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**ADAPTATION OF MINORITY IN DIASPORA
NOVEL: A CASE STUDY OF MANJUSHREE
THAPA'S SEASON'S OF FLIGHT**

Mahesh B Bhatt



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Abstract

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ADAPTATION OF MINORITY IN DIASPORA NOVEL: A CASE STUDY OF MANJUSHREE THAPA'S SEASON'S OF FLIGHT

Mahesh B Bhatt

1. Introduction

Human migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention to settle in the new location. Migration may be voluntary migration within one's region, country, or beyond. Voluntary migration includes the slave trade, trafficking in human beings and ethnic cleansing. The attachment to the homeland, problems of voluntary or forced migration and thereafter, attempts for adaptation, assimilation are as old as existence of human being on the earth. Globalization transcends territory, location, distance, and borders, and has been accompanied by rapid migration of people across borders and has raised questions about identity, citizenship and nationality. In referring to Modern Diasporas, Sheffer has proposed a simple definition: "Modern Diasporas are ethnic groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their country of origin- their homelands" (Sheffer, 1986. p.3). The objectives of the paper are to explore the crisis of identity as narrated in the selected novel of Manjushree Thapa viz. *Season's of Flight*. The protagonist of the novel migrates to America and she faces problems of settlement there. She struggles and tries to adjust herself. At the end, she adapts herself into the foreign environment retaining her identity. The issues of immigrant protagonist are assessed on the basis of theories of cultural studies. *Season's of Flight* is a novel written by Manjushree Thapa who is a novelist of Nepali origin. The early scholars of Nepali literature wrote in Sanskrit language. However, in Post-Revolution era in Nepal, i.e. after 2006, Nepali scholars are rapidly migrating around the globe and many books of Nepali literature are published from different corners of the world. Diasporic literature has developed the new ways of thinking and it is emerging branch in the Nepali literature. In an interview

at Swanet, Thapa comments on Nepali literature thus:

When I started out as a young writer, it helped me develop my own voice to learn how to translate Nepali literature into English. It helped me find the language of Nepali experience in English. Translating is something that I'd recommend all bi- or multicultural writers to do. New creative worlds open up in between languages. (Terry, 2014)

There are great similarities in the literature of Nepal and the literature in the regional languages of South Asia. They tend to focus on social issues, and are often the most visionary documents of their times.

Manjushree Thapa is a Nepali diaspora writer. She was born in Kathmandu in 1968. She grew up in Nepal, Canada and the USA. Thapa's creative writing consists of her first book *Mustang Bhot in Fragments*, a travelogue. *The Tutor of History* is her debut novel. Her best known book is *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy* published just weeks before the royal coup in Nepal on 1 February 2005. *Tilled Earth* is a collection of short stories. *A Boy from Siklis: The Life and Times of Chandra Gurung* is a biography of a Nepali environmentalist. In 2010, her novel *Seasons of Flight* was published. *The Lives We Have Lost: Essays and Opinions on Nepal* is a non-fiction collection by Thapa.

2. *Season's of Flight*: An Introduction

In *Season's of Flight*, Manjushree Thapa narrates the story of a Nepali girl Prema who wins a green card

lottery and goes to America. The story begins with Prema settled in America and her past is recollected through memories. Prema does her primary schooling in a village and then comes to Kathmandu and studies forestry. At the age of seventeen, she leaves her family living in a small village and goes to the capital city Kathmandu. Her life in a village was full of poverty.

Prema's early years were full of sorrows. Her mother died after the birth of her younger sister Bijaya. The Maoist rebel in Nepal is recruiting one member from each family and Bijaya joins it. Thapa mentions about political unrest in Nepal as reflected in Newspapers: "Two clashes between the Maoists and the army had claimed fourteen lives. A curfew had been imposed in a border town..." (Thapa, 2010. p.10). Prema's father is a progressive man who supports her to make her career and he allows her to go to college and so she joins forestry. A Hindu ascetic who came wandering through Prema's birth village had given an ammonite to Prema's mother. Her mother used to worship it at the centre as a Shaligram, an avatar of Vishnu. Prema takes this lustrous stone, Shaligram, with her as a memory and a symbol of belonging of native. Initially, Prema joins NGO for save forest environment conservation programme and works with a senior forester, Trailokya, to offset the carbon footprint of a British corporation. The NGO gives interest free loans to poor for rear chickens and goats, vaccination, health camps, non formal education classes etc. After completion of her college, Prema's friends suggest schemes to migrate to India or further to Australia, Europe, Canada, and America for development. So, one day on insistence of Kanchha, a Gurkha, she enters her name in the American green card lottery.

Prema gets attracted towards Rajan, who works in the poverty-alleviation programme of a non-government organization. In the hill bazaar Prema lives a spinster's life. As a student, Rajan has joined a communist student

union, organizing demonstrations and strikes, fighting face-to-face with policemen, courting tear gas, beating, and arrest. Through dialogues between Prema and Trailokya, Thapa mentions about political unrest and Maoists rebels in Nepal. After winning the lottery, the middleman named Harihar-dai, who is a friend of Rajan, has helped for money and getting job recommendations for Prema in America. The middleman charged fifty thousand for it. Prema starts learning English language, makes efforts for driving car and from the bookstalls reads about the United States. She also visits cyber-café and reads Los Angeles Times online. Kanchha has been suspected by army as an agent of the Maoist and he has been beaten and then he has been arrested by the police. His father approached Amnesty International, Human rights commission and the Red Cross, but his disappearance has remained a mystery. The Middleman asks for money to get whereabouts of Kanchha. As Prema's sister joins the Maoist, she goes directly to America without meeting her father.

At LA airport the middleman's nephew comes to receive Prema. He makes arrangement for Prema in Little Nepal, a ghettos where Nepali immigrants live. Prema lives in a rental room, Sushil and Neeru as her neighbour. Prema starts working with other people who have come from Nepal. Neeru and other ladies work in the restaurant named Shalimar. Neeru cooperates and guides Prema at an initial level viz. how to get credit cards from where to buy phone cards, where to check e-mail, how to get a State of California identity card etc. She explained social security to Prema, and health care and unemployment benefits. Gradually, Prema thinks to leave this Nepali ghettos and goes to live with Meg and Susan. She comes in contact with Andy and has had sex with him. Prema has American relationship with Luis. In the USA, Prema feels that she is very far from native. She works as a homecare attendant for an old lady, Esther King in Los Angeles. Esther has the symptom

of dementia. Prema has been guided through written instructions on the kitchen board how to take care of Esther. Prema lives in a house with two young women-housemates. Thapa narrates the air port of Los Angeles, metropolitan city and the luxurious life of people of America. Prema, who spent her childhood in Nepal, has never visited a sea beach. But now she visits the beach near Los Angeles frequently with Esther. Esther's husband Tim worked for an oil company. The married life and social life in America is described through Esther's life. Her husband Tim had died long ago. Her stepson Theo-who is Natalie's father, is Tim's son from a previous marriage. He is a stock broker at New Jersey. His wife is Mary.

The condition of working people is narrated through Prema's housemate Meg Williams. She is an African-American. Meg has a *committed* relationship with a man named Luke. Meg wished to marry him and have lots of kids after finishing her nursing. Prema's other housemate is Susan Kitterow, is in her forties, originally from Idaho, and lived in Seattle, in the state of Washington. Most evening she goes and dates, staying out all night or bringing back a man who would invariably leave early the next morning. She works in a health food store.

At Meadowvale, Prema meets Luis who is from Mexico. He is the general administrator of the nursing home. Prema develops friendship with Luis. Luis, who is thirty three years old, talks about his ex-wife and daughter July. He works as a General Administrator in a company. He says that at least Prema works with and for a live person Esther where as his life is empty. During her company with Luis, Prema makes efforts to adapt American culture and so she buys a red bikini of \$24.99 and flip-flops for \$4.47. She visits various places with Luis and both of them become close friends. Prema has had sex with Luis and she learns new techniques of making love and sex. On their dates, Luis takes her to

Thai, Mexican, Indian, and Korean restaurants all over the metropolis. After spending some days with Meg and Susan, Prema leaves and goes to live with Luis at his flat. She goes at Luis's mother and step father Ron's place on Thanksgiving. Prema gets herself involved in this family gathering at Luis's parent's home. Prema goes to Luis's ex-wife's residence for Christmas. Luis works as Meadowvale's Head of Human Resources as one man quit from there to join rival group. Prema tries to learn Spanish and Luis tries to learn Nepali. Prema knows about Guatemala through reading of books. Thapa narrates the history of Guatemala. Luis has to struggle economically as he has to pay various loans.

Though a person may get material luxury, the ultimate achievement of peace is very difficult. Luis feels that after divorce with Tina, he is the loser. He plans to visit Christopher's guru Mata Sylvia and finds interest in meditation. Prema too thinks to go for regaining her sense of belonging. She goes in Little Nepal area. In the diaspora text, Thapa mentions about how immigrants retain their culture and religion. At Mata's home Prema finds books on *The Bhagvad Gita*, the *Mahabharata*, *The Ramayana*, on Osho, Krishnamurti, Vivekananda, Ram Das, Sai Baba , Aurobindo , Maharshi Mahesh Yogi.

Though making efforts to assimilate in America, sometimes Prema feels nostalgia. She recollects the time she has spent with her parents, sister, Rajan and at the Hill Bazaar in Kathmandu. She goes at Meg and Susan's place and thinks that Asians are conservative in comparison to Americans. Though Prema attempts to forget Nepal and the Nepali ghettos, she visits little Nepal and likes her language. She finds that Neeru and Sushil have left their earlier abode. Prema eats momos with Neeru. Prema hides truth from Luis about her visit to little Nepal. She longs for her root and so emails Trailokya and Rajan in Nepal. Thapa mentions about the Maoist ceasefire in Nepal. Prema feels nostalgia

and she calls her father for the first time after arriving in America.

Prema and Luis quarrel on the point of going to Steve and Camilla, his friends. But Prema denies going there. Luis insists her to take him to her world and friends, to which Prema replies, "I do not have a world! I left the world I had, and do not belong in the one I am now-your world. I do not have any place to take you, Luis. I do not have a place in the world"(Thapa, 2010. p.186). Prema leaves Luis's home and takes her belonging – ammonite etc. and goes to Long Beach with Neeru and Sushil. She quarrels with Luis on phone. At the end there are some rapid developments in the plot. Prema continues her job at Esther. Luis gets promotion in job. Prema likes to visit wetland and enjoy beauty of nature with plants and animals. Prema meets a woman Fiona-an environmentalist, searching butterfly El Segundo Blues-a butterfly on the federal endangered list. She informs Prema that Life Corps tracks the presence of pesticides in Southern California's marine life. At one time Prema thinks to leave Esther but then emotional attachment does not allow her to leave. After death of Esther she lives at Neeru and Sushil's home. Neeru and Sushil tell Prema that any boy from Nepal who has settled in America may not mind if a girl has relationship with a boy in the past, so they advise Prema to select a Nepali boy and get married, but Prema denies. Prema has already found her company with the environmentalist. She feels contented in the group with activities of her choice. She sees Luis at Bangkok airport during her journey to Nepal but avoids him. At last she decides not to marry anyone or have kids.

3. Prema's voluntary migration

As a narrative of the immigrants, *Season's of Flight* describes the story of migration of the protagonist from a small village in Nepal to Kathmandu and then to Los Angeles (LA) in America. Her father is a progressive person and allows his daughter to go Kathmandu for

further study. Here, this is an internal migration for Prema within her country. During the final year of her study of forestry in Kathmandu, Prema finds her friends have hatched elaborate schemes to migrate to India, or further, to Australia, Europe, Canada, and America. Thapa writes, "There is so little in Nepal, everyone just wanted to leave. And also, for those who felt they were from a shabby third- world country, it was hard not to believe that life in a richer land was more-proper, solid" (Thapa, 2010 p.6-7). America announces various schemes of lottery for the aspirants to migrate and settle in America. Prema fills the American lottery form with Trailokya, on insistence of Kanchha, a Gurkha. Kanchha is an agent for filling the forms for lottery to get visa for America Kanchha advises Trailokya to migrate to America. He says, "You could make money saving Americane trees!" (Thapa 2010.p.8) Later on she wins the lottery and goes to America. So in the case of Prema, her migration is a voluntary, for better economic opportunities. She finds her homeland as captured in the Maoist activities. The time of migration is very young age of the protagonists. She gets help from the middleman and initially lives in the Nepali ghettos in Los Angeles. Thapa has depicted migration of the first generation immigrants from the developing country viz. Nepal to a developed country viz. America. Here the migration of Prema is a voluntary.

4. Search for identity and feelings of alienation

After leaving her village, Prema has to live alone. Prema keeps an ammonite with her as a god and memory of her dead mother. In America she wants to reinvent herself, she thinks "but-What is there to being human? The body which desires, persistent and unreasonable; thoughts and temperaments. Instincts. A capacity to harm. And history, which lingers as a spectre" (Thapa,2010. P.3). Prema makes efforts to relocate herself through her memories of village, temple, ammonite, language and food. She makes efforts to be an American by adapting

American life style with her Latino- American boy friend Luis but she feels alien, something is missing. Johann Gottfried Herder, an eighteenth century philosopher, argues “the foundation of construction of identity rests on the perceived ‘wholeness’ of a community derived from the totality of its expressions – language, customs, dress, architecture, religion (qtd. in Kerr, 2006.p. 362).” Prema keeps herself away from her father, never thinks about her sister, further she wants to be Americanized, and so, she breaks her contact with Sushil and Neeru in Little Nepal in LA. In the condition of homelessness and alienation, Prema reinterprets her national identity as a person from Nepali origin following Hinduism.

Remembering the past is very important for all, especially for immigrants. In LA, Prema’s meets Mata Sylvia, a preacher of Hindu religion. She recites lines from Hindu scriptures, like the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayan*, and the books about Osho, Vivekananda etc. This takes Prema back to “Nepali home” away from her “present home”. She recalls her mother’s bedroom shrine, and idols of the godsetc. Memory makes prema a fragile sense of belonging on an alien land. Prema, an immigrant woman searches her fixed cultural identity in America. Stuart Hall in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* states, “‘cultural identity’ can be thought in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’ which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Hall,2003. p. 234). Thapa depicts the incidences in the life of Prema such that she feels her physical location in LA but her genealogical and geographical roots lie in Nepal. Prema longs for her new identity. She feels something which was protected in Nepal has lost in America and that is her roots, her belonging. Giddens in *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the late Modern Age* says,“Globalization tends to break down the protective framework of the small community and of tradition replacing these with

many larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological support and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings” (Giddens, 1991. p 33). Through a fictional character Prema, Thapa has portrayed an immigrant woman who has made her life ever-changing and mobile as she is uprooted in LA, from her original social milieu of Nepal. Prema brings in the images of Hindu religion, Nepali language and food – Momo – as imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation. It is her attempt to recreate a lost sense of cultural identity. Even after several years of stay in America, living with Luis and serving at Esther’s home, Prema feels alien. She visits Nepal after the Maoist ceasefire and she starts searching her contacts and whereabouts of Rajan and Trailokya.

5. Nostalgia and Memory and their role in the present

Resistance to alien culture creates feelings of nostalgia. Nostalgia helps in bridging a gap between the past and the present. Memories of the past help one to escape from the harsh reality of the present. Prema seeks nostalgically to recapture her “happy days” of childhood past in her imagination. She recollects memories of food and festive meals: reminiscences of those culinary delights that brought her such warm feelings of pleasure, security, and even love as a child. For Prema, an ammonite is a constant support and memory of her childhood spent with her parents in Nepal.

Thapa, as an expatriate, uses food as a marker of identity. Sometimes it is a tool to feel secure in an alien land. In this regard, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, “In the field of rational analysis, a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism” (Spivak,1992. p 773). When Luis says: “Hey Prema, know what I had for dinner last night?” “Dull-bath. A kind of Nepalese, I mean, Nepali food (Thapa,2010. p 61),” she is very happy and says she cooks it often

but “just – the ingredients. I don’t know where to buy them” (Thapa,2010. p. 61). Thapa narrates this universal feeling of oral regression experienced among every immigrant. Nostalgia emerges as a form of cultural resistance. Nostalgia can help to maintain and construct cultural identities by connecting the present to the past, by articulating past experiences and their meanings, at present. Prema feels extremely happy when Neeru offers her Nepali food. She exclaimed with joy when she finds two plates of hot dumplings before them: “Momos! Can you believe? Momos in America (Thapa,2010. p 171)!” Thus rhetoric of nostalgia – a rhetoric saturated with gastronomic images of food, feasting, and festive dining – is used as a plea for Nepalese to resist being ushered into an adulthood of western-style capitalist modernity. In this regard, in an online research paper, it is mentioned, “Juxtaposing the concerns of the stomach to those of the head or heart, Manjushree Thapa has used food and eating in her *Seasons of Flight* as an ‘identity markers’ to reflect, a means of security for the immigrants”. (*Freeonline*,2010)

Prema thinks about her existence. Thapa narrates her predicament thus:

She thought of her movements from her present life with Luis to her life on the dry, grassy hill, and her life in Little Nepal, and her lives farther back...Her birth village, her school and her college years, her years in the hill bazaar. Her attachments to Rajan. The town at the base of the hills, the bus ride to the capital. Her weeks in limbo in Kathmandu. Her flight to America. Her time in transit at the Bangkok airport. She had passed the gates for Osaka, Dubai, Paris, Ankara, Melbourne, Amsterdam. She had taken the flight to Los Angeles. She had lost her way. (Thapa,2010. p 161)

Language is a tool to reconcile the feelings of nostalgia. Prema teaches Nepali to Luis. She wants to establish her linguistic link with him. In cases of rapid domestic change and real or perceived geographical and

genealogical inequality, Prema involves joining a local identity-based group that seems to provide her answers and security.

6. Struggle to acculturate

As the protagonist migrates to America, Thapa provides microcosm of America in the novel. Prema is fascinated by the broad roads and lights and traffic system in America. Thapa has also depicted the poverty stricken people in America. Hollywood is not as glamorous as Prema has thought. The exploitation of human being, workers and poor is same everywhere, as in Nepal, in America also. In America Prema finds cosmopolitan society and the family system is very much different from her homeland Nepal. In the family of Esther and Luis, divorces with spouse and re-marriage and step relations are very commonly found. The married life and social life in America is described through Esther’s life. Her husband Tim had died long ago.

Thapa narrates free life style in America. In Nepal, she has relationship with Rajan, but she has to keep secrecy of that relationship. But here in America the situation is very different. Prema’s housemate Meg Williams is an African American. Meg has a *committed* relationship with a man named Luke. Prema’s other housemate is Susan Kitterow, goes on dates, staying out all night or bringing back a man who would invariably leave early the next morning.

The novel narrates incidences of the attitude of the immigrants towards other migrants and towards their homeland after their migration. When a poor girl like Prema gets visa through lottery scheme, she gets confused whether to go to America or not. At an initial stage, Prema thinks, “Should she not leave? This shabby, third-world country. Having received a chance- Having won a lottery. Was this not an opportunity to keep progressing? America was rich, it was- proper, solid. But wasn’t it also- an agent of corporate capitalist expansionism?” (Thapa, 2010.p.51)

In America, Prema gets in touch with people from different country. She feels that language may be a barrier to her. She develops American relationship with Luis. Luis learns Prema's language, he discusses on meditation and popular games in Nepal. Prema makes efforts to get into the likings of Luis. There are step relatives in Luis's family. Prema goes to the home of parents of Luis as well his ex- wife's home and meets his relatives. She likes family gathering on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Prema likes to be included in the celebration of an American festival. Thapa mentions about the support that Prema receives from Luis's family. "The gathering broke up late, with hugs all around, and promises to meet soon, promises that no one would be able to keep, but which nevertheless rang warm and sincere. At the door Peggy hugged Prema, Ron hugged Prema, Ryan hugged Prema...Americans hugged so much" (Thapa, 2010 p.123). As Prema tries to accommodate her in the life style of America, she gets positive support from the hostland people. Maintaining the protocol, Peggy, the mother of Luis, says, "'namaste', I salute the god within you" (Thapa, 2010 p.123). However, at the later part of the novel, Prema finds something missing in her life and quits them.

At Esther's home Prema feels queer and does not like to continue her job. She finds that Natalie has free life and she is bound in obligations of Esther. At one time she thinks about leaving Esther and the job. Later on she feels that it would be improper to quit Esther on humanitarian ground. After leaving Luis' home and visiting Nepal, Prema is confused and becomes nervous. But at the end of the novel, the group of people working on environment makes the life of Prema interesting and she enjoys there.

In the novel, the issues of adjustment of immigrants in an alien land are highlighted. Prema makes efforts to assimilate in American life style. She starts buying

cloths that suits on beach at LA. She mimics American style of dressing. She buys a red bikini of \$24.99 and flip-flops for \$4.47. She goes to LA beach. Adjustment is more difficult for a poor girl like Prema in the house of a rich person like Esther. At Esther's house-"All the closets were jammed with appliances: vacuum cleaners, humidifiers, dust-busters, air purifiers, irons, ironing boards" (Thapa,2010 p.14). Esther's granddaughter Natalie tacks a list of instructions on the kitchen board: a list of Dos, DONTs and NEVERs. Prema has broken her ties with her family back at home and the Nepali community in Los Angeles in an attempt to assimilate her identity into a vague pluralism of American multiculturalism. As Appadurai says, "Identities are increasingly liminal and hybrid as capital, commodities, information, technologies, images and ideologies circulate across the borders due to "ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes and mediascapes" (Appadurai,2003. p.31). Language is one of the barriers in efforts for adapting a foreign culture. Before leaving for America, Prema starts learning English language, make efforts for driving car, read about the United States from the books, she also visits cyber- café and reads *Los Angeles Times* online so that she may get adjusted in America. In America, Prema teaches Luis to speak Nepali. She thinks by teaching Nepali, she could establish a linguistic link and possess him whole heartedly. R. Sigel has noted in his *Political learning in adulthood*, "There exists in humans a powerful drive to maintain the sense of one's identity, a sense of continuity that allays fear of changing too fast or being changed against one's will by outside forces"(Sigel,1995. P.459). As she likes Luis, she creates interest in him and reads about Guatemala as Luis's roots are from there. Even at little Nepal, Neeru and other immigrants are also struggles to assimilate in an alien land.

In the era of globalization, when the people are losing

their tie and emotional support from the relatives, individual faces problem of lack of emotional protection. Here, Prema likes the company of Luis but her sense of insecurity in multicultural America continues throughout the novel. Prema frequently dwindles between absence and presence. In the company of Luis, Prema feels as if she finds herself assimilated to American multiculturalism but the moment she idealizes her lost realm of culture, geography, innocence, purity and happiness; she is overwhelmed by absence. Her search for presence continues throughout the novel. Prema, towards the end of the novel, renews her relation and reconnects with her national roots by visiting Nepali people in Los Angeles and by taking a trip back home. Her efforts to reconnect with previous relations revive the ties that had become numb while updating and renewing her cultural identity. As she feels increasingly uncertain about her daily life, her search for cultural identity takes on ontological and existential dimensions. At the later part in the novel, Prema meets a woman Fiona- an environmentalist, searching butterfly El Segundo Blues-a butterfly on the federal endangered list. Prema thinks that to serve Esther and work with this environmentalist will bring her sense of belonging in America. She decides to join this group. People like Prema who find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure often give rise to a politics of resistance and the growth of local identities. They feel a genuine sense of loss as expressed in the recreation of a real or imagined past, or through the distant and often romanticized memory of a home. In the process of identity mobilization, these factors may become political weapons.

7. Conclusion

Manjushree Thapa's *Season's of Flight* is a novel which narrates many issues of diaspora. Regarding her challenging work of creative writing in Nepal

she says, "The choice for me was to live in the West and have a settled personal life but boring work; or to have interesting work but a chaotic personal life in Nepal. Everything I want to write about, at least now, is in Nepal. There is so much that can be done here, if politics would stop self-destructing" (Interview).

Away from 'home' – Nepal, in the foreign land – Los Angeles, Prema is disembedded from her root and she lacks the protective cocoons of home. Identity is newly problematized by changing conditions of Nepalese way of life in Los Angeles. Identities are increasingly liminal and she feels insecure in the foreign land. To overcome existential fears and feelings of loss and despair, she visits new Nepal in Los Angeles, eats Nepali food, visits Mata-Sylvia and recites Nepali *bhajan*. She joins a local identity-based group that seems to provide her answers and stability. Prema, an immigrant in Los Angeles desperately tries to recapture, excavate and bring to light the traces of indigenous homelands which is constructed and reconstructed in the face of globalization and cosmopolitanism through culture, language, culinary nostalgia, community and love. The alternative identity sought out by Prema could be real and yet not real enough to feel authentic. It only gives her a fragile sense of belonging. Cultural identity depends on some degree of continuity with the past – the geography, culture and location. The construction and reconstruction of her indigenous identity through historical symbols and religion supply her alternative identity to everyday insecurity. It conveys her a trace of security – though elusive – of a 'home' safe from intruders.

Here, the plight of Prema can be compared with what Nehru says about mingling of native and foreign culture. Nehru's opinion about cultural identity. Nehru says, "I cannot get rid of either the past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they

also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself” (Nehru,1936. P. 596). Spiritual loneliness, cultural in-betweenness, and psychological ambivalence, resulting from cultural and educational hybridity, made him say, “In my own country I have an exile’s feeling”(Thapa,2010. p 596). It created a cultural limbo in him-neither here nor there. The novel gives voice to the predicament of an immigrant for assimilation in an alien land.

Terry Hong *An Interview with Manjushree Thapa* <http://www.bookslut.com> Oct 2014.

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Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policy makers drawn from national and international universities, institutes and organizations. GRFDT is presently based in India and is shaping as the largest such group focusing specifically on the issues related to diaspora and transnationalism.

The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.