politically, and legally. The next chapter shall draw a conclusion for this study by summarizing the findings of this study and elucidate the scope for future research.

Chapter-VI

CONCLUSION

This study has engaged with the literature arising from displacement and subaltern studies to advance a new understanding of displacement as a process of epistemic subalternity that challenges the neoliberal formulation of the ‘good’ or ‘acceptable’ immigrant. In this study, I have argued that besides diasporic displacements, there are alternative modes which render individuals disenfranchised after displacement. Also, nation-states deploy unfair mechanisms to determine if the individual could be given the permission to reside within its national perimeters or should be discarded. The significant aim of embarking upon this research was the utmost need to study the displaced subaltern subjectivities of South-Asian origin in the U.S. In the contemporary era, when nation-state immigration policies are largely governed by neoliberal ideologies, this study has established the importance of investigating the displaced individuals who are less-privileged and remain invariably marginalized. The displaced subalterns, the nuclei of this study, were not only dehumanized in the Trump regime in the U.S. solely. The years 2015-16, the time around which I had embarked upon this investigation, was witnessing the ascending of a virulent opposition by far-right populists to refugees and asylum seekers in the U.S. and across Europe. This extremist contagion spread to South Asian nation-states as well in the following years reflected in the crisis which embroiled the Rohingyas with Myanmar declaring them as outcasts, Bangladesh refusing them asylum, and India tagging them as illegals. Dehumanizing certain displaced individuals have been the primary objective of neoliberal nation-states.

Refugees and the undocumented seeking asylum are forced into displacement; they are forced to stay displaced until their crisis is resolved by international humanitarian agencies or the

nation-state in context. They actively resist deportation or what is termed as the refoulement regimen. My investigation highlighted the vulnerable conditions and the transpiring precarity ensnaring the displaced subalterns. Conducting a context-specific investigation resulted in some crucial revelations. This research has inferred that nation-state recognition is the ultimate criterion for establishing any kind of displaced identity. Whether it is the diasporic status or that of undocumented/illegal or refugee or asylee, it is the specific nation-state that determines the label for the displaced individual. I have demonstrated this by identifying the presence of undocumented immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers of South-Asian origin in the U.S. rummaging through the archival records and the current immigration database. Underlining the categorical disparities underpinned by the distinct experiences of displacement was elementary to explore the various ramifications of human displacement. The investigation also unearthed the momentous fact that apart from the Indian diasporic community, there are individuals of Indian origin residing in the U.S.—Indians living on expired visas, infiltrating through its southern borders without legal documents, and seeking asylum— a phenomenon that wrecks the much acclaimed and illustrious diasporic image. Another key finding is that the elite diaspora is not the victim of displacement even though numerous studies have attempted to establish this aspect. In the contemporary era where nation-state immigration policies are governed by neoliberal ideologies, the casualties of displacement are the individuals who are perpetually rendered precarious owing to displacement— individuals desperately seeking refuge. In this context, it is pertinent to mention what this study has unraveled further— the neoliberal nation-states like the U.S. and even the far-right extremists are not exactly anti-immigration; they are pro-elite immigrants while being deliberately hostile to the economically deferred displaced individuals. Policies are drafted in a manner that makes the asylum-seeking process quite complex. To understand why neoliberal ideologies are more interested in welcoming the wealthy and talented migrants while implementing rigorous border controls in

case of refugees and the undocumented, this study critically evaluated the U.S. immigration policies, executive actions, and approaches inscribed during the four years of Donald Trump's presidential term. Refusing asylum on multiple instances reveals the neoliberal paranoia with the displaced subalterns.

Therefore, a significant element that has been divulged is that displacement is not limited to territoriality; the individuals who have acquired the spotlight in this study have not only experienced geographical displacement but also been atrociously displaced from the vast human community—being denied the label and rights of being human or even belonging to the human world by the ruthless groupism of unfettered power.

This study also demonstrated the methodological difficulties of studying the displaced subaltern subjectivities and the drawbacks of implanting the diasporic theoretical framework and conceptualizations in this context. This study has proven that the diasporic category is not applicable universally as there are various strains of displacement that cannot neatly consolidate in diaspora. As a researcher, I have not only identified the generalized conceptualizations proffered by the term 'diaspora' but also positioned the displaced subalterns at the pivotal point of this investigation. Neoliberal hegemonic discourses and knowledge productions have incessantly attempted to make the displaced subalterns invisible and unheard. Hence, this study foregrounded a new theoretical vocabulary drawing on the subaltern framework because analysing these displaced subjectivities would focus on their lived experiences and thereby establish the epistemological gap between the history of these displaced individuals and the diasporic history. The subaltern approach has opened new avenues to capture the diverse forces and effects of displacement and mobilities. This study has intercepted into the historical schools of diasporic thought that failed to represent the

history of irregularities and refugeehood. The factors conducive to the formation of a diasporic community are hardly available in the contexts of irregular migration and forced displacement.

This study has established the particular urgency to acutely observe the struggle of the displaced subalterns— a universal phenomenon in a neoliberal world which either perpetuates integration or exile in a highly publicized normative mode. Investigating the displaced subaltern subjectivities could prove quite challenging as there are more nuanced facets that still remain to be deciphered and would constitute propelling topics for further research. My study focused on the political rhetoric and executive actions implemented by the former American president Donald Trump, who had quite ostentatiously made pejorative remarks on undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and which was essentially the chief agenda of his electoral victory in 2016. The Americans have chosen a Democrat in 2020. The Biden-Harris administration had committed to repeal the policies implemented by the Trump administration. President Joe Biden had raised the refugee admission ceiling for the financial year 2021 which was earlier lowered during the Trump regime and also resumed the previous prejudiced immigration bans from several countries. Still, what remains to be further explored is that if the current administration is able to divorce immigration policies from neoliberalism and set an example of the U.S. as the nation of immigrants.

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