INSCRIPTIONS OF THE THIRD SPACE:

AN EXPLORATION OF SELECT CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES

Thesis submitted to

the University of Calicut

for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English Language and Literature

by

Amritha Vydoori S. P.

Department of English

University of Calicut

July 2023

Declaration

I, Amritha Vydoori S. P., hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Inscriptions of the Third Space: An Exploration of Select Contemporary Narratives** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. M. V. Narayanan, Professor (Rtd.), Department of English, University of Calicut, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut **Amritha Vydoori S. P.**

Date: 24/07/2023

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Inscriptions of the Third Space: An Exploration of Select Contemporary Narratives** submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature is an original bona fide work of research carried out by Amritha Vydoori S. P. under my supervision, and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut

Date: 24/07/2023

Dr. M. V. Narayanan

Research Supervisor

Acknowledgement

I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor and beloved teacher, Dr. M. V. Narayanan, Professor (Rtd.), Department of English, University of Calicut for his esteemed guidance in my research work. He has been an inspiring mentor since my Post Graduation days, and I feel fortunate to experience the warmth of his wisdom. I am thankful to him for sparing his valuable time to discuss, give suggestions, and guide me, despite his busy schedule.

I thank all the teaching staff of the Department of English, University of Calicut for igniting the sparks of knowledge in me. I am grateful to Dr. Sajitha M. A., Head of the Department, Dr. Janaky Sreedharan, Dr. K. M. Sheriff, Dr. Umer Thasneem, and Dr. V. Prathiba for their support and encouragement throughout my research work. I also express my sincere thanks to the Library and non-teaching staff for their help and cooperation. I am indebted to all my research scholar friends for their motivating companionship.

I would also like to thank the teachers of Providence Women's College, Calicut for motivating and encouraging me during my Under Graduation days.

I express my special thanks to Prof. (Dr.) Santhosh V. M., Principal, Payyanur College, Dr. A. C. Sreehari, Head of the Department of English, Dr. Premachandran Keezhoth, and all my beloved colleagues who have been very kind in extending their help at various phases of this research. I remember with gratitude the support and help given to me by my friend, Dr. Aiswarya P. K.

I am forever indebted to the guiding light of my father, Dr. P. Surendran, and the blessings that he showers upon me. I am grateful to my mother Dr. N. Leena for her unconditional love and care. My husband, Akhil K.T. has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement for carrying out the research work.

I fondly thank my family, Nipun S Pachappoyil, Dr. Nidhin S Pachappoyil, Aswathi P. M., Dr. Anjali Rajeev, and Thrayambaka. I express my deep gratitude to my father-in-law, Kunhiraman K. T. K, mother-in-law, Padmini P. V., Aneesh K. T., Shijina V. P., and Daksh for providing me with a good family environment. Above all I thank the Almighty for making this work possible.

Amritha Vydoori S. P.

Contents

Introduction

Third Space thinking is emerging as a significant area of enquiry in socio-cultural studies as a recompense to the inherent deficiencies in binary thinking, bringing about a paradigm shift in the commonly accepted notions of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and identity. Dualistic thinking privileges the first term in the binary, and the second term is always relegated to a marginal position. In this division, those who remain in-between, who do not align themselves either with the first or the second are denied a space. There is an exponential growth of people who remain in the in-between space due to the ongoing migration, globalization, and the resultant hybridity, cultural inter-mixings, and the formation of diaspora. The sexual minorities who are stamped as deviants or aberrations due to their difference in sexual orientation and appearance, and borderlanders residing in the borders are placed in the in-between spaces. The borderlanders experience identity crisis due to an inter-mixing of different socio-cultural practices, languages, religions, and ethnicities. These people, in general find it difficult to assert their identity and self, be it gender, race, language or nationality. Ashcroft et al. argue that binary systems "suppress ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories, so that any overlapping region . . . becomes impossible according to binary logic, and a region of taboo in social experience" (23-24). Binary opposition propagates a dominant ideology in the society, wherein any activity or state that do not fit the binary are subjected to repression (24).

Colonization and settlement played a pivotal role in the formation of hybrid identities, as people belonging to different nations, races, and cultures comingle and

interact during this period. The subjectivity of the hybrid people is composed of variable sources pertaining to many locations, which demolishes forever the idea of subjectivity as stable, single, or pure. This shows that hybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves. These shifting concepts of identities undermine our sense of self as integrated subjects. In this process, as Stuart Hall, one of the pioneers of cultural studies, observes, there is a loss of the "stable core of the self" (Hall and Gay 3) which leads to the dislocation or de-centring of the subject. These hybrids with fluctuating subjectivities and identities do not find a space for themselves in the traditional binary thinking, and demand a reconfiguration of the system that would include and accept those caught in the in-between spaces. An interstitial passage or a liminal space between fixed identifications is to be opened up to accommodate them. Liminal space stresses the idea of what exists in between settled opposition and eschews either/or dualism and its supposed certainties that are employed to define identity in a fixed space. Nevertheless, liminal space brings about ambivalence, as liminality refers to the blurring of borders, and these become sites for re-definition and contestation.

Several theoreticians and philosophers across the world have striven to incorporate and address the ambiguous position of those who reside on the borderlands by introducing new theories and terminologies. The prominent among them are Homi K. Bhabha, a leading Indian-British postcolonial critic residing in America; Gloria E. Anzaldua, an American scholar of Chicana cultural theory, feminist theory, and queer theory; Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher and spatial theorist; Edward W. Soja, an American academician and an eminent spatial

theorist, and bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins), an African American social activist and theoretician. All of them contributed profusely to strengthen, elaborate, and expand the concept of the Third Space[1]. Bhabha introduced the concept of "the Third Space of enunciation" and Anzaldua, the "*mestiza* consciousness." Lefebvre's theorization of space and social spatiality and Soja's Thirdspace encouraged people to think differently about the meaning and significance of space. Lefebvre linked historicality, sociality, and spatiality to explore the limitless dimensions of space, and hooks made attempts to transform marginal spaces into spaces of resistance.

Bhabha has introduced the concept of the Third Space along with the concept of hybridity, and asserts that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls "the Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha, *Location* 54). The Third Space questions the established notions of culture and identity. It rejects anything fixed, and offers new forms of cultural meaning, thereby significantly suspending the limits of boundaries. The Third Space thus becomes a comprehensive category that is capable of including the excluded. It opens up newer scope for fresh alternative thinking, allowing us to go beyond the rigidity and limited focus of traditional binary thinking. Instead of exclusion and rejection, the new space, thus, has the capacity and tendency to include and accept. This new space in-between the binary, according to Bhabha, is a liminal space, a hybrid site, and a liberatory space for the production of meanings. The new positions that emerge here are not only the sum of two parts but something more. The cultural

[1] The term Third Space is used in two different ways in this thesis. One, "Third Space" as used by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* and the other, "Thirdspace" as used by Edward Soja in his work *Thirdspace*. These terms in its respective forms are used as and when required, and I have followed Homi K. Bhabha's usage throughout the thesis.

identity that emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space is a mixed one which problematizes the purity of culture. It destabilizes cultural diversity by replacing it with an empowering hybridity where cultural difference becomes predominant. These "in-between" spaces, according to Bhabha, provide strategies for asserting and exploring one's selfhood as well as that of the community by initiating the processes for identity formation (Bhabha, *Location* 2). This phenomenon becomes more conspicuous in the borderlands, which are important thresholds full of contradictions and ambivalence. He looks upon borders as intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier. The beyond is an in-between site of transition "which is neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past" (Bhabha, *Location* 1-2). Living on the borderlines of the present (in the fin de siècle), "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, *Location* 2). He emphasizes the need to think beyond narratives of originary subjectivities, and to focus on the moments or processes produced in the articulation of cultural differences. Cultural values are negotiated in the in-between spaces, which may not always be collaborative and dialogical but conflicting and antagonistic. These interstices become complex spaces for the emergence of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, *Location* 2).

The concept of *mestiza* consciousness, introduced by Anzaldua, has its framework in the borderlands, specifically in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands, but the theory has got universal relevance, as it is applicable to all those who reside in the

borderlands across the globe. Anzaldua refers not only to the physical borderlands, but brings the ideological borderlands too within the ambit of her theory. In the formulation of this concept, she has been influenced by her own plurality of self, emanating from her different sexuality, multiple languages, races, and cultures, as is true in the case of Chicano/as too. As borderland is the place where the cross-overs take place, the theory engendered from such a context too becomes a mixture, a *mestizo* of different languages, races, and cultures. This theory is one of inclusivity. Anzaldua describes this as a "hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool" (77). The new *mestiza* develops a tolerance for ambiguity, a tolerance for contradictions. While working out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts and she labels this as the *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldua 79-80). Here too, as in Bhabha's the Third Space of enunciation, purity of race is problematized. Anzaldua challenges racial purity claimed by the white Americans. The theory dismantles subject-object duality, transcends the traditional western concepts of binary opposition, and opens up a liminal space, an in-between space which has immense potential to challenge and resist exploitation and domination, which in turn will bring about revolutionary changes in the world by the acceptance and inclusion of the excluded and the marginalized. Anzaldua envisages a cosmopolitan world where the democratic rights of each citizen are protected and respected, and where liberty and equality prevail.

Lefebvre, a French philosopher and theoretician, pioneered revolutionary changes in spatial studies by introducing the concept of social spatiality in to his major writings, and categorically asserted that two terms and the oppositions built

around them are not enough to truthfully reflect the limitless dimensions and complexities of the modern world. Instead, he forcefully argued for linking the pre-existing historicality and sociality with spatiality, which he called *une dialectique de triplicate,* and Soja named it as "triple dialectic." As early as in the 1960s, Lefebvre chose space as an interpretive thread in his writings (Soja, *Thirdspace* 7). He vehemently criticized the oppositional dichotomy of power, and the categorical closure implicit in the either/or logic of the binary and added another term, "Autre/Other" to depict the position of those who remain in the in-between space (Soja, *Thirdspace* 7). Bearing a close resemblance to the theoretical formulations of Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and theoretician, and a renowned figure in cultural studies, propounded the concept of "Other spaces," foregrounding spatial thinking (Soja, *Thirdspace* 11). Both Foucault and Lefebvre tried to restructure and redefine the familiar ways of thinking about space across all disciplines. Their theories and visions of life had a considerable influence on Soja. Soja further developed their spatial theories by introducing the concept of Thirdspace. This new concept underscores the importance of spatiality along with historicality and sociality. This innovative theory was formulated with a view to enable people to think differently about the meaning and significance of space, eschewing the rigid notions of the past. It can provide space for those who are excluded from the strict binary divisions. By propounding the theory of Thirdspace, Soja wanted to open up and expand the scope of spatial imagination to depict the complexities of human life. At a time when the world was going through a period of spatial crisis, an-Other form of spatial awareness began to emerge. Soja named this new awareness as Thirdspace. This newly configured space captures the essence of

both the first and second space, but it is something more than these two spaces. Such a concept is more flexible, and has the potential to overcome the rigidity inherent in dualistic thinking. This new perspective is more inclusive rather than exclusive.

hooks, a renowned cultural theorist, critical thinker, and social activist has made significant interventions into Third Space thinking, drawing upon her multiple self, and the struggles of her own life and the life of her community, underscoring the racial, gender, and class oppression that they experienced from the colonizers. She develops a counter-hegemonic narrative as a strategy of resistance which stems from the enforced silence, alienation, and estrangement that she experienced as a woman of colour as well as the deprivation of a home space from where she could nourish her potential. She considers language also as a place of struggle. She accepts the colonizer's language to express herself and the struggles of her black community, and endorses Adrienne Rich's comment, "this is the colonizer's language, yet I need it to talk to you" (hooks 146). She crosses the boundaries set by race, sex, and class domination, and stands with the oppressed to create space in the margins, where there is unlimited access to the power of knowledge and creativity, and where there is a possibility for transformation. She observes that locating oneself in the margins, which is a space of radical openness, is difficult and risky, yet it is necessary for the production of counter-hegemonic discourses and to create new worlds.

All the major critical thinkers discussed in the above review are unanimous in their observation that a redefinition and a restructuring of the ways of perceiving the world are mandatory to bring about substantial transformations in the life of

people, specifically in the life of those who had been pushed to the periphery for no fault of their own. Third Space thinking which is gaining currency among the intellectuals and theorists, and writers of the day can make a positive impact upon the life of those who live in liminal spaces. Guided by this prospective vision, I have focused the present research work upon the inscriptions of the Third Space in select contemporary narratives. The narratives are chosen very judiciously so as to give special attention to those who had been side-lined in their life. In a world where human inequality, oppression, and exploitation persist, researchers and academicians find it necessary to ponder upon these burning issues and find solutions. An exploration of the Third Space which has immense emancipatory potential, has great relevance in the current scenario. The emergence of such a liberatory space, and its incorporation into the human thought process in a positive and creative manner can bring about a revolutionary transformation in this world.

The title chosen for the study, "Inscriptions of the Third Space: An Exploration of Select Contemporary Narratives," intends to delve deep into the genuine problems faced by those who reside in the in-between spaces. The word "inscriptions" is used here in the sense of writing down something in a book which is to last forever, just like an inscription or engraving on stone. The usage "Third Space" should not be taken verbatim as occupying a third place; rather, the Third Space is emblematic of a more powerful space that exudes greater potential than the First space and the Second space. The Third Space, as envisaged by the renowned thinkers mentioned above, is a liberatory space filled with immense potential for empowerment, which is capable of bringing about a radical change in the world,

accommodating all those who are excluded from mainstream society. If such a system comes true, we may be able to put an end to the violence engendered by intolerance; bloodshed and war in the name of territorial expansion, religion, pelf, power, and glory; brutalization of sexual minorities, and such other calamities perpetrated in the name of divisive tendencies and capitalistic greed.

The narratives are selected with the specific objective of exploring how different writers residing in different geographical locations of the world think alike about the problems that persist in the life of the people living on the thresholds, which require urgent redressal. The solutions that they suggest through their theoretical formulations and imaginative fiction emanating from their examinations of empirical reality will be given due significance throughout the course of the study. The selected works that come under the rubric of my research work are enumerated below:

Ibis trilogy written by Amitav Ghosh, comprising *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire; Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*[2], an autohistoria-teoria[3] written by Gloria Anzaldua; *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, a film written and directed by Rituparno Ghosh; *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* written by Arundhati Roy; and *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, an autobiography of A. Revathi.

Amitav Ghosh, a master craftsman of Indian English fiction, weaves the themes of his novels from major historical events, and transforms them into

[2] The title *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* will be herein after referred to as *Borderlands.*

[3] It includes both life story and self-reflection on this story. For more details, see Chapter 3, pg 149.

exquisite masterpieces. He brings into his fold a plethora of characters taken from different parts of the world. He writes in various genres like historical fiction, science fiction, travelogues, and non-fiction, which centres round the impact of colonialism and settlement upon the colonized, neo-liberal policies of the west leading to capitalistic greed, and environmental and ecological themes; making use of different narrative strategies, and explores the complexity of life of the people with specific attention to those living in the South-East Asian countries. He is a global explorer who started his travel across the world right from his younger days along with his father. The exposure he received during his period of education in different reputed universities; and the cultures, languages, and lifestyles that he experienced during his career as a teacher in different universities assisted him in creating authentic representations of the life of various sections and communities of people. With the precision of a historian, he was able to reproduce the relevant historical events by fictionalizing them.

Amitav Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), has won the Prix Medicis Etranger Award, and the second novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), has won the Sahitya Akademi Award. As the title suggests, Ghosh argues that all lines that divide nation-states and people from one another are mere shadow lines. The same theme is continued in *In an Antique Land* (1992), a work that blurs the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), which comes under the genre of science-fiction, has won the Arthur C. Clarke Award. Ghosh holds two Lifetime Achievement Awards and four honorary doctorates. The Government of India awarded him the civilian honour of Padma Shri in 2007. He

received India's highest literary honour, Jnanpith Award, in 2018. He has also won Ananda Puraskar Award, Pushcart Prize, Hutch Crossword Book Award, Grizane Cavour Prize, Man Asia Literary Prize, and Dan David Prize. The non-fiction work *Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma* (1998), a travelogue recounts the author's life experiences, and *Countdown* (1999) centres round the testing of nuclear devices near Pokhran. The novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) has won the Grand Prize for Fiction and the Frankfurt eBook Award. *The Imam and the Indian* (2002) is a collection of essays Ghosh wrote during his stay in Egypt. *The Hungry Tide* (2004), set in the backdrop of Sundarbans, focuses upon ecology and environment, and the adverse effects of human interventions upon the fauna and flora. The novel also gives a prophetic warning about the outbreak of tsunami if human greed and reclamation of land go unchecked. *Incendiary Circumstances: A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Times* (2005) gives a detailed description of the devastating events that happened during his career as a journalist. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) is a non-fiction work in which Ghosh expresses his deep concern over climatic change which is largely triggered by human intervention on nature, and he looks upon it as a gross ingratitude towards the generations to come. *The Nutmeg's Curse,* published in 2021, during the period of covid pandemic, explores the terrible repercussions of western colonialism and imperialism upon the colonized countries. Ghosh cautions us that the environmental crisis and climatic change that suffocate our lives today will derange the lives of all living beings on Earth if the exploitation of nature goes unchecked. He makes use of different narrative strategies to unravel the complexities of individual and collective identity, and to show how people try to overcome the identity crisis and assert their

self. Ghosh, with his ingenuity and craftsmanship, provides a quality of multiplicity and cosmopolitanism to his works.

His acclaimed masterpiece, *Ibis* trilogy, comprising *Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke,* and *Flood of Fire,* introduces a multitude of characters from across the globe, who follow different cultures, religions, languages, and ways of life, and who cross the geographical borders as well as the borders of religion, culture, race, caste, creed, and colour so as to re-invent themselves and to recreate a new identity. When these people live together and interact, they engender an altogether new culture, a hybrid culture that gives space to all, despite the differences. The *Ibis* trilogy problematizes the precarious existence of people, follows them through their sufferings and success, and examines how they survive in the new found space. Migration and border crossings form the crux of the trilogy; characters move on to new spaces either to escape from the harassment and discrimination that they face in their native land or in search of profitable markets for their goods and to establish overseas trade relations.

The first among the *Ibis* trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* (2008), is an intensely vibrant work that takes us along the Ganges to Calcutta, where the poppies are grown and the opium processed. At the heart of this epic saga is a vast ship, the *Ibis,* bound to the Mauritius islands with a group of sailors, migrants, indentured laborers, lascars, widows, and convicts. *River of Smoke* (2011), the second book of the trilogy, focuses on the opium trade that formed much of the background to *Sea of Poppies*. Ghosh carries the story forward from the *Ibis* to the occupants of two other ships sailing the same oceanic space, and caught in the same storm, the *Anahita,* run

by Bahram Modi, a major player in the Indo-China opium trade, and the *Redruth*, belonging to a horticulturist, Fitcher Penrose. In the final book of the trilogy, *Flood of Fire* (2015), many characters who first appeared in *Sea of Poppies* appear once again. Ghosh writes about individuals involved in the First Opium War (1839-42). The trilogy underscores the agony and pain experienced by ordinary people and the impact of the Opium War on their socio-economic life. The fraternity formed by the destitute and the migrants in the oceanic space is labelled by one of the migrants as *jaház-bhais and jaház-bahens*[4], which is in tandem with the Third Space propounded by renowned theoreticians like Bhabha and Soja.

Anzaldua, generally defined as a Chicana lesbian feminist writer, is a multi-faceted genius and an acclaimed theoretician who has published autohistoria-teoria, essays, poetry, children's books, and multi-genre anthologies. Her path-breaking autohistoria-teoria, *Borderlands* (1987), a hybrid combination of prose and poetry, sky-rocketed her to fame and glory, and it became a seminal text for all borderland studies, irrespective of national differences. The book was named one of the 100 best books of the century by both *Hungry Mind Review* and the *Utne Reader*. The themes of her works came from the plurality of her self, the sense of non-belongingness, identity crisis, and instability experienced by herself and the borderlanders in general. Marginalized in multiple ways and ostracised from society due to her different sexuality, race, class, and colour, Anzaldua resolves to establish her identity by amassing knowledge through education, and by offering resistance to oppression and exploitation. Books opened to her a window to the world outside.

[4] Ship siblings.

Her poignant and penetrating counter-hegemonic discourses are intended to bring about a revolutionary transformation in the life of marginalized groups, and she succeeds in this attempt to a great extent. She always felt an unseen and mysterious power guiding and inspiring her to write, and to become the voice of the voiceless.

Anzaldua co-edited with Cherrié Moraga *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour* (1981) and edited *Making Face, Making Soul / Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Colour* (1990). She also wrote children's books such as *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del Otro Lado* (1993) and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y La Llorona* (1995). A volume of her interviews, *Interviews / Entrevistas* (2000) and *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation (2002),* co-edited with Ana Louise Keating, are remarkable works. She won the Lambda Lesbian Small Book Press Award (1991), Lesbian Rights Award (1991), Sappho Award of Distinction (1992), National Endowment for the Arts Fiction Award (1991), and American Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2001). Her consistent and concerted effort has brought to her an enviable position among the great writers of the world.

Rituparno Ghosh, an Indian film-director, actor, lyricist, and scriptwriter, rose to fame and glory through his unparalleled proficiency in depicting the complexities of human lives in his films. While the Bengali film industry was going through a period of crisis due to the demise of the stalwarts of the film world like Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, the unique aesthetic fashioned by Rituparno Ghosh enlivened the world of cinema through his soul-entrancing themes which

enchanted the aesthetic sense of the cinema lovers. His cinema, rooted in the urban Bengali history and culture was received with accolades by both national and international audience. Rituparno Ghosh, a native of Kolkata, developed his interest in film making by excelling in advertising and copy writing. He received the National Film Award for Best Feature Film for *Unishe April* (1995), *Dahan* (1998), *Asukh* (2000), *Shubho Mahurat* (2003), *Chokher Bali* (2004), *Raincoat* (2005), *The Last Lear* (2008), *Sob Charitro Kalponik* (2009), and *Abohoman* (2010). His film *Dahan* (1998) received the National Film Award for Best Screenplay. He won the National Film Award for Best Direction for *Abohoman* (2010) and *Utsab* (2001). The film *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* (2012) won the National Film Awards-Special Jury Award. He also won the FIPRESCI Prize for *Titli* (2002), the NETPAC Award for *Bariwali* (2000), the 5th Kalakar Award for Best Director for *Unishe April* (1997), the 19th Kalakar Award for Best Actor for *Arekti Premer Golpo* (2011), the 11th Tele Cine Awards for Extraordinary Performance in an Exceptional Character for *Arekti Premer Golpo* (2011).

Rituparno Ghosh attempts to redefine stereotypes through the depiction of intense emotional states of mind of characters from the urban middle-class society, their complex relationships, and the plight of widows and middle-class women confined within their households, subdued, oppressed, and exploited by patriarchy. He made his films extremely sensitive through his realistic and poetic way of narration. Rabindranath Tagore's oeuvre worked as a great source of inspiration for his films, and he immortalized many of Tagore's characters. "Ghosh seeks to extend Tagore's vision of Indian identity and individual autonomy by infusing it with

elements of political, cultural, and sexual liberalism" (Datta et al. 190). His films disturbed the complacency of the people who were unaware of a world of sexuality beyond heteronormativity. Ghosh used cinema as a medium to lay threadbare a world where there were other forms of sexual desires apart from heterosexuality, and himself being a homosexual, insisted on the presence of homosexual, queer desires. He proclaimed himself as a queer, and soon became a queer icon, voicing the inner turmoil and the emotional depression that passed through the minds of sexual minorities, the LGBTQIA+[5] community. He gave expression to the physical and mental trauma experienced by them through visual media. His films played a pivotal role in naturalizing queerness so as to locate queer identity within the cultural matrix of Bengali society, and also within the larger matrix of the world. His talks, debates, writings, documentaries, and films were all meant to find space for marginalized groups, women, and sexually different persons. He invoked people to think beyond the binary, and to stress the presence of an in-between space, a liminal space which envisions a liberatory space for those who were unacknowledged by society. This space that he envisaged is at par with the Third Space, propagated by eminent theoreticians like Bhabha, Soja, and Lefebvre. Hence, I have included Rituparno Ghosh in my study to show how the Third Space is inscribed in his film *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*. A detailed description of this theme is given in Chapter IV, entitled "Gender Fluidity in Select Narratives."

Revathi, a transgender activist and writer born in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu, was assigned a male gender at the time of her birth, and was named

[5] It is a collective term to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and all the other gender identities which are not included in the above-mentioned categories.

Doraisammy based on the child's physiological features. As Doraisammy grew up, he realized that he was a female trapped in a male body. He was inclined to cross-dress and preferred to play with girls. Due to the incessant harassment and violence, both at home and at school, he was forced to discontinue his studies and leave home to join like-minded people belonging to the hijra community. To get an entry into the hijra-household, he went through a sexual reassignment surgery. The surgery transformed Doraisammy into a female, and he accepted the name Revathi. But soon, she[6] found herself socially excluded. She realized that a transwoman's life was exposed to hardships, torture, and exploitation. Her entry into Sangama, a Non-Governmental Organization, working for the rights of sexual minorities, transformed her life. She got a platform to voice her views and fight for the rights of transgenders and other sexual minorities. She gave expressions to the stark realities of the lives of transgenders and fought for justice for the discriminated and marginalized groups in society. She wanted to extend love, compassion, and respect to all human beings, irrespective of their gender identities, sexual orientation, caste, class, color, language, or religious belief.

Her first book, *Unarvum Uruvamum*, which came out in 2004 vividly unravels the real life-stories of the hijras of South India. In her second book, *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), she gives a truthful description of her own life experiences as a transgender, the discrimination that she suffered in society and family, the stigma attached to the transgenders, and her bold attempts to overcome the traumatic events of her life. The book was translated into Tamil as

[6] The pronoun 'he' is used till Doraisammy undergoes sex reassignment surgery, and assumes the name Revathi. The pronoun 'she' is used to refer to Revathi after the surgery.

Vellai Mozhi and published in 2011. *A Life in Trans Activism*, published in 2016, deals with her life and experience with the NGO Sangama, and the knowledge that she has amassed about the multiplicity of gender identities and sexual orientations. The book also gives a detailed description of the mental and physical trauma experienced by trans men. Right from her younger days, she proved her talent in acting, which later proved beneficial to her to enact the role of a transgender in both Tamil and Malayalam films like *Thenavattu* (2008) and *Antharam* (2022). Revathi was awarded an Activist Fellowship with SAATHII, an Indian LGBTQIA+ organization, in 2019, which was instrumental in inspiring her to work for claiming an identity for marginalized people. The financial support she received through this Fellowship enabled her to initiate various strategies to alleviate the sufferings of sexual minorities and involve herself in theatrical performances, and to convey her message to the public. Her relentless fight against the adverse circumstances of her life won her a pride of place among the social activists, writers, and performance artists of the day. Akila Kannadasan wrote in *The Hindu* about Revathi that her name was put up at Butler Library in Columbia University, alongside the names of women writers, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Anzaldua, Diana Chang, Zora Neale Hurston, Ntozake Shange, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

Roy**,** widely acclaimed for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), is an Indian author with roots in Kottayam, Kerala. Through her articles, essays, and fictional and non-fictional works, she vehemently raises her voice against injustice, oppression, exploitation, and environmental damage that is taking place in our society. Roy received Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 for *The God of Small*

Things, a semi-autobiographical work that discusses casteism, politics, and the complexities of love relationships. In this best-seller work, she experimented with language by incorporating the actual dialects of Malayalam used in southern Kerala by transliterating it into English. The book has been translated into many languages. Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* was published in 2017, 20 years after the publication of her first novel. In the meantime, she engaged herself in social and political activism and published works like *Power Politics* (2001), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (2004), *Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), *Broken Republic: Three Essays* (2011), and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014). She has won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay (1998), the Sydney Peace Prize (2004), the Orwell Award (2004), and the Norman Mailer Prize (2011).

Roy, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* focuses on the marginalized and dispossessed group who are pushed to the periphery by those who wield power. Anjum, born Aftab and a hijra, represents the community of hijras who have been side-lined throughout the ages and are not integrated into society. They have fought a long battle in order to escape from discrimination, exploitation, and poverty. The Khwabgah, the House of Dreams to which Anjum enters to escape from the suffocation at home, and Jannat Guest House, set up in the cemetery, are spaces that function as Third Space, a space of refuge for the marginalized people.

The major objective of this research work is to explore the inscriptions of the Third Space in select contemporary narratives. The underlying significance of the

Third Space, as postulated by renowned theoreticians in this area is investigated. The circumstances that necessitated the emergence of a paradigm shift in the theoretical parlance, such as the inherent deficiencies in binary thinking, the need for a liberatory space for the marginalized and the excluded, and the demand for a re-definition of the word "human" by including the excluded accepting their differences form the crux of the study. The repercussions of globalization and migration upon the identity of individuals, the formation of hybrid identities, and its impact on the socio-cultural patterns of society are other significant areas of the study. The crucial issues faced by borderlanders and gender minorities, their existence in the liminal space, their resistance and revolt from the margins to assert their self, and their attempt to convert such spaces into spaces of liberation, creativity and power are also exemplified in this thesis.

The theoretical postulations that frame the concept of the Third Space are analysed in detail. Observations of different theoreticians are reviewed to examine the fluidity of identity, the impact of colonialism upon the colonized, and the formation of hybrid identities. The review of literature dealing with postcolonial studies, gender studies, queer studies, and studies on LGBTQIA+, required for substantiating the arguments in the thesis is analyzed and incorporated into the relevant chapters of the study. The method of textual analysis is used to explore the inscriptions of the Third Space in select contemporary narratives.

The concept of the Third Space has emerged from various related concepts like migration, hybridity, border, and gender. Even before the onset of globalization, migration to different parts of the world continued, mainly in search of better

avenues for exploration, employment, and settlement. Forced migration in the form of punishment and exile also persisted across the globe. Migration to escape from ethnic cleansing and the transformation of the natives of the conquered land into refugees elsewhere were predominant right from the ancient periods. The migrant refugees, unwelcome in the host land, had to go through a period of great struggle for survival. Thomas Sowell, in *Migration and Culture,* considers migration as a social phenomenon that has been taking place on land and across water-bodies for centuries (1). The continuous influx of migrants to an alien land and their settlement will impact the socio-cultural patterns of the host country. Exposure to an alien culture will not only bring about changes in the set patterns of the culture of the migrant but in the sociocultural practices of the host country as well. As different cultures, languages, and life patterns mix and merge, a new hybrid culture emerges.

Migration took a new turn with the advent of colonialism. The increasing number of settlers from European countries, who carried with them their languages, cultures, and ways of life, imposed the same upon the colonized natives. To facilitate easy administration of the vast colonies that they had brought under their control, they trained the colonized through education and religious missionary works. Under the guise of the civilizing mission, the colonizers tried to implement the colonial agenda upon the colonized. They devalued the religious beliefs of the colonized as pagan/heathen and looked upon them as barbarians with a view to curb their resistance and subdue them. They encouraged the colonized subject to follow their culture and moral values. In this process, many of the colonized people tried to mimic the colonizer in their language, dressing patterns, habits, and lifestyle. But

however hard the colonized tried to mimic them, they did not succeed. Contact with new cultures of the colonizers produced a group of "mimic men" who are "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, *Location* 123). A diachronic study of the history of human migration will reveal more about the mixing and the resultant hybridization that has occurred over the ages. The term mimicry has been crucial in Bhabha's view of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. The attempt of the colonized to imitate the colonizer contains both mockery and certain menace so that "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha, *Location* 123). This mimicry carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

Hybridity and mimicry became the most debated topics within postcolonial studies and cultural studies. Migration and global cultural flows significantly impacted the identity of individuals; the idea of closed identity became a misnomer, and the long-held belief in essentialism was challenged. Several theoreticians have worked upon the different meanings of identity, and have tried to arrive at a definition of the term in order to deliberate its different nuances in contemporary social formations. They have constructed, de-constructed, and re-constructed its meanings in various ways. Identity has been loosely defined by Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets in *Identity Theory* as a set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person (3). Each person can have multiple identities according to the roles they perform. They become members of different groups in accordance with their place of origin, gender, caste, class, interests, and profession.

Identity is socially constructed through representations and discourses. These discourses are structures of power that generate meanings and determine the lives and actions of individuals. Identity theory attempts to understand identities, their sources, and processes of operation. Individuals hold multiple identities arising from their multiple positions in society. Identities offer both stability and change to individuals. Douglas Kellner proposes that "if the modern 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (Hall and Gay 18). Constructing identity remained a problem during the period of modernity, and it continues to be the same.

> Many of the notions which we would usually regard as the basic 'givens' of our existence (including our gender identity, our individual selfhood, and the notion of literature itself) are actually fluid and unstable things, rather than fixed and reliable essences. Instead of being solidly 'there' in the real world of fact and experience, they are 'socially constructed,' that is, dependent on social and political forces and on shifting ways of seeing and thinking. (Barry 33)

Christopher Lasch reflects on the changes that has happened in the current scenario. He opines that both persons and things have lost their solidity, definiteness, and continuity in the modern era. The world constructed of durable objects has been replaced "with disposable products designed for immediate obsolescence . . . identities can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume"

(Hall and Gay 23). An avoidance of fixation is the strategy that is followed these days.

Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter,* makes a powerful case that "all identities operate through exclusion, through the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalized subjects" (Hall and Gay 15). In her works, she engages with the complex transactions between the subject, the body, and the identity. Drawing insights from Foucauldian theories of power and psychoanalytic theories, Butler opines that the subject is constructed and that gender is performance. It is a result of the repetitive actions performed by oneself. All these are affected by power (Hall and Gay 15). According to Butler, identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability (Hall and Gay 16).

The cultural landscape of modern society is witnessing an unprecedented change with the ongoing fragmentation and reconfiguration of established notions of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and nationality. In the postmodern period, the postcolonial migrants and the diaspora face discrimination and marginalization. They become insignificant; their identity goes unrecognized in the everyday discourses and histories. This state of unsettledness and fragmentation has had its impact on the population and their culture in the wake of forced and free migration, which has become a global phenomenon. The thesis aims to look at various aspects relating to hybridity and fluidity of identity.

The thesis is divided into four chapters in addition to "Introduction" and "Conclusion". "Introduction," gives a brief description of the title, the rationale of

the study, its social relevance, objectives of the thesis, methodology, and review of literature. The core points upon which the thesis is built up are introduced and a definition of the Third Space, its proponents and its significance in the current scenario are brought under discussion. A brief oeuvre of the writers selected for the study is furnished to locate them in the current literary scenario.

Chapter I, "Expressions of the Third Space," attempts to trace the origin of the concept of the Third Space, and analyses the contributions made by theoreticians. This chapter underscores the need to develop Third Space thinking, which can reconfigure and redefine the traditional concepts of binary thinking. Specific situations in the select narratives which necessitate the emergence of the Third Space are exemplified in the study. An attempt is made to examine the paradigm shift taking place in the socio-cultural patterns of our society.

Chapter II, entitled "Migration, Hybridity, and Identity in *Ibis* Trilogy," deals with migration, hybridity, identity, and the expressions of the Third Space in Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* Trilogy. This chapter examines how the displaced and the dispossessed migrants overcome the caste, class, racial, religious, and linguistic boundaries and create an identity and space for them in the *Ibis*. It examines how they overcome the colonial, patriarchal, and racial oppression and the capitalistic greed of western imperialism.

Chapter III, "Borders and Borderlanders in *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*" studies the impact of borders upon the life of the borderlanders with a special focus upon Anzaldua's *Borderlands.* This chapter examines the significant interventions made by Anzaldua in redefining the life of the borderlanders,

specifically that of the Chicana/os, by propounding the theory of *mestiza* consciousness. It also shows how the marginalized borderlanders, by deploying margin as a place of resistance, develop for themselves a Third Space, a space with immense potential to bring about revolutionary changes in this world.

Chapter IV, entitled "Gender Fluidity in Select Narratives," deals with the marginalized sexual minorities with specific reference to homosexuals and transgenders, and shows how they try to find a space for themselves in society by asserting their self and identity. A close analysis of *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, a film by Rituparno Ghosh; *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* written by Roy; and *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, an autobiography of Revathi is made in this chapter. The central characters of these works, Rudra Chatterjee, Anjum, and Revathi, the representatives of sexual minorities considered as aberrations by society, try to claim a space for themselves by asserting their self.

"Conclusion" is a summation of the observations made in all the preceding chapters. Third Space thinking is the need of the day. At a time when racial, religious, linguistic, and gender discrimination are becoming predominant and certain groups of people are side-lined, discriminated, and segregated from society, a paradigm shift becomes mandatory to include and accept the excluded. This work intends to bring about a transformation in the general perception of the people and inspire them to unlearn their preconceived notions, and learn to accept differences and show honour and respect to the marginalized people. The government policies shall be amended in such a way as to enforce grassroot changes in the rules and regulations so that due honour and respect will be extended to all those who are

denied their right to live as true human beings. The aim of this thesis is to disseminate the ideologies of Third Space thinking across the world, as it has immense potential to establish harmony and peace.

Chapter I

Expressions of the Third Space

In the current scenario, when the socio-cultural arena is going through a period of transition, radical changes are taking place in the human thought process and ways of living, engendering a paradigm shift in socio-cultural studies. The traditional concepts and perceptions of life are getting transformed to cater to the needs of the changing socio-cultural scenario and to deal with the personal, social, environmental, political, and global crises that we face today. These new ways of thinking expand the ambit of our understanding of space and spatiality; older definitions are getting redefined to accommodate and open up new possibilities. This shift in thought is necessitated due to the social and cultural exclusion of a group of people who are pushed to the periphery and treated as the Other[7]. The explorations and contributions of academicians and theoreticians in the field of space have played a great role in developing a new way of thought. The notion of space and the importance of spatiality in socio-cultural studies are emphasized in their studies. By providing a spatial dimension to the study and analysis of our lives, they address issues of belonging and existence that hitherto were left unaddressed. Spatial studies has gained momentum with the contributions of theorists like Lefebvre, Soja, and Bhabha. The concept of the Third Space becomes important in this era where varied modes of exclusion are practiced. In this context, it is imperative to discuss and define the concept of the Third Space, a space which accommodates and accepts

[7] "O" in "Other" is capitalized whenever the term is to be given special emphasis.

differences, and gives space to everyone, especially the ones who are excluded from the binary. In the forthcoming chapters of this thesis, issues related to space with respect to hybridity and migration, border, and gender, respectively are discussed. In this chapter, the concept of the Third Space, its origin, relevance in the present era, and its inscriptions in the contemporary narratives are focused upon.

The concept of "the Third Space of enunciation" introduced by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* and the theories of Lefebvre, Soja, Anzaldua, and hooks form the basis of the argument of the thesis. An enquiry into the formation of the Third Space reveals that it bears a close resemblance to Arnold van Gennep's theory of liminality as propounded in the remarkable work *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) published in 1909.

> Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state') or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. (Turner 94)

Gennep argues that the three phases noticeable in the rites of passage may not be fully developed in all ceremonial patterns.

> Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance in pregnancy, betrothal and initiation, they may be reduced to the minimum in adoption, in the delivery of the second child, in remarriage or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated. (11)

The ritual subject achieves a stable state and is given the right to follow the customary norms and ethical standards of society. Every period of transition is marked by relevant rites. The transition from one phase to another takes place in this liminal phase. This phase offers possibilities for transformations. Victor Turner recognized in liminal space "a possibility for ritual to be creative, to make new situations, identities and social realities" (Schechner 66).

The concept of liminality introduced by Arnold van Gennep was re-discovered by Victor Turner in 1963, and through research into liminality, he explored the roots of human experience. Liminality and its entry into the discussions on human existence had a far-reaching impact upon social and cultural studies. It was further incorporated into various disciplines as it addressed the complexity as well as the in-betweenness experienced by each and every individual. Victor Turner elaborates on liminality in *The Ritual Process*:

> The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (95)

The Third Space refers to an interstitial space between the binaries; it can be a space between the strict binary division of gender, race, ethnicity, language, or community. This space is a liberatory one that holds and opens up numerous possibilities. According to Bhabha, this space becomes the point of production of meanings. Through this postcolonial concept Bhabha and several other theoreticians have tried to challenge homogeneity, universality and supremacy of the western notions of culture, identity, nationality, ethnicity, and gender. The contradictions and lacunae inherent in their ideals and notions become evident and explicit; the notions of purity and supremacy are questioned. A new space, an in-between space which Bhabha famously nomenclatured as "the Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha, *Location* 54), challenging and altering the hitherto established notions and concepts of the west, has emerged. The signs and significations in this discursive space undergo multiple processes of secondary signification. Just like differánce, a prominent concept introduced by Jacques Derrida, in which meaning is generated because of a word's difference from other words in a signifying system, and

meaning is infinitely deferred or postponed through secondary signification, culture too is always in flux, giving space to new definitions and interpretations. Culture is permeable and susceptible to change, opening up a space for hybridity. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, signs acquire meaning through their difference from other signs (Ashcroft et al. 23). In the same manner, a culture maybe identified by its difference from other cultures. They carry different meanings and identifications, which in turn questions the fixity of meanings and originality of culture. In this post-structuralist view,

> Derrida suggested that the 'difference' is also 'deferred,' a duality that he defined in a new term, 'differánce.' The Third Space can be compared to this space of deferral and possibility (thus a culture's difference is never simple and static but ambivalent, changing, and always open to further possible interpretation). (Ashcroft et al. 61)

In an interview, Bhabha has asserted that hybridity is the Third Space that enables other positions to emerge. "This Third Space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (qtd. in Rutherford 211). A confluence of cultures has been taking place for a long time, ever since people started moving from place to place either as migrants or as settlers. With the onset of globalization, hybridity became more and more prominent among people; multiple changes, alterations, and modifications began to occur in human communities. As a result of this, new practices and elements of culture started to emerge in the host culture as well as in the culture of the migrants and the settlers. These types of

cultural exchanges create new hybrids. The individuals enter into a new and altered space. Bhabha observes that hybridity

> bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses. . . . The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. (Rutherford 211)

Bhabha endorses Frantz Fanon's observation that the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of hybrid identity. They are caught in the continuous time of translation and negotiation (Bhabha, *Location* 55). Their identity undergoes change during their interactions with people of different cultures. However, this change is never complete as it gets renewed and redefined at different junctures of contact. Bhabha opines that the Third Space of enunciation is a precondition for the articulation of cultural difference. In this space, the contraries are assimilated, and an instability with the potential to generate powerful changes is created. It opens a way to conceptualize

> an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. . . . it is the 'inter'-the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space-that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. . . . And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha, *Location* 56)

Bhabha identifies the Third Space as the space produced by the collapse of the previously defining narratives of modernity based on colonialism, class, and patriarchy. These narratives labelled and defined the Other on grounds such as race, gender, and sexual orientation (Baker 16). Colonial narratives which discriminated the Other were replaced by insurgent discourses which emerged as a part of the resistance of those who were pushed to the periphery.

Cultural diversity and cultural difference are hotly debated topics in postcolonial parlance. In an interview, Bhabha clarifies the difference between cultural diversity and cultural difference. Even when cultural diversity celebrates diversity, there is an inherent racism and universalism in it, whereby certain norms and rules are considered as the dominant, perpetually marginalizing a group of people and their culture. It "masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests" (Rutherford 208), whereas in cultural difference, there is a possibility to manifest all the differences without being judged by the dominant ideologies. The space that can accommodate cultural difference is a productive space where the construction of new cultures and the production of meanings take place. This is a liberal space that is free from universalist and normative norms, cultural and political judgement which is quite different from the space offered by cultural diversity and hegemonic ideologies. Bhabha attacks cultural diversity as giving the false impression that cultures are holistic, separated, and static with "pre-given cultural contents and customs" (Bhabha, *Location* 50). Instead, we must recognize the porous borders between cultures, the fact that they are always leaking into each other, crisscrossing supposed barriers. Bhabha opines that the differences of culture cannot be contained

within the universalist framework of liberal democracy. He wants to move beyond the limits offered by cultural diversity and the "mythologies of progress" to give space for the "Other" (Rutherford 209).

Cultures cannot be easily compartmentalized and categorised, since there are overlaps, permeability, and changeability which engender a Third Space of enunciation. Bhabha introduces the notion of "cultural translation," which suggests that all forms of culture are related to each other, and they are "always subject to intrinsic forms of translation" (Rutherford 210). We cannot claim an originary or full culture as culture is always subject to interpellation, difference, and signification. Bhabha selects this term from the oeuvre of Walter Benjamin and connects it to the process of translation in language.

> Translation is also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense-imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never finished or complete in itself. (Rutherford 210)

The singularities associated with class and gender categories are questioned, and different subject positions are given importance. This interstitial space is one of negotiations and accommodates displacements and distortions. Bhabha emphasizes the need to think beyond the notions of originary subjectivities, and to focus on the articulation of cultural difference. Such articulations produce in-between spaces. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood-singular or communal-that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of

collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, *Location* 2).

Bhabha elaborates the concept of "beyond" as a spatial distance, which marks progress and offers promises in the future. However, this going beyond the boundary or barrier also includes a return to the present. In this process, "present" is also redefined and revisioned. Beyond becomes a space of intervention. It can no longer be understood as a mere break or bonding with the past and future; it needs to be addressed in terms of all its inequalities and discontinuities as well. This is similar to what Benjamin describes as the blasting of monadic moment from the homogenous course of history, establishing a conception of the present as the "time of the now" (Bhabha, *Location* 5-6).

Soja, an acclaimed theoretician and urban planner who is known for his thinking on the Thirdspace talks about the emergence of a spatial awareness all over the world in the late 1960s. He calls this new awareness, Thirdspace and describes it as a product of a "thirding" of the spatial imagination. It draws upon the material and mental spaces of traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in substance, scope and meaning (Soja, *Thirdspace* 11). He makes the observation that spatiality has been treated in a relatively peripheral way for a long time when only historical and social imaginations were given importance.

> Understanding how history is made has been the primary source of emancipatory insight and practical political consciousness. . . . Today, however, it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us,

> the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world. (Soja, *Postmodern* 1)

Each and every human activity was determined by its historicality and sociality. He states that the importance of historical and social qualities shall be retained, but at the same time, it should be interwoven with spatiality.

> And this three-sided sensibility of spatiality-historicality-sociality is not only bringing about a profound change in the ways we think about space, it is also beginning to lead to major revisions in how we study history and society. The challenge being raised in *Thirdspace* is therefore transdisciplinary in scope. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 3)

While talking about the emergence of the Thirdspace, Soja states that spatiality and an inquisitive spatial imagination have recently entered as a vital third mode of theoretical understanding into what has hitherto remained as an essentially two-sided socio-historical project. He observes that Lefebvre, a French metaphilosopher was influential in "exploring the limitless dimensions of social spatiality; and also, in arguing forcefully for linking historicality, sociality, and spatiality in a strategically balanced and transdisciplinary 'triple dialectic'" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 6). In his (re)conceptualization of the relation between centers and peripheries, Lefebvre criticized the oppositional dichotomy of power and all forms of binary logic. He insisted that two terms are not enough:

> there is always an-Other term, with Autre/Other capitalized to emphasize its critical importance. When faced with a choice confined to the either/or, Lefebvre creatively resisted by choosing instead an-Other alternative,

> marked by the openness of the both/and also. . ., with the 'also' reverberating back to disrupt the categorical closures implicit in the either/or logic. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 7)

Both Soja and Lefebvre harbored within them a total disregard for the concept of binary division, and the categorical closures implicit in it, and they endeavored to give space to the Other. The inclusion of spatiality into the dialectics of historicality and sociality leads to the formation of what Lefebvre calls "the galaxy of triads" which is the key point of his "dialectics of triplicity" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 70). Soja describes this formation as "trialectical thinking" and more specifically, "the trialectics of spatiality." Soja explains trialectical thinking as follows:

> Thinking trialetically is a necessary part of understanding Thirdspace as a limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open . . . all-inclusive and transdisciplinary in scope . . . that are never completely knowable but whose knowledge none the less guides our search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination. . . . it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 70)

Soja notes that in Lefebvre's *The Production of Space,* there is a "thirding as Othering" which reasserts Spatiality against the tendency of the west to bifocalize on the interactive Historicality and Sociality of being (Soja, *Thirdspace* 71). Spatiality, obtains a strategic positioning to defend against any form of binary reductionism,

and it can provide rich insights for understanding the production of lived space (Soja, *Thirdspace* 72).

In the binary division, the first term achieves prominence while the second term is given a subordinate position. In the case of binaries like white/black, man/woman, and civilized/savage, the first term is given more importance than the second term, and a forefronting happens here, which maintains a hierarchy. These kinds of binaries encourage the formation of a dominant hegemonic group, leaving behind certain others who are not included in the binary. The binaries play a key role in the construction of society. It was the French structuralist linguist Saussure who used the term binary for the first time during his discussion on signs and how it constitutes a particular meaning. A sign gets meaning from its opposition to other signs. He used the term while explaining the signifier and the signified, which constitutes a sign.

Ashcroft et al. observe:

> The problem with such binary systems is that they suppress ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories, so that any overlapping region that may appear, say, between the categories man/woman, child/adult or friend/alien, becomes impossible according to the binary logic, and a region of taboo in social experience. (23-4)

Postcolonial theoreticians try to look at the inherent problems in the binary logic and point out the presence of ambivalence and hybridity, which distort the certainties of colonial thinking. The racial discrimination practised by the imperialists reduced humanity into two terms; whites/non-whites. They “take the

West as norm and define the rest as inferior, different, deviant, subordinate, and sub-ordinateable" (Ashcroft et al. 192). This method of othering exposes the logic of power inherent in binary thinking, which compels us to move away, distort and break binary reductionism.

In this context, a restructuring of the traditional concepts relating to our existence becomes mandatory. Spatiality, which has been hitherto neglected, gains relevance. The existential philosophy of being-in-the-world is thus redefined to incorporate spatiality along with historicality and sociality. These historical-social-spatial beings actively participate in the construction/production of histories, geographies and societies (Soja, *Thirdspace* 73). Again, it "recentres knowledge formations first around the long-submerged and subordinated spatiality of existential being and becoming, and then in the spatialization of historicality and sociality in theory-formation, empirical analysis, critical inquiry and social practice" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 82). Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* emphasizes that "space is assuming an increasingly important role in supposedly 'modern' societies. . . . its effects may be observed on all planes and in all the interconnections between them" (412). Soja observes that in *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre demonstrates this far-reaching spatialization which is not obtained in closed epistemologies. He makes it possible through a series of theoretical and empirical approximations, with a never-ending journey to explore new grounds. Soja affirms his findings and states, "We must always be moving on to new possibilities and places" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 82).

Foucault, a French philosopher and theoretician, an influential figure in cultural studies, foregrounded the importance of spatial thinking. Soja, in his seminal work *Postmodern Geographies,* underscores the significance of Foucault's observations on spatiality.

> As we move closer to the end of the twentieth century . . . Foucault's premonitory observations on the emergence of an 'epoch of space' assume a more reasonable cast. The material and intellectual contexts of modern critical social theory have begun to shift dramatically. In the 1980s, the hoary traditions of a space-blinkered historicism are being challenged with unprecedented explicitness by convergent calls for a far-reaching spatialization of the critical imagination. (11)

He gave a different name to the phenomenon of the Thirdspace as "Other spaces" (*des espaces autres*). Foucault's lecture notes published under the title "Of Other Spaces" provide a rough picture of his conception of a new approach to space and spatial thinking that he called heterotopology which has resemblance to Thirdspace (Soja, *Thirdspace* 154). Foucault describes heterotopias as "the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs. Like Lefebvre . . . he also filled these heterogeneous sites with the trialectics of space, knowledge, and power" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 15). The "nexus of power" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 162) is central to Foucault's spatial thinking, while Lefebvre focuses on the social production of space.

> Lefebvre and Foucault were making in their different yet similar conceptualizations of spatiality: *that the assertion of an alternative*

> *envisioning of spatiality* (*as illustrated in the heterotopologies of Foucault, the trialectics and thirdings of Lefebvre, the marginality and radical openness of hooks, the hybridities of Homi Bhabha*) *directly challenges* (*and is intended to challengingly deconstruct*) *all conventional modes of spatial thinking.* (Soja, *Thirdspace* 163)

Soja argues that the disordering, disruption, and deconstruction of the geographical imaginations and spatial sciences is the first step to understand the Thirdspace and to comprehend the works of the space theorists. Otherwise, the privileged viewpoints in postmodern literature and the taken-for-granted perspectives will continue to exist (Soja, *Thirdspace* 163).

Soja endorses Foucault's argument that the "links between space, knowledge, power, and cultural politics must be seen as both oppressive and enabling, filled not only with authoritarian perils but also with possibilities for community, resistance, and emancipatory change" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 87). The relation of power to cultural politics of difference is simplified into hegemonic and counter-hegemonic categories. The hegemonic group that wields power "produces and reproduces difference as a strategy to maintain social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment and authority" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 87). An uneven development is apparent in the workings of power operated on the body and the home, the nation, and the world economy. Lefebvre has argued that this "uneven development has become increasingly fragmented, homogenized, and hierarchically structured in capitalist societies, making the simple division between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power, centers and peripheries, more and more

complex and difficult to decipher" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 87). Foucault argues that struggles against hegemonic power operate in three overlapping areas, around what he termed subjection, domination, and exploitation, and among all these forms of resistance, subjection has assumed a much more central role, especially with regard to gender and race, and the far-reaching relation between the colonizer and the colonized (Soja, *Thirdspace* 88). It can be observed that power percolates in society in an unequal way creating a division and differentiation among people through spatial and social representations bringing about alterations and transformations in human lives.

hooks, a contemporary feminist, cultural theorist, and a critical thinker has made substantial contributions to propagate the concept of the Third Space. In her seminal essay, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness", she narrates how she is involved in the "counter-hegemonic cultural practice" (145) to identify the spaces where a re-vision is required. She realizes the need for an oppositional political struggle to push against the oppressive boundaries set by race, sex, and class domination (145). She overcomes the efforts to silence her voice, both within and outside her community, and stands with the oppressed in offering them possibilities for a new cultural politics of difference and identity. She chooses marginality as a space of resistance and emphasizes the difference in its meaning from the marginality which is imposed upon her/them by the oppressive structure.

Soja comments that the Thirdspace can be re-explored through hooks's approaches. It is a space that is filled with contradictions and ambiguities, with perils but also with new possibilities: a Thirdspace of political choice (Soja,

Thirdspace 96). According to hooks, margin is an inclusive site of creativity and power where we erase the binaries of the colonizer/colonized through unified action. hooks considers margin as a space of inclusion rather than exclusion, a spatiality where radical subjectivities can join together into communities of identity and resistance. In this space, fragmentation is no longer a political weakness but a potential strength. Locating herself on the margins, hooks observes that "the ground we stand on is shifting, fragile, and unstable. We are avant-garde only to the extent that we eschew essentialist notions of identity" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 101). She engages in this discussion from the standpoint of a Black American and considers the margin as a space where they can come together, engage in critical dissent, and reclaim their identity without white intervention.

Exploration of the Third Space in Select Narratives:

Inscriptions of the Third Space elaborated in the theoretical formulations of Lefebvre, Soja, Bhabha, Anzaldua, and hooks are evident and explicit in the narratives selected for the study. A discussion on the concept of the Third Space and its relevance in the contemporary era, as envisaged by these theoreticians, have been made in the above section. Instances that necessitate the production of the Third Space, an in-between space, are exemplified in chapters two, three and four. This section focuses on isolating the expressions of the Third Space from the narratives selected for the study. Migration, hybridity, and the resultant identity crisis undergone by migrants and borderlanders are global phenomena that need to be addressed. In a world where persecution of people on the basis of race, class, caste, and gender persists, an urgent redressal of their problems has to be made.

Marginalized people and sexual minorities excluded from the binary who dwell in the in-between space do not find a place in the accepted definition of a human being. This denial of space has become a much-debated topic among theoreticians and activists who emphasize the need to redefine the term human by accommodating the excluded. A close reading of the narratives taken for the study reveals that attempts are made by people who reside in the in-between spaces to find a space of their own. The hardships and discriminations faced by people who are not able to fit into the strict binary division of society reveal the undemocratic side of our world. In this context, an all-encompassing world that welcomes and provides a space for those who were hitherto ignored and erased from mainstream society becomes essential; a comprehensive perception capable of accommodating all the differences needs to be developed.

Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy unravels various ways in which the characters offer resistance to marginalization, oppression, and exploitation. Through the film, *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish,* directed by Rituparno Ghosh, autobiography of Revathi, *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, and the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* written by Roy, we get a vivid picture of the lives of transgenders and homosexuals. The central characters in these texts have lived a life of neglect and exclusion as a result of their difference from the societal norms of sexuality. The world in which we live today is imbued with real-life replicas of such characters. The traumatic life of the LGBTQIA+ community and their struggles to achieve visibility in a world which glosses over their existence triggers the need for accepting them in society. The binary division, which classifies people into closed

categories, is interrogated to provide a niche for those who do not fit into this classification.

Ibis trilogy abounds with hybrid characters who migrate and try to forge an identity forsaking their unpleasant past. Their voyage in the ship *Ibis* brings characters from different lands together, where they form a fraternity. The ship space functions as a Third Space that accommodates motley characters and is a perfect example of how people create a space for themselves when they confront unforeseen adversities. Here, he introduces the terms *jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens* to bring about the idea of fraternity shared by the occupants of the ship. The *Ibis* accommodates and accepts people across national, religious, and linguistic boundaries. The ship space of the *Ibis* is given the image of a mother and her womb, which gives birth to children. They are reborn as new selves in the ship, shedding their ties with the past. Most of the characters who board the *Ibis* have discarded their life on the land to escape from the exploitation and oppression which emerged from exploitative mechanisms like patriarchy, racial, class, and caste discrimination. Among them were people subjected to coerced migration to be transported as labourers in the plantations of the imperialists in Mauritius, which was a continuation of the system of slavery that existed earlier. The motley crew in the ship exhibited hybridity in nationality, language, race, and culture. Pugli, a French lady with a hybrid identity who enters the *Ibis* in order to escape the harassment that she has suffered from her care-takers comments,

> On a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same: it's like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannath, in Puri. From now on, and

> forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings-*jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens*-to each other. There'll be no differences between us. (Ghosh, *Sea* 356)

When Deeti, the matriarch of the *Ibis*, who was anxious just like others in the ship of losing her caste, was given a befitting answer which was so complete, satisfactory, and thrilling, she appreciated Pugli and shared her happiness with a communion of touch and all the others followed suit. Deeti identified all of them as children of the ship, "her new self, her new life, had been gestating all this while in the belly of this creature, this vessel that was the Mother-Father of her new family, a great wooden *mái-báp*, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties yet to come" (Ghosh, *Sea* 356-57).

Ghosh elaborates on the womb image to underscore the generation of a new group of people who are hybrid and occupying a Third Space. A conglomeration of multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial people belonging to different nations communicating in different languages develops a community of their own in this newfound space. Here, the ship space becomes "a meeting place for all peripherized or marginalized subjects wherever they may be located" (Ikas and Wagner 51). Oceanic space, which functions as a platform for imperial domination, becomes a space where the marginalized community is incessantly oppressed by those who wield power; these side-lined subjects transform this space of oppression into a space of resistance. New meanings are generated in this space, bringing about a transformation in their hitherto oppressed life, and giving way to the formation of liberated identities.

When Deeti left home, she was filled with anxiety and a sense of homelessness, but inside the ship she experienced a feeling of liberation. The sense of freedom that Deeti experienced at this time is in tune with the observation made by Bjorn Thomassen.

> [L]iminality reminds us of the moment we left our parent's home, that mixture of joy and anxiety, that strange combination of freedom and homelessness, that pleasant but unsettling sensation of infinity and openness of possibilities which-at some moment, sooner or later-will start searching for a new frame to settle within. (4)

She rewrites the age-old socio-cultural customs and conventions, and inscribes an identity for herself by absconding with an untouchable named Kalua. Her defiance of the cultural practices of the upper caste, and the acceptance of his love is her first step towards self-actualization. Her life was a vehement fight against odd situations. In the *Ibis*, she becomes the *bhauji*[8], who provided strength, hope, and confidence to *jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens* of the *Ibis*. Deeti, known as *Kabutri-ki-má*[9] evolves as a matriarch of the *Ibis*. Hitherto, her true self and identity remained invisible, made known to others merely as the wife, sister, or mother of someone else. To inscribe an identity for herself, she renames herself Aditi, and accepts Chamar[10] as her caste, the caste of her lower-caste lover, Kalua. As Schechner has commented:

---

[8] A reverential way of addressing a sister-in-law in Bhojpuri language.
[9] Mother of Kabutri.
[10] Leather workers' caste.

> Persons are stripped off their former identities and positions in the social world; they enter a time-place where they are not-this-not-that, neither here nor there, in the midst of a journey from one social self to another. For the time being, they are powerless and identity less. Second, during the liminal phase, persons are inscribed with their new identities and initiated into their new powers. There are many ways to accomplish the transformation. (66)

Deeti's embarkation on the *Ibis*, along with Kalua, marks a period of transition in her life. As a *girmit*[11] who has severed all ties with the land, Deeti enters a liminal space, and she tries to adjust with the new found atmosphere in the *Ibis.* The incessant tilting movement of the ship was quite uneasy and suffocating in the beginning. To cope with this, she lays down and holds on to the wooden plank as a source of support. The nail markings which she feels with her hands on the wall of the ship and the iron buckles hooked on it reveal that other similar labourers were transported through this ship in the past. This marks a continuity of the system of oppression and slavery, and Deeti ponders upon the analogous systems of oppression which prevailed in the world. She immediately finds a connection with the nail engravings on the wooden plank. Shifting forms of exploitation which persisted in the world and how oceanic space functioned as a liminal passage for the slaves are highlighted here. The *Ibis* becomes an integral part in moulding her identity; she resolves to gradually use this ship space to create her own space of engravings. The custom of engraving, which she inherited from her grandmother, inspires her to indulge in carving images of those who played crucial roles in her

[11] Indentured labourers from British India transported to work on plantations to compensate the shortage of labourers caused by the abolition of slavery.

life. This drawing of images on the walls of her rooms, the wooden plank of the *Ibis*, and later on in the caves of Mauritius can be seen as her attempt to create her own space. Liminal experiences form an integral part of one's culture. Years after crossing the borders of her nation, Deeti still carries with her the cultural traits that she has inherited from her family. As Thomassen observes, cave paintings can be "interpreted as being part of ritual passages and enacted liminal experiences" (4). She arrests the turning points in the life of *jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens* on board the *Ibis* through her artistic engravings in the shrine of *La Fami Colver*[12] in Mauritius. It functions as a monument to the *Ibis* fraternity.

The other migrants, too, hailing from different nations belonging to different castes, classes, creeds, and colours develop new identities inside the *Ibis*. Most of the migrants are transported as *girmits* who lose their ties with their homeland after signing the contract or as lascars who work as the crew of the ship under their leader. These migrants are ready to forego their past and forge an altogether new identity. The process of renaming when they board the *Ibis*, showcases their readiness to adopt a new identity which underscores the fluidity of their identity.

Zachary Reid, a man of hybrid identity, a metif[13], in his attempt to escape from the racial discrimination he faced in his native land, boards the *Ibis* as the ship's carpenter. But within no time, due to various reasons, he is promoted and finally raised to the position of the captain of the ship *Ibis.* He achieves a revolutionary potential to bring about a transformation in his identity and

[12] It is a family formed in Mauritius by Deeti to commemorate the *Ibis* family and the name derives from her husband, Kalua (Maddow Colver).
[13] A person of mixed race, especially a child of a native American and a white European (Metif).

personhood. By virtue of his ivory complexion and tall gentlemanly appearance, he could effortlessly pass off as a white man. With his cunning nature and his continuous and concerted effort, Zachary, a person from the periphery, racially discriminated and marginalized in his own native land, fights his way to success and thereby disrupts "the categorical closures implicit in the either/or logic" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 7). He rewrites the plight of the multi-racial mulatto[14]/metif designated as black and inscribes for him a space among the elitist bureaucrats. This space allows him to climb the social ladder of success, and he is enthroned as one among the business magnets along with the British and the Chinese business tycoons.

Overseas trade and commerce that flourished during the nineteenth century is epitomized through the representation of business magnets like Bahram Modi. Marginalized and segregated from his own land for being a member of a lower class, he works his way to success by engaging in the highly lucrative opium business and establishes an identity and a space of his own in Canton. As the entry of foreigners is strictly prohibited in Canton, overseas businessmen from across the globe are allowed a space in Fanqui[15] town. Through the letters of Robin Chinnery, Paulette's childhood friend, we get a bird's eye view of Fanqui-town. Just like the *Ibis* in the *Ibis* trilogy, Fanqui-town, brimming with life, becomes a place where people belonging to different classes, castes, races, and nationalities, who are fluent in a hybridized creole and pidgin actively engage in their trading operations. This melting pot is the epitome of the fluidity of culture, identity and language as people

[14] A person of mixed white and black ancestry (Wallenfeldt).
[15] It is a town near Canton, China exclusively allotted for foreign traders who were denied entry to Canton.

hailing from different parts of the world dwell here for the purpose of trade. Robin Chinnery, in his letter to Paulette describes Fanqui-town as follows,

> In a way Fanqui-town is like a ship at sea, with hundreds-no, thousands-of men living crammed together in a little sliver of a space. . . . so small and yet so varied, where people from the far corners of the Earth must live, elbow to elbow for six months of the year. (Ghosh, *River* 185)

This town is an exclusive space allotted by the Chinese government to accommodate foreign businessmen who engage in free trade. Their residing space, the Thirteen Hongs was

> the gate through which China connected with the world, as well as the window through which the world got to know China. . . . The word hongs, in Cantonese, refers to merchant houses or trade houses, similar to companies. The number 13 is an appellation, or a generic term, not the actual number of merchant houses. (Quanlin)

People belonging to different cultural backgrounds and linguistic zones execute their business deals in this unique space. A dissolution of national, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries becomes visible in this residential area of foreign businessmen. To cater to the needs of easy communication among the diverse groups of people who live in Fanqui-town, an improvised language with which they can effortlessly convey their ideas, has been formed. Local boat people have their own variety of languages, which is a mixture of Chinese and other foreign languages. Rich businessmen who live away from their land satisfy their sexual

appetite by entering into illicit liaisons with boat-women who earn their living by engaging in various odd businesses, and by providing warmth and food in accordance with their taste. Ghosh delineates Bahram, an influential opium businessman from Bombay, as a representative figure who has fallen in love with a boat-woman, Chi-mei. The birth of an illegitimate son, Leo Fatt (Ah Fatt), who is half Chinese, his ambivalent position among other boat children, his growing up, his sense of non-belongingness, his unfulfilled dreams to visit his father's land, his entrapment among smugglers of opium, his opium addiction and his final murder by the cohorts of the Chinese business tycoon, Lenny Chan, points to the plight of boat-people, and the futility of their attempt to create an identity and a space among the land-bound people.

The great divide between the rich and the poor, and how the oppressed and the exploited group are perpetually enmeshed in a matrix of slavery and subordination, and their inability to assert their identity are encapsulated in the *Ibis* trilogy. *Girmits*, lascars like Jodu and Serang Ali, and people like Chi-mei, Ah Fatt, Allow live their life in subordination, while, Mr. and Mrs. Burnham, Bahram and Shireen Modi, Zadig Bey, Dinyar Ferdoonjee enjoy all the pleasurable luxuries of the rich. The treatment that the widows, Deeti and Shireen Modi receive from the oceanic space exemplifies the disparate ways in which the poor and the rich forge their identity and self-esteem.

The concept of *mestiza* consciousness introduced by Anzaldua in her autohistoria-teoria, *Borderlands* is an example of the Third Space. She has developed this theory, which is nomenclatured by Moraga as "theory in the flesh,"

(Moraga and Anzaldua 23) from her own lived life and the life of the borderlanders. She analyses the concrete realities of the people living in the borderlands, specifically the people living in the U.S. Mexican border. The plurality of their self resulting from an intermixing of race, gender and sexuality, functions as a framework for formulating this new concept. The existence of a homogenous culture, language, and race is interrogated in the borderlands as a result of the cross-over taking place here. This borderland is a hybrid space where people belonging to different races and following different religious and cultural practices comingle and interact. During such processes of interaction, cultural collision, as well as cultural hybridity, takes place. For the same reason, border culture is quite unique, and Anzaldua derives inspiration for her new concept from this ambivalent space.

The cultural collision, a phenomenon noticeable in the borderlands becomes all the more prominent when two or more self-consistent but incompatible cultures come together. The whites attack the commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, and both the whites and the Mexicans attack the indigenous cultural practices and belief systems. When the whites attack the Mexicans, they give a counter-stance by offering resistance against the dominator. This resistance is a step towards liberation from cultural domination. In this counter-stance, the dominated crosses the border to establish a wholly new and separate territory, a new consciousness. It is in this context that Anzaldua has propounded the concept of *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldua 77). This new consciousness is more flexible and inclusive and is analogous to the Third Space. It develops a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity. As a multicultural, multilingual, multiracial entity with a plurality of self,

mestiza goes through a period of insecurity and dilemma. To get into terms with the ambivalence in the liminal space is a painful and emotional event which takes place subconsciously. The *mestiza* breaks open the psychological borders, which has kept her a slave of habits and set patterns of behaviour, and embraces a more whole perspective giving space for "the good, bad and the ugly" (Anzaldua 76). In this newly formed space, there is a possibility of uniting all that is separate. An amalgamation of different socio-cultural and religious practices takes place in this space to bring about a synthesis. Duality is transcended in the process of synthesis, leading to the formation of a third element that is stronger in its power of resistance. This consciousness imparts more confidence to those who have been excluded from the binary. The new *mestiza* breaks down the subject-object duality and transcends the binary division between the white and the coloured, the male and the female, by dismantling the western practice of dualistic thinking. In such a scenario, the patriarchal structures of oppression will collapse. The empowered women will emerge with greater vigor, ready to challenge all kinds of exploitation levelled against them. Anzaldua envisages a liberated world where the divide between the colonizer-colonized, and the exploiter/exploited will become insignificant, diminishing the chances for violence and war.

The inevitability of the emergence of the Third Space, and the deficiencies of binary thinking are highlighted through the movie *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish,* which centers around the life and experiences of Rudra Chatterjee, a homosexual. The director cum actor, Rituparno Ghosh himself, takes up the lead role. He initiates a discussion on homosexuality and how family, friends, and society

look upon such sexual minorities. Both Rituparno and Rudra Chatterjee share similar sexual orientations in a society where same-sex desire and different sexual identities are considered aberrations. At a time when the LGBTQIA+ community was not acknowledged as normal human beings, Rituparno gives expression to the plight of sexual minorities who are marginalized in society through this movie. As a person who has gone through challenging experiences of a queer, he could truthfully portray Rudra Chatterjee. In a society where heterosexuality is the norm, homosexuality is taboo. In the man/woman binary, their existence is not marked and is conveniently erased by mainstream society.

Ghosh delineates Rudra's parents as the spokespersons of the traditional concepts of the binary division of gender who prefer a heteronormative life. For them, an individual shall be either a man or a woman. They believe that anyone who deviates from the norm will become a misfit in society. To conform to the norms of society, a man shall go for a masculine job rather than opting for a profession which is classified as a feminine job. His father wanted to give him a space befitting a man, and for the same reason, he refuses to go to watch Rudra's dance programs. Though his mother understands his feelings, she cannot give him wholehearted support because she fears that his father may not agree with her and that society may ostracize them. Father, mother, and society are all complicit in creating a sense of estrangement in him. Acute pain and agony overcome him when he realizes that he has no space in his own family, in society, or even among his friends. The realization that he cannot abide by the positions and gender roles ascribed to him by society develops in him a terrible sense of alienation and non-belongingness. He

yearns for a space, for acceptance. He finds refuge in a kindred spirit, a percussionist, Partho, who was also ostracised by society for being a heroin addict. His passion for him develops into love. But same-sex love is taboo and unacceptable to society; his parents too cannot offer him any kind of support. The sense of alienation that he feels is so intense that he resolves to live with Partho even without their consent. The biological truism that same-sex lovers cannot beget children is overcome when Rudra suggests that they can adopt a child. But adoption rights are forbidden to homosexual couples. To legalise adoption, Rudra volunteers to go for a sex reassignment surgery. But Partho disagrees with this decision, and when Rudra was halfway through the process of operation, Partho shows his disinterestedness and courts a lady whom he resolves to marry. Bereft of love and compassion, an emaciated and shattered Rudra calls off the operation and requests the doctor to take away his breast implants. He goes through an acute identity crisis and this aggravates his sense of estrangement and alienation. His individuality and personhood are interrogated. Left with no other option, he resolves to accept his self. Society's failure in recognizing and accepting people who think and behave differently is highlighted here, and this points to the importance of evolving a new perception, a Third Space with possibilities for a liberated life. The conservative attitudes which sanction only heteronormativity make the life of homosexuals miserable. The failure of the legal system to adequately address the problems of the LGBTQIA+ people and the various discriminations and barriers imposed upon them by society is a significant factor that demands redressal. Even when they search for a space where they can be themselves, the search most often ends in the creation of their own Other spaces. The Third Space, which is more flexible and inclusive, can

accommodate people with non-normative sexuality. hooks suggests that marginal spaces shall be converted into spaces of resistance, and in these "restructured and recentred margins, new spaces of opportunity and action are created, the new spaces that difference makes" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 98). These spaces offer them liberation and possibilities to cross the boundaries of mind, body, and society.

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Revathi's *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* lead us to the discussion on transgenders and hermaphrodites. Anjum, the central character in Roy's novel, was born a hermaphrodite with both male and female reproductive organs, and the parents named him Aftab, a boy's name. Even though he was born a hermaphrodite for no fault of his, Aftab was ostracized throughout his life. His life had been a tornado of problems which torpedoed his childhood and self-esteem. The realization and acceptance of his difference from others during his adolescent years launched him into a dilemma. He couldn't cope with his family, school, or society and wished for a way out from the strictures imposed upon him. His search to find someone like him ended up in the Khwabgah, a hijra gharana[16], away from the world of categorizers where hermaphrodites and transgenders lived. His entry into the dilapidated yet comfortable space marked a very important episode in his life. Gender, religion, class, caste, and colour were not a matter of concern to the inhabitants of the Khwabgah. The inmates believing in different religious faiths were free to observe their own religious practices and modes of worship.

[16] A place where hijras, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour establish kinship and live together. This space functions as a surrogate society where they can assert their self.

The Khwabgah, a liminal space to which Aftab escapes, away from the confinements of his home, is similar to the liminal space propounded by Arnold van Gennep. Aftab disengages himself from the paraphernalia of home space to join like-minded people. He escapes from the socially conditioned norms to reinvent his identity and assert his self. However, his transformation remains incomplete till the initiation rites are performed. These rites give him a passageway to enter into his new self. During the initiation rites, Aftab is presented with a green Khwabgah dupatta, which formally makes him a member of the hijra community. "Aftab became Anjum, disciple of Ustad Kulsum Bi of the Delhi Gharana, one of the seven regional Hijra Gharanas in the country each headed by a Nayak, a Chief, all of them headed by a Supreme Chief" (Roy 25). He goes through a period of transition. The green Khwabgah dupatta is one among the many symbols that marks a new beginning in his life, and underscores the changes one accepts and the new identity one creates.

By becoming a member of the hijra community, Anjum was able to give expression to her actual self; she dressed according to her likes and adorned herself with jewellery which were denied to her in the *duniya*, the world outside. She was accepted among them and felt a sense of belonging. She felt elated like a new bride on her wedding night when they celebrated her 18th birthday, but the pleasure was short-lived as her body expressed its sexuality like a man's (Roy 27). Ustad Kulsum Bi gave monetary support for her sex reassignment surgery. She paid the money back, which was much more than what she had received (Roy 28). The surgery and the convalescing period were difficult, but the result made it worth suffering. She

could get rid of the male part from her body, even though its remnants remained in her body in various forms. Thomassen observes:

> Stressing the importance of transition in any society, Van Gennep singled out *rites of passage* as a special category, consisting of three sub categories, namely *rites of separation*, *transition rites* and *rites of incorporation*. Van Gennep called the middle stage in a rite of passage a *liminal period.* He called transition rites *liminal rites*, and he called rites of incorporation *postliminial rites*. (3)

Anjum goes through these periods of transition, gets separated from her home, undergoes the transition rites in the hijra community, and eventually gets incorporated into the life of hijras. For more than three decades, she lived her life in the Khwabgah in accordance with their rules and regulations. The ecstatic delight that she experienced in the beginning gradually faded, giving way to dejection and despair when confronted with the stark realities of life in the hijra gharana. Though the Khwabgah functions as a place of refuge, it is not free from the hierarchy visible within the power structure. The promise of a liberatory life is left unfulfilled and an unsatisfied Anjum resolves to leave the Khwabgah at the age of forty-five. Her desire to lead an independent life like an ordinary person prompts her to take shelter in the city graveyard near the government hospital. This city graveyard becomes her home for the rest of her life. The selection of the graveyard as a home points to the helplessness and exclusion of people like Anjum. She finds solace amidst the spirits of the dead ones, as the world of living beings is hostile to her. She accommodates several other fallen people, birds, and animals in the graveyard which she calls her

guest house Jannat, Paradise (Roy 68). Jannat Guest House set up in the cemetery, is a Third Space, a hub for the marginalized and the destitute. This space on the margin is a "location of radical openness and possibility" (hooks 153) where new ways of thinking about space emerge. This space subverts the preconceived notions of binary thinking and reconstructs it by incorporating an Other space, a Third Space which is inherently flexible. This space attempts to capture "a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (Ikas and Wagner 50). Multiple possibilities are opened up in this new-found space which makes it unique, and enables it to go beyond the limits of the existing parameters.

Anjum's sexuality and physique ascribe to her a unique personality and strength of mind to overcome any of the challenging situations in life. Her gesture of spreading the threadbare carpet in between the tombstones in the graveyard is highly symbolic; it is her proclamation of protest to society, which hitherto denied her a space and an identity. This challenging gesture underscores the fact that she too has the right and liberty to occupy a space where she can live uninterrupted by the strict social codes. The graveyard to which she enters is a threshold that opens up a new order. It is her indefatigable vigour that has enabled her to enter this graveyard, a place of the dead, generally shunned by the people due to its eerie atmosphere as well as the fear evoked by it. Even though her unprecedented action has been criticised by many in the beginning, within no time, many others, discarded and cast out by society, flock to this place which reveals that society abounds with people who struggle to find a space to live their life. Here, Roy makes a re-vision of spatiality by providing space for those who are excluded from mainstream society.

The inmates of this place are people who are thrown out of society, just like the *girmits* that Ghosh portrays in the *Ibis* trilogy. hooks suggests to occupy and reclaim such spaces on the margin. She considers margin as a site which nourishes one's abilities to resist and offers new alternatives and possibilities. According to hooks, this realisation of the strength of the margin is very important, especially for the marginalized section. This inclusive space helps such people to recover and rejuvenate, once they understand the true vigour and potential of the margin. Marginality is considered as much more than a site of deprivation and margin becomes the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance (hooks 149). People who are marginalized in various ways join together in this graveyard as they find it a space of liberation, and a space which recognizes their existence. This space on the margin is, "a spatiality of inclusion rather than exclusion, a spatiality where radical subjectivities can multiply, connect and combine in polycentric communities of identity and resistance; where 'fragmentation' is no longer a political weakness but a potential strength" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 99).

In *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story,* written by Revathi, she narrates her life experiences as a transgender person. The ostracization she felt during her life was severe; even her parents and siblings were not ready to accept her in her true self. They tried to impose their ideologies upon her and brutally attacked her for showcasing feminine behaviour. The deviance that Revathi showed during her younger days as Doraisammy was beyond comprehension for her family and society in Namakkal taluk. Revathi's escape from her native village to Dindigul to take part in the festival where men dressed up as women is a ritual rite which marks her

transformation from a man to a woman. This rite enables her to come to terms with her identity, and fulfill her hidden desires. The decision to undergo sex reassignment surgery is a culmination of the uncertainties she had in mind. Even though born as a male (Doraisammy), Revathi felt like a woman in a male body. Her desire to transgress the boundaries of the body can be compared to the crossing of the threshold/limen. In this liminal phase, she experiences the birth of a new self. Nirvaanam[17]/ the castration operation, is the rite she performs to escape the confinements.

Revathi learns about the life of hijras and the various systems, like the *guru-chela* system they maintain. She, too, is accepted as one among them when she becomes the *chela*[18] of a *guru*[19]. Just like Aftab, who became Anjum after the sex reassignment surgery, Doraisammy turned to Revathi, and felt an ecstatic delight during the convalescing period after the operation. The dreamy sleep to which she fell after the operation was like a dreamy passageway to her new life. The elaborate ritual performed during and after this period paves the way for her to move slowly and steadily from the male, Doraisammy to the female, Revathi. She feels as if she is reborn after the ritual. When she looks at her own renewed feminine face in the mirror 40 days after the operation, she enjoys blissful happiness. Through her passage from masculinity to femininity, she has carved a space of her own, a Third Space where she accepts the identity of a female and becomes Revathi. In the *haldi-mehendi* ritual[20], she was gifted a green sari along with certain other gifts. This

[17] An operation or castration after which a person turns into a full woman.
[18] Disciple of a *guru*.
[19] A reverential mentor or mother-like figure of a disciple.
[20] Practices similar to marriage rituals in which haldi (turmeric) and mehendi (henna) are used.

exchange of gifts and the adorning of the saree are all parts of the initiation rites. Worship of *Mata*[21], singing in praise of her, and praying to her are done to invite the blessings of Mata while embarking on this new journey. The goddess of the hijras, Pothiraja Mata seated on a cockerel, is very much venerated by them. The veil-covered face is unveiled to exhibit the new self. After the performance of these rituals, the process of transformation becomes complete. The hijras who exist in the in-between spaces harbour desires to be accepted by society. Revathi permanently changed her genitals to claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned at birth. She tries to create her own space through her strenuous efforts, despite the exploitations done to her by society as well as her family. The family ill-treats Revathi fearing that society will ostracize them; they deny her even the right to live in her own home, right to property, right of inheritance, and right to exist as herself. The adversities she suffers in her life can be juxtaposed with the life of the fictional character Rudra Chatterjee in *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*. Rudra's mother, though she could infer the sexual and emotional difference of her son, was reluctant to disclose it to his father as she knew that such deviation might not be accepted by society, and their family would be ostracized. The plight of Anjum, the fictional character who assumes center stage in Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, is quite the same. Her mother tried to hide the true nature of Anjum's sexuality as she could not accept that she had mothered a hermaphrodite. She had great apprehensions regarding the way in which society would treat such a child, and refused to reveal this even to her husband. Both of them tried their best to heal the

[21] Mother goddess.

girl part so as to bring up Aftab as a boy. The father refused to accept his child as it is, and tried to impose his idea of sexuality upon the child, despite the fact that the child was born a hermaphrodite. When the feminine traits began to project itself prominently in her physical and mental self, she developed in her a sense of alienation, and she craved for the company of those who could understand her. The non-acceptance of her real self by her family and society eventually leads Anjum to escape from home, and find a space where she can assert her identity and validate her self.

Hijras established for themselves a unique pattern of life which was strictly followed by each hijra. They owe their allegiance to their *guru,* who enjoyed a superior position as the head of the *Parivar*.[22] All *chelas* are subordinate to their *guru,* and the fraternity of the hijras obediently worked for the welfare of the *Parivar* and earned their living, performing odd duties like begging and sex work allocated to each of them. Even when they lead such a seemingly liberated life in their improvised spaces, without hindering the free flow of life of the "duniya," the rowdies and gangsters from outside intervene in their life, bringing about disastrous consequences. They callously inflicted physical pain upon them, and Revathi's *guru* was stabbed to death, which devastated her. The death rituals followed by hijras are elaborate; when the *guru* dies, all *chelas* become widows. They followed the rituals associated with death; Revathi and other *chelas* were adorned with bangles and flowers, and applied pottu on the forehead. Then *aravanis* [23]from the Chaukan house-who did the final rites-came and broke their bangles, wiped the pottu off their

[22] A family or household.
[23] A name used to refer to hijras. For more details, see Chapter IV pg. 234-35.

forehead, stripped the flowers from their hair, and declared them widows. They remained thus for forty days. It was followed by certain rites known as *roundap* in which they were given coloured sarees (Revathi, *Truth* 298-9). The event symbolically marks their entry into a new life. This liminal passage from widowhood to actual life is a period of transformation, bringing about the continuity of life. Revathi, too becomes a *guru* to her *chelas*, and when they expressed their desire to undergo nirvanam, she insisted that they should complete their education and enter into a job; otherwise, they may have to struggle and suffer like her. It was her connection with an educated *chela* that enabled her to enter Sangama, a non-governmental organization that worked for sexual minorities.

The rejection and marginalization of sexual minorities by the family and society and their inability to assert their real self prompt them to search for a space where they can be themselves. In this context, the margins they inhabit become spaces of resistance, a space of creativity and power, a space of liberation where the Other comes forward to find new spaces. It is "a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange" (Ikas and Wagner 50). This space can be considered as the Third Space "where issues of race, class and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other" (Ikas and Wagner 50).

All the theoreticians, critical thinkers, and fictional and non-fictional writers mentioned above have observed and analyzed the transitions and transformations perceivable in society, and endorse the centrality of space and spatiality. Apart from the First space and the Second space, which were the cornerstones of binary thinking, they foreground the emergence of the Third Space, which is an all-

inclusive space from which no one is excluded. The present research work has made an attempt to explore the new possibilities opened up by the paradigm shift taking place in our perception of space and spatiality, and the select contemporary narratives are read in the light of the theoretical concepts relating to the Third Space. These concepts that are formulated in recent years, and the tracing of their presence in the select narratives can bring about an awareness and understanding among people about the extent of the real and ideological exploitation taking place in society, and the restrictions placed on human beings which curtail their autonomy and liberty. Efforts are made to counter these restrictions through varied strategies of resistance. Freedom is our birthright and each and every human being shall try one's best to safeguard and protect this.

Chapter II

Migration, Hybridity, and Identity in *Ibis* Trilogy

The world in which we live today is becoming increasingly hybrid, and its impact is felt upon the lives of the people, their culture, religion, community, ethnicity, nationality, and identity. Homogenous cultural identities are being problematized, leading to the emergence of new hybrid identities. Pre-colonial maritime migration in search of better avenues for trade and commerce, the advent of colonialism, imperialism and settlements in colonized lands, the free flow of goods, services and human labour as the inevitable accompaniments of globalisation are some of the major factors which give impetus to the formation of hybrid identities. When people from across the globe interact with the local indigenous people, their disparate cultural traits and different social and cultural practices converge, leading to the emergence of an altogether new form of culture, a new form of life that is neither the one nor the other, resulting in hybrid identities. This convergence is more pronounced and visible among migrants and diasporic people.

The presence of hybrid identities became more conspicuous during the period of colonization and came to determine the transactions of culture and society during the postcolonial period, thus becoming one of the predominant topics within postcolonial and cultural studies. According to Birgitta Frello, "hybridity theory is…closely related to an increased awareness of global cultural flows, influences and interdependences, both historically and contemporarily" (1). As a result, the essentialism related to notions of singular, closed identities came to be seriously undermined.

Hall observes that "there has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of identity" (Hall and Gay 1). The essentialist notion of identity as "integral, originary and unified" (Hall and Gay 1) has been critiqued and deconstructed. The discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed-always "in process" (Hall and Gay 2). This fluidity of identity is similar to Derrida's concept of differánce, where the meaning is permanently deferred. Identity is constantly destabilized by what it leaves out. Hall asserts:

> Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in process of change and transformation. (Hall and Gay 4)

Subject positions undergo changes in accordance with the changing positions of the subject, and is closely associated with those who wield power. The identity of the powerful gains meaning only in relation to the powerless. They are inter-related and "it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term-and thus it's 'identity'-can be constructed" (Hall and Gay 4).

In-depth research into the fluidity and hybridity of culture has achieved greater significance during the postcolonial period, primarily initiated by the works of Bhabha. In his preface to *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha gives expression to his

experience as a student of English at Oxford. It was "the culmination of an Indian middle-class trajectory where formal education and 'high' culture colluded in emulating the canons of elite 'English' taste and conforming to its customs and comforts" (Bhabha, *Location* x). Bhabha's life in the western countries influenced him to such an extent that he poses a rhetorical question, "what it would be like to live without the unresolved tension between cultures and countries that have become the narrative of my life and the defining characteristic of my work" (Bhabha, *Location* x). He lived his life in the "rich cultural mix of languages and life styles" (Bhabha, *Location* x). During his student days at Oxford, he realised the separatist attitude prevalent in western countries. Through his writings, he attempts to make clear how difficult it is

> to survive, to produce, to labour and to create, within a world-system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country or your people. . . . Such neglect can be a deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs you to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of centre and periphery. (Bhabha, *Location* xi)

The nomenclature "hybrid identities" had a pejorative sense in the past when racial and ethnic inter mixture were looked upon as perverse miscegenation, especially in the colonized countries where the colonizers presented themselves as the protectors of the colonized. To substantiate that theirs was a "civilizing mission," the colonizers administered severe punishment to those who engaged in inter-racial or inter-ethnic relationships with the hidden agenda to subjugate the colonized. In

due course, the term gained a positive connotation as a result of anti-imperialist struggles and the anti-hegemonic discourses of theoreticians like Fanon and Bhabha. As Patrick Gun Cuninghame observes:

> By the 1970s its present generally positive nuance had emerged in anthropology, ethnography and sociology with their increasing interest in the emerging multicultural societies of western Europe, the rights of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples slowly emerging from centuries of invisibilization, and the massive migratory flows that have increasingly come to characterize the post-1945, post-imperialist, neocolonial, globalised world. (Smith and Leavy 20)

Christopher Baker while discussing the concept of hybridity observes:

> It first emerged as a concept in modern Western thought during the eighteenth century with the development of the natural sciences, and in particular, botany and zoology where it referred to the outcome of the cross between two separate varieties of plant and animal. However, in the nineteenth century it emerged as a form of categorization of the human species into taxonomies of race, with increasingly vigorous debate about the origin of the species itself. (13)

Hybrid identities entail an intermixture of local and global cultures, languages, and ways of life; they acquire the advantage of being multi-cultural, multi-vocal, and multi-ethnic. This phenomenon has become more conspicuous today due to the exponential growth in the number of border crossers. While exploring the contributions made by Bhabha to free the diabolic stain attributed to

"hybridity" in the past, Papastergiadis observes, "Bhabha has divorced the term hybridity from the context of miscegenation by placing it at once in both the semiotic field of discursive reconfiguration and in the socio-political domain of deterritorialized subjectivity" (Smith and Leavy 21).

When the natives and the settlers, the colonizer and the colonized live together, intermix, and interact, a reconfiguration takes place in the traditional notions of binary division; the boundary between white/black, colonizer/colonized, self/other, and centre/margin becomes blurred. An interstitial passage is opened up between the binary, an in-between space where the clear-cut distinctions pertaining to their nationality, race, ethnicity, identity, and their perception of themselves as an insider/outsider are problematized. Its impact is significantly felt by the people who migrate from one place to another. "Bhabha argues that cultures interact with and transform each other in a much more complex manner than the traditional binary oppositions of Western thought (center/margin, civilized/savage, and enlightened/ignorant) permit" (Smith and Leavy 21). When different cultures co-mingle, new transcultural forms are created, giving rise to a new group of people with cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic hybridity. According to Bhabha, "hybridity is the rejection of a single or unified identity and a preference for multiple cultural locations and identities" (Nayar 179). Hall opines that migration has "altered the customs, cultures, and identities not only of the 'travelling' peoples but also those of the 'natives', producing what he has termed a 'translation' of identity" (Eagleton 26).

The migrant develops a unique hybrid identity that is ready to include and accept differences through a process of reworking, reforming, and reconfiguring, and they form a plural identity. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha uses hybridity as an in-between term, referring to a Third Space.

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew. (Bhabha, *Location* 55)

Historiography reveals that the patterns of migration have undergone tremendous changes since the onset of colonialism. It has taken different forms and shades ranging from involuntary migration, as in slave trade, and both voluntary and involuntary migration, as in the transport of indentured labourers. The Industrial Revolution and the concept of modernity led to the development of capitalism in the European countries. They required more resources and labour force from outside of Europe and more markets to deliver their finished products and to accumulate profit. To meet their requirements, they began to spread their wings to South-East Asian countries to find markets for their products and to procure resources. New travel routes were opened up, leading to the discovery of new lands. Colonialism reached its climax in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

> It was an exploitative mechanism-economic exploitation of resources, the use of native peoples, the conquest of territory and markets-based on difference in race, culture, forms of knowledge, technological advancement and political systems between the Europeans and the natives. (Nayar 154)

The colonial domination over the colonized countries was retained and sustained through the economic power engendered by capitalism and through severe military strategies. They devastated the indigenous cultures, languages, and ethnic identities of the colonized people through colonial education and discourses, and the natives were represented in literature and history as inferior beings. They subjugated the colonized people, oppressed and exploited them by appropriating their landed properties and denied them their livelihood. Lives for the natives became miserable in this context.

Amitav Ghosh, through his well-acclaimed *Ibis* trilogy, brings to light the colonial projects of empire expansion and exploitation of the colonies, denying the natives their inheritance and forcing them to find their livelihood elsewhere working in the plantations owned by the imperialist countries. The trilogy is mainly located in the oceanic space, which becomes a site for a close interaction of transcultural, transnational, and transracial characters whose identities are shaped and re-shaped in accordance with the flux of life. *Sea of Poppies*, the first of the *Ibis* trilogy centres round the opium trade and its impact upon the social, cultural, and economic fabric of nineteenth century India. The novel is subdivided into three parts; "Land," "River," and "Sea," highlighting the different geographical spaces where the whole theme of the novel is enacted. The first section, "Land," is set apart for giving a truthful picture of the vast and fertile agricultural lands of Northern India, which were forcibly transformed into fields of poppies. In the second section, "River," all the passengers and the crew in the *Ibis* are introduced as they get themselves ready for the voyage. The last section, "Sea," graphically describes the actual voyage in

the ship *Ibis,* in which the ship siblings try to create a space and identity for themselves.

When the food crops which sustained the agricultural economy were substituted by cash crops, the peasantry was the worst affected, as it deprived them of their livelihood. The greedy British colonial businessmen of the East India Company forced the indigenous people to sign a contract through which the landowners eventually lost their hold on their own lands. Rural communities in various parts of India, including Bengal and Bihar, witnessed a drastic change in their traditional ways of living. The entire texture and fabric of India, especially the cultivable farm lands on the banks of Ganges, Bihar, and parts of Bengal, the epicentres of food crops, were appropriated and monopolised by the agents of the company. Shashi Tharoor in *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* observes, "India was 'depleted,' 'exhausted' and 'bled' by this drain of resources, which made it vulnerable to famine, poverty and suffering" (37). These events pulled the natives, especially the marginalized subaltern peasantry down from poverty to impoverishment. The Bengal famine of 1770, triggered by both British colonialism and natural environmental factors which adversely affected the life of people is described in *The Cambridge Economic History of India* as follows, "The famine of 1769-70 by killing off about one-third of the population and forcing many others to emigrate, reduced the cultivation by about one-third and the recovery from this disaster was a slow process" (Kumar and Raychaudhuri 94).

The terrible impact of colonialism upon the colonized countries are graphically described by Amitav Ghosh in his novels. Ghosh incorporates historical

evidence into his fictional world with the felicity of a learned historian. “His fiction is endowed with extraordinary depth and substance through his academic training as a historian and a social anthropologist” (“Author”). The Opium War fought between Britain and China during 1839-1842 forms the backdrop of the trilogy. As Hanes and Sanello observe, Britain was greatly addicted to the tea leaves brought from China, and this led to a great economic dependence. The goods sold in China by Britain, like calico, iron, and tin, were not enough to balance the trade. The imbalance in trade was escalating, and it was slowly draining Britain of silver, which was the only form of payment accepted by China. Britain was searching for an alternative, and to find something that would addict the Chinese just like tea. Opium was an answer to all these. Arab merchants were already selling the opium cultivated in Asia Minor (Modern-day Turkey), via caravan routes since the Middle Ages. They focused on its medicinal properties, and its use helped the Chinese to prevent diarrhoea and dysentery. The French and the Dutch were also involved in such opium trades. However, it was the British who took this trade to a different level using the East India Company as the channel through which they executed their plan. The overuse of opium, and the addiction and indolence it induced in the Chinese triggered the Chinese government to ban the opium trade. As a result, the East India Company transferred the role of exporting opium to independent British and Indian merchants who would then smuggle and illegally sell it to China (20). The profit they amassed from the opium trade was so high that the imbalance of trade was reversed, and China had to pay huge amounts to procure opium brought by the British merchants. But the drug devastated Chinese society, and had an adverse impact upon the economy, social and political life. Initially, it affected the

rich upper class; later on, its deadening affects could be felt even in the lower parts of the socio-economic ladder. This reduced the productivity and progress of Chinese society; it poisoned and penetrated all levels of society.

> In November 1836 . . . the Daoguang Emperor issued an edict banning both the importation and use of opium throughout China. In December 1836, the new Governor (or Viceroy) of Canton's province, a venerable scholar of sixty named Deng Tingzhen, proclaimed, 'The smoke of opium is a deadly poison. Opium is nothing else but a flowing poison; that it leads to extravagant expenditure is a small evil, but as it utterly ruins the mind and morals of the people, it is a dreadful calamity.' (Hanes and Sanello 33)

In *Sea of Poppies,* Ghosh gives a vivid picture of the cultivation of opium and its processing in the opium factories, which were strictly monitored by white overseers. Severe punishments were meted out to them if their work was not satisfactory. Opium was considered one "among the most precious jewels in queen Victoria's crown," (Ghosh, *Sea* 91) and as a major source of government revenue. However, the working conditions in the opium factories were pathetic, "the Earthy, sickly odour of raw opium-sap hung close to the ground" (Ghosh, *Sea* 93). The lethargy and dullness induced by the scent of opium, which permeated the whole atmosphere made the workers' eyes vacant and their movements slow. Ghosh gives a graphic picture of the deplorable and inhuman conditions that prevailed in the opium factory through the eyes of Deeti, the matriarch of the *Ibis* trilogy. Her family believed that her fate was governed by the planet Saturn and this turned her life into one of struggle and bare survival. She represents the peasantry of colonial India,

whose patterns of life were determined by opium, its cultivation, harvest, and processing. Married to an impotent, lame-footed, opium-dazed *afeemkhor*[24] Hukam Singh, an ex-sepoy of the British Regiment, who worked in the opium factory, her existence was beset with trials and troubles. Deeti was a victim of gender violence. Unlike the usual wedding night, her husband welcomed her with a carved wooden box containing the finest quality of opium and a smoking pipe. Running his hands affectionately over the smoking pipe, Hukam Singh told her:

> this is my first wife. She's kept me alive since I was wounded. . . . He took a mouthful of smoke, placed his mouth on hers and breathed it out into her body himself. Her head began to swim. . . . The fibres of her muscles began to soften and go slack; her body seemed to drain itself of tension. . . . She felt herself slipping away from this world into another that was brighter, better and more fulfilling. (Ghosh, *Sea* 34)

Disarmed by opium, she was raped on their wedding night. The realisation that an ignominious event had taken place devastated her, and she wanted to know who impregnated her. She suspected her mother-in-law for the conspiracy, and as a sort of revenge started mixing opium in all that she ate. She started showing the effects of the drug. "In a very short time, the old woman grew quieter and more tranquil, her voice lost its harshness and her eyes became softer; she no longer took much interest in Deeti's pregnancy and spent more and more time lying in bed" (Ghosh, *Sea* 38). Deeti marvelled at the power of this drug and how deeply it could affect a

[24] Addict. Constant use of opium makes the person an addict to the drug which deteriorates the health of the person.

human being, and finally, her mother-in-law spilled the truth. She started addressing her as "Draupadi" (Ghosh, *Sea* 38), who was destined to become the wife of the five sons of Pandu in a polyandrous marriage as depicted in the *Mahabharata*. The allusion confirmed Deeti's belief that the child in her belly was fathered not by her husband but by her brother-in-law, Chandan Singh (Ghosh, *Sea* 39). Though opium had wreaked havoc upon their married life, Deeti dutifully performed all the wifely duties and treated him with respect and love, which were not reciprocated. Ghosh portrays Deeti as a representative figure among the lower class, whose life had been torpedoed by the deadening and intoxicating opium. A victim of domestic violence and sexual harassment, Deeti confronts all the challenges life has thrown upon her with indomitable courage. Many characters faced with such adverse circumstances are portrayed in the novels, and their struggles to create an identity form the centrepiece of the trilogy.

Casteism that pervaded among the Hindus of India is illustrated through Hukam Singh, who depends upon the lower-caste Kalua's ox-cart for his journey to the opium factory. "A man of unusual height and powerful build" (Ghosh, *Sea* 53), Kalua, a Chamar, "belonged to the leather workers caste, and Hukam Singh, as a high-caste Rajput, believed that the sight of his face would board ill for the day ahead" (Ghosh, *Sea* 4). Such was the extremity of casteism that prevailed in India that Deeti was forced to cover her face with her sari to ward off the gaze of other men, particularly lower-caste men. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, in his renowned work *The Annihilation of Caste,* denounces the Indian caste system and looks upon it as the

most degrading system of social organisation, "a system that deadens, paralyses and cripples the people from helpful activity" (16). He observes:

> What we call the caste system today is known in Hinduism's founding texts as *varnashrama dharma* or *chaturvarna*, the system of four *varnas*. The approximately four thousand endogamous castes and sub-castes (*jatis*) in Hindu society, each with its own specified hereditary occupation, are divided into four *varnas-Brahmins* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (soldiers), *Vaishyas* (traders) and *Shudras* (servants). Outside of these varnas are the *avarna* castes, the *Ati-Shudras*, sub humans, arranged in hierarchies of their own-the Untouchables, the Unseeables, the Unapproachables-whose presence, whose touch, whose very shadow is considered to be polluting by privileged-caste Hindus. (Ambedkar 15)

Those whose existence is not even reckoned in the caste hierarchy had to do their servile duties to the members of the higher class. When the permanently ill Hukam Singh one day fainted in the opium factory, Deeti sought the help of Kalua to fetch him home. Though an "unseeable," his duty as an ox-cart driver is appropriated here, notwithstanding his caste. The fact that the life of the peasantry of India is inextricably bound with opium is revealed when Deeti took out a pod of opium as a reward for Kalua's service. Opium here has become a substitute for money which underscores the inevitability of opium production among the peasants. As Deeti entered the Ghazipur Opium Factory, she observed that the iron-roofed structures of the factory were vast enough to accommodate a large number of labourers and a good store of opium.

> Deeti was taken aback by the space ahead, but this time not because of the vastness of its dimensions, but rather the opposite-it was like a dim tunnel, lit only by a few small holes in the wall. The air inside was hot and fetid, like that of a closed kitchen, except that the smell was not of spices and oil, but of liquid opium, mixed with the dull stench of sweat-a reek so powerful that she had to pinch her nose to keep herself from gagging. (Ghosh, *Sea* 94)

Deeti became an eye-witness to the oppression and exploitation that persisted in the factory. Inside these dimly lit rooms were vacant-eyed "bare-bodied men who were sunk waist-deep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge" (Ghosh, *Sea* 95). These men seemed exhausted due to their continuous exposure to opium. These hard-toiling men were scrutinized by the colonial masters armed with "fearsome instruments like metal scoops, glass ladles, and long-handled rakes" (Ghosh, *Sea* 95). The plight of the workers in the factory throws light on the various ways in which the natives were exploited by the British. The unwilling farmers were also trapped into growing opium through tactics, pushing them permanently into severe poverty. The exploitation and oppression of the workers in the opium factory are similar to the exploitative mechanism that prevailed in England during the period of Industrial Revolution. In his seminal work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, E. P. Thompson traces the catastrophic nature of the Industrial Revolution and the formation of the English working class. While describing the plight of the workers in the English spinning mills, he observes:

> The English spinner slave has no enjoyment of the open atmosphere and breezes of heaven. Locked up in the factories eight stories high, he has no

> relaxation till the ponderous engine stops and then he goes home to get refreshed for the next day; no time for sweet association with his family; they are all alike fatigued and exhausted. (201)

A parallel situation prevailed in the opium factories. Hukam Singh became a scapegoat and a victim of opium due to his incessant association with opium. When Deeti entered the innermost, severely guarded packaging room where her husband worked, she could see his conscious-less and inert body lying helpless on the floor. The sirdars guarding the room assailed her for sending an *afeemkhor* to work, to which she retorted, "who are you to speak to me like that? How would you earn your living if not for *afeemkhors*?" (Ghosh, *Sea* 98). An English agent intervened in the quarrel and explained to them the greatness of Hukam Singh, and how he fought for the Company Bahadur as a *balamteer*[25] in Burma. He commanded them to go and work to avoid whipping by his *chabuk*[26] (Ghosh, *Sea* 98). The spirit of rebellion and resistance was latent in Deeti, and it spurted out spontaneously when confronted with a critical situation. This spirit stood her in good stead in her struggle for survival and in establishing her identity as the matriarch of the *Ibis* trilogy.

When the English agent offered that Hukam Singh could come and work whenever he required, Deeti knew that he would never come back to normal life. Very soon, he succumbs to opium and leaves the world, leaving Deeti all alone to take care of the family. The sexual harassment that she faces in her husband's home

[25]Volunteer. During the period of colonization, the colonized people volunteered to serve the British in exchange of a meagre reward.
[26] Whip, a piece of rope used to hit. This is a tool of oppression to punish and exhibit the authority of those who wield power upon the subjugated people.

forces her to become a sati. Her brother-in-law Chandan Singh too prompts her to accept this so that he will become the sole heir of the family property.

Sati is a form of widow sacrifice in which "the Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it" (Spivak 297). The patriarchal system imposes it upon the widow to systematically silence them, and justifies this inhuman act as the duty of a "virtuous wife." It is chiefly an upper-caste Hindu practice that subjugates, and takes away the life of the widow. "By immolating herself, the widow purportedly enables herself as well as her deceased husband to enjoy 'heavenly pleasures' and even, according to some scriptural texts, to escape thereafter the cycle of birth and death" (Mani 1).

When the preparation for the sati sacrifice was underway, Kalua happened to witness the event, saved her from the pyre, and they eloped in an improvised raft. Paradoxically enough, the same Chamar, whom she refused to look at for fear of being polluted, became her saviour. All the barriers of caste dissolve when they plan to live together away from the pernicious eyes of the high-caste Hindus. Deeti is optimistic, and she believes that "when the sun rises the path will show itself-and so strongly did she believe this that not even at the worst of times did she allow her hopes to slacken" (Ghosh, *Sea* 203). She is a very strong lady of formidable courage and calibre whose presence is conspicuous in all the books of the *Ibis* trilogy. She, along with Kalua, overcomes the various hurdles they face after the sati incident. They become ready even to accept the life of a *girmitya* to escape the threat of being found and penalised by her family for desecrating the altar of sati. She knows that to be a *girmitya* means to lose all the ties of the land and to lose her daughter forever.

She grew up listening to stories of how *girmits* would lose their caste and be considered an outcaste after they crossed the Black water[27] and reached Mareech[28]. Their resolution underscores how they defy the age-old belief of the Hindus that the crossing of the Black Water defiles them, and they will be accepted back home and to their communities only after an elaborate ritual of purification. This fear of excommunication prevents people from crossing the black water and reduce overseas journeys.

Mareech[29] was a place she detested and considered as a demon-plagued island. When Kalua suggested that they too could join the *girmits* in the ship bound to Mauritius, Deeti was unwilling in the beginning and asked Kalua, "Is this what you saved me for? To feed me to the demons?" (Ghosh, *Sea* 205), but when she realised that they would be hunted down by her husband's men if they remained on land, they had no other alternative but to join the *girmits*. They understood that their caste would not be a bar, as all kinds of men "Brahmins, Ahirs, Chamars, Telis" (Ghosh, *Sea* 205) were admitted as *girmits*. The only criterion was to "be young and able-bodied and willing to work" (Ghosh, *Sea* 205). The girmitiyas "were so-called because, in exchange for money, their names were entered on 'girmits'-agreements written on pieces of paper. The silver that was paid for them went to their families, and they were taken away, never to be seen again; they vanished, as if into the netherworld" (Ghosh, *Sea* 72).

---

[27] In Hindu religion, crossing the Black water or *kaala pani* is considered a taboo. Crossing the sea will cause the loss of one's varna status (Kaala Pani).
[28] Mauritius. The indentured labourers were transported from British India to Mauritius.
[29] Maricha or Mareecha is the name of a demon killed by Rama in *The Ramayana.* This adds to the element of horror associated with the place.

The intrusion of the British East India Company into the fertile agricultural lands, and the forceful implementation of opium plantations in the place of food crops led to severe poverty and food scarcity. The life of the farmers became so miserable that they were forced to migrate in search of better homelands that would provide them with a better life. Just like Deeti and Kalua, all the migrants inside the *Ibis* were afraid of losing their caste, and this made them resistant to the migrations across the *kaala pani*. But later, the lack of other options and opportunities forced them to opt for migration across the sea. Deeti adopted a new name, "Aditi," as she entered the *Ibis* to avoid chances of being recognised. She created a new identity as the wife of Kalua, a Chamar whose name was entered in the register as Maddow Colver or Madhu. She disowned her past by renaming her caste as a Chamar. Thus, she was all set to begin a new life,

> a curious feeling, of joy mixed with resignation, crept into her heart, for it was as if she really had died and been delivered betimes in rebirth, to her next life: she had shed the body of the old Deeti, with the burden of its karma; she had paid the price her stars had demanded of her, and was free now to create a destiny as she willed, with whom she chose. (Ghosh, *Sea* 178)

The agonizing and traumatic experiences of exploitation undergone by the indentured labourers are encapsulated in the novel. The harrowing experiences of the displaced, alienated, and excluded *girmits* are inscribed in detail here. Slavery and victimization existed in various forms even after the Emancipation Proclamation of slavery. The system of employment called indentured labour came into force as a

substitute strategy to ensure the flow of the human work-force. "Although, as the term implies, indentured contracts were apparently voluntarily entered into, in practice, this operated as a system of forced labour with many of the labourers impressed rather than recruited" (Ashcroft et al. 215). The dispersal of these indentured labourers across the globe is one of the largest forced migrations in human history. This can be seen as a continuation of the slavery system, which had been abolished. This system met the demand for cheap agricultural labour in colonial plantation economies.

The ship named *Ibis* in *Sea of Poppies* was once a "blackbirder" (Ghosh, *Sea* 11), built for trafficking slaves. But after the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, a British company named Burnham Bros monopolised the same for the smuggling of opium, along with the transportation of indentured labourers. It appeared like a "white-winged bird in flight" (Ghosh, *Sea* 11). Deeti portrayed the *Ibis* "in the fashion of a mythological bird, with a great beak of a bowsprit and two enormous, outspread canvas wings" (Ghosh, *River* 13). Hybridity is at the core of this ship as it accommodates people belonging to different religions, nations, ethnicity, culture, and language. Transcultural, transracial, and transnational characters like Paulette Lambert, Zachary Reid, and Ah Fatt, respectively are portrayed in the *Ibis* trilogy. The *Ibis* becomes a melting pot of various languages, as people belonging to different nations who have different linguistic, cultural, and racial background assemble together developing affinity as well as antagonism among themselves. The *Laskari*[30] crew of the ship comprises sailors from different parts of the world, like

[30] *Laskari* derives from lascar which means a sailor. Lascars were headed by a serang who had control over the sailors.

China, India, and Malaysia, who have followed different religions. Creole and pidgin have been developed to communicate with each other in the absence of a common language. Linguistic hybridization becomes visible through the *Laskari* tongue-the newly formed motley tongue developed by the people who interact with each other. This *Laskari* tongue is

> spoken nowhere but on the water, whose words were as varied as the Port's traffic, an archaic medley of Portuguese calaluzes and Kerala Pattimars, Arab booms and Bengal paunch-ways, Malay proas and Tamil catamarans, Hindustani pulwars and English snows-yet beneath the surface of this farrago of sound, meaning flowed as freely as the currents beneath the crowded press of boats. (Ghosh, *Sea* 104)

Oceanic space, an interstitial space hitherto unacknowledged as a space of significance, achieves a central position in Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy. The ship *Ibis*, floating in the fluid oceanic space in-between lands, is a space of liberation which can be considered as a Third Space. Just like the fluidity of water, the identity of those who travel in the ship also becomes fluid. They erase the memories of their unpromising past to accept a new and empowering identity in the ship. Ghosh traces how a motley crowd, thrown together due to different reasons and circumstances develops and enunciates its own identity, which is stronger than the earlier one. The most prominent among them is Zachary Reid, a man of mixed identity born of an African-American Maryland freedwoman and a Caucasian-American father. While everyone calls him a mulatto, Zachary calls himself a *metif* as his mother is a

quadroon[31] and his father white (Ghosh, *Sea* 507). The novel portrays him as a gentleman of "medium height and sturdy build, with skin the colour of old ivory and mass of curly, lacquer black hair that tumbled over his forehead and into his eyes" (Ghosh, *Sea* 10), who has a great inclination towards the sea and the life there. He is a self-reliant and ambitious young man bent upon improving his career. The commonly accepted assumption that the black-white multi-racial is to be identified as black is transgressed by Zachary, and he tries to pass himself off as white. When Mr. Crowle, the first mate of the *Ibis,* happens to know this fact, he resolves to use it as a trump card to blackmail Zachary. But to Zachary, this paper and the discovery made by Mr. Crowle that he is black has not changed anything. He tells Crowle, "It may look to you that this piece of paper has turned me inside out, but in truth it's changed nothing. I was born with my freedom and I ain't looking to give any o' it away" (Ghosh, *Sea* 508). These words reveal that Zachary will do anything to safeguard his freedom. This confidence has played a great role in moulding his identity. Zachary has a previous experience of working in the Gardiner shipyard in Baltimore, but due to racial discrimination prevalent among the whites towards the youngsters of mixed race, he resolves to quit the job and "seek a berth on a ship's crew" (Ghosh, *Sea* 52). As Baker observes, "all mixed-race people are subject to deep-seated racial discrimination epitomized in such phrases as 'peanut,' 'yellow-belly,' 'half-breed' and 'redskin', which are not used for children with two black parents (15).

[31] An offspring of a mulatto and a white person (Quadroon).

Mr. Burnham, the owner of the ship *Ibis,* considered Zachary as the suitable person to take up the charge of the supervisor for outfitting the old slave ship. His duty in the *Ibis* was to supervise the alterations made to the ship on behalf of the change in ownership and purpose of sailing, and he should begin the work when the schooner reached Calcutta, where Mr. Burnham had his residence (Ghosh, *Sea* 12). At the start of the voyage, Zachary was only a novice, and he had no more knowledge of ships than any other carpenter on land. He had signed on with an intention to learn the sailor's trade, but within a short while, he was to shoulder the responsibilities of the second mate, as the earlier official inadvertently fell overboard and drowned. Due to the damaged reputation of the *Ibis*, American or European sailors were not ready to sign on into the ship. Only lascars were ready to enroll themselves.

> This was Zachary's first experience of this species of sailor. He had thought that lascars were a tribe or a nation, like the Cherokee or Sioux: he discovered now that they came from places that were far apart, and had nothing in common except the Indian ocean; among them were Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arakanese. They came in groups of ten or fifteen, each with a leader who spoke on their behalf. (Ghosh, *Sea* 13)

Serang Ali and his lascar team were taken into the *Ibis*. Serang Ali "was a personage of formidable appearance, with a face that would have earned the envy of Genghis Khan, being thin, long and narrow, with darting black eyes that sat restlessly upon rakishly-angled cheekbones" (Ghosh, *Sea* 14). Zachary detested the lascars with

their deplorable dressing patterns and naked feet. The first mate of the ship left in a hurry, leaving behind a bag full of clothes, as the prospect of journeying to India was unappealing to him with such a crew. As no other sea-officer could be found before the departure, Zachary was to stand in for the first mate. “Thus, it happened that in the course of a single voyage, by virtue of desertions and dead tickets, he vaulted from the merest novice sailor to senior sea man, from carpenter to second-in-command, with a cabin of his own” (Ghosh, *Sea* 15).

As the captain of the ship fell ill, the task of navigating the ship was upon Zachary, and he “was given the charge of the ship’s log and navigation charts” (Ghosh, *Sea* 17). By making use of the captain’s watch, he calculated the ship’s position, and they reached Port Louis. Serang Ali’s expertise in following the star to detect the route also helped them to reach their destination. Due to the Captain’s illness, Zachary had to deliver a letter to a plantation owner in Port Louis on behalf of Mr. Burnham. While Zachary was about to leave to deliver the letter, Serang Ali insisted that his attire should be gentlemanly. Under Serang Ali’s direction, a team of lascars with their expertise in beautification dressed up Zachary in a way appropriate for a white man, and transformed him into a gentleman.

> In a couple of hours Zachary was looking at an almost unrecognizable image of himself in the mirror, clothed in a white linen shirt, riding breeches and a double-breasted summer paletot, with a white cravat knotted neatly around his neck. On his hair, trimmed, brushed and tied with a blue ribbon at the nape of his neck, sat a glossy black hat. (Ghosh, *Sea* 19)

Serang Ali played a significant role in moulding Zachary into a gentleman. Zachary was amazed at the way he was treated by others after this transformation. He realised the magic that attire and appearance could do to a man. A French man whom he approached for hiring a horse even addressed him as "milord" (Ghosh, *Sea* 19), and the overseers would bow at his sight. He had grown up imitating his white father's gentlemanly manners and accent, and he could easily pass himself off as a white man. This mimicry aligns with the observation of Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, *Location* 122). Zachary grooms himself to be an amalgamation of cultures; he adapts and adopts the *laskari* language, their food, and their lifestyle. In *Sea of Poppies,* he is portrayed as an amiable young sailor who is optimistic about his future. But in *Flood of Fire,* he is transformed into a greedy, clever, and cunning businessman.

That in one's journey towards self-discovery and the establishment of identity, nations, cultures, and languages are no barrier to anyone is proved through Paulette, a French girl who was brought up in India. Paulette has a dual identity as she internalises both French and Indian cultures. Ghosh significantly makes Paulette an agent of harmony, and depicts her as a lady who takes the lead role in connecting people of diverse cultural, racial, and national backgrounds. She was born in Jodu's father's boat under the assistance of his mother. But unfortunately, Paulette's mother died in childbirth, leaving her father, Pierre Lambert, alone with the crying infant. Lambert requested Jodu's parents to stay with him until an arrangement was made to take care of the newborn baby. However, no arrangements could be made, and

Jodu's mother became both the wet nurse and foster mother of Paulette. On being raised by an Indian boatwoman, she began to internalise the ways and manners of the Indians. She was endearingly called Putli, meaning doll, an Indian version of Paulette, "the first language she learned was Bengali, and the first solid food she ate was rice-and-dal khichri cooked by Jodu's mother . . . she far preferred saris to pinafores" (Ghosh, *Sea* 67). Here it can be observed that Paulette does not try to fit into the English society around her, and defines her identity in a fluid manner according to her ideas and desires. Through her, we get a glimpse of how essentialist notions of identity are challenged.

When the peaceful life of their home was disrupted due to the death of her father, Paulette was left an orphan, and the Burnham family adopted her. Jodu and his mother, too, had trouble, having to face many accusations from the people around them owing to a substantial debt that Lambert had accumulated through his life, and they were forced to leave their place. Bereft of the comforts of Lambert's house, her health wasted away, and eventually she died. Just like Deeti, Paulette too fell prey to gender violence. Though apparently, she was leading a sophisticated life with the Burnhams, she felt suffocated while living with them, and wanted to escape the tyranny and sexual harassment of Mr. Burnham. She detested their plan to marry her off to Justice Mr. Kandalbushe, who was a widower. Her appeal to Zachary and Jodu to take her along with them in the *Ibis* turned out to be a failure.

Paulette rewrites the norms of maritime travel which has been monopolised by males, and empirically proves that females are also capable of crossing the sea. With the help of Baboo Nob Kissin, Burnham's gomusta, she gets a passage through

the *Ibis* as an indentured labourer to Mauritius by exchanging her mother's locket, in accordance with her father's wish. She takes the name Putleshwari as she enters the *Ibis*. Paulette redefines female identity, and defies the notions that females are incapable of embarking upon maritime migration. An indefatigable Paulette finds a space in the ship, quite unseen and unnoticed by others; she remains with the female *girmits* with her face veiled by a *ghungta*[32]. The uniqueness of Paulette is revealed through Deeti's comment:

> The stranger too pulled back her sari, revealing a face that was long and finely-shaped, with an expression in which innocence was combined with intelligence, sweetness with resolution. Her complexion had a soft, golden glow, like that of the cosseted daughter of a village pundit, a child who had never worked a day in the fields. (Ghosh, *Sea* 355)

The other migrants too, hailing from different nations belonging to different castes, classes, creeds, and colours develop new identities inside the *Ibis*. Most of the migrants are renamed, which exemplifies how they are ready to forego their past, and forge an altogether new identity. Deeti becomes Aditi and Kalua, Maddow Colver. Neel Rattan Halder becomes Neel, Paulette becomes Putleshwari or Pugli, and the lascars and their head Serang Ali address Zachary Reid as Malum Zikri.

Deeti, a firm believer in the customs and practices of caste, was reluctant to cross the Black Water lest she should lose her caste and become an outcast. But, when confronted with the question of survival, she dared to cross it. Similar was the

[32] A piece of cloth used to cover head and face.

case with the other female migrants. They were victims of opium farming, patriarchal oppression, and exploitation. To escape the poverty-stricken life, they resolved to indenture themselves for survival, and all of them found a rebirth in the *Ibis*. Everyone believed that crossing the Black Water would pollute them, and they would become outcasts, but bereft of any other options, they volunteered to migrate.

The realization that this was "the last they would see of their homeland created an atmosphere of truculence and uncertainty" (Ghosh, *Sea* 397). Deeti felt that her ties with her native land were lost forever when the ship started moving away from the shore. "There's nothing worse than to sit here and feel the land pulling us back" (Ghosh, *Sea* 400). The passengers prepared themselves mentally to forget their past and move on to begin a new life. "All the old ties were immaterial now that the sea had washed away their past" (Ghosh, *Sea* 431). They became an extended family bound by shared experiences and not by birth. When Pugli understood that Deeti and all other females on the *Ibis* were greatly concerned about losing their caste if they crossed the Black Water, she reassured them that all of them were ship-siblings embarking on a pilgrimage to a holy place where no one could lose their caste. The passengers on board the *Ibis* improvised and enunciated a culture of their own which was not an imitation of the homogenized holistic and stable culture to which they were accustomed to in their past life. Instead, they rejected the hegemonic culture, and formulated an entirely new culture, an all-inclusive culture in which each and every one was respected, accepting their cultural differences.

Raja Neel Rattan Haldar, the land lord of Raskhali, who belonged to one of the richest landowning families of Bengal too fell prey to the deceit and treachery of the British businessmen, and he was transported as a convict in the *Ibis*. The British colonizers exploited not only the farmers and peasants of India, but even Rajas and landlords. Even though the Haldars had great regard for Queen Victoria and the British businessmen like Mr. Burnham, and supported them in enlarging their business, British men deceptively cheated them, and appropriated their land and property. Mr. Burnham, the cunning British businessman, accused Neel Rattan of forgery, and Justice Kendalbushe, taking into account all the pieces of evidence, including "a sworn affidavit" (Ghosh, *Sea* 220) from Neel's mistress Elokeshi, passed the judgement to arrest him. He was arrested and imprisoned in the Alipore jail, where he was ill-treated, harassed, and tortured by the jailer and was tattooed on the right side of the forehead "forgerer alipore 1838" (Ghosh, *Sea* 292). There he was pushed into a cell where an *afeemkhor*, Ah Fatt, who was to be transported to Mareech, was also imprisoned. Neel Rattan Haldar, too, would be exiled to Mareech along with his cellmate. Bishuji, a prison official, says,

> He will be on your ship and you will have to travel with him to your jail across the Black Water. He is all you have, your caste, your family, your friend; neither brother nor wife nor son will ever be as close to you as he will. You will have to make of him what you can; he is your fate, your destiny. You cannot escape what is written on your forehead. (Ghosh, *Sea* 316)

Though Neel, an orthodox Hindu, strictly observed upper-caste taboos during his heyday as the Raja, inside the prison cell, he had to forego all practices of untouchability. To spend his time inside the cell with an *afeemkhor* immersed in faeces and vomit was disgusting. However, he resolved to clean his cellmate's body disregarding the pollution caused by his physical contact with a foreigner. Gradually, the condition of Ah Fatt began to improve, and he was able to answer some of the questions of Neel. When the *Ibis* rowed past the Raskhali palace and the terrace where his son Raju flew kite, Neel tried to forget his memories, and in order to divert his attention, he prompted Ah Fatt to talk about him. His narration kept Neel engaged throughout the journey. Ah Fatt told him that he was from Canton, China. He was the son of Bahram ji Naurozji Moddie, an opium merchant from Bombay who fell in love with a Dan girl, Lei Chi-mei, and that his first name was Leo Fatt. A strong bond developed between Neel and Ah Fatt. Bhyro Singh, who was in charge of the convicts, was angry with them and tried his best to make them enemies, which turned out to be a failure. Bhyro Singh derived a sadistic pleasure in torturing the convicts. When Baboo Nob Kissin witnessed the two convicts being marched around the deck in chains, a deep sense of compassion overpowered him, and he felt that Ma Taramony, his aunt whom he adored, "could be responsible for the upsurge of maternal tenderness in his bosom" (Ghosh, *Sea* 388). He wanted to bring Neel under his protective fold. Even as the torture of the convicts continued in the ship, Baboo Nob Kissin was concocting secret plans to help Neel and his team escape from the ship. The unforeseen events that emerged during Heeru's wedding, and the severe punishment meted out to Jodu and Munia for being seen together led

to a great commotion in the ship. During this confusion, a Silahdar[33] died when he inadvertently slipped down into the sea. This event unsettled everything inside the *Ibis*. Bhyro Singh recognised Kalua and Deeti, who ran away from the funeral pyre. He learned that Deeti under the cover of her *ghungta* was instigating trouble in the *Ibis*. When Deeti was mentally and physically tortured, Kalua raised an alarm. Bhyro Singh wrongly accused Kalua for the death of Silahdar, and passed the verdict that he should be given sixty whippings. While the whipping was in progress, Kalua curled the whip around Bhyro Singh's neck, and pulled it so tight that he fell dead. A verdict was passed that Kalua was to be hanged the next day. In an attempt to rescue Kalua, Deeti and Paulette arranged plans for Kalua, Jodu, Serang Ali, Neel, and Ah Fatt to escape the *Ibis*. Baboo Nob Kissin, who had developed a maternal affection towards Neel, offered him "the key that could unlock the cages that imprisoned everyone" (Ghosh, *Sea* 503). Rebellion and resistance offered by the subalterns in their attempt to escape from the oppressive mechanism of the colonizers are highlighted through such instances. They escaped in a boat through the tumultuous sea when the storm raged and rain lashed out its fury. When they landed safely on the Great Nicobar Island, Serang Ali, the crafty leader of the lascars, who was once a sea pirate, left the remnants of the boat floating on the sea to give the impression that all of them perished in the storm. A connection between the three ships of the *Ibis* trilogy is established through this aggressive storm that caused great damage to the ships. The storm that enabled Neel, Ah Fatt, Jodu, Serang Ali, and Kalua to escape the *Ibis* caused great damage to the two other ships,

[33] Arms-bearer.

Anahita, which was used by Bahram to transport a huge cargo of opium, and *Redruth,* owned by Fitcher Penrose, a botanist and a horticulturist which was carrying plant specimens to Canton.

Through the second book of the *Ibis* trilogy, *River of Smoke,* Ghosh unravels the negative sides of the opium trade and brings free trade to the discussion. Deeti emerges in this novel as a matriarch and the head of a huge clan, *La Fami Colver*. Her "Memory-Temple-*Deetiji ka smrithi-mandir*" (Ghosh, *River* 8) gives a pictorial representation of the *Ibis* family in a shrine in Mauritius. This temple serves as a connecting link between *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*.

Deeti's practice of drawing figures on the walls of the temple is similar to the hieroglyphics, which designates a pictographic script, as that of the ancient Egyptians, in which many of the symbols are conventionalized pictures of the things represented. She attempts to paint a world of meanings. Whenever the curious onlookers of the pictograph raised doubts, she clarified them through oral narration. She had mastered this art from her grandmother.

> Madhubhani, Deeti's grandmother's village was renowned for its gorgeously decorated houses and beautifully painted walls. When she moved to Nayanpur she brought the secrets and traditions of Madhubani with her: she taught her daughters and granddaughters how to whiten their walls with rice flour, and how to create vibrant colours from fruits, flowers and tinted soils. (Ghosh, *River* 9)

The paintings were unique and eco-friendly; Deeti excelled in this art, and painting little mortals was her forte. "[D]rawing was not just a consolation, but also her

principal means of remembrance: being unlettered, it was the only way she could keep track of her memories," (Ghosh, *River* 10) and pass them on to the next generation. Even though this was unwelcome in her husband's home, she created her "private pantheon of those she most loved and feared" in her puja-room. "[T]his small prayer-niche became the repository of her dreams and visions" (Ghosh, *River* 9-10). She created a world of her own in the hostile environment of her husband's family, which was dominated by her in-laws.

She regains the agency on her identity, which is incessantly torpedoed by others, and subverts the power structure dominated by patriarchy and female subjugation. The domestic oppression which she faces in the house is not an isolated event; she represents a microcosm of a larger landscape where similar instances of female oppression prevail. However, unlike Deeti, many of them silently endure oppression and exploitation, and are incapable of offering resistance. Her experience is that of a doubly colonized person, colonized both by patriarchy and colonialism. The strong and stable mental strength and confidence enable her to fight vehemently against odd situations. Deeti's experience at her husband's house can be considered as the experience of a colonized enacted in the context of a household. She breaks the shackles of bondage, and resolves to lead a liberated life with a lower caste Chamar, Kalua, and challenges the rigidity of casteism and patriarchal oppression.

Deeti's unique gift of expression through pictograph is retained in her even after the harrowing experiences of her life, like the death of her husband Hukam Singh, events leading to her escape from sati with Kalua, and the transportation as an indentured labourer to Mauritius. All the important characters of the *Ibis* family,

who function as the connecting link between past and present are pictorially represented in her shrine. Her son Girin plays a vital role in identifying the spot for the family shrine "the Fami's Chowkey"[34](Ghosh, *River* 11) in Mauritius, a spot which shelters them during a storm. Storm is a symbol that Ghosh uses in a very insightful manner; it connects and disconnects people. While foraging for food in the forest of Mauritius, she, with her son Girin encounters a terrible storm, and they take shelter in a fissure. The remnants of human habitation, like the stacks of firewood, human dung, and stick figures on the wall of the fissure give her reassurance about the former existence of human beings in this cave (Ghosh, *River* 12). She begins to draw a "larger-than-life-size image of Kalua" (Ghosh, *River* 13) in her shrine which is followed by the images of various inhabitants of the *Ibis*: Jodu, Paulette, Serang Ali, Ah Fatt, Neel, Baboo Nob Kissin, and Zachary Reid. This cave later becomes the shrine where the huge clan, *La Fami Colver* gathers for worship. The cultural trait that she has carried from the past becomes a method through which she reclaims her past and finds courage. The endearing memories that she has carried with her find expression through this pictograph and are made eternal. The unpleasant memories and people are completely erased to build up a selective past. The past is reinvented and eternalized through pictography for the present as well as for the future. Through these depictions, she tries to develop a community feeling and a communal identity for the members of the *La Fami Colver*. This is similar to the formation of a nation; a shared set of beliefs brings people together, and helps them to develop a feeling of oneness. Benedict Anderson's

[34] The sacred place where all the devotees of the family join together to offer their prayers and get blessings.

Imagined Communities discusses this idea of nation formation. “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6).

A feeling of fraternity is formed here through memory and imagination. A memory of a liberatory journey is expressed here; only the people who help her in this transformatory journey are accommodated in the family memory. Through this depiction, she creates a narrative of the origin, which eventually becomes an origin myth. The origin myths of the major systems mentioned in epics/*Ithihasas* emerge in a similar fashion and become accepted over the course of time when these are repeated and reaffirmed. However, it is not an originary origin but a transformatory origin with the potential to reimagine the world.

The yearly ritual performance in the family shrine plays a pivotal role in maintaining the family’s sense of unity. A sense of closeness and oneness is experienced by them as they ascend the cliff to this shrine. They develop strong bonds among them, cutting across national, linguistic, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Deeti eclectically absorbs the cultural traits and traditional practices of her nation, and imparts the same to a whole clan who were ready to incorporate and assimilate those practices. The preconceived notions of a nation are re-defined in this context. She becomes the fulcrum around which the whole clan moves in unity in an alien land, Mauritius. “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (Bhabha, *Nation* 1). Here, people belonging to different nations develop a kinship and affinity with the

land and the people with whom they come into contact. Bhabha emphasizes the ambivalence immanent in the idea of the nation, language, the lives of the people, and stresses

> the liminal[35] image of the nation. . . . It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the 'origins' of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. (Bhabha, *Nation* 1)

From an unlettered lady at the beginning of *Sea of Poppies,* who grew up speaking Bhojpuri language, Deeti gradually progresses in her linguistic ability, and becomes proficient in a hybrid language that is acquired through her contact with people belonging to different nations speaking different languages. Finally, when we meet her in *River of Smoke,* in Mauritius, she is capable of using a Creole language, a blend of a variety of languages used by the ship siblings. Whenever the members of her family raise doubts and clarifications about "the escape" (Ghosh, *River* 15) depicted in the murals in Deeti's shrine, she rebukes them:

> are you a fol dogla or what? Don't be ridkil: the whole thing, from start to fini took just a few minits, and all that time, it was nothing but jaldi-jaldi, a hopeless golmal, tuz in dezord. It was a mirak, believe me, that the five managed to get away-and none of it would have been possible if not for that Serang Ali. (Ghosh, *River* 15)

[35] The concept of liminality is discussed in detail in Chapter I.

Deeti's mastery over the language and her great appreciation of the episode of the escape are revealed through her words. In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh uses a motley tongue like Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Cantonese, pidgin, and creole to give a sense of the diversity and multilinguistic pattern of English language during the nineteenth century; it is an amalgamation of varied languages. In an interview given to the *Quint* on the publication of *Flood of Fire,* he reveals the paradox that as English language becomes hegemonic; it becomes narrower and narrower in the twentieth century (Ghosh).

Ghosh experiments with the use of language and underscores how languages undergo changes under specific conditions. In relation to the development of language, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o observes that language changes in accordance with the socio-economic and cultural changes taking place in society, and it is most often reflected through the language of the working class.

> It is the peasantry and the working class who are changing language all the time in pronunciations, in forming new dialects, new words, new phrases and new expressions. In the hands of the peasantry and the working class, language is changing all the time, it is never at a standstill. (68)

In *Sea of Poppie*s, Ghosh focuses his attention on the cultivation of opium, and the dexterity of its processing and packing, while in *River of Smoke,* his attention is upon its export and the business transactions with China. Real and fictional characters who are closely associated with the opium trade are introduced in this novel. It is set in the South China Sea and nineteenth-century Canton, focusing on Fanqui-town, a place exuberating with trade and commerce. The

different phases of empire expansion of the Victorian age are highlighted here with special reference to its most valuable colony, India. A major portion of opium exported to China came from the British opium plantations in India. The foreign traders involved in the opium business were restricted from entering Canton, but an exclusive trading arena was set apart for them on the banks of the Pearl River, named Fanqui-town. Fanqui-town or foreign enclave acts as a center of commerce. This town becomes the epicenter of the problems related to the opium ban and free trade. Situated on the farthest extremity of the city, the town is well-designed with rows of colourful buildings and factories. The foreign enclave in Canton has thirteen factories or Hongs. They are not really factories but living spaces with a number of apartments and lodgings which are rented out to foreign merchants according to their means. The factories which belong to different nations have their own flags. The British, the Dutch, the Danish, the French and the American flags are erected in front of them (Ghosh, *River* 182). The architecture, too, is a mixture of different forms belonging to China, Amsterdam, India, etc. The entryways of factories are so narrow that one would be astounded to find a number of houses, courtyards, godowns, and long corridors behind them (Ghosh, *River* 182). A multicultural social life and a motley mixture of people speaking different languages are the characteristic features of this town. Neel describes Fanqui-town as a small place inhabited by “a peculiar assortment of sojourners” (Ghosh, *River* 225). As several boats are closely packed and anchored along the water’s edge, it is difficult to see the water below.

> This floating city looks like a vast shanty town made of driftwood, bamboo and thatch; the boats are so tightly packed that if not for rolls and tremors that shake them from time to time you would take them for oddly shaped huts. Closer to the shore are rows of sampan . . . Their roofs are made of bamboo. Their design is marvelously ingenious . . . to suit the weather. The occupants are all so *busy* that you would imagine the floating city to be a water-borne hive. (Ghosh, *River* 181)

The boat-people keep themselves busy preparing eateries and tasty delicacies; a cacophony of different voices from the farmyard, from hawkers, tailors, cobblers, and barbers make the whole area throbbing with life (Ghosh, *River* 181). This fluid space, meant for foreign trade transactions, accommodates people belonging to different nations with their own cultures and languages. This space is equivalent to the Third Space, which accepts and accommodates differences and enables people to assert their self and identity.

Apart from the characters of *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh introduces some major characters in the second book of the trilogy, *River of Smoke*. Bahram Moddie, a Bombay Parsi merchant originally from Navsari, coastal Gujarat, and an acclaimed opium exporter and trader, occupies a prominent position in the thematic development of the novel. Ah Fatt, his illegitimate child in a boat woman, Chi-mei, is introduced in the novel to depict the identity crisis and the in-between position of boat people in general. Fanqui-town plays a significant role in moulding Bahram's identity. His engagement with overseas trade transforms him completely, and he is able to win the respect of the British merchants, who give him a place of pride.

Bahram's versatility in different languages and his expertise in business transactions helps him to reach the apex of glory. However, the ban on the opium trade by the Chinese government alters lives of all the people in Fanqui-town, including the life of Bahram. Bahram's rise to a business tycoon is fueled by his unpleasant experiences at the Mistrie mansion after marrying Shireen Bhai, the daughter of a reputed Parsi businessman, a ship builder of the city named Seth Rusthamjee Pestonjee Mistrie. The unwillingness on the part of his brothers-in-law to accept him as a member of his family due to his low social status invigorates in him the desire to become wealthy and thus climb the ladder of success.

Ghosh traces the life of Bahram, and how he has struggled to create an identity of his own in a place where he has been sidelined owing to his marginal position in the social strata. Bahram seeks the help of his father-in-law, who has a soft corner towards him, to promote him to the opium business in Canton, China. He gives Bahram the ship *Anahita*, meaning Sea Goddess which takes him to Canton. He flourishes in the business and is able to build his own business empire across the sea. Bahram finds an astounding transformation in himself:

> In Canton, stripped of the multiple wrappings of home, family, community, obligation and decorum, Bahram had experienced the emergence of a new persona, one that had been previously dormant within him: he had become Barry Moddie, a man who was confident, forceful, gregarious, hospitable, boisterous and enormously successful. (Ghosh, *River* 52)

In Canton, he enjoys all that has been denied to him in his country. He falls in love with Chi-mei, a boat woman who is a contrast to Shireen Bhai. She loves him with a

passionate intensity, unlike the widow-like coldness of Shireen Bhai. She is an entrepreneur who takes care of her family all alone.

> The boat-women of Canton were utterly unlike their land-bound sisters: their feet were unbound and often bare, and there was nothing demure in their demeanor; they rowed boats, hawked goods, and went about their work with much gusto, if not more, than their menfolk. (Ghosh, *River* 68)

He expands his business in Canton and becomes the head of the Accha Hong[36]. Bahram creates a home of his own away from his native land, in Fanqui-town, as he cannot accept the imposed identity of the Mistrie family. This home which crosses the borders of nation, culture, and language, redefines his identity and the traditional concept of home, and the purity of culture. This tallies with the observation made by hooks that "home is no longer a precise geographical location but a non-physical space, liberated from any constraints of spatiality or culture" (Baker 19).

Bahram craves for recognition in the Mistrie family, but his efforts to establish his identity becomes a failure. He feels suffocated at the Mistrie mansion with all its paraphernalia for a sophisticated life. He implores his wife to move out to lead an independent life, but her complacency, as well as the desire to remain in the comfort zone of her home and family, discourages her from moving out of her home. "Every human being seeks to persist in his own being," (Butler, *Undoing* 31) says Spinoza, which is true in the case of Bahram also. Hegel extrapolates upon this

[36]It is a house of foreign trade in China in which people from Hindustan engage in trade. Accha is the name given to people from Hindustan.

view of Spinoza, and emphasizes that "to persist in one's own being is only possible on the condition that we are engaged in receiving and offering recognition" (Butler, *Undoing* 31). To establish his identity and personhood, to demand respect and recognition, he feels it essential to move away from the Mistrie mansion, and make efforts to mould his own self. After the death of his father-in-law, his brothers-in-law takes the whole control of the family business; they try to oust Bahram from their business and sell the fleet and the export unit. They suggest him to retire and to go on pension as his filial duties are over with the marriage of his daughters. Bahram, thinking about his father-in-law expresses his regret, "when the wise one goes things fall apart" (Ghosh, *River* 112).

Class discrimination shown towards people who hail from poor working-class families is underscored by Ghosh when he reveals the inhuman attitude of Bahram's brothers-in-law, even when he has risen to prosperity by building up a business empire in Canton. He was unwilling to dispose of the hugely profitable export unit which he had built up on his own. Notwithstanding the misgivings of the Mistrie family and the rumors that opium business in Canton was on the decline, as the Emperor of China might impose a total ban on opium import, Bahram resolved to continue his opium business. He expressed his willingness to buy his flagship *Anahita* when his brothers-in-law were conspiring to sell the whole export division, including the ship. He bought opium from the Parsi merchants at a cheaper rate when they were engaged in a panic selling due to their fear of the future ban on opium. He raised money from various sources of credit, including their joint property and Shireen's jewelry. It was such a "shipment that ran amuck in the storm

of September 1838. . . . Its total value would be well over a million Chinese taels[37] of silver" (Ghosh, *River* 58). *Anahita* was badly damaged in the storm, and its auspicious figure-head-the Goddess of Sea was gone, which he considered a bad omen. The storm is depicted "as a gigantic serpent, coiling inwards from the outside, going around and around in circles of diminishing size, and ending in a single enormous eye" (Ghosh, *River* 19).

When Bahram embarked on his journey to Canton, he didn't pay heed to Shireen Bhai's omens and his brothers-in-law's warnings. Nobody supported him. When he reached Canton, he witnessed a drastic change. Except for Fanqui-town, which was brimming with life, everything was silenced. Vico, his confidante, brought him a letter from the committee appointing him as a member of the Chamber of Commerce to be "the leader of the Canton's Achhas" (Ghosh, *River* 197). At the same time, he learned from his friend Zadig Bey that China was taking steps to ban the opium trade. Opium dealers were arrested, "they had seized and burned the 'fast-crab' boats that had once roamed the Pearl River, transporting opium directly from ship to shore" (Ghosh, *River* 147). Neel, Bahram's new munshi, too confirmed the rumour that the Chinese government was trying to ban the opium trade, and capital punishment was waiting in store for the opium traders. When he attended the meeting at the chamber of Commerce as the doyen of the Achha community of Canton (Ghosh, *River* 231), everyone assembled there confirmed that the opium traders would have a tough time. Bahram revealed to Lancelot Dent, another opium merchant, that he had a ship load of opium anchored at Hong Kong.

[37] A unit of currency formerly used in China (Tael).

Dent told him that he, too, had a shipload of opium to sell, and that if Benjamin Burnham gave them support, they would become stronger. Dent supported Mr. Innes, a man of "wild, willful character" and a "troublemaker" (Ghosh, *River* 231), who was still transporting cargos of opium into Canton, defying the Emperor's ban, but Bahram disagreed to join hands with such a person.

British traders were ready to accept him as one among the successful businessmen. On one occasion after returning from a banquet, when Bahram had no other boat to sail home, he got into Allow's boat, which was the one that Bahram bought for Chi-mei. After her death, Allow purchased it. He deceptively influenced Bahram to sell his consignment of opium to Mr. Innes. He fanned the smoke of opium into the air, which Bahram began to breathe, his body became lighter, and he could forget his worries. When he was dazed, he saw a woman and enjoyed her company, but when he reached the destination, she was nowhere to be seen, "on the river of smoke, and when his sleep broke, he was amazed to find that his arms were empty and she was gone" (Ghosh, *River* 301). Bahram entered into an opium-induced hallucinatory world.

Allow convinced Bahram that the opium could be safely sold to Mr. Innes, and he went to the Creek factory where the free traders like Jardine and Innes did business, and delivered the shipment. Bahram breathed a deep sigh of relief as this particular deal was very important to him. While the lascars were unloading the crates, he saw a troop of soldiers marching towards the Creek factory to confiscate opium, and arrest the merchants. Somehow through the backside, Bahram escaped without being caught with the help of his munshi Neel.

Meetings were conducted by the merchants of Co Hong to make the foreign businessmen engaged in the free trade of opium admit their guilt for smuggling opium despite the warning from the Chinese government. The Governor has directed by edict to make Innes admit his guilt, and to be driven out of Canton, China. Bahram thought that his condition, too, would be the same as Innes's. He could not think of leaving Canton; he felt that

> without the escape and refuge of Fanqui-town he would have been forever a prisoner in the Mistrie mansion; he would have been a man of no account, a failure, despised as a poor relative. It was China that had spared him that fate; it was Canton that had given him wealth, friends, social standing, a son; it was this city that had given him such knowledge as he would ever have of love and carnal pleasure. If not for Canton, he would have lived his life like a man without a shadow. (Ghosh, *River* 348)

Though Bahram belonged to a Parsi family in Bombay, India, his affiliations and attachments were with people of Canton in China. Through these ruminations of Bahram Moddie, Ghosh problematizes the concept of nationality and the idea of nationhood, where the borderlines between nations become mere shadows, a theme which he had successfully experimented with in *The Shadow Lines*.

Ghosh has deliberately used the actual names of the officials of China in this historical fiction in order to blend facts and fiction, and he blurs the line between them. As an initial step towards the ban of opium trade in China, William Jardine, an influential and prosperous British opium merchant was forced to go back to Britain. This diplomatic move on the part of Chinese officials, headed by the Imperial High

Commissioner, Lin Tse-hsü had far-reaching repercussions upon the foreign traders in Fanqui-town. This dictum was humiliating to Jardine and all other merchants, especially the British. William Jardine, of Jardine and Matheson business firm, considered "the use of opium not as a curse, but a comfort and benefit to the hard-working Chinese" (Hanes and Sanello 1). He became a driving force behind the outbreak of the First Opium War, which was primarily a war triggered by businessmen.

An elaborate farewell ceremony was arranged in honour of Jardine, in which all the merchants involved in free trade participated, including Mr. Benjamin Burnham. Burnham's optimism about the future of the opium trade boosted Bahram's spirit, but it was short-lived. Stringent measures were taken up by the Chinese government. The foreign traders were held hostages, and they were forced to surrender their consignment of opium. When the property belonging to the British subjects was seized, it created great turmoil which eventually led to the outbreak of war. Mr. Burnham claimed that the Chinese victory was only illusory, and the businessmen would get back everything they lost. But Bahram could not wait. The thought of bankruptcy and debtor's prison, the angry letters from investors, the humiliation of facing his brothers-in-law, and his disregard for the premonitions of his wife aggravated his sorrow. Bahram took the solace of opium, but was not able to relax. When he witnessed the destruction of opium, he felt as if his own body was being trodden upon. His body began to ache, and he craved for more opium. Soon after he reached *Anahita* and the owner's suite, he locked the door, made a pipe, and drank in the smoke. His muscles began to relax, and he heard familiar echoes from

the past and his name Mister Barry, being called. Through the emergency exit of *Anahita*, he began to descend the ladder, and when he stepped on to the sampan, he pushed the ladder away. In his hallucinations, he felt Chi-mei's hands brushing against his chest, calling him, "Come, Mister Barry. . . . He smiled. 'Yes, Chi-mei, I'm coming. It's time now'" (Ghosh, *River* 546), he said, and the warm waters of the river took him to its entrails.

The man who reached the apex of glory through opium met his doom through the same opium. The opium merchant's death as a result of the hallucination triggered by opium is ironic. Ghosh underscores the deadening effect of opium, and its capability to bring down human lives and empires. Even though Bahram attained success in his life, and tried to create a transnational, multiracial identity among the businessmen, and had connections worldwide by developing excellent communication skills with his mastery over different languages, and his ability to assimilate varieties of cultures and the ways of life, he succumbed to an unfortunate end due to a tragic flaw in him. The identity that he had created with his sincere and strenuous efforts became futile.

Ghosh delineates the rich flora of China in *River of Smoke* through Fitcher Penrose, a botanist who has devoted his life to the search and nurturing of the plants. Paulette was given a job, and accommodated in his ship *Redruth*, which carried plants to China. The diversity of the flora of China is revealed through their excavations for the mysterious golden camellia. A geographical description and the workings of various institutions are revealed through the letters of Robin Chinnery, the illegitimate son of George Chinnery, to his childhood friend Paulette.

The final book of the *Ibis* trilogy, *Flood of Fire*, discusses in detail the escalating tension between China and Britain consequent on the crackdown of the opium trade. Commissioner Lin's announcement of the blockade over the opium business, and the prohibition of foreigners from establishing the opium trade in China form the backdrop of the novel. Opium addiction has percolated into the very fabric of China, and has adversely affected their patterns of life, inducing into them lethargy and indolence, depriving them of their efficiency in productivity. Ghosh focuses his attention on the impact of the opium business on international relations, especially the relations of China, Britain, India, and the U.S. The onset of the forces of capitalism and the extent to which human beings will go to satisfy their insatiable greed for wealth are graphically portrayed here. The actual reasons for the outbreak of the First Opium War (1839-1842), which are largely glossed over in the British historiography, and its repercussions upon the lives of the subalterns are minutely observed and recorded by Ghosh with the precision of a historian. The superior naval power of Britain, meticulous planning in their military intervention with their technologically advanced war armaments, and the deceptive ways in which they have subjugated the Chinese force are vividly portrayed. The novel also traces the lives of Indian sepoys who work like slaves for the British on a meagre salary and poor living conditions, even when they realize that their British counterparts are given more money and better facilities.

Ghosh introduces Havildar[38] Kesri Singh, an Indian sepoy serving the Bengal Native Infantry of the British East India Company, in the first section of

[38] A soldier or police officer in the Indian Army

Flood of Fire. The life of Kesri represents the futile attempts of thousands of sepoys of India who try to assert and create a space and identity for themselves in a colonized world. To be in the British force is a part of the prestige of the able-bodied youth of the time, and Kesri is no exception. He gets enrolled in the British Indian Army with the help of Bhyro Singh. Severe drilling and punishment are administered to the new recruits under the supervision of Bhyro Singh, and when Kesri makes an attempt to escape, Bhyro Singh warns him: "This is your jail, and I am your Jailor-You had better get used to it" (Ghosh, *Flood* 112). Colluding with the colonizers, they torture and exploit the Indian sepoys, and become accomplices in the empire expansion. Kesri Singh regrets over the decision, and realizes that in choosing to run away from home with Bhyro Singh, "he had abandoned not just his family and village but also himself-or rather the person he had once been with certain ideas about dignity, self-containment and morality" (Ghosh, *Flood* 112). He realizes that the Indian sepoys have no freedom to assert their identity, and the only way left for him is to adapt himself to the changed situation. His impressive performance in the British Indian Army enables him to be a source of income for his family. Bhyro Singh negotiates with Kesri for his sister Deeti's marriage with Hukam Singh, an afeemkhor, which turns out to be a failure. Constant exposure to opium has weakened his already frail health leading to premature death. The news that Deeti has desecrated the sacrificial altar of *sati* by eloping with a Chamar named Kalua, reaches the army camp. In an urgent meeting in the army camp, Bhyro Singh makes Kesri an outcast. The hierarchical division of the society into upper castes and lower castes is apparently maintained even in the army camp in order to impress upon the colonized that the British colonizers respect the caste hierarchy of the

Hindus. Ghosh underscores the severity of the caste system, and that the Indian officials working in the British East India Company are its proponents. To escape from the ignominy, Kesri resolves to go overseas, to Southern China, to serve the British, under Captain Neville Mee, in the ship the *Hind,* where he is given the charge of recruiting followers to the expedition. Ghosh gives a vivid description of the unequal treatment meted out to the soldiers in the army camp due to the deep-rooted racial discrimination that prevailed among the whites through the perspective of Kesri Singh.

The Indian sepoys were paid less than the British soldiers even when they did the same job, and promotions and positions of authority always were appropriated by the whites. They were sent to fight with old equipment while new guns were supplied to the British troops. Many of the Indian sepoys had misgivings in crossing the Black Water, as disasters were predicted, and they bid farewell to their homeland with a heavy heart to fight for the British. The Indian sepoys formed a major part of the colonial army; they became the instruments through which the colonial agenda was executed. The Indian Ocean water-worlds had remained as a significant oceanic space for exploiting people of South East Asian countries who were transported as indentured labourers, sepoys, or as convicts. The colonizers treated them as mere tools. “That India contributed such a significant amount to Britain’s imperial expansion can be seen from the frequency with which troops were dispatched overseas for wars which had nothing to do with India and everything to do with protecting or expanding British interests” (Tharoor 38).

Ghosh exemplifies the total indifference and inhuman attitude of the British towards Indian sepoys. Such subaltern sufferings left out as gaps and absences in history are retrieved through fiction. Fanon detects three phases of colonialism. In the first phase, there is an assimilation of the cultural model introduced by the colonizer. In the second phase, there is an internal self-questioning of this response and the quest for authentic national roots. A commitment to liberation struggles on behalf of the masses through violent revolutionary action becomes the third phase in colonialism (Brooker 212). This observation is true in the case of Havildar Kesri Singh. Right from his inception as the sepoy of the Bengal Infantry, he shows great allegiance to the British government. When he is given the charge of training the new recruits in the intricate art of soldiering, he discharges his duties with great efficiency. The effectiveness of his training becomes visible when they confront the detachments of Chinese troops at Macau. When the sepoys commence their action as a unit for the first time, Kesri feels proud to see them moving smoothly, "like spokes in a wheel, with their minds not on themselves but on the unit" (Ghosh, *Flood* 384). Kesri's loyalty to the British force makes him turn a deaf ear to the complaints and allegations of the Indian sepoys about the rotten provisions and unseaworthy ships. But his conscience chastises him for parroting the words of the Angrezi officers. As Fanon has observed, an internal self-questioning slowly emerges in him, and he questions himself whether his doings are right.

Kesri was made the head of the Bengal Detachment under Captain Mee, and he led the firing of canisters, creating a hailstorm of bullets that filled the whole area with smoke, and the Chinese frontlines were decimated. He recollected an incident

in which a Chinese soldier, probably an officer, who refused to surrender, came rushing at Kesri almost as though he was begging to be cut down. For the few seconds of life that remained to him, the man fixed his gaze on Kesri, "he knew it to be the look that appears on men's faces when they fight for their homes, their families, their customs, everything they hold dear" (Ghosh, *Flood* 472). Unnamed grief came upon Kesri, and he reached out to close the dead man's eyes. Kesri was filled with regret, and remembered how "his father had fought at Assaye[39]-for something that was your own; something that tied you to your fathers and mothers and those who had gone before them" (Ghosh, *Flood* 472). Realization dawned upon Kesri that the bold defence on the part of the Chinese soldiers was truly patriotic, and he exclaimed aside that he too would have done the same if it were to safeguard his own nation. The initial exhilaration while he joined as a sepoy of the British East India Company began to wane. He considered the Indian soldiers serving the British force as mere mercenaries, colluding with them in their greed for profit engendered by capitalism and executing their strategies for empire expansion. The fixed gaze of the dying Chinese soldier was an eye-opener to Kesri, and he began to look upon the British as cruel, self-centered, and avaricious, with no trace of humanity. Kesri, with agonizing regret, despised himself for being instrumental in bringing about tragedy upon the innocent people of China, and he exclaimed, "Why fight like this-Why not just accept defeat and live? . . . So much death; so much destruction-and that too visited upon a people who had neither attacked nor harmed the men who were so intent on engulfing them in this flood of fire. What was the meaning of it? What was

[39] A small village in Maharashtra which was the location of the Battle of Assaye.

it for?" (Ghosh, *Flood* 505). Though Kesri tried to console himself by comparing him to the heroes of the *Mahabharata* who fought against their own inclinations, "the question kept coming back to him: So much death; so much destruction-what was it all for?" (Ghosh, *Flood* 506). Kesri pondered over the futility of warfare and the massacre of innocent people in China.

Even though there was a brief cessation of war, on condition that a compensation of six million dollars would be handed over to the British for the confiscation of opium, and the Chinese were asked to withdraw their troops, the civilians of China were not ready to leave the aliens unharmed as they had conquered and devastated their land, and decimated their kith and kin. They attacked the brigades, and the Chinese projectiles kept raining down on the British troop. Kesri was badly wounded by the pointed end of a spear,

> his left leg crumbled under him, bringing him down heavily, on his back. . . . he knew that his time had probably come but he felt no panic; only a kind of sadness that it should happen here, at the hands of men with whom he had no quarrel; men who were not even soldiers, who were trying only to protect their villages, as he himself would have done back home. (Ghosh, *Flood* 592)

Maddow protected him and bound up the wound with his own clothes. He took some opium from his pocket and pushed it into Kesri's mouth. His nostrils were filled with "the grassy, sickly sweet odour of opium" (Ghosh, *Flood* 593). Even though his pain receded and breath returned, his left leg had to be amputated. A subversion of the hegemonic ideology becomes visible in this context when

Maddow Colver (Kalua, a Chamar), irrespective of his lowest position in the caste hierarchy, becomes the savior of the upper caste Havildar Kesri Singh. Maddow Colver was a constant companion, and Kesri wondered why Maddow showed too much love and attachment towards him. Maddow revealed that he was doing it for his sister Deeti's sake.

Kesri remained loyal to his superior officer Captain Mee throughout his career, and a transracial and transcultural relationship and love developed between them; he was a confidante to Captain Mee. Mee visited Kesri, and announced that their CO[40] had recommended him for a citation for bravery in the field. This was the only recognition he received for his life-long struggle and sacrifice for the sake of the British Empire. "The sacrifice that Indian troops made for the advancement of British interests, the results of which linger even today, was acknowledged neither in compensation to them nor the families they left behind, nor by any significant accretion to the well-being of India" (Tharoor 39).

Mee's death after thrusting a satchel full of glittering gold ornaments and sparkling silver coins into Kesri's hands made him ponder over the futility of his life and the life of Captain Mee. The roles that both of them played were pivotal in decimating the life of the Chinese people in the Opium War. According to Fanon, in the third phase, there is a development of a commitment towards liberation struggles of one's own nation (Brooker 212). Kesri, too, developed in him a desire to fight for the sake of his country, just like the Chinese who fought for their own land. However, the realization was too late. In his mad rush for material prosperity and

[40] Commanding Officer.

prestige in serving in the British Indian army, he forgot to create an identity for himself. He had drained himself of his physical and mental health, expending his youthful vigor for an alien country without achieving anything. With his physical deformity, he could never be the same again and lead a full-fledged and active life. The sacrifice of his youthful life as the havildar of the Bengal Native Infantry had helped only to satisfy the greed of a few petty bourgeoisies, the offspring of capitalism, who, under the pretext of establishing free trade between east and west instigated the outbreak of Opium War, decimating the life of the Chinese people. He resolved to leave the place secretly because he knew that people would suspect him if he was found with Captain Mee's money soon after his death. He asked Maddow Colver if he could arrange Serang Ali, who helped Neel's son Raju to escape, to help them too so that they could escape from the stranglehold of the British force.

While Ghosh presents Kesri Singh as a subservient subordinate of the British empire, who failed to create an identity for himself, he projects Zachary Ried in an entirely different light. Born a mulatto/metif, labelled as black, he rewrites the essentialist notion of identity by masquerading himself as a white gentleman, and attains enviable positions in society. In *Sea of Poppies*, he was eager to be passed off as a gentleman, and he advanced forward in his career from a young seafarer to the second mate in the *Ibis*. When the *Ibis* was hit by a powerful storm, five fugitives escaped in a long boat to which Zachary was held responsible and kept under judicial custody. In the final book of the *Ibis* trilogy, *Flood of Fire*, Zachary was exonerated, after a wait of several months in Bengal. The first witness was the Captain of the *Ibis*, Mr. Chillingworth, who "provided extensive testimony in Mr.

Reid's favour, holding him blameless for the troubles of the voyage which he ascribed entirely to late Mr. Crowle, the first mate" (Ghosh, *Flood* 6). Mr. Benjamin Burnham also furnished a testimony in favour of Mr. Reid. Certified by all as a good gentleman, Zachary found an easy access to the sophisticated, aristocratic life, accentuated by his ivory complexion, dark hair, clean limbs, and sturdily built body. When Mr. Doughty found for him the job of a carpenter to repair and refurbish a budgerow[41] of the Burnhams, he was inadvertently stepping into a hitherto unfamiliar world which was thrilling as well as deceptive. Mrs. Burnham, with her seductive love, lured him into a passionate world of sex and initiated him into a world of luxury which awakened in him a desire to be rich. His rendezvous with Mrs. Burnham had opened a window into a new world

> where the finest and most voluptuous pleasures were those that were stolen. . . . It was as though she had placed his feet on the threshold of this world: all that remained was for him to make his way in-and he was determined to do it, if only to prove to her that he was capable of it. (Ghosh, *Flood* 249)

Baboo Nob Kissin adored Zachary and believed that "he possessed the power of animating mighty emotions in the heart of all who came into his orbit-love and desire, rage and envy, compassion and generosity" (Ghosh, *Flood* 256). He believed that Zachary was the incarnation of the Dark God with his flute, and love flowed to him as profusely and spontaneously as his devotion to God. Only in one respect, Zachary was different from the blue-black hue of Dark God, it was his ivory complexion, but this was easily solved when the gomusta got a page of the log book

[41] Large slow-moving barge with long cabins formerly used on the Ganges (Budgerow).

in the *Ibis* crew list (Ghosh, *Flood* 256). Recorded against the name Zachary Reid was the word "black" under the column of race. Zachary's entry into his life had dissolved the barrier that separated his spiritual and material lives, and he felt a surge of love and compassion towards Zachary. Baboo Nob Kissin told him about his meeting with Paulette, and that she obtained employment as an assistant to an English Botanist. On her enquiry about Zachary, he told her that he would sign up on a ship. Zachary's response was instantaneous:

> No Baboo, I am sick of that shit-sailing, risking your life everyday never having any money in your pocket. I don't want to be one of the deserving poor anymore. . . . I want to be rich, Baboo; I want to have silk sheets, soft pillows and fine food. . . . I want to own ships and not work on them . . . I want to live in Mr. Burnham's world. (Ghosh, *Flood* 258)

Amitav Ghosh, through this stream of thought running through the mind of Zachary, delineates how the oppressed and exploited subalterns offer resistance to the racial discrimination to which they are subjected to by the whites, and how they challenge them by appropriating their space. As Ashcroft et al. rightly comment, "post-colonial societies take over those aspects of imperial culture…that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities" (9). Listening to Zachary's words, Baboo Nob Kissin was reminded of Ma Taramony's words about the present era:

> Kaliyuga, the age of apocalypse-was but a time of wanting, an epoch of unbounded craving in which human kind will be ruled by the demons of greed and desire. It would end only when Lord Vishnu descended to the

> Earth in his avatar as destroyer, Kalki to bring into being a new cycle of time Satya Yuga, the age of truth. (Ghosh, *Flood* 258)

Taramony had predicted that a host of beings would incarnate on Earth to expedite the march of greed and desire. Baboo concluded that Zachary Reid is one such incarnation, and hence "it was his duty to assist Zachary in his mission of unshackling the demon of greed that lurks in every human heart. . . . Baboo Nob Kissin knew exactly the right means; a substance that had magical power to turn human frailty into gold. 'Opium is the solution'" (Ghosh, *Flood* 258). He must learn to buy and sell opium as Mr. Burnham did, so that he could excel in the trade. Baboo offered all kinds of help as he had been in this business as the gomusta of Mr. Burnham for more than thirty years. Zachary entered into the opium business with the savings he made by doing odd jobs. Mr. Burnham was glad to see his spirit of enterprise, and told him, "A new age is dawning, you know-the age of Free Trade-and it's men like you and I, self-made Free-Traders, who will be its heroes" (Ghosh, *Flood* 281) where trade transactions will not be restricted by government policies relating to the import and export of goods and services.

He applauded Zachary to seize the moment as it is an "exciting time for a venturesome white youth to seek his destiny in the East" (Ghosh, *Flood* 281). Mr. Burnham was optimistic that there would be a boom in the opium business with the British expedition to China. Businessmen involved in the expedition would play a key role in the ensuing war. Britain's Naval power could protect its merchant vessels from selling their goods in areas where the demand for opium was high. Mr. Burnham lured Zachary into the world of business in the same way as Mrs.

Burnham lured him into the world of sexual pleasures and sophisticated life. He offered him the position of the supercargo of the ship the *Hind*, which he had lent to the British expeditionary force to China. The vessel would carry opium, a few passengers, a contingent of troops and equipment for war. He would be paid a salary, and he would have the right to sell some opium on his own account. Zachary accepted the offer wholeheartedly, as the prospect of career advancement and profit excited him (Ghosh, *Flood* 284). Soon after the *Hind* reached its destination, and the cargo was unloaded into the *Ibis*, Zachary had another unexpected turn of fortune to be the Captain of the *Ibis*, as Captain Chillingworth was indisposed. Zachary looked upon his progress from a novice seaman, a ship's carpenter, to the skipper of the *Ibis* as a blessing bestowed upon him by the ship *Ibis*. "The change was so great-as to suggest the intervention of some other-worldly power: as a sailor Zachary knew that certain ships possess their own minds, even souls-and he did not doubt that the *Ibis* had conspired in making his transformation possible" (Ghosh, *Flood* 373). Zachary flourished in the business; he was able to make a great profit. The chests he sold were brought by Lenny Chan, who had built up the largest retail network in Southern China. With his good proficiency in different languages, especially pidgin, he could effortlessly communicate to his customers. Lenny Chan remained as a valuable customer, and lured him into a world of opium. He provided him with opium to smoke, and it "poured into his body like a flood coursing through his veins and swamping his head" (Ghosh, *Flood* 395). Their meeting was the beginning of a long partnership, and he resembled Mr. Burnham, with whom he had been doing business for a long time.

Zachary's profit from business escalated at an incredible pace, and he convinced Mr. Burnham of the matter. Once again, Zachary was able to prove his efficiency in business by rallying Mee round to enter into a business contract with Burnham Bros, and supply the provisions to the army officials. Mr. Burnham offered Zachary a commission to applaud him for his success in business. Zachary was waiting for this moment, and he told Mr. Burnham that he wanted to be a partner in his firm. Mr. Burnham gave him a positive response, and Zachary felt giddy with triumph, but it struck him that the triumph would be incomplete without letting Mrs. Burnham know how he climbed the ladder of success to "become a man of the times," (Ghosh, *Flood* 245) as she had challenged him earlier. Though it was Mrs. Burnham, the seductress who lured him to the world of luxury and comfort, and inculcated in him the greed for money, the morally degenerate Zachary waited for an opportunity to blackmail Mrs. Burnham emotionally. Zachary disclosed to her his knowledge of her liaison with Captain Mee, and how he brought him around to do business with Burnham Bros. Mrs. Burnham found herself exposed, and saw no meaning in continuing her life, and courts death in their ship *Anahita*. The furious storm that went surging through the windows of the owner's suite of the ship took the life of Mrs. Burnham. The moral degeneration of Zachary had reached its apex when he callously wreaked vengeance upon his oppressor, who seduced and exploited him. However, Mrs. Burnham had written a letter before her death to reconcile an issue in the love affair between Zachary and Paulette, because she held herself responsible for their estrangement. This letter reached Zachary and Paulette at the right time, and they resolved to unite, forgetting and forgiving the events of

the past. The bond that the inmates of the *Ibis* developed in the ship space is unbreakable.

Ghosh portrays female empowerment, and their quest for a liberated self through characters like Shireen Modi, Paulette, and Deeti. Shireen, who has remained quiet and invisible in the second book of the *Ibis* trilogy, *River of Smoke,* emerges as a strong lady in *Flood of Fire*. She breaks the shackles of confinement, and challenges the dominant patriarchal ideology that women are subordinate to men. She rewrites the notion that women are to be perpetually subjugated, and attempts to assert her identity. She sheds the inhibitions of a Parsi widow, and decides to move to China in order to reclaim the huge amount of money that her husband lost during China's ban of opium trade, and to find the truth about Bahram's son Freddie. When Bahram's purser Vico conveys the tragic news of Bahram's accidental death, grief overpowers her. The sudden reversal of fortune makes Shireen numb at first. The grief aggravates with the knowledge that he has left a huge debt that cannot not be handled by her with the meagre amount of money and property she has with her.

When Commissioner Lin Zexu announced a blockade of opium, the merchants were forced to surrender their cargo, which incurred a great loss to Bahram. There was a good chance that the confiscated opium could be sufficiently compensated, and when it happened a family member of Bahram should be there in China to receive the reparations. As Bahram did not have a son, Shireen herself volunteered to take up the challenge to go to China. It was then that Zadig Bey, Bahram's intimate friend and confidante, revealed about Freddie (Ah Fatt),

Bahram's illegitimate child who was then in China, and he suggested that Freddie could be of help to her to reclaim the money lost in the opium trade. "It astounded her now to think that her husband had been leading another existence for some thirty years, a life of which she had not had the faintest suspicion" (Ghosh, *Flood* 153). Her initial despair when she heard about her husband's illicit liaison with a Chinese lady soon gave way to a sudden inclination to meet her stepson. Freddie was leading a life of an outcast for no fault of his; he grew up among the boat-people, and was never accepted fully into any circle. His existence had always been an unresolved question to him. Bahram was not ready to disclose to his wife and the Mistrie family that he had an illegitimate son, and so couldn't take him to Bombay even when he begged. His mother, Chi-mei, too, didn't give him much freedom. Zadig Bey's comment that "he needs you more than ever" (Ghosh, *Flood* 155) changed Shireen's mind, and she decided to meet and accept Freddie. When they met, affection welled up in her, and she allowed Ah Fatt to lean on her shoulders. She softly caressed the contours of his face, which had a close resemblance to Bahram's face. At the same time, he looked typically Chinese, a trait he inherited from his mother Chi-mei (Ghosh, *Flood* 323). He proved to be a truly transnational identity born of a Parsi Indian father and a Danish Chinese boat-woman.

Ibis trilogy abounds in such characters; illicit half-Chinese children of sailors, merchants, and other foreigners, and Zadig Bey is no exception. An Armenian by origin, Zadig had his family settled for centuries in Cairo. He travelled to various ports in the Indian Ocean, and was fluent in many languages, including Hindustani. Bahram and Zadig Bey, both traders grown up continents apart, had

many things in common. Like Bahram, Zadig had risen in the world as a result of an unequal marriage, and had experienced the plight of a poor relative, and he too had a second family in Colombo. Ghosh points to the fact that many of the overseas traders had illicit relations and illegitimate children who were brought into this world to grow up without proper identity and explicit parenthood; the identity crisis that they undergo and their sense of non-belongingness have become the inevitable consequences of migration and overseas trade. The plight of children born to boat-women is especially pathetic. The land people are not ready to acknowledge their identities, they are deprived of mainstream education, and in effect, they are socially ostracized.

Ah Fatt born to Bahram, a rich "White Hat Alien" (Ghosh, *River* 88) from India, and a Chinese Danish washer-woman Chi-mei, had great difficulty in creating an identity for himself. His father wanted him to grow up like a respectable gentleman with literacy in classical Chinese as well as schoolroom English (Ghosh, *River* 88). But his mother could not see the point of all this and said: "what use was calligraphy to him when boat-people were banned by law from sitting for Civil Service examinations? . . . when boat-people were barred even from building houses ashore?" (Ghosh, *River* 89). She wanted him to grow up like any boat child, learning to fish and sail and handle boats. She considered him as her "secret shame" (Ghosh, *River* 90) but wanted him because of the money his father gave. Ah Fatt did some odd jobs along with other mixed-kind-boys (Ghosh, *River* 92) who were in plenty along the Pearl River where men could buy women. He entered into the opium business for his boss, Dai Lou but soon fell in love with his concubine, Adelina.

However, when his boss detected the love affair, Adelina committed suicide, and Ah Fatt went into hiding. Like Ah Fatt, she was half Cheeni, half Achha.

Ghosh portrays Ah Fatt as a dislocated individual without a nation to belong to, without any right to education, with no means for livelihood, without a land to build a house, without an accepted language but only the mixed language of the boat-people, and like most of the boat people, he too slowly falls a prey to opium. The acute identity crisis that the mixed-race children of the displaced, disinherited, and unwed boat-women face is vividly depicted through the characterization of Ah Fatt. Ah Fatt's meeting with Shireen gives him only a semblance of belonging as the persons from whom he wanted love and acceptance are no longer alive.

Shireen's journey to China transforms her life. Her brothers though reluctant at first, allows her to embark on an overseas voyage as she cannot be dissuaded. Adrienne Rich observes that, women lead a life of confinement inside their own houses. Their physical movement is prevented, and they are kept off the streets, inside the purdahs. These veiled women are forced to follow "feminine" dress codes; they face harassment everywhere, and are prescribed for "full-time" mothering at home. The enforced economic dependence of wives retains them in a subservient position (19).

The sea journey metamorphosed Shireen completely; her appearance, dressing style, her way of carrying herself, everything changed from that of a docile housewife to that of an independent woman. She belonged to a very wealthy family, and her marriage to Bahram was quite a mismatch, as he was a penniless youth at the time of marriage. The marriage was fixed as a kind of alternate arrangement

when the prospective groom of Shireen Modie died. Her benevolent father had set apart an apartment exclusively for the newly wed. Bahram found himself a fish out of water at the Mistrie mansion and desired to move out, but she was unwilling to leave home, as she feared loneliness during the long absences of her husband. Even at her own home, she felt marginalized as her husband hailed from a poor family.

The age-old notion of sea travel as anathema to women is reconstructed in *Flood of Fire,* and Ghosh depicts independent, empowered, and self-made female characters to show the remarkable transformation that has taken place in their attitude towards maritime life. The transoceanic migration here becomes a prelude to her liberation. Shireen's appearance in *Flood of Fire* is that of a totally transformed lady bold enough to cross the Black Water, unmindful of becoming an outcast and ready to disregard the protests of her family members. As Simone de Beauvoir puts it, women, "instead of being the negative inferior other . . . must become subjects in their own right. They need not be restricted by or to roles and identities fostered or imposed on them by patriarchy" (qtd. in Nayar 88). Shireen's acceptance of her new identity, necessitated by the existential angst, unmasks the real potential lying dormant in her, which she has fruitfully utilized during the time of crisis. Millions of such people are forced to cross the boundaries of culture, caste, class, language, and tradition to find a space for themselves in a world which has hitherto marginalized them. Breaking the age-old custom of wearing white saris, usually worn by widows, she resolves to wear a dress which is easier to manage at sea. She creates a make belief home for herself in the ship during her journey to China, with her cabin draped by a "toran"-an embroidered fringe of the kind that hung around the

doorways of all Parsi homes around the entrance. The fluidity of the concept of home is exemplified here when her daughter Shernaz exclaims, “It’s just like home now,” (Ghosh, *Flood* 269) to which Shireen answers, “So it is” (Ghosh, *Flood* 269). Shireen settles down with great ease in the ship and easily gets adapted to the ship space.

> The very textures and colours of the world around her seemed to change and things that had been of little concern to her before-like business, finance and politics-suddenly seemed to be of absorbing interest. It was as if a gale had parted the purdahs that curtained her world, blowing away many decades’ worth of dust and cobwebs. (Ghosh, *Flood* 217)

She visited Bahram’s grave in Hong Kong Island, and made offerings of fruits and flowers (Ghosh, *Flood* 362). Paulette recollected the events of the day and confirmed that there was a ladder hanging from *Anahita*; it was through that ladder Bahram descended into the Pearl River, into a world of hallucination, and then to death (Ghosh, *Flood* 446). Shireen felt at home with her friend Rosa in the rented house arranged by Robin Chinnery. She remained updated on the latest news relating to the British attack on China through Zadig Bey during their walks together. They gradually developed a liking for each other. The British intervention into the issue of the opium blockade gave a new dimension to their clash with China. The British destroyed the Chinese fleet with their well-equipped fleet and seized the island’s capital Tinghae and raised their flag, Union Jack above the city (Ghosh, *Flood* 377).

Dinyar Ferdoonjee, a relative of Shireen, whom Bahram supported during his beginning days of the opium business, invited Shireen Modi to take up his household, Villa nova, and she agreed. This opportunity provided her with an elite space in an alien land. At a grand party thrown by Dinyar, Shireen came into contact with many important characters who played pivotal roles in the formation of a fraternity in a land far away from home. Shireen's meeting with Mrs. Burnham developed into a strong bond between the two. They became support systems to each other, and empowered and motivated each other. Adrienne Rich, in her observation on lesbian continuum underscores that women share a rich inner life and develop a bonding against male tyranny, giving and receiving support from each other (27). Their informal talk revealed that both of them had gone through similar unpleasant experiences in their lives which brought them close to each other. They unburdened themselves by sharing stories about their past, and the unfortunate events that happened to them. Mrs. Burnham revealed her secret love towards Captain Mee, and how she was forced to move away from him because of her arranged marriage to Mr. Burnham which was quite unfulfilling. Shireen, too, narrated her story in which she had been betrayed by her husband for nearly thirty years as he had a mistress and a son in China. When Mrs. Burnham prompted Shireen to marry Zadig Karabedian, she protested, saying that her children, family, and community would not forgive her if she married him. Hearing these words, Mrs. Burnham asks her, "Have we not done enough by our duty, Shireen? Do we not also have a duty to ourselves?" (Ghosh, *Flood* 466), indirectly hinting that it was high time for her to lead a life for herself.

While Freddie supported her decision to marry Zadig, Dinyar Ferdoonjee expressed his disapproval as he was a spokesperson of patriarchy. He warned her that she would be cut off from all of her familial and communal ties. He asked her why she spoke about Bahram's illicit relationship. Shireen said that those things would not disappear even when nobody spoke of them, "because it is impossible to bring children silently into this world. They all have voices and some day they too learn to speak" (Ghosh, *Flood* 565). She wanted to make their voices heard.

The destruction of a huge cargo of British opium under the command of Commissioner Lin Zexu, instigated the British businessmen to defend their honour and reclaim their loss. With its superior military power and the expertise of the sepoys of the East India Company, the British could easily win over Chinese military force. A number of warships, and heavily armed steamers, including the awe-inspiring *Nemesis,* were at the forefront of the British force. A flight of Congreve rockets blasted through the air, attacking the gun emplacements of China (Ghosh, *Flood* 500). "The British gunships had destroyed dozens of warships and fire-boats" (Ghosh, *Flood* 541). Captain Elliot met Qishan, the Governor General, to cede Hong Kong to the British along with an indemnity of six million Spanish dollars. Hong Kong was seized, and Commodore Bremer erected Union Jack taking possession of the island (Ghosh, *Flood* 487). When the island was auctioned off, many of the merchants who got indemnity were in a hurry to buy the choicest plots. The Bombay Seths headed by Dinyar Ferdoonjee accompanied by Shireen too reached there at the right time. Shireen utilised the money that she received as indemnity to clear Bahram's debt in Bombay, and gave a large amount of money to

her daughters. She resolved to buy land on the slopes of the "Peaceful Mountain" with a plan to endow a hospital in the name of Bahram. Shireen broke the cocoon of silence, and emerged as a liberated and more empowered woman who found a space and identity for herself.

The largest portion of the plot was reserved for Zachary, Burnham, and Leonard Chan, and together they made the biggest bid for the firm of Burnham & Reid. Zachary escalated from his earlier status to that of a successful businessman. His dream of becoming a self-made man got fulfilled as he was able to enter into the hitherto forbidden arenas of business and success.

Neel, an ex-convict and a fugitive from British justice, collaborated with the Chinese officials, and accepted a job in the Bureau of translation. His duty was to gather knowledge about the British East India Company's opium production in India. The proficiency of Neel in different languages, including Cantonese helped him in this new job. The English journals published in Canton had many Indian words unfamiliar to Compton, and Neel was able to help him a lot in translating such words, which inspired Zhong Lou-Si to seek his help. When asked about the loyalty of the people of Bengal towards the British colonizers, Neel said that they had a mixed response; many of them were unhappy with foreign rule, and at the same time, many people became rich by helping the British. Many others were happy to have them as they had brought peace and security. At this time, Neel's own life flashed past through him, and he wondered, "to whom do I owe my loyalties?"

> Certainly not to the zamindars of Bengal, none of whom raised a finger for me when I was carted off to jail. Nor the caste of my birth, which now sees

> me as a pariah, fallen and defiled. To my father then, whose profligacy ensured my ruin? Or perhaps to the British, who if they knew that I was still alive will hunt me down to the ends of the Earth? (Ghosh, *Flood* 84)

If he accepted the job, he should cut off all his connections with India and foreigners. He should commit his loyalties to a vast plurality of people of a country with which he had few connections. The job offer came at an opportune moment when he should remain in a hide-out away from the ever-watchful eyes of the British. He resolved to make use of the great trove of information about many things that he acquired to be useful to Compton and Zhong Lou-Si. He wrote down in his journal all the events prior to and after the Opium War. His job demanded that he should keep abreast of the latest developments in the opium trade, and collect as much news as possible.

Neel reconfigures himself towards the later part of the *Ibis* trilogy, and becomes an important storehouse of knowledge; Ghosh gives details about the real-life character Neel in the epilogue. Neel forms a deep bond with Compton; he feels a kind of solace and comfort as he has reached Canton escaping the presence of the British, and develops affiliation towards the Chinese who have fought for their land and rights. Ghosh attempts to create an intercultural bond and relation here. The power politics of the British, and how they exploit the whole world during the period of empire expansion are underscored here. Neel's archives, his notes, jottings, books, pictures, and documents that he has actually accumulated from China during his period of stay there function as great sources of information for Ghosh while compiling and connecting different episodes in the trilogy. Neel gives a

graphic description of the British attack on the Chinese force, and the role of Indian sepoys in their war against China. Neel is picturized as a man of fluctuating loyalties because, by profession, he shall show allegiance to China, but by instinct, he is with the Indians. The long and committed service that he has rendered to the Chinese officials, and the prominent role that he has played in the administrative setup of China helps him to establish his identity in an alien land.

Ghosh fictionalizes history while using the First Opium War as the backdrop of his narration, and portrays a microcosm of the world through the trilogy. The war has brought about a major transition in the Chinese trade relations with the west, opening up the Empire to foreign markets through free trade. The opium trade has been widely considered as a criminal offence because of its adverse impact upon the lives of millions of Chinese people. The canvas of the *Ibis* trilogy abounds with characters who exemplify hybridity and an in-betweenness engendered by migration and settlement. The people who live on the periphery, who have been discriminated and exploited by the mainstream society, try to find a space of their own. Migration and the resultant changes in society, and its impact upon the lives of people are highlighted in the trilogy. Margins have become places of resistance, and many of them succeed in creating an identity. The changes visible in the characters underscore the fluidity of culture and identity. Subaltern resistance, female empowerment, the rise of capitalism, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, fluidity of borders and boundaries, nation and nationhood, and universal brotherhood are encapsulated in the *Ibis* trilogy, an outstanding masterpiece of Amitav Ghosh.

Chapter III

Borders and Borderlanders in *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

"A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (Anzaldua 3). Borders are used to demarcate the territory of one nation-state from that of the other. Most often, rivers, forests, mountain ranges, sea etc., are used as boundaries. These natural boundaries play a significant role in developing a community feeling in the people who reside inside them. Border crossings and migrations form an integral part of human civilizations. Various ways of mixing and merging of cultures, languages, and races result in the development of populations in new permutations and combinations. Discussions on borders are very important in the current scenario, where prejudices and animosities are perpetrated across the world in the name of nationalism, religion, caste, ethnicity, race, and language. The impact of globalization, the concept of the global village, and the revolutionary transformations in technology and transportation facilities have intensified the urge to move on to distant lands in search of better living conditions and job prospects. Border crossings are also made to escape the insecurity and poverty that people experience in their native land. These migrants strive to create a space of their own in the host land, which leads to the emergence of new spaces of interaction and connectivity. They strive to establish their position in the new land. However, these attempts are not always successful; at

times, the host land becomes hostile to the new entrants, making them incapable of asserting their identity.

The patterns of migration have undergone tremendous changes over the years. People develop new patterns of border crossings; they move from one country to another or from one state to another as voluntary migrants, forced migrants or as tourists. When the migrants settle down, the host country as well as the parent country experiences different economic, cultural, political, and social changes. In this process, the rigid concepts of nation and nation-states are redefined. The hybrid individuals who are products of globalization develop hybridised identities by adhering to the cultures of both the host land and the native land. However, such individuals also experience a kind of rejection, non-belongingness, and alienation leading to an identity crisis. Renato Rosaldo opines that border cultures challenge unitary one-state-one-territory/one-society-one culture conceptualizations, predominant until recently (Wilson and Hastings 48). Border culture is an amalgamation of different cultures and ways of life. An exclusive religious, cultural, sexual, or gender identity is quite rare in the borderlands. Researchers, academicians, theoreticians, and social scientists are involved in the process of examining the pros and cons of cross-border migrations, and its impact upon socio-cultural life of people and their identity. The significance of borders that simultaneously divide and connect people has increased tremendously during recent years.

> Borders are . . . complex spatial and social phenomena which are not static or invariable but which must be understood as highly dynamic; this is similar to

> the field of border studies itself, which has undergone major transformations during the past century and has been experiencing a flourishing renaissance over the course of past fifteen years. (Wastl-Walter 1)

Globalization and the free flow of goods and services across the world have made borders porous resulting in the emergence of a borderless world. But the empirical reality reveals that territorial borders are getting sharply defined, and the borders of nations have become more and more impermeable. As Doris Wastl-Walter observes,

> In the post 9/11 era, borders have been re-erected or reinforced in many places. Hence, the current world-wide political situation which is distinguished by the prevalence of fear of terrorism and security concerns can be interpreted as a sign for a *'reterritorialization'* rather than *'deterritorialization'* of the world. (2)

Border theoreticians like Anssi Paasi and David Newman have contributed immensely to border studies and underscore the need for a theory in border studies. Paasi has examined the current status of border studies, and has noted that border studies is becoming more diverse, more integrated, and more international. Newman opines:

> Borders are lines. They constitute the sharp point at which categories, spaces and territories interface. . . . It is an area within which people residing in the same territorial or cultural space may feel a sense of belonging to either one of the two sides, to each of the two sides, or even to a form of hybrid space in which they adopt parts of each culture and/or speak both languages. (Wastl-Walter 37)

Borderland is spread over both sides of the border. Newman observes that borderlands can become zones of transition in regions of stability and cross-border cooperation, resulting in cross-border hybridity (Wastl-Walter 38). Many border theorists like Anzaldua and Nestor Garcia Canclini focus on border cultural hybridity, where an inter-weaving of different socio-cultural practices becomes apparent. Anzaldua, a renowned border theorist, through her theory of *mestiza* consciousness, envisages a space, visibility, and voice for the hitherto invisible and voiceless borderlanders. She makes a persistent effort to accept and include the subordinated people into the dominant cultural framework. Canclini observes how studies of hybridisation have altered the manner of speaking about identity, culture, difference, inequality, and multiculturalism. He defines hybridization as a "socio-cultural process in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices" (Chiappari and Silvia xxv). Border culture thus becomes an amalgam of different cultural practices and ways of life. Hybridity is a predominant feature of the borderlands. The residents of borderlands cannot claim a singular, homogenous, or unique culture. According to Martin Heidegger, "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greek recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*" (qtd. in Bhabha, *Location* 1). In the boundary regions, new border cultures emerge due to socio-cultural and racial intermixing. As Rosaldo observes, "border zones are always in motion, not frozen for inspection" (217). He agrees with El Louie and Anzaldua who look upon borderlands "as complex sites of cultural production than as representative of a self-contained, homogenous culture" (217).

Theoreticians of different disciplines approach the border in different ways. Economists stress the importance of transforming border regions from barriers into active spaces, while anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists give importance to "the cultural and social boundaries affecting communities and identities of border citizens" (Wastl-Walter 17). Political scientists regard "boundaries as lines separating and stabilising the system of states as sovereign power containers" (Wastl-Walter 17). Key words like identity, inclusion/exclusion, and inside/outside have gained momentum among the border scholars (Wastl-Walter 17). Paasi observes that "borders are a very complex set of social institutions that exist on and through various spatial scales and are related to a number of social practices and discourses in which they are produced and made meaningful" (Wastl-Walter 28). In Newman's view, borders are social and political constructions. They are created as a means of separation, a barrier between two sides, a perceived defence from foreign invasion and migrants, and to keep out people who are undesirable or detrimental to the home territory (Wastl-Walter 35). The processes of exclusion and inclusion take place in these borders. Borders are created and maintained by the people in power who construct reality in their favour, thereby eliminating and excluding a certain group of people. The powerless lacks representation in these constructions of the powerful. They are excluded, marginalized and made invisible. "The contemporary study of borders focuses on the process of bordering, through which territories and peoples are respectively included or excluded within a hierarchical network of groups, affiliations and identities" (qtd. in Newman 13). Border functions as a protective wall for those who reside in the borderlands. Newman opines that "cultural borders offer protection against infiltration of values which are not

compatible with the hegemonic practices of the majority, be they social and economic status, religious affiliation and/or residential homogeneity" (Newman 14).

The increasing significance that border has achieved in the contemporary era has inspired many researchers to make in-depth studies of the concept. The concepts taken from the traditional study of boundaries are redefined, providing them with new meaning-such as the historic evolution of borders, notions of borderlands and frontiers, as well as the complex processes determining the demarcation and delineation of borders (Newman 17).

Borders promote hybridity, and in the borderlands, adaptation, and assimilations take place. The borderlanders and the migrants go through various experiences that alter themselves as well as society. Borderlands are often places where multiple cultures interact. "Doors and bridges can be as apt a metaphor for borders as are walls and barriers, but neither should it be forgotten that while walls can be knocked down as quickly as they are constructed, so too doors can be slammed shut as easily as they are opened" (Newman 19). Borders shift and change in the course of time. However, they do not disappear completely. In a border culture, coexistence is the only key to a peaceful existence. In such borderlands, interaction, and cooperation will be facilitated, enabling differences to be valued rather than feared (Newman 23). Even as serious discussions are underway on the multiple nuances of the concept of border, proper consideration has not been given to the plight of the people who reside in the borderlands. Efforts are made to trace the origin of border, and to redefine it to suit the changing scenario. Borders are appropriated by those who wield power, but the struggles and sufferings of the

powerless, the way they are trifled and side-lined, their lack of space, language, visibility, and identity in their homeland are neither properly addressed nor documented. It is in this context that the theoretical contributions made by Anzaldua, who describes herself as "a *mestiza* multiculturalist teacher and writer, informed by her identity as a Chicana Tejana[42] dyke[43] from a working-class background" (Keating 204), become relevant.

In her seminal work, *Borderlands,* Anzaldua talks about borderlands and the sense of alienation experienced by the people who inhabit such in-between spaces. Her lived experience in the borderland, and the struggle for survival of the borderlanders are vividly articulated in this pathbreaking work. She explores how her race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and language have shaped her identity as a borderlander. Growing up in such a milieu, with multiplicity of subject positions, Anzaldua becomes instrumental in fighting against injustice and oppression prevalent in the borderlands. As a multi-identity Chicana feminist writer, Anzaldua challenges all norms in her life, especially aspects related to religion, culture, homosexuality, and femininity. She makes use of her writing as a platform to inform the readers that a well-grounded foundation in different cultures will help to formulate a new identity with the best from all cultures. She discusses several critical issues related to Chicana experiences, the oppression of Chicana lesbians and vehemently criticizes the patriarchal system of society.

[42]Native Texans of Mexican descent (Anzaldua 6).
[43] A slang used to refer to a lesbian (Dyke).

Chicana feminists challenge the colonial/patriarchal power structure and attempt to overcome it. The activism of Chicana feminists became more prominent during the 1980s and 90s. The intellectuals and academicians united to establish a space for them by raising their voice against oppression. Teresa Córdova, in her article, "Anti-Colonial Chicana Feminism," gives a vivid picture of the Chicana feminist writings and activism. She explains how they deconstruct and reconfigure their self in an attempt to recover from the "memory of molestation," (Córdova 379) and to escape from the oppression and exploitation done by colonizers and patriarchy. "Chicanas wrote about the issues affecting their working-class communities: employment issues, labour struggles, education, child care, prisoner rights, sterilization, legal rights, health, welfare rights, birth control, images of women, and sex roles" (Córdova 381). The Chicanas break their silence to give a truthful depiction of Chicana life, and to establish the legitimacy and existence of Chicana feminism, which is quite distinct from white feminism. They have started writing about the social issues that have prevailed among them, and assert that Chicanas are not inherently passive. Their history is rooted in a legacy of struggle, and they reject the traditional stereotypical images given to them. They attempt to redefine and establish them as subjects through their writings (Córdova 381). Chicana writers give expression to the painful and agonising experiences by means of vivid imagery and metaphor drawn from their own life experiences in a deceptively simple vocabulary, interspersing it with various Chicana dialects. Patriarchal oppression and abuse and exploitation by the whites are often the common themes of their writings. As Córdova notes, "Resurrecting ancestral memory, connecting to indigenous roots, retrieving legend and oral tradition,

returning to spirituality, and controlling self-representation are mechanisms by which Chicana writers recover and resist" (Córdova 385).

Anzaldua, a leading Chicana feminist, endeavours to uplift the life of the borderlanders through her writings, and engages in redefining their myths, images, and symbols. She articulates how the original myths and beliefs are manipulated by the colonial/patriarchal society in line with their ideology. Through her writings, Anzaldua has expressed her concerns relating to the life of the Chicanos. Her acclaimed autohistoria-teoria, *Borderlands*, is an iconoclastic work in border studies. As Sonia Saldivar Hull notes, *Borderlands* is a "transfrontera, trans disciplinary text" that has travelled between many disciplines (Keating 9). She rewrites the hegemonic western literary canon of autobiographical writings by mixing different genres like poetry, story-telling, anecdotes, history, myth, and self-reflection along with her personal biography. In this process, the text itself becomes a Third Space, a form of writing that she has improvised as a strategy to move away from the hegemonic discourses. In this altogether new genre, she gives outlet to her true feelings and emotions, the tormenting experiences that she has gone through in her life as a borderlander, as a lesbian, and as a coloured person. The stories incorporated in this work are factual reports of the atrocities done by the whites to her race and culture, and the havoc they have done to nature, its fauna, and flora. Her self-reflection forms an important part of this work in which she gives vent to the feeling of insecurity that she has experienced at home, in her culture, and also at various academic locations. An amalgamation of history and myth makes this life-story unique. The poetry section interwoven into this genre gives a graphic and

picturesque description of the life of the borderlanders, and delineates how they have been perpetually tortured and exploited by the whites. The unpleasant experiences in the life of the borderlanders are recaptured through vivid imagery and figures of speech in this section. Anzaldua's interventions into the production of a new genre of writing named autohistoria-teoria, and her propagation of the theory of *mestiza* consciousness through this genre are instrumental in establishing an identity and space for the borderlanders. It is in this context that the text, *Borderlands*, assumes greater significance in the domain of border studies. Her power to transform marginal spaces into spaces of resistance becomes evident through her writings.

Anzaldua confesses her intention behind writing *Borderlands*; she wants to produce knowledge about the borderlanders and the marginalized community. She expresses how they are denied a space and identity in society and academia. University education, learning platforms, and publishing houses have been the monopoly of whites. "They produce the unconscious values, views, and assumptions about reality, about culture, about everything" (Keating 188). The coloured people internalise and assimilate these theories. The process of monopolising the academic world by the whites in the universities has met with mass resistance from the Chicana feminists. Córdova notes that, "[d]uring the 1970s and mid-1980s, a critical mass of working-class Chicanas filtered through the walls of the ivory towers of American universities" (380). Their aim was to escape from racism and patriarchal domination prevalent in the universities, and to inscribe a space for themselves and

their community. This was a common trend noticeable among the Chicanas who wanted to revolutionize and redefine academia and educational institutions.

Anzaldua, as a campesina[44]-working class lesbian belonging to a racial minority, had to overcome many hurdles while producing theories about her community. She practises shamanism[45] in a new way. She picturises herself as a poet who tries "to preserve and create cultural or group identity by mediating between the cultural heritage of the past and the present everyday situations people find themselves in" (Keating 121). Shamanism practised by Anzaldua is labelled by Keating as "shaman aesthetics," which exemplifies the transformative power of writing. Like the shaman, a writer can transmit information from her/his consciousness to the physical body of another (Keating 8). She wants to write in a *mestiza* style in her own vernacular language, and at the same time use knowledge and histories of whites as well as ethnic cultures. She observes, "I wanted to be able to deal with certain theories, to be able to philosophise" (Keating 189). Anzaldua no longer wants to internalize and assimilate the theories offered by the white elites in the academia. She wants to produce theories that will produce knowledge about the working-class people of colour, racial and ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities so as to document their history and culture. She wants to shake the complacency of the academic elites by code-switching in language as well as genre. By opting to intersperse Chicano-Spanish in her writings, she tries to make her readers uncomfortable and angry for their inability to decipher what she conveys. She says, "Not only do I code-switch in language, but I jerk the reader around by also code-

[44] A peasant or farmer.
[45]Shamanism comes from the Sanskrit word *saman* which means song (Keating 121).

switching in genre: mixing genres, crossing genres from poetry to essay to narrative to a little bit of analysis and theory" (Keating 190). This is her method of resistance from the periphery, questioning the very structure of language and method of writing. She attempts to oppose the persecution she and her group have encountered in the academia and in their life. This is a paradigmatic shift in theorizing difference. *Borderlands* defies easy classification.

> Anzaldua herself describes this text as "autohistoria-teoria," a term she coined to describe women-of-colour interventions into and transformations of traditional western autobiographical forms. Autohistoria-teoria includes both life-story and self-reflection on this story. Writers of autohistoria-teoria blend their cultural and personal biographies with memoir, history, story-telling, myth, and other forms of theorising. By so doing, they create interwoven individual and collective identities. (Keating 9)

The racial discrimination, isolation, and marginalization that Anzaldua has undergone in the educational institutions reveal that *mestizas* have no right to choose their area of interest in their dissertations; they cannot research on Chicano literature, Spanish literature, or feminist theory. In her attempt to incorporate the literature of the coloured in the academia, Anzaldua, a *mestiza* insists that she wants to study non-English and non-Euro-American literatures. Anzaldua asserts:

> we want more work by women of colour on the reading lists. We are bookworms gnawing holes in the canon; we are termites undermining the canonical curriculum's foundations. . . . We struggle to make room for

> ourselves, to change the academy so that it does not invalidate, stamp out or crush our connections to the communities we come from. (Keating 208)

Her refusal to be hushed and her efforts to make the voices of those in the margins heard are exemplified here. Anzaldua expresses the hardships that she as well as other borderlanders has suffered on the borders due to racial, cultural, social, linguistic, and gender discrimination. She talks about how they develop a border culture in order to survive and exist. Through her representation of the plight of the borderlanders in the U.S.-Mexican border, she throws light on the life of the borderlanders all over the world, thus making it a universal subject. Through resistance and revolt from the margins, they reclaim and re-establish their domain and develop for themselves a Third Space, a space with the potential to transform the world order.

The marginalization and alienation experienced by Anzaldua, and her resistance from the margins closely align with the trajectory of the life of hooks, an African American woman of colour and a postcolonial intellectual and theoretician. hooks talks about her marginal position in the world; she says, "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (Harding 156). The anecdote that she provides in "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" gives us a vivid picture of her lived experience, and how people belonging to her community have been treated as unequal.

> The railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. . . . Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world

> but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin. . . . Not to return was to risk being punished. (hooks 149)

The experiences shared by Anzaldua and hooks are similar, and underscore the marginal position of people like them in society. Both of them consider this marginal position as a place of resistance. They subvert the notions associated with marginality, and reconstruct it as a storehouse imbued with sparks that are capable of igniting the flame. This understanding or realisation of the impending power of the margin as a place of resistance is crucial for the oppressed and the exploited.

Anzaldua considers herself a border woman who has grown up between the Mexican and the Anglo culture. This place of contradictions is not a comfortable territory, as hatred, anger, and exploitation are predominant here. Anzaldua, in her Preface to *Borderlands* comments about the difficulty in dwelling in the borderlands. Life in this ambivalent space is beset with dangers, but Anzaldua amasses strength and courage to fight against the odds in life, and resolves to configure an identity for herself as well as for the borderland community through her discursive practices. She labels the rebel in her "Shadow Beast" (Anzaldua 16). In her attempt to represent the unrepresented, she becomes an iconoclast, and brings about a paradigm shift in the cultural matrix of the Chicanos.

As a working-class woman of colour and a lesbian, Anzaldua cannot feel completely at home in her own family, community, or society. This sense of non-belongingness that she experiences propels her to create a home of her own through writing. She gathers the strength to leave her parents and home to discover her own true self, buried under age-old impositions. She recollects that she is the first in six

generations to leave the valley, and the only one in the family to leave her home. Her innate quality enables her to realise who she is, and to mobilize her soul according to her own thoughts. When she walks away, she has taken with her the land and the valley, and has not lost touch with her origins. She comments, "I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back" (Anzaldua 21). The emotions that go through her mind while leaving home can be compared with the feelings of Deeti, in the *Ibis* trilogy, when she bids farewell to her homeland as a *girmit*. Deeti holds on to the pleasant memories of home through her engravings. She selectively recreates her past, and attempts to erase the agonising memories. However, Anzaldua is not ready to glorify the aspects of her culture which have injured her in the name of protecting her. She does not want to remain in her home, where she is considered an alien due to her colour and sexuality. In order to claim a space for herself, she makes "a new culture-*una cultura mestiza*[46]" with her own lumber, bricks, and mortar, and her own feminist architecture (Anzaldua 22). Her intense longing to overcome the challenging situations in life helps her to carve a niche for herself and her community, and to establish herself as an acclaimed borderland theorist.

Borderlands was received warmly by the Chicanos, but they were disturbed about the code-switching as they realised that they did not have a language of their own to express themselves. It was critically appreciated by the academia also. However, the white theorists who wrote about gender made brief references to race and class, and mentioned Anzaldua's name only as an aside. They never integrated

[46] It is a Spanish term which means a mixed culture (Anzaldua 77).

her theories into their writing. Instead, they insisted that Anzaldua got these theories from Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, or the French Feminists. Anzaldua confessed that she was not familiar with those theorists when she wrote *Borderlands,* and she had not read them. They said, "She got it from these white folks and didn't even cite them" (Keating 192). Anzaldua had to face such humiliating remarks throughout her life. The whites always looked down upon the non-whites as inferiors.

The racial identity of the borderlanders is a mixed one due to the continual inter-racial marriages. The Mexicans have been removed from their core race and core culture. Anzaldua challenges the theory of the pure Aryan race and the racial purity that white Americans practice (Anzaldua 77). In her attempt to give an identity to the hitherto unacknowledged people of the mixed race residing in the borderlands, Anzaldua formulates a new theory, a new *mestiza* consciousness in which two or more genetic streams cross over, resulting in a mixture of races. She draws inspiration from Jose Vascocelos, a Mexican philosopher who envisages *una raza mestiza*[47], which he labels as a cosmic race. This cosmic race, *la raza cosmica*[48] is a fifth race that embraces the four major races of the world (Anzaldua 77). This theory is one of inclusivity in which no race is inferior to the dominant races. It is a mixture of cultures. "From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the making-a new *mestiza* consciousness. . . . It is a consciousness of the Borderlands" (Anzaldua 77).

[47] A Spanish term used to refer to a mixed race (Anzaldua 77).
[48] A Spanish term used to refer to a cosmic race (Anzaldua 77).

The borderland is an ambivalent space that becomes a platform for the construction of new cultural systems. Bhabha notes that wherever people belonging to different races and cultures co-exist, there is a possibility for the formation of hybrid identities. It is in this "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable" (Bhabha, *Location* 55). Hierarchical norms and rules are disrupted in this space. The experience of *mestiza* is ambivalent in this in-between space where she goes through a feeling of insecurity, psychic restlessness, and mental nepantilism. *Nepantla* is the Nahuatl word for an in-between state, that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another when changing from one class, race, or sexual position to another, when travelling from the present identity into a new identity (Keating 180). *La mestiza* goes through a dilemma for being a multilingual, multicultural person of mixed breed. In her essay "The New *Mestiza* Nation: A Multicultural Movement" Anzaldua elaborates on the concept of *mestiza*, "The new *mestiza* is a liminal subject who lives in borderlands between cultures, races, languages and genders. In this state of in-betweenness, the *mestiza* can mediate, translate, negotiate, and navigate these different locations" (Keating 209). By developing this concept, Anzaldua tries to build up a new world order unlike the old one. In this new order, there are numerous possibilities and space for everyone hitherto unacknowledged or marginalized to live a liberated life.

She describes the theory of the "new *mestiza*" as an innovative expansion of previous biologically based definitions of *mestizaje*[49]. The mestizos are people of

[49] *Mestizaje* is a Latin American term referring to racial mixture (Mestizaje).

mixed Indian and Spanish blood. For Anzaldua, "new *mestizas*" are people who inhabit multiple worlds because of their gender, sexuality, colour, class, bodies, personality, spiritual beliefs and/or other life experiences. This theory offers a new concept of personhood that synergistically combines apparently contradictory Euro-American and indigenous traditions (Keating 10).

On the borderlands when two or more cultures come together, a cultural collision takes place. When indigenous cultural practices and beliefs are attacked by the whites, the Mexicans take it as an attack on themselves, and Anzaldua attempts to block them with a counterattack (Anzaldua 78). Her intention is to free her people from the bondage of the oppressors and cultural hegemony. In this new consciousness, Anzaldua emphasises the need to dissolve the strict binary divisions, and the necessity to embrace flexibility and inclusivity. To her, "Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically" (Anzaldua 79). *Mestiza* moves away from "set patterns and goals towards a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldua 79). The new *mestiza* develops a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity. "She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality; she operates in a pluralistic mode. Nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned" (Anzaldua 79). At the focal point where the *mestiza* stands, a possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. It is not a mere coming together of severed pieces or a balancing of opposing powers.

> In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new

> consciousness-a *mestiza* consciousness-and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (Anzaldua 79-80)

The vantage point where the *mestiza* stands, redefining the age-old convictions and beliefs, is the Third Space, the in-between space which opens up endless possibilities for resistance to transform the world. This space Anzaldua hopes could "bring us to the end of rape, of violence and of war" (Anzaldua 80). *Mestiza* consciousness is a state of mind much needed in this era in order to unlearn the traditional practices of victimisation and marginalisation, and learn new methodologies for resistance to establish new spaces of liberation, and to inscribe new meanings of self. The cosmopolitan and all-embracing quality of *mestiza* is revealed when Anzaldua says, "I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover" (Anzaldua 80). She is involved in the creation of a culture with its own value systems, images, myths, and symbols that connect the borderlanders to each other.

The power of *mestiza* to survive challenges is unraveled when Anzaldua says, "like an ear of corn, a female seed-bearing organ-the *mestiza* is tenacious and tightly wrapped in the husks of her culture. Like kernels she clings to the cob; with thick stalks and strong brace roots, she holds tight to the Earth-she will survive the crossroads" (Anzaldua 81). Anzaldua brings in the imagery of corn to highlight how *mestiza* is designed for preservation under a variety of conditions, and is capable of withstanding odds in life with a firm determination. She breaks away from all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions. She "winnows out the lies from

history" (Anzaldua 82) and re-interprets it using new symbols and myths. She, who has remained as an insignificant person, who has been oppressed and exploited by her own culture, patriarchy, and colonialism, determines to break the shackles of bondage, and come out of the cocoon to claim a space and identity for herself and her community.

Anzaldua describes borderlands as potentially transformational spaces where opposites converge. According to Soja, Anzaldua's borderland is a space of radical openness, a Thirdspace filled with the perils and possibilities that infiltrate the chosen marginality of hooks (Soja, *Thirdspace* 127). Anzaldua's theory reminds us of Jorge Luis Borges's short story titled "Aleph", which is a point in space that contains all other points, "the one spot on earth which contains all other places within it. All people in it, whether natives or immigrants, colored or white, queers or heterosexuals, from this side of the border . . . or local people-all of whom relate to the border and to the nepantla states in different ways" (Keating 180). A period of transition occurs at the liminal stages of one's life, especially in the lives of the people residing in the borderlands. Yarbro-Bejarano observes,

> Anzaldua enacts this consciousness in borderlands as a constantly shifting process or activity of breaking down binary dualisms and creating the third space, the in-between, border or interstice that allows contradictions to co-exist in the production of the new element (*mestizaje* or hybridity). (11)

Anzaldua talks not just about the visible, physical, or geographical borders but the invisible psychological, spiritual, cultural, sexual, and linguistic borders that exist between the binaries like man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, and

white/non-white. The actual physical borderland that Anzaldua deals with in *Borderlands* is the Texas-U.S.-Southwest/Mexican border. The border has emerged out of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848 at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War (Anzaldua 7). However, this treaty was never honored, and the disputes continued.

Anzaldua picturises herself as a Mexican immigrant standing on the threshold "where earth touches the ocean / where the two overlap / a gentle coming together / at other times and places a violent clash" (Anzaldua 1). The constant surging of the waves into the barbed wire fence which has been built across the border has gashed a hole under the fence, and the immigrant, waiting for a chance to cross the border and enter the U.S., walks through the hole to the other side. She describes the 1950-mile-long fence along the border, dividing a culture, as an open wound that runs through the length of her body, staking fence rods in her flesh (Anzaldua 2-3). She identifies this thin edge of barbed wire as her home. Her hatred towards white intruders who has erected barbed wire-fence across their land, depriving the Mexicans of their homeland, becomes evident through her words, "But the skin of the earth is seamless / The sea cannot be fenced," (Anzaldua 3) and it can be blown down at any time. She asserts, "This land was Mexican once, / was Indian always / and is. / And will be again" (Anzaldua 3). Her adamant refusal to cede their land to whites is underscored at the outset of her autohisoria-teoria. In such borderlands, a border culture that eclectically absorbs the cultural traits of people residing on both sides of the border is developed. An exclusive culture of difference emerges in this hybrid site which becomes a liberated space where people can

enunciate and evolve their own culture. Border culture is no longer an independent entity but a conglomeration of many cultures. Rosaldo, a border theorist, agrees with Anzaldua, and opines that borderlands are places of freedom and innovation. According to him, "creative processes of transculturation centre themselves along literal and figurative borders where the 'person' is crisscrossed by multiple identities" (Vila 608).

In this globalized era, the mixing of cultures pervades the spaces where people migrate and hybridize. Anzaldua talks about her own migration when the time has come for her to go for higher studies. The academic world has revealed white supremacy and elitism by promoting racism and homophobia. They silence the dissenting voices of the non-whites and the working-class people. *Mestiza* feminists like herself seek to transform pedagogic institutional practices, so that they can represent ethnic people and protect students of colour, gays, and lesbians against racist and heterosexist violence. They want their histories, knowledge, and perspectives to be accepted and validated in schools and universities and challenge existing power hierarchies. They attempt to counter the imperialist agenda which tries to side-line the oral and written literature of the Chicanos through resistance. "Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world in the culture it carries" (Thiong'o 15). Anzaldua opines that the education system of the *mestiza* nation shall aim at deconstructing Euro-Anglo ways of knowing, and create texts that reflect the needs of the world community of women and people of colour, and show how lived experience is connected to political struggle and art making (Keating 205).

The role of language in moulding one's identity is crucial; apart from functioning as a medium of communication, it reflects the culture as well as the social position of the speaker. It is through language that one expresses oneself and gets connected with others. Thiong'o opines that, "The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe" (4). Anzaldua struggles to claim a linguistic space for the Chicanos, and validate their language and history through her writings. She wants to carry knowledge about the borderlanders and their life to the world. The borderlanders speak a variety of languages; however, unlike the well-established languages of the whites, most of the languages spoken by them are infant languages. They preserve their history and culture in this language. "Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history" (Thiong'o 15). A hierarchy is developed among the people according to one's usage of a particular language, and the speakers of the less-privileged languages are side-lined. Anzaldua as a borderlander, has gone through linguistic marginalization right from her school days. She recollects how she was punished for speaking Spanish in school, where the students were told their language was wrong. This derogatory way of looking upon their native language diminishes their sense of self. Anzaldua switches on to different languages in her writings in order to recreate the actual perplexity experienced by the borderlanders, and to create frustration among the readers. In *Borderlands,* Anzaldua comments about the code-switching she engages in, "from English to Castillian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl and to a mixture of all these" (Preface). This is the language of

the borderlands. To communicate among themselves, the Chicanos use Chicano Spanish with its own regional variations, which is considered a "bastard language" (Preface). Those who speak these languages are considered inferior by the dominant group. Ethnic identity and linguistic identity are closely related, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity" (Anzaldua 59). The individuality and identity of a person are defined by the language he/she speaks.

> Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature; the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. . . . Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (Thiong'o 16)

The new *mestiza* overturns white supremacy in the academia as it breaks down the markers and theories that are used to control them. Anzaldua observes, "pen is the sword that renders us war prisoners in intellectual mind factories. But we are learning to wield the pen" (Keating 205). They are trying to make their voices heard through self-representation in higher education. The imperialists want to keep higher education a Euro-Anglo institution, and impose hegemonic theories on the people of colour. *Mestizas* are forced to internalize these theories and concepts that control them. The deviants are considered as infiltrators who bring new ideas with them, and subvert the theories and language framework established by the hegemonic group. A great struggle is required on the part of the working-class and

coloured people to prevent themselves from being indoctrinated in the academia, and to overcome the class barriers, and to make their voices heard.

Just as the role of language and education is pivotal in moulding one's identity, culture too plays a significant role in framing the beliefs of an individual as well as that of the community. Certain dominant ideologies of culture engendered by patriarchy which remain unchallenged for years, are transferred from generation to generation. Most often, the norms and rules are created by men, and this is transmitted through men and women. It reflects the ideologies and perspectives of those in power, and expects a subordinate acceptance of this ideology by those who are excluded from the circle of power, especially women. Anzaldua opines,

> The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males. If a woman rebels, she is a *mujer mala*[50]. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favour of the male, she is selfish. (Anzaldua 17)

Women are deprived of the opportunity to assert their self. They shall obey the rules made by men. Society looks upon women as good if she remains a virgin till her marriage. She also has the choice of becoming a nun, a prostitute or a wife. Women rarely choose the option to be educated and autonomous (Anzaldua 17). Patriarchy impresses upon women that they dictate rules only to safeguard women,

[50] A derogatory term for a woman who rebels (Anzaldua 17).

though the opposite happens. The sexual deviants are condemned by society, and they find ways to get rid of such deviants. Anzaldua says,

> most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals and others who deviate from the sexual common. The queer are the mirror reflecting the homosexual tribe's fear; being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub human, in-human and non-human. (Anzaldua 18).

Anzaldua talks about a *muchacha*,

> for six months she was a woman who had a vagina that bled once a month, and that for the other six months she was a man, had a penis. . . . They called her half and half . . . neither one nor the other but a strange doubling, a deviation of nature that horrified, a work of nature inverted. (Anzaldua 19)

Anzaldua gives an account of homophobia and accepts the meaning given to it as "Fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*[51], for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged" (Anzaldua 20). Most of them do not reveal their sexuality and remain hidden throughout their lives. Anzaldua hates such self-imposed constraints and swims against the current to establish her identity and selfhood. Books are her only means to move to a better world, a world of knowledge; and this propels her to fight against all kinds of injustice done towards her as well as her community.

[51] The race.

In her discussions on the religious practices followed by the Chicanos, Anzaldua talks about *Coatlalopeuh*[52]."*Coatlalopeuh* is descended from . . . earlier Mesoamerican fertility and Earth goddesses. The earliest is *coatlicue*, or 'Serpent Skirt.' She had a human skull or serpent for a head, a necklace of human hearts, a skirt of twisted serpents and taloned feet" (Anzaldua 27). *Coatlicue* is one of the powerful images Anzaldua uses to represent the underground aspects of her psyche. "It is a symbol of the fusion of the opposites: eagle and serpent, heaven and underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and horror" (Anzaldua 47). She describes the *Coatlicue* state as having "duality in life, a synthesis of duality, and a third perspective-something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality" (Anzaldua 46). The early Aztec society was matrilineal, and women possessed property and supreme power; the royal blood ran through the female line (Anzaldua 33). However, the male-dominated Azteca-Mexica culture drove the powerful female deities underground by giving them monstrous attributes and by substituting male deities in their places in the same way as Indian *Kali*[53] was disempowered (Anzaldua 27). *La Virgen de Guadalupe's*[54] Indian name is *Coatlalopeuh.* She is the central deity connecting the Chicanos to their Indian ancestry and their powerful religious, political, and cultural image. Anzaldua observes:

> She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered.

---

[52] *Coatl* is the Nahuatl word for serpent. *Lopeuh* means the one who has dominion over serpents (Anzaldua 29).
[53] A Hindu goddess bestowed with great power to destroy the evil and protect the innocent (Das).
[54] Most potent religious, political and cultural image of the Chicanos (Anzaldua 30).

> She is the symbol of the *mestizo* true to his or her Indian values. . . . *Guadalupe* unites people of different races, religions, languages. . . . *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is the symbol of ethnic identity and of the tolerance for ambiguity that Chicanos-*mexicanos*, people of mixed race, people who have Indian blood, people who cross cultures, by necessity possess. (Anzaldua 30)

The new *mestiza* consciousness propounded by Anzaldua has many things in common with *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. The Roman Catholics enshrines *Guadalupe*, and makes her synonymous with *La Virgen Maria*;[55] (Anzaldua 29) thus depriving her of the serpent/sexuality aspect in her personality. The Western world rejects paganism, and looks upon its followers as superstitious. Anzaldua detests the methods of the prominent religions like Catholicism and Protestantism which develops a sense of fear within its devotees. Like the members of her family, she deviates from the norms of Roman Catholicism by accepting a folk Catholicism with pagan elements.

Poetry, which forms the second section of Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, provides penetrating insights into the actual struggles for survival of the borderlanders in the midst of the severe oppression and exploitation of the whites, the Gringos and the Anglos. The touching revelation that she makes in her poems is an outlet to her deep-rooted anger and hatred towards the oppressors. Through her poems, she underscores the need for providing the borderlanders with a space to assert their identity. She makes a detour to the borderlands, inviting the readers to empathise with the life of the people residing there. Her project, through her practice of

[55] Virgin Mary.

shamanism, is to transmit information from her consciousness to another, so as to expose the lived life of the borderlanders to the world, which, she hopes, can bring about drastic and revolutionary changes in their lives. Anzaldua's poems unravel the adverse impact of white domination upon the environment, its fauna, and flora. Ecological "imperialism not only altered the cultural, political and social structures of the colonized societies, but also devastated colonial ecologies and traditional subsistence pattern" (Ashcroft et al. 76). Human interference into the natural world has disrupted the balance of the ecosystem. The callousness and cruelty of the colonizers towards birds and animals are exposed when Anzaldua sings in "White Wing Season," "The white men with their guns / have come again / to fill the silence and the sky / with buckshot (Anzaldua 102). The reverberations of gunshots unsettle the peaceful life of the birds nestling among the lush growth of trees, "startled, plumb bodies rise / from the wooded areas and desert bush. / The beating of feathers / white patches on wings and tail (Anzaldua102). The way the whites disrupt the harmonious co-existence of humans and animals is exemplified in a touching anecdote entitled "Cervicide," where she introduces a dark-skinned girl, Prieta, who is forced to kill a baby deer which is saved by her and her siblings from the hunter. The penalty for being caught in possession of a deer was $ 250 or jail. When they hear the sound of the game-warden approaching, they have no other way but to kill the fawn and hide it. The title given to the anecdote is highly symbolic. "Cervicide" means killing of a deer. Anzaldua explains that "In the archetypal symbology, the self appears as a deer for women" (Anzaldua 105). The symbolic action of killing the deer underscores how women are prevented from asserting their self. Even

bigger animals like horses are not exempted from the knife of the whites, which is made evident through the poem "Horse" (Anzaldua 106).

In the poem "Nopalitos,[56]" Anzaldua narrates how the Chicanos lived in harmony with nature, relishing the soup made out of the green leaves of cactus. The intrusion of the whites into their land has destroyed the ecological balance of nature. Her mamagrande's [57] ranches were once full of hummingbirds, but they were hunted down by the whites. The undue reclamation of land for cultivation reduced the forest cover and destroyed the habitat of wild animals and reptiles. The rivulets in which they used to play dried up, and the snakes disappeared (Anzaldua 112). The poem exemplifies how the unconstrained use of nature creates irreparable loss and upset the ecosystem.

The multiple oppression to which the women of color residing in the borderlands are subjected to form the theme of the poem, "Immaculate, Inviolate Como Ella."[58] It is also an explicit expression of the deep love that Anzaldua has for her grandmother, who has burned herself to death, unable to withstand the atrocities done to her and her tribe by the whites. Her acres of ranches, ranch house, and all things dear to her have been taken away by them, reducing the land-owner to the position of a menial laborer. Apart from the colonial and racial oppression, Chicano-women, including her grandma, were subjected to patriarchal oppression. They were doubly oppressed and exploited; by patriarchy and colonizers. Her husband, just like many other Chicano men-folk had illicit relations with other women. They

[56] Tender leaves of the nopal, cactus (Anzaldua 113).
[57] Grandmother (Anzaldua 109).
[58] Like her (Anzaldua 110).

endeavored to escape from this injustice, but the attempts were in vain as these were deeply rooted in society. As a lady of dignity and pride, she could inscribe her identity and selfhood only through self-immolation. Anzaldua lived on the endearing memories of her grandma and her little gestures of love (Anzaldua 108). The poem gives a vivid description of the silent sufferings of the Mexican women inside their homes.

The women folk working in the field are incessantly tortured and sexually exploited by the Anglos. They are forced to work for many hours in the field, disregarding the terrible heat and other adversities. Incapable of resistance, the women laborers are forced to volunteer to the sexual assault of the whites, and the children born through such illicit relations are further exploited by them by making them the unpaid workforce of their plantations. Still, the women sing in chorus and continue planting the saplings down the rows. Anzaldua wonders, “If she hadn’t read all those books / she’d be singing up and down the rows / like the rest” (Anzaldua 117). She recollects how during her younger days; she had worked along with her family for more than 12 hours a day in unhealthy conditions without getting proper wages. Very soon, she realizes that “you are respected if you can use your head instead of your back . . . and you can find space in air-conditioned offices” (Anzaldua 118). With great determination, she resolves to conquer such a space by cultivating the habit of reading and amassing knowledge from books. Her entry into the elite world of academic institutions and her versatility in different languages enables her to express her views to the outside world, and fight against oppression.

Anzaldua fights against injustice and transforms areas in the margins to sites of resistance.

Even when the Mexican women lived a life of pain and suffering, they maintain a close affinity with each other, and when they gather on porches, "their laughter swells over the garden" (Anzaldua 113). But Anzaldua keeps away from their company and refuses to listen to their scolding. She says, "I keep leaving, and when I am home / they remember no one but me had ever left" (Anzaldua 113). Her different sexuality, black color, and bleeding body kept her away from their company. A feeling of estrangement among her camaraderie is explicit in her, and she overpowers this by conquering the world of knowledge. She claims: "I have more languages than they, / am aware of every root of my *pueblo*;[59] / they, my people, are not. / They are the living sleeping roots" (Anzaldua 113). Through the production of her own discourses, she is engaged in creating an identity for herself as well as for the Chicanos. She wants to make her own voice heard, and also the voices of her race, caste and community who were rendered mute and invisible by the dominant groups.

The poem "El Sonavabitche"[60] gives a graphic description of the Mexican peasants working in the fields. They are sunburnt with brown faces, and their bent backs appear like "pre-historic boulders." (Anzaldua 124). Tall men in uniforms make them work like slaves in the field at gunpoint without providing them with the basic amenities of life. In the migrant camps, the Chicanos lead a suffocating life.

[59] Culture (Anzaldua 2).
[60] A swear word in Spanish used to refer to masters of migrant labourers (Anzaldua 124).

The immigration officials make the *mojados,* the undocumented and illegitimate children of the migrant workers, work from dawn to dusk, fifteen hours a day, including Sundays, without giving them time to pray or rest, and holding back their wages. They are denied legal protection, and these undocumented workers cannot approach law court to fight for their wages. Anzaldua becomes a spokesperson for the exploited Mexican peasants, and she demands two weeks' wages from the immigration officials, "I want cash / the whole amount right here in my purse", she says (Anzaldua 127). When he refuses to give, she insists, "Sweat money, Mister, blood money, / not my sweat, but same blood" (Anzaldua 128). She threatens him, saying that the illegal workers on his land will be reported, and forces him to pay the wages. The margin is used as a space of resistance, and she succeeds in her endeavor. The poem gives a realistic picture of the life of the migrant farm laborers who are tortured and exploited by the whites. The hardships and sufferings of the Mexican peasants who work in the field under the scorching heat of the sun in perpetual servitude form the theme of the poem, "A Sea of Cabbages" (Anzaldua 132). The poem "We call them Greasers" is a truthful depiction of the plight of the natives who live their life by growing corn on their own ranches, and raising cattle and horses. But very soon, they are evicted from their land, and are forced to become sharecroppers as they cannot pay taxes at the right time. Though they appeal to the court, they cannot express their complaints in English. She writes, "It was a laughing stock / them not even knowing English" (Anzaldua 134). Here, Anzaldua delineates the doomed life of the native Chicana/os who are not versatile in English language, and how they lose everything that they have earned during their life-time, including their landed property. She underscores the necessity of a common

language accessible to the Chicanos so that they too can express their thoughts and fight for their rights. Unable to claim the ownership of their land, many of them are forced to migrate to the neighboring countries, an experience vividly described in the lines: “some loaded their chickens children wife and pigs / into rickety wagons, pans and tools dangling / clanging from all sides” (Anzaldua 134).

Some of Anzaldua’s poems, like “Interface” (Anzaldua 148) and “Corner of 50th St. and Fifth Av” (Anzaldua 145) deal with lesbian and gay life and their sexual intimacy. In the poem “Holy Relics”, she picturizes the borderlanders as holy relics. “We are the holy relics, / the scattered bones of a saint, / the best loved bones of Spain. / We seek each other” (Anzaldua 159). The acute identity crisis experienced by the borderlanders is graphically portrayed in the poem “To live in the Borderlands means you” (Anzaldua 194). She describes them as “half-breed / caught in the crossfire between camps / while carrying all five races on your back / not knowing which side to turn to, run from” (Anzaldua 194); Their ambivalent position becomes evident through the lines, “you are the battleground / where enemies are kin to each other; / you are at home, a stranger” (Anzaldua 194). In the poem “Don’t Give in, Chicanita”[61] she ignites the spark of revolution in the minds of the Chicanos, invoking them not to give in. She asserts that the native Chicanos were raised in the ranches of the Rio Grande Valley by strong women, “Strong women reared you: / my sister, your mom, my mother and I” (Anzaldua 202). She instills confidence and courage in the Chicana/os to fight for their rights and not to yield to the whites. Before the Gringos took over their land, Texas was Mexico. Even their

[61] A Chicano girl or woman.

cemetery, where their ancestors were buried, was occupied by them (Anzaldua 202). Anzaldua takes pride in their heritage and ancestry. She proclaims that Chicanos will overcome all adversities that come in the way, and will emerge as the members of a new species with skin tone between black and bronze, and their eyelids will have the power to look at the sun with naked eyes (Anzaldua 203). Anzaldua prophesies, "Yes, in a few years or centuries / *la Raza* will rise up, tongue in tact / carrying the best of all cultures" (Anzaldua 203). Thus, the final poem in the poetry section of *Borderlands* ends on an optimistic note. The prophetic proclamation heralds the beginning of a new race, a new consciousness, a *mestiza* consciousness in which all races merge into one. In this new *mestiza*, no one is left out; everyone is incorporated and accepted. Anzaldua relentlessly struggles to find a space and identity for the Chicanos, a Third Space, an in-between space that breaks down the binaries, and allows ambivalence and contradictions to co-exist by accepting differences. Her theoretical endeavors are fueled by the collective history of the Chicanos and her own personal life and her multiple subject positions based on race, gender, and sexuality.

As Yarbro-Bejarano observes, while Anzaldua's writings recognize the importance of narratives of displacement in the formation of subjectivity, she is also aware of the material conditions of existence, and the real histories of these narratives (11). The cultural matrix of Mexico is intertwined with stories narrated orally which is passed on to generations. Anzaldua brings back the memories of the past through the oral narrations of her grandmother and father, and she passes it on to her generation by narrating them to her sister in the night. "Nudge a Mexican and

he or she will break out with a story" (Anzaldua 65). She relives an exotic past before the conquest when poets gathered to play music, dance and sing and read poetry in the open air, and says that stories have the ability to transform both the storyteller and the listener into something else. She adds, "The writer as a shape changer is a *nahual*, a shaman" (Anzaldua 66). She looks upon a work of art as a living thing, not as an inert and dead object as the western culture thinks of art works. It has life and just like a person, it has to be fed. She derides the west for taking away the spiritual art objects of the tribal culture, and ripping them off the vital energy of the people of colour. She suggests that it is better for the whites to delve into the spiritual life of the multicoloured people so that they can escape from the white sterility that they experience in life. She says that even though in their conscious mind, black and dark may be associated with death, evil, and destruction, in the subconscious mind, white is associated with disease, death, and hopelessness. She adds that the left hand, that of darkness and femaleness can divert the indifferent right-handed "rational" suicidal drive (Anzaldua 67-69). She envisages a left-handed world where people from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs and concerns co-exist, and bring about a revolutionary change. In the poem "Coming of El Mundo Surdo," [62]she invokes the lovers of peace to break out of bondage, discard hatred, and disseminate the feeling of love. She assures that the awakening "feminine presence" will transform the world (Keating 37).

[62] The lefthand world, "it indicates communities based on commonalities, visionary locations where people from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs and concerns coexist and work together to bring about revolutionary change" (Keating 322).

Anzaldua communicates her ideas through words and images. The psychic unrest that she experiences in the borderland prompts her to write about them. The intense longing to express her ideas through words pierces her "like a cactus needle embedded in flesh" (Anzaldua 73), which she tries to pluck away through writing. This plucking away is agonising and painful, but once it is done, she is relieved of the pain. She compares her writing to pregnancy and childbirth and says, "how much easier it would be to carry a baby for nine months and expel it permanently" (Anzaldua 73). Cultural ambiguity compels her to write as well as blocks her from writing. The internal tension of opposition propels the *mestiza* writer to become an agent of transformation.

Anzaldua, as a border theorist has made significant interventions to inscribe a space for the borderlanders, and to articulate their legitimate needs. Positioned within the matrix of a campesino culture, toiling along with her family in the fields for subsistence, and having gone through the strenuous life of the farm workers entrapped in the vicious circle of capitalist exploitation, Anzaldua gives expression to her anger and hatred against the oppressors by giving them a counter stance through protest and resistance. The theory of *mestiza* consciousness that she has propounded is an inspiration to all mixed-race people to respect themselves and to fight for their rights, and assert their self. In many respects, the ideologies contained within this theory have similar overtones with the Third Space, which erases the binary oppositions of the margin and the centre.

Chapter IV

Gender Fluidity in Select Narratives

In the battlefield we stand.

We do not seek sympathies

Understand our emotions—we

Demand our dues and nothing else.

(Revathi, *Our Lives* 1)

The borders between genders are becoming fluid, challenging the commonly accepted binary gender system and the heteronormative ways of thinking. The gender roles and behaviors which are defined and prescribed by society as a part of the socialization process are being interrogated. Gender studies and discussions on gender become crucial in academic discourses and social parlance at this vantage point. Attempts are made to break open the rigidity inherent in the binary system in order to accommodate, and give space to those who do not belong to the accepted notions of gender. The increasing alienation and emotional distress that these marginalized sexual minorities feel need to be properly addressed. The deep-rooted patriarchal, hetero-normative notions persist in society to such an extent that sexual minorities are considered aberrations. Feminist and queer movements attempt to liberate people undergoing multiple oppressions from gender and its constraints. In a heteronormative society that validates only heterosexual relations, homosexuals and other sexual minorities undergo an existential crisis. The subordinate position

ascribed to women and the LGBTQIA+ community makes them powerless in a society that operates through a binary system.

Queer cultural studies has emerged as a discipline in order to address the issues of the people who are caught between the binary. It tries to go beyond heteronormativity, and attempts to redefine the definitions associated with gender and identities in order to evolve a space of recognition for people of different sexualities. Foucault's observations on sexuality are instrumental in the formation of queer theory. Women-to-women and men-to-men attraction were prevalent from the days of antiquity. However, "the apparently unequivocal distinction between *being* homosexual or *being* straight . . . has developed only very recently within certain institutional and discursive practices" (Bennet and Nicholas 266). The term queer has a wider spectrum of meanings in recent discussions. "Queer now refers to not only gay/lesbian issues but also includes other practices, identities, and communities-all of which have been marginalized in history" (Nayar 185). Queer studies recognizes the varied ideas of subjectivity, and does not stick on to the strict categorizations offered by society.

Queer theory originated in the 1990s within western discourses of sexuality and replaced gay/lesbian studies. It dealt with the issues associated with sexual orientation and sexual identity of people. The term "queer" was first coined by Teresa De Lauretis to serve as the title of a conference that she held in February 1990 at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Halperin had observed that Lauretis wished to open a wider space within lesbian and gay studies and unsettle its complacency. She wanted "to introduce a problematic of multiple differences into

what had tended to be a monolithic, homogenizing discourse of (homo)sexual difference, and to offer a possible escape from the hegemony of white, male, middle-class models of analysis" (340).

Gay/lesbian studies focuses on the social construction of categories according to which some are normal and others abnormal. Queer theory attempts to look at a wider level, and expands its reach over various marginalized communities. The discussions on gender, which emphasize that gender is a social construct, and not something that is inherent in a person, influenced the development of this theory. This anti-essentialist notion of gender further opens up conceptions on sexuality, paving the way for the reformulations of preconceived notions. Ideological impositions of society impact upon the sexuality of a person, and classify certain choices as either good or bad, moral or immoral. Those who deviate from the accepted norms find it difficult to come out of the cocoon and exhibit their self. Annamarie Jagose, in *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, talks about the different nuances of the term queer:

> In recent years 'queer' has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies . . . queer is very much a category in the process of formation. It is not simply that queer has yet to solidify and take on a more consistent profile, but rather that its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics. (1)

Jagose opines that queer has various possibilities inherent in it as it is not aligned with a specific identity category. Queer theory takes up a post-structuralist way by destabilizing the stable notions of gender prevalent in society. It critiques the heteronormative notions as well as the androcentric patriarchal notions of society. Jagose notes that there are two views relating to homosexuals; the people who support the essentialist notions believe that some people are born as homosexuals, whereas the constructionists believe that it is somehow acquired by the person during his/her growth. People who support homosexuals believe that they should be allowed to enjoy all human rights enjoyed by heterosexuals, whereas homophobics believe that such sexual orientations are aberrations that can be corrected gradually (13). Foucault, in his seminal work, *The History of Sexuality*, provides a persuasive historical narrative about the formation of a modern homosexual identity (Jagose 10).

Science and popular ideologies began to address various issues and manifestations related to sexuality during the beginning of the nineteenth century. It came to be the topic of discussion, and was talked about in public gatherings as it slowly dropped the repressive constrictions over it. This opened up new ways in which sexual identities and sexual orientations could be imagined. According to Foucault:

> our ideas about hetero-and homo-sexuality are a function of the 'invention' of homosexuality in the late nineteenth century. While the precise historical configurations of any such 'invention' have been challenged by historians of sexuality, many of whom see the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as

the crucial period of redefinition and 'crystallization'. (Bennet and Nicholas 265)

Alan Bray, too opines that there is nothing equivalent to the modern concept of homosexuality before the seventeenth century. However, homosexuality persisted even before that in various civilizations. "Ancient Greece and Rome have often been invoked as models of advanced civilizations that accorded same-gender relations considerably higher status and freedom of display than most subsequent Western societies did until very recently" (Hubbard xv). Stories of same-sex relations can be found in Hellenic texts. Molly houses were places where men with sexual interests in other men gathered, but not necessarily for sex, "it was as likely to be expressed in drinking together, in flirting and gossip and in a circle of friends as in actual liaisons" (Bray 84). These gatherings helped to assert their identity. The notions of homosexuality were different during different periods of time. It changed according to different cultures and time periods.

Initially, all the discussions on homosexuality dealt with the formation of male homosexuality. Theorists focused on the issues of male gender and studied male sexuality. They ignored the possibilities of female sexuality as they believed that it did not have the same historical importance as that of male sexuality. They focused on male examples. The British judicial system considered male homosexual acts as criminal acts. They did not address female homosexual acts and ignored them completely. The Labouchére Amendment of 1885, on which much current anti-homosexual western legislation is founded, specifically outlaws acts of "gross indecency" between "male persons," but leaves comparable acts between female

persons legal by default (Jagose 13). What produced the changes in attitude, Jagose believed, were reactionary responses to the demands of first-wave feminism and-even more emphatically-the increasing tendency by sexologists to pathologise female homosexuality (Jagose 14).

Heterosexuality is validated by society, and it is considered as the normal sexual orientation. The unacceptability of homosexuality is the byproduct of the unitary family which made heterosexuality the social norm. Modern judicial system is based on the notion of the heterosexual unitary family as the fundamental unit of society. Jay Stewart asserts:

> Heterosexuality and the gender roles, identities, and expressions that were deemed 'normal' to those who were 'male' or 'female' were invisible and taken-for-granted, but sets of behaviours, desires, thoughts, and actions that were deemed 'different,' 'other,' or 'variant' began to be highly scrutinised and recorded. (Richards et al. 54)

Homosexuality is generally considered as a deviation, and hence lesser in status than heterosexuality. In India, it was declared illegal until a judgement was passed in September 2018. The court scrapped section 377, "a 157-year-old colonial-era law which criminalises certain sexual acts as 'unnatural offences' that are punishable by a 10-year jail term," ("India court") and passed the rule that "discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a fundamental violation of rights" ("India court").

Halperin, in his article "The Normalization of Queer Theory," comments on the word queer as follows:

> A word that was once commonly understood to mean 'strange,' 'odd,' 'unusual,' 'abnormal,' or 'sick,' and was routinely applied to lesbians and gay men as a term of abuse, now intimates possibilities so complex and rarified that entire volumes are devoted to spelling them out. Even to define queer, we now think, is to limit its potential, its magical power to usher in a new age of sexual radicalism and fluid gender possibilities. (339)

Along with gay and lesbian studies, queer studies focuses on other related areas such as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, sex reassignment surgery, and gender ambiguity. In homosexuality, two gender models are perceivable: man-loving man and woman-loving woman. These unique groups of people, as they are caught up in the thresholds between genders, develop a tendency to build up emotional, psychological, and physical bonds with those of the same category. Away from their group, they feel terribly alienated from society and develop suicidal tendencies. In her seminal work *Tendencies*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick talks about the suicides of gay/lesbian teenagers. She opines that "up to 30 percent of teen suicides are likely to be gay or lesbian; that a third of lesbian and gay teenagers say they have attempted suicide; that minority queer adolescents are at even more extreme risk" (1). The number is not shocking as society is tailored in such a manner that it places pressure on the ones who do not follow its norms and patterns. It denies the right to choose one's sexuality. It is a generally known fact that most gay men are forced to leave their homes because of the conflicts arising out of differences in ideologies.

The plight of transgenders who come under the LGBTQIA+ community is not very different from that of homosexuals. Transgenders existed ever since the beginning of human race and were acknowledged in epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. They had different roles during different periods of time. In some societies, they were treated with reverence, and in some others, without reverence. Except for certain traditions which acknowledged their presence, they are most often sidelined. They are commonly known as hijras in India. Hijra characters portrayed in Indian mythology played a significant role in the construction of hijra identity. Hijras were given a role of importance in the ancient days. They were chosen as the confidantes and as keepers of harems by the royal courts. Their presence in the Hindu rituals associated with child birth and marriages ascribed to them important roles. However, with the advent of colonialism, things changed, and they were relegated to the margins. They fell from a position of esteem to a position where they were ridiculed and mocked at for being different, and were treated in an inhuman manner.

Sexual minorities bear the burden of stigma, and are not incorporated into society as normal people. Their lives are abundant in stories of rejection and discrimination; they are the victims of a societal norm that validates binary system only. Just like homosexuals, they are considered as people who are ill or abnormal. In films and fiction, they are often negatively represented as comic characters, villains, or criminals. The original or real portrayals most often come only through autobiographies. A close analysis of the autobiography written by Revathi reveals the inhuman ways in which they are treated. Ill-treatment from family as well as

society makes their life miserable. They suffer the most severe consequences of the compulsory norms of gender system. Their inner turmoil remains indecipherable to those who lead a heteronormative life. To overcome the feeling of alienation and segregation that they experience, they form a community of their own, which is quite different from the communities of those who belong to the binary divisions of gender. In the binary division, those who deviate from the accepted norms of male/female are treated as outside the normative categories of gender.

Eminent theoreticians like Lefebvre and Soja have played significant roles in redefining the binary logic and the categorical closures implicit in it. They argue for a "both" and "also" logic in which those who belong to the binary, and those who are not included in the binary are given proper space. This space is labelled as the "Third Space."[63] This is a liberatory space that offers endless possibilities for resistance, and enables the marginalized sexual minorities to assert their identity and self. In this way, they try to create a niche where they can exhibit their true selves. People who find themselves at odds with the labels given by society associate themselves with trans identity. This trans identity covers a variety of experiences, and includes people who do not feel comfortable with the gender roles assigned to them by society. Some of these transgenders cross-dress as a means to fulfill their desire. They form a community, and in this space, they share their fears, dreams, hopes, aspirations, and sufferings, and try to assert their identity. The trans activism in which they involve looks at the trans issues with greater seriousness, with a view to make the future of the next generation easier than theirs. Even though ignorance

[63] For more details on the concept, see Chapter I

and prejudice towards the issues faced by transgenders are slowly receding, huge traces of injustice and discrimination done to them are still visible in the fabric of our society. The transpeople are unable to obtain or retain a job as per their choice. It is difficult for them to rent a home, and even more difficult to protect themselves from violence. They face discrimination while attempting to access services from government offices and other related social service providers.

A fundamental shift happened in the academia during the 1900s, when it was realized that to be trans was not to have a mental or medical disorder, which enabled the trans men and women to reclaim the reality of their bodies. Stryker and Whittle observe that a trans person might be a transgender or a transsexual, an MTF (Male to Female) or FTM (Female to male) or a cross-dresser.

> Some communities and their terms are ancient, such as the hijra from Northern India, but many are more modern. The word 'trans,' referring to a 'trans woman' or 'trans man' . . . is a very recent take on the umbrella term 'transgender.' Although there had been some previous usage in the 1990s . . . 'trans' as a stand-alone term did not come into formal usage until it was coined by a parliamentary discussion group in London in 1998, with the deliberate intention of being as inclusive as possible when negotiating equality legislation. Cultural spaces and historiographies are constantly reframing the community, the identities, the cultures, and the language. (xi)

New interventions are to be made in the case of language as well. The language that we use now is also governed by patriarchal norms; it does not accommodate the gender diversities that are present in our society. New linguistic

innovations are underway; “for example, ‘per’ as a pronoun was developed by UK community members with nonexistent gender identities, and similarly the US term ‘hir’ for those who have both” (Stryker and Whittle xii).

With the advent of trans studies, deliberations are going on in the case of the distinction between sex and gender; their stability is dismantled and deconstructed. They reconstruct it and strip away the old norms which are ruled by the binary division. Histories are being re-written, and new modes of subjectivity are being opened up. There is an expansion in transgender studies in accordance with the transitions in culture. However, the stigma associated with trans people in real-life situations, and the severe oppression and humiliation that they have to go through still persist. This is one of the most significant issues which is to be brought to the forefront of queer studies.

> The field of transgender studies is concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood. (Stryker and Whittle 3)

Trans theory addresses the position of trans people in society and the labels attached to them. The labels formulated by society are inadequate to articulate a truthful description of trans identity and their experiences. Their voices are not

properly heard, even when society has developed strategies to find a solution to their problems. However, these formulations have a great impact upon the notions of gender and sex. Trans studies aims to acknowledge the existence of trans people, and works are written to represent the plight of the people who are made victims by the transphobic society. It allows them to accept and embrace their queerness, and reject the gender ascriptions of society. They are allowed to claim their identity. A visible change is observable today in the way transgender lives are studied and addressed. It has shifted its focus from looking upon transgenders as aberrations, to an empathetic attitude towards the empirical reality of their life.

This chapter aims to look at select contemporary works to examine the issues of gender and sexuality as represented in them. Gender fluidity, psychological trauma, and emotional distress undergone by the people who are excluded from the binary are exemplified. An attempt is also made to look at how the creation of identity and subjectivity of individuals are influenced by social norms. The major focus of this chapter is to look at these issues as seen through the movie *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* by Rituparno Ghosh, *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, an autobiography of Revathi, and the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* written by Roy.

Rituparno Ghosh, a queer icon of the Bengal film industry, engages with the much-debated topic in gender studies: same-sex desires and divergent sexual identities. His life and art have inspired many queer lives across the world and have paved the way for serious discussions and debates on homosexuality. The movie *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish,* released in 2012, had a significant impact on the

lives of sexual minorities. The film is an explicit expression of the genuine feelings and emotions of sexually deviant persons. It is touching and is successful in its endeavor to bring to light the reality of the lives of sexual minorities. The film has an autobiographical tone, as Rituparno Ghosh himself is a self-proclaimed queer. He has successfully portrayed queer lives in the film, as many of the events in it stems from his own personal experiences. He is an iconoclast, breaking the age-old assumptions about sexuality, gender, dressing patterns, and behaviour. He boldly attempts to dissociate biological gender from sexuality through his adaptation of female roles.

The film unravels the hardships the central character Rudra Chatterjee faces due to his non-normative sexuality. He is forced to fit in or belong to the categories designated by society and his family; his self and subjectivity are interrogated here as he could not conform to the accepted standards of heteronormativity. He is incapacitated from expressing his real self. His family is incapable of accepting the ardent love that he feels towards the percussionist Partho, as man-to-man love is not validated by the homophobic society. They do not accommodate those who deviate from the standards set by the heteronormative society. In such circumstances, people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are forced to hide their sexuality. They live in a hostile environment in perpetual fear of ostracization. A homophobic society poses great threat to the lives of homosexuals. The film is an expression of the discrimination, alienation, and suffering that sexual minorities experience in their lives. The societal pressures to conform to the norms make his life miserable. Rudra Chatterjee is forced to suppress his identity, and this seriously impacts upon

his relationship with his family and society. Throughout his life, he is haunted by different types of traumas, doubts, and anticipations about himself and his sexuality. Even the decision of choosing his own career is made by his parents. He aspired to become a choreographer, but in order to satisfy the dreams of his father, he chooses engineering, a discipline that he does not like. But very soon, he realises that his vocation is not that of an engineer but that of a choreographer. He addresses the issues of gender and gender fluidity in the dance drama *Chitrangada*, which he plans to stage on the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary. The theme of the film, *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* runs parallel to the theme of Tagore's *Chitrangada*.

Rudra, the central character of the film, attempts to stage Tagore's *Chitrangada* by highlighting the plight of Chitrangada, the daughter of the King of Manipur, who is brought up as a man but yearns to gain feminine charms after her tryst with Arjun. The King of Manipur, a devotee of Lord Shiva, was blessed with a decree that his lineage would thereafter consist only of sons. Contrary to this decree, Chitrangada, a daughter was born, and the king decided that she would be brought up like a son. Rigorous training was given in the art of warfare and archery, and very soon, the princess excelled in the tactics of warfare and archery. She was able to bend the bow, and target the arrow with immaculate precision. Due to constant practice, Chitrangada was able to change the traits of her gender in accordance with the desire of her father. Her performance validates the view that gender is a social construct. "Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which

achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, *Gender* xv).

In Rudra Chatterjee's confessions to the counsellor at the beginning of the film, the thoughts of Rituparno Ghosh are reflected. Lying down in his convalescing bed, the character Rudra ruminates over the imposed identity assigned to Chitrangada, and poses the question whether the child's desires and dreams were taken into account. He says, "Children have dreams beyond their parent's expectations" (*Chitrangada* 00:02:41-45). The storyline of the dance drama *Chitrangada* is in tune with the life of Rituparno Ghosh. Rudra's identity is torn within himself; he does not know whether he is a female or a male. But his parents bring him up as a boy.

Tagore's play, *Chitrangada,* begins when Arjun, the warrior hero of the *Mahabharata,* after wandering for twelve years as an abstinent ascetic, reaches Manipur, where he has a rendezvous with Chitrangada. Bereft of feminine charms due to the consistent practice in warfare and hunting expeditions, Arjun dismisses her, mistaking her for a young man. But Chitrangada falls passionately in love with Arjun, and hence yearns to possess feminine charms, which she lacks as her father brings her up like a boy. She implores Madan, the God of love, to make her beautiful so that she can attract Arjun towards her, and fulfil her dream of union with him. The play is mainly a story of wish, the wish of Chitrangada versus her father's wish.

When Kasturi, the actor playing the role of Chitrangada performs in a feminine manner, Rudra, the choreographer shouts at her, saying: "Chitrangada is

conditioned to be a man; that's how she is brought up" (*Chitrangada* 00:08:05-07). This underscores the observation that gender is a social construct. Everyone has the right to choose one's gender, and through constant performance, this gender can be validated. As Butler observes,

> when a child is born the medical discourse identifies/declares/enunciates it as 'male' or 'female.' This names the child, but also identifies the role s/he will have to play. It constructs the child in the very act of saying 'it's a girl' or 'it's a boy'. . . . all subsequent discourses are repetitions of this first enunciation. The role of 'male' or 'female' that the child has to play out later is already, therefore, determined. (Nayar 191)

The child is trained to be an individual that fits into the set patterns of society. This begins at a very early age itself, and curtails the freedom of the child to be herself/himself. Society sets the boundaries, and dictates the ways in which a person shall think and behave in a gendered culture. An individual is conditioned to be either a man or a woman. The choice of identity is never that of the child; instead, society trains the child to fit into its set patterns. Society considers sexual differences as pre-ordained and unchangeable, and only procreative sexual activity is considered proper. Neither man nor woman owns his/her body. Jeffrey Weeks argues that sex, as an act, attains meaning in social relations, and coercive forces in society limit the possibilities of choice, autonomy, and pleasure. These discourses around sexuality eventually become social sanctions or injunctions, and sexuality outside any of these discourses is considered deviant (Nayar 188).

A conflict arises in the minds of people who are caught in the in-between space. They suffer incessant denials, criticisms, and marginalization, which push them into a state of vulnerability, and they are incapacitated from asserting their identity. The quest for self/identity has been a perennial theme of literary works and art forms from time immemorial. The Indian epics, the *puranas,* and histories abound in such themes. The story of Chitrangada in the *Mahabharata* and her quest to discover her gender identity has inspired many writers, including the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. His *Chitrangada* based on this myth has been the motivating force behind Rituparno Ghosh's *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*. Ghosh takes up the lead role of the film, and enacts his role as an effeminate choreographer and dancer. This role-play on the screen provides him with an opportunity to project his subconscious desire to be a female. It allows him to cross-dress as a graceful dancer, with all the paraphernalia of jewelry, makeup, gestures, and performance which are some of the markers of femininity. Butler aptly comments that these deliberate acts reveal that gender is a performance.

> It gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between primary identification-that is, the original meanings accorded to gender-and subsequent gender experience might be reframed. The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. (Butler, *Gender* 187)

This film established Ghosh's identity as an icon of the LGBTQIA+ community. Rituparno Ghosh gives expression to the mental turmoil and anguish of people who are caught up in the in-between spaces. He looks closely at the

conventional social norms which hinder the freedom of same-sex lovers, and brand them as criminals or as aberrations in society. The societal norms consider only heteronormative life as the accepted code. The film captures his politics of desire, and portrays the intense trauma and conflict faced by the central character, Rudra Chatterjee. The film begins in a post-operative ward in a hospital where Rudra is going through a convalescing period after the initial processes of sex reassignment surgery. The counsellor, Subho, who approaches him with an aim to converse with him about his mental condition and thoughts, actually functions as his alter-ego, and enables him to recollect many of the events loaded with intense emotions and feelings. Rudra reaches a position where he is able to accept his identity.

At the outset, Rudra expresses his unwillingness to confide to the counsellor; however, later, he acquiesces to his request, and starts to talk about himself and his life, his relationship with various important persons in his life, and how these relations are affected due to his sexuality. His initial inhibition to speak to the counsellor shows his fear of exposing his thoughts and feelings to another person. He makes an agreement with the counsellor in the beginning itself: “I needn’t speak if I don’t want to” (*Chitrangada* 00:01: 48-52).

Rudra begins his confessions to the counsellor by talking about his meeting with Partho. Partho is a member of the dance group of Rudra, and a bisexual who falls passionately in love with the effeminate Rudra. He is a percussionist who is thoroughly under the grip of heroin. Rudra empathizes with Partho, as both of them have been ostracized by society; Rudra for being effeminate and Partho for being a heroin addict. Partho had been in the rehabilitation center, but he could not get over

the addiction. Rudra wants to offer help to Partho. The film showcases the troubles they have to undergo in an intensely homosexual relationship which is considered taboo in society.

Rudra is torn between two worlds: the one fulfilling the dreams of his parents, and the other following his own passion for dancing and finding fulfillment in his love towards Partho. Of these, Rudra chooses a life with Partho. He wants to dance and perform on the stage, but his father dislikes him dancing, and wants his son to opt for a "masculine" profession. Rudra wants his father to watch his play at least once, and reserves tickets for his parents; but only his mother ever comes.

Partho shares a very passionate relationship with Rudra; he calls him Rudie. They go through a complicated relationship in which both of them depend on each other in a peculiar manner. But eventually, Rudra becomes sick of Partho's attitude. A kind of love-hate relationship develops between them. The inertia of the relationship prevents Rudra from calling off their bond. He narrates the various events that has occurred during their times together; a trip he has gone along with Partho, and his meeting with his ex-lover. As Rudra becomes more and more involved in the relationship, he starts to think about living together as a family and adopting a child. He knows that Partho love children very much, and he is willing to do anything for Partho. Rudra tells Partho, "Two male friends can't adopt a child in this country" (*Chitrangada* 01:01:46-49). Rudra decides to conform to the stereotypical heteronormative structure of a family, and to undergo sex reassignment surgery. However, Partho dissuades Rudie from this, and educates him on the repercussions of sex change surgery. He cautions him that it will alter his body;

his only instrument for pursuing his dream career of a dancer cum choreographer. Rudra responds, "I don't dance with my body Partho. It comes from within. Fortunately, my art form is not gender bound. My dance is not limited to my gender Partho. And neither is my identity" (*Chitrangada* 01:06:36-01:07:18). Rudra considers sex change only as a technical necessity in order to adopt a child. He approaches a doctor and tells him, "All I need from you is a certificate that I am a woman. No other changes, I am not going to wear sari" (*Chitrangada* 01:10:08-16). He knows that adoptive rights are denied to openly gay people, and that the law doesn't allow two males to adopt a child in India. Butler observes, "State regulations on lesbian and gay adoption as well as single-parent adoptions not only restrict that activity, but refer to and reenforce an ideal of what parents should be, for example, that they should be partnered, and what counts as a legitimate partner" (Butler, *Undoing* 56).

Rudra discloses his decision to undergo sex change surgery to his parents during a casual dinner at home. Quite alarmed, they try to dissuade him from his decision, and persuade him to consult a doctor, and cure his "weird" thoughts. His father asks him to take treatment and counselling to get back to "normal" life. Rudra reveals that he has started treatment; but his father misunderstands him, and thanks god as he thinks that he is getting treatment to come back to normalcy. In fact, Rudra is talking about sex reassignment surgery, and informs that he will become a woman in six months. His parents are embarrassed as they cannot imagine their son becoming a woman. The notions of gender to which they are accustomed, do not allow them to accept the fluid nature of gender, nor any kind of deviation from

the strict notions of gender divisions. They cannot accept the homosexual relation Rudra shares with Partho. They pathologize homosexuality as a deviation or perversion which requires medical treatment and assistance.

Rudra decides to move away from home, and regrets his inability to fulfill his parent's wishes. He considers himself "a perennial embarrassment" (*Chitrangada* 01:12:16-19). His parents are more worried about the questions they may have to answer, and the humiliation they may have to suffer from society. Rudra and his mother share a strong bond, and she laments her inability to acknowledge the differences visible in him, despite knowing the fact that he cannot conform to the strict binary classification of gender. She says, "It's easy to blame him. We are to blame too. We have always known. But wouldn't accept it. He was born a boy, and we insisted he act like one" (*Chitrangada* 01:19:32-36).

The response of Rudra's mother to her husband's observation exemplifies the severe identity crisis through which an individual with a deviant identity goes through. Rudra's father finds nothing unnatural in bringing him up like a boy, and he asks:

> Why shouldn't we?
>
> Boys should be boys. It's only natural.

Mother responds:

> Nature dictates what is natural; it has its own desires. If we had been able to accept what was natural for him, he wouldn't be lying there, under the surgeon's knife. (*Chitrangada* 01:20:10-49)

Society prescribes certain roles, and Rudra's parents want their son to conform and fit in to the norms. The familial and societal norms force him to enact various roles that suit the identity of a male. Rudra confronts severe identity crisis after going through the initial process of sex reassignment surgery; he is not able to reconcile with his own self. During his conversation with the nurse, Rudra requests her to stop calling him "sir" as this is contradictory to his desire to become a woman, and that's the reason why he is undergoing the series of operations. He ponders over the question of permanence and temporality of human life. The scene of Rudra undergoing sex reassignment surgery is juxtaposed with that of Chitrangada undergoing the desired change under Madan. "In *Chitrangada*, he achieves a postmodern retelling of the tale by inserting autobiography and ambiguity into the narrative. By doing so, he also subjects the original story to stylistic and semantic shifts to create a new queer consciousness" (Datta et al.196). Tagore's dance drama and Rudra's life have got several parallels. It is like a pre-text to his life story. "By identifying himself with Tagore's character, Ghosh also draws our attention to aspects of the drama that undermine stable oppositions between heterosexual and same-sex desire pointing to the unstable aspects of sexual identity" (Datta et al. 200). People whose gender identity do not conform to the prescribed norms of the society strive to strike a balance with their inner self and outer physique. The varied ways in which they try to cope with the incongruity of their life are reflected in Butler's words, "There is a whole range of complex relations to cross-gendered life, some of them may involve dressing in another gender, some of them may involve living in another gender, some of them may involve hormones, and surgery, and most of them involve one or more of the above" (Butler, *Undoing*

80). Rituparno Ghosh, through this film, makes an attempt to disseminate his ideology on homosexuality to the world so that people like him will find a space in the society, a Third Space, where one can exhibit his/her true self.

The trans men/women experience an acute identity crisis when they go through sex reassignment surgery. After going through the first phase of sex reassignment surgery, it is quite traumatic for Rudra to engage in a discussion of changing his name, as he cannot part with his name by which his "social identity is inaugurated and mobilized" (Butler, *Bodies* 171). Rudra's father wants to approach the sex change legally, and ponders over the validity of the will in which Rudra's name and sex is that of a male. He asks him whether he wants to change his name, and that it must be legally registered. In the will it is written as, "my only son and heir," and he says that the will shall be modified. Rudra asks, "Am I not the person to whom you willed your property? (*Chitrangada* 01:55:18-23). He requests him not to change his will.

Rudra's parents, hitherto oblivious to the plight of their son, begins to realise his actual state. After the surgery, his father kisses him on the forehead. His father, begins to sympathise with him and starts showing concern and love. He is reminded of his wife and the time she was carried on a stretcher while she was about to deliver Rudra. The bond with his mother becomes stronger, and he begins to experience a sense of belonging. His mother wants to know the details of the operation. She says, "I gave birth to you son. I have rights over your body. I cared for your body. If you decide to cut it, I should know" (*Chitrangada* 01:28:23-48).

Rudra connects his story to that of Chitrangada. She was transformed from ugly to beautiful. He wanted to know the repercussions of the change, and how her family accepted her after the change, and whether her father was able to accept her newly found identity. Tagore, in his work, wrote that Chitrangada had gone for a pilgrimage. “It must have been a royal proclamation? Could it be that the king was unable to accept her?” (*Chitrangada* 01:23:50-59). These remain only as rhetorical questions with no answer provided. Rudra feels that he can neither capture the soul of Chitrangada nor of Partho; neither know his parents nor the members in his dance group well. His inconclusiveness underscores the fact that the ultimate solution to the problems of sexual minorities is only a mirage. He ruminates, “I don’t know Chitrangada well enough. Did I know Partho well enough? Do I know my parents well enough? The youngsters in my group? Do I know them?” (*Chitrangada* 01:43:43-57).

The acute identity crisis undergone by Rudra during the liminal stage, and the loving and promising words of his parents dissuade him from completing the surgery. Paradoxically enough, the very purpose of going through a sex change surgery is defeated when Partho begins to move away from him. Rudra eventually decides to drop his idea of getting a sex change. Partho rejects Rudra, and explicitly shows his disinterest in his transfigured body with breast implants. He says, If I have to have a woman, I would rather have a real woman, not this synthetic one (*Chitrangada* 01:37:54-01:38:00). He starts to court Kasturi, and plans to get married to her. Rudra wonders for whom he has gone through this ordeal of sex change. His talks with the counsellor persuade him to think rationally. Shubho

acts as an extension of Rudra's self; the realization dawns upon him that he has been hallucinating till then under intense mental stress. The counsellor asks him, "How do you wish to be remembered? Veracious, energetic, eccentric, creative dancer" (*Chitrangada* 02:04:22-33) answers Rudra. He realizes that the true fulfilment comes only with a complete acceptance of the self. He calls off the surgery at the last moment, and resolves to crown his own wish. He requests the doctor not to conduct the vaginal reconstruction surgery, and asks him to take away the breast implants from his body, leaving forever a scar on his chest. The scar left on the body after the removal can be considered as a metaphor of his desire to transgress the boundaries of body and mind. He decides to go back home. Home, here, stands for a state of mind where one accepts oneself, and is accepted by others. His mind becomes ripe enough to accept his identity. The text message Rudra receives towards the end of the movie: "Why is a building called a building even after it is completed?" (*Chitrangada* 02:05:35-43), underscores the continuous process of becoming of one's body and identity.

In a sense, the film endorses Butler's argument about the fluidity of gender. Butler observes, "when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one" (Butler, *Gender* 9). Gender, here, is looked upon as a social construct which occurs as a result of social conditioning. Rituparno Ghosh tries to break the conventional status

quo, and interrogates the originality of gender and gender identity. This reinforces Butler's observation on gender parody. Butler asserts:

> gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect, that is, in its effect, postures as an imitation. This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. (Butler, *Gender* 188)

Rituparno Ghosh repudiates the notion that gender is a fixed entity. He opines that it is something that is in transition, and this process of transition is never complete. Rudra aptly comments: "Tell me what is permanent. This body? Is this permanent?" (*Chitrangada* 01:13:14-19). The film underscores the fluidity of gender identity and asserts one's freedom to be oneself.

The film is autobiographical and is a projection of Rituparno Ghosh's own sexuality and desire. He draws the pathos of his own life, and subverts accepted norms of gender. He has paved the way for the non-conforming sexual minorities to find a place for themselves, and to accept themselves as they are. The film challenges the stereotyping of sexualities, problematizes gender identity, and emphasizes that it's one's wish to choose one's gender. The decriminalization of homosexuality in September 2018 liberated the LGBTQIA+ community from the existing social taboos, and this has opened up new vistas to the hitherto ostracized

group. But in effect, the condition of the sexual minorities remains almost unchanged.

An exploration of Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Revathi's *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* reveals the trauma experienced by those who have been side-lined for a major portion of their life, and the plight of the LGBTQIA+ community. The focus of these works is upon the transgenders who have no space of their own in the male/female binary. The severe identity crisis that they suffer, and how they strive to establish their identity as a human being become the crux of these works.

Roy makes an attempt to voice the protest of sexual minorities through Anjum, a hermaphrodite.[64] Revathi's autobiography is a direct narrative of her own experiences as a hijra, and the hardships that she has undergone throughout her life. Both the fictional character Anjum and the real character Revathi move towards the same goal; to create a space of their own, and to get themselves integrated into a society that has refused to acknowledge their identity and existence.

The anger and protest that Roy has against the social and political injustice meted out to the deprived and the dispossessed people of India are expressed in her works. Roy uses her powerful language to crack down the repressive and exploitative policies prevalent in contemporary India. She has used different strategies to voice the protest of the minority groups. Most of the characters in the novel hail from the marginalized and excluded group who are trifled and swept to

[64] Hermaphrodite is one who has both the male and female reproductive organs (Hermaphrodite).

the periphery by those who wield power. Anjum, the central character of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* was born a hermaphrodite. In mythology,

> The term hermaphrodite refers to the mythic character of Hermaphroditos. In Book IV of the *Metamorphosis,* Ovid described Hermaphroditos as a male embodying the ideal masculine qualities of his father, Hermes, and the feminine qualities of his mother, Aphrodite. In Ovid's telling, the nymph Salmacis spied Hermaphroditos bathing and immediately fell madly in love. She begged the gods to unite them forever. Wielding their cruel sense of humour, the gods took Salmacis' request literally and melded her body to that of Hermaphroditos. . . . Hippocratic texts (fourth century BC) explained that hermaphroditism represented an intermediate form in the spectrum between the pure female and the pure male. (Haggerty and Garry 264)

Anjum was born as the fourth of five children to Jahanara Beegum and Mulaqat Ali on a cold January night in Shahjahanabad, the walled city of Old Delhi. Ahlam Baji, the midwife who put her in her mother's arms, said, "It's a boy" (Roy 7). But when Jahanara Begum explored the tiny body, "she discovered, nestling underneath his boy-parts, a small unformed, but undoubtedly a girl-part" (Roy 7). The realization devastated her. A realistic portrayal of the agony and trauma experienced by her is given through the following words:

> Her first reaction was to feel her heart constrict and her heart bones turn to ash. Her second reaction was to take another look to make sure she was not mistaken. Her third reaction was to recoil from what she has created while her bowels convulsed and a thin stream of shit ran down her legs. Her fourth

> reaction was to contemplate killing herself and her child. Her fifth reaction was to pick her baby up and hold him close while she fell through a crack between the world she knew and worlds she did not know existed. There, in the abyss, spinning through the darkness, everything she had been sure of until then, every single thing, from the smallest to the biggest ceased to make sense to her. (Roy 8)

The traumatic experience of Jahanara is induced by the social world around her which negates a space for those who are outside normative categories of gender. A human being cannot persist in a social world without its norms of recognition. An individual whose sexuality goes outside the socially accepted heteronormative, binary gender system very often develops suicidal tendencies to escape from the segregation and alienation imposed upon them by society. Butler in her seminal work *Undoing Gender*, observes:

> The desire to kill someone, or killing someone for not conforming to the gender norm by which a person is supposed to live suggests that life itself requires a set of sheltering norms and that to be outside it, to live outside it is to court death. The person who threatens violence proceeds from the anxious and rigid belief that a sense of world and sense of self will be radically undermined if such a being, uncategorizable is permitted to live within the social world. (34)

Jahanara is pained to know that there is no word in her language, Urdu, to refer to her child except *Hijra*[65] and *Kinnar,*[66]and she reflects, "two words do not make a language. Was it possible to live outside language? . . . this question . . . addressed itself to her as a soundless embryonic howl" (Roy 8). The world we live in is constituted by language, but reality reveals that proper recognition is not given to sexual minorities through language. The language that exists is insufficient to express their bodily features and experiences. They have little representation except in a few words that are basically derogatory and exclusionary in tone and meaning. The realization leaves Jahanara helpless, and she resolves to keep the gender of her child a secret even from her husband, and pray at every shrine, and ask the Almighty to show her mercy. The unbearable pain and agony that the mother goes through on the realization that the child she has given birth to does not conform to a socially accepted gender category is indescribable. The socially conditioned notions of gender have penetrated into the very thought process of human life, and Jahanara is no exception. They have been incapacitated from thinking beyond the binary. Heteronormative life is the socially accepted category, and those who are born with a difference are considered abnormal.

The gender of her new born baby, and the thought of its position in society torments Jahanara, and she waits patiently for his girl part to heal. Even though she is fiercely protective of him, she cannot hide the secret regarding the baby's gender for long. The child's initiation into social life begins with schooling, and when a

[65]A person whose gender identity is ambiguous, who is born either a male or intersex, and shows female characteristics (Narayan).
[66]A term used by the hijra community in India to refer to themselves.

child with a gender disorder is put in the midst of the peer group, s/he experiences a strange sense of non-belonging, a sense of alienation, and estrangement. During this extremely challenging period, s/he becomes an introvert, and gradually finds excuses for not attending school. As Jody Norton observes, "Trans children of all races are still as a rule nameless and homeless: silenced in their schools, disciplined in their families . . . privately concealed and publicly effaced" (Anzaldua and Keating 150).

Aftab, at the age of five, starts to attend a madrassa. He proves to be an above-average child, and his real gift is music. He is given training in music under Ustad Hameed Khan, and by the age of nine, he becomes an outstanding young musician. Though people encourage him in the beginning, he faces bickering and teasing from other children, "He's a She. He's not a He or a She. He's a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee! Hee! Hee!" (Roy 12). Shame and despair overpower Aftab, and he refuses to go to school. But Ustad Hameed, who dotes on him, offers to teach him separately on his own, and so the music lessons continue. Jahanara can no longer prolong his circumcision, and finally, she resolves to confide the nightmarish secret about their son to her husband, Mulaqat Ali, a doctor of herbal medicine and a lover of poetry. He scolds her for being late in sharing the news, and readily decides to consult a doctor, Dr. Ghulam Nabi, in New Delhi.

> After examining Aftab, he said he was not, medically speaking, a Hijra-a female trapped in a male body . . . . Aftab, he said, was a rare example of a Hermaphrodite, with both male and female characteristics, though outwardly the male characteristics appeared to be more dominant. (Roy 16-17)

He suggests a corrective surgery to heal the girl part, but cautions that hijra tendencies may persist. While raising money for the surgery, Mulaqat Ali starts to mould him up as a boy trying to instill manliness in him, and prevents him from deviating towards girlish tendencies. Contrary to his endeavour, Aftab shows empathy and fellow feeling towards girls. In the movie *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* too, Rudra's parents bring him up as a boy, notwithstanding his different gender identity. His father advises him to visit a doctor for corrective treatments, and to come back to "normal" life. While the parents of Rudra raise him as a boy, he secretly cherishes his effeminateness, and prefers to cross-dress and adorn himself with jewelry. Instances from these two works highlight the fundamental conviction of the androcentric society to cling on to sexual orthodoxy and patriarchal norms. "Among homosexual and heterosexual women and men, cross gender behaviour is also commonly undertaken for theatrical performance, employment as male or female impersonators" (Jones and Marjorie 96). This tendency to cross-dress is looked upon with disdain by society.

While his siblings went to school, Aftab remained on the balcony of his house looking down at the busy street below. On one such day, he "saw a tall, slim-hipped woman wearing bright lipstick, gold high heels and a shiny green satin salwar kameez, buying bangles from Mir the bangle-seller" (Roy 18). It was for the first time that Aftab saw such a woman. He followed her down the street, and waited near the blue doorway to see where she was going. Unlike ordinary women who wore a burqa, she was dressed in a different way; Aftab assumed that she could walk and dress the way she did, only because she wasn't a woman. Whatever she was, "he

wanted to be her" (Roy 18). She was Bombay Silk, and there were seven others like her living in the *haveli*.[67] They had a guru named Kulsoom Bi, who was the head of the household. Their haveli was called the Khwabgah-the House of Dreams (Roy 19). Admission to the Khwabgah was not easy. After serving them in different ways, he could win their confidence, and enter into the Khwabgah. "He entered that ordinary, broken-down home as though he were walking through the gates of Paradise" (Roy 20). This entry was a breakthrough in the life of Aftab; he passed through a liminal[68] phase while stepping into an entirely different world. He felt elevated in the midst of like-minded people who had similar physical and mental make-up. The adversities and inconveniences at the newfound home were not a matter of concern for him. The inhabitants of the Khwabgah were a group of people who followed different religions; Christians, Hindus, and Muslims. They visited churches, temples, and mosques, respectively.

Roy's in-depth research into the life of hijras is explicit in the meticulous description of their anatomy, physical features, and mental makeup. She includes numerous characters in the novel who exhibit different sexual identities. Bismillah is a person who is thrown out of her house by her husband for not bearing him a child. She is given the charge of guarding the Khwabgah against intruders (Roy 21). Razia, her companion, who has lost her mind as well as memory, is a man who likes to wear women's clothes. The incongruity with the body and mind experienced by them is reflected through the following description. "[T]he most masculine person in the Khwabgah, however, did menstruate" (Roy 21). Roy envisages a world of

[67] A mansion (Haveli).
[68] See Chapter I for an elaborate discussion of the concept.

freedom for the hijras and other transexual and transgender people. She expresses her view through Razia, an inmate of the Khwabgah who talks about a government scheme, "a secret unutilized scheme (dao pech[69], she called it) . . . they would all live together in a housing colony and be given government pensions and would no longer need to earn their living doing what she described as *badtameezi*-bad behaviour-anymore" (Roy 22). Here, Roy underscores the fact that the government has done nothing to ensure livelihood for the non-normative people. They are forced to engage either in sex work or begging. Excluded from the mainstream and side-lined and segregated from society, they lead a life of estrangement and deprivation. They are considered as aberrations who lead an abnormal life. Nimmo Gorakhpuri, a friend of Aftab at the Khwabgah, once asks him, "D'you know why God made Hijras? . . . No, why? It was an experiment. He decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So he made us" (Roy 23). Her words exemplify the suffocation and alienation experienced by the marginalized sexual minorities, and their subsequent identity crisis.

Aftab was not able to digest her words in the beginning. He felt that everyone was happy at the Khwabgah. He understood the true significance of her words only when he was fourteen. The anatomical changes explicit in his body evoked repugnance in him. He became tall, muscular features of his body became prominent, and hair began to grow on his face and eyebrows. His voice cracked. He lost his sweet voice, and developed a masculine voice. Gradually, he lost his interest in singing and, later on, sang only to caricature Hindi songs at hijra gatherings to

[69] The name that Razia has given to an imaginary space, where the sexual minorities can lead a liberated life.

ruin the celebrations of people who were not ready to give them money. Nimmo Gorakhpuri, comments about the bad behaviour of hijras, "'We're jackals who feed off other people's happiness we're Happiness Hunters.' Khushi-khor was the phrase she used" (Roy 24).

When the music lessons, his only source of happiness, stopped, Aftab resolved to leave the real world to find a space in the Khwabgah. Though Jahanara tried her best to take Aftab back home, he was adamant about staying in the haveli. He didn't visit his home every weekend as promised, but Jahanara Begum made sure that she sent a hot meal to Aftab at the Khwabgah for years. At times, the mother and daughter (Aftab turned Anjum) met at the dargah[70] of Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed, whereas her father, Mulaqat Ali, who was not able to accept Aftab as Anjum, kept away from her and refrained from talking to her. The father, who should function as the pillar of support during periods of crisis of his offspring, tried to escape from the situation, and thereby aggravated the feeling of alienation that she experienced.

Hijras in general, and people born with non-normative gender and sexual asymmetries, feel terribly alienated in a society where heterosexuality is the accepted norm. To escape segregation at home and society, they try to find out the community of hijras, and become an inmate. This is a common practice noticeable among hijras, "Most hijras' defining characteristic is leaving home to become a part of the hijra community, a community which removes itself from wider society and teaches its lessons in secret" ("Third Gender" 1). It is only in this newfound home that they feel a sense of belonging and can express their real self. Hijras,

[70] The tomb of a Muslim saint (Dargah).

transgenders, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, intersex, and transsexuals are excluded from the traditionally accepted definition of human. A redefinition or a re-articulation of the human becomes mandatory to incorporate all of them. Butler suggests, "we can only rearticulate or re-signify the basic categories of ontology, of being human, of being gendered, of being recognizably sexual to the extent that we submit ourselves to a process of cultural translation" (Butler, *Undoing* 38). The commonly accepted definition of a human being doesn't even acknowledge or give space for transgenders or hijras. For the same reason, knowledge about their life, their anatomy, their longings, and desires are limited. But research works conducted in this field reveal the different nuances of hijra life. Richards et al. assert:

> *Hijra* can be subcategorized-with *born hijra* typically possessing ambiguous genitalia at birth (as with some-though not all-intersex individuals), and *made hijra* who often come to their identity in part through a lack of attraction to women-historically positioning them as 'incomplete men'. This delineation is by no means sufficient, as *hijra* also disidentify both with being male and masculinity. (19)

Hijra community is an autonomous body with its own rules and rituals. When a hijra is inducted into a hijra household, an initiation ceremony is conducted.

> A young person is initiated by following a *guru*, or teacher, who will teach the *chela*[71], or disciple, in the hijra ways of life. This includes leaving their home to live in community with other hijras, to learn the ritual roles that they

[71] Disciple or daughter (Revathi, *Truth* 25).

> perform in Hindu households. Hijras are expected to perform dances, songs, and blessings at both births and weddings of Hindus. ("Third Gender" 1)

Soon after Aftab entered into the Khwabgah, he was exhilarated with happiness as this new world offered all that were denied to him earlier. "The next night at a small ceremony, he was presented with a green Khwabgah dupatta and initiated into the rules and rituals that formally made him a member of the Hijra community" (Roy 25). The green dupatta is a symbol of acceptance. His entry into the Khwabgah can be looked upon as an entry into a Third Space where he felt liberated. It provided Aftab a passage to become Anjum. She[72] was able to appear the way she liked; she wore "the sequined, gossamer kurtas and pleated Patiala salwars . . . silver anklets, glass bangles and dangling earrings" (Roy 26). She embraced all these markers of femininity. She pierced her nose and wore a nose-pin, outlined her eyes with kohl, applied glossy red lipstick, and plaited her hair (Roy 26). She looked even more beautiful than the real biological woman. "She learned to exaggerate the swing in her hips when she walked and to communicate with the signature spread-fingered Hijra clap" (Roy 27), which only another hijra could decode. The unique pattern of a hijra community is outlined as follows. The hijra communities has heads who have control over particular houses.

> Households will have leaders or *gurus* who function to organise the finances collected from the work of the *hijra* within the house, and prospective *hijra* require sponsorship from a *guru*. Many *hijra* undergo an operation

[72] After the sex reassignment surgery, Aftab assumes the name Anjum. Hence, after the surgery the pronoun "she" is used.

> (traditionally by another *hijra*) to remove the penis and testicles, without vaginal construction. This defines the *hijra* as neither man nor woman. (Richards et al. 19)

Kulsoom Bi had a thorough knowledge about hijras; she talked about the glorious past of the hijras, when they were treated as confidantes of the palace, taking care of the wives and mothers of the emperors. She adds, "we are not just *any* Hijras from *any* place. We are the Hijras of Shahjahanabad" (Roy 49). She lived in the memory of a time when they were treated with importance and were not ostracized by society. "The Khwabgah was called Khwabgah . . . , because it was where special people, *blessed* people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya. In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated" (Roy 53). Initially, Anjum, too, enjoyed the liberation she felt at the Khwabgah.

The inmates of the Khwabgah and all hijras from the city celebrated her 18th birthday with pomp and glory. That night Anjum felt like a new bride on her wedding night. "She awoke distressed to find that her sexual pleasure had expressed itself into her beautiful new garment like a man's" (Roy 27). The humiliation she felt was intense; she realized the incongruency of her body and mind, and how difficult it was to live as a woman in a man's body. The identity crisis confronted by hijras is highlighted here. Kulsoom Bi consoled her softly, telling her there was "no reason to be ashamed of anything . . . Hijras were chosen people, beloved of the Almighty. The word *Hijra*, she said, meant a Body in which a Holy Soul lives" (Roy 27). To overcome the humiliation that Anjum experienced, Kulsoom Bi suggested

an operation to heal her male part as done by herself and Nimmo. The legend behind the practice of castration of hijras is encapsulated in the following observation. “The practice of castration and feminine identification originated with the story of the goddess appearing in a dream to an impotent prince and ordering him to remove his genitals and serve her as a woman or experience divine punishment” (Richards et al. 20).

Anjum volunteered to go through the surgery. It was not an easy one, but required great levels of patience and endurance. After the whole process, Anjum “felt as though a fog had lifted from her blood, and she could finally think clearly” (Roy 28). Kulsoom Bi provided financial support for the surgery and other related procedures. “Anjum paid her back over the years, several times over . . . . though the ‘tendencies’ that Dr. Nabi had cautioned her father about remained, Dr. Mukhtar’s pills did un-deepen her voice” (Roy 28). Her voice lost the charm it had; she could no longer sing in her sweet voice again. “The vagina, however, turned out to be a scam. It worked, but not in the way he said it would, not even after two corrective surgeries” (Roy 28). The lack of scientific advancement in this area puts the lives of such sexual minorities into trouble. Proper researches have to be done in order to redress these issues. “Anjum lived in the Khwabgah with her patched-together body and her partially realized dreams for more than thirty years” (Roy 29).

At the Khwabgah, many of her ambitions remained unfulfilled; she desired to lead a normal life outside its strictness, and longed to be a mother. It was this longing for motherhood that prompted her to safeguard the little girl of about three years old, whom she stumbled upon the steps of a Juma Masjid. When nobody turned up to own or claim the child, Anjum took her to the Khwabgah to care her

like a mother and named her Zainab. There, the child was showered with love by many mothers, and in a few weeks, she began to call Anjum, Mummy, as she had taught her. Both the fictional character, Anjum, and the real character, Revathi, harbour within them a longing to be a mother, but motherhood remains a remote dream for these transwomen.

Anjum's plan to leave the Khwabgah, and live with Zainab as a typical mother and daughter was thwarted by the rise of anti-Muslim riots during the Gujarat massacre. While making a religious pilgrimage to a dargah, she was entrapped in the riot, and was spared only because she was a hijra, "Don't kill her, brother, killing Hijras bring bad luck" (Roy 62). "They left her alive Un-killed. Un-hurt . . . Butchers' Luck. That's all she was" (Roy 63). When Anjum returned to the Khwabgah, she refused to speak anything about the atrocities that she had confronted during the riot. Zainab moved away from her, and chose to live with Saeeda. All these events brought about a drastic change in Anjum's behaviour; she became secretive and rebellious; a kind of insubordination was visible in her. Kulsoom Bi disagreed with her men's attire, and her desire to dress Zainab in boy's clothes. She detested the hierarchy, and the manifestations of power that was developing inside the Khwabgah. This eventually prompted her to leave the Khwabgah altogether, leaving Zainab under the care of another inmate of the Khwabgah, Saeeda. At the age of forty-five, Anjum expressed her decision to leave the Khwabgah. Her father was dead, and her mother was living with her brother and family in one section of her house, and the other section was rented out. "Anjum was welcome to visit occasionally, but not to stay . . . . Anjum had nowhere to go" (Roy 29).

After leaving the Khwabgah, Anjum moved to a graveyard. She unrolled a threadbare carpet in the city graveyard near the government hospital she called home. There in the graveyard, she started living as naturally as a tree. “When people called her names-clown without a circus, queen without a palace-she let the hurt blow through her branches, like a breeze and used the music of her rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain” (Roy 1). She was left to survive in peace only when “Ziauddin, the blind Imam . . . befriended her and began to visit her” (Roy 1). Her uniqueness as a person is emphasized by Roy, “Who says my name is Anjum? I’m not Anjum, I’m Anjuman. I’m a mehfil, I’m a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing” (Roy 2). The graveyard, with its eerie silence, dreaded by all, wrought no change in Anjum. She felt that the spirit of the dead protected her, and she made her bed in between the graves of her relatives. Her helplessness and desolation made her braver, and she became impervious to adversities. She took the resolution to withstand and survive, overcoming all obstacles and not to relent. She wanted to make her life meaningful.

The support that she got profusely from her friends helped her a lot in coping with the new environment. The presence of people like Ziauddin, Saddam Hussain, D. D. Gupta, a contractor who helped her to build a temporary shack in the graveyard, and other well-wishers of Anjum made her life in the graveyard easier. She developed the graveyard into a home not only for the fallen people belonging to different religions, caste, colour, and creed, but for the wounded and discarded animals and birds as well. Anjum named it Jannat Guest House, meaning paradise (Roy 68), and later on, it began to function as a funeral parlour also, where unclaimed dead bodies were bathed, dried, and perfumed. Imam Ziauddin said the

prayers, and Jannat Guest House was renamed Jannat House and Funeral Services (Roy 80).

In this novel, Roy provides space not only to sexual minorities, orphans, and destitute, but to the dispossessed, and the disinherited who do not have a home of their own. Jannat Guest House turns into a big family providing accommodation to all of them. It functions as the Third Space,[73] a liberated space that offers new possibilities. Roy introduces a strong character named S. Tilottama, born to a Syrian Christian unwed mother and a Paraya, an untouchable father, who is raised as an orphan by her own mother. Even though Tilo is deprived of love and parental care, she grows up to be a liberated and empowered lady capable of withstanding the odds in life. She is portrayed as a lady who do not have a past, a family, a community, a people, or even a home. Jannat Guest House becomes her final abode, where she finds refuge along with an orphaned child whom she names Miss Udaya Jabeen. With dauntless courage and determination, Anjum creates an identity for the marginalized community, including herself, by breaking the shackles of confinement. Here, Roy talks not about a fixed identity but an identity that transgresses all the boundaries and artificial borders. Roy paints an ideal world where each and every inmate is free to live their life. Jannat Guest House becomes home to an array of the excluded: untouchables, Muslim converts, addicts, hijras, and abandoned babies Miss Udaya Jabeen and Zainab.

While Roy uses a fictional character to disclose the sufferings of transgenders, sexual minorities, and the destitute, Revathi gives a graphic

[73] Discussed in detail in Chapter I.

description of her own experiences in her autobiography *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*. Both Roy and Revathi, focus on the life of transgenders who are denied a space in the binary thinking. They are the threshold people who do not belong to the male/female binary. In binary thinking, which enforces oppositional dichotomy, both male and female are represented, while sexual minorities are excluded. As Lefebvre has envisaged, categorical closure implied in the binary shall be dismantled to give space to those who presence is not acknowledged. The intense longing to be accepted as a human being makes the life of transgenders an incessant search for an emancipatory space. This liberatory space is emblematic of the Third Space. She delineates the unpleasant experiences that she has undergone throughout her life, and how she tries to overcome these hardships by her relentless struggle against gender oppression. She implores to redefine and restructure the commonly accepted patterns of the gender system which side-line the LGBTQIA+ community. She challenges the age-old binary gender system, and wants society to accept, include and acknowledge the presence of people like her.

Born in Namakkal taluk of Salem district as a transgender, Revathi had to endure various difficulties due to her difference in sexual identity. Her parents named her Doraisammy. But gradually, in the process of growing up, Doraisammy understood that deep within him he held a desire to be a woman. He was a child full of doubts and anxieties because of his sexual difference. He enjoyed doing the "womanly" chores, sweeping the front yard, drawing kolams,[74] playing "girls' games" along with girls, and helping his mother in the kitchen (Revathi, *Truth* 3).

[74] A culturally significant floor drawing at the entrance of a house using rice flour or coloured flour. It is mostly done by women (Kolam).

People insulted him by calling names. "'Hey, Number 9!', 'female thing', and 'female boy'. Some even teased . . . saying 'Aren't you a boy? Why do you walk like a girl? Why do you wear girls' clothes?'" (Revathi, *Truth* 4). At school, he was intimidated and humiliated, both by teachers and students, for behaving like a girl. He was even punished by his teacher for speaking like a girl and for showing coyness like that of a girl.

Doraisammy felt this behaviour to be that of his self. He did not feel any kind of strangeness. He said, "it was like eating for me-just as I would not stop eating because someone asked me not to eat, I felt I could not stop being a girl, because others told me I ought to be so" (Revathi, *Truth* 7). Once, when he took up the role of Chandramathi in *Harishchandra,* he received accolades for his exceptional performance. They said he looked and "acted like a real woman" (Revathi, *Truth* 9). He relished this comment as he could give expression to his real feelings, and find fulfilment through role-play. He felt a special attraction towards young men and the boys who did not bully him. He wondered whether this was right or wrong or natural. He asked himself, "Why did I love men? Was I mad? Was I the only one who felt this way? Or were there others like me, elsewhere in the world? Would I find them, if indeed they were there?" (Revathi, *Truth* 14). He couldn't curb the "irrepressible femaleness" (Revathi, *Truth* 14) that he felt surging within him. The emotional perplexity that Revathi experiences when she was Doraisammy is similar to the observations made by Barry Fisher and Jeffrey S. Akman while talking about the confusion of sexual minorities during their adolescent period,

> They may become more aware of behavior that is considered gender atypical, having sexual or emotional fantasies involving a same gender friend, or feeling aroused when seeing or touching someone of the same sex. Individuals will also realize that those feelings are likely to be viewed negatively by their society . . . . Adolescents may also react with shame from their own internalized values and judge the attractions as deviant or unhealthy. (Jones and Marjorie 4)

As he grew up, he experienced anatomical changes taking place in his body and felt like "A woman trapped in a man's body" (Revathi, *Truth* 15). The disturbance he felt was so acute that he slowly stopped going to school. Instead, he used to steal money from his father's purse to sneak out for movies. Movies helped him to escape from his worries at least for a period of two and half hours, as he could identify himself with the heroines of the movie. His siblings addressed him as girl-boy (Revathi, *Truth* 15) and punished him severely for not attending school, and for his failure in the examination. Being a transgender, Revathi has to face torture and bullying throughout her life, and her autobiography abounds in the description of her stoic endurance, and bold resistance to adverse circumstances.

Revathi reminisces in her autobiography about the Mariamman Festival of her village. Girls beautifully adorned in silk skirts and half saris carried lamp offerings to the temple. Doraisammy always wanted to dress and behave like a woman. He used to examine them keenly, their mannerisms and behavior. He examined himself in front of the mirror to learn about his body, and to find whether there was any connection between his body and mind, the reality of being a male,

and the desire to be a female. The other children took advantage of his feminine appearance. The emotional perplexity that she experienced during her days as Doraisammy is reflected in these lines. “To the world, it appeared that I was dressing up and playing a woman, but inside, I felt I was a woman.” (Revathi, *Truth* 12). Here, in accordance with the observation made by Butler, Doraisammy performs the “sexually unperformable” through gender identification (Butler, *Bodies* 180). His family could not approve of his dressing up as a woman, and he regretted for not being born as a woman. He took part in the dance program, and acted as a girl. This change of role was the only time he felt real. When others considered that it was a disguise, a female disguise, he felt that it was not a disguise. He believed that he had given form to his real feelings by enacting the role of a woman dancer. Back in his men’s clothes, he felt that he was in disguise and had left his real self behind (Revathi, *Truth* 16). Transgender narratives have often mentioned this desire to cross-dress which is also called transvestism.

> Transvestism has become the accepted term for the desire of a certain group of people to dress in the clothes of the opposite sex. This term, first used by Magnus Hirschfeld has the disadvantage that it names a disturbance of behavior and emotion after only one of its symptoms, although the most conspicuous one. This symptom, which is also known as ‘cross-dressing,’ is the symbolic fulfilment of a deep-seated and more or less intense urge suggesting a disharmony of the total sexual sense, a sexual indecision or a disassociation of the physical and mental sexuality. (Stryker and Whittle 45)

Through cross-dressing, they exhibit their hidden desire to be acknowledged by society as the opposite sex. They imitate the mannerisms and dressing style of the opposite sex. Revathi's transvestism is a signal of the mental confusion she has in choosing her gender and the transsexualism inherent in her. A transexual is different from a transvestite. Transsexualism

> indicates more than just playing a role. It denotes the intense and often obsessive desire to change the entire sexual status including the anatomical structure. While the male transvestite, *enacts* the role of a woman, the transsexualist wants to *be* one and *function* as one, wishing to assume as many of her characteristics as possible, physical, mental and sexual. (Stryker and Whittle 46)

Revathi during her adolescent period began to feel certain changes in her body which made her feel anxious. The ambivalent state of mind she had, when she lived as Doraisammy, in a hostile environment showcases the pathetic condition these sexual minorities had to go through. She wondered why God created her half male and half female, and not wholly male or wholly female. The small-town life of Doraisammy began to get altered with his rendezvous with some young men on top of the hill who behaved just like him, female inside and male outside. He connected with them instantly, and could relate himself to their behaviour and feelings. Very soon, they shared an emotional fraternity, exchanging their anxieties, likings, thoughts, and dreams about life. He looked upon them as his *thozhis*,[75] and danced and enjoyed during those short intervals. They addressed each other as women, and

[75] Female comrades (Revathi, *Truth* 18).

talked about their life, sex, and various other matters concerning them. He was pained to know about the cruelty with which a rowdy gang treated his friend by forcing him to do *danda*[76]. Doraisammy expressed his desire "to become a woman, marry an educated man and only then have sex" (Revathi, *Truth* 19). He came to know of a woman, an *amma* in Dindigul, who had an operation and received other men like him from Mumbai and Delhi. He decided to go and meet her, and be a part of the Goddess festival (Revathi, *Truth* 20). Doraisammy's journey to Dindigul was a turning point in his life. The sari-clad women appeared like real women; they differed only in their voices. There he came to terms with his own real self, and dressed up as a woman along with his friends. A glow of pride was visible in him when someone passed a comment that he looked like the actress Revathi, and after the sex reassignment surgery, Doraisammy became Revathi. He got acquainted with the tradition of *Paampaduthi*,[77] and learned about the life-changing *nirvaanam* (Revathi, *Truth* 21-22). He started to learn more about their lives and the different terms associated with them.

At Dindigul, he felt liberated in the midst of people who shared similar feelings, emotions and experiences. This space where he experiences a sense of belonging can be identified as the Third Space. Doraisammy expressed his desire to become a *chela* to a guru so that he could enter into their world, and become one among them. A *guru* was like a mother to a *chela* who allowed the *chelas* to live along with her, and provided them with food and clothing. A *guru* accepted a *chela*

[76] Anal sex (Revathi, *Truth* 19).
[77] A traditional practice of touching the feet in which the sari-clad women gave blessings to the feminine men or hijras (Revathi, *Truth* 21).

during the *jamaat*[78], in which hijras from different places participated. A *guru* and her *chela* shared a deep bond, they loved and protected each other (Revathi, *Truth* 23). The *guru* had to pay a *thandu* (fee) before accepting a *chela* which was received by the other members of the *jamaat*, and they placed it on a plate kept in front of the *chelas.* Then the *chela* was allowed to call the *guru* as *Amma*, and *guru* would acknowledge the *chela* as her daughter (Revathi, *Truth* 25). They along with *nani*[79], *gurubais*,[80]and *kaalagurus*[81] formed a fraternity.

After his stay in Dindigul and Erode, he went back home where he was ill-treated and severely punished. His sudden disappearance and subsequent reappearance in a changed manner created an upheaval in the family, which melted down only when he narrated a crafted story that he had gone to Madurai to see a temple festival (Revathi, *Truth* 30). His hair which hijras considered as a marker of femininity had grown longer during his stay away from home, but it was ruthlessly cut down by his family. Unable to withstand the ill-treatment at home, he boarded a train to Delhi with the determination to meet his *amma*, his *guru.* He had an intense desire to confide his sufferings to someone who could understand his miserable plight.

In Delhi, he felt at home in the presence of his *guru*, and thought that his life had become meaningful. He learned a lot about hijras and their past, about a time when they were treated with reverence and respect during princely rules. They

[78] A meeting of the sari-clad elders of the hijra community (Revathi, *Truth* 23).
[79] Mother of the guru (Revathi, *Truth* 26).
[80] Sisters (Revathi, *Truth* 26).
[81] *Nani's* sister (Revathi, *Truth* 26).

waited upon queens and princesses in the palaces, but lost their position with the advent of British colonialism. "The British removed state protection from the *hijra*, described their roles as 'abominable practices of the wretches,' and passed 'laws criminalizing emasculation' which would remain after Indian independence" (Richards et al. 20).

His stay at *nani*'s place helped in moulding himself. He learned about the governmental support that they received during the period of Indira Gandhi when houses were built for them as well as for the poor. *Nani* recalled that they were treated as gods by the ancient people; they fell at their feet to seek their blessings as their prophecies were most often true and powerful (Revathi, *Truth* 44). In the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*, they were given a position of importance. An episode in the *Ramayana* narrates how hijras received a boon from Rama. When Rama went into exile for fourteen years, he asked his subjects-both men and women to go back to their houses. However, he did not include the hijras, who did not belong to either mankind or womankind, in his command. Hence, they stayed there loyally for the next fourteen years till he returned. Rama was greatly pleased at their sincerity and granted them the boon: "Whatever you speak will be true. Your words will come true" (Revathi, *Truth* 45). People believe that the hijra's words come true, and they seek their blessings and receive them with respect. The Hindi-speaking hijras perform doli-badaai, a mixture of dance, song, and dholak[82] playing. They performed it at weddings and during childbirth, and were given money in return (Revathi, *Truth* 47).

[82] Two-headed hand drum, a folk percussion instrument (Dholaka).

> It is through the Hindu faith that the *hijra* were able to gain cultural legitimacy as ritual performers for important events (such as births, festivals, and weddings). Whilst this legitimacy translated into recent recognition under Indian law through creation of a third gender category on Indian passports, *hijra* can simultaneously be heavily stigmatised. (Richards et al. 20)

Doraisammy wanted to find out the true meaning of his life. He missed being home, but detested going back as he thought of the impending tortures. When he went back home after getting the false telegram informing him that his mother was ill, he was beaten up by his siblings even at first sight till his skull cracked and bled heavily (Revathi, *Truth* 55). They believed that he had fallen under the spell of some female demon, and was going through a bad period of time. The lack of scientific knowledge regarding human diversity and its different manifestations is made evident through such false convictions. To escape from the physical assault inflicted upon him, he feigned a lie that he was coaxed by those sari-clad women, and followed them as one with a diseased mind. Both his mind and body were hurt during his short stay at Namakkal. He soon left for Delhi in search of a place where he belonged. From there, he moved to Mumbai, and then to Byculla where he was made a *chela* to a Mumbai *guru*. The *nani* of the house was sympathetic and arranged for his *nirvanam,* an operation through which the male genitals were surgically removed. Serena Nanda, in her article, "Hijras: An Alternative Sex and Gender Role in India" observes:

> Hijras call the emasculation operation *nirvan,* defined in Hinduism as liberation from finite human consciousness and the dawn of a higher consciousness. The Hindu scriptures call the beginning of this experience the 'opening of the eye of wisdom,' or second birth. The hijras, too, translate *nirvan* as rebirth, and emasculation for them is a rite of passage containing many symbolic elements of childbirth. Through emasculation, the former impotent male person dies, and a new person, endowed with the sacred (female) power of the goddess, is reborn. (Herdt 384)

The conflict between man and woman was very intense in Doraisammy's mind. He believed that this operation would help him to get rid of his dilemma. The female imprisoned within him would finally be able to spread her wings and be free. But the fear to get the core of his life removed was also there within him. He even doubted whether he would be able to come through the operation successfully (Revathi, *Truth* 69).

Revathi, along with a *gurubhai chela,* was sent to Dindigul in Tamil Nadu for the operation. They were given money (7000 rupees each) for the operation and sent in a train (Revathi, *Truth* 67). They were petrified to the core as there was no one to provide them with comfort. The operation was done by a doctor in a hospital. Revathi felt ecstasy after the operation, but had fears about the pain that might emerge after the effect of anesthesia fades. After two hours of intense pain, she vomited the bile that rushed up. After throwing up, she felt that the burning sensation had diminished, and she was reborn again. The dreamy sleep to which she fell after that felt like a dreamy passageway to her new life and new beginning

(Revathi, *Truth* 75). This transition stage in the life of Doraisammy, a male who gets transformed into a female, Revathi is a liminal passage towards self-actualisation.

People stared at them curiously, and they were looked upon as oddities during their journey back to Chennai after the sex reassignment surgery. Revathi wondered why hijras were treated so cruelly by others. "Why did God give me these feelings? Why must we be tortured by people's looks?" (Revathi, *Truth* 84). At the railway station, a woman police officer who found out that she had done an operation asked her: "Why can't you be like other men? Why can't you be normal? Find a woman, get married, and be a good householder, who works for a living? I didn't think she would understand me or my troubles. She made it seem easy, this business of being a normal man" (Revathi, *Truth* 80). Society is tailor-made to believe in the binary division of gender; they do not accept or give space to people with differences. The rigidity of the system is so strong that the deviants are always ostracized.

The transformation from male to female plunges her into a whirlpool of difficulties. Revathi recollects a terrible instance she had faced from the policemen when she lost her way home in the night. Despite being labelled as law enforcement officers and protectors of human rights, they derived sadistic pleasure in persecuting the helpless hijras. He kicked her with his boots, and stripped her naked. Revathi recalls, "When I was standing naked, he stuck his lathi where I'd had my operation and demanded that I stand with my legs apart, like a woman would. He repeatedly struck at that part with his lathi and said, 'So, can it go in there? Or is it a field one can't enter? How do you have sex then?'" (Revathi, *Truth* 206).

Nobody except a hijra could understand the true feelings of a hijra. Their meeting with *pottais*[83] on their way back after the operation gave them immense relief. They could feel an instant kinship with each other. The *pottais* considered *nirvanam* as rebirth, and those who did *nirvanam* gained special praise in the community (Revathi, *Truth* 82).

The process of *nirvanam*, as well as the convalescing period, was quite tedious and painful. They had to maintain a strict control over their diet, sleeping positions, bathing habits, etc. Forty days passed in complete care after the surgery. They were not allowed to eat fruits, drink milk, look in the mirror or see men, or comb their hair during this period of healing. The twelfth, twentieth and fortieth days were ceremonious, and were celebrated elaborately with the accompaniment of many rituals like *haldi-mehendi* followed by *puja* (Revathi, *Truth* 85). The hijra was dressed up by other hijras, and *guru* gifted her a *jok*-a green sari, a blouse and an inner skirt, and a nose-ring, anklets, and toe-rings. Songs were sung in praise of *Mata*, and the ritual of balancing a pot of milk on the heads, and pouring it into the well were performed. This was followed by a ritual in which they were asked to take off the veil covering their face, and look at *Mata*'s image and pray. After that, a mirror was given, and she was asked to look at her image (Revathi, *Truth* 86). Revathi recollects, "I could not recognize myself. My face had changed! I felt like a flower that had just blossomed. It seemed to me that my earlier male form had disappeared, and in its place was a woman. I felt exultant" (Revathi, *Truth* 88).

[83] Sari-clad feminine men (Revathi, *Truth* 24).

Revathi had gone through a liminal phase[84] during these initiation rites. She had left one world and reached another. She harboured the desire to get a partner, and wanted to settle down just like her mother and sister, but these were denied to her. She suppressed her desires as her house would not support such ideas and decisions. Eventually, she walked away from the house where she stayed, and ended up doing sex work which was done by most of the hijras to earn their living. Her sexual longings and desires forced her to take up this decision, but very soon, she started to feel disinterested as they were routinely bullied by different men, including rowdies. A feeling of fear lingered, and she discovered the horror and violence embedded in this option.

Her homecoming after *nirvana* was beset with fears. Her mother was heartbroken to see Doraisammy as Revathi. Her brothers attacked her, and insisted that she should wear men's clothes, and stop being a laughingstock in the village. She revealed that it was not merely a costume change, but a permanent transition to womanhood (Revathi, *Truth* 113). They were bothered about the humiliation that a hijra would bring to their family. Her father thought that it was her destiny to spend her life in such a way though they had tried many times to bring her mind back. They cut her hair, shaved her head, and hit her, but nothing could change her. Her father eventually accepted that if that was what she wanted from life, let it be (Revathi, *Truth* 116). Her sister and mother believed that it was fate's doing or someone's sin had visited on her. She lived a half-hidden life, hidden from society, and spoke very less when in public or rather remained quiet. Everyone in the village

[84] See chapter I for more details.

was curious to know about Doraisammy turned Revathi. She did not want to remain a burden to her family, and decided to leave to Mumbai to her old *nani*. In Mumbai, Revathi was introduced to an entirely new world. She began to dress like a film actress, and started to do sex work. "Hijra sex work is known as '*danda.*' The house where sex work was carried out is called a '*danda kantra*'" (Revathi, *Truth* 131). The lengthy stretch of the street was always in a carnival mood with men searching for bodies to have sex with, shopkeepers who sustained on the business happening thus, and the hooting and other noise (Revathi, *Truth* 130-31). She took to drinking to distract her mind from the tormenting memories of life which however became worse as time passed. Money brought her respect and position; she got a *chela* named Mya, and a mother-daughter relationship prevailed between them. But both of them were unhappy in the hijra house, and decided to leave the place.

Contrary to her earlier visits, Revathi got a warm welcome at home. Her neighbours started to address her as Revathi, and accepted her new self. She started to play the womanly roles, and participated in the procession during the Mariyamman festival. Property-related issues and the right of inheritance remain a stumbling block among the hijras and sexual minorities. During the time of the partition of her family property, their lawyer wanted Revathi to appear as Doraisammy before the court to avoid issues regarding gender. Revathi was pained at this suggestion as the hardships that she had suffered in her life to become a woman became futile when she was asked to appear as a man before the law. The property issue was settled when her siblings gave her an amount of money as her share of the property. She no longer had any claim on the property, and it was

divided among her brothers. The house was given solely to her parents. Revathi had to move out of the house to a rented place, and started doing sex work as there was no other option. Sex work was considered a crime, so the police and rowdies tortured them (Revathi, *Truth* 210). The policemen exploited the hijras, and did physical violence to them; they even robbed the hijras of the little money they had.

> A number of structural factors make sex work risky and marginalize transgender sex workers. These include those that apply to sex workers of any gender, such as criminalization, violence, sexism, racism, and ageism. They also include some that are more common specifically to transgender sex workers, such as discrimination in housing, education, and employment, and a lack of access to gender affirming and general healthcare. (Nuttbrock xi-xii)

Revathi felt abandoned and emotionally drained when even her father betrayed her by refusing to acknowledge the money that he had taken from her, promising to rewrite the will in her name. Revathi even attempted suicide as she felt deceived and exploited. Later on, her father changed the decision and rewrote the will in her name.

The tormenting experiences of Revathi as a hijra in her family and society are typical of the life of sexual minorities across the world. Hijras face difficulties in getting documents like RC and driving license. Revathi faced issues while trying to register a scooter in her name, as the name given on the ration card was Doraisammy. She had to knock at several doors to change her name on the ration card. She had to go through a similar ordeal when she planned to take a driving

license in the name of Revathi. The inspector said that he couldn't grant a license to her, as such a case was new for them. He flung the papers at her (Revathi, *Truth* 225). She was enraged at this, and said that she would approach newspaper reporters and television channels to let the people know that the government issues licenses only to men or women and not to people like her. Eventually, she received her license with the help of the driving school instructor (Revathi, *Truth* 226).

Revathi's life had been an endless journey from one place to another. At Bangalore, she met her first *chela*, Mya and three others, Mayuri, Famila, and Rithu who approached her requesting to accept them as her daughters, and support them for undergoing *nirvanam*. Revathi dissuaded them from the decision as she did not want them to go through the same harrowing situations she suffered. She persuaded them to continue their studies and enter into a job. But they remained adamant in their decision and underwent the surgery. They addressed Revathi as mummy, and she too felt a motherly affection towards them.

Revathi got acquainted with an organization named Sangama through her *chelas*. Sangama collected information on hijras, kothis, homosexuals, and other similar sexual minorities from the newspapers, weeklies, and the internet. Homosexuals are considered as criminals by society and are most often tortured. Sangama documented the violence towards homosexuals and provided a space for such people to interact and express themselves. Revathi enumerates her role in Sangama, which worked for sexual minorities.

> Our aim was to challenge stereotypical and incorrect perceptions of sexual minorities. I participated in these events and spoke about hijra culture, hijra

> ways of living, and the violence and discrimination that we faced. I also spoke about hijras and property rights and the stakes involved for someone like me who had opted to change their sex. As a spokesperson for hijra rights, I also gave interviews to newspapers and spoke at public meetings. (Revathi, *Truth* 243-44)

Revathi speaks about the condition of hijras, how they are denied education and are forced to end up in prostitution or begging. Downright rejection by family and society leaves them desperate, and some of them develop intense death wish to escape from the atrocities and cruelties inflicted upon them. Yet, some others gather strength from their sordid experiences, and assert their identity and dignity. They do not expect any sympathy from the world around but an equal treatment as humans.

Revathi did not want to court death as a means of escape, even when there were moments in her life when she had suicidal tendencies. When her father ill-treated and disinherited her, when she was rejected in love, and her marital life came to an abrupt end, she had an intense death wish. A senior staff member of Sangama, a bisexual showed affection towards her, which developed into love and eventual marriage. She was his mother, companion, office assistant, lover, and good wife (Revathi, *Truth* 274). Even though they had discussed various topics that would affect their marital life and made agreements, they couldn't develop a deep bond of love after marriage. He said, "I made a mistake by marrying you. In fact, it is one of the biggest mistakes of my life" (Revathi, *Truth* 289). He spoke for women's rights and equal partnership in relationships but failed to bring it into his own life and relationship. Though Revathi was deeply affected by this change of behaviour, she

resolved to overcome everything, and march forward in life. She realized that hijras like her should come forward, and work for the upliftment of their community. Sangama provided her with a platform to fulfill her aim, and was given a job as the office assistant (Revathi, *Truth* 241). She wanted to be an example for other hijras to follow. She became so involved in the work that she became dear to all the senior staff members and an inevitable part of Sangama. She learned more about the sexual minorities, the injustices that they faced, violations against Dalits, Adivasis, Hindu-Muslim differences and conflicts, and the effects of war on people. Revathi contributed with her own experiences of life as a hijra, and the injustices she had to face. Sangama began to grow as an organization, and more people joined them. Revathi, too, started to grow. She started visiting various colleges and universities to conduct classes for students on sexuality, identity, and culture, took part in workshops, and spoke for the hijra community with an aim to strengthen, and bring all the hijras together to fight for their rights. She wanted the world to know about their existence, and the way they were exploited.

Revathi, while tracing the legend behind the name Aravani, talks about a festival in the Koothandavar temple in Koovagam, Tamil Nadu.

> A festival is held there every year on the day of the full moon in the month of Chitirai (mid-April-mid May) and thousands of people congregate for the celebrations. Men and hijras-women do not participate in this ritual-make a vow to tie a thali to Aravan in the temple. After the temple chariot is drawn through the streets the next day and the ritual sacrifice carried out, they break their bangles and rip off their thalis. (Revathi, *Truth* 259)

The festival recognizes the presence of hijras. They are given a place of significance in the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata.* Revathi talks about the connection of the story of hijras to a legend relating to the Kurukshetra war.

> The origin of the festival can be traced back to the events of the *Mahabharata*. To ensure that they win the great war, the Pandavas have to sacrifice a young man who is perfect in every way. Only three men were considered perfect: Arjuna, Krishna and Aravan, the son of Arjuna and a Naga Princess. Since Arjuna and Krishna needed to play their part in the Kurukshetra war, Aravan agrees to be the sacrifice. As his last wish, before he steps on the sacrificial altar, he wants to marry a woman and enjoy, however fleetingly, conjugal bliss . . . Krishna assumes the form of a woman, Mohini, and marries Aravan. After a day of conjugal bliss, Aravan enters the sacrificial place. After he is sacrificed, his wife Mohini (Krishna) laments his death and assumes the garb of a widow. (Revathi, *Truth* 260)

Hijras take part in the festival, and showcase their desires to dress up and appear beautiful. Hijras came to be known as *Aravanis* in Tamil Nadu from this festival. They practice the rituals which has developed out of this legend. Hijras wear silk sarees and adorn themselves with flowers, and are dressed up like brides. The thalis they wear are removed when Aravan is taken for sacrifice. After this, they wear the white sari of a widow, and remain in that state for the next three days. After feeding at least ten poor people, they change their sari into a coloured one. There are many such instances in Indian epics. A review of historical documents reveals:

> Transgender or cross-gender dress and behavior have historical and contemporary precedents in many cultures. Many deities of antiquity had unequivocal characteristics of both male and female sexes. Cave paintings of such deities, perhaps representing true biologically intersex persons, have been found in Cro-Magnon[85] dwellings. (Jones and Marjorie 96)

Revathi expresses her concern over the discrimination shown to hijras, "In India, Ardhanareeswara, who is half male and half female, is worshipped. Why would such a country abuse hijras? How could those of you who have read the story of Shikandi in *Mahabharat* refuse to understand *hijras*? (Revathi, *Our Lives* 2). Hijras have been discriminated against while undergoing surgeries, attempting to access services from governmental institutions, in claiming property rights, and in accessing relevant certificates. She insists that the hijras as a whole shall organize themselves and appeal to the state to address their demands. The state shall accept people like her, and give them their rights, the right to sex reassignment surgery, and offer help in such surgeries. She doesn't want people to consider hijras as persons with disease, but rather as normal human beings with natural feelings and emotions. The laws and the system have made them beg and end up in sex work. She wants the state to grant them ration rights, housing rights, employment, and medical care, just like normal people.

Revathi presented her testimony at the World Social Forum held in Mumbai, where she spoke about her life, the hijra community, the ill-treatment at home, from

[85] Population of early *Homo sapiens* dating from the Upper Palaeolithic Period in Europe (Cro-Magnon).

society, from police, about the law that did not protect them, and about her unhappy married life. As a part of her job at Sangama, she met *aravanis* from different locations of Tamil Nadu, and shared their life experiences, joys, and sorrows. She came to know that many others were also subjected to similar pain as that of her. She realized that her pain was nothing when compared to the atrocities inflicted upon other hijras.

The interviews that she has conducted with various hijras in different parts of Tamil Nadu are graphically portrayed in her work, *Unarvum Uruvavum,* which is a truthful documentation of the life of hijras. This pioneering work paved the way for many more writings about the transgender community. Revathi pays attention to maintain the polyphonic nature of the life narratives of this marginalized group. In this work, she gives us a panoramic view of the injustice meted out to sexual minorities. The torturous life that the hijras have lived, and the humiliations that they have suffered on a daily basis while earning their livelihood underscore the deprived state of the transgender.

Both Anjum and Revathi are the representatives of sexual minorities who are always marginalized and exploited due to their non-conformity to heteronormativity. Their sexual incongruities make their lives insecure. Anjum and Revathi, after their concerted effort, try to find a space for themselves in society. Anjum feels at home in the Jannat Guest House along with some like-minded people who are rejected by mainstream society. She finds happiness in their company at the graveyard. This make-belief home which is a miniature secular world, entertains all the destitute of the area, and they live there with unity and love. Religion, caste, creed, colour, or

class have no role to play in this newfound land of liberation. The space that Roy and Revathi envisage in their works is the Third Space, a space which accepts differences, and offers respect to all human beings. The mission of both Roy and Revathi is to bring about favourable changes in the attitude of society towards sexual minorities.

Slow progress is becoming visible in society's attitude towards transgenders. The recent amendments made to the law, and the passing of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill on November 26, 2019, provide recognition to them. The Bill defines a trans person as someone whose gender does not match the one assigned at birth. It prohibits discrimination against them in employment, education, housing, health care, and other services ("Transgender"). Supreme Court of India passed the judgement, "that the right to choose one's gender identity is integral to the right to lead a life of dignity which is guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India" (Revathi, *Life* 229).

However, the recent deaths and suicides of transgenders point to the fact that their grievances are not adequately redressed. The report of the tragic suicide of Anannyah Kumari Alex in her own flat in Edappally, Kochi, on 22 July 2021, after undergoing an unsuccessful sexual reassignment surgery brings to light the low progress made in the field of Medical Science relating to the problems of transgenders ("Transgender Activist"). The resolution made by the transgender couple Rithwik and Thripthi Shetty to donate their body after death to the Anatomy Department of Govt. Medical College, Ernakulam to conduct research upon the

unique anatomy of transgenders assumes greater significance in this context ("Maranashesham").

Numerous studies are being made about trans identities and their existence. The transgenders have begun to come out of their cocoon, gathering courage to articulate their condition, and educate society. They have started to speak for themselves, and motivate others of their community to raise their voice for their rights. Academia has started to study them, and theorize their lives. This gives them courage to speak out, and seek equality and justice. They implore the government to make new policies and amendments in laws, and to provide new opportunities for them. Governmental support shall be provided to them in health care and in various medical needs like hormonal therapy and sex reassignment surgery.

Conclusion

The concept of the Third Space, propounded by eminent theoreticians and critical thinkers is gaining great relevance in the current scenario of globalization and mass migration. The general patterns of perceiving gender issues are also undergoing significant changes. The Third Space problematizes dichotomized thinking inherent in the binary system, and gives space to those who are excluded from the binary. The origin of the Third Space can be traced back to Arnold van Gennep's theory of liminality introduced in *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) published in 1909. Victor Turner revived Gennep's theory in 1963, and it became an important area of research in socio-cultural studies. Liminality addresses the complex issues of human existence, and the in-betweenness experienced by "threshold people" (Turner 95) who are pushed to the periphery. The Third Space has similar overtones with liminality as it refers to an interstitial space between the binaries. The space between the strict binary division of gender, race, ethnicity, language, or community comes within the purview of the Third Space. It gives space to those who are excluded from the binary, accepts and accommodates differences, and carries within it a revolutionary potential for emancipation and empowerment.

In this thesis entitled "Inscriptions of the Third Space: An Exploration of Select Contemporary Narratives", an attempt is made to observe and analyze the problems faced by those who reside in the in-between spaces, and marginalized due to the difference in sexuality, race, class, and caste. Third Space thinking envisages dismantling the closed categories implicit in binary oppositions. An openness in

thinking and practice has become the most essential one in the current world order, where numerous factions are formed and boundaries drawn.

The main observations made while analyzing the narratives selected for the study are brought together in this concluding chapter. Both fictional and real-life stories are incorporated into the study. The narratives are chosen from different genres with specific intention to isolate the instances of the Third Space inscribed in them. Chapter I brings together the theoretical postulations of different critical thinkers and theoreticians like Bhabha, Soja, Lefebvre, Anzaldua, and hooks relating to the Third Space. The significant issues related to migration, identity, border, and gender which necessitate the emergence of the Third Space are dealt with in detail in Chapters II, III and IV respectively. Binary thinking prioritizes the first space, and the second space is relegated to a secondary position in the hierarchical structure. Most significantly, the liminal space existing in-between the two has been rendered non-existent. In this process, a certain group of people are socially and culturally excluded from mainstream society, and are treated as the Other. The identity and existence of those who reside in this interstitial passage have been problematized. In fact, in the current scenario, those who reside in these threshold spaces are on the increase due to globalization, liberalization, and the concomitant migration, resulting in the emergence of hybrid people with multiple identities and subjectivities. Hybridity has become more prominent in the borderlands, where people belonging to varied ethnic groups, following different cultures, religions, languages, and ways of life comingle and interact. As Baker observes, “hybridity is here to stay and there is no going back” (2). He states that hybridity pervades all aspects of our lives,

bringing about a deeper philosophical and epistemological change, and notices that "as we move beyond the cusp of the twenty-first century, we are moving further and further away from the binary 'either/or' definitions that the enlightenment and Marxism bequeathed to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (2). The migrants, the diaspora, the border landers as well as the sexual minorities go through severe identity crises during this period of transition. The age-old conviction in reproductive sexuality and heteronormativity excluded people with gender differences from normative sexuality; all those who deviate from heterosexuality and follow homosexuality were looked down upon as aberrations. Such denial of space is becoming conspicuously pervasive in contemporary society.

In the colonial discourses, hybridity was devalued as a potentially dangerous phenomenon that might impinge upon the genetic purity of the whites due to the miscegenation caused by the sexual union with ethnic people; later on, the term lost its derogatory nature, and currently, it has become a positive term, and people celebrate hybridity. The sense of purity attributed to culture, caste, color, race, and ethnicity is interrogated. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, argues that hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or "purity" of cultures are untenable (55), while Anzaldua questions the purity of race and challenges the theory of pure Aryan race and the racial purity of the whites (77). Bhabha makes a critique of cultural diversity and cultural difference that have emerged in the postcolonial scenario, and observes that cultural diversity retains within it an inherent hierarchy, whereas cultural difference acknowledges and accepts the differences without imposing any hierarchy or cultural dominance (Rutherford 208). Cultural difference,

cultural collision, and cultural hybridity have been integrated into the socio-cultural patterns of society, leading to a paradigm shift in the accepted notions of culture. To describe and define such transformative states taking place in society, critical thinkers, academicians, intellectuals, and writers across the globe formulated different theories. Bhabha named the in-between space opened up in the binary as "the Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha, *Location* 54), which has the potential to accept and accommodate differences, and give space to those who are excluded from the binary. This is a productive space, where new cultures and production of meanings take place. Bhabha interrogates the traditional holistic nature of cultures, and emphasizes the need to recognize the porous borders between cultures, which permeates into each other, leading to a cultural translation (Rutherford 210). Thus, he suggests that all forms of culture are related to each other, and at the same time retain cultural difference. The articulation of cultural difference leads to the production of in-between spaces, which opens up the possibilities for the emergence of new identities.

Soja, an acclaimed spatial theorist, endorses Lefebvre's view of linking historicality, sociality, and spatiality in a strategically balanced and transdisciplinary "triple dialectic" and labels this new awareness the "Thirdspace". Soja observes that this three-sided sensibility of historicality-sociality-spatiality has initiated tremendous changes in the ways we think about space (Soja, *Thirdspace* 6). Both Soja and Lefebvre disagree with the categorical closures implicit in the concept of binary division, and they have endeavored to give space to the Other. Soja

underscores the necessity of understanding Thirdspace, which is all-inclusive and has the potential to bring about emancipatory change and freedom from domination.

Anzaldua's *mestiza* consciousness aligns closely with the concept of the Third Space as postulated by Bhabha, Soja, and Lefebvre. This theory is an inclusive one in which no race, caste, colour, creed, or culture is inferior to any other dominant race or culture. The formulation of this theory is necessitated by the exclusion and marginalization experienced by the people residing in the borderlands, including herself. Her multiple languages, races, sexuality, and culture have influenced her in propounding this theory. The borderlanders, in general, residing in the interstitial spaces go through similar experiences of marginalization and discrimination. Through the *mestiza* consciousness, Anzaldua tries to redefine the traditional binary thinking which privileges one over the other. She opens up an interstitial space in-between this strict binary division by adding a third element which is labelled as *mestiza* consciousness (77). This concept is introduced in her autohistoria-teoria, *Borderlands*.

Quite similar to the theoretical postulations of Anzaldua, hooks, a renowned theoretician, social activist, and critical thinker, also recognized the underlying power of the margins as a space of resistance. hooks's writings impart strength and hope to marginalized people, and fill them with energy to resist oppression and exploitation. Her counter-hegemonic works function as a beacon of light to a vast number of people hidden in darkness, and expose the deep-rooted racial, gender, and class-based discrimination and oppression prevalent in society.

The growing significance of Third Space thinking in academic discussions and theoretical parlance is underscored by all the major critical thinkers discussed in this thesis. The narratives selected for the study demarcate the paradigm shift taking place in the socio-cultural patterns of society. The introductory chapter has given the rationale and objectives of the study along with the definition of the title, and a brief discussion on the oeuvre of the writers. The major theories and concepts that substantiate the ideas discussed in the thesis are outlined in the Introductory Chapter.

Chapter I of the thesis brings together the expressions of the Third Space in select narratives. It traces the origin of the theory of the Third Space, its trajectory of development, and the theoreticians associated with it. The study is based primarily upon the theories of the Third Space introduced by Bhabha, Soja, and Lefebvre. A diachronic study reveals the close resemblance shared by the theory of the Third Space and liminality. Arnold Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's contributions to the concept of liminality have been examined. "The Third Space of enunciation" and hybridity put forward by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*; the discussions on Thirdspace by Soja in his seminal work *Thirdspace;* and the criticism of the categorical closures implicit in the binary logic by Henry Lefebvre have been used as the framework of the study. Anzaldua's *mestiza* consciousness and hooks's theories of resistance from the margin, which closely align with the concept of the Third Space, also function as the basis of the study. The inscriptions of the Third Space, predominant in select narratives, are carefully analysed. The Third Space is a liberatory space that accepts differences, and offers new possibilities. This inclusive

space questions the rigidity of binary thinking, and highlights the deficiencies inherent in such divisions. It is a space of creativity that offers power to the people trapped in the margins to fight against exploitation and oppression. In this process, hybrids, migrants, borderlanders, and other marginalized communities excluded from the binary will be able to assert their identity, and create a new world of freedom.

In Chapter II, "Migration, Hybridity, and Identity in *Ibis* Trilogy," an attempt is made to trace the root cause for the formation of hybrid identities and the production of the Third Space. These hybrid identities determine the transactions of culture and society during the postcolonial period, and become a key area of interest in postcolonial and cultural studies. Essential/closed/originary identities are problematized. The fluidity of identity and the transformatory nature of culture have become significant topics of discussion. Migration of people from one place to another lead to an exponential growth in the number of individuals with hybrid identities.

Amitav Ghosh explores such cultural changes engendered by hybridity and migration in the *Ibis* trilogy. Set in the oceanic space, the trilogy underscores the impact of migration upon the maritime migrants. Ghosh looks upon the oceanic space as a Third Space. Even though many writers over the centuries have used oceanic space as a framework for their fictional works, Amitav Ghosh's treatment of oceanic space in the *Ibis* trilogy is of special significance, as it focuses on the emergence of the Third Space, which offers immense possibilities for asserting one's identity and selfhood.

Amitav Ghosh works upon this maritime discourse, and examines how the identity of people occupying the ship space is different from that of the land-bound people. The *Ibis* functions as a microcosm of the world where the trans-national, trans-racial, and trans-cultural migrants co-exist. Their identities undergo change in accordance with the changing circumstances. Each and every character occupying the oceanic space has ample reasons to escape from the land. Hurdles of life engendered by caste, colour, creed, ethnicity, and nationality function as the predominant factors which make their life on land torturous and unbearable. They have embarked on the ship leaving behind an unpleasant past. The new phase into which they have entered is a liminal space, a space of transition that has the capacity to transform their life. A fundamental shift has taken place in their life, the moment they welcomed their identity on the ship space as *jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens*. A feeling of unbreakable bond is inherent in their acceptance of the appellation as ship siblings, and it proves to be so in the case of a majority of this fraternity. The passengers on board the *Ibis* improvise and enunciate a culture of their own which is not an imitation of the homogenized holistic and stable culture to which they were accustomed to in their past life. Instead, they reject hegemonic culture and formulate an entirely new culture, an all-inclusive culture in which each and every one is respected, accepting their cultural differences.

Deeti, acknowledged by the ship siblings as *bhauji*, becomes the matriarch of the *Ibis* trilogy. She is present in all the three books of the trilogy. Ghosh has given life to such a character to represent the life of the peasantry, whose life is torpedoed by the advent of colonialism. The forced cultivation of opium in the place

of food crops made their life miserable and poverty-stricken. She is also a victim of female subjugation, domestic violence, and patriarchal oppression. Through Deeti, Ghosh reproduces a microcosm of a larger landscape where the subject position of a female is interrogated. The trilogy underscores the stoic resistance offered by Deeti when she lost the agency on her own body due to domestic exploitation. She flaunts the rigidity of casteism, the age-old convictions and belief systems relating to religion when she acquires the mental strength to escape to a world of freedom with the lower caste Chamar, Kalua. Ghosh represents Kalua as a masculine epitome of unbeatable strength, capable of offering resistance to oppression and exploitation. His attempt to save Deeti from the funeral pyre, and escape in an improvised raft are all liberatory gestures aimed at establishing his identity. Deeti finds in Kalua the mental and physical strength to protect her, and she finds in him the qualities which she has yearned to resist oppression. Her expression can be looked upon as the gesture of the subjugated and colonized female enacted in the context of a household with the ultimate aim to embrace a liberated space. Their attempt to rename as Aditi and Maddow Colver signals their strong will to erase all the unpleasant memories associated with their past life, and their readiness to accept and live an altogether new and liberated life. Ghosh proves that a fixed, unitary, and closed identity is a misnomer and that identity is fluid and flexible. As Hall has stated, identity is always “in process” (Hall and Gay 2).

Zachary Reid, a man of mixed breed, is introduced in the trilogy to show how the oppressed and the exploited subalterns offer resistance to racial discrimination, and how they challenge the hegemonic dominance of the whites by

appropriating their space. Zachary resolves to find a space in the ship, a liminal oceanic space floating in-between lands offering new possibilities. From this space, he climbs the ladders of success. He is depicted in *Sea of Poppies* as an amiable young sailor, who is eager to be passed off as a gentleman, and very soon, due to various unforeseen circumstances, he is promoted as the second-mate of the ship, *Ibis*. When he reappears in the final book of the *Ibis* trilogy, *Flood of Fire,* he has been exonerated from the crime of assisting five fugitives to escape from the *Ibis*. His rise from the position of Mr. Burnham's ship's carpenter to the captain of the ship is instantaneous. His association with Mrs. Burnham plays a pivotal role in inculcating in him the greed for money, and he metamorphoses into a cunning businessman. The morally degenerate Zachary Reid becomes corrupted to the core, and he enters the world of the opium business by amassing wealth. He joins hands with Lenny Chang, the biggest opium retailer in China, along with the British opium merchant Mr. Burnham, and succeeds in the business. Zachary Reid, identified as a mulatto/metiff and labelled as black in the ship's logbook, rises to the position of a business tycoon through his steady effort and strong willpower. In this process, he dismantles the center/margin, white/black, superior/inferior dichotomy, and reclaims an all the more powerful space among the elitist bureaucrats of the day. During the period of the rise of capitalism, Zachary is represented as a typical migrant of the times, with an insatiable greed for money, who scrupulously rises to power, sacrificing all moral values.

Migration for the expansion of business, which forms the key narrative focus in *River of Smoke,* is epitomized through the introduction of Bahram Moddie.

The marginalization and alienation that Moddie experiences due to his lower-class status, and his unequal marriage propel him to try his luck in an overseas opium business. In Fanqui-town, near Canton, China, an exclusive area is set apart for foreign businessmen by the Chinese government, where Moddie has built up his business empire. This unique space, which can be interpreted as the Third Space, is a melting pot where national, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries dissolve, giving way to the formation of hybrid cultures and languages. Ghosh delineates Bahram as an acclaimed opium businessman, versatile in different languages and cultures, which enables him to succeed in business. He is able to establish an identity for himself in Canton, China, but the sudden ban on the opium trade introduced by the Chinese Government wreaks havoc upon his business, and the thought of going back home as a pauper drains his strength. He succumbs to death in an opium-induced hallucination by drowning himself in the sea. Ah Fatt, his illegitimate son born of mixed blood, experiences alienation among other boat children due to his ambivalent position. Eventually, he is entrapped among the smugglers of opium, and he too falls prey to opium. Later on, Ah Fatt gets killed when Zachary betrays him to a Chinese opium dealer's man in exchange of cementing his business deal. Through Bahram Moddie, Ghosh depicts the ups and downs in a migrant businessman's life, and through Ah Fatt, he brings to light the struggle for survival of the illegitimate children born to overseas traders. Ghosh underscores the need for accommodating and accepting these children, who undergo severe identity crises, class discrimination, and marginalization, and emphasizes the need to include the excluded.

The traditional notions of maritime travels prohibit women from crossing the sea; this conservative attitude is interrogated through the lives of characters like Deeti, Paulette, and Shireen Modi in the *Ibis* trilogy. They who remained insignificant in their earlier lives achieve a drastic transformation after the sea voyage. They reclaim their agency upon their selves, and empower themselves by challenging the male-centric patriarchal norms.

When transnational migration as a result of globalization is on the increase, drastic changes are visible in the identity of the migrants, borderlanders as well as the settlers. Cultural, social, religious, and linguistic intermixing give rise to the formation of hybrid identities. The sense of stable/fixed identity is problematized giving rise to fluid/flexible identities. The emergence of Third Space thinking can disrupt and subvert the hierarchy implicit in the binary division, and accommodate those who reside in the liminal/threshold spaces. In such a context, people in the margins too become capable of asserting their self and identity, and develop in them the power to resist oppression and exploitation. This can herald the beginning of a transformed and empowered society.

Chapter III, entitled "Borders and Borderlanders *in Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*" has focused upon the concept of *mestiza* consciousness propounded by Anzaldua in *Borderlands.* This acclaimed work written in the genre of autohistoria-teoria, enumerates the precarious existence of the borderlanders who live in the in-between space. Borderland is an ambivalent space where people of different cultures, races, castes, ethnicities, genders, languages, and religions interact and live. Cultural hybridity and cultural collision take place in these spaces. The

borderlanders of mixed races and multiple identities are dominated and exploited by the more powerful dominant groups. To establish an identity and space for the borderlanders, Anzaldua propounded a new theory, a new *mestiza* consciousness, which is more flexible and inclusive. It transcends binary oppositions, and opens up an in-between space that has great power to resist exploitation and oppression. Even though this theory is formed to address the issues of the borderlanders residing in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands, it has global relevance, and moves beyond the boundaries. She talks not just about the geographical borders, but also about the ideological borderlands like spiritual, sexual, racial, and linguistic borderlands. It is her positionality in the margins that has enabled her to inscribe her resistance against oppression. To ensure equal treatment and justice for all humans, Anzaldua traverses through difficult pathways, but what she has achieved is worth the struggle. She has succeeded in her attempt to a great extent, and can assert her identity along with the identity of Chicanos.

The study on gender, which forms the major focus of Chapter IV, "Gender Fluidity in Select Narratives," addresses the inherent deficiencies of the binary gender system, which excludes certain groups of people as aberrations in society. The need to give space to those who are excluded from the binary, and erased from mainstream society is underscored through an in-depth analysis of the narratives. Anjum, the central character of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Revathi, of *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story,* and Rudra Chatterjee, of *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish,* are ostracized by the heteronormative society. They are forced to suppress their real longings and emotions in the initial stages of their life; they can

reclaim their identity only after a long period of struggle and suffering. The plight of such people who are deprived of their right to assert their identity and self are highlighted in this chapter. The study has made an attempt to suggest solutions to this severe problem that persists in society by stressing the need to engage in an alternative way of thinking. The emergence of the Third Space thinking which provides a space for those who are excluded from the binary can make revolutionary changes in society.

Roy portrays Anjum as a hermaphrodite who was named a boy, Aftab. Anjum undergoes severe identity crisis during her stage of growing up as she can't find a space at home, among friends, or in society. Her entry into the Khwabgah, a hijra gharana, liberates her from the strictures of family and society. This space, which is different from the world where she has lived so far, can be looked upon as a Third Space, and provides her with liberation. The sexual reassignment surgery that she has undergone from there completes her transition from a boy to a girl. The initial exhilaration that she experiences at the Khwabgah fades away due to its constricting rules and regulations. The formation of a hierarchy in the Khwabgah prompts her to leave the place. This shows that at times, places of liberation can also turn into places which deny freedom. After spending the prime time of her life in the hijra gharana, an unsatisfied Anjum leaves the place, and opts to live in the city graveyard, where no one from the *duniya* will trample upon her liberty. She calls this space Jannat, and within no time, Jannat Guest House becomes a welcome spot for the excluded and discarded people in society. The graveyard from where Anjum offers resistance can be considered as the Third Space, which is a space of inclusion

rather than exclusion; it provides space for all those who are thrown out from mainstream society.

The real-life story that Revathi enumerates in *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* is at par with the experiences of the fictional character Anjum. Though born as a boy, and named Doraisammy, Revathi feels like a woman trapped in a male body. Her tendency to behave like a girl is unwelcome in her family, which sanctions only stereotypical gender identities. Unable to comprehend the inner turmoil of Revathi, they torture and ill-treat her for fear of being ostracized by society. Their cruel and inhuman attitude towards Revathi stems from a public consciousness that is intolerant to the difference exhibited by sexual minorities. Revathi tries to overcome the torture at her home by escaping to Dindigul, where she is exposed to another world that accepts and celebrates deviance in sexuality. This journey is a turning point in her life which enables her to come to terms with her sexuality. Later, her dream of becoming a woman gets fulfilled by undergoing a sex reassignment surgery. The hijra rituals navigate her through a liminal space which eventually helps her to transform into a woman. Though she has felt elated in the beginning for being a transwoman, it soon gives way to despair. Revathi realizes how transwomen are persecuted and exploited by family and society. It is only through a strenuous and consistent effort that she finds a space in society. She boldly comes forward to give a truthful and authentic account of her life story through her autobiography, which secures for her a prominent place among contemporary writers. She becomes a source of inspiration for transgenders across the world to fight for a space and assert their identity. They have begun to challenge the binary

gender system, which divides gender into simple oppositions, male/female, and come forward to establish a space for sexual minorities who reside in-between the binary.

The fictional character, Anjum, and the real-life transgender, Revathi, who have undergone sex reassignment surgery, share similar sexual orientations. Rudra Chatterjee, the central character of *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish,* a professional choreographer, too harbours within him the desire to be a woman. His non-conformity with heteronormative life becomes apparent through his cross-dressing. Choreography and dancing enable him to hide his identity and showcase his effeminacy. He satisfies his desires through dancing as it is not a gender specific art form. He underscores the fluidity of gender through his appearance and behavior, and exemplifies the "performativity of gender," as observed by Butler (Hall and Gay 15). Rudra's family refuses to accept his sexual deviance due to societal taboo as well as their inability to comprehend his different sexuality. His love for Partho, the percussionist is considered an aberration, as man-to-man love is taboo in society. He resolves to live with Partho and adopt a child; but adoption rights are forbidden to homosexuals, and this prompts him to undergo sex reassignment surgery and become a woman. Partho expresses his discontentment against this decision. When Rudra is half-way through the surgery, Partho deserts him as he doesn't want to live with "a synthetic woman" (*Chitrangada* 01:37:54-01:38:00). The futility of the whole endeavor dawns upon him, and Rudra calls off the operation. His identity and existence are interrogated, and at this crucial juncture, he resolves to embrace his real self. The acute identity crisis and the dilemma of sexually different persons,

which remain unresolved in society, are highlighted through Rudra Chatterjee. Rituparno Ghosh, through this film, underscores the necessity of accepting difference and providing a space for those who are left out from the binary. Being a self-declared queer, who has gone through the traumatic life of a sexually deviant person, he gives a truthful picture of their life through Rudra Chatterjee.

The study shows that the LGBTQIA+ community is positioned at the margins in this society. The thesis also highlights the fluidity of gender, and shows how the boundaries of body and mind are crossed by people who liberate themselves from the strangleholds of traditional conservative thinking. However, their journey to this state is never easy, as society ostracizes the "deviants" who have different sexual orientations.

Noticeable changes are visible these days with regard to laws and regulations. The law, which has been hitherto inconsiderate towards sexually deviant persons, has become more lenient. Specific changes are brought about in the application forms where special columns are added to mark the identity of sexual minorities or transgenders. Queer pride marches are organized every year, which enable them to meet and feel a sense of togetherness. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which has denied human rights to these sexual minorities, is declared unconstitutional, and the right to sexuality, the right to sexual autonomy, and the right to choose a sexual partner have become a part of the right to life. In this context, Supreme Court Judge Indu Malhotra observes:

> History owes an apology to the members of this community and their families, for the delay in providing redressal for the ignominy and ostracism

> that they have suffered through the centuries. The members of this community were compelled to live a life full of fear of reprisal and persecution. (Majumdar)

The alienation due to stigma and threat is getting diluted, and the Indian Constitution has been favourably amended to protect and safeguard the rights of sexual minorities. However, scientific research giving ample importance and attention to the physical and mental issues of sexual minorities shall be carried out to get a true understanding of the problems faced by them, and to alleviate their sufferings. Government policies shall ensure equal treatment to all human beings, including sexual minorities.

The movie *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* exposes the sad plight of sexual minorities in a heteronormative world. Rituparno Ghosh, the icon of the queer community in India, highlights the trauma experienced by homosexuals. He underscores the dire necessity of recognising, understanding, and accepting sexual minorities. Anjum and Revathi, the representatives of the transgender community too live a life of extreme agony. However, they overcome the ostracization that they face, and find a space for themselves. The Khwabgah and Jannat Guest House in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* can be considered as spaces of liberation where the destitute and those who are excluded from mainstream society assert their true self and identity. Revathi finds fulfilment in life through her sincere contributions to Sangama, a non-governmental organization formed for uplifting the life of transgenders, and through autobiographical writings/self-narration. These are the spaces that offer a ray of hope to the otherwise deprived lives. Anzaldua formulates

a new theory of *mestiza* consciousness, and carves a niche for herself as well as for the borderlanders. She implores the world to practice tolerance for contradictions and ambivalence. This space accepts differences without considering the barriers of races, creeds, nationalities or languages.

Ibis trilogy focuses on the condition of migrants, and how they frame their identity in the oceanic space. The migrants consider themselves as *jaház-bhais* and *jaház-bahens*. The ship space where the migrants live as siblings, and Fanqui-town, set apart for overseas businessmen in Canton, China can be considered as a Third Space where different cultures, languages, races, and ethnicities mix and merge to give rise to a new hybridised society. Amitav Ghosh also explores the possibilities of ship space/oceanic space as spaces of liberation where the rules of lands are overlooked to enable the ship siblings to assert their identity.

Soja observes that the spatial dimension of our lives is gaining great relevance today than ever before, mainly due to discrimination based on races, classes, castes, creeds, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, and languages. As older definitions of space and spatiality do not exactly define the current context, he tries to redefine and expand the same in new directions by propounding the concept of Thirdspace. Such a spatial turn can rectify the deficiencies of the traditional, conservative binary thinking, and give space to those who are excluded from the binary. In this process, the existence of binary thinking is challenged, and the whole system relating to the scheme of power gets subverted. The present study has been narrowed down to a select number of narratives, which are examined in the light of the concept of hybridity and the Third Space. Further research can be carried out by

applying the concept to different works in different genres, like drama and painting. Even though studies on the literature of the marginalized have been carried out in plenty, the study of narratives with special focus on the Third Space is very limited. The research area can be widened by extending the study to different areas like sociology, politics, economics, and anthropology. Language is an important marker of identity; the study reveals that the migrants, hybrids, and borderlanders improvise language to suit their needs leading to the emergence of linguistic variations like *laskari* tongue and borderland languages. The innovative changes in languages have not been discussed in the thesis, and it can be taken up as an area of further research.

The study reveals that Third Space thinking has percolated into society, and evident changes are visible. The emerging events like the queer pride marches, new job opportunities given to transgenders taking place in the urban scapes provide the LGBTQIA+ community with a space where they can celebrate their difference and exhibit their true self. The instance of Padma Lakshmi, becoming Kerala's first transgender lawyer is noteworthy ("Kerala's"). The symptoms of change in the mindset, and approach of parents towards their offspring who have non-normative sexual orientation are visible these days. The love and care that the renowned writer Khaled Hosseini has given to his child with different sexuality is a good case in point. He comments:

> I have never been prouder of her. I am delighted to now have not one but two beautiful daughters. Most of all, I am inspired by Haris' fearlessness, and her courage to share with the world her true self. She has taught me and our

> family so much about bravery, about truth. About what it means to live authentically. (Hosseini)

The above-cited quote speaks volumes about the unbounded love that he feels for his daughter, who has come out as a transgender. His assurance that the whole family will stand by her in her life is an inspiration to many such people who fear to come out of the closet due to the negative interventions of family and society.

The practice of looking upon the sexually different persons as curious objects of gaze shall come to an end. Those who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community shall be treated as subjects who can assert their identity without inhibitions. The school education and curriculum shall be amended incorporating mandatory sex education to keep the students well-informed about the subtle nuances and complexities of sexuality. They shall be educated on the deficiencies of the heteronormative gender system. They shall learn to acknowledge, accept and include those who reside in the in-between spaces of the male/female binary. The social movements and discursive practices shall aim at the project of finding solutions to the problems of sexual minorities. Educational institutions shall aim at educating students in such a way as to make them aware of the diversity in human sexuality and the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. Instead of stigmatizing and segregating them from mainstream society, they shall be provided with a supportive environment to nourish their potentials. Such an atmosphere can contribute a lot to alleviate the physical and psychological distress of sexually different individuals. The LGBTQIA+ community shall be provided with a social space where they can exhibit their true self. Legal protection, health-care facilities,

medical assistance, property rights, and recognition among their communities are to be granted to them to ensure a hurdle-free, liberated life.

Works Cited

Ambedkar, B. R. *Annihilation of Caste.* Edited by S. Anand, Verso, 2014.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso, 1983.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Anzaldua, Gloria, and Ana Louise Keating, editors. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation.* Routledge, 2002.

Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts.* Routledge, 1998.

"Author Amitav Ghosh Honoured with 54th Jnanpith Award." *Times of India,* 14 Dec. 2018, timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/author-amitav-ghosh-honoured-with-54h-jnanpith-award/articleshow/67093276.cms.

Baker, Christopher. *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking.* Ashgate, 2007.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* Viva Books, 2010.

Bennett, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Routledge, 1995.

Bhabha, Homi K., editor. *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, 1990.

---. *The Location of Culture.* Routledge, 1994.

Bray, Alan. *Homosexuality in Renaissance England.* Gay Men's Press, 1982.

Brooker, Peter. *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*. Arnold, 2003.

"Budgerow." *Collins,* https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/budgerow.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter.* Routledge, 1993.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

---. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004.

Burke, Peter J., and Jan E. Stets. *Identity Theory*. Oxford U P, 2009.

Chiappari, Christopher L., and Silvia L. Lopez, translators. *Hybrid Cultures Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity.* U of Minnesota P, 1995.

Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish. Directed by Rituparno Ghosh, Shree Venkatesh Films, 2012.

Córdova, Teresa. "Anti-Colonial Chicana Feminism." *New Political Science,* vol. 20, no. 4, 2003, pp. 339-43, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17.

"Cro-Magnon." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cro-Magnon.

"Dargah." *Collins*, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/dargah.

Das, Subhomay. "Kali: The Dark Mother Goddess in Hinduism." *Learn Religions*, https://www.learnreligions.com/kali-the-dark-mother-1770364.

Datta, Sangeeta et al., editors. *Rituparno Ghosh: Cinema, Gender and Art.* Routledge, 2016.

"Dholaka." *SHABDKOSH*, https://www.shabdkosh.com/dictionary/hindi-english.

"Dyke." *Collins*, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/dyke.

Eagleton, Mary, editor. *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory.* Blackwell Publishing, 2013.

Frello, Birgitta. "Cultural Hybridity". *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, Blackwell Publishing, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0297.

Gennep, Arnold van. *The Rites of Passage*. The U of Chicago P, 1960.

Ghosh, Amitav. *Flood of Fire.* Penguin Books India, 2015.

---. *River of Smoke.* Penguin Books India, 2011.

---. *Sea of Poppies*. Penguin Books India, 2008.

---. "The Amitav Ghosh Interview, on the Publication of *Flood of Fire*." Conducted by H. R. Venkatesh, *The Quint*, 3 June 2015.

Haggerty, George E., and Molly Mc Garry, editors. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Hall, Stuart, and Paul du Gay, editors. *Questions of Cultural Identity.* Sage Publications, 1996.

Halperin, David M., "The Normalization of Queer Theory." *Journal of Homosexuality*, pp. 339-43, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17.

Hanes, W. Travis, and Frank Sanello. *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*. Sourcebooks, 2002.

"Haveli." *SHABDKOSH*, https://www.shabdkosh.com/dictionary/hindi-english/haveli/haveli-meaning-in-english.

Harding, Sandra, editor. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies.* Routledge, 2004.

Herdt, Gilbert, editor. *Third Sex Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History.* Zone Books, 1993.

"Hermaphrodite." *Biology Dictionary*, biologydictionary.net/hermaphrodite/.

Hooks, Bell. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. South End Press, 1990.

Hosseini, Khaled. Instagram Post on Daughter's Coming Out. *Instagram*, 13 July 2022, www.instagram.com/khosseini/.

Hubbard, Thomas K., editor. *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Source Book of Basic Documents*. U of California P, 2003.

Ikas, Karin, and Gerhard Wagner, editors. *Communicating in the Third Space*. Routledge, 2009.

"India Court Legalizes Gay Sex in Landmark Ruling." *BBC NEWS*, 6 Sept. 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-45429664.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. Melbourne U P, 1996.

Jones, Billy E., and Marjorie J. Hill, editors. *Mental Health Issues in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities*. American Psychiatric Publishing, 2002.

"Kaala Pani-A Prisoner's Worst Nightmare." *Ithihaas to History*, https://itihaastohistory.com/kaala-pani-a-prisoners-worst-nightmare/.

Kannadasan, Akila. "When Recognition Comes Calling." *The Hindu*, 14 Oct. 2019, www.thehindu.com/society/phenomenal-woman-thatsher/article29679044.ece.

Keating, AnaLouise, editor. *The Gloria Anzaldua Reader*. Duke U P, 2009.

"Kerala's First Transgender Lawyer Wants to Be Voice of the Poor Marginalized." *The Indian Express*, 21 Mar. 2023, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/kerala-bar-council-gets-its-first-transgender-advocate-8508838/.

"Kolam and Benefits." *TamilNadu Tourism*, *https://www.tamilnadutourism.com/traditions/kolam-and-benefits.*

Kumar, Dharma, and Tapan Raychaudhuri, editors. *The Cambridge Economic History of India*. vol. 2, Cambridge U P, 1983.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell, 1991.

Majumdar, Ushinor. "'History Owes an Apology:' Justice Indu Malhotra on Section 377." *Outlook*, 7 Sept. 2018, www.outlookindia.com/website/story/history-owes-an-apology-justice-indu-malhotra-on-section-377/316160.

Mani, Lata. *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*. U of California P, 1998.

"Maranashesham Shareeram Medical Colleginu Nalkan Trans Dhambadimar." *Mathrubumi*, 12 Aug. 2021.

"Mestizaje in Latin America: Definition and History." *ThoughtCo*, https://www.thoughtco.com/mestizaje-in-latin-america-4774419.

"Metif." *Collins*, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/metif.

Moraga, Cherrié, and Gloria Anzaldua, editors. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color.* Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981.

Narayan, Sathya. "Taking Birth as Third Gender is a Science, not a Curse." *SPEAKINGTREE.IN*, https://www.speakingtree.in/allslides/the-scientific-causes-behind-the-birth-of-hijra-or-third-gender.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. Pearson, 2010.

Newman, David. "On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework." *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, spring 2003, pp 13-25, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2003.9695598.

Nuttbrock, Larry, editor. *Transgender Sex Work and Society*. Harrington Park Press, 2018.

"Quadroon." *Dictionary.com*, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/quadroon.

Quanlin Qui. "Thirteen Hongs: China's Trade Legacy." *China Daily*, 14 May 2022, global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201909/14/WS5d7c55f3a310cf3e3556b6bc.html.

Revathi, A. *A Life in Trans Activism*. Zubaan, 2016.

---. *Our Lives, Our Words: Telling Aravani Life Stories.* Yoda Press, 2011.

---. *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story.* Penguin, 2010.

Richards, Christina, et al., editors. *Gender Queer and Non-Binary Genders.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Rich, Adrienne Cecile. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Journal of Women's History,* vol. 15, no. 3, autumn 2003, pp 11-48. *PROJECT MUSE*, https://doi.org/ 10.1353/jowh.2003.0079.

Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Beacon Press, 1989.

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin, 2017.

Rutherford, Jonathan, editor. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* Lawernce and Wishart, 1990.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2002.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies.* Routledge, 1994.

Smith, Keri E. Iyall, and Patricia Leavy, editors. *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations.* Brill, 2008.

Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Verso, 1989.

---. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Sowell, Thomas. *Migrations and Culture: A World View.* Basic Books, 1996.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, MacMillan Education, 1988, pp. 271-308.

Stryker, Susan, and Stephen Whittle. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2006.

"Tael." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 Mar. 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/tael.

Tharoor, Shashi. *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India.* Aleph Book Company, 2016.

"The Third Gender and Hijras." *Hinduism Case Study-Gender*. Harvard Divinity School Religious Literacy Project, 2018, https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/rpl/files/gender_hinduism.pdf?m=1597338930.

"The Transgender Person's Bill explained." *The Hindu*, 30 Nov. 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/watch-all-about-the-transgender-persons-bill/article30122229.ece.

Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1987.

Thomassen, Bjorn. *Liminality and the Modern*. Ashgate, 2014.

Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*, Vintage Books, 1963

"Transgender Activist Anannyah Kumari Alex Found Dead." *Mathrubhumi.com*, 22 July 2021, https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/transgender-activist-anannyah-kumari-alex-found-dead-1.5844488.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Cornwell Paperbacks, 1977.

Vila, Pablo. "Processes of Identification on the U. S.-Mexico Border." *The Social Science Journal*, vol. 40, 2003, pp. 607-25. *Pergamon*, https://doi:10.1016/S0362-3319(03)00072-7.

Wallenfeldt, Jeff. "Mulatto." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 July 2022, https://www.britannica.com/topic/mulatto-people.

Wastl-Walter, Doris, editor. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies.* Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011.

Wilson, Thomas M, and Hastings Donnan, editors. *A Companion to Border Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Yarbro-Bejarano, Yvonne. “Gloria Anzaldua’s *Borderlands / La Frontera*: Cultural Studies, ‘Difference,’ and the Non-Unitary Subject.” *Cultural Critique,* no. 28, Autumn 1994, pp. 5-28. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1354508.