

## Chasing the so-called 'American Dream': Plight of a Bangladeshi Immigrant Family in the US in Mahmud A. Shareef's *Nive Jaoa Shakal*

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### ABSTRACT

America has been one of the most sought-after destinations for Bangladeshi immigrants for quite some time. More often than not, a good many families of the Bangladeshi diaspora in America forsake a stable and prosperous life back home in the pursuit of the so-called "American Dream". The aim of this qualitative research is to delve deep into the life of this diaspora on the American soil which the diaspora literature portrays as fraught with a myriad of disillusionment, disgrace, struggle, and agony. This paper also attempts to critically analyze the trials and tribulations of a Bangladeshi family as portrayed in the novel *Nive Jaoa Shakal*, by Mahmud Shareef.

## INTRODUCTION

North America, particularly the US and Canada, has been a dreamland for Bangladeshi immigrants for quite some time. It may not be an exaggeration to say that there is hardly a Bangladeshi who has not dreamt of settling as immigrant in either of these countries. The US has drawn millions of Bangladeshis through immigration schemes like DV lottery. A significant number of Bangladeshi students are also going to these two countries and a good many of them are staying back. There is no dearth of anecdotes regarding the difficulty the Bangladeshi diaspora go through in adapting to these two North American countries. While studying in the post graduate programme at a Canadian University, my husband had hard time coping with the Canadian society. The reality turned out to be altogether different from his rosy imagination. Stress was relatively easy to handle for him as he was alone and his stint was for only two years or so. Given the challenges a student had to negotiate, I was curious to find out how Bangladeshi immigrant families fared in Canada and the US and thus, I started reading the existing literature. One of my colleagues recommended a novel *Nive Jaoa Shakal* by Mahmud A. Shareef, a faculty member at North South University. Life of Bangladeshi immigrants has become even more difficult in the post 1/11 time and Mahmud A. Shareef has portrayed an authentic picture of the struggle of them. I thought a critical discussion on this novel would shed new light on the plight of Bangladeshi diaspora which in turn might initiate changes in the policy of the said host nations.

## LITEATURE REVIEW

Despite being a much talked about, long standing and well recognized phenomenon, the plight of the Bangladeshi immigrants, as a whole, has not drawn much attention in the contemporary literature barring a few writers like Bharati Mukherjee and Clark Blaise (Blaise, C. & Mukherjee, B. 1977). Shareef (2022), in a poignant language has endeavoured to bring out the trials and tribulations of a Bangladeshi immigrant family go through in chasing the so called "American Dream". He has also painted a picture of the naked white supremacy and racism a girl namely Keya of the said family is subjected to. Mukherjee (1987) as cited by Uddin (2019) has dealt with South Asian diaspora in her collection of short stories titled *Darkness* (1985). According to Uddin (2019), these stories are important to understand the status of the South Asian diaspora in North America. They are also crucial in getting insights on attitude of these two countries towards the South Asian diaspora. The novel *Nive Jaoa Shokal* points out the flaws in the attitudes of the dominant whites in America towards Bangladeshi emigrants. This novel may be critical also for gaining insights about the post 1/11 plight of the Bangladeshi immigrants in the US.

## METHODOLOGY

This study, “Chasing the so called ‘American Dream’: Plight of a Bangladeshi Immigrant Family in the US in *Nive Jaoa Shakal*”, employs a qualitative research methodology to deconstruct the American psyche as it is portrayed in the novel. The central aim is to analyze how the attitudes of the Americans affect the adaptation of Bangladeshi immigrant families on the American soil. This research is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand the subjective experiences and social realities presented within the text. It utilizes a close reading and textual analysis approach, treating *Nive jaoa Shakal* as a primary data source. This methodology moves beyond a simple plot summary to examine the nuances of language, character interactions, and symbolic representations to reveal the ideological assumptions and psychological defense mechanisms of the Americans. A detailed examination of key American characters, including Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Natalia, Mr. Hubert, Mrs. Ashley Turner and Mr. Gerard will be analyzed. The analysis will focus on their dialogue, internal monologues, and actions to identify patterns of thought and behavior related to the Bangladeshi emigrants. Special attention will be paid to moments of direct interaction and conflict, such as the project assigned by Mr. Bertner. Linguistic and Rhetorical interpretations used by American characters to describe Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi culture using derogatory terms, dismissive phrasing and condescending tones will be dealt with. The analysis will also consider the narrative voice and how it positions the reader in relation to the characters’ perspectives. The recurring themes revealing the American psyche will be identified and explored that very particularly uphold the themes of social hierarchy, the ‘us vs. them’ mentality. Psychological concepts such as xenophobia and the defense mechanisms of projection and rationalization will be applied to interpret the characters' motivations and justifications for their behavior.

## RESEARCH RESULT

At the outset, I started browsing the existing research and in no time was overwhelmed by the sheer body of research on adaptation issues of immigrants in the pre-1/11 US. However, research on adaptation issues on post 1/11 America was slim. Given the outcry of the global media regarding the plight of Americans who happened to be Muslims in post 1/11, I was curious to study the plight of American Muslim(s), preferably from Bangladesh. At the fag end of my study, I happened to have telephone conversations with a few of my acquaintances in the US and surprisingly, their stories of agony and grievance aligned with the content of the novel I analyzed.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The novel revolves around the dilemma and plight of a Bangladeshi migrant family in the US. The family comprises five members namely the couple Anis and Kobita, their two daughters Kakoli and Keya and their only son, Shihab. The couple goes through a lot of dilemmas in deciding to migrate to the dreamland- America. Kabita has been fascinated about America by the stories from her expatriate elder sister Reshma and her friend Aparna. Her husband Anis, however, is not as enthusiastic as Kabita. So, when Kabita receives the green card, Anis is not as thrilled as Kabita. Kabita is confident that Anis will eventually be happy to settle in America despite the fact that he has a stable bank job and strong love for Bangladesh. Anis just can't accept the idea that he will have to depart Bangladesh for a better life in the America. This is probably a common dilemma for Bangladeshi migrants as they are not very sure whether they will be better off in the America. The idea of leaving the near and dear ones also weighs heavy on Anis

Here comes a big dilemma as to what Anis does with his job in Bangladesh Bank. Kabita is in favor of quitting the job but Anis insists on taking a long leave as he is in total darkness about his career in America. The land of destination may hold a lot of promise but things do not turn favorable for all. There are a significant lot who suffer terribly in the migrated country after quitting a decent job in their home country. Siblings of Anis also don't like the idea of uprooting the kids. His elder sister, Sandhya, raises a concern that the kids are too small to be able to recognize their motherland and they won't grow any bonding with Bangladesh. Kabita curtly replies that there is no harm if the kids don't have a tie with their motherland. She adds that the kids will grow the tie with America instead. Flabbergasted, Sandhya insists that the kids should be allowed to stay in their homeland up to a certain age so that they grow a bond with their motherland.

The family eventually leaves for America. While saying goodbye, Kabita tells her mother-in-law in an emotional voice that they are leaving for the "Dreamland". A line of a poem by an African poet and activist suddenly pops up in Anis' mind which reads -'nightmares come in the sky of dreams'. Like a good many Bangladeshi immigrant families, is the dreamland going to turn into a land of nightmares for them? The family chooses Dallas as their primary destination as Kabita's elder sister Reshma has been living there. They receive the first blow of unwelcome from none other than their nieces - Renu and Mirad. They don't meet or greet the guests upon their arrival. It is at the dining table that they meet but the kids don't greet the family.

The host family gives the guests a week to show around Dallas. Anis, in the meantime, gets a job as an insurance agent. It is quite a blow for Anis as he was a deputy Director at the Central Bank in Bangladesh. This is one of the most painful aspects of migration. While applying, Anis didn't feel any discomfort but

the attitude of Reshma's kids and the subtle pride of Mr. Rashid (brother-in-law of Anis) dent Anis' confidence and comfort. The condescending attitude of Mr. Rashid also adds insult to the injury. Addressing Anis brother Mr. Rashid says tauntingly that he is not sure about Anis' qualifications. Mr Rashid asserts that with a Bangladeshi degree Anis does not qualify for a better job in the US. Anis is taken by overwhelming emotions like frustration, fear, and hesitation. It also proves difficult for the entire family to accept and adapt to this situation. Kabita, who has so far been upbeat about the whole process of migration, is also down. The family decides to move to a new city, Washington. Getting there, Anis goes into depression. He feels like a non-existent person. He draws inspiration for fighting back from his dad who is a martyred intellectual in Bangladesh in the Liberation war in 1971. In Washington, thankfully, they find a very sympathetic couple- Rifat and Anjali. Thanks to the support of this couple, the family is able to overcome a few odds. Anis is tormented by introspection. The job he works in the US does actually require High School level skills. He, however, has earned a Master's degree from the most reputable university, namely Dhaka, which was once given the epithet of the 'Oxford of the East.' To supplement his income and to get his wife into a job, Anis insists Kabita to study over there so that she can find a respectable job. Kabita feels burdened by the upbringing of her three kids and eventually decides to work a blue-collar job, instead of pursuing education.

The family experiences the first incident of racial hatred when Keya, the eldest daughter, is admitted to school. In her first class, the class teacher wants the students to draw a flag. Keya first draws an American flag but she changes her mind and draws a Bangladeshi flag when she sees her German classmate drawing the German flag. With surprise and shock in her tone, the ill-tempered teacher comments that living in the US, Keya is drawing a flag of his homeland. Protesting, Keya retorts that the teacher doesn't object to Robin's drawing a German flag. The teacher is angry at this attitude and asks her to get out of the class. The vice Principal of the school calls Kabita to see her. He alleges that Keya has not learned American etiquette. Kabita is saddened by this uncalled-for racial discrimination. Research also shows that school students experience racism. A study in 2023 reveals that one in three high school students across the US experience racism in school.

The family receives the first culture shock at the dining table when the younger Kakoli addresses her elder sister Keya by her name. Kakoli argues that in America, girls do not address their elder siblings as "bhaiya" or "apu". They are called by their first names. Bangladeshi migrants find it difficult to adapt to this change. Anjali holds that an unpleasant condition for immigrants to be happy is to forget their identity. She refers to her husband Rifat as the most perfect example. When Anis points out that Rifat goes home every year, Anjali says that he does it for the sake of her parents; not for any love of Bangladesh.

America enters a dark phase on 9/11. Around three thousand people have been killed and they comprised of seventy-seven countries. And a good many of them were Muslims too. 9/11 was an act of the terrorists and America has aptly avenged by killing five lac Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the pretext of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" (WMD), America and its alliance demolishes Iraq. What Noam Chomsky (2004) says in his article "Resort to Force" is worth noting in this regard:

More significant, Bush and colleagues declared the right to resort to force even if a country does not have WMD or even programs to develop them. It is sufficient that it has the "intent and ability" to do so. Just about every country has the ability, and intent is in the eye of the beholder. The official doctrine, then, is that anyone is subject to overwhelming attack. (p. 1)

After 9/11 the Americans award the immigrants what Mukherjee termed a "low- profile marginality status. 9/11 particularly makes the life of the Muslim immigrants difficult. Rifat is beaten by a few white Americans on his way home. The kids don't go to school except Keya. She is rudely asked by Miss Jennings, her ill-tempered class teacher, why she has come to school. As Keya poses Jennings the same question, she proudly retorts that they are Americans. When Keya inquires about her nationality, the entire class bursts out laughing. Miss Jennings haughtily tells Keya to ask her parents. Kabita receives a call from the school at noon to bring her daughter back. Kabita doesn't like the look of Miss Jennings. On their way back, Keya asks her mom why she is sent home and if she is an American or not. Insulted and angered by the attitude of the class teacher, Kabita shouts that she is not an American but a "Muslim from Bangladesh." The divide between the white and colored Americans widens in a very fast pace. The brown Asian immigrants feel as if they were uprooted trees. Rifat is deprived of the Christmas bonus. The manager wants him to be happy with the fact that he is not fired instead. His American colleagues, however, are given bonus Thus, Rifat's pride in being an American suffers a big setback. At the same time, the hypocrisy and racism of the so-called fair and democratic white Americans is exposed.

Anis has an incident with one Rebecca Turner. She calls Anis about insurance but when she gets to know that Anis is a Muslim, she says that she is not interested in talking to a Muslim and requests Anis to transfer the phone to someone else. The white Americans claim to treat all their fellow Americans with respect but this claim proves to be are mere lip service. Anis takes it as a serious insult but doesn't share it with anyone except his wife. She has her own story to share. An unkempt young white American enters the fast-food joint where Kabita works and orders a burger. When Kabita hands him the Coke glass, he throws it on the floor and smashes it. All the while, the boy keeps swearing in

filthy language. Mukherjee (1985) shares similar incident in Canada. This is how she expresses her feelings:

In Canada, I was frequently taken for a prostitute or a shoplifter, frequently assumed to be domestic, praised by the astonished auditors that I did not have a singsong accent. The society itself, or important elements in the society, routinely made crippling assumptions about me and about my "kind". (Darkness, p. 2)

These two incidents put the couple thinking hard about how much they will be able to love America. They grow concerned as to how the kids will adapt to this changed attitude of the white Americans. The couple also realizes that nothing is more disconcerting and painful than confusing thoughts about one's identity. An adult immigrant who has shaped his identity may be unlikely to experience this pain but kids who are in their formative years in identity formation, invariably experience this pain. Keya is the worst sufferer of this pain. She wakes up in her sleep and asks who she is. Understandably, the girl is traumatized by the things happening in her life. Anis is unhappy too. He shares this feeling with Rifat. Anis frankly admits that he is not happy with his American life, he misses Bangladesh. Rifat assures that it shall pass with time. He also hopes that his feelings will change for the better.

Three years have passed but things haven't changed. On a picnic by the Potomac River, Anis comments that the Potomac reminds him of the Jamuna. Anis is reprimanded by one of the attendees, Rashed. Anis says in reply that he can't help reminiscing about Bangladesh. Rashed thinks that one doesn't have to remember any other country after landing in America. Asif, a fellow immigrant from Bangladesh quips that the Americans don't treat the Bangladeshi immigrants as their equivalent. Rashed holds that the problem lies with those individual Americans who don't treat the immigrants equally.

Before bedtime that day, Anis ruefully comments that people like Rashed want him to forget Bangladesh. America is everything to Rashed. Siding with Rashed, Kabita brings up a rather queer comparison by saying that one should forget about street food while having dinner at a five-star hotel. This analogy irks Anis and he retorts by saying that he grew up having street food and thus, can't change his taste buds. Now that an opportunity has dawned, it would be stupid not to change the taste buds- advises Kabita. Saying things like this, Kabita is adding to the mental distress of Anis. We can realize that she is desperately trying to integrate into the mainstream culture by shedding her former identity as a Bangladeshi. This desperation may stem from the desire to be recognized as an American. Arguably, Kabita is assailed by a severe sense of insecurity.

Living in America for a couple of years, the family visits Bangladesh. Sensing what the family must have gone through, Kakoli's grandma passes a

significant comment that someone must know his own identity before loving another country. She adds that before anything else, we are Bangalee and we must uphold this identity. If that cannot be done, we will not be able to love any other country. As Kakoli inquires how she will hold onto the identity of a Bangalee, Grandma replies that most people tend to forget their identity as they grow up. Kakoli promises not to forget her identity. All the family members enjoy the trip except Anis. He feels agonized about leaving his ailing mother. He feels guilty for not carrying out his duty as a son. Before leaving, the family is treated to a farewell dinner by the younger brother of Anis. At dinner, Keya wears a *sharee* which gets her into an awkward altercation with Tina, her cousin. Tina teasingly asks Keya what makes the latter doll up like a Bangladeshi. Hurt, Keya inquires who are entitled to doll up like a Bangladeshi. Angered, Tina replies that those, who are Bangalees. Isn't Keya a Bangalee then? What Tina says next is even more insulting and humiliating. Tina asks Keya why the latter is messing around with Bangladeshi identity and outfits.

That Keya is not accepted as an American is evident from the comments of her classmates as well. Assigned to talk about the civilization of a country by her class teacher, Keya chooses America. As she starts with the attack of Bush on Iraq, Keya's classmate Jennifer, protests by asking why Keya chooses America instead of India. All migrant students who are Americans on paper face criticism and bullying from their white American peers if or when they say anything that goes against America. Keya is confused. During her visit to Bangladesh, she wants to be a Bangladeshi which is criticized by her cousin. On her return to America, she does everything to become an American which is heavily criticized by her classmate, Jennifer. She can't figure out whether she would be an American or a Bangladeshi. She has sleepless nights over these disturbing thoughts.

The transformation of Shihab, the only son of the couple, adds to the misery of the family. He grows an intense hatred for America. Finishing his studies on networking, Shihab finds a job with a Saudi charitable organization. This worries Anis but Kabita warns him not to say anything. Rifat, however, reacts to this decision of Shihab. He says that when one breaks loose from the mainstream, he eventually is disconnected from society. He insists Shihab on finding a job with an American company. Rifat even invites Shihab to join his insurance company but Shihab declines as he considers working for an insurance company is "haram". When Keya quizzes Shihab at the dining table whether he is a Bangalee, Bangladeshi, or an American, Shihab boldly replies that he is none other than a "Muslim." What is interesting to note here is that Shihab does not cite "American Muslim" as his identity. He completely withdraws himself from the society. All his colleagues are either from Pakistan or from the Middle East. Shihab spends a lot of time in his office. He doesn't go out of the house except for going to the mosque. All his conversations are with the

"musallis" from India or Bangladesh. Kabita asks her son why he is growing so unsocial day by day. Shihab curtly replies that he doesn't want to be trapped in American life and thus, stays away. Shihab stops attending any gathering of Bangladeshi immigrants which means he has severed all ties with Bangladesh.

Kakoli, the youngest daughter, has also changed a lot and she now dresses like a haughty American. We might wonder if Kakoli has taken on a new identity in her bid to obliterate her previous identity. In addition to their agonies related to identity, the family now faces another calamity. Keya's varsity friend Samantha one day inquires about the occupation of Keya's father. Knowing that Keya's dad is an insurance agent, Samantha says that her parents graduated from Washington University and are working prestigious jobs. One of Samantha's uncles, who did not pursue higher studies, now works as a cleaner. This comparison is hinted at Anis. Keya has never felt that insulted in her life. After dinner, she asks her dad why he studied up to Masters if he was to work the job of an insurance agent. Keya questions the point of wasting so much money of a poor nation to pursue a Master's degree. Finding no suitable answer to this question, Anis replies that he wishes to be known by the identity of his kids. From this statement, we can perceive a deep sense of frustration in the father. What Keya says in turn hurts Anis immensely. Keya says that a person with a sense of dignity never wishes to be known by the identity of his kids.

University teachers are generally expected to be free from racial prejudice and discrimination. Unfortunately, they prove to be racist too. One of Keya's varsity teachers, Mrs. Natalia, hates the Indians and the Muslims. In one of her class lectures, Mrs. Natalia boasts that white Americans don't bother seeking citizenship in other countries. While saying this, she casts a condescending look at Keya. The entire class looks at Keya though they don't say anything. This attitude of Mrs. Natalia corroborates the findings Strack et al. (2020) found in their study on American teacher bias. In the said study seventy seven per cent of American teachers demonstrated implicit bias.

Keya mulls over forgetting either of her identities. But will it be possible? On the birth anniversary of Martin Luther King, Keya has a class with her another teacher Mr. Petersen. He asks Keya what she thinks of Luther King. Keya replies that as an American, she considers him an activist against white supremacy. Not quite happy with the answer, Mr. Petersen now insists Keya answers this question as an "Indian". This insistence puts Keya in a nagging dilemma about what her identity is. Mrs. Natalia, in another class, talks about a "mental disorder of aspiration" and comments that people nowadays desire beyond what they deserve. She points out that third-world people, particularly South Asians, mostly suffer from this disorder. They use American citizenship as a ladder, Natalia adds. Natalia says these things with an eye on Keya and the latter readily

gets that these derogatory remarks are meant for her. Philip, one of Keya's classmates, taunts Keya for her Indian accent.

Kabita is concerned about Shihab and Kakoli. No one can be happy being disconnected from the mainstream, Kabita now perceives. Shihab is now withdrawing himself from everything and Kakoli doesn't care anything. Kabita shares her worries with Anjali and is reassured that things will be okay in due course. As already said, Keya's classmates emerge as bullies. One evening they attend an opera. During the interval of the opera, Jinia, one of her friends, asks Keya how she enjoyed the opera. Keya likens the opera to one of Tagore's dance dramas which shocks Jennifer. To her, Tagore can be no match for the writer of the opera, Richard Wagner. Jennifer comments that it is like comparing a pond with an ocean- comments Jennifer. Jennifer passes the harshest comment when Keya says that she doesn't know anything about Richard Wagner. Jennifer now angrily comments that people who take American citizenship just for an American passport, don't have any feelings for the country.

To the utmost happiness of the family, Keya eventually secures an admission in the PhD program in Psychology, at Harvard. On this achievement, her parents are ecstatic. Citing this as the biggest one in their life, Anis says that migrating to America is fraught with frustration but Keya has brought an unbounded joy to the family. This joyous incident, however, can't get Keya out of her sadness. When Kabita inquires about the reasons, Keya replies that she often feels that the Americans around her tend to pity her. They ignore her and at times they neglect her just because she is from a poor country. Keya feels that she won't be treated as a white American. At times, she feels like an unwelcome guest.

Keya has an altercation with two of her classmates, Maria and Jerard. They attack Keya in a filthy language. Overcome with sadness and pain, she breaks down crying. She has never felt so unwanted in America. Her thoughts get muddled. These incidents leave an indelible mark on Keya's mind. She is scared and has an uneasy feeling all the time. She keeps assuring herself that she is also an American with equal rights. Despite this, she is overcome with a sense of hesitation. This is worrying. As a psychologist, Keya knows that when emotions take control over other feelings, we are doomed to be helpless. Keya thinks that her mental restlessness will calm down if she lives with her family for a while. But this proves counterproductive. She is even more confused by her two siblings, Kakoli and Shihab. She can't decide which identity she should carry- Bangladeshi or American. Her mother seems to have forsaken her Bangladeshi identity while her father seems to value his identity as a Bangladeshi -he seems to lack the courage to form an identity of his own.

Keya visits Dhaka after ten years. Her relatives don't show much enthusiasm about her. She needs a birth certificate from the City Corporation office. When the officer notices an American passport at Keya's hand, he shamelessly asks for a hundred dollars as bribe. In the face of protest, the officer asks why Keya claims herself to be a Bangladeshi since she holds an American passport. He then commands Keya to come after ten days and he will see what can be done. Keya is utterly shocked by this attitude of the officer. Being ill-treated in America can be justified because of racism. Keya can't accept that someone from her homeland will behave like that. She feels like a stranger in her homeland. She receives another blow from her school friends. At dinner, her friends insist Keya chooses the menu. They inquire if she has changed her Bangladeshi food habits. Sonya, one of her friends, who lives in Italy, says that she now prefers beef steak and pasta. In reply, Keya says that she still loves rice and mashed potatoes. At this, Alima, says grudgingly that she just can't stand this hypocrisy of the immigrant Bangladeshis. This comment is meant for Keya. Keya's aunt understands that Keya is troubled. Boarding the return plane, Keya is overwhelmed by a sense of vacuum. She feels that she came with her right to be recognized as Bangladeshi, but now is getting back empty-handed. What is even more troubling is the sense of being unwelcome. She feels like a jilted lover. Keya's plight is comparable to Bharati Mukherjee (1987). After living in Canada for a good fourteen years, the Mukherjee along with her husband paid a visit to Kolkata. During the stay she felt like being uprooted from India for living away too long. Kobita's plight is comparable to the experience of Bharati Mukherjee. A similar plight is shared by Tara Banerjee Cartwright, the heroine of Bharati Mukherjee's in her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) says that Kolkata-born Tara settled in New York after completing her education in the US. When she comes to India after seven years, she is surprised to find that the city of her birth has changed beyond recognition, and she can't connect to it.

Keya passes the following year in great depression and mental agony. Despite these, she performs outstandingly well in her studies and is given an award. This award also promises a faculty position at Harvard. A classmate of Keya, Zerard, makes a very rude comment in front of Paul and Robin saying that people from poorer countries are pitied by all. Robin supports this by saying that Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize on this very ground. We all know that Robin's analogy is baseless. Einstein was awarded the Nobel for his genuine contribution to Physics. Pity for being a refugee has nothing to do with the prize. Had Zerard been true, millions of students who hail from poor countries would have secured good results and become faculty members in American Universities. In the prize-giving ceremony, Keya wears a *saree* and for this, she is subjected to another attack by Maria and her boyfriend Augustine. They ask Keya what kind of wrapper she is wearing. Keya says that wearing a wrapper without any dress on is a kind of nudity. What she is wearing is not a wrapper

but a *saree*. Now Augustine passes an obscene comment which leaves Keya dumbstruck. Augustine says that even if Keya is naked, he will not be sexually aroused just because of her complexion. By all standards, it is a barbaric, cruel, and racist comment from a white American. A comment of this sort exposes their hypocrisy and true color. Now, pointing to the national flag of Bangladesh, Maria poses her second question as to which nation the flag belongs to. Learning that the flag belongs to Bangladesh, Maria asks why people like Keya come to America. Maria seems to imply that once people are on American soil, they should get rid of any attachment to the country they are from. Augustine, with obscene laughter, claims that he calls all the Indians "pigs". How can a sophisticated American keep passing obscene comments about a fellow American just because of his or her background? Keya can't control herself and bursts out crying. She seems to hear several voices calling her pig.

For the next week, she does not go to the campus. Going to her lab, she finds fifteen letters without the address of the sender. As a rule, she never receives so many letters. She opens the first six letters to find that every letter has the same message. It reads that a brown pig doesn't have a place among white Americans. Keya is again devastated by the letters. The senders have not given any clue as to where Keya belongs. Keya herself is also desperately looking for the answer to the question as to where she belongs. She is in trouble with her identity both in Bangladesh and in America. It is, therefore, a pressing issue for Keya to figure out which country she belongs to- Bangladesh or America. After the letter episode, she can't help feeling like a refugee. This plight of Keya upsets her parents as well. Anis is particularly anxious to find a way out of her pitiable mental state. Anis calls his sister Sandhya for help with Keya's crisis. Sandhya comes up with her take on the issue. She opines that though the migrants tend to think that they belong to two countries at the same time, they, in reality, are homeless and without roots. They are welcome in neither of the countries. Braving all odds, Keya mechanically keeps working for her PhD. Her friends keep calling her piggy behind her back. Gerard's friends often taunt her saying that she is devoid of any sense of reality. Natali, and Maria, show up with a chimpanzee clad in an Indian *saree*. Natali asks for Keya's comment on the chimp. Keya goes dumb and we understand why. How disturbed Keya is evident from her responses to a project given by her teacher Mr. Bertner. The project involves two PhD students who are to trace any mental ailment of each other by a face-to-face interview. Keya is paired with Hubert. The first insulting question that Keya faces is which country Keya is from. Keya poses a counter-question as to how this project is related to where someone is born. Hubert then says that he observes that Keya is down most of the time and does not talk. He assumes that she is depressed. This question irks Keya and she replies annoyingly that if society makes someone depressed, it is the ailment of the society, not of the person. The next question Hubert asks is how Keya enjoys the company of people

of different races, religions, colors, nationalities, and civilizations. Hubert is pretty sure that Keya will explode at this question and this is what exactly happens. Keya says angrily that the company of two persons will never be enjoyable if they have a disparity of power. The last question Hubert poses is which one Keya prefers- to laugh or to weep. Keya replies that she enjoys neither of them. Hubert thinks that Keya's aloofness from society has made her bitter. If she is not cautious, it might take a turn to a serious mental disorder. Hubert submits the report to the concerned teacher and hands in a copy to Mrs. Ashley Turner, Keya's supervisor. Ashley has recently been a bit annoyed with Keya due to her isolation and confusion. One Saturday Mrs. Ashley calls Keya into her office and tells her that the Department of Psychology is up to making scientists for psychiatric ailments, not psychiatric patients. Keya has so far battled with insults like this but she has reached her limit and ends her life by committing suicide. And with this death, the chase of the "American Dream" comes to an end.

## CONCLUSION

Referring to Mukherjee, Alam (2007) says that "immigrants should not only resist a policy which would isolate them from the dominant group but should also actively attempt to assimilate into the community where they have arrived". (p. 343). Again referring to Mukherjee, Alam (2007) says that "She can see no virtue in staying aloof and cultivating an expatriate mindset. Only alienation and mistrust can result from such an attitude". (p. 343). As per Alam (2007), "Mukherjee seems to be saying that there should be no going back for immigrants and no indulging in nostalgia for them if they wanted to root themselves in the country to which they had emigrated". (p. 343). Referring to Mukherjee, Uddin (2018) in his research says "South Asians fail to acculturate to American life because of their retrogressive attitude and expatriate mindset". (p.1). In fine I would like to say that when someone decides to immigrate, he has to take it for granted that he will have to go through a lot of challenges and difficulties in adapting to the host community or culture.

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