

Analyzing Push and Pull Factors for Migrants in Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountain Echoed*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*



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Abstract: *The phenomenon of migration has become a great debate in the present times world. People are leaving their homes and moving to host lands due to a number of factors. Among these include push and pull factors. The present study has discussed Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountain Echoed*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* regarding push and pull factors behind migrants' movement to host lands. The study aims at exploring circumstances in which characters in the selected novel move and impacts of such conditions on their lives. The present study has employed Lee's Push & Pull model who argued that people around the world are migrating for a variety of reasons that can be summarized in two common terms, 'push' and 'pull'. The selected novelists tend to portray migration in more variable ways than anticipated by previous theory of migration.*

Keywords: Push And Pull Factors, Migration, War, Refugees, Cosmopolitan

Background of the Study

Migrants have different conditions to move towards the foreign lands and these include both; willingness and enforcement. Such factors, making migrants move, are categorized into two kinds; push and pull factors of migration. Migrants who leave their countries of origin on account of push factors are termed as refugees. These push factors include war, disaster or unavoidable political situations. In other words refugees are forced to leave their homeland. They have defined status in legal texts and international conventions. In this regard, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) defines refugees as people who are afraid of being persecuted for reasons of religion, race, nationality, and are outside their homelands, feeling a sense of insecurity and hence unable to return to homeland. Literature relating to

refugees suggests that such migrants leave their homeland and shift to the host country and this may distract their identities, and they try to redesign them.

There are various causes behind migration; sometimes migrants leave their homes on account of factors such as political restlessness, war, economic crisis or natural disaster. These enforcing circumstances are termed as push factors and migrants leaving under such conditions are named as *refugees* or *the asylum seekers* because their decision of migration is not voluntary but imposed one. Further, this category of migrants finds more difficulty to adapt in host country than those who take this step willingly. Flusser (2000) defines refugees as carrying with them the countries of origin which make their lives harder in the host countries. Refugees seem nostalgic and lament

for roots in the host country. The present study explores the predicaments of refugees in the selected novels. The present study aims at analyzing different push-pull factors behind migrants' movements and exploring their representation of identity in these novels.

In the twentieth century, one of the important aspects of migration is the economy. Most of the theorists are seen focusing on 'economic migrants'. The second category of migrants includes people who move willingly so they take a conscious decision regarding migration. This category is dissatisfied in the country of origin and expects for prosperous life in the host country. As compared to refugees, economic migrants move willingly and hence they are mentally more ready and open to host culture. This category is dissatisfied in the country of origin and expects for prosperous life in the host country. As compared to former category of migrants, economic migrants move consciously and hence they are mentally more ready and open to host culture. In this regard, the present study explores economic factors working as pull factors behind the movement of the migrants who usually move to other places due to better opportunities of finance and expect standard living abroad. The selected texts are analyzed under four designed codes as mentioned earlier in the introductory part of this chapter.

A third category of migrants is *cosmopolitans*. In last few years, the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' has become so famous in literature that it attracted the attention of a number of scholars and theorists. It becomes quite hard to define this term due to its multifaceted link to culture, politics, economics and morality. According to Cambridge Dictionary (1995) a cosmopolitan is one who has experience of many different parts of the world. The term cosmopolitanism originates from the Greek term 'kosmopolites' which translates to "a citizen of the world." The concept of distinguishing individuals as members of either the local or broader "common" societies was initially employed by the Diogenes Cynics and then adopted by the Stoics. In other words, a cosmopolitan is one who is a citizen of the universe rather than a

resident of some smaller category such as race, ethnicity, country or nation. Literally, a cosmopolitan lives in a specific part of a country/world but he sees himself belonging to every part of the whole world regardless of his current geographical location. He or she belongs to whole world though living anywhere. Socrates introduced such notion of association to the whole world back in 300 BC. When Socrates was asked to which [country] he belonged, he would say, 'To the world,' for he thought that he was an inhabitant and citizen of the whole world. These migrants are termed as global citizens and they think themselves at ease everywhere. Cosmopolitanism is an attitude based on *roots* and *wings*, Pacal Zacharys (2000) says. *Roots* refer to the connection of origin while *wings* refer to the openness for new cultures. Here the strong roots, under the form of ethnic or family relations, are essential for the psychological stability and for the disposition for opening towards the new and for a solid responsibility feeling. This category includes the notion of transnationalism. In postmodern age, many people have become global citizens and hence free from concepts such as nationalism, geographical boundaries and fixity of identity. Cosmopolitan migrants move place to place freely and feel at home in the entire world.

The present study has discussed Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountain Echoed* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* regarding the push and pull factors behind migrants' movement to host lands.

Objectives of the Study

To discuss push and pull factors behind migrants journey from home to host-land

To analyze the impacts of these factors on the lives of migrants

Research Questions

What push and pull factors migrants have in the course of their migration?

What impacts such factors leave on the lives of migrants?

Research Methodology

The present study employs Lee's Push & Pull'

model who argued that people around the world are migrating for a variety of reasons that can be summarized in two common terms, 'push' and 'pull'. The 'push' factor is a condition that makes life in the migrant's home country difficult or impossible, and the "pull" factor is a condition in the destination country that makes it a better place to live than in the home country. Common "push" factors include violence, gender inequality, political corruption, environmental degradation, climate change, and lack of access to adequate health care and education. Common pull factors include increased financial and employment opportunities for family reunion, and improved quality of life, including access to adequate education and health care. John R. Harris and Michael Todaro's Classic Todaro model of migration helps in understanding the provoking factors behind the phenomenon of migration.

3. Analysis and Discussion

The present study has discussed Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountain Echoed*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* regarding the factors for characters' migration to foreign lands.

3.1 Push and Pull Factors for migrants in Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed*

Unlike other novels of Hosseini that specifically focus on wars and their consequences, in *And the Mountain Echoed*, he focuses less on wars and their traumatic results. In the novel war happens and it forces families to migrate yet Hosseini concentrates on the way in which life goes on regardless of changes. There are push and pull factors for agents' migration.

In connection with Afghanistan, the diasporic began to emerge primarily after the Soviet invasion by the former Soviet Union and the subsequent war (1978-1989). Afghan civilians were extensively arrested and executed by the occupying forces. Eventually, thousands of refugees migrated from Afghanistan, especially to countries such as Pakistan, Iran and the United States. In this book, the action takes place on the islands of Afghanistan,

California, Paris and Greece.

Unlike other books of Hosseini such as *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that center on a single protagonist, *And the Mountain Echoed* is constructed as a series of stories, each set in a different place and time and told from a different agents' point of view. In the book, agents flee from Afghanistan, some who migrate and then briefly return; a few are drawn there as aid-workers by war and its aftermath. Some of the agents choose to stay; war is a benefit to some of them and a source of devastation to others. The practice of migration is often imposed on migrants due to some push-pull factors. In the second story, Abdullah and Pari, who seem one soul in two bodies, are separated. Pari is sold for economic reasons as the following lines show economic crisis faced by Saboor, "as far as Abdullah could remember, father was out searching for work, knocking on doors for a day's labor" (p. 27). Again, like Baba Ayub who sacrifices one child to save the rest of the children, Saboor sells Pari to save the rest of the family, highlighted by the fact that his baby Omar had died of the cold the previous winter due to economic crisis and he couldn't save him. Pari represents a finger to be cut to save the hand.

In the book, some of the agents return to Afghanistan due to pull factors. Timur and Idris return to Afghanistan for property their ancestors had left behind in the country. They return just to sell the property and to earn finance. Similarly, Dr. Markos Varvaris, a plastic surgeon travels to Kabul to help in repairing the damage inflicted by years of war. For him, war becomes a pull factor that has provided great opportunity to work as a surgeon in Afghanistan. It is mentionable here that it is Markos who informs Pari that she has a brother namely Abdullah. When Pari, sister of Abdullah, is sold by Saboor, Abdullah decides to leave Afghanistan, travelling to Pakistan and eventually the United States. Unlike Abdullah, Paris is still seems younger at the time of leaving Afghanistan. That's why she doesn't miss Abdullah so much that she misses it. Nevertheless, she feels that "there is no basis for her existence or anyone"

throughout her life (189).

Pari recalls the memories of her adoptive father, Suleiman Wahadati. She remembers that he drew a giraffe and a cynomolgus monkey on the side of her cupboard for her. She keeps a picture of her father in her room. Hosseini organizes the journey as both migrant metaphor and a literal experience. Such roads are geographically and culturally diverse. In the novel Hosseini's stories and characters will visit places between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan to the United States, Afghanistan to France, and the United States to France. They are pushed and pulled by many forces in many places.

3.1.2 Push and Pull Factors for migrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Unlike Hosseini's selected novel that demonstrates different wars as push factors, Lahiri's *The Namesake* doesn't deal with war or any rigid push factors behind the movement of migrants. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* focuses on a young Bengali couple: Ashoke and Ashima who move from [Calcutta](#), India to Boston the U.S. The book deals with emotional and cultural identities of migrants. It also shows the gap between first and second generation migrants. The title of the book, *The Namesake* symbolically refers to a newly born baby, Gogol who is named after a famous Russian author namely Nikolai Gogol by whom Ashoke seems influenced greatly. *TNS* focuses heavily on Gogol revolting against family and struggling to construct his own identity by changing his family given name. Analogically, the book reveals hyphenated identity migrants and diasporic people between their home and exile. Agents, in the book keep evolving; regarding the process of identity construction specifically Ashima undergoes noticeable change.

However, Lahiri's *TNS* implies both push and pull factors for agents' displacement in different forms. Firstly, Ashoke leaves India and moves to America due to both push and pull factors. In terms of push factor he is firstly motivated by Ghosh on the train, who persuaded him to go abroad and see the world outside his country. The following lines from the book show Ghosh

persuading for visit abroad:

Seen much of this world?" Ghosh asked Ashoke, untying his shoes and settling himself cross-legged on the berth. Once to Dehli, Ashoke replied. "Not this world", he said England and America have you considered going there? You are still young. "Do yourself a favor before it's too late, pick your luggage and see the world as much as you can (p.16).

Thus, Ashoke is greatly pushed by Ghosh's words and after the train accident Ashoke thinks of India, he thinks of a place he barely survived, a place he needed to leave in order to learn how to live again. His bare survival from the train accident symbolically represents India as a place to him where he survived hardly and his life journey shifts to the U.S.

At the same time there is also pull factor behind Ashoke's migration to the U.S. He expects some positive prospects in America. Among these chances one is his dream of education as he comes to the U.S as a student of Engineering at MIT. By earning his degree from MIT, he manages to get a job as an architecture office too. In this regard, there is also pull factor behind his movement to the U.S. Therefore, Ashoke leaves India and moves to the U.S due to both push and pull factors. Ashima Ganguli is married to Ashoke Ganguli. She is a house wife. She migrates to America because of her husband Ashoke so that the latter may complete his graduation at MIT. She is described as a reluctant migrant in the U.S who feels xenophobia and laments for home back in India. Therefore, there are push factors behind Ashma's movement from India to the U.S.

3.1.3 Push & Pull Factors for migrants in Hamid's *Exit West*

Although migration is universal, different kinds of migrations nonetheless exist, and a key factor in the differences is whether migrations is initiated by push or pull factors, or both. Hamid's *Exit West* exhibits both push and pull factors regarding agents' movement. The major characters in the book namely Saeed and Nadia migrate from an un-named city as soon as a civil war starts. The novel suggests that migration is a desirable response to violence as a "push"

factor by contrasting Saeed and Nadia's choices to Saeed's father's choice.

Saeed's father is not pushed to move and hence he dies which is symbolic and represents the notion that one who doesn't move ceases life and dies. The father seems more nostalgic and can't give up his roots behind. When he is asked by Nadia and Saeed to move along with them, he replies that when one migrates, one leaves lives of those one leaves behind. The protagonist asks him why he does not accompany them and leave; he replies that due to Saeed's mother. Saeed says that she is gone but Saeed's father says "she is gone for you not for me" (p.60). This demonstrates his highest affiliation to his wife and homeland. Thus, Saeed's father is very nostalgic and does not move. Saeed's father is, even, more attached to roots than him. He refuses Nadia and Saeed's invitation to join them as they pass through the black door and leave their city behind. He is reluctant to leave behind the places where he shared a life and love with Saeed's dead mother.

There are also some economic factors working in the book as Saeed and Nadia both lose their jobs because of the critical situation in the city. Saeed and Nadia work for advertising companies in the city. Due to the emergence of war, the companies start firing employees. Consequently, Saeed and Nadia face economic loss which compels them to move from their city. Again, this economic crisis works as a push factor for the shifts they make.

At the same time, where some push factors make Saeed and Nadia move, there are also some pull factors behind their migration. They discuss where they would like to travel. By discussing and considering choices of places. They would like to go; they demonstrate their inclination towards those chosen places for some pull factor. These may be on the basis of economic opportunities and standard of life they expect, but the author more directly indicates Nadia's desire to experience a different, more vibrant culture and Saeed states his desire to see the natural world. These push and pull factors, as mentioned above, are significant and play an important role in the choice of characters in the book. Hamid seems giving value to the notion of

migration as he himself migrated to the U.S and spent years there before writing this *Exit West*. Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) projects a world experiencing massive migration that can no longer be controlled by physical borders, military surveillance and international agreements. A massive migration has begun at this time of globalization more than ever, the text demonstrates:

That summer it seemed to Saeed and Nadia that the whole planet was on the move, much of the global south headed to the global north, but also southerners moving to other southern places and northerners moving to other northern places (p. 168).

The mentioned lines exhibit a very massive scale of migration and it seems that if the entire planet has become a moving star. Migration at such a large scale also demonstrates uncontrollability of movement of people across the world.

The book enables its readers to understand the urgency of today's turbulent global situation of war and evacuation. The author uses magical realism as a technique by which the black magic doors allow thousands of people to slide safely to the west from their own "battlefield of murder" with financial difficulties. A normal door [s] becomes a special door. Without warning "migrants of various nations, ethnicities and religions suddenly appeared at the doorsteps of people, transforming the earth into a denationalized cultural space, the first and third worlds of everyday life experiences. Reproduce the huge division between. Hamid envisions a new version of future migrations that will allow readers to visualize it.

Conclusion

The selected novelists tend to portray migration in more variable ways than anticipated by previous theory. Instead, they portray migration such that the complexities of agent's personalities & purposes and scenic factors are crucial for determining how much and how well they are able to integrate their home culture and new culture in forming their identity through the journeys of their lives. The current study demonstrated that within the chosen texts,

authors tend to depict migration in a more diverse manner. Migration is depicted in a manner that emphasizes the significance of various elements, including the multifaceted nature of individuals' personalities and motivations, as well as the environmental aspects, in influencing the extent and quality of their ability to assimilate their native culture with the new culture. This process plays a pivotal role in shaping their identity as they navigate through the different stages of their lives. The majority of characters examined within the specified categories possess attributes that facilitate their ability to adapt and transition between their place of origin and a state of exile.

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