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The themes of Racism and Immigration in the books of Bidisha

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Contents

Abstract	3
1. The introduction to the author	4
2. The theme of Racism in the novels of Bidisha Mamata	7
3. The theme of Immigration in the novels of Bidisha Mamata	21
4. Conclusion	38
5. Works Cited List	40

Abstract

The themes of racism and immigration in the novels of Bidisha are representation of the dark sides of any society. Bidisha is an Asian woman second generation born in England (*Venetian Masters* 246). Bidisha is concerned about the preservation of human rights and equality of races (*Asylum and Exile* endorsement cover). Therefore, the themes of racism and immigration in the novels and books of Bidisha are depicted by a plethora of examples. As a person and writer in her books there is an aim to prove the racism and prejudices of white Western society and moreover, in the case of her fourth book, *Beyond the Wall: Writing a Path through Palestine*, the Israeli society against Palestinians citizens (*Asylum and Exile* second cover). Furthermore, throughout her books the exposure of injustices and condescending behaviours towards immigrants or individuals with different skin colour, are portrayed in plain and direct manner jointly with a sharp criticism which disapproves those demeanours (*Asylum and Exile* second cover). The theme of racism in the books of Bidisha is illustrated with numerous examples which show the frame of mind of white Western society, in order to comprehend the immensity of the psychological postures of the residents from white and developed countries towards other races. Consequently, the theme of immigration is connected with the theme of racism since due to immigration, racism was originated. To conclude, the themes of racism and immigration in the novels of Bidisha represent the importance to prevent society from more xenophobic and insular mentalities in white Western societies.

Key Words: Human rights, illegitimate, immigration, racism, refugee.

1. Introduction to the author Bidisha Mamata.

Bidisha was born in the city of London 1978 (*Too Fast* endorsement cover) and is a “second generation British Asian, the daughter of a migrant” (*Asylum and Exile* 70). Bidisha is an author, broadcaster, journalist, human right activist, (*Asylum and Exile* endorsement cover) film maker and television presenter (Bidisha).

Bidisha holds a PhD in Old and Middle English at the Oxford University and a Master Degree in Philosophy of the Social Sciences, Economic History and Moral and Political Philosophy at the London School of Economics (Bidisha). Bidisha started writing professionally at very early stage since the age of fifteen, contributing for style magazines and writing columns for *The Big Issue* and *The Independent* (*Too Fast* endorsement cover). Currently, Bidisha writes for the newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* among other notorious newspapers in Great Britain (Bidisha). As previously asserted Bidisha is a film maker and during 2017 Bidisha directed her first short film *An Impossible Poison* which is her latest achievement (Bidisha). In addition, Bidisha volunteers in the United Kingdom prisons, refugee charities and detention centres (Bidisha).

As an author, is important to highlight that there is a development in the persona of Bidisha and therefore there is a progression to aim the exposition of humanity stereotypes and discriminatory behaviours throughout her books. Bidisha started her professional career since early age, as previously explained (*Too Fast* endorsement cover). Therefore, the first novel published *Seahorses* was published when Bidisha was eighteen years old, however she signed the book deal when Bidisha was at the age of sixteen. (“Bidisha Mamata”) The first novel *Seahorses* and the second novel *Too Fast To Live* are fictional novels. There is an evolution in the genre of the novels of Bidisha as she shifted to non-fictional books, therefore her third book *Venetian Masters, Under the Skin of the City of Love* is a journal of her experiences in the city of Venice (319), her fourth book *Beyond the Wall: Writing a Path through Palestine* is a reportage (*Asylum and Exile* endorsement cover) and her last

book *Asylum and Exile* is a chronicle (first cover). The first novel of Bidisha, *Seahorses*, represents the first attempt as an author to find her own voice. The novel comprises several topics regarding certain prejudices of English society such as fame, money, social status, higher education, fate and desire. The novel is quite controversial since the plot deals with sexuality in different modes. Equally important, the novel demonstrates distinguishing features of Bidisha as an author which are present in every novel or book Bidisha has published: the great detailed and filmed description, the intertextuality together with a witty and clever rhetoric. The second novel Bidisha has published, *To Fast Too Live*, is a thriller, the novel is an alteration of the preceding novel since is full of violence, criminal and corruption illustrations. Furthermore, the novel *To Fast Too Live* portrays the distinguishing features of Bidisha, the witty and clever rhetoric including violence and disruptive behaviours to comic episodes which help the reader to assimilate the plot. It is important to emphasize the fact that there is a distinctive use of the titles of the characters. For that reason, in the second novel Bidisha presents the protagonists lacking of last names, this differentiation is evidently presented in some of the characters and protagonists throughout her books and novels. Conversely, Bidisha presents in the prologue of *To Fast Too Live* the characters with family names. Therefore, the distinction of lacking family names is not a recurrent characteristic of Bidisha as an author.

The third novel is *Venetian Masters, Under the Skin of the City of Love*, is a non-fictional book since is the result of the journal Bidisha was writing based on her daily life while she was visiting, and living for five months in the city of Venice (*Venetian Masters* 319). She resided in Venice during the summer of 2004, from the beginning of July (38) until the third of November (272). There is no specificity in the text regarding the year; however following the details of the novel it can be located between 2004 and 2005 (310). As noted earlier, Bidisha shifted in the third book to a non-fictional novel since the style of the novel is written as personal diary about her experiences and observations of the city of Venice and the Venetian people. However, the characteristic as an author are maintained in this novel and includes the addition of another distinguished feature of Bidisha as author the criticism in her writings. It is important to highlight the fact that Bidisha wrote another novel while she was living in Venice; however, the novel never was published (280, 319). The fourth book of Bidisha *Beyond the Wall: Writing a path*

through Palestine is a non-fictional book written by Bidisha after her first trip to Palestine 2011. (ix) The novel comprises different themes regarding human rights criticism and feminism against the actual situation of Palestine where the Palestinian citizens, no longer own their land and the level of dictatorship, discrimination and the quality of life which Palestinian people live today is illegitimate and corrupted by the Israel government (*Beyond the Wall* Back cover). Respectively, in the novel *Beyond the Wall: Writing a path through Palestine* the distinguished features as an author are preserved.

The last book of Bidisha, *Asylum and Exile: The Hidden Voices of London* was published on March 2015 (“Bidisha Mamata”) and is a transcription of her literary classes during 2011 and 2012 (vii) jointly with the biographies and experiences of her students before and after arriving to United Kingdom (second cover). Bidisha had the opportunity to teach in two different resources centre, one of the resource centres it is in Bethnal Green, East London and the other resource centre is in Victoria, South London (1, 34). The novel comprises different themes interrelated with migration, asylum seekers, discrimination, human rights criticism and exposition, racism and xenophobic behaviours (*Asylum* endorsement cover). The book is a beautiful chronicle of different spheres of the asylum seekers or immigrants (*Asylum* endorsement cover). Bidisha wrote the book in a plain and straightforward method and includes her distinguished features as an author, witty and comic commentaries jointly with sharp criticism on the English society and authorities.

Bidisha is an author concerned about human rights, the equality of races and immigration (Bidisha) this is primarily revealed in her late books *Beyond the Wall: Writing a path through Palestine* and *Asylum and Exile: The Hidden Voices of London*. She is an activist and as an author defending those injustices she had witnessed in the city of London and Venice and in the Palestine region (*Asylum* endorsement cover). The themes of racism and immigration are observed beneath her perceptions as human being of the society and there is an aim to expose those aspects of society and more specific, the English society to the reader of her books.

2. The theme of Racism in the books of Bidisha.

The theme of racism can be found in the books of Bidisha and as well a clear criticism about prejudices of the white population. It is important to highlight that there is a development in the persona of Bidisha as an author and therefore in her books there are different themes regarding the importance she would have placed, thus in all her books the theme of racism is not present. There are differences among the examples shown in this chapter concerning racism since as mentioned previously the theme of racism is not introduced in all of her books. Bidisha as an Asian second generation woman born in England (*Venetian* 246) in her writings make the reader aware that there is a present racism in white population towards different races in England (Bidisha). It is interesting to reflect on the word race and racism in order to understand the mentality and impressions of the population of any country might have towards racism.

The term race as applied to man has been variously used- by politicians, military leaders, philologist, human biologists, demographers, and historians. Some “races” constitute language groups, often of peoples whose only kinship is that they speak a common language. Such was the original meaning of the so- called Aryan race. Some “races” are simply hypothetical, invented to embrace present distributions of such genetic (hereditary) characteristics. (“Race” 348)

In other words, the characterization of race was to define language groups not skin colour. In addition, the word race is “the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the bases of inherited physical and behavioural differences” (Wade et al.). The description of race has changed throughout history as is clearly exposed in these two examples due to human behaviour which had an impact on the definition and furthermore on human beliefs creating an ideology to support discrimination and displacement in order to achieve their goal of obtaining goods from those who they believe to be different. This is supported by this explanation “scholars now argue that “races” are cultural interventions reflecting specific

attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century.” (Wade et al.).

The usage of the term race depends on individuals but it would be patented by the environment where individuals have been conceived, that is to say white male population or Indian population, the different value of the word race would be tied up by the experiences of every individual and its environment. In addition to this, the level of education and literacy of every individual can stained the value of the word race, which might have been constructed in a toxic childhood and modified in a constructive way. Furthermore, the word racism is defined as “any action, practice, or belief that reflects the racial worldwide, the ideology that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”” (Wade et al.). Racism has been throughout history a motivation to slave or appropriate people who were different in physical appearance to the Western white male. Bidisha as an author is deeply concerned about racism and prejudices over race and there is a duty to reveal those aspects of society and in this case English society in her books. (*Asylum* second and third covers.) As a writer there is a parallelism and development with her personal maturity as formerly asserted. Therefore, in her first novel *Seahorses* Bidisha started to reflect on certain prejudices of English society such as fame, money, social status, and higher education rather than racism since there is no trace in the plot of the novel concerning any type of racist attitudes. However, in her second novel *Too Fast To Live* due to the development of her personal views together with her own maturity her approach about white English society had been modified by her own experiences; as a result Bidisha starts to integrate racist attitudes and prejudices of the white population in England and especially in London in the novel. One of the best examples where Bidisha demonstrates a racist attitude towards non white English citizens in the novel is the character of a white man who is racist towards two of the protagonists of the novel Neela and Lukas. Both characters are orphans and born in England but their physical features resembles: the character of Neela as an Asian girl and Lukas as an Eastern European boy (*Too Fast* 23): “New dark meat, he wishers again ... What are you? Eastern European, is it? ... I don’t like the looks of you refugees type. ... It wouldn’t matter what she was: writer, artist, politician. They just see a street- beggar. A boat person.” (*Too Fast* 59-60)

The above example will be echoed in her last book *Asylum and Exile*. This fragment is an interesting case of racism, it is worthy to mention that the attitude and expressions used to annihilate and devalued the protagonists Neela and Lukas are many times unfortunately the beliefs in silence society think about other people from foreign countries, as Bidisha will be reverberate in her last book. The expressions “refugees type,” “street-beggar” or “boat person” are examples of “the ideology that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races.”” (Smedley) The conviction that humans can only belong to where their ancestors were born and no human being should be displace to another country (Bidisha). As an example of this Bidisha uses the character Shane Chisholm in *Too Fast to Live* a white British policeman to show the white British male racist mentality, when he approaches the protagonist Janine a mixed race woman:

‘You’d fit right in, here,’ he is saying. ‘Lots of people like you in the neighbourhood. Odds and ends from all over the world. All sort of colours, talking in their language at the tops of their voices. You come to this country, you’d think some of them would learn to speak English.’ (*Too Fast* 136)

This fragment expressed what Bidisha claims in her last book *Asylum and Exile*: “The clichés are that migrants ... cannot be bothered to learn English.” (117). This is the mindset of some individuals from white British population approaching immigrants based on a mentality that has moulded the definition of race in order to feel superior and have authority to discriminate others who are not the same skin colour or from a foreign country. In her novel, *Too Fast To Live*, Bidisha illustrates she has a depth knowledge on urban jargon or vernacular English, in the following case it is significant that there are stereotypes words use to designate black human beings, when the character Shane Chisholm is conversing with the character Lenny regarding the protagonist Janine. The character Lenny uses the word “nig-nogs”(94) to define the protagonist Janine. The word “nig-nogs” is a word to define black people and to reflect the prejudices against the black community. From *Too Fast To Live* there is another fragment in which the protagonist Janine as mixed race woman feels uncomfortable under her skin because she is black, Bidisha describes the protagonist Janine as “plump and very beautiful. She seems to be mixed origin: caramel-coloured skin and tightly curly gold hair, with large, dense-lashed amber

eyes” (*Too Fast* 48). There is a contrast between this description of Janine and the following example:

The other people in the café are watching her from the corners of their eyes. Maybe they’re wondering if she’s going to try and pocket the sugar tongs. ... But this place, with its twee net curtains. ... It is too white. Usually in this country she has not felt conspicuous. On London tube carriages it always pleased her to see that white people were generally outnumbered by their tanned brethren. ... Now she feels like someone who’s clambered out of the trees: so dark only her eyes and teeth are visible, her hair trailing twigs and moss. (*Too Fast* 180)

The above example shows the difference between the city of London where the black community is a vast population in contrast with other counties of England where immigration has not been developed as in the metropolis of London. The expression “It is too white” portrays the untouched village from immigration Bidisha is describing in the novel, the town where dwellers are not used to foreigners and as a response to the visit of foreigners they are afraid of them, the fear of the unknown, a terrified feeling articulated in “The other people in the café are watching her from the corners of their eyes. Maybe they’re wondering if she’s going to try and pocket the sugar tongs.” (*Too Fast* 180) Bidisha continues explaining that in the city of London the protagonist Janine “is pleased to see that white people were generally outnumbered by their tanned brethren.” Human beings feel supported when they are in a group rather than as individuals. And the last part of the fragment “Now she feels like someone who’s clambered out of the trees: so dark only her eyes and teeth are visible, her hair trailing twigs and moss.” This is the discrimination the black community has undergone throughout history and in many cases has internalized it as their reality, as we can see in the following case when the protagonist of *Neela* feels discriminated because of her appearance and her skin, attached to the previous example where the protagonist Janine was feeling uncomfortable under her skin, the character Neela feels the same when she is being examined by her instructor: “There is sallow Neela, her short black hair crudely shorn....There is something special, personal in his tone. Neela wonders what he sees when he looks at her; maybe a little capering monkey, something escaped from the jungle” (*Too Fast* 24).

The word “sallow” describes the skin colour of a person with dreadful connotation in this case towards Asian people. The fact that Bidisha is using this word to identify the skin colour of the protagonist Neela in order to depict directly the protagonist to the reader from Asian heritage makes the reader conscious that there is a race concern on the novel. In addition, this fragment it is an example of the psychology behind racism, where there are two elements, one element would be the racist active society and the other element is the racist received society, that means that one part of society is being discriminated by the other, and under this discrimination, prejudices and actions, the mentality and behaviour of individuals are being transformed feeling undervalued and slighted. The main cause of racism throughout history was the fear of the unknown, which made white imperialist Western European society to dehumanize those who were not the same tone of skin and that did not possess the same level of skills as the high technologies of Europe at that time. With this mentality the white European male had a reason to justify their superiority and their possession over the land of those they claimed to be lower than them. It is amusing how that same mentality has been shifted in contemporary era where instead of maintaining a justification to possess the land, the white population living in developed societies justifies their racism in terms that immigrants would appropriate their jobs, houses and benefits as Bidisha expresses in this observation in her last book *Asylum and Exile: The Hidden Voices of London*: “The clichés are the migrants (with no distinction between types of migrant) are opportunistic, backward, grasping advantage-takers who want to ‘steal’ either British jobs or British welfare benefits, who are involved in organized crime at least and terrorism at most” (*Asylum* 117).

Since human history started to be written by Western Europeans the traces of different races were unknown due to no actual evidences from other tribes were found, so the world history was based on the narrowed Western territory. For that reason, the East and South part of the earth were isolated and unheard from where the birth of human history was created, in Europe. This caused an insular and isolated mentality upon the Western white population leading to philosophies and sociological reasons to undervalue those individuals who were found when the navigations and discovering revolution era began. There is a psychology pattern grounded behind every action of discrimination and prejudices to justify the

motivation of human interaction between those the human eye captures as different: the environment where the individual has been nurtured, the belief systems of the family, the practices the family of the individual maintain as a contribution to society, if the family is highly educated and depending to which part of social strata belongs the behaviour might differ, the ambition of each individuals about future, whether the person wants to have a stable and comfortable life or whether the person aspires for a life of new and global discoveries, in the later case the person would and will possess another mentality towards humanity itself and the different races.

An insular mentality is meant to be formed by what I would call “the balloon of reality”, meaning that those places or territories where other races are known but not gather in that territory, creates a protective notion and definition about those who are different from them. One part of being human is the protection from alien dangers, here is where the “balloon of reality” would be created giving the notion that there are people who are different and the definition needed to articulate the feeling of being unprotected from those foreigner dangers. A balloon it is formed, in general by a plastic cover and the air inside which it cannot be seen, the white population is the air from the inside of the balloon, as the previously example where the protagonist Janine is experiencing a racist environment, where immigrants have not yet settled and when the balloon is exploded by immigration, the white population now would have to share their lives with other humans beings who are unknown and different from them and therefore, the metaphor can embody the feeling of white population being required to adapt themselves to inhabit with those they believe or think to be lower and dangerous to white society. However, “the balloon of reality” can be a metaphor as well for those immigrants who are unknown and different from the insight as the air of the balloon but known from the outside as the plastic cover because of the colour of the skin.

The book *Venetian Masters, Under the Skin of the City of Love* is the journal Bidisha wrote effortlessly when she travelled to Venice to visit her best friend Stefania Berone (*Venetian* 319) and she stayed at a palazzo owned by the Berone family (6). The family is very rich (8) and is part of the upper class Venetian society (238). For that reason, Bidisha was capable to witness another sphere which tourists and poor immigrants have not the possibility to have access to it (238). The book is a beautiful description and great travelogue of the city of Venice (*Venetian*

endorsement cover) beneath the observation of an English second generation Asian woman (246) who perceives Venice in her own personal way. *Venetian Masters, Under the Skin of the City of Love* is a description of the Italian lifestyle and more exclusively Venetians. There is an existent racism in Italian society in the book, however it is important to emphasize the fact that racism still being present today in Italian society. For example, the far- right political party Forza Nuova continues to manifest racist and fascist propagandas (“Racist Poster”) To defend this point, there is an example in which Bidisha maintains a conversation with the character of Ginevra, “Stefania’s childhood friend” (6) about political awareness of human rights being violated in Italy therefore there is a continual progression of xenophobic behaviours in several Italian citizens.

‘Has there never been a left-wing government?’ I ask. ‘Yes. There one before this one. And it was good.’ ‘So what happened?’ ‘The problem in Italy is that we are split fifty-fifty between left and right. And there are lot of people who just don’t know and don’t vote at every election, only when they feel like it. Unfortunately the people who don’t care are right-wing by nature and that is the way they vote when they can be bothered.’(*Venetian* 314-315).

In *Venetian Masters* Bidisha gives the impression she is unaware of the fact that there is a part of Italian society and in this case Venetian society with a racist background. In this conversation with the character Ginevra, is apparent that Bidisha as an English person who lives in London, where there is an acceptance of different ethnic groups and the political propagandas are tolerant and recognise the necessity to work as a cohesive community (Bidisha) does not comprehend the reason of Italian citizens not supporting the idea of progression and community. To demonstrate this point the following illustration is the explanation of Stefania Berone provides Bidisha concerning the differences between Venice in relation with London. ““You must remember that this is a small town and the people who live here have a small town mentality. They don’t like outsiders, especially tourists,’ says Stefania”(*Venetian* 22). This excerpt illustrates the mentality and approach of Venetian people towards the rest of the world and is furthermore an example of “the balloon of reality.” The following case Bidisha describes she experienced ethnic discrimination in Venice “There’s a very distinct difference in the way I’m treated once it’s shown that I am definitely, obviously non-Italian.” (*Venetian* 239). This

quotation it is one of the episodes in which Bidisha encountered racist attitudes at the time she was living in Venice, as she explains further “ I get the same treatment in the post office, a newsagent’s and a chemist in San Polo ... the cheerfully flowing conversation before me, the complete silence when it’s my turn.” (239). This illustration demonstrates the racist and prejudices of Venetian people against those who are not Italian and is evident because of the lack of respect in the comportment of Venetian people towards those who are obviously non- Italian (239).

Bidisha had the opportunity to attend to different art exhibitions while she was living in Venice during 2004 (*Venetian* 38) which she describes in great detail throughout the book. The International Exhibition of Art of the City of Venice or commonly known as the Venice Biennale, defined as “the international art exhibition featuring architecture, visual arts, cinema, dance, music, and theatre that is held in the Castello district of Venice during the summer.” (“Venice Biennale”) The subsequent year 2005 Bidisha attended to the opening of the Venice Biennale (305), where she witnessed several episodes of racism as previously explained. One of the examples to illustrate her observance is the recounting of the different countries invited to participate on the exhibitions, all were white countries and as she points out “All the non-white ones” (331) were unsolicited. The apparent disregard to those countries with a racial distinction it is clearly articulated in the anti admission of any piece of representative art from those countries with non white residents and additionally undeveloped countries. Therefore, the following fragment from *Venetian Masters* is an example of the rejection and discrimination from the upper white class society in this instance, Italian white supremacists, and as can be grasped from the title of the book, the masters of Venice. Since the Venice Biennale exhibition is a privilege to the world to have the access to display art in Venice; and those countries must have something in common, the colour of the skin and money.

One of the exhibits on display is a slick-looking world map and a list of all the countries that haven’t been invited to submit work: Nigeria, Uganda, India...the list goes on. It’s long. ‘All the non-white ones’ I say aloud, wonderingly, after reading the list, and there’s a murmur of agreement around me. So here we are, keeping the male white Western capitalist hegemony going. Three cheers for art! That bastion for rebels! Challenging the status quo with every jingle of our money bag. (311)

It is essential to emphasize that the Venice Art Biennale exposition of 2005 it was the exhibition which Bidisha experienced (310). Nevertheless, there has been a development and the invitation list of the Venice Biennale of 2017 there were artists invited from different places from the globe to present their art in Venice and not only white and developed countries (Biennale Arte). One of the most important examples of racist attitudes towards black people Bidisha narrates is the racist behaviours of the security guards at the check point she witnessed towards solely black persons who were travelling to the city of Venice when she arrived at Venice airport from London.

When we arrive at Treviso Airport I notice something unfortunate about the security guard's behaviour. ... They stop every single black person and open up their bags. I'm waiting far back in the extremely long passport queue, look up to see one young black man being checked. Look up three minutes later and it's another young black man. And so on. (*Venetian* 283)

The evident discrimination to sole black individuals is an example of prejudices and white male mentality over the black race motivated on superior beliefs about themselves. And moreover, the suspicious approach of white male Western mindset on those they claim to be a hazard and untrustworthy to the rest of the white population. There is another racist example Bidisha recounts from the security guards at Treviso airport in Venice; meanwhile she was waiting she observed the protocol of one of the security guard and his comportment towards a black woman.

I find myself a couple of metres behind a black woman in her early thirties, well-dressed, very tall and handsome ... I watch the customs guy to see what he'll do. Quick as a flash he leaps into the queue and begins steeping close behind the woman, almost nicking her ankles with the edge of his boots, and he shouts loudly into her ear, 'Bag check! Bag check! C'mon, c'mon, don't waste my time, you know what's coming.' I'm horrified. I see the woman turn slowly, frowning slightly as she is harangued by the man, whose eyes are sparkling. His tone is that of a prison guard with an already-condemned criminal: you know what you've done so don't give me any fuss. (284)

This citation portrays the harassment out of hatred and the disrespectful violent manner in which the security guard approaches the black lady which it is manifested by Bidisha when she is describing the action. Bidisha declares she was horrified when she experienced the situation. The language the security guard uses together with his body language gathers what it is notorious from a racist person. Furthermore, Bidisha continues reporting the situation giving details of the racist procedure of the security guard, she describes how the lady is responding to those racist behaviours being powerless to confront the harassment and violence against her, one of the reasons of being powerless might not only be because she is a woman and black, but as well as she is at an airport, where the security guards have the authority to decide which people are a threat to the country, in this case Italy. “His tone is that of a prison guard with an already-condemned criminal: you know what you’ve done so don’t give me any fuss” (*Venetian* 284). This example represents a xenophobic and racist hatred to black people, considering the tone of the man Bidisha depicts that the man is treating the lady in such a hideous manner where his prejudices against those who are black are evident and he is not disturbed about his behaviour moreover, the security guard feels he has the right to treat the lady in such a comportment because of his white superior and xenophobic mentality and his belief supports his attitude to those who are different skin colour from him, and more specifically black people.

During the attendance to the Venice Biennale Bidisha witnessed other xenophobic behaviours not only towards black people but also to any person who was not Italian, such as Chinese or Sri Lankan employees working in Venice. This quote illustrates the attitude and state of mind of Italians towards non Italians. Bidisha is proving with this example that some Italians show no respect towards those who are different from them; in this instance there is a woman and her partner who are imitating the accent of the Chinese people who work in a bar. The disrespectful and scornful conduct of part of the Italian citizens headed for non Italians born, who they believe and think to be in a lower position than them, it is an example of Italian racism and discrimination that continues today, in many parts of Italian society: “Walking along Zattere one afternoon on my first day of this trip I heard the middle-aged couple behind me mimicking the Chinese-accented Italian of the young couple who run the new coffee bar in Dosoduro.”(314) Demonstrating

this, there is another quotation which portrays the Italian racism and xenophobic demeanours, where Bidisha observed two Italian children mocking and being disrespectful to two Indian immigrants employees from another bar in Venice. Nevertheless, the attitude of the parents who are pleased by their children racist and xenophobic conducts is without a doubt the ground of generations of racism. The parents consent and permit their children to act in an irrational and dreadful way against other human beings, as is a pattern to follow. When a parental figure approves an incorrect deed, such as insults, mocks or even violent behaviours, the parental figure is tolerating and promoting that behaviour to continue. Therefore, some Italian children whose parents consent such behaviours would spread the undeserved harassment and scorn which they are supporting on their children against others non Italian citizens. “In San Polo, near my old apartment, I heard two kids mocking the Indian accents of the waiters at the Sri Ganesh restaurant in the same way. Their parents chuckled along.” (*Venetian* 314)

The subsequent excerpt portrays the hatred and violent attitudes of part of the Italian society and more specifically Venetian society towards foreigners. The last night of the trip to Venice (316) Bidisha experienced a violent xenophobic action, the attack to a Chinese man by an Italian young man (317). This is an important example of the treatment of immigrants in Venice and in this case people with different skin colour.. It is significant that the young man also intimidated the character Ginevra and Bidisha who were walking near the attack; the young man was pleased with his violent actions this can be seen in the description of his “laugh of glee” (317). Moreover, the information the character Ginevra provides Bidisha about the attacks on immigrants is an illustration of the reality of part of the Venetian society towards different races. In addition, the reality that foreigners have no protection from the government and the police, as the character Ginevra points out, “It’s not reported in the papers because they are afraid to go to the police- the police are just the same.” (318) affirms that those racist actions are permitted by the Venetian authorities. Furthermore, the character Ginevra declares that this has not been the first time she has witnessed violent actions towards people who are from different countries and different colour of skin, since is not only on Chinese and Japanese immigrants but also to Sri Lankans immigrants. (318)

We become aware that there's a voluble drunk guy behind us. ... We pass a phone box at which a skinny, much older Japanese man is making a call. ... We hear a sudden laugh of glee behind us: the drunk man has leapt up and kicked the Japanese guy's phone out of his hands and is hammering the sides of the phone cubicle with his fists. He then lunges in and wrenches the Japanese guy out. The victim spins weightlessly across the street, hits the far wall, yelps 'Help' in a strangely calm voice- the attack's happened too quickly for panic to set in- and walks away fast, ahead of us, his shoulders hunched with fear. He can't run because it'll provoke the attacker, who laughter we hear behind us. Ginevra and I are breathing hard. We also can't run. ... 'That happens a lot', says Ginevra eventually. 'Drunk guys looking for trouble?' 'No. Well yes. But also, attacks on the Chinese and Japanese who live here. And on Sri Lankans. It's not reported in the papers because they are afraid to go to the police- the police are just the same. But let us say, this isn't the first time I have seen this.' (*Venetian* 318)

As commented previously, this excerpt is an important example of the situation foreigners might experience in Venice because of racist and xenophobic behaviours of some Venetians because of their white supremacist mentality. To conclude with the examination of the theme of racism in *Venetian Masters*, Bidisha in the following example summarizes her analysis on the city of Venice. She had the opportunity to visit and live in one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and she witnessed different episodes of racism and xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants, tourists and herself. However, those hideous experiences are not able to dismiss the beauty of the city of love, Venice (318): "Despite having seen the reality of Venice I am still beguiled by the cliché. You could say that Venetian culture is deeply sexist, racist, mercenary, bourgeois, hypocritical and pretensions; yet for some reason its beauty isn't compromised by its ugliness" (318).

The fourth book of Bidisha *Beyond the Wall: Writing a path through Palestine* the theme of racism is not developed since the book is focused on the description on the events of the Palestine nation and the discrimination and dictatorship in which the Palestinians survive every day. However, there are a plethora of examples of discrimination and violent measures against the Palestinian people in Israel.

The last book of Bidisha, *Asylum and Exile: The Hidden Voices of London* was a transcription of her literary classes during 2011 and 2012 (vii). The book is an anthology of the biographies and experiences of her students before and after arriving to United Kingdom (*Asylum* second cover). The book is a selection of the different episodes which Bidisha transcribed and chose perhaps because they are important and worthy to be part of her book. The following excerpt portrays a case of racism where the character of a Cameroonian woman called Banyina (5) who is a manager in a company, the character Banyina claims to a friend she cannot interview her friend because the other colleagues would think she received the job because she is also a black individual. Furthermore, this case is interesting because the Cameroonian woman had accepted the label of racism in her frame of mind; therefore she is preoccupied about the suspicious of what it means to be black since it can be a threat to her role in the company.

A Cameroonian woman named Banyina ... 'I was the only black in the company. I was a manager', she says proudly. 'And a friend of mine, she wanted to work for that company also. I said "Apply but I don't want to interview you in case they say, oh, you know, 'She chose her because they're both black..."' (*Asylum* 5- 6)

The last illustration as a case of racism in *Asylum and Exile* is the conversation between the characters of Manny, who is an Iranian music professor and Bidisha about racism and immigration. Manny describes Bidisha his precedent life in his home country Iran and he comments that in the country of Iran there are "no foreigners and they are very strict." (39). Nevertheless, the character Manny agrees in the city of London that is different since there are people from every country of the world, as is exposed on the subsequent excerpt.

'But here, there are so many languages, so many cultures, different colours, different people.' 'That's the case in London and in the major cities. It may not be the case further out' 'Aha. They'll have that thing.' 'What thing?' 'What's that thing, where the white doesn't like the black, the black doesn't like the white...' 'Oh- do you mean racism?' 'Yes!' (*Asylum* 40)

It is remarkable this excerpt because of the content since is the description of the metropolis of London and its multiculturalism and pluralism. Furthermore, the statement where Bidisha exposes "It may not be the case further out" is referring to the referendum named Brexit where English citizens voted for the departure from

the European Union and therefore the multiculturalism and pluralism of the city of London would be compromised by the limited number of future immigrants. The character of Manny erroneously understands that the reason of enclosing the English culture in London is due to racism, since he probably does not know the current situation and information about the city of London and thinks is because of racism.

The theme of racism in the books of Bidisha is exposed in a critical and open manner due to her personal experiences and her witnesses in the lives of other people. It is important to highlight that as an author she has developed to be a human rights activist (*Asylum* third cover) where one of her aims is discrimination as it is exposed in this chapter two. The theme of racism has a present influence in our everyday life and it is healthy to acknowledge that there is a problem in order to look for solutions.

3. The theme of Immigration in the books of Bidisha.

The theme of immigration in the book of Bidisha is established in different approaches and is associated with the theme of racism previously explained in chapter one. There are examples of immigration and its background throughout the book of Bidisha examined beneath her own personal view of immigration in London, Venice and Palestine. Moreover, Bidisha as a Asian second generation born in England (*Venetian* 246) the vast descriptions Bidisha exposes in her book expresses her points of view about migration and the environment in which it has been settled through all the different places she portrays in her book. In addition, Bidisha exposes on an interview “I feel British – I am British – and I’m clearly not white English” (Bidisha) Nevertheless her racial heritage is Indian since her parents migrated to England. For this reason, Bidisha as author and persona is deeply conscious of the existence of immigration in Great Britain since her parents migrated to England from India (*Venetian* 246). In order to identify the theme of immigration in the book of Bidisha is essential to define the term migration, or more specific human migration.

Human migration is commonly defined as the permanent change of residence by an individual or a group. Since the definition does pose the problem of deciding what is “permanent”. In statistics of international migration, for instance, a person is usually classified as an immigrant if he has stated his intention of settling in the country of entry for at least one year (“Human migration” 185).

Accordingly to the former specified definition, human migration is the movement performed by an individual in order to establish a new location as the place of residence. In order to better understanding, is crucial to illustrate the most recent description of the term migration which is important for the comprehension of the theme of immigration in the book of Bidisha. The subsequent explanation simplifies and asserts that migration excludes any movement which is not permanent, “human migration is the permanent change of residence by an

individual or group; it excludes such movements as nomadism, migrant labour, commuting, and tourism, all of which are transitory in nature” (“Human migration”).

Given this orientation, the theme of immigration in the book of Bidisha is reproduced through the stories of different characters, and more precisely one of her book with greater amount of illustrations of the theme of immigration is her last book *Asylum and Exile, The Hidden Voices of London* since the book is concerned primarily on the migration process which the students of Bidisha have been through (*Asylum* 114). Therefore, the definition of the term immigration is equally important to the better understanding of the theme.

Immigration is a process through which individuals become permanent residents or citizens of a new country. Historically, the process of immigration has been of great social, economic, and cultural benefit to states. The immigration experience is long and varied and has in many cases resulted in the development of multicultural societies; many modern states are characterized by a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities that have derived from previous periods of immigration (Parry).

Immigration is the process of migration and as previously defined contributes to the creation of multicultural countries such as Great Britain, United States of America, Germany, Australia, Spain and France. The following points are a scheme of the motifs of migration through human history as is comprehended today:

1. Seeking for new lands to inhabit since human beings were nomads.
2. In quest for new lands to expand their territories once they settled.
3. On the outlook for new prospects of living, migration from towns to cities.
4. Searching for new boundaries outside the conquered lands.
5. To exercise a new power over the discovered lands.
6. Seeking for asylum and aid in foreign countries, leaving the mother land due to wars or political reasons.
7. On the search of new opportunities in foreign countries.

Foremost, some of these intentions or motives are integrated in the book of Bidisha as it would be discussed in this chapter three.

The borough of the Greater London as part of the country of Great Britain and one of the capitals of the developed economic world is a multicultural metropolis

and is because of the immigration the city has received for centuries. The city of London as part of a country is a location in the world with its economic strata. Respectively, the metropolis of London admits huge income of immigrants every day. Therefore, the opportunities to have an average employment would depend on diverse circumstances:

1. The motivation of the immigrant to migrate.
2. The economic position of the home country.
3. The level of financial stability of the immigrant.
4. The professional background of the immigrant.

These arguments suggest that, the motivation of the immigrant to migrate would differ from one immigrant to another, for instance, the immigrants who are seeking aid in developed countries most of the times as Bidisha explains in her last book *Asylum and Exile, The Hidden Voices of London* are forced to leave the home country because of dictatorships, hunger, political persecution or wars (*Asylum* 114). Another prospect of migration would be to seek for a new life not because of the current situation of the home country, nevertheless because the intention of the migration is to discover and achieve goals that solely migrating immigrants can achieve, for example, the study of a university degree or an employment which is exclusively in certain locations of the world. Demonstrating this, in the third book *Venetian Masters* the character Stefania Berone migrated to London to study a Master degree on Science and Computer Science (*Venetian* 14). As noted earlier, the second circumstance is the economic position of the home country which would impact on the future position of the social class of the immigrant in the receiver country, that is to say, immigrants from developed countries would possess uncomplicated access to improved opportunities of employment, residence and future. Nonetheless, the immigrants from undeveloped or poor countries would not possess the same opportunities as the immigrants from developed countries. There are evidences that in the cities of London and New York there is a positive effect of immigration since there are more possibilities to access to opportunities to progress in life, whether the immigrant progresses in the company where he or she is employed. As an example of this, Bidisha describes in her first novel *Seahorses* the progression of the character Ian Litner in his occupation and therefore, he is capable

to change residence in an average location: “The things in the Turnpike Lane house are packed. ... There is a place up in Hampstead, smaller, but with stripped floors ...the place reeks of quality, of authenticity. It is the real thing.” (*Seahorses* 204)

To give an illustration that the economic position of the home country contributes to the probabilities of an average career in the receiver country, in the book *Venetian Masters* Bidisha introduces the character Charmaine, an American woman who is wealthy and has admittance to the upper class society of Venice. (*Venetian* 209) The subsequent example is a conversation between Bidisha and the character Charmaine, and portrays the economic position of the home country which facilitates the future of the immigrant, in this instance, a woman from the United States of America: “‘No. It’s my job. But tell me about you. You said you have an office near San Marco.’ ‘Well, we don’t have it, we’re renting it. It’s share. We might buy it soon though.’ And still I can’t make work out what she does for a living” (*Venetian* 224).

The approach of the character Charmaine about migration is correlated to the motivation of discovering new territories and exploring new dimensions of the world. Moreover, in order to illustrate the third of the circumstances that cause an impact on the future of the immigrant in the receiver country which is the level of financial stability of an immigrant, the character Charmaine demonstrates that there is a difference between affluent or underprivileged immigrants since the character Charmaine is a wealthy American woman who has immigrated to Venice and procure the admission in the Venetian higher spheres (*Venetian* 209). In this context, is worthwhile to consider an additional illustration from the second novel of Bidisha *Too Fast To Live* of the protagonist Janine, “the daughter of a Uganda diplomat and an English teacher” (*Too Fast* 68) who migrated to England more specific to the city of London seeking for a new location to reside, furthermore the protagonist Janine is another example of the immigrant with economic stability which is required to reside above the average citizens: “She started out more privileged than most... there was a lot of money around. Then her father died. Janine bought herself a plane ticket to London where she rented a fabulous Hyde Park-side apartment until her money ran out.” (*Too Fast* 68-69)

A clear difference, is the case of the Chinese or Sri Lankan immigrants formerly discussed in chapter one, who had as well migrated to Venice and due to the level of financial stability of the individuals and their home country, they do not obtain the same opportunities as human beings to progress in Venice as the character of Charmaine (*Venetian* 290, 318). Accordingly, to the economic position of the immigrant the possibility to settle in an affluent or less privileged area would depend strictly upon the finances of the immigrant. As a consequence, the creation of underprivileged neighbourhoods has been constructed through history due to the necessity to isolate the working classes from the bourgeois class. To give an illustration, the disadvantaged immigrants who arrived to New York from 1880 to 1920 were located in the working class or underprivileged areas (Camacho). For this reason, generally immigrants with no financial prospect might not have access to live in a privileged area. To summarize and illustrate the former explanation of the situation in the city of London Bidisha describes in her first novel *Seahorses* the district where the character Ian Litner lives prior the progression he achieved from his new career.

Turnpike Lane was a dark forgotten part of north London, occupying the capitals' periphery like a maggot on the carcass of a lion. It was a mesh of boarded-up houses, spray-paint-spattered railings, cracked paving-stones, abandoned cars, kebab shops, bagels shops, Indian grocers, harmless children's gangs, dangerous parks and barren gardens: a place where the alienated congregate. (*Seahorses* 13)

Significantly, the above description contemplates that immigration might have access to elect as permanent residence depending on to the social strata of the city of London. Furthermore, the previous example shows the underprivileged opportunities unfortunate immigrants might achieve and moreover the consequence of immigration as Bidisha states "the alienated" group of society. The sense of alienation is connected with immigration in the book of Bidisha. The forth circumstance of the opportunities that a human being who is migrating to a new country has to ingress an average employment is the professional background of an immigrant in the home country, that is to say, the professional career of each individual in the home country would benefit the future of the immigrant in order to achieve the same occupation in the receiver country, for instance, a medical doctor

in Sri Lanka would be able to work as a doctor in any other country where the homologation of the university degree is accepted.

The metropolis of London as asserted formerly is a multicultural city due to the income migrations over centuries. As a result, the forty-one percentage of the population “of Londoners are black and minority ethnic, compared to an average of 10% in the rest of England” (“London's population”). Therefore, the city of London has great numbers of diverse ethnic groups. In the first novel *Seahorses* Bidisha describes the different ethnicities there are included in the district of Turnpike Lane as previously explained, moreover the area of Turnpike Lane as Bidisha describes it is where all “all alienated congregate” (*Seahorses* 13).

At Turnpike Lane station four Asian kids were messing about. ... On the street, two tall black men loping fast each other suddenly turned, exchanged loud greetings, and carried on walking. In Ali's Burgers a Greek girl wrung the hand of her boyfriend, an English schoolkid. ... The local comp. (*Seahorses* 72)

The previous illustration shows the multiculturalism and ethnicities which immigration has generated in the capital of London and is associated with the social class in which the district is located within the metropolis of London as described earlier by the author. The novel *Seahorses* focused on the economic system of wealthy characters and there is a contrast between the advantaged and the disadvantaged characters as exposed on the former examples. Demonstrating this, the following case depicts the social strata that underprivileged immigrants might achieve:

The people out in the middle of London at Christmas were the ones with no families or friends, though not homeless, not vagrants, the unthought-of band who stuck themselves beneath the smallest ledge of the employment scale, occupied the trickiest nook of immigration law. (*Seahorses* 187)

Bidisha portrays in the previous case the reality of many disadvantaged immigrants who are slaves of the economic system in order to survive in the city of London. The consciousness of alienation from immigrants is marked by the social class differences, as the preceding example affirms “the unthought-of band who stuck themselves beneath the smallest ledge of employment scale” (187). Social classes exist because there are numerous strata which form the social classes,

obviously in the modern world those differences are not longer so distinctive from each other; nevertheless in undeveloped countries the layers of society are profoundly more pronounced than in developed countries. For that reason, underdeveloped immigrants approaching developed countries would not have access to the same opportunities as immigrants from other developed countries. And as a result, the sense and perception of alienation in immigrants from underdeveloped countries is more prominent than in immigrants from developed countries. The factor of alienation in individuals who have migrated would be determined by the acceptance and approval from the receiver country. Formerly explained “the balloon of reality” which is the fear of the unknown would patent the xenophobic and prejudices against those individuals who are immigrants from undeveloped countries. To illustrate this, the subsequent example which has been introduced in chapter one from the second novel of Bidisha *Too Fast to Live*, depicts “the balloon of reality” and the xenophobia that many citizens from developed countries maintain against immigrants.

‘What are you? Eastern European, is it?’ ... ‘Shouldn’t you be on the tubes? It’s your peak hour now.... You can put the money in your empty paint pot.’... ‘I’ll tell you something, youse two. I’ve been here a fair while. We all have. And we don’t like you people. That is to say, we don’t want your company. We don’t like the look of you refugee-types.’ (*Too Fast* 60)

The xenophobic verbal abuses that immigrants have the obligation to suffer because of their change of residence are illegitimate and completely unreasonable. Moreover, it is the daily basis of many unfortunate immigrants in many countries. The preceding illustration represents the mind set of various citizens towards new comers approaching their country or as “the balloon of reality” would assert the untouched places where migration has not been initiated yet. The creation of stereotypes to create “the balloon of reality” is obligatory since would secure the reality of the isolated populace that has not been in contact with immigrants, and provide the reassurance among the residents that the new comers are not worthy to live among them and more precisely inferior than the residents. Demonstrating this, the former case depicts the reaction of the residents against new comers: “We don’t like you people. That is to say, we don’t want your company” (*Too Fast* 60). For this reason, the character of the white man slighted the characters of Neela and

Lukas in the novel *Too Fast To Live* in the above illustration. More importantly, the denomination the character of the white man is using to identify the character Lukas, who is an English citizen with an appearance of an Eastern Europe citizen (*Too Fast* 23) expresses that the theme of racism and immigration are completely attached and therefore the creation of “balloon of reality” is shaped. It is worthwhile to mention, that on an interview Bidisha recently asserted that there are existence prejudices within English society against “the European Union immigrants from countries like Poland and Romania” (Bidisha). The use of the expression “refugee-type” portrays the stereotypes shaped by the white male mentality which draws a representation of immigrants, who are seeking aid due to dreadful situations, in order to find a justification to dishonour and displaced the immigrants as lower. As interesting case, the following example is the answer of the character of Neela to the character of the white man: “I promise you, white-o, whiteface, one day I’m going to round up all the refugee-types I know. Every nigger, every paki, every chink, every wog. ...I’m tired of people like you, paleface.” (*Too Fast* 60-61). The preceding example represents the respond of many immigrants towards racism as the protagonist Neela declares: “I’m tired of people like you, paleface.” (61) This lead to the understanding, that the new comers also have a voice against the frequent abuses from the residents. There is another remarkable illustration from the second novel of Bidisha *Too Fast To Live* which it was formerly explained in chapter one. The character Shane Chisholm is denigrating the character Janine and demonstrates the white male mentality against immigration. This example as well is echoing the fifth book *Asylum and Exile, the Hidden Voices of London* as previously clarified in chapter two.

They drive northwards out of the city centre, into Finsbury Park. Janine stares at the streets, at once wide and dirty, grand and defiled. She knows the area. ... ‘You’d fit right in, here,’ he is saying. ‘Lots of people like you in the neighbourhood. Odds and ends from all over the world. All sorts of colours, talking in their language at the tops of their voices. You come to this country, you’d think some of them would learn to speak English’, (*Too Fast* 135-136)

The metropolis of London is divided in 33 boroughs (“The city”) and the most affluent areas are in the centre of the city, for example, Richmond, Kensington, Chelsea, Notting Hill and Knightsbridge (Tarver). The creation of neighbourhoods

was moulded by the position in society in which the residents might have been settled, for that reason the affluent areas are in the centre of the city of London, in contrast with the working class areas which are in the surroundings fields. With this in mind, the description that Bidisha expresses of Finsbury Park represents the working class area in which immigrants as formerly explained might have access to reside. Respectively, the character Shane Chisholm reflects that in that in the region of Finsbury Park there are immigrants inhabiting from around the world. The sentence taken from the quotation “talking in their language at the tops of their voices” (*Too Fast* 136) symbolizes that the approach that white mentality might have on immigrants is that the new comers are disturbing their previous peace with loud voices. The last statement the character Shane Chisholm asserts: “You come to this country, you’d think some of them would learn to speak English” (*Too Fast* 136) demonstrates that white population maintains a powerful belief that immigrants do not desire to learn the language of their country. In chapter one, this depiction is explained and is associated with another example from the book *Asylum and Exile*: “immigrants (with no distinction between types of migrant) ... cannot be bothered to learn English.” (117).

Another aspect of immigration concerning the attitude and behaviour of the residents towards the new comers might be a condescending and patronising attitude. As previously described “the balloon of reality” creates a denomination of the immigrants in order to secure the state of welfare within the environment the residents inhabit. For that reason, the conception of stereotypes and prejudices is essential to protect the territories of the residents from new comers. The following excerpt taken from the third book of Bidisha *Venetian Masters, Under the Skin of the City of Love* can help to understand the previous examination.

The conversation turns to... how Eastern Europeans have integrated well into Italian culture. ‘When we were growing up the Eastern Europeans were always *strange*,’ says Lucrezia, wrinkling her nose in distaste, ‘not Italian...but when I finally became friends with them, I saw that they spoke beautiful Italian, completely natural. You can’t tell they’re not Italian! They integrate perfectly, they live a completely Italian lifestyle.’ ‘When you’ve grown up in a country that isn’t stable and you know everything could change from one day to the next, it makes you adaptable,’ says Stefania. ‘People from these countries, you could put them anywhere and they’ll be

all right.’ ‘It helps that they’re white to look at, so the host culture gets over its first hurdle’, I can’t help throwing in. (*Venetian* 248)

The above example portrays the white Italian bourgeoisie mentality which perceives immigrants as an alien influence to their own culture and therefore immigrants have the necessity and obligation to live under the Italians life standards in order to be granted access to the Italian welfare. Besides, as formerly asserted the view of foreigners is distinguished to be beneath the concept of being a citizen. It is important to emphasize that the immigrants are Eastern European individuals thus white human beings. And for that reason, they are accepted without difficulties in Italian society and the only concern of Italians is the accent regarding Italian accent. Bidisha makes the reader conscious that is not only because of the capacity of adaptation of Eastern Europeans immigrants to integrate in other societies, however it is as well because as she believes in the following example: “‘It helps that they’re white to look at, so the host culture gets over its first hurdle’, I can’t help throwing in” (*Venetian* 248). In addition, as Bidisha points out in this illustration to be a person with a different colour of skin it would create a different atmosphere as an immigrant, and it would be more difficult to adapt to the new realm the person is aiming to live.

The fourth book of Bidisha *Beyond the wall: Writing a Path through Palestine* is a journal Bidisha wrote describing her experiences and moreover the description of the situation of the citizens of Palestine. The theme of immigration is extremely connected with the most important aspect of the book which is the terrible accounts of the atrocities the citizens of Palestine are suffering by the government of Israel and more specific, by the soldiers of the Israel state. The term occupation have been used over decades to denominate the process in which the Israel government is removing lands and properties from the Palestine citizens in order to provide with those fields and possessions the Israeli people or even more other immigrants which have approach the region of Palestine. As depicted in the following illustration the occupation has not been a process of controlled and respectful systematic immigration, furthermore it has been an invasion joint with violence, discrimination and more importantly dictatorship which has lead to the Palestinian nation as merely

defenceless and fearful from the government abuses. Respectively, the activist and author Ghada Karmi, who is explaining the occupation of Palestine (109) affirms that the presence of the continual ill-treatment from the army and the political powers it has an impact on the lives of Palestinian people to poison and annihilate the Palestinian society from Israel state. To conclude Karmi declares that the most dreadful side of the occupation of Palestine is the reality the children are obliged to survive in the state in which they are living, one of terror and no prospect of future. (111)

She explains the occupation's corruption of both its victims and its perpetrators, its generation of obsessive behaviours, the acts of violence and destruction which can never be taken back and the ceaseless toxic back-and-forth attrition. What should be feared are not just the actions of one authority and its weapons but the wider poison of these cycles, endlessly regurgitated, of grievance, frustration, claustrophobia, desperate uprising and vicious suppression, abuse and perpetual inter-reaction. I would add, too, the saddest thing in all this is the life that Palestinian children must live, one of fear, pain, limitation and, as they get older, cynicism, despair, anger and (potentially) vengefulness. (100- 111)

The history of Palestine is related to migration since the creation of the Palestinian territory was first established by the migration of the Assyrian and Babylon empires into Palestine territories (Sheffer). Furthermore, the Jewish citizens already were notorious for their migrations into other territories within Europe and Africa. For that reason, the Jewish culture is connected with migratory movements around the Western lands since the foundation of the Jewish nation (Sheffer). The Jewish Diaspora was a migratory movement which exile many Jewish citizens in different countries of Europe; after the Holocaust and the terrible situation of the Jewish people the instauration of Jewish citizens within the territory of Palestine was initiated and the foundation of the state of Israel (Sheffer). Furthermore, the systematic migration of Jewish citizens to Palestine was instituted without the approval of the former residents of the Palestine region, therefore the economic powers of the world decided to decree the state of Israel in Palestine soil. ("Creation") Demonstrating this, there is a beautiful description from the book *Married to Another Man* by Karmi (109) in the book *Beyond the wall* that portrays the previously assertion: "The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another

man.”(qtd. in Bidisha109) In more detailed, Bidisha explains the connotation of the statement:

The title comes from a phrase written by the rabbis who were sent to investigate the potential of Palestine as a location for the Jewish homeland after the Second World War. ‘The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another man’ wrote one rabbi to (coyly!) explain the Palestine was a populated country, not empty territory. (*Beyond* 109)

As the former excerpt informs of the immigration of the Jewish nation in the territory of Palestine was illegitimate since the Palestinian soil was already inhabited, however the instauration of the Israel State was not blocked moreover motivated by the imperial powers of the time, the United States of America and the Union Soviet of Russia (“Creation”). Demonstrating this, in the following example Bidisha echoes the voices of generations of Palestinians who have been occupied by the Israel government due to the Zionist cause, that is to say, “Jewish nationalist movement that has had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews”(“Zionism”).

When the event is opened up to the floor, people’s frustration and chagrin at the occupation come out. ...A man stands up... ‘The Jews have used the Holocaust as a way of furthering the Zionist cause. If people begin to disagree, they say, “Oh, the Holocaust, the Holocaust” and people given them more money.’ (30-31)

The former illustration is the mentality of a Palestinian man who had suffered the occupation of Israel state in his home country, not only the invasion of new citizens but moreover the acceptance of being arrogated from properties and the instauration of a brutal and unlawful dictatorship over the Palestine region. The personality and frame of mind of Palestinian citizens have been shaped by “the balloon of reality” however in the case of Palestine, the immigration has not been reasonable and dignified moreover the persistent discrimination and neglecting attitude from the external authorities of the Israel State magnifies the pain and traumas that have caused the immigration of Palestine region by the Jewish nation.

For that reason, the Palestinian man is resentful towards the idea of the Jewish nation and is cynic as Karmi affirmed in her speech on the occupation of Palestine. (111)

The book *Beyond the wall*, travels through the situation of the residents of Palestine who have been arrogated their fields, houses, occupations, wellbeing, and any legitimate and rightful way of living from the Israel government after the migration of Jewish and other immigrants. To illustrate this, in the following example Bidisha portrays the approach the Israel State have established the political power over the Palestinian people during the occupation for seventy one years. (“Creation”)

I think about the strategy of this occupation. How do you subjugate a people? By nihilism, chaos and anarchy in the name of control. You do it by sabotaging their certainty ... You control where people can and cannot go, then change the rules arbitrarily so that they cannot make plans or have any stable expectations. You make them feel that their house is not their home and can be violated, occupied, demolished or taken at any time, so they cannot fully relax even in their own beds. You isolate them and put a wall where their view used to be. You shout at them in a language that is not their own and which they do not understand. ... You change the appearance of their cities and ensure that the new, alien elements – the walls, roads, settlements, towers, concrete blocks- are much bigger than them or on higher ground so that they feel diminished and watched. (53-55)

In the preceding quotation Bidisha formulated the perspective in which the Israel State has shaped the political authority over the Palestine region and the Palestinians. The approach of the perspective has been of dictatorship and violence together with the uncertain prospect of life. Since the continual abuses and discriminatory control of the soldiers of the Israel State solely over the Palestinians have formulated the certainty of the state of Israel to be a country annihilating the sense of citizen from the Palestinians who are discriminated as outcasts and unworthy people. There are great amount of examples in the book, Bidisha portrays evident and dreadful pictures of this recurrent violence, xenophobia and discrimination towards the Palestinians. The previous example describes how the authorities have affirmed the right to diminish the welfare of the Palestine people, and more precisely the right to arrogate their properties. The construction of walls to

separate the Palestinians from the new comers is to secure the arrogated territory. An obvious example of this, Bidisha declares the following statement on the approach of the Israel authorities towards the Palestine people. “Then something reminds me that this is an occupied territory controlled by the military, in which anything can happen if the authorities wish it.” (*Beyond* 15) Bidisha in this quotation is referring as the location where she is in the Old City in Jerusalem has been occupied since that part of the Israel state was formerly a Palestinian region.

The fifth book *Asylum and Exile: the Hidden Voices of London* encounters other aspect of immigration since Bidisha transcribed the autobiographies of the students she taught between 2011 and 2012 (VII) in “an East London resource centre for asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people “(1) and “Another migrants’ resource centre in Victoria” (33). Furthermore, the theme of immigration in the book *Asylum and Exile* is divided between the refugee seekers and rightful immigration in the country of Great Britain. For that reason, the book *Asylum and Exile* is a great compilation of the reasons or motives any human being might be forced to migrate. In order to better understanding, Bidisha provides two lucid descriptions which illustrate the disparity among refugee seekers and immigrants.

East London resource centre for asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people. ...Had discovered a secret slice of the city: thousands of individuals from hundreds of countries, people who were not hipsters or bankers, who where weren’t thriving on the make but in some cases barely surviving. They had fallen between the cracks and were stereotyped, stigmatized, exploited and overlooked, yet determined to make a life. Articles were written about them- scare stories ... - but their own voices were rarely heard. (1-2)

The Victoria centre attendees are slightly different from the Bethnal Green ones. They’re migrants, but the vast majority are not refugees, asylum seekers or undocumented people. They have leave to stay and work, have more money, privilege, education, support and near-perfect language skills and are generally on their feet and surviving. (34)

The first resource centre as previously asserted is a centre for refugees or misplaced people, therefore the individuals are in need for help in order to inhabit in the city of London. (1) The second resource centre is a migrant centre where the migrants are guaranteed the right to stay to live in the country of Great Britain (34); consequently, there is a big difference between the two centres and more specific the students and their previous environments. It is obvious that there is a difference between the two centres and their students. The former explanation illustrates the misplaced and unknown human beings who are part of society but completely invisibles to the stereotypes and prejudices mentality of the receiver culture. Bidisha describes the refugee immigrants as “barely surviving” (2) since as the book portrays the refugee immigrants in the country of Great Britain endure terrible circumstances and not only the rejection of the British society, however the neglecting answer to acquire the right to stay in the United Kingdom. More importantly, Bidisha reflects on the fact that the image of the refugees or certain immigrants is observed as obscure and dangerous in the white superior frame of mind which moulds what I have called “the balloon of reality” to obtain the justification to undermine new comers, either refugees or legal immigrants. The later quotation explains the other sphere of immigration in the country of Great Britain, who are legal immigrants with the right to stay in the country and therefore those individuals have access to more privileges and opportunities for a better future as previously explained. Demonstrating this, Bidisha affirms her students from the resource centre of Bethnal Green who are refugee seekers have no possibility for opportunities in order to have a bright future where they are independent and legal citizens from the country of United Kingdom: “My students are living in the UK but most have not been granted indefinite leave to stay and do not have the right to work or access to public funds. When they do work, it’s off the books.” (5)

The book of *Asylum and Exile* is not only an anthology of different human beings existences but moreover is a reflection of the stereotypes and prejudices the white Western subconscious has labelled the new comers from underprivileged countries and more specific countries from the continent of Africa. As previously commented the view of immigrants would depend whether the receiver country might accept the country from origin which the immigrants are coming from, that is to say, there is a difference between regarding the economic position of the

developed countries and underdeveloped countries, therefore the frame of mind and approval of new comers from underdeveloped societies would be regarded and fashioned beneath the creation of “the balloon of reality” in order to provide a motif to underestimate those immigrants or refugees who are seeking sanctuary (*Asylum* 114) The subsequent fragment is notable to support the former observation:

My students have grown up in normal homes and in vibrant communities, have had jobs and families and lives, only to see those things destroyed by war, corruption, abuse, persecution and fear. They flee violence or poverty, seek sanctuary or a better life and then encounter the most disheartening aspects of a new country: unsympathetic, governments, a disbelieving and suspicious society, prisons, detention centres, destitution, further abuse, exploitative employers, cultural ignorance, violence. ... From the traumatic immensity of what has gone before, their days are eaten up ... trying to learn languages and get a foothold in a new country. (114- 115)

In the preceding illustration Bidisha portrays the reality of refugees. The definition of refugee is “Any uprooted, homeless, involuntary migrant who has crossed a frontier and no longer possesses the protection of his former government” (“Refugee”). The explanation of the term refugee is comprehended in the former quotation from the book *Asylum and Exile*, since as Bidisha asserted the refugees immigrants are “fleeing violence or poverty, seeking sanctuary or a better life” (114). Therefore, there is a difference between refugee and immigrant since; refugee is an external imposition to seek aid outside the home country whereas immigration is the process of permanent change of residence (Parry) in which case, the migration is not compulsory in order to survive. Moreover, the motifs to seek aid in foreign countries might differ from one individual to another individual due to different circumstances in the society of the home country of the asylum seeker, for instance, whether political persecution, wars or survival as Bidisha declares in the preceding quotation. Bidisha as well asserts that the receiver countries and more accurately the United Kingdom has formed “balloon of reality” to diminish and discriminate the asylum seekers who are aiming to live and have improved opportunities than the possibilities they had in their home countries. The foundation of “the balloon of reality” is indispensable in order to articulate the legal and legitimate excuse to neglect the permanent right to stay to asylum seekers as Bidisha affirms in the former quotation.

Finally, the asylum seekers in the United Kingdom not exclusively are obliged to live under hideous circumstances; furthermore to accept the new reality the individuals are living in order to survive, which is a new language and a new realm (115). Bidisha declares that this is a traumatic procedure the experiences of asylum seekers (115), since being imposed to leave the home country to endure an uncertain future is not simple. Bidisha affirms she has learnt from the experiences of her students (104) as is comprehended in the book, Bidisha is deeply concerned about the state of the asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. Demonstrating this, the following excerpt from the book portrays her concerned with her students and any other asylum seeker to enlighten the British society since the British residents have no awareness about the reality of the asylum seekers in their country, therefore the individuals remain invisibles to the eye and mentality. In the subsequent example Bidisha describes in a beautiful manner the person beneath the skin of an asylum seeker:

Behind the stereotype, the ignored face or quickly forgotten name is an individual who has experienced world-spanning journeys, stark opposites, vast distances and differences, dramatic upheaval, extreme change, new things to be learnt quickly, past things to be grieved over, horrors to recall, lost things yearned for, for the devastation and forced rebuilding of identities and lives. (*Asylum* 113)

To conclude, the following illustration from the last book *Asylum and Exile* synthesizes the aim of Bidisha with her to enlighten and inform the existence of another slice of the British society which is immigrants and asylum seekers, whose voices have been silent and stereotyped beneath the frame of mind of the residents of the receiver country. (*Asylum* 2) The motifs of seeking aid or migrating to unfamiliar countries might differ; however the treatment of the receiver society in most of the cases is similar as Robert Winder wrote in his book *Bloody Foreigners* “Yet we habitually see immigrants not as brave voyagers but as needy beggars.” (qtd. in Bidisha 115).

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the themes of racism and immigration in the books of Bidisha has exposed the persistent racist and discriminatory demeanours from a part of society towards individuals who are different in physical appearance to the white Western community or in the case of the fourth book, *Beyond the Wall: Writing a Path through Palestine*, the Israeli nation the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the themes of racism and immigration in the books of Bidisha are depicted in order to illuminate the obscure and injustice characteristics of society, in the cities of London and Venice and in the Palestinian region.

Accordingly, to the analysis of the five books Bidisha has published the theme of racism is represented in diverse examples, throughout her fictional and non-fictional novels is noticeable that as an author Bidisha is concerned about the discriminatory and xenophobic attitude of society towards individuals who do not share the same skin colour. The theme of racism is illustrated through different perspectives with a common denomination xenophobic behaviour, either physical or verbal abuses. The examination of the theme of racism in the novels of Bidisha reveals that she is Bidisha is profoundly aware and conscious of the existence of a persistent racism in the different societies she has portrayed in her books.

The theme of immigration in the books of Bidisha demonstrates the existence of xenophobic and discriminatory mindset towards new comers from the receiver country. In consequence, the theme of racism and immigration in the novels of Bidisha are interconnected since the illustrations point out that there is a connection between the two themes in her novels. Furthermore, the diverse examples of the theme of immigration found in the novels of Bidisha synthesize the reasons and motifs of human migration as explained formerly. For that reason, Bidisha as an author illustrates in great detailed different aspects of human migration: seeking asylum, seeking opportunities to prosper or survival. Conclusive evidence is that Bidisha as an Asian woman second generation born in England (*Venetian* 246) is aiming to impact society and more specific, white Western society with her books

demonstrating that there is a slice of society which is diminished and annihilated from the rest of society either by racism or prejudices on immigration.

To conclude, the themes of racism and immigration are widely exposed in the novels and books of Bidisha to portray the reality of society which is racist and supremacist. The importance of the examination of the themes of racism and immigration in the books by Bidisha is essential to identify the frame of mind of certain parts of society in order to not justify those xenophobic and discriminatory actions and be capable to obstruct the creation of “the balloon of reality” in which individuals formulate a justification to excuse and forgive illegitimate and hideous behaviours against other individuals who are newcomers with a different language, culture, skills, and more importantly skin colour.

For further study an interesting case in the books of Bidisha, is gender since Bidisha as an author and woman is severely concerned about the treatment of females in her novels and books.

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