UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Bc. Aneta Rambousková

The Assimilation Problems of the First Generation in Bharati Mukherjee's
Jasmine and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*

Diplomová práce

Vedoucí práce: prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc.

Olomouc 2016

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

Filozofická fakulta

Akademický rok: 2014/2015

Studijní program: Filologie

Forma: Prezenční

Obor/komb.: Anglická filologie (ANGFN)

Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta

PŘEDKLÁDÁ:	ADRESA	OSOBNÍ ČÍSLO
Bc. RAMBOUSKOVÁ Aneta	Horní Roveň 141, Dolní Roveň - Horní Roveň	F140064

TÉMA ČESKY:

Problémy asimilace první generace v dílech Bharati Mukherjee Jasmine a Meeny Alexander Manhattan Music

NÁZEV ANGLICKY:

The Assimilation Problems of the First Generation in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine and Meena Alexander's Manhattan Music

VEDOUCÍ PRÁCE:

prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc. - KAA

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

V úvodu práce studentka zařadí zvolené autorky do širšího literárně historického kontextu. Stručně zmíní historii indicko-americké literatury a zařadí zvolené autorky do kontextu indicko-americké literatury. S využitím relevantní teoretické literatury bude definovat klíčové pojmy, s nimiž bude pracovat, např. pojem identita, asimilace, etnicita, gender, imigrace, první generace apod. Jádrem diplomové práce bude analýza vybraných románů z hlediska zachycení problematiky asimilace, identity, dvoukulturnosti, genderu apod. Studetka své vývody opře jak o sekundární zdroje, tak je bude ilustrovat ukázkami z primárních textů.

SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:

Mukherjee, Bharati. Jasmine. New York: Grove Press, 1989.
Alexander, Meena. Manhattan Music. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1997.
Cheung, King-Kok. An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Takaki, Ronald. A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.
Takaki, Ronald. Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans. Toronto: Little Brown Company, 1998.
Srikanth, Rajini. The World Next Door: South Asian American Literature. Philadephia: Temple University Press, 2004.

PŘEDPOKLÁDANÝ OPONENT:

Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

Podpis studenta: *Rambousková*   Datum: 15. 3. 2015

Podpis vedoucího práce: *Jařab*   Datum: 16. 3. 2015

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma "The Assimilation Problems of the First Generation in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*" vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne...................   Podpis ....

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my supervisor prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc. for his guidance and valuable comments which helped me during the whole process of writing my thesis.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to find out and analyse what assimilation problems the first generation characters have in the United States; with what they are confronted in the new country and what challenges they have to overcome. This analysis focuses on two novels written by two contemporary Indian American female writers, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*. The depiction of the assimilation problems in the novels is also compared since both novels demonstrate a different approach to the concept of assimilation.

Immigration has become a widely discussed topic. A lot of countries endeavour to find ways to cope with new immigrants and to integrate them into society. The main interest of this thesis is, however, how immigrants themselves perceive this process. It is certainly the first generation that experiences the cultural shock most profoundly. Their initiation process into the dominant society is not simple and without obstacles. For Indian Americans, the biggest challenges of their integration lie in their race, gender and ethnicity. Therefore, the thesis is divided into three main chapters which deal with each of these problems in great detail. The chapters are organized according to the gravity of the above stated problems.

The first chapter dedicated to race is focused on the question of racial identification of Indian Americans in the USA, racial stereotypes and prejudices, and the racial status of Indian Americans. It further explores the importance of race in the intermarriages and relationships with white Americans, and briefly presents the history of Indian immigration to the U.S., and its impact on Indian Americans.

The chapter devoted to gender deals with the motivations and expectations of female Indian American characters to travel and settle in America, and how these expectations are fulfilled. It also examines the position of Indian American female characters within Indian American community, and their conformity or non-conformity to traditional gender roles. Lastly, it discusses the impact of assimilation on marriages, relationships and on the attitude towards womanhood and sexuality of Indian American female characters.

The last chapter dedicated to ethnicity explores how Indian American characters negotiate their ethnic identity in the Unites States; what elements of their culture are transplanted into the new country, and what elements are abandoned in the process of

assimilation. Additionally, it briefly examines the topic of names and their importance for one's identity.

The main chapters are preceded by an introductory chapter which provides a general overview of Indian American literature and basic terms of this thesis such as assimilation or the first generation.

Even though this thesis focuses on the assimilation problems of the first generation Indian American characters, it is predominantly the experience of female Indian American characters that is the prime focus of the analysis since they have more reasons to seek an escape from the patriarchal society than male characters, and so undergo a bigger transformation. The analysis is further complemented by the observations of sociologists, psychologists, social anthropologists, historians and other scholars on the topic of immigrant's socialization with a new culture to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the stated problems. The conclusions that are drawn by various theorists are occasionally supported by autobiographical accounts of the authors of the analysed novels, who belong to the first generation of immigrants too.

1 BECOMING AMERICAN, BEING INDIAN

As the title of this chapter, which is derived from the name of Khandelwal's book[1], suggests, since the very beginning American culture has been shaped by people who had considered "home" a different country before their arrival. Its consequences are "the persistent attempts to construct a sense of natural family cohesion in the new world."[2] In the American context, a considerable public and scholarly debate has taken place about what constructs and defines American culture and "Americanness" in general, and what distinguishes it from other cultures, particularly from European culture. Nevertheless, as Werner Sollors, a professor of African-American studies at Harvard, points out, whatever creates American culture, it may be instructive and informative to "look at the writings of and about people who were descended from diverse backgrounds but were, or consented to become, Americans" because they offer narratives "about how Americanness is achieved, at the point of its emergence, and how it is established again and again as newcomers and outsiders are socialized into the culture."[3] From this perspective, ethnic literature seems to be very valuable, not only for the immigrants and members of ethnic groups themselves, for whom it serves as both "expressions of mediation between cultures" and "handbooks of socialization into the codes of Americanness," but also for white Americans whose ancestors went through a similar process.[4]

Indian-American literature belongs to one of the youngest ethnic literatures. It has flourished since the sixties when the country opened its door to immigrants from all over the world, India included. Even though India can predominantly be characterized by religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity, the history of all parts of the country is linked with colonialism. As a result, India has English as one of its official languages, and Indian-American writers who typically come from middle or upper class have a

---

[1] Madhulika S. Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
[2] Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6-7.
[3] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 6.
[4] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 7.

perfect command of English.[5] In spite of its newness, Indian-American literature has gained critical and public attention, mostly thanks to the works of contemporary female Indian-American writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Meena Alexander, Mira Jacob, Chitra Divakaruni or Kiran Desai. Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most prominent writers in this category. She won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for her first short story collection "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999). Her other two works "Unaccustomed Earth" (2008) and *The Lowland* (2013), were nominated for the Man Booker Prize. Her novel *The Namesake* (2003) was turned into a movie.[6] Kiran Desai, a daughter of an Indian writer writing in English Anita Desai, won the Man Booker Prize with her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).[7] The group of Indian-American male authors is best represented by Agha Shahid Ali and Vikram Chanda. Agha Shahid Ali was a poet nominated for the National Book Award. In his poetry he managed to interconnect his multiple ethnic identities.[8] In contrast to Ali, Chanda is a contemporary novelist and short story writer. His works include novels *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) and *Sacred Games* (2006), and a short story collection "Love and Longing in Bombay" (1997).[9]

This paper focuses on two novels written by two contemporary Indian American female writers, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*. *Jasmine* follows a journey of an Indian girl to the United States, and her transformations to become an American. The novel also illustrates how American culture and society is transformed by her and other immigrants. *Manhattan Music* revolves around the life of an Indian woman Sandhya Rosenblum who moves to the United States with her Jewish-American husband. This throws her life and existence into turbulence. In her effort to make sense of her new life she is guided by an American woman of mixed descent

---

[5] Ketu H. Katrak, "South Asian American Literature," in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 192-194.
[6] "Jhumpa Lahiri," accessed October 21, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jhumpa-Lahiri.
[7] "Kiran Desai," accessed October 21, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kiran-Desai.
[8] "Agha Shalid Ali," accessed October 21, 2016, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/agha-shahid-ali.
[9] "Biography," accessed October 21, 2016, http://www.vikramchandra.com/biography/.

Draupadi, who accompanies Sandhya in her personal quest of finding a place in the alien country.

The characters at whom this study is aimed belong to the first generation of Indian immigrants. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the term 'first generation' refers to the people born abroad.[10] In *Beyond Ethnicity*, Marcus Lee Hansen, an American historian who is best known for his work on immigration, articulates his theory about the generational succession among immigrants. Three generations of immigrants with different attitudes and approaches to their ethnicity are generally distinguished. While the first generation devote their energies to securing material comfort and preserving ancestral tradition, the second generation, which refers to the children of immigrants born in the United States, display a clear tendency to abandon everything connected to their foreign origin. It is the third generation which embrace their ancestry again, trying to find balance between their descent and consent.[11]

Nevertheless, as Sollors explains, the term 'generation,' which has been widely used, is, in fact, a cultural construct created in the reaction to the continuous arrival of immigrants in order build the continuity of people:

> Though it defies measurability, the generation is first and foremost a mental concept which has been experienced as well as used to interpret experience throughout American history. (…) the construct of 'generations' has been useful both as an instrument of cultural criticism and as a rhetorical device that is used to create a sense of cohesive kinship among the diverse inhabitants of this country.[12]

From this understanding of a 'generation' it can be concluded that it functions as a metaphor, "which frames our perception of reality while largely remaining invisible."[13]

In his book Sollors uses the phrase "the socializing rituals" to describe the process of the incorporation of immigrants into American society. Such a process is, however, most commonly known as *assimilation*. Elizabeth P. Pauls, on the website of *Britannica*, defines assimilation as "the process whereby individuals or groups of

---

[10] "Foreign Born," accessed October 5, 2016, www.census.gov/population/foreign/about/faq.html.
[11] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 215.
[12] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 210.
[13] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 208.

differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society."[14] As Pauls further explains, assimilation entails adopting cultural traits of the dominant group by individuals or groups to be assimilated to such an extent that they will blend in with the dominant culture. Individuals or groups either voluntarily undergo assimilation or they find themselves under pressure to assimilate; in other words, they are forced to assimilate.[15] This seems to account for and support Richard Alba's and Victor Nee's argument that the term 'assimilation' has become a "hot potato" in contemporary American public discourse. It has acquired negative connotations of "an ethnocentric and patronizing imposition on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity."[16] In the present the word predominantly remains to be associated with "a bygone era, when the multicultural nature of American society was not comprehended, let alone respected, and there appeared, at least to white Americans, to be a unitary and unquestioned American way of life."[17] Alba and Nee basically distinguish two approaches to assimilation: old and new. According to the old conception, individuals or groups were expected to assimilate into the dominant culture, and assimilation was perceived to be inevitable for newcomers and their children. This approach presupposed that there is a standard to which newcomers should aspire to reach. This standard was represented by a middle class white Protestant of British or rather English descent, commonly known under the abbreviation 'WASP'. Alba and Nee, however, point out that this approach is not valid anymore.[18] The new conception of assimilation, which is now widely accepted as the only possible way of looking at assimilation, is partly inspired by the Chicago School of Sociology whose "definition of assimilation envisioned diverse mainstream society in which people of different ethnic/racial origins and cultural heritages evolve a common culture that enables them

---

[14] Elizabeth Prine Pauls, "Assimilation," accessed October 11, 2016,
https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society.
[15] Pauls, "Assimilation."
[16] Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.
[17] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 1.
[18] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 2-10.

to sustain a common national existence."[19] The process of the change in the approach to assimilation from the old to the new is further described in the chapter dealing with ethnicity.

In their attempt to reformulate assimilation, Alba and Nee present their own definition of this concept as "the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences."[20] They further specify their conception of assimilation as follows:

> "Decline" means in this context that a distinction attenuates in salience, that the occurrences for which it is relevant diminish in number and contract to fewer and fewer domains of social life. Individuals' ethnic origins become less and less relevant in relation to the members of another ethnic group (typically, but not necessarily, the ethnic majority group), and individuals on both sides of the boundary see themselves more and more as alike, assuming they are similar in terms of some other critical factors such as social class; in other words, they mutually perceive themselves with less and less frequency in terms of ethnic categories and increasingly only under specific circumstances. [21]

From Alba and Nee's perspective, assimilation is a two-way process that has an impact on not only an individual or a group, but also the society in which individuals or groups try to assimilate, and which "is changed in the process".[22]

---

[19] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 10.
[20] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 11.
[21] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 11.
[22] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream,* 11.

2 RACE

As Lucius Outlaw, a professor of philosophy at the Vanderbilt University, explains, race has been employed as a tool to classify people and understand the world.[23] The calling for race to be used in such classifications was due to "the need to account for human origins in general, for human diversity in particular."[24] Nevertheless, as quoted in Outlaw's essay from Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood's *The Race Concept*, the beginnings and the progress of this employment are not very clear:

> The career of the race concept begins in obscurity, for experts dispute whether the word derives from an Arabic, a Latin, or a German source. The first recorded use in English of the word "race" was in a poem by William Dunbar of 1508, (…). During the next three centuries the word was used with growing frequency in a literary sense as denoting simply a class of persons or even things (…). In the nineteenth, and increasingly in the twentieth century, this loose usage began to give way and the word came to signify groups that were distinguished biologically.[25]

Even before the 19th and 20th centuries, race was used as a device of sorting people according to their biological differences in connection with the development of capitalism and slave trade. In the 18th century, race classifications began to be scientifically supported, which consequently led to the development of theories of race types. The first formulation of racial classification was provided by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in his *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* in 1776. A few years later, Georges Cuvier, a French anatomist and founder of comparative anatomy and paleontology, established three categories of people with a descending scale: whites, yellows, and blacks.[26]

While science laid the foundations of the concept of race and race types in the 18th century, in the 19th century it became the backbone of the whole concept because it

---

[23] Lucius Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory of "Race"," in *Race and Racism*, ed. Bernard Boxill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed March 15, 2016, http://www33.homepage.villanova.edu/edward.fierros/pdf/Outlaw~Critical%20Theory%20of%20Race.pdf, 63.
[24] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 63.
[25] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 63.
[26] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 64.

provided the justification and legitimacy of the view on the natural hierarchy of race groups. This view was further supported by Darwin's work (*On the Origin of Species*, 1859).[27] Some of his key ideas became the basis for the theory of social Darwinism.[28] According to Outlaw, social Darwinism was proposed in order to apply "Darwin's principles regarding heredity and natural selection to human groups and endeavours and thereby provide firmer grounding for the science of 'race'."[29] This proved to be particularly helpful in the distribution of power and rationalization of the superiority of one group over others.[30] Race was connected with a set of distinguishing attributes and features concerning not only the physical appearance, but also the differences in intelligence, temperament and sexuality. As both Banton and Harwood and Winant and Omi claim, the mixing of different races was considered an act against the natural order and it could even cause the complete disintegration of human society.[31]

Nevertheless, as W. E. B. DuBois writes in *Dusk of Dawn*, the general agreement on the natural hierarchy among race groups was not supported exclusively by "scientific data" but also by cultural heritage. As Dubois explains, race was a shifting construct which was either exclusively related to biological features or it was understood in terms of culture and cultural history. It was believed that the position of race groups with respect to one another was based on the assumed possession of culture and history.[32] Whereas the white race was considered to produce culture and have history, Africa "was left without culture and without history."[33] This assumption also

---

[27] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 65.
[28] Social Darwinism is based on the theory that persons, groups, and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as Charles Darwin had perceived in plants and animals in nature. According to the theory, the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grew in power and in cultural influence over the weak. Social Darwinists held that the life of humans in society was a struggle for existence ruled by "survival of the fittest," a phrase proposed by the British philosopher and scientist Herbert Spencer. http://www.britannica.com/topic/social-Darwinism
[29] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 65.
[30] Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory," 65.
[31] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation*, 24.
[32] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Concept of Race," in *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept,* ed. W. E. B. DuBois (New York: Schocken Books), accessed March 25, 2016, https://openlibrary.org/works/OL17090335W/Dusk_of_dawn_an_essay_toward_an_autobiography_of_a _race_concept, 49.
[33] DuBois, "The Concept of Race," 50.

applied to Asiatic countries. As a result, the white race was perceived to be naturally superior to other races.[34]

The scientific theories of race were discarded by the Chicago School of Sociology led by Robert E. Park.[35] The Chicago sociologists rejected not only the theory of social Darwinism, but also the notion of a human body being crucial for determining race. [36] Yet, Winant and Omi emphasize the importance of the body "as a signifier of status, and as signifier of group belonging":[37]

> The racial body had served from the earliest days of conquest, and still serves today, as an imperfect but effective tool and marker: for both domination and resistance, for the assignment of identity and the recognition of difference, for the maintenance of social control and the drawing of boundaries among groups, and for claims of solidarity made both by the powerful and the powerless.[38]

In the mid-20th century the conventional approach to race based on the biological features began to be undermined by the concept of race as a matter of culture. Nevertheless, cultural differences are generally associated with the notion of ethnicity. As Winant and Omi explain, to understand race in terms of ethnicity leads inevitably to reducing the importance of physical attributes and to dismissing the participation of descent, kinship and ancestry, which are the central notions in anthropology. As Winant and Omi suggest, if race is approached from a cultural perspective, race status seems to be a matter of choice, as one can learn a new language, adopt a different way of life, convert to a different religion or change a way of clothing. As one of many obstacles in accepting the ethnicity-based paradigm of race, Winant and Omi mention conventionality. The affiliations to a particular race type have been determined by corporeal characteristics for many centuries, and this has become deeply rooted in the essence of the word and its usage. [39] More importantly, the biggest problem with this paradigm of race lies in the limitation of its application. Racial groups consist of

---

[34] DuBois, "The Concept of Race," 49.
[35] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation*, 24.
[36] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 40.
[37] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 40.
[38] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 40.
[39] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 22.

ethnically diverse subgroupings which often have nothing in common except for the skin colour. Whereas the whites are distinguished culturally on the basis of their country of origin, blacks and Asians are thought to be without those cultural distinctions. The ethnicity-based paradigm was originally applied to white immigrants coming predominantly from Southern and Eastern Europe before and after the turn of the 20th century, but later it has come to be employed on groups which, however, have been defined above all racially.[40] For these reasons, in this paper race is associated with physical or biological attributes, while ethnicity is linked to cultural specificities of each group, including language, cuisine, and a way of clothing or a manner of behaviour.

   Although it may seem to be without difficulties to identify people into specific race types, for some this can be particularly demanding. As Winant and Omi explain, racial identity is not always clear. The U.S. Census Bureau system of racial classification is not sufficient and satisfactory because many people do not identify themselves with any of the offered possibilities. They are unable to find their position within the system.[41] As Maria Root writes, people are forced by the government to choose only one racial identity even though some populations, namely the population of Hawaii, have considered themselves multiracial.[42] Moreover, one's own sense of racial identity may collide with the general opinion on the individual's racial belonging. Some people may even reject the imposed racial identity.[43] Indian Americans represent one of the groups that find very challenging to racially define themselves. Sakhi and Sandhya, the first-generation characters of *Manhattan Music*, are attacked both verbally and physically by a group of young Americans in front of a supermarket. The young boys throw stones at them while calling them various names. Sakhi, Sandhya's cousin is particularly offended by the labels the young men have been trying to attach to them: "'Paki,' they yelled, then, 'Hindu,' one after the other, as if the words were

---

[40] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 44-45.
[41] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 2.
[42] Maria P. P. Root, "Within, Between, and Beyond Race," in *Racially Mixed People in America,* ed. Maria P. P. Root (Sage Publications, 1992), accessed March 26, 2016, https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1452253358, 9.
[43] Winant and Omi, *Racial Formation* , 2.

interchangeable. 'Neither of which,' (…) 'suits my flesh very well.'[44] Jasmine, on the other hand, is surprised at the genuine effort of Taylor's friends to categorize her: "Taylor's friends in New York used to look at me and say, 'You're Iranian, right?' If I said no, then, 'Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi?' "[45] They cannot resist the urge to locate her racial identity, but are unable to do it.

Throughout the past decades there have been a lot of negotiations over the proper racial classification of Indian Americans. Even though Indian Americans are commonly included "in the census 'Asian' category", most of the Indian Americans are not personally identified with the imposed racial label.[46] As Nazli Kibria in *A Part, Yet Apart* claims, "South Asian Americans[47] have a sense of profound racial difference from other Asian Americans."[48] This disagreement over Indian Americans's racial identity exists even among other Americans as well as Asian Americans who do not consider Indian Americans to be racially Asian.[49] The feeling of "not fitting," of "not belonging" surrounds Indian Americans's racial identity, as they have been put in any of the officially employed racial categories, and still were viewed to be racially different from other members of that racial group:

> South Asians are clearly perceived to be racially distinct from the white population. There is, however, considerable confusion about the exact "race" of South Asians, who are inconsistently categorized by the majority population as members of any of the major racial groupings in the United States. [50]

According to Kibria, the main reason for the obscurity of South Asians' racial identity lies in the U.S. racial system itself because it divides people according to a simple "dichotomous scheme" into the whites and the non-whites.[51] South Asians have always

---

[44] Meena Alexander, *Manhattan Music* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1997), 135.
[45] Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (New York: Grove Press, 1989), 33.
[46] Ann Morning, "The Racial Self-identification of South Asians in the United States," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27 (2001): 62-64, accessed March 16, 2016, doi: 10.1080/13691830020024867.
[47] This is a term used in Kibria's book, and it also includes Indian Americans.
[48] Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart: South Asian in Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 75.
[49] Morning, "The Racial Self-identification," 64.
[50] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 70-71.
[51] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart,* 71.

been categorized as "non-whites" by the American legal system. Thus, instead of giving them one 'pure' racial category, it seems more appropriate to describe them, as Kibria herself suggests, as "ambiguous nonwhites." Nevertheless, as Kibria points out, South Asians themselves have contributed to the ambiguity of their racial status. They try to resist both the U.S. racial system and their position in it.[52] According to Maxine Fisher's study, South Asians do not associate skin colour with the concept of race; they consider these two notions to be totally unrelated. Therefore, their racial thinking significantly differs from the way of thinking typical for the U.S. political and social climate.[53]

In *Jasmine*, the first generation immigrants are confronted with racial stereotypes held by the dominant-white society in the United States. Nevertheless, instead of challenging them, they conform to them. This describes one of the tendencies which minority group members display when facing racial stereotyping of them. As Minako Kurokawa Maykowich in her article dealing with reciprocity in perceptions of racial stereotypes among white, black, and Japanese Americans as the representatives of Asians explains, there are generally two ways minority group members cope with racial stereotypes: either they identify with the dominant-culture stereotype of a particular group and reinforce it, which is known as the "mirror-image phenomenon", or they reject the racial stereotypes imposed on them and instead they create "reciprocal prejudice and attribute negative stereotypes to the dominant group."[54] However, before examining the racial stereotypes associated with a certain racial or minority group, it is necessary to define a stereotype. According to Maykovich, a stereotype can be understood as "a standardized concept or image invested with special meaning and held in common by members of a group."[55] This definition of a stereotype implies that these concepts are in fact "social norms for describing recognized groups, reflecting the power relations of dominant versus minority groups in a given social structure."[56]

---

[52] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 71-72.
[53] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 72.
[54] Minako Kurokawa Maykowich, "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes: White, Black, and Yellow" *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972): 876-877, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776927.
[55] Maykovich, "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes," 876.
[56] Maykovich, "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes," 876.

Maykovich's research reveals that the dominant-image of Japanese Americans includes attributes such as ambitious, quiet, industrious, efficient, conventional, courteous and loyal to family.[57] A different approach to stereotypes, not only racial, but also ethnic or gender, is introduced in the article called "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition."[58] The stereotype content model operates along two dimensions - warmth and competence and works with two variables – status and competition. According to the model, warmth and competence can be mixed into various combinations whose results are *mixed stereotypes*. These mixed stereotypes are basically of two types: paternalistic and envious. Paternalistic mixed stereotypes portray a group of people as incompetent but warm, evoking pity, compassion and sympathy towards them while envious mixed stereotypes depict a group as competent but not warm, arousing envy. As the mixed stereotype content model clearly shows, Asians are perceived as highly competent but not warm.[59] As the research has shown, Asians are considered as "too competent, too ambitious, too hardworking, and simultaneously, not sociable."[60] Therefore, they belong to the group of people, together with the Jews, rich people and feminists, which arouses envy and jealousy in the dominant group.[61] All the above mentioned attributes associated with the stereotypical portrayal of Asians can be found in the character of Du, a first generation immigrant of Vietnamese origin adopted by Jasmine and Bud, Jasmine's lover and banker from Iowa, at the age of 14 from a refugee camp in Vietnam. Du is described as being occasionally contemptuous, tough, mysterious, quiet, secretive and self-controlled. Hardly ever does he display emotions, and other people, including Jasmine herself, have difficulty in understanding him or what he is thinking about. At school teachers describe him as "a quick study," which

---

[57] Maykovich, "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes," 876, 880.
[58] Susan T. Fiske et all., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82 (20022): 878, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/Fiske_StereotypeContent.pdf.
[59] Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content," 878-879.
[60] Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content," 880.
[61] Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content," 879.

implies that he is viewed as competent, clever and ambitious.[62] Du's portrayal fits the envious mixed stereotype model which presents Asians as a highly competent but not warm minority group. Moreover, the behaviour of the Americans toward Du is in accordance with the stereotype model which states that minority groups being defined as competent but not warm arouse feelings of envy and jealousy in the members of the dominant group. A teacher at Du's school makes a comment about Vietnamese children in general that suggests, as Jasmine herself points out, that Asian children are looked on with envy and jealousy by the dominant-group members: "'They were like that, the kids who hung around us in Saigon.' He didn't make 'quick study' sound like anything you'd like to be."[63] What the comment implies is that Asians can even be perceived as a threat due to their assumed great competence. Some of the traits attributed to Asians can also be recognized in the character of Jasmine. In the United States, she has intimate relationships with two Americans. Even though she has some feelings for her love partners, she never lets her feelings control her. If necessary, she even leaves her partners without any regrets. Although for Jasmine such an outcome is understood as inevitable, from Karin's, Bud's ex-wife, point of view, Jasmine is "a tornado."[64] In Karin's opinion, Jasmine is a walking disaster which endangers the traditional system of their world. Jasmine is also portrayed as secretive. She does not want to speak about herself with anyone, and she does not tell any of her partners about her feelings for them. The only one to whom she expresses her love is Du since they share the same fate of wandering across the ocean. Furthermore, Jasmine is depicted as highly competent and ambitious because she is able to adapt very easily to changing conditions. Upon her departure from Bud, she admits that "the world is divided between those who stay and those who leave."[65] Her departure is set in contrast to Karin who will take care of Bud after Jasmine leaves.

Even though Asians are viewed as emotionally cold and unsociable, they are paradoxically considered to be loyal to family. Du decides to leave his adoptive family

---

[62] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 28.
[63] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 29.
[64] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 215.
[65] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 228.

for his own sister who settled down in Los Angeles and who is the only surviving member of their family except for Du himself. She struggled to keep Du alive when they were staying in the refugee camp. She was feeding Du by worms, crabs and other animals so that he would not die of starvation. His decision to move to his sister in order to support her and her family demonstrates the loyalty to family. Nevertheless, it is the family with whom he is related by blood not his adoptive one, to whom he feels to be loyal. Unsurprisingly, Jasmine as his adoptive mother perceives his departure as a betrayal and remarks that "[b]lood is thick."[66] Therefore, there are two groups to which Du shows his loyalty: his own race as he leaves his adoptive American family for his Vietnamese sister and he is also accompanied on his journey by his Vietnamese friend, and other immigrants as Jasmine is the only one from his adoptive family to whom he says goodbye and shows any emotional vulnerability. On the other hand, he does not display any loyalty to the dominant culture, which is represented by his adoptive father Bud and other relatives. As Du simply states, "[H]he [Bud] never wanted me."[67] In other words, Du distances himself from the dominant society and retains his loyalty to other Vietnamese people and immigrants. Apart from Du, his Vietnamese friend who brings Du a letter from his sister is also described as a very cold, unsociable and suspicious person. Loyalty to family does not seem to be one of the traits of Jasmine who does not feel any obligations to either her relatives in India with whom she is not in touch or other Indian Americans living in the United States. On the other hand, Sandhya keeps in contact with her family in India; she calls them regularly and travels back to India if necessary, for example, when her father falls ill. Moreover, she prefers the company of other Indian Americans to other Americans.

With respect to their assumed great competence, Asian Americans are considered to represent a "model minority." Lei Lai in the article "The Model Minority Thesis and Workplace Discrimination of Asian Americans" explains that even seemingly positive racial stereotypes can be a source of discrimination. Initially, the term was applied to Japanese Americans who had managed to succeed in the United

---

[66] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 221.
[67] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 221.

States even after the long period of discrimination during the Second World War, and soon it started to cover all Asian Americans.[68] The characteristics of Asian Americans as the model minority Lai summarizes as follows:

> Asian Americans have low unemployment rates and high occupational achievement because they have a strong work ethic; Asian Americans have high educational attainment because Asian cultures place a strong emphasis on learning; Asian Americans have low delinquency rates because of a strong family value orientation.[69]

So far the attributes connected with Asian Americans have been predominantly positive emphasizing their great competence and skills, self-control and self-discipline, and family orientation and loyalty. Nevertheless, Lai lists several reasons explaining the motives which drive the dominant group to associate such a characteristic with Asian Americans. Firstly, it "reifies the American ideological canon that anyone can enjoy the American dream if he or she works hard."[70] As the second reason she states that it "serves as propaganda to other racial minorities that Asian Americans have succeeded by being hard-working and self-sufficient."[71] As the last reason, Lai proposes that "it echoes the media celebration of a few 'rags-to-riches' stories of Asian Americans."[72] However, there is a real danger for Asian Americans being labelled as the model minority. This danger lies in the emphasis being placed on their minority status. This may result in rejecting their participation on the American life and in preventing their integration into the dominant society, which may inevitably lead to the perception of them as non-American Americans.

It is the perpetual foreigner syndrome that considerably affects Asian Americans. They are considered as foreigners regardless of their country of birth. To put it differently, they experience difficulty in being accepted as real Americans. Sandhya Rosenblum, married to a white Jewish American, experiences a feeling of

---

[68] Lei Lai, "The Model Minority Thesis and Workplace Discrimination of Asian Americans," *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 6 (2013): 93, accessed April 13, 2016, doi:10.1111/iops.12015.
[69] Lai, "The Model Minority Thesis," 93.
[70] Lai, "The Model Minority Thesis," 94.
[71] Lai, "The Model Minority Thesis," 94.
[72] Lai, "The Model Minority Thesis," 94.

alienation in the United States. Even after living in the United States for a couple of years, she cannot shake the feeling of not belonging. In her view, this is mainly due to her dark female body. She also believes that it is her race that keeps representing an obstacle in her marriage with a white American husband:

> Supposing she were to swallow the green card, ingest that plastic, would it pour through her flesh, a curious alchemy that would make her all right in the new world? What if she could peel off her brown skin, dye her hair blonde, turn her body into a pale, Caucasian thing, would it work better with Stephen?[73]

Sandhya identifies an invisible barrier between herself and Stephen. They are unable to communicate successfully with each other or share their worries, fears and other feelings. Furthermore, Sandhya seems to be unable to talk about her struggles to find her place in the new society. Her Indian relatives who have immigrated into the United States as well blame the problems in her marriage on her husband's race. They are convinced that she would not experience such difficulties in living in America and in integrating into the mainstream society if she were to marry an Indian.

The reasons that seem to underlie such assumptions are linked to the common experience and equal racial position in the dominant society. Firstly, if Sandhya were to marry an Indian man, then they would share the same history and culture. Coming into the United States would make an enormous change for both of them as they would be the first generation immigrants. They would endeavour to accommodate themselves in the alien world. Moreover, they would have to start from scratch because there would be nothing they could return to. Therefore, her Indian husband would potentially understand her problems, which would enable her to confide in him.

On the other hand, Stephen travels to India to work on his thesis, and after a few weeks he returns with Sandhya to the United States. In other words, India has been only a short stop enlivening his life in America. Stephen returns to his flat, to his work and to his family. He returns to the known environment. However, everything is unfamiliar for his wife. Sandhya also realizes that her husband will not help her find a way to

---

[73]Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 7.

integrate: "This was the world Stephen had brought her to, but he himself was oddly absent from it, and Sandhya felt that there was no way she could draw on his experience to help her live her life."[74] Although Stephen sees Sandhya's problems, he remains silent and decides not to interfere.

Secondly, if Sandhya were to marry an Indian, they would not only share the common experience of being the first immigrants, but they would also share the experience of being Indian Americans in society with racial hierarchy. Stephen believes in equality concerning opportunities and life in America generally. He takes for granted that his wife will seize all the opportunities which America offers. Nevertheless, "often his resolution wavered, and the truths he had discovered for himself wore thin when stretched over his wife's dark femaleness".[75] The equality of opportunities that is ensured for him does not mean that it will apply to his wife as well. As Vincent Kang Fu in his article dealing with racial intermarriages points out, "marriage across racial boundaries does not indicate complete acceptance between members of the two groups."[76] In this sense race relations which seem to enable equality for the members of the same race can be compared to caste system in India which establishes equality for the members of the same caste. Since the 20th century there has been an intense debate over the comparability of U.S. race system and India's caste system. The caste system was originally applied to the race relations between blacks and whites in the South by American sociologists such as Lloyd Warner, Gunnar Myrdal or Kingsley Davis.[77] The proponents of the similarity of these two concepts, namely André Béteille or Gerald D. Berreman, point out that although both systems differ in content, they show similarities in operation. Berreman, a professor of anthropology and a specialist on social inequality in India, defines a caste system as "a hierarchy of endogamous divisions in which

---

[74] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 39.
[75] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 39.
[76] Vincent Kang Fu, "Racial Intermarriage Pairings," *Demography* 38 (2001): 157, accessed April 13, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088297.
[77] André Béteille, "Race, Caste and Gender," in *Man* 25 (1990): 489-490, accessed April 18, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803715.

membership is hereditary and permanent."[78] In his view, the hierarchy "includes inequality both in status and in access to goods and services."[79]

The opponents of the comparison of race relations with caste system or the application of caste relations in the United States such as Oliver C. Cox or C. S. Johnson seem to emphasize that all members of a caste society in contrast to the members of a racially-stratified society are content with their position and have no desire to change it. In "Race and Caste: A Distinction" Cox compares the caste system to a colony of bees in which each group has its own responsibilities. Additionally, each group fulfils its duties without any objections and realizes its part in the whole system.[80] Some scholars even propose that the caste system in India in contrast to the race relations in the United States is motivated by religious principles which underlie the foundation of the system and justify the social stratification of people.[81]

Berreman's research on caste relations in the north of India has showed that people belonging to lower castes are not against the caste system itself but against their position in it because to abolish the system would mean that they would have to consider people from the lowest caste as their equals.[82] In the United States, on the other hand, there is the division of people into the whites and non-whites, which means that in case of destroying the system, people classified as unwhite "have nothing to lose but their inferior status."[83]

As Béteille, a professor of sociology in the University of Delhi, demonstrates, caste system also controls the marriage market. Men are allowed to marry women from inferior castes but this does not hold true vice versa as the marriage between women from a superior caste with men from an inferior one is widely detested. Vincent Kang Fu studies interracial marriages in the United States and he suggests that people prefer to marry members of the same group. They search for potential partners from different

---

[78] Geral D. Berreman, "Caste in Indian and the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 66 (1960): 120, accessed April 20, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2773155.
[79] Berreman, "Caste in Indian," 120.
[80] Oliver C. Cox, "Race and Caste: A Distinction," in *American Journal of Sociology* 50 (1945): 361, accessed April 18, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2771189.
[81] Berreman, "Caste in Indian," 120-121.
[82] Berreman, "Caste in Indian," 125.
[83] Berreman, "Caste in Indian," 125.

groups if they are unable to find the right one in their own group.[84] In his view, "racial identity is viewed as a cultural resource that individuals seek to match with their spouse. Cultural similarity enables a couple to forge a common lifestyle and enhances mutual support."[85] This seems to prove Sandhya's family right that she would not suffer so emotionally if she were to marry an Indian. Their union could be based on mutual understanding, encouragement and support, which is missing in Sandhya's marriage with Stephen. Above all, both would be subjects of racial discrimination and inequality.

In *Manhattan Music*, Sandhya and her cousins Sakhi and Jay are involved in an unpleasant incident in which they are suddenly attacked by a group of young working class white Americans who are throwing stones at them. This experience fills Sakhi with intense anger as she considers the attack to be directed not only against her race, but also against her womanhood. The attack on Sandhya and her family also seems to be provoked by the myth of Asian Americans as the model minority. As Ronald Takaki, a professor of ethnic studies, in *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* explains, American politicians, the Presidents included, publicly praised Asian Americans for their constant efforts which had brought them success and so the American Dream was kept alive and intact.[86] Nevertheless, these blunt statements caused fear and anxiety among white Americans who began to feel threatened by such a powerful force. White Americans felt that their jobs and university places were being stolen by those Asians. White Americans then started forming gangs which were targeting Asian Americans regardless of their ethnicity, and their attacks ranged from verbal abuses to heavy beatings.[87]

After the attack, Sakhi devotes herself to antiracist and antisexist work. The incident, however, seems to have an opposite effect on Sandhya whose sense of alienation from the life in America only deepens. Sandhya also does not wish to speak about the incident with her husband, fearing that he would feel guilty because "after all,

---

[84] Fu, "Racial Intermarriage Pairings," 149.
[85] Fu, "Racial Intermarriage Pairings," 149.
[86] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (Boston: Little Brown, 1989), 479-484
[87] Takaki, *Strangers,* 479-484.

he brought [her] here."[88] The stoning incident draws on the real-life experience of the author herself who was met with racial hostility when a white man called her "black bitch."[89] In this event "her vulnerability as a South Asian American woman in America" was exposed and she felt "humiliation and irreducible exclusion as a foreigner in the eyes of segments of white America."[90] Moreover, she could not bring herself to talk to her husband about it because she doubted if he had been able to understand her and her racial position in the USA as a white American.[91]

Whereas different racial identities seem to represent a problem, a hindrance to communicate successfully, and an insurmountable obstacle to achieve an emotional intimacy in Sandhya and Stephen's marriage, this is not true in Jasmine's relationship with Taylor, a white American professor and her employer. In the United States Jasmine starts working as a caregiver for an adopted child of a young married couple. She considers the closeness of the white American family as a great opportunity to integrate into the dominant society as she can learn their way of life and imitate it:

> I became an American in an apartment on Claremont Avenue across the street from a Barnard College dormitory. I lived with Taylor and Wyllie Hayes for nearly two years. Duff was my child; Taylor and Wyllie were my parents, my teachers, my family.[92]

She views their living together as a bridge connecting two racial groupings rather than as a possible source of conflicts. Before moving in with the Hayes, she has been living for some time with an Indian family of her deceased husband's professor. However, she finds the life in an Indian community too suffocating and so decides to leave the comfort and security of her little India to explore the world outside. She settles down in an American family, and has no intentions of maintaining a contact both with her homeland and with other Indian Americans and Asian Americans in general. She also cannot understand Du's need to create a cultural link and closeness with other

---

[88] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 133.
[89] Shankar and Srikanth , *A Part, Yet Apart*, 249.
[90] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part, Yet Apart*, 249.
[91] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part, Yet Apart*, 249.
[92] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 165.

Vietnamese in America. From Jasmine's point of view, her assimilation is therefore complete, whereas Du's assimilation is only partial or hyphenated since he refuses to abandon his national identity. According to Sucheta Mazumdar, a historian specializing in Indian and Chinese history, South Asians[93] do not take into account the participation of other Asian Americans and African Americans in the Civil Rights movement even though they can take advantage of the results of their efforts.[94] South Asians are not interested in and they do not want to become involved in the affairs of other Asian Americans and African Americans:

> [F]or South Asian middle-class immigrants travelling the slippery road of upward mobility, it is easier to imitate the hegemonic culture of Anglo-EuroAmerica than explore other Asian cultures. After all, almost two hundred years of British colonialism have prepared us for this. So why to bother to link up with all these other Asians when we can sit at the feet of the masters themselves? (…) Our temples, gurdwaras, jamatkhanas, mosques, and churches do not need to teach the history of Black struggles; one does not need to know the history of African America to be an engineer or a doctor.[95]

Jasmine shows such reluctance to socialize with other Asian Americans, Indian Americans included. She finds the life among white Americans quite appealing. Moreover, she has a complete trust in the American legal system which seems to offer personal freedom and a wide range of opportunities to everyone. Taylor Hayes epitomizes the American openness to embrace and absorb culturally and racially diverse groups and to take them under the wing of democracy:

> I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her, and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking, even when she didn't understand it. It seemed entirely American.[96]

What Jasmine tries to imply is "the polarization of the West as the land of liberation and the East as the land of oppression."[97] Nevertheless, it is not necessarily

---

[93] This thesis is focused on Indian Americans, but some authors study South Asians in general, to where Indian Americans also belong.
[94] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 61
[95] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 61.
[96] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 167.

true that the entry of Indian Americans into the United States and their life there has been simple. Indian Americans have always met with racial hostility. The hostility which was originally directed against Chinese Americans expanded to cover other Asians Americans, and it has affected the immigration from Asia itself. What is more, the scientific rationalization of racial categorization which quickly spread out throughout the country at the end of the 19th century supported such sentiments towards Asian Americans.[98]

The first Indian immigrants came from the Punjab region situated in northern India. These earliest immigrants were predominantly Sikhs who originally travelled to Canada but were forced to relocate southwards due to the anti-Indian hostility they encountered there. These Punjabi immigrants who became farmers in California were soon forbidden from the land ownership by the Alien Land Law.[99] Shortly afterwards, they were even outlawed from becoming rightful American citizens. In the early 20th century following the Naturalization Law of 1790 and its amendment from 1870 only white Americans and African Americans could gain the American citizenship.[100] Japanese Americans who tried to prove themselves to be white were rejected "on the grounds that 'white' was synonymous with 'Caucasian'."[101] This encouraged some Indian Americans to apply for the American citizenship pointing out that Indians have a Caucasian origin. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court dismissed their claims because "in the understanding of the common man he was not a white person, even though, technically, Caucasian was synonymous with white."[102] There is a clear contradiction in the treatment of race in legal discourse depending on its understanding. Race and skin colour correspond to the categories of "Caucasian" and "white." The Supreme Court further connects the "Caucasian" category with scientific classification and the label "white" with a common sense. Therefore, in the first case the Supreme Court viewed a

---

[97] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 186.
[98] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 90.
[99] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 81-83.
[100] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 208.
[101] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 208.
[102] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 208.

racial identity to be determined anthropologically while in the second case racial identity was associated with skin colour, ignoring the scientific approach altogether.[103]

Since their arrival Indian American's racial identity has created a great confusion among the dominant white Americans. The necessity to categorize the newcomers was particularly demanding since Indian Americans could be characterized above all by diversity. As Ronald Takaki in *Strangers from a Different Shore* quotes Saint Nihal Singh who provided a description how Indians differed from each other in eye, hair and skin colour:

> All Hindoos who come to America have hair varying in hue from brownish-black to purplish or an intense raven-black (…). The hide of the Hindoo varies from the dull, pale, sallow-brown of a Mexican to the extreme black of an African. The man who hails from the highlands of northwestern Hindustan is a shade darker than olive. A few coming from Kashmir have fair skins, light hair and blue eyes. Those who come from the low plains have darker complexions and an extremely sun-burnt appearance (…). They have intelligent faces, keen eyes, compressed lips and determined chins. This type of countenance is distinctly Aryan, as all Hindoos who come to the land of the Stars and Stripes are descended from the same branch of the human family as the Anglo-Saxons. [104]

Nevertheless, the white Americans did not agree that their racial brothers should have the same right to live in the United States, and to participate in the social life as they did for they decided to include India into "the Asiatic barred zone," which was a set of Asian countries from which the entry of immigrants was denied.[105] This regulation was part of the Immigration Act of 1917, and "the first widely restricted immigration law."[106] In the aftermath of these events, about 3000 Indian Americans returned to their native country.[107] Those who decided to stay usually married Mexican women because Indian Americans were not allowed to have relationships with white women and they could not bring wives from India.[108] The Second World War greatly contributed to the

---

[103] Shankar and Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart*, 94.
[104] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 295.
[105] "The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)," accessed April 28, 2016, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act.
[106] "The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act".
[107] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 300.
[108] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 309-310.

change in status of Indian Americans in the U.S. and it reopened America for Indian immigrants. In 1946, the United States enabled a few Indians per year to enter the country, and some years later the government even granted Indian Americans the citizenship. The main reasons for this change of mind of the Congress lay in the strategic position of India in the fight with Japan, and the fact that the United States could not effectively fight against the fascist regime in Europe while still maintaining racist discrimination of nearly a quarter of their population.[109] The 1965 Immigration Act was a turning point for the Asian immigration into the U.S. This law accelerated the immigration from Asiatic countries from which immigration had been prohibited for several decades.[110]

Since the arrival of Asian Americans to the United States, they have been perceived, to use Takaki's label, as "strangers from a different shore" by the dominant white society.[111] Immigrants have been coming in most cases for two reasons – they have been driven either by economic necessity or by the promise of freedom and the opportunity to realize their potential. [112] It is the second reason which draws Sandhya to America. Sandhya is attracted by America which seems to offer a place where one can "break from old patterns" which cannot reach across the wide ocean. In India, she is haunted by the inescapable fate of arranged marriages and the realization that there is no future for her outside matrimony. Stephen's proposal represents for her a way to escape from her parents' influence:

> He was a stranger to her, but a kind one, and what more could she ask. She would arrange her own marriage, leap over the terrible wall her mother had erected; foil her parents at their own game. Married to Stephen she would be quite beyond their power.[113]

---

[109] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 367-370.
[110] "U.S. Immigration Since 1965, "accessed September 26, 2016, http://www.history.com/topics/us-immigration-since-1965.
[111] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 472.
[112] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 472.
[113] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 34.

Nevertheless, America seems to catch Sandhya off guard. While Stephen takes pride in what America has offered to immigrants, and how open and kind it has been to accept and welcome so many people from different parts of the world, Sandhya is struck by the "vision of America as essentially a place where European immigrants would establish a homogeneous white society and where nonwhites would have to remain 'strangers'."[114] This becomes even more evident after Stephen takes his wife on a trip to the Ellis Island. The former immigration station has been made into a museum, and Stephen is excited about showing it to his wife. It has, indeed, a very profound effect on Sandhya but quite different from which Stephen has indented. Instead of being impressed with the symbolic importance and greatness of the United States, which the museum ought to represent since it shows how many people America has attracted, and how many people have believed that with the entry to the country their lives were going to change, her mind is in a state of total chaos because she sees the difference between her husband's perspective, which exemplifies the stance of the dominant white settlers, and her own perspective, which considers the immigrant's experience. Stephen is unable to comprehend the real reason for his wife's sudden melancholy and distance, and he ascribes them to the small-scale Indian immigration in the past: "Was it because so few Indians had come that way?"[115] Stephen is, however, aware of certain negative attitudes Americans have been displaying towards Asian Americans, and he is particularly careful to protect his wife from discovering it. At one moment Sandhya and Stephen get separated in the museum. While searching for her, he becomes worried over her seeing the signs of hatred and hostility the dominant white society has expressed to the newcomers from Asian:

> (…) racing about the museum, even into the room with anti-Asian images, "Jap Go Home" and the like, which he hadn't wanted her to see, the flat caricatures, the Asian Exclusion Act written up in big type next to the letters THIS LAND IS NOT YOUR LAND. [116]

---

[114] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 472.
[115] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 36.
[116] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 37.

This trip deepens her sense of alienation from people around her, including her husband. She becomes emotionally and psychologically vulnerable as she realizes that there is no place for her where she could feel she belongs; she cannot permanently return to India, and she does not know how to make meaning of herself in America, which has not proved to be particularly open to the Indian Americans. She cannot put down roots in America, which leads to her being caught between two continents, unable to live in neither of them.

The signs and posters in the museum on the Ellis Island are the remains of the period when Asian Americans were far away from being considered a "model minority." Instead, they were labelled as "coolies," which meant that they were perceived as "a degraded race of 'godless opium addicts, prostitutes, and gamblers.'"[117] Jasmine is confronted with these prejudices in a bar in a small town in Iowa which she enters with Bud. The other guests regard Jasmine as a prostitute:

> 'I don't know nothing about horsepower, but I know *whore*power when I see it!' His next words were in something foreign, but probably Japanese or Thai or Filipino, something bar girls responded to in places where he'd spent his rifle-toting youth. [118]

With respect to the relatively remote location of the place, and the homogeneous community living there, it is understandable that there is still such an image of Asian Americans. The shift of the public image of Asian Americans from coolies to model minority occurred in the aftermath of the 1965 Immigration Act which opened gates to high-skilled and educated workers from Asia.[119] Nevertheless, as Jane Junn points out in her essay "From Coolie to Model Minority," it is mainly the government policy and its laws that shape the public view on racial groups and their image in the society.[120] In pre-1965 Immigration Act period, the federal laws which forbid Asian Americans from land ownership and from naturalization, and which sent a mass of people to internment camps were supported by the image of Asian Americans as coolies. In the last decades

---

[117] Jane Junn, "From Coolie to Model Minority: U. S. Immigration Policy and the Construction of Racial Identity" *Du Bois Review* 4 (2007): 356, accessed May 3, 2016, doi:10.10170S1742058X07070208.
[118] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 201.
[119] Junn, "From Coolie to Model Minority," 355-356.
[120] Junn, "From Coolie to Model Minority," 368.

of the past century, the government's praise considerably elevated Asian Americans in the eyes of general American society. On the other hand, Jane Junn concludes that labelling Asian Americans as a model minority "works in tandem with another common characterization of Asians as *perpetual foreigners*."[121] Discussing the situation of Indian Americans after September 11, Rajini Srikanth emphasizes the media's reluctance to acknowledge the attacks on Indian Americans as racial assaults since the mainstream society did not actually view them as the attacks on Americans: "They [Indian Americans] are outsiders, regardless of the number of generations that their families have been in the United States, their dedication to the U.S. Armed Forces, or the number of flags they fly from their businesses and homes."[122] What happened to Japanese Americans during World War II is now happening to Indian Americans and Arab Americans who, in the war against terrorism, are suspected of retaining loyalty to those countries in Asia from which they or their ancestors have come. This perpetual foreigner syndrome has been leading a lot of Asian Americans to maintain strong ties with their ancestral countries. Such is the case with Sandhya who keeps returning to India every year bringing her daughter along. Moreover, she always carries gifts for her parents, and some objects for decorating the house in the hope that she will keep her presence there alive. Although living in America, she is interested in her family affairs, rushing worriedly back to India when her father falls ill. Her return to ancestral land functions as an escape route from the world Sandhya feels to be trapped in. Sandhya seems to experience the same problem as other immigrants she encounters; that is finding herself to be at two places at once. While her body is in America, her mind is wandering through the streets of her homeland. This is especially true when her father gets hospitalized:

> Walking the cold streets, or shopping in the supermarket, Sandhya felt stretched so thin she feared she might die of the sheer transparency needed to be in two places at once: crossing the sidewalk in Manhattan, even as her soul was in Tiruvella, in an unseen hospital room where her father lay. [123]

---

[121] Junn, "From Coolie to Model Minority," 369.
[122] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 53.
[123] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 95-96.

In contrast to Sandhya, Jasmine cuts herself off from her family after arriving in America. She does not enquire as to her family's whereabouts, and has no intentions of ever returning back. Additionally, she does not try to stay in touch with other Indian Americans in the United States. For this reason, she considers her assimilation to be complete or "genetic," whereas, from Jasmine's point of view, Sandhya's assimilation is only partial or "hyphenated."[124]

Nevertheless, the effort to ensure some future in the ancestral lands seems to be futile since their rights for belonging are questioned or rejected, and the places the immigrants have left are soon replaced. When Sandhya returns to her parental house, she is made aware by her sister Nunu that with the change of address she has also changed her membership: "My New York sister, foreign returned."[125] Sandhya's right to stay in the house is limited by her father's condition; as soon as he is out of danger, she is bound to leave. Immigrants may experience difficulty in locating their 'home' after leaving their ancestral lands and settling in new countries. The change of residence does not necessarily mean that their sense of belongingness shifts as well. Sakhi sees that her cousin is struggling to pinpoint her 'home:'

> "Home," where was that after all? Was Tiruvella, where her parents lived, "home" to Sandhya? Or New York? Sandhya had married Stephen and crossed a border with him. Surely marriage meant setting up a new home? [126]

Sakhi, however, realizes that Sandhya's place in India has lost some of its grounds since she married an American and moved away. Even though the family will let her come in, it does not mean that she will be accepted. Therefore, it is impossible for Sandhya to return permanently to India.

---

[124] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 222.
[125] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 115.
[126] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 127.

3   GENDER

In her study on South Asian American literature, Rajini Srikanth contemplates about Sau-ling Wong's two core concepts of her work on Asian American literature, which originally derived from Maxine Hong Kingston's most famous book *The Woman Warrior,* to describe two contrasting incentives which make immigrants set out to America – necessity or extravagance.[127] Sau-ling Wong defines both concepts as follows:

> The terms Necessity and Extravagance signify two contrasting modes of existence and operation, one contained, survival-driven and conservation-minded, the other attracted to freedom, excess, emotional expressiveness, and autotelism. (…) Necessity usually appears with words like *force*, *demand*, or *constraint*; *Extravagance* with words like *urge*, *impulse* or *desire*.[128]

The reasons which prompted Jasmine and Sandhya to leave India for the United States are a mixture of necessity and extravagance. Both women felt constraints to be placed on their lives due to their status, class and gender. Jasmine's status rapidly lowered after the death of her husband. Since she becomes a widow who, moreover, has not produced any children, she is confined to live with her mother, and to separate herself from the outer world and social life. In India the status of women is predominantly determined by marriage and childbearing. Regardless of class, women are prepared for their roles of mothers and wives.[129] Marriage is understood as a tool that secures the well-being and smooth operating of the family, which functions as the guardian of tradition and continuity. In the Indian understanding of marriage, one of its main purposes is to provide protection for marriage partners; a husband is obliged to take care of his wife and protect her against the dangers of the surrounding world. Simultaneously a wife shows her solicitude about her husband's condition and creates a home environment. From this perspective, widowhood is regarded as a sign of ill fate

---

[127] Srikanth, *The World Next Door*, 229.
[128] Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, *From Necessity to Extravagance: Reading Asian American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 13.
[129] Meenakshi Thapan, *Living the Body: Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in Contemporary India* (Sage Publications, 2009), 28-29.

and great misfortune.[130] Without a husband who controls and is responsible for finances, a widow becomes an economic burden to her family. If she does not have enough means to be able to support herself and her children, she will practically become "invisible" or "she will be treated as an 'untouchable'".[131] Jasmine returns back to her widowed mother when she becomes a widow herself. Except for the company of other widows, they remain secluded from the rest of the village as if their "seemingly undeserved misfortune is contagious."[132] As Mohini Giri, a social worker and an activist, in her interview for *The Guardian* emphasizes, "when [a woman] loses her husband and becomes a widow, she loses her identity."[133] Some constraints that are imposed on widows concern their everyday life. In accordance with local customs, widows can eat only one meal a day and they have to "renounce all earthly pleasures."[134] After the death of Jasmine's father, she has to take care of her mother who refuses to eat and voluntarily withdraws from the domestic life:

> When Pitaji died, my mother tried to throw herself on his funeral pyre. When we wouldn't let her, she shaved her head with a razor, wrapped her body in coarse cloth, and sat all day in a corner. Once a day I force-fed spoonfuls of rice gruel into her. [135]

Moreover, widows are prohibited from eating certain foods such as onions or garlic.[136] Some widows even seek the seclusion of an ashram, such as Jasmine's paternal grandmother who comes to visit her son and his family once in a while.

Jasmine refuses to accept these constraints with resignation. Since she has already seen the weight of tradition to be thrown away in her marriage with Prakash, she cannot peacefully comfort to the old customs that determine the course of her future. The marriage to Prakash has changed her perspective on looking at the world.

---

[130] Don S. Browning, M. Christian Green and John Witte Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family in World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 230.
[131] "India's City of Widows," accessed August 3, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/30/india-city-widows-discrimination.
[132] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 97.
[133] "India's City of Widows."
[134] "India's City of Widows."
[135] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 61.
[136] "India's City of Widows."

He is a very tolerant and modern man who has been dreaming about living and studying in America. He ignores some long-standing traditions such as living with his uncle's family and instead he rents a flat. He also insists Jasmine on calling him by his first name instead of using only pronouns, as is the custom. What is more, he decides not to have any sexual relations with Jasmine until she is older. Prakash constantly encourages Jasmine in educating herself and studying English, and he treats her as his equal. His actions reflect the effort to break with the feudalism of India. The transformation from feudalism to modernity is clearly visible on Jasmine herself. She compares Prakash to Professor Higgins from Shaw's *Pygmalion* as he has tried to civilize her and broaden her perspectives: "He [Prakash] wanted to break down the Jyoti I'd been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city women. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine."[137] The change of her name symbolizes a change of her identity. Erik H. Erikson, a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, in his work *Identity: Youth and Crisis* defines identity as a "process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities."[138] As Erikson's definition implies, personal identity is shaped and constructed by the interaction between an individual and society to which one belongs. According to Erikson, the process of self-identification, which is based on how one views oneself in contrast to how others view him or her, is in a state of flux; it is defined by the past experience, and it has an impact on the future.[139]

From this conception of identity it follows that location significantly influences the self of an individual. With the change of location an individual also changes their social circle and the environment that surrounds them. While Jasmine is under the influence of her family and the rest of villagers in the village, where there are stronger ties than in the town, it is predominantly her husband that influences her the most in the town. In the urban setting it is easier to hide from traditional customs and beliefs. Nevertheless, as Erikson points out, identity is not a steady concept but a continuous

---

[137] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 77.
[138] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968), 22.
[139] Erikson, *Identity*, 22-23.

process that is prone to change. Consequently, Jasmine's identity does not become complete and united but it is constantly moving between two poles – Jasmine and Jyoti. As Jasmine admits: "Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities."[140] The change of her character from fearful Jyoti to adventurous Jasmine has a direct effect on her decision to go to America. Prakash's revolutionary influence means that she is unable to succumb peacefully to the constraints of widowhood and seeks a way out. The Necessity of leaving is determined by the change in her identity which makes it impossible to endure the status of widowhood in India, and extravagance is represented by the consideration of her journey to America as a mission to fulfil her and Prakash's dream.

Not only widowhood, but also divorce and singledom are the state of affairs that should be avoided Rupa Jha claims in her article "India's invisible widows, divorcees and single women."[141] The decision to remain single or to fill for a divorce pushes women to the background within her family and the whole society.[142] The status of women after a divorce sinks to the bottom, and society views them as "bad women" because as Deepali, an Indian woman from Mumbay, says: "Good women don't end up as divorcees, (…)."[143]

The necessity that drives Sandhya from India concerns her fear of arranged marriages. In contrast to European or American society where people find their future spouses at workplace, social gatherings or in other settings, people in India, especially Hindus, follow specific rules in the choice of their suitable marriage partner. Neither love nor physical attraction is the main factor that would have any impact on the selection.[144] In fact, it is the "larger concern[s] of the family and lineage"[145] that rules the marriage market in India, as Sosa, Sandhya's mother, reminds her daughter when she is met with strong resistance from Sandhya: "People like us really must do their

---

[140] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 77.
[141] "India's Invisible Widows, Divorcees and Single Women, " accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26356373.
[142] "India's Invisible Widows, Divorcees and Single Women."
[143] "India's Invisible Widows, Divorcees and Single Women,."
[144] Browning, Green and Witte, Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family*, 230.
[145] Browning, Green and Witte, Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family*, 230.

duty. Keep up the family lines."[146] In *Sex, Marriage and Family in World Religions,* Don S. Browning, M. Christian Green and John Witter Jr., three leading American specialists in the topics of marriage, law and religion, describe the system of arranged marriages in India. The marriage organizers are the parents from both sides who keep in mind the interests of the family, "a family that includes ancestors long deceased and descendants yet unborn."[147] Browning, Green and Witter further point out that "[t]he chief criterion for such a selection is compatibility (…). That is, the husband and wife need to be from similar backgrounds so far as caste and community are concerned, (…)."[148] The tradition of arranged marriages is based on several premises which Browning, Green and Wither present as follows:

> The process of locating the optimal mate has generally been initiated by the bride's family. A daughter is often seen as a visitor in her natal family, for she will one day be offered as a "gift" to the husband's family, just as food is offered to the gods in sacrifice. A son, on the other hand, remains in his natal family, accepting the gift of the wife with the obligation to protect or guard her, enabling himself to prosper through progeny, and enabling her to care for him and their lineage together. [149]

For this reason, Sosa keeps to herself a notebook with a list of eligible young men, where each one of them has his own profile with details concerning his education, family background and future prospects. Once a suitable partner is found, he is presented to Sandhya for her approval. However, this is the stage where Sandhya starts fighting back. There are several reasons for Sandhya's unusual resistance. Her secret love to a young man from a lower caste is one of them. Such a partnership would be unthinkable since it would go against the logic of arranged marriages that are ruled above all by coherence or compatibility of spouses. Yet, as André Béteile admits, it is possible for an Indian man to marry below his level or to marry a woman from a lower caste.[150] The same does not, however, apply to women, whose alliance with a man from

---

[146] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 24.
[147] Browning, Green and Witte, Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family*, 230.
[148] Browning, Green and Witte, Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family*, 230.
[149] Browning, Green and Witte, Jr., *Sex, Marriage and Family*, 230.
[150] Béteile, "Race, Caste and Gender," 493.

a lower caste would generally be "condemned in the severest possible terms."[151] Therefore, Sandhya's love for Gautam remains a secret that she cannot share with anyone except her cousin. Not only Sandhya cannot speak about her love with anyone, but also Gautam cannot openly express his feelings to her. Another reason for Sandhya's refusal to accept an arranged marriage is her frustration over the limited possibilities a Hindu woman has in contemporary Indian society. As has been stated above, in Hindu society all women are prepared for marriage and motherhood. However, as Meenakshi Thapan, a professor of sociology at the University of Delhi, observes "it is only in the elite and the highest income groups that young women have the opportunity to pursue their interests and self-defined career goals."[152] Thapan divides women in India into two categories – educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged. She defines the class of educationally advantaged as the "category of individuals who not only have access to education (in a range of private and government schools) but also have the privilege of pursuing their educational goals to fruition."[153] This is possible only for the women from the middle and uppermiddle class. Thapan further emphasizes that although these women are allowed to study, they are "simultaneously a part of tradition, ritual and customary practices."[154] This results into the contradictions about their obligations, possibilities and rights. Sandhya represents such a case; although she could study and work in a travel agency, she faces the pressure from her mother to commit herself to the family life. This total lack of free will and the unacceptability to choose a different way of life from what is generally approved drives Sandhya to despair. Out of the hopelessness she is crying out loud: "If you want me to live as a woman, why educate me? Why not kill me, if you want to dictate my life? God, why teach me to read and write?"[155] Her anguish at her situation is based on the traditional associations of womanhood with motherhood and matrimony in India. To conclude, even though women from families with a higher income are

---

[151] Béteile, "Race, Caste and Gender," 493.
[152] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 28.
[153] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 28-29.
[154] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 28-29.
[155] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 26.

encouraged to pursue further education, they are still expected to commit eventually to the family instead of fulfilling their ambitions. As Thapan explains, this "dilemma gives rise to conflicting sets of expectations about her identity as a young woman in relation to familial and socio-cultural factors (…)."[156]

There is a clear generational gap between Sandhya and her mother since Sandhya is able to imagine a different life for herself in contrast to Sosa for whom marriage represents the only possible future for a woman to have: "What else could a woman's life hold but a marriage? And a good marriage was one of the few ways to avert loneliness, the dreadful fate of women left to their own devices."[157] Sosa's stance expresses the fear of the mother who realizes that her daughter, who would be, otherwise, admired and respected due to her caste and class, might end up being looked down on because she chooses to be single. An account of real-world experience about single life in India is given in an interview for the BBC by Suruchi Sharma, an Indian woman living in Mumbai on her own. She admits that anywhere she goes she is encountered with questions concerning her marriage plans.[158] In a society where a female identity revolves around marriage, the decision to remain single naturally causes commotion and arouses suspicion. Sharma admits that "[t]here is a stigma associated with a woman who is single. When a woman says she is single by choice, it's more or less assumed that she is not respectable."[159]

Since Sandhya feels to be unable to avoid marriage, she opts to choose a husband herself. In her encounter with Stephen, a young American temporarily visiting India, she sees an opportunity to escape all the rituals and customs she is otherwise bound to follow:

> He was a stranger to her, but a kind one, and what more could she ask. She would arrange her own marriage, leap over the terrible wall her mother had erected; foil her

---

[156] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 29.
[157] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 25.
[158] "No Country for Single Women," accessed August 6, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26341350.
[159] "No Country for Single Women."

parents at their own game. Married to Stephen she would be quite beyond their power.[160]

Despite her rebellion against her parents and customs, she remains surprisingly traditional in her thinking. The years of her upbringing in which the prime focus was on her future role of a mother and wife is manifested in her expectations about the nature of her relationship with Stephen:

> She would give herself to him and he would love her. (…) She would be his wife. She would give him a son. The thoughts, which did not seem daring in themselves, merely necessary steps to straighten out her torn life, seemed (…) to have occurred in strict sequence, a way of conducting a woman's life. [161]

The Necessity that forces Sandhya to seek refuge in the relationship with an American stems from the constraints that are placed on her female identity in India. The Extravagance is demonstrated in her desire to control her future life.

Although it was the Necessity to escape the constraints of widowhood in India that motivated Jasmine to travel to America, there is no improvement of her situation in the United States since she settles down in an Indian community. In the new and alien country she finds a shelter at the place of her dead husband's acquaintance, a former professor of her husband, who has immigrated to the States with his parents. However, the shelter gradually changed into a prison from which Jasmine had struggled to flee. Madhulika S.Khandelwal outlines in her study of the Indian community in New York City how Indian families have transformed in the latter half of the 20th century. As Khandelwal writes, "[f]rom the 1960s through the 1990s (…) New York's typical Indian families changed from nuclear husband-wife units to extended family networks of related households, a result of relatives immigrating primarily via family-sponsored visas."[162] These larger family units constitute communities in which there is a strong emphasis on preserving traditional customs and practices such as arranged marriages, caste classification and patriarchal structure. This is also supported by staying in close

---

[160] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 34.
[161] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 34.
[162] Madhulika S. Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 117.

touch with their homeland.[163] Therefore, when Jasmine finds herself in the middle of the Indian American community, it seems to her as if she has never in fact left India. In the Vadheras's, the family who takes Jasmine in, she takes care of the household and does all the chores. While Jasmine hopes that she could hide her state of widowhood, the others expect her to do the opposite; her behaviour, her manner of speech and even her clothing should signalize that she is a widow, and any attempt to violate it would be a sign of disrespect and ill character since it could also disrupt the balance of the family because she would become a threat to it:

> I could not admit that I had accustomed myself to American clothes. American clothes disguised my widowhood. In a T-shirt and cords, I was taken for a student. In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like. To them, I was a widow who should know a proper modesty of appearance and attitude. If not, it appeared I was competing with Nirmala.[164]

In addition to the outer appearance and behaviour, Jasmine cannot consider the prospect of remarrying and having children due to her widowhood. Regardless of age or physical health, she has to give up all thoughts of having another chance. This is set into contrast with Nirmala, the wife of Devinder Vadhera, former Prakash's professor, who, although she is slightly older than Jasmine, can achieve everything that Jasmine cannot: "Nirmala was nineteen: According to my forged passport, I was nineteen too, but I was a widow. She was in the game, I was permanently on the sidelines."[165] Khandelwal reminds that "Indians expected all persons to behave according to their cultural notions of proper ashram and family role behaviour, making judgments about whether behaviour was appropriate for 'an older man of a father's age or whether 'she behaves like a daughter or not'."[166] The only possible solution how Jasmine can change her situation and start afresh is to leave the community permanently.

---

[163] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*. 117.
[164] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 145.
[165] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 143.
[166] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 120.

Jasmine separates herself completely from the community, and mingles with other Americans. From Khandelwal's perspective, this seems to be a very radical act for an Indian to perform since Indians do not separate themselves from their community.[167] According to Khandelwal, "[m]embers of an Indian community do not necessarily live in the same geographic area but do maintain links through visits, family gatherings, and communal religious observances."[168] From this it follows that there is a close relationship between an individual and a community. Erik Erikson has pointed out that identity is formed on the basis of the interaction between an individual and a group of which they feel to be members. With respect to this notion of identity, scholars dealing with identity differentiate social and personal identity. Leary and Tangney, professors of psychology, use in their *Handbook of Self and Identity* Tajfel's definition of social identity according to which social identity should be understood as "the knowledge that one is a member of a group, one's feelings about group membership, and knowledge of the group's rank or status compared to other groups."[169] According to Jean-Claude Deschamps and Thierry Devos, social identity is based on two sections – cognitive and motivational. The cognitive part is related to highlighting differences between groups but overlooking internal or in-group differences. The motivational base, on the other hand, involves the seclusion from other groups in order to boost the self-esteem or self-respect by identifying with a certain group.[170] Individuals concentrate on the differentiation between groups "only when this differentiation is the only means for them to achieve a positive self-evaluation, a positive identity."[171] By way of explanation, if one can achieve a positive identity through identifying with a certain group, one seeks to create differences between groups but does not recognize any differences with other members of the group one is a member of.[172] It should also be

---

[167] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 119.
[168] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 119.
[169] Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney, *Handbook of Self and Identity* (London: The Guilford Press, 2012), 74.
[170] Jean-Claude Deschamps and Thierry Devos, "Regarding the Relationship Between Social Identity and Personal Identity," in *Social Identity: International Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Worchel (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998), 6.
[171] Deschamps and Devos, "Regarding the Relationship," 6.
[172] Deschamps and Devos, "Regarding the Relationship," 6.

noted that if one "is able to differentiate [oneself] from the others directly – acceding in this way to a positive self-evaluation – [one] no longer establishes differentiations with other groups which [one] knows."[173] To conclude, it is possible to propose that "[t]he stronger social identity is, the less important is personal identity, and the more prominent a personal identity is, the less the individual needs a social identity, since social and personal identity satisfy the same need for a positive self-image."[174] Jasmine does not obtain a positive identity within the community because of her widowhood which puts constrains on her. She also wishes to leave the community in order to pursue her goals. The community does not provide Jasmine with a sense of belonging but represents an obstacle in gaining freedom. For Jasmine freedom is associated with happiness, and so the only way to achieve happiness is to leave the community. Her actions imply that her personal identity is much stronger than her social one, and it is also sufficient in forming a positive self-image. This "individualized" self seems to be typical for American society where people consider themselves from the more individualistic perspective in contrast to Indians who see their self from the collectivistic point of view.[175] In an interview with Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, Meena Alexander expresses her ideas about a different approach to identity of Indians and Americans:

> It is a very American thing to try to define one's self and to think that in the defining there would be a germ of some kind of essential meaning. This is not the Indian way, if there is an Indian way. (…) this focus on the self is very peculiar to the culture of North America, (…). A constant attempt to vivify what one thinks of an identity by redefining one's self is a very American project. [176]

Jasmine's escape from the community is also motivated by her fear that she will lose her present self, the adventurous Jasmine that has brought her to America, to the old feudal Jyoti that would never be able to cross the ocean. For Jasmine, this

---

[173] Deschamps and Devos, "Regarding the Relationship," 6.
[174] Deschamps and Devos, "Regarding the Relationship," 6.
[175] Kwandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 119.
[176] Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, "Observing Ourselves among Others: Interview with Meena Alexander," in *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*, ed. Deepika Bahri et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 36.

transformation is very precious to her since it means that she can be relieved from ancient constraints.

In India people follow so-called *dharma* that prescribes what tasks will be performed and what obligations people have based on their gender. This gender role distinction dictates different domains of activity for men and women; while women are more active in the private sphere, being responsible for the household and family members including children and the in-laws, men are employed in the public domain, being in charge of providing and handling finances. Nevertheless, as Khandelwal points out, "[t]his separation of gender roles also results in considerable social segregation between men and women."[177]

As Khandelwal has already stated, some traditional practices such as arranged marriages are implemented even in the United States. Some Indian Americans after spending sufficient time in the U.S., in order to strengthen their position, send for their spouses living in India. Some others travel back to India to choose a suitable marriage partner there.[178] Devinder Vadhera has also entered into an arranged marriage. His wife is nineteen, and comes from a village in India. Such families follow traditional customs and norms. According to Kwandelwal, "[a]lthough they entered mainstream American professions and spoke English at work, at home their diet, dress, gender roles, worship, and language were Indian. Change was minimal."[179] This seems to be only partially true. In the household of the Vadheras, only Indian food is prepared, only Indian movies are watched, only Indian clothes is worn, and only Hindi is used. Nevertheless, there is a slight change in the arrangement of the spheres of activity for men and women. In India women are expected to give up their careers for the sake of their families. They remain at home, and the charge of the finances is left to their husbands. In the United States, this pattern is broken. Nirmala goes to work every day just as her husband does. She works in a sari shop nearby their apartment. This penetration of women into the job market is quite common among Indian Americans in the United States. Yet, as

---

[177] Kwandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 118.
[178] Kwandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 121.
[179] Kwandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 121.

Kwandelwal writes, "little fundamental change occurred in their 'maps for living' or in lived patriarchal relationships."[180]

For instance, in the Vadheras there is still the tradition of addressing a husband only by a pronoun. Not using the proper name of the husband contributes to the idealization of the masculine figure in the Hindu context. Indian men are generally viewed as conforming to the patriarchal norm of a masculine role model which is represented by their portrayal as "a personification of great strength and determination, a provider for the family, one who holds authority in the family (…)."[181] Devinder Vadhera fits such a description. He seems to be a distant but an omnipresent figure in the family, taking care of their matters:

> Nirmala had no idea where her husband worked – he never told her. "What if there's an accident?" I [Jasmine] asked, and she smiled, like a child. "*He* will know," she said, using the pronoun. She had no idea what he did. He was following an ancient prescription for marital accord: silence, order, authority. So was she: submission, beauty, innocence. [182]

In *Sex and Gender,* John Archer and Barbara Lloyed explain that these "beliefs about men and women are not arbitrary" but "[t]hey are associated with coherent ways of understanding the world in which we live, which for many centuries have been presented to each succeeding generation in the form of religious truths."[183] Such beliefs are transferred from one generation to another. According to this process, the presumed differences between both sexes in nature and skills should be viewed "in terms of societal pressures" which are "the consequences of patriarchal values being learned by each succeeding generation as a result of men being in positions of power and influence (…)." [184] This view is also supported by Eagle's definition of gender roles, as stated in Archer and Lloyed's study, in which she emphasizes that the existence and duration of

---

[180] Kwandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 122.
[181] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 36.
[182] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 150-151.
[183] John Archer and Barbara Lloyd, *Sex and Gender* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.
[184] Archer and Lloyd, *Sex and Gender*, 4.

the beliefs about men and women are based on the traditional division of spheres of activity for men and women:

> Gender roles are rooted, not primarily in the society's cultural tradition, but more importantly in the society's contemporaneous division of labor between the sexes. Women are viewed as suited for the specific social roles that women typically occupy, and men are viewed as suited for the specific social roles that men typically occupy. [185]

Nevertheless, these gender role stereotypes are challenged in the United States because Indian American women have more opportunities to work and become financially independent. Even though they relied, in most cases, on their husbands in the 1960s and 1970s, this situation gradually altered since a lot of women started working. Some of them even became active in the community.[186] As Khandelwal observes, "[t]his emergence of Indian women in public spheres led to debate about gender roles, empowerment, and community leadership."[187] This all resulted in the 1990s when "gender became a pivotal issue in Indian American politics."[188] According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, gender "refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men."[189] It should also be pointed out that "[t]hese attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes", and they are also "context/ time-specific and changeable."[190] Additionally, gender deals with "what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context."[191] As the UN organization dedicated to gender equality further states, "[i]n most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to

---

[185] Archer and Lloyd, *Sex and Gender*, 24.
[186] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 123-124.
[187] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 124.
[188] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 124.
[189] "Concepts and Definitions," accessed August 16, 2016, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsandefinitions.htm.
[190] "Concepts and Definitions."
[191] "Concepts and Definitions."

and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities."[192] These practices are culture-specific; what is common and totally acceptable in one culture can, however, create confusion and indignation in another.[193]

As Archer and Lloyed remind, 'gender' used to be used interchangeably with 'sex.' In the present, however, the term gender is preferred to maintain political correctness. The main reason for the usage of two distinct terms instead of only one stems from the understanding that the distinctions between men and women have two bases – cultural and biological, and that the cultural one is more influential. Archer and Lloyed agree with keeping these two terms separate since they refer to different concepts.[194] In compliance with Maccoby, Bem and Eagly's conception of sex and gender, Archer and Lloyed state that "sex refers to the binary categories 'male' and 'female', and gender to the attributes associated to a greater or lesser extent with the two sexes, i.e. 'masculine' and 'feminine' features rather than 'male' and 'female'."[195]

As has been mentioned, Indian American women may break traditional gender roles and stereotypes by obtaining jobs and becoming financially independent from their husbands. Sakhi represents one of the Indian American women who have found a full-time job in America. She is a devoted social worker, and she is also active in the community work. The stoning incident has, however, awakened in her fierce anger at the violence and oppression of women not only in India, but also in the whole world. The attack makes her remember stories from her childhood about getting stoned if she did not cover her arms or went outside without an escort. She has never forgotten these warnings. The fight for women rights and equality, nevertheless, contributes to the ongoing breakdown of her marriage with Ravi. Sakhi and Ravi have slowly been drifting apart but none of them seems to know how to stop it. Ravi can see that his wife has changed but does not understand the cause. Not only Sakhi seems to have undergone a change, but also Sandhya. Stephen is just as helpless and confused as Ravi when he tries to trace down the source of his wife's change. Male characters encounter

---

[192] "Concepts and Definitions."
[193] "Concepts and Definitions."
[194] Archer and Lloyd, *Sex and Gender*, 17.
[195] Archer and Lloyd, *Sex and Gender*, 17.

great difficulty in understanding the change that has clearly occurred with their Indian American wives. Nevertheless, as Sakhi responds to Nunu, Sandhya's sister, after she sends Sakhi a letter in which she complains that her sister has changed, "[o]f course your sister has changed, she lives in a different world now."[196] These changes, however, cause uncertainty to Indian male characters who do not know how to cope with them because no one has prepared them for them. As Indian American women redefine their roles and positions in the new world, the same task seems to be inevitable for Indian American men. As Indian American women obtain full-time employment, Indian American men are no longer the only providers for the family. In the other words, they lose one of their exclusive and traditional responsibilities. They become less central to the family than it was the case in India.

This can further be demonstrated by real-world experience of an Indian American man, Mr. Singh, who expresses his concerns about the changes that are occurring in his marriage in an interview that Khandelwal did with Indian immigrants living in New York City:

> No matter how educated we are, in India we lived in a society where the entire family, and particularly its women, revolved around us. We were the center of their universe. My mother lived for me – all her activities had one origin and one end. Our wives are so different from my mother's generation, and our daughters are going to be even more different. We men are so used to our centrality that when women in America deviate from that orbit, we can neither take it nor understand it. We are so confused. How can she have any other interests in life besides me? How come her job can give her security and confidence? For Indian men this is devastating because they have never seen anything like this in their own parent's generation. Because this happened in America, therefore this must be attributed to Indian women becoming American. [197]

As the extract illustrates, some Indian men blame their marital problems on their wife's employment. This seems to be only partially true because the change that has been happening with Indian American women occur even in the marriages where gender roles are traditionally divided. Such is the case with Sandhya's marriage which is going through a crisis.

---

[196] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 126.
[197] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 134.

Sandhya is primarily responsible for the household. She does all the housework and looks after their child Dora while Stephen is the provider for the family. The decision to stay at home is Sandhya's own although Stephen has even encouraged her in finding a job, which, he thought, would help her accommodate more easily and quickly to the life in America. The reason why Sandhya seems to be content with her role of a housewife is, as Khandelwal explains, because Indian women are not usually "inclined to reject wholesale their cultural traditions for American social patterns and values."[198] For a number of Indian American women, their families are a top priority and they completely give up their careers.

Nevertheless, keeping the gender role distinction in the U.S. does not secure happiness and stability in marriage. Sandhya is deeply unhappy in her marriage. The sadness and melancholy that surrounds Sandhya reminds Sakhi of her own mother that was very unhappy in her marriage too but as Sakhi admits "that was something a woman was brought up to expect."[199] From Sakhi's statement it can be concluded that Indian women are not raised to have expectations of personal happiness in the marriage but they are brought up with the awareness that by fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers they bring happiness to their husbands and children. In America, Sandhya, however, searches for personal happiness, which she finds in a love affair with another immigrant man called Rashid. He provides her with consolation and peace, and she is able to talk openly with him about her immigrant experience. Rashid compares immigrants to the monster of Frankenstein which "was made of bits and pieces of flesh" (…) but it "needs electricity to live."[200] Rashid observes that "immigrants are like that. Our spiritual flesh scooped up from here and there. All our memories sizzling. But we need another. Another for the electricity. So we can live."[201] In addition to the spiritual connection that Sandhya and Rashid share, which is symbolized by two black dolls, each of the lovers having one, Sandhya wants him as a man. He has awakened sexual passion in her that she is unable to articulate. They do not speak to each other about

---

[198] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 124.
[199] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 128.
[200] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 154.
[201] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 154.

their sexual desires, which she truly welcomes because she has never spoken about it with anyone, and what is more, she is not expected to have any: "The question of moral courage, voicing the truth of what she really felt, never arose. This would have been alien to her, raised as she was to a feminity where desires were to be kept hidden."[202] In India, sex and sexual relationships are still perceived as taboo subjects by the general public. Sexual intercourse is traditionally confined to the marriage, and any violation of the old rules such as pre-marital sexual relationships or extramarital affairs are generally condemned.[203]

Concerning extramarital affairs, the reality of the situation is that there is a considerable difference in the attitudes toward relationships outside marriages of men and women. As Leena Abraham observes, whereas Indian women are expected to maintain marital fidelity, male infidelity is tolerated by Indian society. This contrast stems from the opposite conceptions of male and female sexuality in the Hindu context.[204] As noted in *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia*, male sexuality is defined as "aggressive and uncontrollable (…), extending beyond the family boundaries" in contrast to female sexuality which is "passive and compromising (…) centered around the marriage and spouse."[205] What is more, female sexuality "is subordinated to male [the husband's] sexuality through rigid norms that insist on the maintenance of virginity before marriage and chastity after marriage."[206] Nevertheless, it is necessary to define the concept of sexuality itself in order to understand how it influences the perception of one's own identity and one's perception of the world. According to Jeffrey Weeks, one of the leading scholars on the

---

[202] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 141.

[203] Leena Abraham, "Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha: Gender Differences and Cultural Construction in Youth Sexuality in Urban India," in *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia*, ed. Sanjay Srivastava (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), accessed August 18, 2016,
https://books.google.cz/books?id=WWI_8FXKgXkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sexual+Sites,+Seminal+Attitudes&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Sexual%20Sites%2C%20Seminal%20Attitudes&f=false, 210-211.

[204] Abraham, "Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha," 210-211.

[205] Abraham, "Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha," 211.

[206] Abraham, "Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha," 212.

subject of sexuality, it refers to "the personalized sexual feelings that distinguished one person from another."[207] Simultaneously, as Weeks explains, it is:

> (…) the most spontaneously natural thing about us. It is the basis for some of our most passionate feelings and commitments. Through it, we experience ourselves as real people; it gives us our identities, our sense of self, as men and women, as heterosexual and homosexual, 'normal' or 'abnormal', 'natural' or 'unnatural'. [208]

Generally speaking, the concept of sexuality includes "gender identity, bodily differences, reproductive capacities, needs, desires, fantasies, erotic practices, institutions and values."[209] Indian women are not expected to find pleasure in the sexual intercourse with their husbands. Quite commonly, they direct their sexual desires to the care for the family and household by which they can fulfill their primary role in the family. Nevertheless, the most common reason for doing so seems to be a total lack of communication between marriage partners.[210] The perfect example is Sandhya and Stephen's marriage. Even though she has chosen her marital partner herself, she feels to be trapped in her marriage. They grow to be unable to speak openly with each other. It is her motherhood that eases her loneliness and helps her cope with her marital duties:

> With the small child in tow Sandhya could be a mother, and surviving in transit lounges was rendered entirely more bearable with a resolute vocation such as motherhood with its pressing requirements granted her. Her sexual body, too, was less troubling then, for with Stephen, and this was something that had taken years to acknowledge, she constantly felt as if she had to overcome her body, rise beyond it in some difficult, inescapable way. [211]

Sandhya suppresses her sexuality in the relationship with Stephen. This is very common in India, as Thapan writes, where "the normative order (…) does not encourage women to enjoy and take pleasure from their sexuality."[212] According to Thapan, it is generally believed that sexual intercourse is only for the sake of procreation and once the

---

[207] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2010), 5.
[208] Weeks, *Sexuality*, 4.
[209] Weeks, *Sexuality*, 7-8.
[210] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 99-100.
[211] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 42.
[212] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 159.

continuation of the family lineage is secured, "it seems like a meaningless act for the women."[213] Women are also thought to lack interest in sex.[214]

In the United States, Indian American female characters become more open about their sexuality and their needs, and they also begin to learn to accept them. Sakhi does not condemn her cousin for her affair with Rashid but instead expresses understanding, and she stands up for Sandhya when the other family members are not content with what Sandhya is doing: "So what if Sandhya had something going on with that man Rashid, as Jay had hinted. When Sakhi had met Rashid at the dinner party, she found him utterly charming."[215] In America Indian American women also break from the established norms of sexuality which define female sexuality as passive and compromising. They are active in pursuing their sexual needs, and they find pleasure in their sexual relationships. Sandhya experiences desire for the first time with Rashid: "The desire Rashid awoke in her was an agitation in all her parts, a series of small fires lit in her muscles, her skin. How could she have lived without it so long?"[216] Indian American women characters discover and embrace their sexuality. This can be illustrated by Sandhya's surprise when she admits to herself that "she never thought passion would enter her life like this, through all her body parts, (…)"[217] What is more, Indian American women initiate sex and even become dominant in the sexual relationships. Since the incident in which Bud is shot in his back he has been confined to a wheelchair. The shooting has left him paralyzed from the waist down which means that Jasmine is the one that controls their sexual relationship. Bud is sexually dependent on her for which he feels ashamed: "It shames Bud that now, for sex, I [Jasmine] must do all the work, all the moving, that I will always be on top."[218] Jasmine's position shifts from the controlled to the controlling. As Sarojini Sahoo, an Indian feminist and novelist, points out, this contrasts with what is the typical behaviour of women in India

---

[213] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 159.
[214] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 159.
[215] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 129.
[216] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 129.
[217] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 129.
[218] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 35.

where women "are discouraged from taking an active role"[219] during the sexual intercourse.

In the United States, Indian American women are able not only to take control in their sexual relationships, but also to control the process of procreation. In America Sakhi comes to a decision not to have children, which her husband respects. Her decision obviously goes against the basis of Indian culture in which motherhood comprises one of the core parts that define female identity. Indian American women characters such as Sakhi, Sandhya and Jasmine learn to take control of their bodies in America. By doing so, as Thapan claims, they are able to use their bodies, including their sexuality, "as a weapon — for survival, whether to combat the harsh conditions imposed by poverty, to attack the oppressor physically, or to strategically manipulate, coerce or extract the maximum to her advantage."[220] On her first night in America Jasmine is raped by the captain of the boat which has taken her to the country. Even though she thinks of killing herself after the attack, she chooses to kill her rapist instead. She cuts his throat while her blood is dripping on him from her tongue which she has cut. She does not leave any evidence of her in the room for the police to find. Jasmine consciously uses her body to destroy her oppressor, which represents her first step in gaining freedom of her female identity and sexuality in America.

---

[219] "Indian Feminist Author Sarojini Sahoo on Female Sexuality," accessed August 19, 2016, http://womensissues.about.com/od/feminismequalrights/a/FeminisminIndia_2.htm.
[220] Thapan, *Living the Body*, 9.

4   ETHNICITY

Since the 1960s ethnicity has been the central focus of interest for social scientists, particularly for cultural and social anthropologists. Ethnicity has become such an important topic for two reasons. Firstly, a lot of conflicts in the 20th and 21st century stemmed from the clashes between groups of different ethnicity. The other reason has been the increase of immigration, and the subsequent integration of immigrants into the mainstream society. Immigrants form united groups based on their shared cultural heritage, and they demand recognition by the government and society. Additionally, the native population which was suppressed and displaced for a long time under the colonial rule has become active and it endeavours to assert its rights. Generally speaking, ethnicity has always been one of the main criteria in the nation formation, and when this criterion was overlooked, it led to serious conflicts.[221]

The term was used for the first time by an American sociologist David Riesman in 1953. In the United States, ethnicity was originally associated with Jews, Italians, Irish and other groups which were considered inferior by Americans of British descent.[222] Such an attitude toward some European groups particularly toward the Irish can be traced back to the 1840s and 1850s when great waves of immigrants from Ireland left their country for the United States due to the Great Potato Famine (1846-1851) which afflicted Ireland.[223] The Catholic faith of the Irish was perceived as a threat to the American Protestantism, which was considered "an integral part of American identity."[224] This tension between the old settlers and newcomers, not only from Europe, but also from other parts of the world, namely from Asia, continued in the 20th century, and it contributed to the introduction of lots of immigration laws which placed

---

[221] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 1-3.
[222] Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 4.
[223] Mel van Elteren, *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006), accessed September 11, 2016, https://books.google.cz/books?isbn=078642785X, 51.
[224] Van Elteren, *Americanism*, 51.

a restriction on immigration or banned immigration completely. The first exclusion act was passed in 1882 targeting the Chinese (The Chinese Exclusion Act).[225]

After the immigration from China was stopped, the United States was confronted with a new wave of immigration pouring from South, Central and East Europe.[226] These immigrants were perceived as "more alien than earlier immigrants in their language and cultural patterns, and easily associated with social unrest, strikes, and urban problems such as crimes and slum housing."[227] Fearing that these immigrants would jeopardize American culture, the dominant society insisted on their assimilation or "Americanization." As Mel van Elteren puts it, "[w]ithin the U.S. context, 'Americanization' usually referred to a patriotic political philosophy."[228] The term was used to refer to the assimilation of both newcomers and Native Americans.[229] As quoted in Elteren's study, at the beginning of the 20th century, 'Americanization' was understood "as a process by which an alien acquires our language, citizenship, customs and ideals."[230] Americanization was also widely and publicly propagated and what is more, it was presented as a necessity. It was Theodore Roosevelt who declared that there existed only two types of Americans: "100 Percent Americanism" and "hyphenated Americans."[231] The latter is related to a group of people who were unable or unwilling to assimilate and as a result were treated with disdain.[232] In his speech, Roosevelt announced that "[t]here can be no fifty-fifty Americanism in this country (…) there is room here only for 100 per cent Americanism, only for those who are American or nothing else."[233] The government launched a project of Americanization at public schools and universities by which it also wished to prevent new immigrants from identifying with other people of the same nationality.[234] The idea of Americanization

---

[225] "Chinese Exclusion Act," accessed September 11, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act.

[226] Van Elteren, *Americanism*, 52.

[227] Van Elteren, *Americanism*, 52.

[228] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 50.

[229] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 51.

[230] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 51.

[231] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 57.

[232] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 57.

[233] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 57.

[234] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 58.

was even presented on stage, namely in the play called *The Melting Pot* (1909) by a British Jew Israel Zangwill. The melting-pot functions as a metaphor for the "process of fusing elements from different cultures into a new, unitary culture,"[235] which was the expected result of Americanization. This fusion of different ethnic groups into one unitary nation, however, applied only to white immigrants from Europe and excluded African Americans, Asians and Native Americans.[236] The programme of Americanization naturally had its critics and opponents. Horace Kallen, a Jewish American philosopher and professor, belonged to the most influential ones. In his revolutionary and well-known essay "Democracy versus the Melting Pot" published in the prestigious journal *The Nation,* he introduced the concept of *cultural pluralism* as an alternative to Americanization, which he found oppressive and abhorrent. According to his theory, every minority group has its specific features which they should maintain instead of giving them up, and with those features it contributes to the cultural diversity which should be appreciated.[237] Kallen did not see America as a nation of 100 per cent Americans but as an "orchestra" in which "each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are the theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization."[238] Kallen also questioned the assumed superiority and dominance of Americans of British descent, and the possibility and extent of assimilation itself. In his view, "men may change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent" but "they cannot change their grandfathers."[239] This statement of his denied the widely held opinion that immigrants were able to assimilate completely into the dominant society.

In his theory Kallen emphasizes the power of descent in determining one's ethnic identity. Descent is understood as an ingrained or core part of every individual resistant to change, and preserved by an individual's family and relatives. The distinction between the unchangeable and changeable parts of one's identity leads to the

---

[235] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, 282.
[236] Van Elteren, *Americanism,* 57.
[237] "Democracy versus the Melting-pot," accessed January 1, 2014, http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/Kallen.htm, 16.
[238] "Democracy versus the Melting-pot," 16.
[239] "Democracy versus the Melting-pot," 15.

conception of ethnicity as proposed by Werner Sollors in *Beyond Ethnicity*. Sollors explains that "the central drama of American ethnicity" revolves around two opposing poles: *consent* and *descent*.[240] Descent which represents the "hereditary" or "ancestral" part of an individual is defined by "blood or nature" while consent which is "contractual" and "self-made" refers to the relations defined by "law" or "marriage"[241] As Sollors articulates, descent "emphasizes our positions as heirs, our hereditary qualities, liabilities, and entitlements; consent language stresses our abilities as mature free agents and 'architects of our fates' to choose our spouses, our destinies, and our political systems."[242] Therefore, descent and consent are connected with two periods of time framing one's presence: the past and future. While one is bound to the past by one's descent, consent promises a new future established by one's own conscious choices and decisions. The United States as "the Promised Land," as Mary Antin, a Jewish Russian writer and lecturer, called the country in her autobiography of the same name[243], seems to offer a new future, and limitless possibilities how to achieve it. Immigrants are naturally drawn by such a vision on the escape from their homelands. It is through the consent that Indian immigrants attempt to create their future and define their ethnicity. Sandhya marries Stephen on whose back she can slide down right into the heart of the mainstream society. Sakhi's job as a social worker helps her grow accustomed to the life in America. Both Rashid and Jay enjoy their work in America and they take full advantage of the opportunities available to them, and they are also open and comfortable with communicating and dealing with other people, including white Americans. Nevertheless, it is Jasmine that is the real "architect of her fate." Since her arrival in the country she constantly reinvents and transforms herself depending on the conditions. Her transformations are clearly demonstrated by the changes of her name.[244]

---

[240] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 5-6.
[241] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 5-6.
[242] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity,* 6.
[243] "Mary Antin," accessed September 14, 2016, http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/antin-mary.
[244] The power of names, and the impact they have on one's personal identity is one of the central themes of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*.

Names are clear signals of the immigrant's descent. The change of the name seems to shorten the distance between the old settlers and the newcomers, and it also symbolizes the attempt to assimilate into new culture. Immigrants sometimes choose their new names themselves. For instance, Prakash's former teacher changes his name to sound more American:

> He had a new name in New York. Here he was "Dave," not Devinder, and not even Professor, though I never called him anything but Professorji. When he answered the phone, "Dave Vadhera here," even the Vadhera sounded English. It sounded like "David O'Hara."[245]

No one else from the Vadheras adopts an English name since Devinder "Dave" Vadhera functions as the only representative of the family in dealing with the authorities, government or simply non-Indian Americans.

In the United States, Jasmine adopts English-sounding varieties of her name under the influence of her relationships with white Americans. Each variety seems to be bound up with a different character or identity. While working as a caregiver at the white American family, she is called "Jase" by Taylor. The name "Jase" demonstrates her first transformation under the influence of Americanization. "Jase" is focused on the present and wants to enjoy everything that America seems to offer. She buys expensive clothes for herself which she does not dare wear or things for which she has no use. Her sudden obsession to possess reflects the influence of Western society which is generally associated with consumerism and materialism. India, on the other hand, belongs to the East that has always been connected with spiritualism.

In India, the dominant religion is Hinduism. Hervey D. Griswold in his essay "Some Characteristics of Hinduism as a Religion" articulates that it is "the dominance of the religious point of view in all the affairs of life, or the supremacy of the religious consciousness" that is one of the basic points of Hinduism.[246] In other words, religion controls every aspect of life; every action is ruled by religion and every act has its rules

---

[245] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 143.
[246] Hervey D. Griswold, "Some Characteristics of Hinduism as a Religion," *The Biblical World* 40 (1912): 169, accessed March 19, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3141428.

and order. Griswold also highlights that "the separation which has been made in the West between social custom and religion has never taken place in India."[247] This provides one of the explanations why the East has been viewed as very religious and spiritual. It also explains why Jasmine is so excited at the beginning by a different philosophy. Another reason for Jasmine's initial excitement is that things that were so hard to obtain either for financial reasons or for their inaccessibility in India are easily accessible in America. Soon, however, the excitement turns into fear when she is inundated with useless objects and being unaccustomed to such practices she does not know how to stop their arrival:

> In the first weeks of my adventurousness, when Duff and I decided we'd like some of the merchandise advertised on television, I sent away for it. First came a Japanese knife set. Then a radio-controlled Lamborghini. A cassette car stereo for the car I meant to buy someday. A triple-beveled, herringbone, 14-carat-gold neck chain. By the time a spring mechanism for doing sit-ups arrived, I'd grown afraid of the mail. The mailman was a terrorist delivering small explosive objects that wouldn't go away, every month new classical recordings and new history books. I was turning over my entire paycheck for things I couldn't use and didn't know how to stop. [248]

As the extract implies, Indians Americans do not know how to cope with the clash between materialism and spiritualism. They need to learn how to negotiate the differences between Western and Eastern philosophy.

For Indian immigrants, religion seems to be part of descent since it is so deeply ingrained into Hindu society and consequently into the character of Hindus because it touches every detail of life, as Griswold has explained. Jasmine's transformations take the form of reincarnations. Each new self of hers is born only after her former self is buried. In the novel, Jasmine's reincarnation is depicted as a never-ending process. At the very end of the book, she decides to leave Bud, her present lover, to move to California with Taylor, her former lover. While leaving Bud, she abandons her current self in order to create a free space for a new self: "It isn't guilt that I feel, it's relief. I

---

[247] Griswold, "Some Characteristics," 170.
[248] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 186.

realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane."[249] Nevertheless, as Jasmine admits, this constant process of self-definition is very painful: "I cry into Taylor's shoulder, cry through all the lives I've given birth to, cry for all my dead."[250] Jasmine's transformations or reincarnations happen out of necessity as she tries to adapt herself to changing conditions. Surprisingly, it is male characters who trigger the change of Jasmine's identity: "I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali."[251] From Jasmine's confession, it can be concluded that the relationships with white Americans accelerate her integration into the mainstream society. In these relationships she appears to be the more dominant of the partners. Her lovers fall in love with her nearly at first sight, and while they express eagerly their feelings for her, she never tells them about her own. It is Jasmine who always ends the relationship if necessary even though they beg her to stay. Whereas they are emotionally dependent on her, she keeps emotional distance because an excess of emotional dependency would hobble her.

In the novel, Jasmine is even portrayed as an Indian goddess Kali. In Hinduism Kali is the goddess of time, doomsday and death. In addition to death, she is also associated with sexuality and violence.[252] Kali is usually depicted as "black or blue, partially or completely naked, with a long lolling tongue, multiple arms, a skirt or girdle of human arms, a necklace of decapitated heads, and a decapitated head in one of her hands."[253] In her portrayals, she often stands on her husband, the god Shiva, who lies beneath her. Interestingly, Kali has become "a symbol of feminine empowerment" for American "feminist scholars and writers" since the latter part of the 20th century.[254] In the novel, Jasmine turns into the goddess Kali after being raped in a motel room by a boat captain that has taken her to America. Standing naked in the bathroom she slices her tongue. Then she returns to the room where her rapist is lying asleep and tilting above him she sticks out her bleeding tongue and cuts his throat. Jasmine just as Kali

---

[249] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 240.
[250] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 241.
[251] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 197.
[252] "Kali," accessed September 18, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kali.
[253] "Kali."
[254] "Kali."

brings death: "I was walking death. Death incarnate."[255] The reason why Jasmine kills her oppressor is not only to revenge herself, but also to protect herself from further harm.

Nevertheless, Jasmine's transformations or reincarnations result into neither complete nor stable identities. Although she transforms herself a lot of times, she does not forget her past selves: "I am sure that I have been reborn several times, and (…) yes, some lives I can recall vividly."[256] What is more, the boundary between her selves is not clearly defined: "Which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms?"[257] Jasmine carries her multiple identities within herself. They peacefully co-exist but one of them is always dominant. Sometimes they welcome among themselves a completely new identity. The movement between them is also quite fluid; one identity can be pushed aside by another one or the present identity is replaced by the old one, just as when Jasmine lives with the Vadheras, and her adventurous Jasmine is replaced by a feudal and traditional Jyoti. In other words, Jasmine's identity changes to match the present conditions. Jasmine's transformations also support Erikson's view that identity formation is a continuous process that is subject to change and development.

While the interactions with white Americans are really beneficial for Jasmine since they accelerate and facilitate her integration into the mainstream society, they have the opposite effect on Sandhya. The effect of such encounters is adequately summarized by Xiaojing Zhou in *Cities of Others* as "alienating."[258] Zhou further adds that "[b]y marrying Stephen, Sandhya has crossed a border into white America, where

---

[255] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 119.
[256] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 126.
[257] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 127.
[258] Xiaojing Zhou, "The City as a 'Contact Zone:' Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*," in *Cities of Others: Reimagining Urban Spaces in Asian American Literature*, ed. Xiaojing Zhou (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 212, accessed September 18, 2016, https://books.google.cz/books?id=zpO4BgAAQBAJ&pg=PA11&lpg=PA11&dq=Cities+of+Others:+Rei magining+Urban+Spaces+in+Asian+American+Literature&source=bl&ots=-v8KCoSbjZ&sig=G3bL84_oln5uIVuGuIg4YJN1cVY&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi3jpWFnYrQAhV HlxoKHdLxABIQ6AEIQzAG#v=onepage&q=Cities%20of%20Others%3A%20Reimagining%20Urban %20Spaces%20in%20Asian%20American%20Literature&f=false.

she is 'lost,' feeling alienated in both the private and public spaces and confined to a domestic life devoted to the conventional duties of wifehood and motherhood,"[259] from which she has struggled to elude. The same feelings of alienation were experienced by the author of the novel herself after coming into the United States. Alexander describes her impressions and experiences in her autobiographical book called *The Shock of Arrival*: "Having entered this world as an immigrant I felt I was living in a place where I had no history. Who was I? Where was I? When was I?"[260] History seems to be a significant factor influencing the integration of immigrants. On the one hand, there is a missing personal history of an immigrant. The chaos and loss of belonging that stem from it can be clearly illustrated on the character of Sandhya. In her homeland she can trace back her family history, which provides her with emotional security. She realizes that she is a part of the system, which defines her role and obligations, and although she detests it, it contributes to her awareness of the right to live there. Whereas she can follow the tradition of her family and community in India, she must start from scratch in America. On the other hand, there is the weight of immigrant history of an ethnic group. Asian Americans, including Indian Americans, have been persecuted and discriminated in America. This particularly strikes Sandhya on the trip to the Ellis Island. The way how the government and ordinary white Americans treated immigrants from Asia profoundly shocks her.

No sense of history or continuation makes Sandhya look into the past. In the United States, she is haunted by the memories of her first love and his murder. She is trapped in her memories to such an extent that she is sometimes even unable to distinguish reality from her dreams. Nevertheless, none of the first generation characters in *Manhattan Music* is immune to recollecting their past and returning in their memories of their life in India. Yet, they do not let the past control them. The same attitude is also displayed by Jasmine who even refuses to discuss her past with other immigrant

---

[259] Zhou, "The City as a 'Contact Zone," 212.
[260] Meena Alexander, "Translating Violence: Bordering Ourselves," in *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections on Postcolonial Experience*, ed. Meena Alexander (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 63, accessed September 3, 2016, https://books.google.cz/books?id=1ZFZE6PDHEkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.

women: "They assumed I had a past, like them, about which I didn't tell too much. Most of them had children back in Jamaica or Trinidad or Santo Domingo. They assumed I did, too. I didn't have a child, but I had a past that I was still fleeing. Perhaps still I am."[261] She tries to cut herself from the past, which proves to be impossible as she often recalls Prakash. Instead she learns to use her past to process the present and envision the future.

Jasmine and Sandhya also differ in their approach to self-reinvention. Jasmine views her transformations not only as a necessity for survival but also, and more importantly, as an opportunity: "I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bulletproof vest, was to be a coward."[262] In the case of Sandhya, memories hinder her integration into the society. What paradoxically helps her become more determined to find her place in America is her attempted suicide. It represents a turning point of her existence in the United States because it makes her consciously articulate that "[t]here was a place for her. (…) There was a place for her here, though what it might be she could never have spelled out. And she, (…), knew she would live out her life in America."[263] The attempted suicide also enables her to focus on the present rather than to live in the past: "She was racing into America from the dark vessel of her past and she could hear it singing in her, ready to break free, the load of her womanhood, of the accumulated life, breaking free into an inconceivable sweetness."[264] What in fact provides her with a sense of belonging is the contact with other Indian female immigrants who share their experience and are willing to support each other: "Sandhya felt she has entered a country where she needed neither passport nor green card, nor any signs of belonging."[265] Such a meeting promotes sisterhood, solidarity, support and empowerment among women of colour.

In *Manhattan Music*, Indian American female characters seem to need to establish social relationships with both other Indian American women and non-Indian

---

[261] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 34.
[262] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 185.
[263] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 227-228.
[264] Alexander, *Manhattan Music,* 219.
[265] Alexander, *Manhattan Music,* 211.

Americans in order to maintain "visibility within both the culture of origin and the dominant culture."[266] Arpana G. Inman in her article "South Asian Women: Identities and Conflicts" refers to this problem as *cultural value conflict*.[267] According to Inman, cultural value conflict describes "an experience of negative affect resulting from dealing simultaneously with values and expectations internalized from the culture of origin (…) and those imposed from the new culture."[268] Inman's theory is further supported by Khandelwal's research on the Indian immigrant community in New York City which reveals that it is Indian women that function as the true guardians of Indian culture in the United States. In terms of food, dress, media and celebrations, Indian women display more effort to preserve their traditional culture. Khandelwal's results can be well illustrated by the Indian American female characters in Alexander and Mukherjee's novel.

Indian cuisine seems to be the most significant and persisting element of Indian culture in America. Both Jasmine and Sandhya prepare traditional Indian food for their families, and for special occasions. They obtain necessary ingredients, including spices and herbs, from Indian stores or they grow them themselves. When Jasmine lives in Baden, Iowa, Bud's brother even creates a small garden for her where he plants herbs which add to the authentic flavour of Indian cuisine: "Last summer Darrel sent away to California for 'Oriental herb garden' cuttings and planted some things for me – coriander, mainly, and dill weed, fenugreek and about five kinds of chilli peppers. I always make sure to use his herbs."[269] The other people expect Jasmine to cook Indian food when they pay a visit and they are "disappointed if there's not *something* Indian on the table."[270] Such expectations or even demands confirm Wenying Xu's view that "food operates as one of the key cultural signs that structure people's identities and their

[266] Arpana G. Inman, "South Asian Women: Identities and Conflicts," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 12 (2006): 306, accessed September 10, 2016, doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.306.
[267] Inman, "South Asian Women," 306.
[268] Inman, "South Asian Women," 306-307.
[269] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 9.
[270] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 9.

concepts of others."[271] Food is an important marker of identity, not only individual, but also, and more importantly, collective. Food seems to be deeply linked with Indian culture for it is one of the features of Indian culture which are transferred and maintained even though other elements are abandoned in the effort to integrate. According to Pyong Gap Min, the main reason why Indian food traditions continue to be preserved in the United States is because traditional foodways are much easier to be maintained than other aspects of culture.[272] With respect to this, he also adds that "even intermarriage does not do much to hinder the preservation of ethnic cuisines."[273] This can be clearly demonstrated on the example of Sandhya.

Just as Jasmine, Sandhya regularly prepares home-cooked meals for her family. Nevertheless, she seems to be more ill-suited for such a task than Jasmine since Sandhya, coming from an upper-middle class background, did not have to take care of domestic chores, including cooking, because her family had several servants that were responsible for it. From Jay's perspective, his cousin has climbed down on the class ladder by coming into America: "He could not get that image out of his head. His cousin Sandhya Rosenblum doing her own kitchen work. But, of course, that's what America had brought her to."[274] Sandhya's cooking, however, agrees, with Khandelwal's findings from which it results that "[r]egardless of class, Indians preferred home-cooked meals prepared by women."[275] Therefore, Sandhya becomes responsible for preparing meals since there is no one else who could do it.

Indian culinary culture also places considerable importance to the social aspect. The process of preparing, cooking and eating food is a way to strengthen family relationships and discuss family-related issues. This can be well illustrated on the example of the Vadheras who dedicate the evenings to an "enormous dinner" and the

[271] Wenying Xu, introduction to *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*, by Wenying Xu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2008), 2.
[272] Pyong Gap Min, introduction to *Struggle to Ethnic Identity: Narratives by Asian American Professionals*, by Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim (Altamira Press, 1999), 18, accessed September 24, 2016, https://books.google.cz/books?id=6U7Kgxdbi-EC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.
[273] Min, introduction, 18.
[274] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 22.
[275] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 37.

"Sundays [are] our days to eat too much and give in to nostalgia, to take the carom board out of the coat closet, to sit cross-legged on dhurries and matchmake marriages for adolescent cousins or younger siblings."[276]

Both in *Manhattan Music* and in *Jasmine*, cooking is done solely by Indian American female characters. Such organization can be traced back to India where, as Khandewal explains, "preparing meals remains so exclusively the responsibility of women that it is unusually to encounter men in kitchens," since "this is considered women's space."[277] In the United States, there are some small changes of this order. Indian American men step into these spaces, and what is more, they try to help their female spouses, friends or relatives.

In addition to food and cuisine, language is considered as another marker of ethnic identity. As Pyong Gap Min writes, "[l]anguage is the central component of culture, and as such it has the strongest effect on integrating members into a particular ethnic group. (…) Yet language is also the first element of the immigrant culture to disappear over generations."[278] This seems to be particularly true of Stephen who surprisingly demonstrates a desperate effort to speak in precise English as if he wanted to prove his belongingness into the dominant culture. He is conscious of his Jewish-Polish descent and his ancestors. At the same time, he feels shame for not being able to speak Yiddish, the language of his ancestors, and the language in which his grandmother spoke with him. He has a feeling that to allow multiple languages to exist within him would throw his existence into chaos:

> Issues related to language make him feel delicate, vulnerable. They pointed up his failings. (…) The phrases of Yiddish he had gleaned from his paternal grandmother had proved burdensome, threatening to flood him (…). (…) It was as if the pressure of another tongue set up a counter-world, a chaos that rimmed around the fragility of his spoken English, which at such times turned rigid with the precision he attempted to force into it. [279]

---

[276] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 146.
[277] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 37.
[278] Min, introduction, 18.
[279] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 68.

For him English remains the language of thinking and understanding the surrounding world.

Indians have a big advantage over other immigrant groups because of their knowledge of English which they owe to their past status as a British colony as Lillian Gordon, an American Samaritan, helping illegal immigrant women just like Jasmine to survive in America by providing them with food, accommodation and comfort, reminds Jasmine: "I was lucky, she said, that India had once been a British colony. Can you imagine being stuck with a language like Dutch or Portuguese?"[280] The character of Lillian Gordon is important for Jasmine in another aspect than as a mere provider of food and shelter since she teaches Jasmine not to cling to the past and succumb to self-pity and pessimism: "She [Lillian] had a low tolerance for reminiscence, bitterness or nostalgia. Let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you."[281] This way of thinking enables Jasmine numerically to transform herself.

Even though Indians can generally speak English, and English is one of the official languages, there are, as Khandelwal points out, class-related differences in the command of English:

> English is widely used in cities throughout India. It is most prevalent among the middle and upper classes of urban Indians educated in English-medium schools. Among the urban lower classes and in small towns, knowledge of English shrinks to the use of phrases intermixed with Indian languages, and it is nearly non-existent in rural India.[282]

In addition to English, Indians can speak some regional languages. For example, Jasmine knows Punjabi and Urdu but it is only due to her high intelligence that her teacher encourages her in studying English. She even remains at school longer than is the custom for a girl since education is considered unnecessary for a village girl. Neither of her brothers or sisters speaks English, which supports Khandelwal's claim that in rural areas the knowledge of English is rare.[283] Nevertheless, for Jasmine, English is a

---

[280] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 132.
[281] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 131.
[282] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 46.
[283] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian*, 46.

language that opens all doors. She even chooses her husband on the basis of his knowledge of English: "I couldn't marry a man who didn't speak English, or at least who didn't want to speak English. To want English was to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world."[284] Whereas the good command of English is a privilege for Jasmine, for Sandhya and her family it is a standard:

> As for herself, unable to read or write her mother tongue, Malayalam, for she had been brought up within the boundaries of a new India, where regional divisions were not considered overly important. She had fallen back on the Hindi of her school days and the English that people of her class mixed in whatever Indian language they spoke, the polyglot nature of their sentences as a sign of breeding. [285]

English and Hindu are the dominant languages of Sandhya because of her class. In comparison with Jasmine that has a command of and uses her regional languages even in the United States where she tutors them at university, Sandhya does not know her regional language because it is not overly important for her.

The most visible element of Indian culture is the way of clothing. Both Indian men and women have traditional clothes which may show their ethnic identity; for men it is *kurta-pyjama*, "a two-piece suit garment," and women traditionally wear the sari, "the long wrapped and drapped dresslike garment."[286] According to Khandelwal, "[f]emale Indian immigrants considered dress integral to their identity and donning traditional dress was seen as preserving one's culture in the United States."[287] Nevertheless, Indian men and women are accustomed to wearing Western attire in India. For instance, Sandhya occasionally wears jeans and a sweater as a student or her cousins wear Western style suits. After coming into America, Sandhya, however, prefers to wear saris, which supports Khandelwal's argument that traditional dress is an important element of Indian cultural identity. In a different aspect, the sari, however, seems to symbolize the confinement of Indian American women to traditional gender roles. At a party that Sandhya organizes, Draupadi, Sandhya's American friend of

---

[284] Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 68.
[285] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 69.
[286] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian,* 43.
[287] Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian,* 43.

Indian descent, wonders about the complexity of the sari and the constraints on women that it seems to be implying: "Did Indian women always wear saris? And what power of will did it take to swathe those six yards of fabric around the body?"[288] During her sojourn in the Vadheras, Jasmine is forced to wear saris although she prefers to wear American clothes which she finds very comfortable. More importantly, American clothes hide Jasmine's widowhood, which, the sari signifies in contrast. To conclude, Indian traditional dress strengthens ethnic identity of Indian women, but simultaneously ties them to the life of domesticity and the reacceptance of traditional gender and cultural roles. According to Jay, to cleave to cultural values to such an extent limits the integration into the dominant society, and it also prevents one from searching for one's place in a new society: "She needs to tear up all the saris old Stephen bought for her in India. She might be better off then."[289] In contrast to Sandhya, Sakhi willingly removes her saris. The character of Sakhi clearly demonstrates how immigrants can negotiate their ethnicity, as understood by Sollors, in order to establish their place in the United States without abandoning their national origins. In terms of consent, she accepts changes as inevitable if she wants to "survive" in America:

> Rather, responding to what this life, this ceaseless metamorphosis of spirit, required, Sakhi had become an American. (…) She had learned to drive on the highways, to navigate her cart through the supermarket, adjust her feet to shoes and socks in winter and the endless layers of garments the show required. Not, it didn't come naturally, wearing all the heavy clothing. (…) Human beings learned how to survive, and in surviving, they changed. The thought did not hurt her. [290]

Just as Jasmine, Sakhi realizes the necessity of self-transformations. Nevertheless, she is fully aware of her descent which she cannot change, which agrees with Kallen's theory of cultural pluralism, that defines an immigrant's integration into the dominant society as limited since one "cannot change his grandfather."[291] Sakhi, however, does not accept her descent with quiet resignation but instead proudly embraces her ancestry,

---

[288] Alexander, *Manhattan Music,* 50.
[289] Alexander, *Manhattan Music*, 134.
[290] Alexander, *Manhattan Music,* 132.
[291] "Democracy versus the Melting-pot," 15.

equalizing her origins with that of other immigrant groups, including the mainstream American one:

> She would rest here. The thought consoled her. She felt nothing of the guilt so many of her compatriots bore in switching passports, as if they were mortgaging one world for another. She was Indian, she would live and die that way. No one could change her skin, or say to her: your parents are not buried in the churchyard in Tiruvella; your in-laws never lived in Nagercoil. Nor have you ever spoken Malayalam. Surely, it is the greatest of illusions that it is your mother tongue. None of that would happen. [292]

Sakhi adopts a firm stance towards her ethnicity which, simultaneously, seems to represent the idea of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism can be thought of as another step taken from cultural pluralism. Multiculturalists are more aggressive or proactive in defending and demanding the acknowledgement of their rights than cultural pluralists. This is caused by the accumulation of decades of "exclusion, discrimination, and oppression," [293] and the civil rights movements in the 1960s that directed the attention towards minority group rights. Generally speaking, multiculturalism "seeks the inclusion of the views and contributions of diverse members of society while maintaining respect for their differences and withholding the demand for their assimilation into the dominant culture."[294] From this perspective, members of an ethnic group, "[a]lthough being an integral and recognizable part of the whole, (…) can maintain their particular identities while residing in the collective."[295] Sakhi is an example of such an approach to integration. Although she accepts her being part of America now, she takes for granted that she retains her ethnic identity. What is more, she supports her female compatriots in their fight for their rights too.

---

[292] Alexander, *Manhattan Music,* 132.
[293] "Multiculturalism," accessed October 2, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/multiculturalism.
[294] "Multiculturalism."
[295] "Multiculturalism."

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to examine the assimilation problems of the first generation of Indian American characters in the United States; what challenges they have to face and what difficulties they experience in the new country. This analysis focused on two novels by two Indian American female writers, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music.*

Both novels demonstrate a different approach to assimilation. Whereas in *Jasmine* assimilation is understood as a two-way process which transforms not only the individual, but also the society into which the individual try to assimilate, in *Manhattan Music* assimilation is portrayed as a one-way process which forces the immigrant to assimilate but the dominant society remains unaffected by it.

In terms of race, both novels demonstrate that Indian American characters experience difficulty in finding and claiming their racial identity in the United States. A profound confusion surrounds their racial status; neither Indian Americans themselves, nor other Americans know to which category Indian Americans belong. Even though Americans try to label them or to assign to them a racial category, none of the labels seem to be fitting, and they often use them interchangeably without any comprehension of their differences. Indian American characters seem to resist the attempts of other Americans to define them because they find it due to its inaccuracy insulting.

In the novels, the first generation immigrant characters are confronted with racial stereotypes held by the dominant society. Indian Americans as belonging to Asian Americans are assumed to be ambitious, quiet, loyal to family, highly competent but not sociable and emotionally cold. Instead of challenging these racial prejudices, Indian American characters conform to them in both novels. They are portrayed as secretive, not communicating their feelings or troubles with white Americans even though they are willing and able to discuss personal matters with other Asian Americans. Regarding loyalty to family, Indian American characters differ. Jasmine, the main protagonist of Mukherjee's novel, does not maintain any contact with her relatives in her homeland, while for Sandhya, the main protagonist of *Manhattan Music*, it is vitally important for her survival to keep in touch with her family even though these ties, which are separated by a great distance, contribute to her emotional vulnerability and instability.

In *Manhattan Music*, Indian American characters also become the victims of racist attacks. This heightens their awareness of their racial identities and contributes to a sense of alienation they feel in America. Race may pose an obstacle in the relationships and intermarriages with white Americans since both partners have different access to sources and opportunities, and their position in the dominant society is not equal. However, in *Jasmine* living among white Americans is portrayed as quite advantageous because it can accelerate and facilitate assimilation of Indian Americans into the mainstream culture.

In *Manhattan Music*, history seems to be a significant factor influencing the assimilation of Indian American characters. On the one hand, as the first generation immigrants they lack personal history in the new country, which arouses emotional insecurity. On the other hand, they are also affected by the history of Indian immigration to the United States. Their immigrant antecedents were encountered with racial hostility, and felt constantly unwelcomed and marginalized. This is transmitted to the first generation characters, which further emphasizes their feeling of isolation. However, the characters in both novels must occasionally cope with negative racial stereotypes which have persisted among white Americans since the period when Indian Americans and other Asian Americans were subjected to racial persecution.

Due to their racial identity, Indian Americans are perceived as perpetual foreigners by the dominant society. No matter how many years they have spent in America, they are still viewed as non-American Americans. As a result, Indian American characters in *Manhattan Music* maintain strong ties with their homeland. They attempt to secure their position in both countries, which, however, proves to be futile because their former positions in India have already been replaced or forgotten.

In the novels, Indian American female characters who desire to extricate themselves from traditional gender roles and forget the expectations which have tied and restricted their female identity in India are unable to achieve it if they remain part of an Indian community in the United States because there still prevails an emphasis on preserving traditional customs and practices such as arranged marriages, caste classification and patriarchal structure. Once they manage to separate themselves radically from their ethnic community, they are able to transform. Indian American male characters, on the other hand, make no attempt to challenge the traditional gender model, and what is more, they accept their male roles and expectations associated with

them. Nevertheless, the effort of Indian American female characters to redefine their roles and positions in the new world has a negative impact on their relationships with their male partners. It is predominantly financial independence that enables Indian American women to become more confident and prominent, not only within their partnerships, but also within society. Male characters seem to be paralyzed by the changes in their partner's character and behaviour.

In the United States, Indian American female characters experience sexual awakening. They neither try to control their sexual desires nor suppress their sexual needs. Moreover, they are not afraid to seek and enjoy pleasure, and they are willing to accept their sexual needs. They challenge the Indian stereotypical view on their sexuality, which portrays it as passive and compromising, by becoming dominant in their sexual relationships.

In the new country, Indian American first generation characters struggle to separate themselves mentally from their homelands, and simultaneously to accommodate themselves to different conditions. Since complete assimilation proves to be impossible for them because Indian Americans are unable to change their ethnic identity and race, they try to change their clothes, names and philosophies to blend in. What seems to be particularly important for their integration is their ability to transform or to reinvent themselves. Such a transformation is often accompanied by the change of name. Indian American characters adopt new names under the influence of their relationships and contacts with non-Indian Americans. The change of name symbolizes their attempt to assimilate into new culture. The interaction with white Americans has two opposite effects. On the one hand, it can accelerate the integration into the mainstream society, but, on the other hand, it results into a feeling of alienation.

In both novels, Indian American characters experience the clash between the old and new, between the spirituality of the East and the materialism of the West and between assimilation and cultural preservation. It is predominantly Indian American women that function as the true guardians of Indian culture in the United States. In terms of food, clothes and celebrations, Indian American female characters display more effort to preserve traditional Indian culture. Indian cuisine seems to be the most significant and persisting element of Indian culture in America. Indian food is deeply linked with Indian culture for it is one of the features of Indian culture which is maintained and protected in the United States. Apart from cuisine, traditional Indian

clothes are another aspect of Indian culture that strengthens ethnic identity of Indian American female characters in America. Simultaneously, it, however, ties them to the life of domesticity and the reacceptance of traditional gender and cultural roles. For Indian American characters, language does not represent a barrier separating them from the dominant society or hindering them in assimilation since they have a perfect command of English.

RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je zjistit a analyzovat, jakým problémům musí čelit postavy první generace Američanů indického původu při své asimilaci do americké společnosti; s čím se musí vyrovnat, a jaké výzvy na ně čekají v nové zemi. Předmětem této analýzy jsou dva romány od současných amerických spisovatelek indického původu a rovněž příslušnic první generace *Jasmine* od Bharati Mukherjee a *Manhattan Music* od Meeny Alexander.

Je to bezesporu první generace imigrantů, pro kterou je téma asimilace nejrelevantnější a problémy s ní spojené nejvýraznější, neboť je to právě tato generace imigrantů, která se musí začlenit do nové společnosti. Pro Američany indického původu spočívají nejzávažnější problémy jejich asimilace v rase, genderu a etnicitě. Proto se tři hlavní kapitoly této práce věnují detailně každému z těchto problémů. Přestože se tato práce věnuje postavám první generace, jsou to především postavy imigrantek, na které se zaměřuje největší pozornost, protože ve Spojených státech procházejí složitější a hlubší proměnou než jejich mužští protějšci.

Hlavní části práce předchází úvodní kapitola, která poskytuje stručný přehled indicko-americké literatury s nastíněním dějinné linie zkoumaných románů. Dále vysvětluje základní termíny, se kterými tato práce pracuje, jako první generace a asimilace. Román *Jasmine* od Bharati Mukherjee sleduje cestu indické dívky do Spojených států a její transformace v procesu amerikanizace. *Manhattan Music* od Meeny Alexander se soustřeďuje na život indické ženy Sandhyi Rosenblum, která se přestěhuje do Spojených států se svým americkým manželem židovského původu, a snaží se najít své místo v nové společnosti. Postavy sledované v těchto románech jsou příslušníci první generace, což jsou lidé, kteří se narodili mimo Spojené státy a do země imigrovali. Prvogenerační imigranti se snaží začlenit do americké společnosti, a tento proces začleňování, při kterém jsou jednotlivci, nebo celé skupiny s odlišnou etnickou identitou absorbovány do dominantní společnosti, se nazývá asimilace. Asimilace znamená přijetí znaků a rysů kultury dominantní skupiny do takové míry, že dojde ke splynutí s dominantní společností.

První kapitola se zabývá nejdůležitějším problémem, se kterým se musí prvogenerační imigranti v America vyrovnat a tou je jejich rasa. Kapitola se zaměřuje na jejich rasovou identifikaci a obtíže s ní spojené. Dále se věnuje rasovým stereotypům

a předsudkům, a statusu Američanů indického původu v americké společnosti. V neposlední řadě zkoumá, jakou váhu má rasa v rasově smíšených manželstvích a vztazích s bílými. Pro postavy Američanů indického původu není snadné si zvolit a určit svou rasovou identitu. Jejich rasová příslušnost vyvolává zmatení nejenom u rodilých Američanů, kteří je zařazují do různých kategorií, často bez hlubšího porozumění rozdílů mezi nimi, ale i u Američanů indického původu, kteří se snaží vzepřít těmto pokusům je identifikovat, neboť se neztotožňují s žádnou z nabízených možností. V románech postavy prvogeneračních imigrantů také čelí rasovým stereotypům dominantní společnosti. Stereotypem se rozumí standardizovaný koncept nebo obraz se zvláštním významem, který sdílejí členové určité skupiny. Mainstreamová společnost vnímá Američany indického původu, stejně jako ostatní imigranty z Asie, jako ambiciózní, vysoce kompetentní, loajální k rodině, ale také jako emocionálně chladní a stranící se společnosti. Prvogenerační postavy Indo-Američanů těmto stereotypům ovšem podléhají, místo aby se proti nim vzbouřili. V *Manhattan Music* se postavy prvogeneračních imigrantů stávají oběťmi rasových útoků, což v nich zvyšuje povědomí o jejich rase, a také to přispívá k jejich pocitu odcizení, který v America prožívají. Kvůli své rase jsou Američané indického původu vnímáni jako neameričtí Američané nebo jako „věční cizinci," proto se některé postavy snaží udržovat kontakt se svou rodnou zemí, aby si udrželi své pozice v obou společnostech. Tato snaha se však ukazuje být marná, protože po odjezdu z Indie svá práva a postavení ztrácejí. V *Manhattan Music* odlišná rasová identita obou partnerů vytváří nerovnováhu, neboť oba partneři mají odlišný přístup ke zdrojům a příležitostem.

Druhá kapitola věnovaná genderu zjišťuje motivaci a očekávání postav prvogeneračních imigrantek, které je vedou k rozhodnutí usadit se ve Spojených státech, a zda jsou tato očekávání v Americe naplněna, protože jsou to právě ženské postavy, které mají více důvodů hledat únik z patriarchální společnosti. Kapitola se také zabývá pozicí postav imigrantek v indo-americké komunitě, a jejich postoj k tradičním genderovým rolím. V závěru sleduje dopad asimilace na manželství a vztahy, a také na změnu vnímání vlastního ženství a sexuality. Postavy prvogeneračních imigrantek, které se touží v Americe vymanit z tradičních rolí a zapomenout na očekávání, které svazovali jejich ženskou identitu, toho nedokáží dosáhnout, pokud v Americe zůstávají součástí indické komunity. Jakmile se radikálně odloučí od své komunity, dochází k jejich vytoužené transformaci. Snaha imigrantek o přehodnocení jejich rolí má ovšem

negativní dopad na jejich partnerské vztahy. Ve Spojených státech jsou postavy imigrantek sexuálně otevřenější; nesnaží se ani kontrolovat ani omezovat své touhy a potřeby. Také jsou ve vztazích dominantnější a aktivnější, čímž vzdorují stereotypnímu pohledu na ženskou sexualitu v Indii, která ji považuje za pasivní a obětavou.

Poslední kapitola se zaměřuje na etnicitu a na způsob, jakým se postavy Američanů indického původu vypořádají se svou etnickou identitou v Americe; jaké elementy své kultury přenášejí a transplantují do nové země, a jakých rysů se naopak vzdají v procesu asimilace. Etnicitou se rozumí kulturní specifičnost určité skupiny, která zahrnuje jazyk, jídlo, oblečení a chování. Postavy prvogeneračních imigrantů zjišťují, že je nezbytná jejich transformace, pokud se chtějí integrovat do americké společnosti. Symbolem této přeměny je často změna jména, kterou motivuje interakce s Američany neindického původu. V obou románech dochází u postav Američanů indického původu ke střetu mezi spiritualismem východu a materialismem západu a mezi asimilací a zachováním vlastní kultury. Jsou to především postavy imigrantek, které vystupují jako pravé strážkyně indické kultury ve Spojených státech. Nejvýraznějším a nejzachovalejším rysem indické kultury v Americe je indická kuchyně. Kromě kuchyně je to také oblečení, které posiluje etnickou příslušnost u postav imigrantek v Americe. Zároveň je ovšem symbolicky připoutává k tradičním genderovým a kulturním rolím. Pro postavy Američanů indického původu nepředstavuje jazyk žádnou překážku ani bariéru v asimilaci do americké společnosti, neboť mluví plynulou angličtinou, a pro mnohé z nich je angličtina jejich rodným jazykem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Alexander, Meena. *Manhattan Music*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1997.

Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.

Secondary Sources

"Agha Shalid Ali." Accessed October 21, 2016.
     https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/agha-shahid-ali.

Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Alexander, Meena. "Translating Violence: Bordering Ourselves." In *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections on Postcolonial Experience*, edited by Meena Alexander, 63-110. Boston: South End Press, 1996. Accessed September 3, 2016. https://books.google.cz/books?id=1ZFZE6PDHEkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Archer, John, and Barbara Lloyd. *Sex and Gender*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Bahri, Deepika, and Mary Vasudeva. "Observing Ourselves among Others: Interview with Meena Alexander." In *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*, edited by Deepika Bahri, and Mary Vasudeva, 35-53. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Berrenman, Gerald D**.** "Caste in Indian and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 66 (1960): 120-127. Accessed April 20, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2773155.

Béteille, André. "Race, Caste and Gender." *Man* 25 (1990): 489-504. Accessed April 18, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803715.

"Biography." Accessed October 21, 2016. http://www.vikramchandra.com/biography/.

Browning, Don S., and M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr. *Sex, Marriage and Family in World Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

"Chinese Exclusion Act." Accessed September 11, 2016.
     https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act.

"Concepts and Definitions." Accessed August 16, 2016.
     http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsandefinitions.htm

Cox, Oliver C. "Race and Caste: A Distinction." *American Journal of Sociology* 50 (1945): 360-368. Accessed April 18, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2771189.

"Democracy versus the Melting-pot." Accessed January 1, 2014. http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/Kallen.htm.

Deschamps, Jean-Claude, and Thierry Devos. "Regarding the Relationship Between Social Identity and Personal Identity." In *Social Identity: International Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Worchel, 1-12. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998.

DuBois, W. E. B. "The Concept of Race." In *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, edited by W. E. B. DuBois, 97-133. New York: Schocken Books. Accessed March 25, 2016. https://openlibrary.org/works/OL17090335W/Dusk_of_dawn_an_essay_toward_an_autobiography_of_a_race_concept.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press, 2010.

Erikson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968.

Fiske, Susan T., and Amy J. C. Cuddy, and Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82 (20022): 878-902. Accessed April 6, 2016. http://www.cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/Fiske_StereotypeContent.pdf.

"Foreign Born." Accessed October 5, 2016. www.census.gov/population/foreign/about/faq.html.

Fu, Vincent Kang. "Racial Intermarriage Pairings." *Demography* 38 (2001): 147-159. Accessed April 13, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088297.

Griswold, Hervey D. "Some Characteristics of Hinduism as a Religion." *The Biblical World* 40 (1912): 163-172. Accessed March 19, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3141428.

"India's City of Widows." Accessed August 3, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/30/india-city-widows-discrimination.

"India's Invisible Widows, Divorcees and Single Women." Accessed August 3, 2016. http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26356373.

"Indian Feminist Author Sarojini Sahoo on Female Sexuality." Accessed August 19, 2016. http://womensissues.about.com/od/feminismequalrights/a/FeminisminIndia_2.htm

Inman, Arpana G. "South Asian Women: Identities and Conflicts." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 12 (2006): 306-319. Accessed September 10, 2016. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.306.

"Jhumpa Lahiri." Accessed October 21, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jhumpa-Lahiri.

Junn, Jane. "From Coolie to Model Minority: U. S. Immigration Policy and the Construction of Racial Identity." *Du Bois Review* 4 (2007): 355-373. Accessed May 3, 2016. doi:10.10170S1742058X07070208.

"Kali." Accessed September 18, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kali.

Katrak, Ketu H. "South Asian American Literature." In *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, edited by King-Kok Cheung, 192-218. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Khandelwal, Madhulika S., *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City*. London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Kiran Desai." Accessed October 21, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kiran-Desai.

Lai, Lei. "The Model Minority Thesis and Workplace Discrimination of Asian Americans." *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 6 (2013): 93-96. Accessed April 13, 2016. doi:10.1111/iops.12015.

Leary, Mark R., and June Price Tangney. *Handbook of Self and Identity*. London: The Guilford Press, 2012.

"Mary Antin." Accessed September 14, 2016. http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/antin-mary.

Maykowich, Minako Kurokawa. "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes: White, Black, and Yellow." *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972): 876-897. Accessed April 6, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776927.

Min, Pyong Gap. Introduction to *Struggle to Ethnic Identity: Narratives by Asian American Professionals*, by Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim, 11-15. Altamira Press, 1999. Accessed September 24, 2016. https://books.google.cz/books?id=6U7Kgxdbi-EC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Morning, Ann. "The Racial Self-identification of South Asians in the United States." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27 (2001): 61-79. Accessed March 16, 2016. doi: 10.1080/13691830020024867.

"Multiculturalism." Accessed October 2, 2016.
    https://www.britannica.com/topic/multiculturalism.

"No Country for Single Women." Accessed August 6, 2016.
    http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26341350.

Outlaw, Lucius, "Toward a Critical Theory of "Race"." In *Race and Racism*, edited by
    Bernard Boxill, 58-82. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Accessed March
    15, 2016,
    http://www33.homepage.villanova.edu/edward.fierros/pdf/Outlaw~Critical%20Th
    eory%20of%20Race.pdf.

Pauls, Elizabeth Prine. "Assimilation." Accessed October 11, 2016.
    https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society.

Root, Maria P. P. "Within, Between, and Beyond Race." In *Racially Mixed People in
    America,* edited by Maria P. P. Root, 3-11. Sage Publications, 1992. Accessed
    March 26, 2016. https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1452253358.

Shankar, Lavina Dhingra, and Rajini Srikanth, *A Part Yet Apart: South Asian in Asian
    America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New
    York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Thapan, Meenakshi. *Living the Body: Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in
    Contemporary India*. Sage Publications, 2009. – CHYBI MISTO VYDANI

"The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)." Accessed April 28, 2016.
    https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act.

"U.S. Immigration Since 1965." Accessed September 26, 2016.
    http://www.history.com/topics/us-immigration-since-1965.

Van Elteren, Mel. *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic
    and Global Influence*. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006. Accessed
    September 11, 2016. https://books.google.cz/books?isbn=078642785X.

Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sexuality*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Wong, Sau-Ling Cynthia. *From Necessity to Extravagance: Reading Asian American
    Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Xu, Wenying. Introduction to *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American
    Literature*, by Wenying Xu, 1-17. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Zhou, Xiaojing. "The City as a 'Contact Zone:' Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*."
    In *Cities of Others: Reimagining Urban Spaces in Asian American Literature*,

edited by Xiaojing Zhou, 198-226. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. Accessed September 18, 2016. https://books.google.cz/books?id=zpO4BgAAQBAJ&pg=PA11&lpg=PA11&dq=Cities+of+Others:+Reimagining+Urban+Spaces+in+Asian+American+Literature&source=bl&ots=-v8KCoSbjZ&sig=G3bL84_oln5uIVuGuIg4YJN1cVY&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi3jpWFnYrQAhVHlxoKHdLxABIQ6AEIQzAG#v=onepage&q=Cities%20of%20Others%3A%20Reimagining%20Urban%20Spaces%20in%20Asian%20American%20Literature&f=false.

ANOTATION

Name: Aneta Rambousková

Faculty: Faculty of Arts

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the Thesis: The Assimilation Problems of the First Generation in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*

Supervisor: prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc.

Number of pages of the thesis: 87

The aim of the thesis is to analyse the assimilation problems of the first generation of Indian American characters in two contemporary novels written by Indian American female writers, namely Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music*. The thesis is divided into three main chapters which deal with the most significant challenges with which the first generation is confronted in the United States: race, gender and ethnicity. These chapters are preceded by an introductory chapter which provides a general overview of Indian American literature and briefly defines some key terms of the thesis such as assimilation or first generation.

Key Words: first generation, gender, race, ethnicity, assimilation, Indian Americans

ANOTACE

Jméno: Aneta Rambousková

Fakulta: Filozofická fakulta

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Problémy asimilace první generace v dílech Bharati Mukherjee *Jasmine* a Meeny Alexander *Manhattan Music*

Vedoucí práce: prof. PhDr. Josef Jařab, CSc

Počet stran: 87

Cílem této práce je analyzovat problémy, které při své asimilaci do mainstreamové americké společnosti zažívají postavy prvogeneračních Američanů indického původu. Tato analýza se zaměřuje na dva romány současných amerických spisovatelek indického původu, které také patří do první generace imigrantů *Jasmine* od Bharati Mukherjee a *Manhattan Music* od Meeny Alexander. Tato práce se skládá se tří hlavních kapitol, které se věnují nejzávaznějším problémům, kterým prvogenerační imigranti čelí ve Spojených státech – rase, genderu a etnicitě. V úvodní kapitole této práce je stručně představena indicko-americká literatura a také jsou definovány základní termíny, se kterými tato práce pracuje, jako například asimilace nebo první generace.

Klíčová slova: asimilace, první generace, gender, rasa, etnicita, Američané indického původu