

**Tracing Transnationalism and Neocolonialism in Zia Haider Rahman's *In***

***The Light of What We Know***



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### Abstract

Rahman's Debut novel has contributed in the literary world at a great extent. His novel talks about contemporary geopolitical issues and an individual being subjected by its atrocity. Rahman's main character Zafar discovers himself as an exile in different land on a political and at a personal level. Postcolonialism falls short to comprehend the novel *In The Light of What We Know* (2014) because the concentration of the novel is very modern and cover world politics on issues like migration, terrorism and philosophy. The study shows how transnationalism in literature has made its progress since 1970. Thus the nature of this study is to analyse to what extent Zafar can be claimed as a Transnational character by comparing his situation with other two immigrants; Rahman's unnamed narrator and Cole's protagonist, Julius in *Open City* (2011). The study also depicts Afghanistan as a neo-colonial land that has to deal with western intrigues in forms opposed to Postcolonialism.

Keywords: Transnationalism, *In The Light of What We Know*, *Open City*, Neo-colonialism.

## Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized world has certainly spread its wings to take everyone under its citizenship. Despite the promise and the thrill contained in the above sentence, the reality refers to growing surveillance, the politics of elites and of legal or 'humanitarian' systems that only seek to benefit itself and the privileged of the world. Every life is exposed to a dual or confusing identity, leading to the uncertainty of human existence. Terms like "immigrant", "multicultural", "multi-racial", "hybridity", "diasporic"; are used to recognize the state of an individual's political, social or cultural status. These terms also suggest that people do not belong to "one" identity anymore. On the surface level it seems like imperialism and colonialism in many forms like war, media, migration, have either provided or imposed (depends on situation) a scope to affirm one's identity with many places or cultures. Many critics argue that globalization began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as western countries started moving out, trading, or ruling over different regions of the world from that era. However, in this thesis, I will use the term globalization as an extension of the post-colonial era, and use it to refer to the new forms of colonization since the demise of colonisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Globalization can be placed as a postcolonial notion itself because the term was found after the 1970's in order to denote "trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration" (IMF 2000). Along with its gift of integration of economies and cultures through technology and global organizations, it is accompanied by secrecy in geopolitical issues. The design of this system is so complex that every life, willingly or unknowingly, is somehow affected, no matter in which part of the globe the individual may live. Everyone is caught within this chain of politics. How does a "self" or "individual" identify him/herself within such territorial confusion? At one level, nationality is traced in legal terms, despite difference in cultural and racial backgrounds. In the same case, the "self" perceives him/herself to belong to a certain nation and culture and yet shares a strong bond

with another nation. This is a state of being which cannot simply be defined as cultural hybridity or postcoloniality. It can be seen from a transnational perspective. Rahman's fictional character "Zafar" explores himself in every chapter of his debut novel *In The Light of What We Know* (2014) and concludes by defining his state as that of an exile. Zafar tries to evaluate the lives and the significance of the events that he encounters in the making of political history of the twenty first century. In this process, Zafar's political and cultural identity is divided into two parts: one is how people perceive him and the other how he identifies himself.

On the other hand, the globalization is affecting geopolitical issues. Globalization is also subjected to colonization. As Paul Jay has mentioned that globalization is a postcolonial issue but it is certainly a product of colonization because the history of globalization started with the practices of colonization. The phenomena in 21<sup>st</sup> century has established the issue of colonization in the form of establishing global or international organization in the third world. The foundation of these organizations like United Nations, EU, is based on to mitigate the prospect of international conflicts and to raise peace among nations. However, the method they use suggests differently. These organizations systematically take over governing system to influence its policies to keep a country dependent on these for a long time. In the process, truth becomes unknowable, and fact and fiction blend into each other.

The thesis is focusing on two aspects, self and land, and how these are subjected or affected by globalization. In the first two chapters, the paper searches through two novels *Open City* and *In the Light of What we Know* to show what it means to be a transnational figure and how this is associated with 21<sup>st</sup> century global political, social and cultural status of immigrants. The second part of the study shows how Afghanistan is being portrayed as a neo-colonized land in the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized world which is subjected to systematic abuse of international organization in the name of globalization.

The thesis is divided into 3 chapters. Chapter 1 is “Literary Transnationalism”. Literary transnationalism is comparatively new theory. Transnationalism is seen and understood differently under various domain like economics, social studies, and literature. However, in literary texts, transnational studies have widened the scope for migrant writers and scholars to display and appreciate the complexity of immigrant life connected with geopolitical and global issues. The chapter will seek out various aspects of transnationalism and the characteristics that can make a literary text or characters to be considered as transnational. In this chapter transnationalism as categories in social science and literary criticism have been compared. Bourne’s essay on transnationalism provided a breakthrough in understanding the nature of latter-day migrant communities to the US. The chapter explains what transnationalism is through the works of social scientists such as Schiller and Bourne. Through Homi Bhabha’s introduction to his collection of essays *The Location of Culture* (1994), transnationalism as hybridity and the difference in the understanding of the notion of migration between postcolonial literary studies and sociological studies will be explored. The chapter will explain how the transition of postcolonial studies to literary transnationalism has changed the aspect of looking into the forms of exile and subjugation. The chapter will set a gateway to look through novels *Open City* (2011) and *In The Light of What We Know* from a transnational perspective.

Chapter 2, “Tracing Transnationalism”, explains the dilemma of identity in a globalized world. It explores Zafar’s identity as he continues telling his stories to his Pakistani-American friend. It shows what makes Zafar feel a “sense of being different, sense of being apart” (qtd. Preston). His transnational identity helps him explore the characteristics of the modern nature of the existential crisis where the self is both marred and complete at the same time. The discussion in this chapter includes a comparison between the protagonists of Cole’s *Open City* with Rahman’s debut novel. The constant shifts of places and nature of



stream of consciousness in both the characters have been thoroughly analysed to explore their transnational nature. Both the character Julius and Zafar are next generation immigrants and constantly question and assess their identities in different ways. Julius and Zafar have much in common as regards how they are being perceived in the west and for Zafar, also in the east. For these characters, it is not about what black is; or who decides your “culture” rather it is about the characters and how they deal and identify with their multicultural heritage. The focus of the chapter is to explore Zafar’s transnational identity and compare it with Julius’ and Rahman’s unnamed narrator through their narration.

Chapter Three, “Tracing Neo-colonialism”, is about the new form of colonization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is being narrated by Zafar. Zafar’s story, if divided, has few major focuses in the novel *In The Light of What We Know*. One of those focuses is his visit to Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The latter country is mentioned “[to be] at war” against terror. This chapter focuses on the post 9/11 state and compares its effects both in the east and west. It discusses two facts one of which is how westerners deal with the land or perhaps more precisely hide their activities with a camouflage like “war on terror”. This includes the establishment of so called NGOs to save the land from rotting. The modern and perhaps a very subtle way of extending colonialism (as Zafar mentions how and why westerners are taking the colonized people very seriously now) through a helping hand contributes to the protracting of colonization. The second fact of the journey portrays how the land (public and authority) is responding to western organizations like UN and AfDARI, taking over the place. This chapter will discuss these two issues along with theories of Postcolonialism by Edward Said, transnationalism and globalization by Paul Jay, William I. Robinson, Arundhati Roy and Klein and will see how far Zafar’s account of Afghanistan suggests integration of international organizations as a tool of neo- colonial systems.

*In The Light Of What We Know*, is an important commentary on 21<sup>st</sup> century geopolitics, given that it exposes a contrasting picture of globalization from the perspectives of the east and west. It also demonstrates that the idea of postcolonialism, transnationalism and globalization are overlapping and intertwined. The exchanges and trade between west and east are still heavily influenced by imperialism in complex ways. Public and private lives, in this fiction, show the intricacies of modern day politics (the secrecy, the camouflages) and question its activities (like the war on terror). However, it is also true that postmodern novels like *Open City* and *In The Light of What We Know* also focus on the self or the individuality of the characters. The objective of this paper is to show whether the identities of the self and the land (Afghanistan) suggests postcoloniality or transnationality and how neo-colonialism plays a crucial role in Afghanistan through Zafar's journey.

## Chapter 1

### Literary Transnationalism:

#### A Gateway to Understand Rahman and Cole's Characters

Starting with the early nineteenth century, migration literature created a platform for “transnational migration” (Garrett 2) along with “transnational identities” as new ways to understand contemporary practices of immigrants and emigrants. This chapter is going to analyse the concept of transnationalism and how it has contributed to literature so far. The purpose of this critical observation on literary transnationalism is to develop a basic idea of identifying the location of transnationalism in Zia Haider Rahman's debut novel *In The Light of What We Know*. In the next chapter, the study will show how the characters of Rahman's novel are presented as transnational characters in various forms. Since Rahman placed his main character Zafar as an immigrant of England and his unnamed narrator friend as a Pakistani American, I have compared their position in the society with Teju Cole's “Julius” in *Open City*. These three characters are immigrants of the dominant countries of west, US and England. They reflect the establishments of transnationalism in diverse forms in immigrants. What my study focuses on, is how these characters travel to different regions and develop a transnational identity in Chapter 2. In order to understand the 21<sup>st</sup> century migrant literature and its appearances, the understanding of literary transnationalism is essential. This chapter ideally will set a channel to understand Rahman's novel in the next chapter.

Migration is not a contemporary subject. People started migrating since the beginning of civilization. Trading, usurping lands, war and many other factors increase the process of migration. As the concept of “nation state” emerged, the higher the sense of nationality grew. The shaping of culture started to take a nationalistic agenda. The large number of colonies of

European countries mingled with the colonized communities and cultural hybridization (Bhaba) took place. However, the subject of migration started to intensify since the two world wars occurred and a large number of people started immigrating in different countries mostly within western territory. It is after that migration that the concept of trans-nationality first needed a space to be politically placed. Generally, elements of instability have been frequently present in migration practices. Feist sketches the developments of “back migration,” “circular migration,” “return migration,” and “transient migration,” as examples of impermanent migration (Garrett 2). Bhaba in his collection of essays *Location of Culture* (1994) has pointed out that literature, specifically postcolonial study looks into issue of migration from a critical point of view as opposed to a holistic one. Literature studies the phenomenon of “transnationality” to give it a “recognition of- the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres” (173). He also suggests that “migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation” gives cultural transformation a complex form that shares a “transnational dimension” (172).

Randolph Bourne in his essay “Trans-national America” has coined the term “transnationalism” in order to understand 20<sup>th</sup> century migration in America during the 1<sup>st</sup> world war. He has written the essay in 1916, to depict the picture of “failure” of “melting pot” called America to assimilate a huge number of migrated people from Europe. In his word, transnationalism refers to the assimilation of cultures. He argued that the “new” immigrants are expecting the same establishments as the “old” immigrants, the Europeans at the time of colonization, were looking for at that period. His proposal of processing the assimilation is to place the cultures in parallels. He describes how Americans are descendants of immigrants and the merging should. He argued that the “new” immigrants are expecting the same establishments as the “old” immigrants, the Europeans at the time of colonization, were looking for at that period. The author recognises the differences between “old” and

“new” immigrants. What new immigrants are searching for is the same thing that that the old immigrants were looking to find, and both sets of people had the same amount of allegiance to their homeland. Since the English arrived first, and had no barriers when they practiced English principles, culture, and government in today’s Americanization:

“The Anglo-Saxon was merely the first immigrant, the first to found a colony. He has never really ceased to be the descendant of immigrants, nor has he ever succeeded in transforming that colony into a real nation.....Colonials from the other nations have come and settled down beside him. They found no definite native culture which should startle them out of their colonialism, and consequently they looked back to their mother- country, as the earlier Anglo- Saxon immigrant was looking back to his. What has been offered the newcomer has been the chance to learn English, to become a citizen, to salute the flag” (n.p)

Bourne’s essay was looking for a scope to invoke an idea where melting of different cultures in a land like America should be welcome by immigrants and locals. The struggle and resistances should be eliminated and a smooth assimilation should take place. This process of integration and adaptation of cultures takes place by discarding the sense of single “nationality” in America. The process will help America to grow in a truer sense or otherwise, will plunge into “false... cosmopolitan vision” (n.p).

“America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans- nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors.” (n.p)

Since “nationalism” blocks human capacity to think beyond the narrow spaces of its objectives, Bourne suggests to discard the idea in order to embrace transnationality. Another key point of Bourne shows in his essay by calling the immigrants “alien” as they are being treated like exiles who do not have the scope or interest to go back to their mother land and neither have they acceptance in the new land.

Bourne was writing on the context of US in 1916, where recent German migrants were too conscious to hold on to their culture and Americans were able to resist that approach of the outsiders. However, Concannon, Lomelí and Prieue in their book, *Imagined Transnationalism*, criticised Bourne’s definition of transnationality since it only deals with the concept of nation-state and American identity but excludes all other sorts of issues that are related to 21<sup>st</sup> century transnationalism:

“Much as Bourne sees the transnational as a means of undermining certain myths of the nation, most notably the melting pot, critics today conceptualize the transnational as a means of challenging those myths of the nation that seek to marginalize others based upon race, gender, or sexual orientation. In doing so, a transnational approach can sometimes be mistakenly believed to be a liberatory one, as conceiving of the world in terms of a mixture of flows of capital and individuals, and less in terms of boundaries, not recognizing the challenges faced by immigrants being forced to leave their home or being confronted with material and metaphorical barriers.”

(Introduction 3)

In their introduction, the issues regarding transnational approach takes place. The downside of 21<sup>st</sup> century transnationalism is that it subjects the immigrants as the “other” or the “alien” and thus they become victim of different types of “labels”. This tendency is very apparent in Rahman and in Cole’s novels which is discussed in my next chapter.

Since 21<sup>st</sup> century has got caught up in transnationalism in the form of globalization, more and more concentration on the subject has become necessary to understand the phenomenon. Waldinger and Fitzgerald extended the idea by exploring it in the domain of social science. They brought the concept of “here” and “there” as opposed to migrated nation and motherland. These terms becomes fluid in a transnational state of mind. One cannot possibly remain within a particular national territory or cultural sphere psychologically if an individual holds a transnational identity. In that sense, three of the characters from Rahman and Cole’s novels truly acquire transnational identities. Rahman’s unnamed narrator and Julius both depict a fluid sense of not belonging to any particular nation. They certainly do not call themselves a “global citizen” rather they intertwine different experiences from different culture and places and put it in a parallel line. Zafar is born in Bangladesh but was brought up in London and considers himself as an English and yet shares a very strong relationship with Bangladesh and Afghanistan. A reader can sense a feeling of exile in Zafar regarding his identity as an English person. The struggle I am referring to is more psychological and takes place due to social stereotyping. As Concannon has pointed out, how difficult it is for a transnational character to ask for acceptance from society due to our continuous practice of labelling one’s identity in legal and cultural terms.

Schiller et al. in their studies have argued that we need new conceptualization “in order to come to terms with the experience and consciousness of this new migrant population”. They call “this new conceptualization, “transnationalism,” and “describe the new type of migrants as transmigrants”. They consider transnationalism as the process “by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement”. A transnational human develops- familial, economic, social,

organizational, religious, and political identities that span borders(1-2). Zafar's interaction with political and international organizations from Bangladesh and Afghanistan provides him an insight of the oppression and corruption that is instigated by the upper class of west and east. His nationality as an English does not stop him to criticise the western power play. Rather his journey brings him closer to understand that the facts of class have the upper hand over nationality and he never truly belongs to any certain place.

Schiller et al. say that migrant literature has not been able to put any new emphasis or finding to completely comprehend the situation of immigrants. Since the study is conducted under the domain of social science, migrant literature has not really contribute to the domain of postcolonial studies. However, it is also true that migrant literature is under the process of evolving. As Bhaba has described that unlike social science that put this phenomenon under the lens of "dependency theory"<sup>1</sup>, literature tends to put a very specific concentration on the subject.

"For the past several decades descriptions of migrant behaviour that could be characterized as transnational have been present in the migration literature, but these descriptions have not yielded a new approach to the study of migration. Students of migration did not develop a conceptual framework to encompass the global phenomena of immigrant social, political, and economic relationships that spanned several societies" (Schiller 5)

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<sup>1</sup>**Dependency theory** is the notion that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former.



Schiller et al. also reason that “the recognition by social scientists that many migrants persist in conjunction with their settlement in the host society” did not grow beyond the descriptive step “because migrant experiences in different areas of the world tended to be analysed as discrete and separate phenomena rather than as part of a global phenomenon” (6).

In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha argued, “The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities—as the grounds of cultural comparativism—are in a profound process of redefinition” (5). Literary transnationalism pursues in a way to describe migrant relationship with the past and present nationality and culture. Some scholars have denoted this notion as a part of world literature. Paul Jay in his book *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (2010) have discussed the importance of literary transnationalism. Transnationalism in literary studies has uphold the differences between “real and imagined border” that shows the complicacies of “nationalist paradigm” (Introduction 1). Literary transnationalism has transformed the “nature of location” (1) of literary studies:

The transnational turn in literary studies began in earnest when the study of minority, multicultural and postcolonial literatures began to intersect with work done under the auspices of the emerging study of globalization. (2)

This actually gave the phenomena a push to understand how the life of migrant and global citizens is intertwined with contemporary global issues. Jay emphasises that if the study of globalization “offers critical framework” on transnationalism then it is possible only if it is considered thoroughly by postcolonial eyes because today’s globalization is not a problem of postcolonial world but has its history since the beginning of colonization. Thus it is very obvious that literary transnationalism integrates both the notion of globalization and postcolonial state that produces a new way of understanding the complexities of 21<sup>st</sup> century

world. Globalization is multifaceted. Use of multiple language, narrating techniques, assimilating various cultural issues; these are the product of literature in globalization. Rebecca Walcott said that HaunSaussy's volume, *ImmigrantFictions*, proposes that "literary studies will have to examine the globalwriting of books, in addition to their classification, design, publication,translation, anthologizing, and reception across multiplegeographies. Books are no longer imagined to exist in a single literarysystem but may exist, now and in the future, in several literarysystems, through various and uneven practices of world circulation" (528). Walcott analyses an interview of a Tokyo-Yorkshire writer David Peace. When he was asked how he can write a strongly "regional and historical" novels on England even after migrating to Japan. His response suggests that living in Japan led him think about more "carefully" about the issues (Walcott 530).

Migrant writing does not provoke the dismissal of the ancestral culture or adaptation of new culture or vice versa. It rather opens up the places to scrutiny the facts from both perspectives and comment on them. Zia Haider Rahman's novel is heavily influenced by his personal geopolitical discoveries that he experienced as his profession as an investment banker and as a lawyer. He denotes in an interview that his migration allowed him to understand the gap in communication for his parents in England throughout their life (Guernica July 15, 2014). His migration, not from postcolonial but a transnational perspective, indorsed him to discover various socio-political position of a migrant. Sobek, in "Transnational Migrations andPoliticalMobilizations:The Case of *A Day without a Mexican*", discusses the various forms of Mexican transnational movement that has entered in literature and art and also has influenced Hollywood films. She states that the issue of Mexican migration have been projected in many forms like showing the community as illegal citizens who are mostly related to drug dealing. Later the notion changed and started to portray the sense of exile among Mexicans in "B category" (69) movies. Currently the stigma has taken a

transnational state in Hollywood movies where the subjugation and the systematic discrimination against the community is being highlighted:

“The twenty-first century transnational migratory movements to the United States have taken a new tack consisting of open and massive political mobilizations protesting inhuman treatment of migrants” (*Imagined Transnationalism* 69)

The transnational state of immigrants allowed them to point out the loopholes and shortcomings of “rational immigration laws that address the transnational migratory movements of people” (69) in the comedy-fantasy film, *A Day Without A Mexican*. It highlights that within the territory of settling country, the migrants demand their rights not to be discriminated in the name of nationality and race. The integration of cultures is encouraged by a transnational migrant like Cole highlights in his novels through migrant stories discovered by Julius.

Transnationalism can come in different form and shape. An immigrant can look for transnational assimilation within himself or in his surrounding after s/he becomes subjected to biases and dichotomies of nationality or periphery of geopolitical issues. The birth of transnationalism has many causes, one of which is postcolonial situation that is globally recognized. When transnationalism comes in question, nationalistic perspectives are challenged both at academic and individual levels. Postcolonial discourse and nationalism can easily define and separate a particular culture and national identity. Contrariwise, transnationalism distorts that particularity of identity to recognize a human. Marcus has noted that in the case of migration “local worlds of subjects and the global world of systems becomes radically blurred” (Schiller 7) which is hard for an ethnographer to recognize or underline. Writers like Rahman and Cole, demonstrate the blurred line. Since it is a less recognized term and the concept of transnationalism is still not fully formed, the term is not

fully integrated. . Thus different terms like “African-American” are used, which also mainly refer to being victimized by racial discriminations.

Nelson Shake, in his thesis, argues that “the hesitation of literary scholars, especially in the West, to read literature from a transnational perspective is troublesome since they hold onto postcolonial studies too tightly. Literary critics can quickly lose relevance when they continue to structure their studies along exclusively nationalistic lines” (8-9). The dichotomies of postcolonial footings (the binaries) such as “self” and the “other”, “oriental” and “occidental” are not enough to describe the writings of authors like Rahman and Cole. The transnational characters can choose to remain in between the fine line of cultures and nations or simply can refuse to have such claims. Transnational characters fold the identity in a fluid and shapeless form where all claims on culture and nationality can be denied as Julius and the unnamed friend of Zafar do. They also can feel a strong bond of multiple cultures that do not shackle them under the chain of certainty of nationalism rather that bond releases them like in the case of Zafar. The characters indeed search for a place or a story which will mend their emptiness or a hollow space that is hard to understand even by them.

We can certainly address transnationality a fluid and shapeless identity that can rise and lay in many forms in an individual. Although this chapter mostly link transnationality with the subject of migration, there is no fixating on the subject. Anthony Giddens in his book *The Consequence of Modernity* (1990) has discussed the notion of fluid identity of a subject, local or an individual by explaining the fluidity of time and space. He calls it the “empty space” in when the separation of space from place occurs. The place is the physical local but the space is “away from place by fostering relations between ‘absent’ others, locationally distant from given situation of face-to-face interaction” (Introduction 18). This situation can be found in relationships of human being with digital or mass media in different forms. This is also a form of transnationalism that does not require one to be an immigrant

but a part of globalization. However, Transnationalism has a strong connection with migration. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the characters of Rahman and Cole are attaching themselves with distant places as equally as they are with their settling country. There is a sense of sensitivity in their relationship with different places and culture which makes endorses their transnational identity.

## Chapter 2

Tracing Transnationalism in Rahman's and Cole's Novels:

*In The Light of What We Know and Open City*

Zia Haider Rahman's and Teju Cole's debut novels, *In The Light of What We Know* and *Open City* explore the issue of 21<sup>st</sup> century immigration. In both novels, the main characters are immigrants and it is their narrative voice that has shaped the novels. Rahman and Cole both have one thing in common: they are both immigrants to the west. This provides insight into immigrants'/emigrants' lives. What these people feel is something other than, perhaps more than diaspora. This feeling completely rejects a particular identity but transforms them into transnational beings. This sentiment makes a very complex identity in Rahman's unnamed narrator and Zafar and Cole's protagonist Julius. The unnamed narrator refuses to label himself as an American. Julius perhaps does not struggle with his identity to such an extent, rather his narration is like a commentary on his transnational identity. Zafar, on the other hand, faces even more barriers than Julius or his unnamed friend do. Zafar's racial background is coupled with his social status that bounds him to see through difficulties of his own. Despite coming from a poor background, Zafar has achieved a certain position in western elite society through his charming personality and extra ordinary academic accomplishments. Zafar in many instances can be found struggling with placing his identity in the world. In other circumstances, Zafar can be seen to refuse the labels and express his identity depending on the facts of his own life alone. The focus of this chapter is to locate transnationality in the identities of Zafar and his unnamed friend and Julius.

Zia Haider Rahman's debut novel *In The Light Of What We Know* has certainly made an impression on contemporary literature due to its significant contribution towards

postcolonial literature and commentary on post 9/11 politics. Rahman's main character, Zafar, has undoubtedly been portrayed as a modern man with dilemmas that are not only irresolvable but also difficult to express or understand. . The shifts in narration from Zafar to his unnamed friend reveal Zafar's experiences. . Zafar's journey from places like London, New York, Dhaka and Kabul make up the plot of this novel. The novel is mostly based on Zafar's fluctuating narrations that rove through time, philosophy, mathematics and politics. It is hard to keep track of his narration. He starts talking about maps that brings the subject of "nation" and "colonialism" and then shifts to Gödel's theory of philosophical mathematics suggesting that nothing we know is absolute. Everything has its limitation, especially knowledge that sometimes solely rely on the imaginary boundary of territories. The narrative style of Zafar seems to build a connecting route to each of the subjects like politics, mathematics and philosophy. . Zafar's narration includes his recent and former memories. The most significant part of his memories had been formed after he visited Bangladesh as a child and later Afghanistan as an adult. These two places reflect the title. Zafar reveals everything "in the [little] light" of what he knows about his past and present.

Through his descriptions readers can discover his anxiety. His constant annotations of "exile" from Said's essay and Eliot's poems shows his paranoia about the uncertainty of his place – whether he can be considered to be inside or outside the western world. Zafar is an immigrant who moved to Britain after the liberation war of 1971 in Bangladesh. He was only five when he came to the west as an immigrant. His legal identity is that of an "English" person, but the national identity that he carries is not the only identity he has in the English society or in his mind. His identity is scattered and finds different expressions when viewed along cultural, racial, national and most importantly, socio-economical status. His identity of English constantly is being challenged. He refers himself as English but shares a strong bond with Bangladesh as it provides the best childhood memory. However, the English society

classifies him mostly as “Indian” or south Asian. Zafar never miss to correct the information about his race but he despises when someone address his identity with his race. Since this novel is about a “Bangladeshi- British” person, who reflects on global politics, it has led many readers to review this novel as a postcolonial novel. The identity of Zafar cannot be simply put in terms with Postcolonialism since he does not count himself as a Bengali but as an English person in many situations. It is very essential for the readers to understand how Zafar views himself and how he is being perceived by society.

The American-Pakistani narrator of the novel *In The Light of What We Know* reflects the same notion of an identity in crisis. Even though he is not torn between two national identities, he mentions a “hollowness” that is never fulfilled. This same void is only fulfilled when both Zafar and he engage in long conversations about life, love, politics, philosophy and science. He agrees with Zafar at certain points and at others he either does not properly fathom or his lack of outside knowledge creates a gap in his understanding. . Their common sense of void - of not having a certain or designated identity - has made their bond stronger as friends, enabling them to indulge in these open and heartfelt conversations. In fact, the whole novel is portrayed through these conversations, and in the voices of these two friends, rather than through any actions. This helps the novel to highlight the immigrants’ point of view. The journey and the experiences of these characters do not lead to a climax or high point in the plot, but give the readers a sense of estrangement from cultural or national roots of biases. As Zafar relates his experiences in Afghanistan and other issues, the narrator listens carefully, noting and retelling the same story. This narrative technique puts us as the readers into the position of the narrator, as we as readers are also listening carefully to Zafar’s experiences. The interchanges between two voices - Zafar and his friend’s – makes the novel a relation of events in which the reader is drawn. This technique is also similar to Cole’s novel, *Open City*.



Teju Cole's debut novel *Open City*, shows the craftsmanship of a contemporary postmodern writer who, like Rahman, is able to intertwine philosophy, politics and individual into one piece of writing. Julius is an immigrant American, currently training in Manhattan as a psychiatrist. His German and Nigerian background creates a strong bond between him and Nigeria and at the same time, his long walks in the street of New York reflect his rootlessness. His description/narration speaks of an urban man who is lost and has hardly any desire to be found but also at the same time very conscious of "fetishizing his outsider status" (Aug 17, The Guardian 2011). These states of mind connect with walks that he makes across the urban web, sometimes with a purpose, sometimes aimlessly. Like Zafar, Julius also tries to connect with his past by going to Brussels in search of his Oma or his European grandmother. Similar to Zafar's visit to Bangladesh and the three memorable years he spent there, which reveals many things in the plot, Julius's visit to Brussels introduces him to different kinds of immigrants and their stories. These stories, along with Julius's own, show how the migrated identities are not national but transnational and how difficult it is to place them or understand them as members of any particular society.

The chapter is going to explore the natures of Rahman's two main characters, Zafar and his unnamed friend and compare them with Cole's Julius. The characters' individuality raises them above and beyond the concept of "here" and "there" and does not follow Said's formulation of "self" or the "other". These characters represent the immigrant community in the west, but cannot be seen diasporic in Rushdie's (*Imaginary Homeland*) sense and neither can they be contained within the tenets of postcolonial theory:

"It is may be that writers in my position, exiles, or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt.... Create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, indias of the mind" (Rushdie 12)

Unlike Rushdie's display of profound connection with Indian history and language, Rahman's character Zafar does not include any of such. Indeed Zafar calls himself an exile but not because he has felt any lack of acceptance from his ancestral land but the land in which he settled. Zafar feeling of exile upsurges because he is considered to be migrant, an outcast within his familiar land. But in Cole's novel, Julius senses a feeling of loss, not an exile. The loss upsurges due to failing his relationships with every single person who are related to him. His recent breakup with his girlfriend, lack of understanding between his mother and him, never reuniting with his Oma and the death of his father; all makes him marred and fragmented. He searches for his story among the stories of different other immigrants at the end of the novel and refuses to put a name on his multicultural heritage. Zafar and Julius both disassociate themselves from labels but facts only. Thus in Zafar or in Julius, there is no sense of "loyalty" towards any nation; instead they have grown a sense of belonging to many places. This chapter will seek the identity of three migrants and to what extent they can be considered as transnational characters, which will take them beyond the identity of an "immigrant" or "postcolonial" identity.

Zafar and the unnamed American- Pakistani friend/narrator of the novel are quintessentially transnational characters because the effect of migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is very visible in these two characters. It is not the process of migration but the timing of migration that sets a new cultural boundary and expectations. The timeline of lives of immigrants is important in defining transnationalism, which point to characters who consider themselves as not belonging to any particular culture or country. Rahman's narrator is a third generation immigrant. He was born in America, Princeton, New Jersey in 1969. He "spoke only English" at home (103). His family did not discuss Pakistan or its politics over dinner. The only "Pakistani" element that was present in their lifestyle was their food. However, even that had started to change:

“I say that the food at home was Pakistani, but I should add that in Princeton my mother took to baking. To this day she bakes that most American of foods, apple pie, and she does it better than anyone else in the world.” (108)

In order to understand the connection between transnationality and the timeframe of migration, it is necessary to understand the effects of belonging to different immigrant generations. The narrator's background boasted of in the novel. His childhood friend, Crane was the son of a financier, who later becomes a senator. The narrator is shown to live in prosperous houses in both Oxford and Princeton, large and comfortable. Family friends are scholars and businessmen, and his grandfather has influential political friends in the USA. Being a third generation immigrant, the narrator's views differ from those of first generation immigrants because of the lack of physical connectivity with the 'original' land. Every generation slowly drifts apart from the ancestral land and feels more connected to the place where they are settled. The narrator's grandfather has strong connections with other South Asian countries: India and Bangladesh. He was “was stationed [in Sylhet] briefly in 1943, in the dog days of the Raj” (128). We never get to know the narrator's father's feelings about being separated from Pakistan. However, their political interests and social engagements definitely give a western vibe. Pakistani roots are displayed in the occasional drinking and religious views and practices, as well as the continued interest in Indo-Pakistan history, which also shows that the narrator's father is not completely separated from his Pakistani origins. His grandfather – the first generation – is even more connected as he spends a considerable amount of time in Pakistan while later generations merely visit Pakistan:

“During their frequent visits to the U.S. from Pakistan, either my grandparents would come to Princeton or, more often, we would join them in New York, where they'd take up a suite of rooms at the Carlyle on the Upper East Side.” (68)

Rahman craftily projects how the loosening of ties with the mother country through subsequent generations. This brings about a generational divide. Thus the narrator's grandfather objects to his marriage with Meena, who despite being of Pakistani origin was from a different class background. For the older generation, this was a very important consideration, as the narrator comments:

He wasn't, in the end, very modern at all. I was able to console myself with the thought that modernity was perhaps not to be expected of men of his age, who had lived with ideas that had never needed defining, never drawn scrutiny. (105)

Tracing transnationality in the narrator is quite a complex process, since it is not very clear how he labels himself. He says that he was born in and raised as an American and holds both American and Pakistani passports. His move to the UK for higher studies at Oxford University brings about a connection with British culture. He does not stop himself from criticizing America (105) but New York city still contains a sense of "romance and longing" in him (106). However, the narrator does not feel any particular "tie with America" nor does he deny being an American. It is rather, as he describes, "a tiny hollow space within him" (69) that makes him feel as if he is "missing something without conscious awareness" (69). The narrator refers to Zafar as he knows that they both feel the void of not belonging anywhere. The void mentioned earlier generates from the idea of getting less recognition as they are in a position of not belonging either to the ancestral or host country. Lack of interaction with the host country separates the narrator from Pakistan, and as he admits he had hardly ever gained any historical knowledge about that particular part of the world called Pakistan. When he was a young boy, he hadn't realised that Pakistan's language was not "Pakistani" but "Urdu" (113). Despite the separation and ignorance of ancestral lands, the sense of belonging does not perish altogether, even if it is felt only "rarely" (113). The narrator feels mortified at times at his lack of knowledge of South Asian history, trying to

hold on some kind of tie with Pakistan. The hollowness in him derives from the fact of belonging nowhere, as he does not have the heart to call himself American even in the legal sense, nor he can claim his Pakistani origin due ignorance about its culture.

His cultural and national identity ties him to both the countries, but there is no sense of hybridity or a mixture of American and Pakistani culture. There is no identifiable inside and outside, no self and the other or a sense of “here” and “there”. Transnationality is the only subject position that can be ascribed to him. In the case of Zafar, the feeling of hollowness arises for a very different reason, mainly because of the gap between him and his parents. His narration hints at the secret of his birth: his biological mother, a war heroine, never reveals herself to Zafar nor does Zafar have any evidence of being a war child. The narrative does not dwell on the nature of his biological parentage, even while it gives us hints of it. However the lack of connection between him and his adoptive parents make the reader sure that Zafar is a war baby. The very first chapter of this novel starts with the quotation from Said’s essay on the subject of Exile where a second generation immigrant seems to have a distant relationship with his parents.

In the first two chapters, the narrator describes his first meeting with Zafar’s parents. Zafar’s inhibition of being seen together with his parents led him to create an optimum distance between them. Both mentally and physically, he felt estranged from his parents. The first account of his parents was from the narrator’s point of view which dwells on some of the obvious reasons for such a generational gap. Rather than his parents’ “religiosity”, Zafar was ashamed of the increasing class differences between them. Somehow Zafar also seems to intuit that he wasn’t their true son. It begins as a ‘cultural gap’ between the first and second generation migrants. His father’s “beard ... and skullcap” (6) and his mother’s saree direct readers to consider them as first-generation migrants who cling to the culture of their motherland. Zafar’s English habit of saying “thank you” even on a trivial incident irritates his

mother because that reminds her of the distance between her and Zafar. This distance gradually leads to a coldness between Zafar and his parents. Zafar in many instances considers himself as an “English” person. However we do not get an insight into Zafar’s parents’ viewpoint as the novel focuses on Zafar’s and his friends narration. The generation gap and the timeframe of their migration separate Zafar from his parents. . Zafar came to London when he was only five. His schooling and surrounding made him develop as an English man even before he could create a memory of Bangladesh. Postcolonialism can perhaps trace the causes of his parents’ migration, but Zafar’s ‘migration’ was part and parcel of his being. . His parents could stick to their original culture, but Zafar had to make his own place in London. But unlike the narrator, whose “maternal grandfather had been an ambassador to the United States” (4), Zafar’s family belonged to the peasant group. From Zafar’s account, the distance between him and his parents exists because of the distance in their social position as well:

“The worst part of it for my parents must have been the fact that their social status never brought them near families with educated children. They were peasants in the sense that connotes nothing pejorative. They came from peasants and they knew that they themselves, that their class, was the obstacle to fulfilling their own ambitions for me, to make good their shame.” (287)

Zafar is ashamed of his parents and ashamed of himself for being so (7). This is one of the reasons why Zafar feels exiled in his own world and insecure even with his parents. His parents remind him of all that he has left behind, and he wants nothing to do with the social and ethnic group that his parents belong to. In his conscious mind, he knows that the bond between him and his parents is slipping away and yet he cannot do a thing about it:

“In any event, I now had little to do with them. My visits to their home in London were separated by months and sometimes years. In fact, I saw more of them in the one

month when they needed help with their mortgage than in all the rest of time since I left their home for university. We seldom spoke on the phone. Once, three years passed without contact.” (28)

“I said it before: Race, or as everyone now likes to say, *ethnicity*, was never so much a source of anxiety as class” (223)

Zafar’s soul is alienated; even the sight of a person working as a servant makes him uncomfortable. He is “always embarrassed in the presence of cleaners, never able to shake off the thought that [he] ought to get up and help” (22). There is a struggle in Zafar between the two social strata that he occupies, which also represents his past and present..

Later he is faced with the global political games as they are played out in Bangladesh and Afghanistan. He moves in elite circles himself both in the west and the east. However, his past and his background from the working class helps him to understand the stereotyping that is common in South Asian communities even after they have migrated to the west. . The “hollowness” in Zafar can be traced to the fact that he could never place himself in a certain place and claim it:

“Zafar was an exile, a refugee, if not from war, then of war, but also an exile from blood. He was driven, I think, to find a home in the world of books, a world peopled with ideas, whose companionship is offered free and clear, and with the promise that questions would never long be without answers or better questions.” (34)

Another step towards his transnationality occurs when he starts to realize a distance between him and his father. That sudden realization came while visiting the library (chapter 4). The worn out face of his father looking through books and waiting for his son to finish his work touches him in a strange way. His father bears the marks of the atrocity and complexity of life that he had experienced through war and oppression, which Zafar never had to face. Zafar’s father calls to mind a diasporic condition, as even though it is not directly referred to,

denotes a man who is separated from his motherland. . He works in low and undignified jobs such as bus conducting or waiting in restaurants. . Despite never having fought in a war, he is called “major” (chapter 6). The irony of Zafar’s father’s life is revealed through the narration. London has made him weaker and brought him lower, even in the eyes of his son. As the narrator describes, he lacks a sense of “self-assurance”. His inhibition to meet his Oxford going son displays his insecurities. . Zafar on the other hand associate Bangladesh with a journey of critical self-exploration, and not as a return, which would be a hallmark of diaspora. Zafar never having experienced Bangladesh as his motherland, does not invest his going back to it with diasporic motives. And secondly not only has he grown up in London but achieved educational and social status there and therefore is spared the insecurity felt by migrants. His position may be more akin to an “exile” as in London he seeks acceptance for his English identity:

“When he finished, he looked at me and, in a voice that I am convinced bore a hint of accusation, he said: If an immigration officer at Heathrow had ever said “Welcome home” to me, I would have given my life for England, for my country, there and then. I could kill for an England like that” (66)

However, he does not cut off the relationship with Sylhet either. The “happiest four years” of his life were spent in Bangladesh. The distance and the childhood memory give him the luxury to build a very strong and yet a melancholic relationship with Bangladesh. His transnational identity becomes significant when he puts emphasis on the factual details about Bangladesh, America, England and Afghanistan. When he is asked about his origin, he never fails to mention that he was born in Bangladesh. He is often mistaken as an Indian because “for certain kind of Englishmen, the subcontinent remains Indian”. He was surprised and excited at the fact of two carpenters knowing trivial detail of the war of Independence of Bangladesh. Rahman insists that the war between East and West Pakistan was not a “civil



war” and neither does Zafar consider it as one. Zafar’s transnational identity allows him to criticise the so called Western or English notion of generalizing the eastern world. The binaries like “orient” and “occident” get blurred in Rahman’s novel as both the narrator and Zafar complicate the idea of “nationality” as they explore the characteristics of a dis-assembled subject.

Zafar has a fascination for maps (chapter 1, 12, 17). The heavy footnotes in the novel, collected from Zafar’s dairy, show that Rahman has a fascination with borders that only a transnational character can understand:

“Zafar surveyed all this, but his eyes settled on the far wall that was covered with my father’s collection of old maps, mounted and framed, of the Indian subcontinent under the British Raj, an area that today stretches from Pakistan across India to Bangladesh.” (10)

In *Midnight’s Children*, Saleem Sinai sees East Pakistan as a land full of “mysteries”. Rushdie’s novel uses the technique of magic realism and shows how the “newly liberated state of Bangladesh” from Indian or a Pakistani eyes. The defeat of the Pakistani army, of which Saleem Sinai is a member is described as the surrender of the Tiger (Niazi) and Sam (Maneckshaw, the commander of the Indian forces) in magical realist terms. Further the exoticization of the Sundarbans also adds to the distancing of Bangladesh, upholding it as the ultimate postcolonial state. The Sundarbans becomes an unreal space:

“.... the jungle which is so thick that history has hardly ever found the way in. The Sundarbans: it swallows them up.” (355)

Bangladesh is brought into view as a land of hope – another independence from yet another oppressive state – as well as mystery – a land that is ultimately unknowable. . All these factors enable us to read the novel as a postcolonial one. It is in Rahman’s novel, with Zafar’s visit to Bangladesh, that we get some of the answers to the mysteries that Rushdie was unable

to decipher. . Zafar went to Bangladesh for the first time when “[he] was twelve years old and travelling alone across a country that was neither home nor foreign to [him]”, or like “a traveller whose world moved about him” (38). The memory of this land remains fresh and is cherished by him. For example, when he went to Kabul, he could not help but recall the experience with a melancholy:

“... [Kabul] was a land of dusty, earthy tones. Whereas my beautiful Sylhet sang the song of seasons...” (19)

The undesired and yet mathematically calculated train crash in Sylhet made Zafar lose a newly-made friend.. The Shadow of unpredictability regarding Bangladesh’s future that we had found in *Midnight’s Children* is given a mathematical turn in Zafar’s description in *In the Light of What We Know*.

It is during Zafar’s second visit to Dhaka and the revelation of political corruption and the role of NGO’s as agents of neo-colonialism places Bangladesh squarely into the globalised world of today. In that sense *In the Light of What We Know* carries forward into the future (now present) that *Midnight’s Children* was unable to present. . Zafar is a war child and later his migration to London at a very young age highlights the way that postcolonial narratives transcend or overstep into the transnational form.

Rahman’s and Cole’s characters are no longer “seeking” their identity. Zafar comes to acknowledge the fact that there is no “home” for him:

“My friend, you know me well enough to know that I couldn’t possibly use the word *home* without couching it in so many caveats as to make it useless. I was going back to my father’s village, the family homestead, the place where I had lived as an infant, the place where I believe I was born.” (52)

Rahman’s narrator feels the emptiness inside but has reconciled himself with his transnational status. Julius on the other hand, celebrates his transnationality. His search for his grandmother

in Brussels, Oma, is not a part of a search for roots. . Rather it is the excitement of reconnecting with golden memories of his childhood:

I had a moment of illumination just then, a feeling that my oma... should see me again, or that I should make the effort to see her, if she was still in this world, if she was in a nursing home somewhere in Brussels. Perhaps seeing me would be some sort of late blessing for her. How I might go about actually locating her, I really had no idea, but the notion seemed suddenly real to me, as did its promise of reunion

Julius embraces the aesthetics of cosmopolitanism and also seeks the stories of different immigrants to fathom the contemporary world. His narrative technique is similar to that of with Zafar's and his friend's, as has been pointed out by said James Wood in his article in "The New Yorker" (2011).

Julius was born in Lagos to a German mother and a Nigerian father and "yet Julius has always felt like something of an outsider" (Miguel Syjuco). Multicultural parental background, migrating to America and visiting Brussels in search of his grandmother bring about the opportunity to understand the vagueness of his "nationality". His narration tells the reader that cultural or national identity is fixed only in a theoretical sense but in reality these identities are a matter of perception. This statement is not only true for Julius but for various other characters presented in this novel through Julius's voice. The process starts with his exploring the city and meeting immigrants in New York and Brussels. His narrative style shows that he has not only documented the stories of these immigrants and emigrants, but has also reflected on these by inter-linking their stories with his own. These stories are of loss, pain and compromise. These stories are also about human biases, generalization and stereotyping of the immigrant communities. Just as in *In The Light of What We Know, Open City* also shows that immigrants are considered to be outsiders even in a multicultural city like New York. These human stories actually provide Julius an opportunity to connect

contemporary politics, arts and philosophy. His narration connects his past and present along with the stories of different people, and his mental and physical connection with Germany, Nigeria and America are shown to reside in parallel lines. His long walks through these cities, the constant recalling of his past to reflect on his present, and collecting other people's stories reveal and justify his feeling of being an outsider. He does not belong to any particular place and that gives him access to go beyond the borders to appreciate the beauty and understand many places and cities. His walks through the roads and visits in places like cinema, museum, concerts, are like a philosophical journey where he connects arts and life. As Zafar's narration whirls through Afghanistan, Bangladesh, America and Britain connecting philosophy, life, politics and mathematics, Julius's narration thematically engages the reader in the same manner. This is where both these characters express the feelings of being transnational.

Julius's transnationality comes effortlessly as he was growing up in a multiracial family. Her mother was born and raised in Germany with his grandmother and his father was a Nigerian. His multiracial background traces back to his ancestors which puts him in a unique situation from where he can think of connecting to many places at once:

“Out there on that day, also, were all four of my own grandparents: the Nigerians, the Germans” (54)

When Dr. Maillotte asks him about his first and second language he could remember that once upon a time German used to be “the private language between [his] mother and [him]self until [he] was five (78). His father was an army person who disbelieved in the system of the Nigeria government and thus he sends his son to an academy for study:

“Discipline: the word had the force of a mantra among Nigerian parents, and my father, who had no military background himself, who indeed had a strong distaste for formalized violence, was taken in by it” (45)

He shares a strong bond with his father because his death really crushed him down and made him even more distant from his mother about Germany. Her voice, her talk on Germany in general made him feel even more detests. His mother and he hardly ever had any “intimate” (47) conversation and neither had he had any interest to improve the condition. Their relationship almost fell apart after his father’s death. Perhaps her “mother’s resentment of [his Oma]” and her clinging to German nation and language created the distance between them:

“My mother and I had become estranged from each other when I was seventeen, just before I left for America. I tend to connect this to my mother’s estrangement from her own mother. They might have fallen out for reasons as inchoate as the ones that separated my mother and me” (23) Julius’ nature never allowed him to like anyone who tries to “wear [him]” with any certain label. He does not want to be recognized by his “Nigerian” background and certainly not based on his skin colour. He simply put a rest on his conversation the black cab driver in Manhattan because “[he] was in no mood for people who tried to lay claims on [him]” (26). His detest for people who try to label him with culture or national identity is perhaps one of the most apparent reason why he can be identified as a transnational character:

“Kenneth was, by now, starting to wear on me, and I began to wish he would go away. I thought of the cabdriver who had driven me home from the Folk Art Museum—hey, I’m African just like you. Kenneth was making a similar claim” (33)

In Brussels he meets a lot of people and also that arouses a sense of excitement of really finding his root in the streets. Belgium has no root for him but simply a connecting bridge between him and his grandmother and yet he finds himself very closely related to the place.

Julius reflects on himself as he walks in the streets of Brussels and fathoms himself as a spontaneous transnational being:

“I began to wonder if Brussels hadn’t somehow drawn me to itself for reasons more opaque than I suspected, that the paths I mindlessly followed through the city followed a logic irrelevant to my family history” (64)

Julius is not a war childlike Zafar, nor he is a second generation immigrant but his parental background first instigated his nature of feeling like an outsider even as a child in Nigeria:

“The name Julius linked me to another place and was, with my passport and my skin colour, one of the intensifiers of my sense of being different, of being set apart, in Nigeria. I had a Yoruba middle name, Olatubosun, which I never used. That name surprised me a little each time I saw it on my passport or birth certificate, like something that belonged to someone else but had been long held in my keeping. Being Julius in everyday life thus confirmed me in my not being fully Nigerian.” (46)

Julius and Zafar share one thing in common that there is no sense of home in both of them. There is nothing but a pure denial of nationality in them.

Another aspect that is common in both these characters is that they compare stories of lives from different parts of the world affected by 9/11. Immigrants or not, it brings about a racial discrimination around the globe. Zafar in his visit to Afghanistan (described in the next chapter), mentions what atrocities the Afghans had to undergo due to the “war against terror”: “America I feel like—I am—a sexual being. Before 9/11, I was invisible, unsexed. How is it that after 9/11 suddenly I was noticed—not just noticed, but attractive, given the second look, sized up, even winked at? Was that the incidental effect of no longer being of a piece with the background, of being noticed, or was it sicker than that? Was this person among us no longer the meek Indian, the meek Pakistani, the sepoy, but fully man? Before

9/11, I was hidden behind the wall of colonial guilt after having been emasculated by a history of subjugation.” (Rahman 19)

Julius’s visit to the prison along with his ex-girlfriend revealed such experiences. Saidu Mohammad Casper, entered Spain and then America and as he was undocumented, had to change his name. Despite this, he is desperate to stay in America and not return to Mozambique as life there was becoming harsher. However, it is not the legal problems of nationality that Julius is referring to, it is the racial discrimination towards communities like “black”, “Muslim”, “African-American”, “Hispanic” and others. After 9/11, people’s lives seem to become more subject to discrimination:

“They brought me here, he said, and that was the end. I have been here ever since. I have only been outside three times, on the days when I went to court. The lawyer they assigned to me said I might have had a chance before 9/11. But it is okay, I am okay.”

(Cole 41)

Casper’s desperation to remain in the prison reflects the horrifying livelihood of people in the targeted nations like Afghanistan, Nigeria and others. Like Zafar, it is essential for Julius to know their stories to look through the criticality of today’s world politics with a mind free of “national” propagandas like “war on terror.

In Brussels, he befriends a man name Farooq. At first Julius felt taken aback from him and felt really “distant” from him (63). However, it is after knowing his struggle for being subjected at his University in 2001 for his religious background, Julius realized that he is not a “complainer” (79) but truly an exile who was denied from the promises of western liberal ideas:

“Europe was supposed to be the perfect answer to the oppression by the king in Morocco. I was disappointed” (71)

Through Julius' encounter with people who are exiles, it becomes clear that even being an "exile" is a matter of perception that can vary in people's mind. Farooq feelings towards conservative, oppressive Moroccan government have produced bitterness in him. And the false promises of acceptance and adherence in Europe have created a great disappointment in him. His talks of politics of "Palestine" and systematic abuse and injustice of world politics have gave him a greater platform to claim himself more as a man than a loyal citizen of any country. However, in the process, his prospect and dream was crushed but he does not stop hoping as he goes on to succeed his plans for the future. The opposite happens with Saidu as he was so desperate to survive even as an illegal, chained by the legality, subjected to imprisonment. He is also an exile but he senses a diaspora when he think about his home and yet want to continue without having one in a hope of remaining in America.

Julius, Zafar and his unnamed friend; all three of them are transnational characters. Nevertheless, the transnational identity does not require any particular inclination to start to build in the first place. The versatile backgrounds of these characters are the proof of that. All they have in common is their floating identity that does not have any root and sometimes it does not even seek one. Zafar dwells in sever rage and melancholy when he think about his national and ancestral nation. Rahman's narrator is not reluctant and yet not very enthusiastic to take a peek through his parental roots. Julius suffers from loneliness not because he is an exile. His loneliness spurs an enthusiasm to learn about details of human quality of life in a diaspora. He shows an effortless desire to search for his "place" and "story" that proves that transnationalism is also a matter of choice. The global mobility has given a rise to the extension of identity that spans borders. The immigrants of west are either in the process of adjusting with different culture or integrating them. In the process individual can encounter



significance of transnationalism that shows the various aspect of accepting one's identity in many forms.

In the next chapter I will explore how a global, transnational citizen like Zafar encounters the horror of geopolitics in the name of globalization. The exploration, even in Zafar's narration, is possible because of his capability to look into the follies of west despite of being one. The transnational state allows him to seek through the knowledge that is always hidden and incomplete due to the secrecy of governing and organizational bodies.

### Chapter 3

Tracing Neo-colonialism – *In The Light of What We Know:*

New Face of colonialism in Afghanistan

“...the UN emerged chiefly as a result of an agreement among the great powers led at that time by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin. They concluded that the founding of a world organisation was in the interests of their respective states. One should ask why they concluded this and then set those reasons alongside the idealism.”

– Mark Mazower (The Boston Globe, 2009)

Postcolonialtheory emerged from literary and cultural studies while the concept of globalization has developed in the field of sociology and economics. However, their interdisciplinary nature has made them meet and struggle on different levels. Many argue that globalization is the natural consequence of the colonialism and later the imperialistic “logic of Modernism” said Lila and Rota (5). Recently, some critics have argued that globalization is the consequence of the postcolonial movement, therefore that the latter is the cultural logic of the former on the basis of their shared common grammar of difference, hybridity, and diasporic movement (Lila and Rota 5). Zafar, despite being a westerner, scrutinises the follies of western intrigues in Afghanistan under the wing of globalized geopolitics. The focus of the chapter is to analyze, through Zafar’s narration, to what extent global rganizations are systematically taking over the geopolitical subject matters and using diplomacy to neo-colonize a nation like Afghanistan.

Said’s introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*(1994) talks about the effects of imperialism and the extent to which it influences once-colonized nations. “The main battle of imperialism is over land” (Introduction xii- xiii) says Said while describing the nature of

colonialism. This brings us to the question of the contemporary “war against terrorism” and the need to understand the nature of this battle. If we look at Said’s note then we can claim that the battle is perhaps over land in Afghanistan since it is the only thing that is permanent. The act of “colonization” in a global world has taken a new shape but the battle is still over the land and resources. However, the process of colonization in Afghanistan has become a gateway of many other opportunities that are complex and difficult to attain. The dispute between the “Talibans” and international organization is not truly a fight against evil and the establishment of good. It is a process, a chain where many wealthy nations are involved to get economic advantages and to protect diplomatic relationships between western countries. Colonel Mushtaq says: “When you play chess, does it matter whether you were black or white in a previous game? In one game, you are white, in another black” (Rahman 320). It is like a chess game and that is the reason why usurping a country or colonizing a nation is no longer possible. What remains possible is to demolish its whole system and to take it over underneath the guise of diplomatic deals. AfDARI, a well-funded organization from Australia, governed by American and English diplomats, controls the president of Afghanistan. This is how neo-colonialism operates. Neither the US nor the UK government is claiming to take over the nation but certainly claiming war against the extremists. In the process and very secretly they are paralyzing the country by bashing the legal system and taking over the government. Paul Jay in his book *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (2010) has argued that globalization and colonization come as a package. Since globalization is considered to be a postcolonial issue, we tend to forget that the process of globalization started since the beginning of the history of colonization that includes trade, and mixing of cultures and languages. What Jay suggests, found in Hines’ review is that “in order to understand contemporary globalisation, one that has come out of some sort of disagreement, we are in danger of drawing a skewed picture of globalization and

colonialism” (Hines n.p). Today’s International and transnational organizations are being used as a tool to subjugate once colonized lands, which remain vulnerable and exploited even now. Naomi Klein in her essay “Baghdad year zero” talked about the power play of American neo-conservatives over the “land” of Iraq and Afghanistan. She commented on the post 9/11 situation in the parts of globe where the “war against terror” physically took place. She compares the role of “talibans” in Afghanistan to the “neocons” Iraq. As Taliban rose to take over, they in the process threw the country to a “debauched Hades of opium and sex slavery” (Klein 18).

To come to the novel: Zafar’s story in *In The Light of What We Know* has multiple focuses. One of those focuses is his visit to Afghanistan. He was driven to Afghanistan for emotional reasons, as a response to the call of his one true love, Emily Hampton-Wyvern. Zafar’s journey portrays the neo-colonial rise of empire in the contemporary world, and Afghanistan becomes the main site where this new power nexus is situated. Through Zafar’s voice and exploration two very important facts are highlighted. One of which is the way in which western powers deal with the land, camouflaging it as a “war on terror”, but with the main purpose of establishing their own presence in this ‘other’ land:

“9/11? The financial crisis?

External events, events that come out of the blue, said Zafar, changing lives all the time, every year, if not every day. Our choices are made, our will flexed, in the teeth of events that overwhelm and devour us.” (Rahman 79)

This includes the intervention of so called NGOs to save the land from rotting. The placement of AfDARI and the involvement of citizens like Sulaiman with UN along with other “white” people are, from the very beginning, being questioned and negatively analysed by Zafar. The second aspect of this political situation is how the country and its people respond to such involvement or invasion of westerners. It is interesting how Afghanistan, from the very

beginning of the novel is being shown as a land that needs “western” attention to improve their condition. The novel never clarifies why an international organization such as the UN enters or how they are working for the development of Afghanistan. While narrating Zafar’s experiences in Afghanistan, 9/11 and the “war on terror” are often mentioned. The continuous revelations by Zafar show us that the manoeuvres of post-coloniality may have changed their form and style, but globalization uses the same manoeuvres and tactics to establish a neo-colonial world order. The chapter discusses the role of globalization as it turns ‘other’ lands (Afghanistan) into a neo-colonial state and how various characters (on both sides of the colonial/global binary) are involved in the process.

Kwame Nkrumah in his book, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism*, (1965) defined neo-colonialism as a systematic geopolitical power that takes over a country’s economic and political system without usurping its “independence and all the outward trappings of international sovereignty” in theory (3). Nkrumah’s description of the nature of neo-colonialism describes how western countries are paralyzing the governance systems of countries like Afghanistan:

“The issue is not what return the foreign investor receives on his investments. He may, in fact, do better for himself if he invests in a non-aligned country than if he invests in a neo-colonial one. The question is one of power. A State in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny” (Introduction 4)

Arundhati Roy in her article, “The Algebra of Infinite Justice”, also describes the pre and post 9/11 actions taken by USA. Many people have joined the US Army from the sense of national responsibility (Rahman 301) and people have taken academic interest in describing Islam’s standpoint because “they’ve been politicised by the war on terror” (111). The irrational responses (280) from American citizens come along with the irrational action western world takes to control the situations by neo-colonizing countries like Afghanistan:

“Chicago, and apparently more people died in the resulting increase in car accidents in the six months after 9/11, in the increase alone, than in the attacks themselves. The whole thing is irrational, of course, the response to the attacks, the individual human responses and the collective political responses.” (280)

Afghanistan is a land which is struggling to achieve a stable identity and place, trying to come out of its marginalised status, and shedding off its political corruption and instability. . Roy shows that since 1979, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union had led to the involvement of the governments of the U.S.A. and Pakistan with Afghanistan, and they had groomed the “mujahids” who later turned into today’s Taliban. Even then, control was established through international organizations, NGO’s and local agencies, as the political and economic hold of such organisation lay with western powers such as the US, Australia and Britain. Naomi Klein has also described how the oil market in Iraq has been controlled, with the US imposing or withdrawing sanctions. Sanctions had turned a prosperous country like Iraq into a barren land, and the people had really suffered shortages of essentials such as food or medicines. She states that “Iraq was to the neo-cons (neoconservatives of America) what Afghanistan was to the Taliban: the one place on Earth where they could force everyone to live by the most literal, unyielding interpretation of their sacred texts” (18). The history of US’s involvement in countering the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proves how CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and ISI (Intelligence Services of Pakistan) worked together to fight against a democratic order. According to Roy, it was during that period that “mujahids” were trained and patronized by US intelligence. So the battle in Afghanistan is not really a fight against terrorism as is claimed, nor is it a fight for freedom. It has been and still is about controlling and maintaining power. Zafar, at the end, remarks on this, saying that there is no common friend or enemy, it is just business as long as westerners can profit:

“Whose side were they each on? The question only makes sense if there are sides to speak of. The West does not care to be reminded, over and over, that the Americans supported jihadis in the war against Soviet occupation. But if my enemy’s enemy is my friend, what is the quality of a friendship founded on common hatred? What have we each learned about the other, when all we need to know is that we share a hatred?” (317)

This is perhaps a very good description of the “globalized” form of colonization that has no central power or any particular “colonial land”. Rather it is bound together by the common interest of powerful countries to formulate a subtle system that successfully camouflages the ‘conquering’ spirit under a mask of humanitarianism. Zafar identifies this as the “new” style of colonizing a land where the colonizers enter saying that they need to fix a “god damn war zone” (305). It is very important for the west to keep up the good image because it serves their business well, “the new colonials [need to]care very deeply what the Afghanis think” (253). People with fine diplomatic skills are appointed to take over the executive positions of the multinational organizations placed in Afghanistan. It is necessary for the organizations to maintain secrecy and uphold the balance of power. The UN officials hardly discuss these matters, but while away their time in foreign clubs and bars. Zafar’s remarks on such parties reveal the true nature of the political and social situation of the country:

“In several months of working in South Asia, I had not smelled that pungent admixture of alcohol and human bodily odour. It came from another world. The music was loud, the soles of my feet tingling with the vibrations, a volume to muffle the clamour of sexual gambits unbuckling over the scene. It was a scene of horror. This is the freedom for which war is waged, in the venerable name of which the West sends its working-class heroes to fight and die. If the Afghanis had been asked, would they have allowed this blight on their home? Is this what Emily was fighting for?” (234)

So what was the fight really about? The post 9/11 situation asserting itself again and again and through the western voice we only learn how the country is “at war” and in “misery” (chapter 2, 17, 20, 21). Arundhati Roy in her article “The Algebra of Infinite Justice” points out few important facts about the exercise of western power over lands like Afghanistan and Iraq. She notes that America has waged war against people whom they hardly know and the rest of the world has to take only their words into account since there is a lack of evidence which proves who is responsible for the 9/11 attack, as the results of the investigations have been kept obscure and the rest of the world does not know about the steps leading to the decisions taken in its aftermath. Zafar talks about American ideology with wit and sarcasm even with admiration:

“I love America for an idea. The reality is important but ambiguous. I love America for the clear idea behind the cloudy reality.... It is the idea of hope, that grand, audacious idea that makes the Britisher blush with embarrassment” (19)

Through many instances the secrecy of UN missions and dubious works of NGO’s and a local authority called AfDari is made clear. The involvement of Afghani governing bodies with UN officials are subjected to international political associations that is certainly not benefiting the nations. These organizations are nothing but political agencies set by westerners to control the truth and maintain their new form of colonization:

“The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was well established. Land Cruisers were roaring into Kabul; U.S. helicopters laden with UNAMA staff churned the dust at makeshift airfields in outlying districts; and, not least, up and running, pulling pints and pouring shots, was the UN bar in Kabul.....a hundred important people were in place, housed in a compound adjoining that bar. The stage was set” (82)



The important people who are almost writing the fate of a country are part of UN and their meetings and discussions are not held in an office but in the UN bar, reflecting how political matters are taken on a very light note. This also reflects the secrecy of the organizations that do not want to discuss blueprints in front of Zafar since he is never counted as “one of them”. “The stage” which Zafar mentions, reflects the duality of the people and the organization itself.

“AfDARI had been established by Australia’s overseas aid agency, with Taliban acquiescence, a few years after the Soviet withdrawal in the early 1990s, though its funding had come from a variety of sources. It was involved in a number of small aid and development activities primarily focused on Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and, of course, Kabul, but was now being sidelined by UNAMA.” (21)

Wealthy and powerful countries collaborate under the guise of aid organizations. AfDari is perhaps a fictional name, but a representative of real organizations that are controlling the government and world politics linked with it. Sulaiman in one account says that people like “the director of AfDARI... do not have the shame even to hide the sound of what they are doing” (84) while they are using the lower class women for their pleasure.

The actual “war against terror” is never really visible in the novel. There is no battle field where soldiers are fighting in Rahman’s novel. The “war” is just a concept, a diplomatic stand. That showthrough political innuendo the process of holding control over a nation that is technically “independent”. Afghanistan is depicted through the various organisations, where both military and peace communities belong to the same nation or side. The war is supposed to be against the Taliban to save the “rotten” country Afghanistan. However, in the novel, characters who are involved with Afghanistan are never seen to fight, confront or even discuss the issue of the Taliban or terrorism rather, they are shown either as engaging in

some obscure business or enjoying the luxuries provided for high end officials. Zafar's encounter with Nicky at the UN bar highlights western views on the systematic oppression of Afghanistan:

“What's it really about?

It's about development and reconstruction.

Nicky was on a fact-finding mission with a women's microfinance NGO, lending small amounts to women who want to organize themselves into small enterprises.

We can do some good here, she continued. This is a miserable country, Zafar.

I don't need to explain that to you. It needs help. Isn't it that simple?

Is anything that simple?” (21)

Geopolitics is the main ground on which neo-colonialism asserts itself and around which it revolves. According to Nkrumah:

“neo-colonialism, like colonialism, is an attempt to export the social conflicts of the capitalist countries. The temporary success of this policy can be seen in the ever widening gap between the richer and the poorer nations of the world. But the internal contradictions and conflicts of neo-colonialism make it certain that it cannot endure as a permanent world policy.” (5)

This indicates the placement of NGO's and UN missions that both supply aid and control policies. In many instances, Zafar questions the purpose of the whole mission.

It is important to note that there is no suggestion of the previous history of Afghanistan, which is described as a land which seems to have been just waiting for western “civilised” forces to overtake it. The novel, or Zafar's narration entirely overlooks the Afghan perspective: we hear nothing about how they suffered or felt. We learn a bit about it through Zafar's conversations with Sulaiman. Neither are western political interests clearly spelt out. .

“The General Welfare of our eastern Empire”, is how Chapter two opens, describing the local organisation called AfDARI. It is an aid agency funded by Australia which had been in operation since the Soviets left Afghanistan, and had been established during the Taliban period in the 1990’s. Since then, the funding for this agency has been coming from various sources. This shows how western powers had been collaborating with the Taliban who are now considered the enemy. Also it shows how diffuse and spread out the sources of power are, as AfDari proceeds from being an Australian-funded NGO to being controlled by many other donors from all over the western world, pointing to a sense of collective power. The very ambiguous relationship with the Talibans– fighting against them and yet financing them – shows how commercial and economic reasons permeate political actions. It is no longer limited to Said’s idea of centre vs periphery or the binaries of colonialism; rather as Lila and Rota suggest, it is a distribution of power without any centre, which is one of the main characteristics of globalization. This system of power and control helps to distribute “benefits” in a complex manner making it hard to define and trace the collaborators in this power nexus.

The people of Afghanistan can be seen as divided into two groups. One group is supporters of the westerners and have no (or very little) power of their own. People like Hamid Karzai and Mohammad Jalaluddin personally benefit through the vulnerability of their own people. However, Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, is not discussed much in the novel, and the only fact mentioned about him is that that he was in the oil business once upon a time. This suggests that he has a influential position and of course Rahman drew the statement to emphasise his favourable position for westerners in his own nation. As he is hardly mentioned, he cannot be seen as a big role player in the novel but who certainly has the support of western power due to his economic influence in the oil market. This gives an impression of a puppet government and president. On the other hand, narrator’s childhood

American friend Crane, who is somehow involved in AfDari. Crane describes his heinous and perverted act (243), his raping the Afghan girl. But it is not clear why the family of the girl give their consent to such a horrible proposition. The novel merely gives a glimpse of the nature of the political domination of the outsider over Afghanistan. The notion highlights the secrecy and the limitation of Zafar's or any other character's knowledge on the geopolitical subjects. The legal system is becoming paralyzed due to the lack of transparency regarding systematic abuse of the organizations. The family of the girl certainly is not in a position to complain or ask for justice from the legal system:

“The girl's father knows what's going on all right, he explains, but they don't care so long as he sweetens the deal. The father stays away and the mother takes the kids out and he gets the girl and the little Afghan house all to himself” (243)

Through Zafar's narration, the readers get fragmented chunks of information, which shows how Zafar himself has access only to bits and pieces of information. Zafar's situation as an insider/outsider makes him an uncertain and perhaps even threatening character. British, but of South Asian Bangladeshi origins, his loyalties seem to be shifting, thus posing a threat to the imperial powers. . These bits of information also help to apprise the reader of the gravity of the situation, which echoes the secrets and mysteries that western powers do not totally reveal.

The other kind of Afghan people we are introduced to are those who are direct victims of western assault. Suaif is perhaps the representative of that part of the people who have been paralyzed and subdued to such an extent that they do not have the scope or ability to resist or raise their voice. Both Sulaiman and Suaif are highly qualified and certainly over qualified for their positions. The burden of survival leads Suaif to do clerical jobs, despite his engineering degree. Sulaiman, on the other hand has a very important and crucial role in the institution AfDARI. He holds the second most powerful position and yet has no power in the

organisation. . At the beginning of the novel, Sulaiman does not seem to favour the westerners, but patronises them as he perhaps has no way out:

“Should I kill this son of a pig? What I say to him is that he must be a very happy man. You bet your ass, he says, and laughs. So now you see. It is not enough to destroy the country; they rape our girls and they humiliate our men”  
(243)

Sulaiman proposes to Zafar to become the head of AfDARI. This made it look like he, along with the whole nation, is in dire need of a good leader who will speak and work on their behalf, and will talk on behalf of the lost and silenced voices. However, at the end of the novel, Crane’s death, shatter the grounds on which Zafar’s reality rests. Zafar was warned against the UN club on the day that the bomb went off there. Maurice is sure of Sulaiman’s involvement in the bombing, but it is never made clear why he had sent the message to Zafar to remain at AfDARI that morning. Emily also was removed from the place before the bombing took place as if she already knew it was going to happen. Sulaiman and Zafar’s plan to keep Crane under control by blackmailing him suddenly seemed pointless. This is an evidence of how the truths and oppression turn into secrets and conspiracies:

“This is, as you put it, a war zone and what happens in Kabul stays in Kabul but only if you’re discreet.” (Rahman 307)

The bombing itself is a depressing act of resistance as it does not serve any purpose and appears as a random act. . Crane, who was talking against the ongoing oppression, is killed in the bombing, making it even more pointless. The bombing only helps to justify the western control of the situation.

In the second chapter of the novel the topic of Afghanistan is raised with wit and sarcasm, pointing to the absurdities involved in the power play. The talk about the NGO’s, the luxuries provided by UN funds, the shady Afghan profit seekers depict a murky and

corrupt scene. Zafar himself appears as an uncertain character, and his refusal to take over AfDari draw attention towards him. Zafar remains in the dark about the bombing and Crane's death. Zafar kept on questioning Emily in his head and calculating every single second to see who might be involved in this incident. At the end, nothing is clear. Perhaps it is Zafar's South Asian background, but perhaps it is also because he himself has kept himself away from the power players.

Zafar compares the beauty of the land of Afghanistan to that of Bangladesh. He sees this country in a different light from the other people in different organization perceive it, even differently from how Sulaiman, a representative of the nation's general people, views it. Zafar's involvement in the national matters of Afghanistan displays that he has the mind to view global circumstances from the factual and transnational perspective. Zafar's curiosity about the land is not just about its political formation but its natural beauty also. His sojourn in Bangladesh and Afghanistan are reported in a similar manner. Zafar sees beyond the chaos. He describes the land from its geographical and natural location, portraying his transnational selfhood that wants to transcend the complexities of the systems of oppression.

“As I looked out the window, I saw a land bleaker and more beautiful than anything I had seen in Bangladesh, and I could see how this place of hard habitation bloomed a romance that condemned it to Western intrigue.” (19)

The focus of this chapter is to analyze the notions of colonization that no longer has a central or a periphery but certainly has a system to intrigue its power to a country with lesser power. The study shows how 9/11 plays a role to create a scope to attack or improve a land for western countries. The lack of transparency evokes the notion of subjugation within the legal system in Afghanistan. The rape of the girl and the bombing in the cafe, are crimes. One does not get exposure and the latter is debunked with false accusations through media. This

chapter emphasises on the views of neo-colonization to address the contemporary geopolitical issues through Rahman's novel.

## Conclusion

Globalization is a concept that represents the strengthening of economic, cultural, and political connections across the globe in the early 21st century. Many large corporations have been operating globally for decades. Global processes are closely related to transnationalism yet tend to be separate from specific national boundaries says Huff (Encyclopaedia Britannica). Transnational processes attach and surpass one or more nation-states. The impact of the transnational migration of groups of people, although diverse, needs to be understood within the framework of economic and political globalization. The modification in lifestyle among migrated groups is shaped both by globalization and transnationalism and is mutually reinforcing.

The concept of political transnationalism proposes a weakening of the control a nation-state has over its populations and territory. The concept of nationality has also been an imaginary one, and transnationalism highlights that imaginary status of nation states. Transnationalism has various means to project its formation such as multinational organization and individuals with multiple heritage. Richard Huff in his entry , “Transnationalism”, has mentioned that the “Inceas[ing] immigration to developed countries in response to global economic development has resulted in multicultural societies where immigrants are more likely to maintain contact with their culture of origin and less likely to assimilate” ( Encyclopaedia Britannica n.p). Julius encounters people like Dr. Maillotte, Professor Saito and many other, each different from each other, and each different in a



different way. These characters do not show any loyalty to any particular land but make remarks based on facts and their experiences:

“Our society has made itself open for such people, but when they come in, all you hear is complaints. Why would you want to move somewhere only to prove how different you are? And why would a society like that want to welcome you? But if you live as long as I do, you will see that there is an endless variety of difficulties in the world. It’s difficult for everybody.” (Cole 79)

We have found aspects of transnationalism in Rahman and Cole’s novels where the main characters not only assimilate cultural boundaries but reject the idea of loyalty and live in a complete state of uncertainty. However, there are characters like the Nigerian cab driver, Saidu, Dr. Gupta and others who having settled in the west, have accustomed themselves to western culture and habits even while they reflect and inhabit their ancestral culture, race and religion. Similarly, Zafar in *In The Light of What We Know*, Shows profound empathy towards Afghanistan and his deep bond with Bangladesh is clearly visible. Chapter 2 of my thesis explained why transnationalism is hard to define as it acquires different forms in various situations. There is no clear articulation of transnationalism except for the fluid flow of nationalisms in an individual subject. Loyalty to the nation to which the individual emigrates may compete equally with adherence to another culture or religion. With amplified global mobility and access to prompt worldwide communication technology, boundaries dissolve and territorial controls imposed by traditional nation-state become less relevant. Chapter 1

laid out the idea of transnationalism and its connection with global mobility that is explored in this thesis. This has been followed on by Chapter 2 which drew in the relevance of these movements and concepts to Rahman and Cole's novels. The process of assimilation or integration of cultures among the characters from *Open City* and *In The Light of What We Know* highlights the shapelessness of their identity. These identities are marred, fragmented and yet accepted and sometimes celebrated.

The thesis also suggests that due to globalization, the enhanced power of international organizations has found a systematic way of colonizing poor countries. In many instances, officials of the UN in Rahman's novel showed Afghanistan as a country without hope due to its poverty and lack of education. But surprisingly, in the novel the steps to prevent such misery are not shown to be taken by any of the characters or organisations. Nothing fruitful ever done. The unstated relationship between the President of Afghanistan and UN officials displays the geopolitical practices that are responsible for the neo-colonization of the land. The last part of the study on neo-colonialism emphasizes that the land and the self (individual) are affected by the dual and ironical processes of globalization. Transnationalism and globalisation mask the despair of vulnerable and poor countries, even while there is an effort to integrate cultures in a global manner. This process of ne-colonisation that is globalisation can best be challenged by transnational characters, which through belonging nowhere, have a greater understanding of both "here" and "there", or of the creation of new peripheries. This is why the study of transnational novels is so interesting.

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