

Prema's Cultural Hybridity and Diasporic Identity in *Seasons of Flight* by Manjushree Thapa

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to shed light on the struggles and conflicts experienced by Nepali immigrants in the United States of America, as they encounter and attempt to appropriate western culture and lifestyle while being haunted by their native culture and tradition. The novel *Seasons of Flight* is a portrayal of the cultural encounters and appropriations experienced by immigrants in the United States of America. It highlights the issues of isolation, alienation, identity crisis, and accommodation that immigrants face when they try to assimilate and internalize the culture and lifestyle of the host country. The topic of identity in diasporic literature is discussed in this study, particularly in light of multiculturalism and hybrid identities. This research applies the perspective of diaspora to analyze the cultural encounters and appropriations depicted in *Seasons of Flight*. The research reviews the literature on diaspora theory, multiculturalism, and hybrid identity, and examines how the protagonist, Prema, undergoes trials and tribulations in her attempt to fit into the multicultural American society. The research also analyzes the conflicts between tradition and modernity portrayed in the novel, and discusses the issues of collective identity, shared belonging, religious beliefs, and commitment for unity that guide immigrants. The research finds that the cultural encounters and appropriations experienced by Nepali immigrants in the United States of America are a general plight of diasporic people. The research concludes that despite the modern amenities and aspirations offered by the multicultural American society, diasporic subjects like Prema undergo with cultural encounters and appropriations, which may lead to identity crisis and hybridity. This research highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity, and the need for immigrants to balance their native culture and tradition with the culture and lifestyle of the host country to overcome the challenges of cultural encounters and appropriations.

Keywords: diaspora, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, tradition, modernity

Introduction to *Seasons of Flight* in the Light of Diaspora

By using a diasporic lens, this study aims to investigate the problem of cultural encounters and appropriations in Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*. The mentioned novel

intensely dramatizes the cultural encounters and appropriations among the immigrants in the US. At the heart of this novel is the projection of how the immigrants in the United States of America are haunted by the native cultural and tradition with their attempt to adapt and appropriate in the culture and tradition of the host country. By putting Nepali immigrants in a multicultural American lifestyle in the United States of America, Thapa attempts to unravel the fact that all the time the uproar of multicultural American society does not give inner relief to the diasporic people, though it offers modern amenities and aspirations for them. However, there is persistent attempt from the part of the immigrants for their appropriation in the new locations. By showing her protagonist, Prema undergoing trial, trouble and tribulation in new location and her aspiration to be fit in multicultural locations, Thapa is critiquing the false consciousness of the happy and blissful life of diasporic subjects in American or western metropolis all the time. The fact, however, is that the diasporic subjects like Prema undergo with cultural encounters and appropriations.

When the east and west encounter in terms of culture and tradition, the protagonist finds her in the state of alienation. The novel attempts to portray the conflict between tradition and modernity portrayed in her staying in the US. It contains the issues of isolation, alienations, identity crisis and accommodation. Before delving into the world of the novel itself, it is imperative to discuss about diaspora in relation to multiculturalism and hybrid identity.

In a globalized world, there is a growing trend of full-fledged migration of people from one country to another with multiple purposes. Due to globalization, there were significantly more immigrants in western cities. People are moving to western countries from all around in search of a better life and future for their families. Immigrants and minorities sometimes feel like their cultural identity is vanishing or is already eroding in their new home countries. Immigrants experience unease and a sense of alienation when they are unable to integrate into the multicultural milieu of the host nation. People attempt to alter their cultural identity and develop a new one when they do not feel comfortable with their current one. Because roots cannot be rejected, people may attempt to modify their cultural identity, although it may be challenging. One's roots and history are constant, ongoing, and recurring issues throughout life.

In general, group identity, such as a sense of shared belonging, religious convictions, and a dedication to togetherness, greatly influences immigration. Even if they do not reside in their country of origin, immigrants nonetheless frequently practice their customs and maintain ties to their social and familial identities. Globalization and multiculturalism's expanding impact have given immigrants a mixed identity. It's because their cultural identity can have been altered or mingled with the local customs.

Diasporic literature has debated the nature of identities in terms of gender, race, culture, and nation. In diasporic literature, the subject of identity is hotly debated. The issue of identity has become more prominent in the modern, globalized world as a result of the rise in

immigration, hybrid states, and the creation of nations with various cultural diversity. Theorists who have presented their theories about how to form identity in the context of diasporic social structures are discussed in this study. The most contentious topic in today's globalized and multicultural society is the problem of identity, which has become notably dynamic as a result of the widespread movement from one nation to another for a variety of reasons.

The definition of "diaspora" has been broadened to encompass additional racial and ethnic groups, and to emphasize hybridity and the non-center as essential components of diasporic identities. The term "diaspora" has evolved to refer to those seeking asylum, refugees, exiles, forced migrants, immigrants, expatriates, guest workers, trade groups, and ethnic communities of all stripes. Some academics have made attempts to uphold a word's coherence to the point of potential irrelevance. Multicultural societies are the places or settings that enable people to lose themselves in home-country longing, which serves as the impetus for constructing identity and real subjectivity.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the concept of diaspora and its impact on cultural encounters and appropriations in Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*.
2. To investigate the conflict between tradition and modernity portrayed in the protagonist's staying in the US in the novel.
3. To analyze the issue of identity construction amidst diasporic social set-ups, and the impact of multiculturalism and globalization on hybrid identities.

Research Questions

1. How does the concept of diaspora influence the portrayal of cultural encounters and appropriations in *Seasons of Flight*?
2. What are the key conflicts between tradition and modernity depicted in the protagonist's experiences in the US in the novel?
3. How do multiculturalism and globalization impact the construction of hybrid identities in diasporic social set-ups, and what are the major debates around the issue of identity in diasporic literature?

Review of Literature

Seasons of Flight by Manjushree Thapa has garnered critical attention from scholars and critics worldwide since its initial publication. The heroine, Prema, journeys from a scenic Nepali hamlet to a culturally and socially varied metropolis in the United States, according to one scholar, Khan (2010). He emphasizes that the journey Prema undertakes involves not only geographical distance, but also psychological and cultural challenges, suggesting that her

experience is rooted in her cultural and societal background. Another critic, Om Tiwari, views the novel as an extraordinary journey toward progress, naming the book after the span of time when butterflies fly and die. Tiwari (2011) notes that Prema's journey is motivated by the need for safety, as the Maoist insurgency in her village posed a threat to her well-being and that of her loved ones. Young people like Prema were at risk of being taken away to join the Maoist movement, which had launched a so-called "People's Movement" in Nepal.

In a similar vein, Thapa (2010) asserts in *The Kathmandu Post* that the themes of identity and exile are prominent in the novels.

Identity, as a socio-cultural constructs, provides a narrative structure to an individual's or group's life. The novel opens with Prema's experience of "being Nepali" in the US. A very simple question, "Where are you from?" and the chain of conversation that follows, not only project Prema's attempt to articulate her national identity but also delivers a sense of 'shared experience' to the readers. For many Nepali readers, who have similar experiences abroad, Prema's answer "from Nepal"—which is often misunderstood by Americans as "Naples"—highlights the struggle of Nepali diaspora to retain their national identity. (12)

In this context, Thapa asserts that the novels elucidate and bring to light the difficult and challenging circumstances faced by the Nepali diaspora residing in the United States of America, primarily stemming from their struggle to maintain a sense of home and identity.

The experience of adapting to a new location without any established sense of identity is a painful one for Nepali immigrants in the US. In a similar vein, Gupte (2012), in interpreting this novel through the lens of home and exile, asserts:

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* takes us to Nepal and America with Prema. Born and brought up in a small hamlet of Nepal, moves to the strife torn Kathmandu for higher education and then to take up a job. However, the increasing Maoism and violence in Nepal suffocates her and she longs to escape 'home' and go elsewhere for solace. Home which signifies peace leaves her in a state of restlessness and she flies to America on an unexpected green card lottery. But does changing countries bring her peace? Does America help her forget home? Does the American soil change her love for the beautiful ecology of Nepal? The novel eventually answers these question, but Nepal figures large as both 'home' and 'exile' for Prema. (7)

Gupte (2012) posits that despite residing in the modern and sophisticated urban centers of America, Nepali immigrants experience difficulty in achieving mental peace and solace due to the incessant impression of their homeland and identity.

In the novel *Seasons of Flight* by Manjushree Thapa, critics have highlighted various themes such as cultural journey, identity and exile, transnationalism, and conflicts faced by marginalized women. According to Thapa (2010), the book explores the journey of life through time, place, and human civilization while portraying the subtleties of America's social and natural surroundings. The work, according to Poudel's (2012) interpretation, dramatizes national imagination outside a nation's geo-cultural boundaries and criticizes the false awareness of nationalism. Swami (2016) examines the idea of identity in relation to both the household and the outside world and illustrates the struggle of oppressed women to define themselves in a patriarchal culture. The challenges and experiences of Nepali immigrants in the United States are better understood thanks to these critical viewpoints.

Similarly, Guragaini (2014) sheds light on the aspirations of Asian immigrants in America in *Seasons of Flight*:

Manjushree Thapa's novel, *Seasons of Flight* not only problematizes Nepali identity in the South Asian diaspora, but also positions it in an interstitial space moving between homeward connection and current metropolitan lifestyle. The identity of Thapa's protagonist, Prema, is constantly conflated with Indianness she encounters different social activities and conversations. Thapa, by presenting a woman-centered story, challenges the assumptions of the American dream of freedom, affluence and multiculturalism, and interjects the undercurrents of the aspirations of immigrants. (51)

Seasons of Flight examines the cultural conflicts that arise when immigrants are torn between the traditions of their own country and those of their adoptive one. In order to more accurately depict her characters' lives, Thapa as a novelist inserts her viewpoints and ideas into her works of literature. Included details from the author's own life and experiences are essential to understanding and interpreting this novel. Diaspora makes it challenging for the characters in *Seasons of Flight* to adapt to the different traditions and moral principles of each new place (Simmons, 2012).

The difficulties that immigrants have adjusting to life in a foreign country are underlined in the book. Prema makes an effort to adopt an American way of life. She begins purchasing beach-appropriate clothing while in Los Angeles. She imitates American fashion in her attire. She spends \$24.99 on a red bikini and \$4.47 on flip-flops. She visits the beach in Los Angeles. For a poor girl like Prema, adjusting to life in the home of a wealthy person like Esther is more challenging. Vacuum cleaners, humidifiers, dust-busters, air purifiers, irons, and ironing boards were all crammed into Esther's closets (Sharma, 2013).

Seasons of Flight is a "beautifully crafted story that reaffirms Thapa's status as one of these countries' most accomplished and graceful young writers," according to Shakya (2010) (6).

Seasons of Flight is a fiction that will be read meritoriously for years to come. Shakya reiterates, "Though she is a young writer, her work is confident and ageless.

Numerous literary critics have focused on the challenges faced by Nepali immigrants in the United States of America in the novel under consideration. However, there appears to be a gap in the critical analysis regarding the cultural conflicts and assimilation issues encountered by the characters in the novel. My research aims to address this gap and provide a new perspective on the novel. This critical perspective will also serve as a valuable resource for future scholars.

Research Methodology

This research explores the cultural encounters and an appropriation depicted in Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight*, and examines the issue of identity in diasporic literature, specifically in the context of multiculturalism and hybrid identity. The research applies the perspective of diaspora to analyze the struggles and conflicts experienced by Nepali immigrants in the United States of America as they attempt to appropriate western culture and lifestyle while being haunted by their native culture and tradition.

A qualitative research approach was used to accomplish the study goals. The information was gathered by doing a thorough thematic analysis of the book. A technique for finding, examining, and reporting patterns (themes) in data is thematic analysis. Themes on cultural encounters and appropriations, identity crises, tradition and modernity, and collective identity were found by the researcher after reading the novel's text. The discovered themes were then examined and explored in relation to multiculturalism, diaspora theory, and hybrid identity.

The research also involved a review of literature related to the topic of the study. A systematic review of relevant literature was conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to diaspora, cultural encounters and appropriations, and identity crisis. The literature review was conducted using various academic databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Research Gate, as well as other relevant sources such as books, journals, and articles.

The sample for this study was limited to the novel *Seasons of Flight* by Manjushree Thapa. The analysis of the novel was conducted by the researcher, and no participants were involved in the study. The research design was based on a qualitative approach, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of the themes related to the research questions.

The research findings were analyzed and discussed in the context of the relevant literature, and conclusions were drawn based on the analysis. The study highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity, and the need for immigrants to balance their native culture and tradition with the culture and lifestyle of the host country to overcome the challenges of cultural encounters and appropriations.

This research employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the issue of cultural encounters and appropriations in diasporic literature, using the novel *Seasons of Flight* as a case study. The study's conclusions shed light on the difficulties that Nepali immigrants encounter in the United States of America and emphasize the value of cultural variety and the necessity for immigrants to strike a balance between their home culture and that of the host nation.

Analysis of *Seasons of Flight*

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* portrays the cultural clashes and struggles experienced by Nepali immigrants in the United States. Despite the modern amenities and opportunities available in the US, the novel highlights how the immigrants are haunted by their cultural roots and experience nostalgia for their native identity. Thapa suggests that multicultural American society does not always provide inner relief to diasporic individuals. The protagonist of the novel encounters cultural collisions as she tries to reconcile her traditional Nepali mindset with the modernized American way of life. Despite these clashes, she strives to assimilate into American culture and ultimately must reconcile the differences between traditional East and modernized West.

Seasons of Flight by Manjushree Thapa tells the story of Prema, a Nepali woman who wins a green card lottery and immigrates to the United States. In the introduction of the book, Thapa highlights the irony that many Americans are unaware of Nepal or do not recognize it as a distinct country. Sadness characterized Prema's early years because her mother passed very soon after giving birth to Bijaya, her younger sister, who eventually joined the Maoist guerrillas in Nepal. Prema's father is a forward-thinking individual who supports her in pursuing her profession and gives her permission to enroll in college to study forestry.

Prema carries an ammonite that her mother received from a Hindu hermit who roamed through the town of her birth and venerated as a Shaligram, an incarnation of Vishnu, as a token of her ties to her home country. Prema joins an NGO for forest conservation after graduation, where she collaborates with Trailokya, a senior forester, to reduce a British company's carbon impact. The NGO gives low-income people interest-free loans for non-formal education, health clinics, rearing poultry and goats, and other purposes.

Prema chooses to enter the American green card lottery at the urging of Kanchha, a Gurkha, while her friends propose plans for her to immigrate to America, Australia, Canada, Europe, or India for growth. She visits a cyber cafe and fills out the form. The story begins with Prema settling into her life in America and reminiscing about her past experiences. Throughout the novel, Thapa portrays how Prema struggles to assimilate into American culture, despite the modern amenities and aspirations it offers. Prema's encounter with American culture challenges her traditional Nepali mindset, and she experiences a cultural collision. Nonetheless, she strives

to assimilate into Americanized culture because she has to adjust to the Western way of life, even though it conflicts with traditional eastern values.

Thapa discusses the political turmoil in Nepal, as portrayed in newspapers. Prema becomes attracted to Rajan, who is employed in a non-governmental organization's poverty alleviation program. They engage in a secret night together, while Prema lives a solitary life in the hill bazaar. Rajan is a student member of a communist student union, organizing strikes and protests against law enforcement and experiencing tear gas, beatings, and arrests. He has visited several nations, including Poland, Russia, and Mongolia. Thapa draws attention to political upheaval and Maoist insurgents in Nepal by using discussions between Prema and Trailokya.

Prema learns that she has won the lottery and can go to America. However, she experiences confusion regarding whether to go to America, how to manage finances, and where to reside. Harihar-dai, a mutual friend of Rajan, helps Prema with money and job recommendations in America. He provides Prema with the contact number of his nephew, Narahari Bohora, residing in Los Angeles, who may help her settle in America. The middleman charges Prema fifty thousand for his services. Prema learns English, practices driving, and reads about the United States from bookstores and online newspapers. Kanchha, a friend of Prema, is suspected of being a Maoist agent and is beaten and arrested by the police. When Prema's sister joined the Maoists, her father told Prema not to go to the countryside.

Prema becomes conflicted about whether to leave her impoverished homeland for the US after winning the lottery. She contemplates the prospect of progress in America, but also acknowledges the potential for corporate capitalist expansionism. In America, Prema interacts with individuals from various countries, including Andy and Luis. Although initially frightened of these people due to language barriers, Prema develops a relationship with Luis, who learns her language and engages in discussions on meditation and popular games in Nepal.

The novel *Seasons of Flight* follows the experiences of Prema, a Nepali immigrant in Los Angeles who strives to locate herself in the multicultural American society while also trying to maintain her national and cultural identity. She receives positive support from her boyfriend's family and enjoys being included in American celebrations, but later feels something missing in her life and ultimately decides to quit. Prema negotiates her cultural identity by trying to locate herself to her hill-village, the Shiva-Parvati temple, Nepali language, and food while also wanting to be a real American through her attachment to her Latino-American boyfriend Luis. Prema frequently has to define her national identity and culture among various people in America.

At the outset, Prema engages in a conversation with an American in Los Angeles and explains the geographical location of Nepal as a country situated near the Himalayas, with

Mount Everest in close proximity. In her childhood, Nepal lacked basic amenities such as electricity and telephones. Thapa provides a detailed description of Prema's rural hometown as:

Her family home- which she still thought of as hers, though she had not lived in it since she was seventeen- was sturdy, two-storeyed, of stone. It had felt sheltering, and safe, when she used to run through bamboo grove past the Shiva-Parvati temple that bordered the terraced rice fields, to school. Only later, when she had left the village, to go to high school, then college, in the capital, Kathmandu, had she discovered that her family had been poor. The house, the grove, the temple and the terraced fields were perched at the foothills of Eastern Himal. A silver mist rolled in all year. Prema had shivered through all her childhood. (2)

Prema tries to reconcile her Nepali identity with the multicultural environment in America. She keeps memories of her village, temple, language, and food with her and carries an ammonite as a reminder of her mother. In Kathmandu, she meets Trailokya and Rajan and experiences the Maoist agitation. In America, she tries to reinvent herself with her Latino-American boyfriend Luis but feels a sense of alienation due to cultural differences. Prema's struggle reflects the tension between Eastern and Western cultures.

Remembering is the most significant way of connecting with the past, whether it be through tangible objects or encounters with people. Prema's encounter with Mata Sylvia, a Hindu preacher in Los Angeles, reciting from various religious books takes her back to her Nepali home, providing a sense of authenticity. Despite being in America, Prema remembers her village days and finds comfort in her country's culture. Her memories of her home, including food, language, and religion, serve as an alternative identity to the everyday insecurity she faces. Prema's building and restoration of her indigenous identity through historical symbols and religion reflects Renan's (1990) idea of a national culture as a spiritual basis. Prema locates herself in her own national territory while being in the American city by thinking back to her hometown and culture.

Prema, a wanderer, is constantly seeking a stable sense of cultural identity and a place to call home. Despite being physically present in Los Angeles, her mind is preoccupied with memories of her ancestral roots and her village's geographic location. This theme is prevalent throughout the novel.

Some days her village felt centuries away, and the other days it was too close; she could not get far enough away from it. Her family home was sturdy, two-storied, of stone. It had felt sheltering, and safe, when she used to run through the bamboo grove past the Shiva-Parvati temple that bordered the terraced rice fields, to school. (2)

The core of Prema's nostalgia lies in the search for meaning in her national and cultural identity, which is complicated by the challenges of modern life. Questions like "Who am I?" and "What am I doing here?" persistently occupy her thoughts. As a result, nostalgia serves as a tool for cultural construction. It ties her to her history, forces her to write about her generational experiences, and draws attention to the differences between the present—characterized by economic, regional, and genealogical inequality and instrumental rationality—and her own, uniquely her own past. She must go through the challenging process of internalizing American culture, but she cannot disregard it entirely while she works to further her career there.

In Los Angeles, a global metropolis, Prema experiences a constant struggle between presence and absence. She feels present and integrated into American culture with Luis at her side. She is, nevertheless, overcome with absence as she longs for her lost cultural origins of geography, innocence, and happiness. Her quest for cultural identification appears again throughout the book.

Prema often nostalgically recalls her joyful childhood memories, which are associated with food and festive meals. The memories of those culinary delights bring her warmth, pleasure, security, and even love. When Luis mentions having had Nepalese food, Prema feels happy and reveals that she cooks it often but struggles to find the necessary ingredients. Luis says:

'There was also – tur-curry?'
'Tarkaari. Vegetables.'
'It was great. Really great.'
'That is nice, ' she said. 'Yeah.' (61)

When discussing Nepali cuisine, Prema feels a strong desire to eat it and be closer to her cultural roots and sense of belonging. Even in the era of globalization, a person cannot fully disconnect from their cultural identity, and Prema is no exception. Nostalgia serves as a means to maintain and construct cultural identities by bridging past experiences and their meanings to the present. When Neeru offers her Nepali food, Prema feels ecstatic and expresses her joy upon seeing two plates of hot dumplings, exclaiming, "Momos! Can you believe? Momos in America!" (171).

Prema is delighted to be offered Nepali food by Neeru-didi and Sushil-bhinaju. The nostalgia of food is used as a way to resist the multicultural society. In the novel, food and eating are used as markers of cultural identity and a sense of home for immigrants. Prema finds solace by eating and socializing with Nepali people in Los Angeles, feeling as if she is in her own country. Prema exposes and expresses her experiences after she remains in America thus:

Many of these friends proudly called themselves Irish-American or Italian-American. But they were several generations removed from the frequently humiliating process of immigration, so that the ethnic roots they claimed had descended underground whereas mine were still tangled and green. I was not

American by birth, nor would I ever be no matter how hard I tried. I felt doomed by this pronouncement, misunderstood and gradually defiant. (154)

Prema has expressed her strong attachment to her Nepali culture and home town of Nepal, stating that she is not interested in the claims of other migrants about their origins. This is because her own cultural identity is deeply ingrained in her, and she feels a strong connection to her Nepali roots.

Longing for culture and home is a coping strategy for dealing with the sense of homelessness in a pluralistic American life. Prema finds solace in participating in bhajans and seeking out Nepali communities like "Little Nepal". Kinship and shared cultural identity provide a sense of security and belonging. In this transnational community, Prema joins local identity-based groups like Nepali restaurants and kinship gatherings, which provide answers and security.

Prema explores and embraces her Nepali identity in an inventive way by visiting Nepali people and their neighborhoods in the multicultural environment of Los Angeles. Despite being far from Nepal, she feels the sense of belonging in the Nepali community in America. Manjushree Thapa portrays Prema's situation as she contemplates her identity:

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

Language serves as a means to ease the feelings of nostalgia. Prema teaches Nepali to her boyfriend Luis, which demonstrates her desire to establish a linguistic connection with him and reinforce her Nepali identity in America. Homesteading is a coping mechanism for dealing with homelessness, involving the creation of a political space to alleviate the contradictions and anxieties of living in an unfamiliar and unequal environment.

Prema's engagement with the Nepali community in America provides her with a sense of security and belonging. Her decision to teach Luis Nepali is a reflection of her desire to preserve her culture and identity in the face of Americanization. She says:

'Ka, Khha, ga, gha, nga.'

'Come again?'

'The first five letters of the alphabets. Ka, Khha, ga, gha, nga.'

'Um.' He said, 'Ka, ka, ka, ka, ka.'

She laughed. (135)

Prema finds amusement in Luis's struggle to pronounce Nepali alphabets correctly and takes the initiative to correct his mistakes. When Luis mistakenly refers to her as a "Nepalese", she kindly corrects him, stating that it is actually "Nepali". Luis expresses his desire to visit the mountains of Nepal, but mispronounces "Himalayas" as "Himmel-aa-yas". Prema corrects him, emphasizing the correct pronunciation. She also corrects Luis when he mispronounces her name as "Pray-muh". Through her actions, it is evident that Prema seeks comfort in language, as it provides her with a sense of security and helps her maintain her cultural identity in a foreign land where she fears losing it.

Prema and Luis' cultural differences prove to be a significant barrier in their relationship. Prema feels a growing sense of detachment from Luis as he fails to comprehend her history and emotions. She comes to a realization that she doesn't truly belong anywhere, prompting her to make the difficult decision to end the relationship:

It was Prema's turn to harden. "You said you want to go to my world", she said. "And I said you can come with me" Luis snapped. "How the fuck is Macarthur Park your world?" Then he took another deep breath. "Look, I am trying, here, Prema. I'm really trying. This isn't easy for me either. It's like you are shutting me out. This isn't about your being foreign. It's about Fuck! I don't know what it's about" her anger flared up. "You do not need to take me anywhere! I will go by myself!" (184)

Prema and Luis break up due to cultural differences, which Prema realizes makes her feel disconnected from her own identity. Luis acknowledges the differences and the strain it puts on their relationship. Prema seeks to find a sense of belonging by staying with a Nepali family and learning about a new way of life in America. The past continues to influence and affect one's actions.

Prema seeks a sense of selfhood and belonging by connecting with her community and language, as diasporic members often have a strong attachment to their cultural roots. Despite her dream of reaching America, Prema faces challenges in embracing its values and norms, causing her to feel estranged from her birthplace and family. However, Prema connects with the Nepali population in Little Nepal, Los Angeles, and feels at ease. When she comes across English words she doesn't understand, she feels dejected, but when she speaks Nepali, she feels proud of herself and more connected to her cultural origins. Language becomes a medium to connect with cultural identity for the diaspora community.

Prema, the protagonist in *Seasons of Flight*, longs for her native land despite living in a modernized America with multiple cultures. The story follows her butterfly-like life, moving from her village to Kathmandu, to various jobs, and finally to Los Angeles. She is dissatisfied with her

life and her attachments to people both in Nepal and America. The author, Manjushree Thapa, who is also migratory, seems to be targeting a non-Nepali audience with the book. While Nepalis may relate to Prema's encounters with foreigners who mistake Nepal for Naples, the book's purpose is to provoke deeper reflection on migration.

The process of assimilation and adjustment to a foreign country is a challenge for diaspora communities who have to navigate the complexities of belonging to both their origin and adopted culture. The Nepali diaspora faces similar challenges as a relatively new immigrant group in the United States, where they are undergoing a transnational process of cultural assimilation and appropriation. The novel *Seasons of Flight* explores the Nepali immigrants' struggles to negotiate their identities and create a sense of home in the midst of this process of self-construction.

The novel offers a serious exploration of the challenges faced by Nepali immigrants as they encounter a new culture and attempt to assimilate into it. The American metropolis of Los Angeles offers a comfortable and technologically advanced lifestyle, but beneath the surface, people often experience a sense of rootlessness and disconnection. This creates a strong sense of nostalgia for their home country, but this longing is often short-lived as they must eventually internalize the Americanized way of life in order to pursue career opportunities in their adopted country. Thapa skillfully captures the nuances of the immigrant experience and offers insight into the complex process of cultural assimilation and adjustment faced by Nepali immigrants in the United States.

Manjushree Thapa examines the cultural encounters and appropriations that Nepali immigrants to the United States of America encounter in her book, *Seasons of Flight*. Thapa effectively portrays the challenges and difficulties faced by these immigrants as they strive to assimilate into the American culture and lifestyle while simultaneously maintaining a sense of their own cultural heritage and identity. The novel emphasizes the importance of understanding the experiences of migrating individuals, who must undergo cultural encounters and appropriations in the bustling American metropolis. Although immigrants may initially struggle to adapt to the technologically-driven American lifestyle, they eventually assimilate in order to advance their careers.

The protagonist, Prema, seeks a sense of belonging in America by staying with a Nepali family and searching for cultural connections, while also learning about American society. Prema's recollections of her Nepali culture, through tangible links to her past, allow her to retain a fragile sense of belonging in an alien land. However, she realizes that her new identity must also include assimilation into American culture. Cultural identity is seen as a shared history and ancestry that individuals hold in common. Prema longs for a sense of rootedness in America, but feels that her sense of belonging has been lost. At the end of the novel, Prema returns to Nepal to reconnect with her culture and identity, but ultimately chooses to return to America. This cycle of cultural encounters and appropriations is a plight faced by many immigrants like Prema.

The argument presented by the researcher is that despite the appearance of peace, power, and prosperity in American metropolis, cultural encounters are inevitable. The diasporic subjects, such as Prema, are constantly haunted by the desire for cultural identity and a sense of home. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the persistent efforts of these subjects to assimilate into the host culture. Even though there may be incompatibilities between the cultures of the host-land and home-land due to these encounters, there are still attempts to internalize the host culture. Throughout the novel, it is evident that when Prema is exposed to Americanized lifestyle, she initially shows a lack of interest in American culture and lifestyle. However, she ultimately desires to assimilate and adopt an Americanized way of life. Therefore, the novel is heavily influenced by cultural encounters and appropriations.

Conclusion

The novel "The Tutor of History" by Manjushree Thapa depicts the cultural encounter between Nepali culture and the secular culture of an American metropolis through the life of its protagonist Prema, who is a diasporic subject. The expression of East-West encounter in the novel represents the conflict between religion and rationality, tradition and modernity, spirituality and materialism, and superstition and scientific outlook. Prema's life in America passes in a desire to find her cultural roots and attain an authentic native identity, which she tries to achieve through nostalgia and attempts to assimilate her identity into American multiculturalism. The novel reflects the sentiment of a diasporic subject and highlights the issues of exile, return, belonging, and identity associated with diasporic literature. Thapa uses food and eating as a marker of cultural identity to reflect a means of security and solace for the immigrants. The novel raises important questions about the meaning of home in a world of increasing complexity and globalization, where many people are living in diaspora and constantly switching locations.

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