Migration happens either by choice or by compulsion. Some people migrate in search of greener pastures and are called as economic migrants whereas some people migrate due to problems or issues in their homeland and are called as asylum seekers. Though there are various types of migrants, I focus on economic migrant, the type applicable to the novel. The economic migrants are “individuals who move from their home countries to host countries in response to capitalist “push” or “pull” factors within local, regional, national and global economies” (Braziel 33-34). The push factors consists of “economic recession or depression, unemployment, scarcity of resources, poverty and famine in home economies” and the pull factors are due to “economic boom in host countries, labor shortages, and increased demand for skilled employees and service-sector workers” (Braziel 34).

Identity plays a major role in the life of an immigrant. Identity can be defined as “identity scheme that is comprised of socially constructed sets of cognitive, affective, and motivational elements – that is meanings, values, and practices – that are learned and associated with a particular way of life” (Martinez-Ebers 33-34). Identity scheme is further divided into “personal identities” and “social identities,” personal identities are “identity schemes associated with the unique relationships that we have with specific individuals” [...] and social identities are “identities we have as members of particular social groups” (Martinez-Ebers 34). The identity issues lead to cross cultural conflict such as nostalgia, exile, dislocation, discrimination, etc. The immigrants who face cross cultural crisis thus resort to assimilation and acculturation to adapt to the new life in the host land. Assimilation is “to abandon all identification with and care for the homeland of one’s ancestors and to adopt instead the culture of mainstream America” (Martinez-Ebers 40). The best method for incorporation into the mainstream culture is “Slow Acculturation,” which “allows first-generation immigrants and their children to preserve and reap the benefits of their
inherited cultures and identities while also gaining identification with American mainstream cultures” (Martniez-Ebers 40).

In the novel Lovetorn, Girish Agarwal is an economic migrant. It is due to the “pull” factors that Girish opts to move to the U.S. and also makes his family members move to the U.S. Asha, his wife, does not like to leave India, but due to her husband’s dream, she leaves India, her homeland and thus faces forced migration. Though Shalini and Sangita also migrate with their parents, they do not feel it as forced, they are willing to migrate with their parents. It is Asha, the first generation immigrant who feels dislocated in the process of immigration. Due to jetlag, she is unable to sleep and at 2.00 a.m in the night, she watches television and confesses to her daughter Shalini about how miserable, she feels, “We’ve been here less than twenty four hours and I’m miserable” (Daswani 13). She feels annoyed at her dislocation and is angry with her husband and complains to her daughter, “Your father isn’t, [...] He’s upstairs snoring away” (Daswani 13). Asha feels displaced. She is caught between the Indian Home and the Diaspora Home, she is unable to forget the Indian home and finds it difficult to consider the home in the U.S. as her own. She estranges herself from the family members. She does not take care of her husband or her children. She stays aloof, she sleeps for long hours, isolates herself and locks herself in a room. When her husband requests her to join for shopping she stays quiet, she locks herself in a room, only when Girish tells her, he will take her to the Indian store, Delhi Delites and Supplies, Asha gets ready. The store Delhi Delites and Supplies run by Mr. Ranjit Singh makes one feel Indian. Asha who feels alienated in the U.S. feels at home in Delhi Delites and she listens to the Indian Bollywood music played in the store and smells the scents of the Indian aroma available in the store.

Once the daughters’ school starts and her husband and daughters leave home, Asha is left all alone at home and feels alienated. One day when the children return from school, they are shocked to find their mother missing. The daughters inform their father about their missing mother. Mrs. Betsy, a neighbour informs Girish that she saw her near the bus stop in Dover Drive. Girish realises where Asha would have gone, so he takes his daughters and goes to Delhi Delites and finds Asha there. Asha who misses her homeland finds some solace in Delhi Delites. When the family members take her back home, she feels homesick, she lives a life of exile. She doesn’t mingle with her family members. When Girish’s boss comes home, she stays in her room. Unlike Indian women who are very hospitable towards the guests in the Indian setup, Asha is not hospitable and her daughters do the cooking for the guest. After many entreaties she comes down and when they speak, Jeremy talks about better prospects in the U.S. to Asha and she immediately displaces her anger on him, “You think you have done us a great favour by bringing us here, as if we were beggars in need of rescuing” (Daswani 67). Asha reveals her anguish and pain of leaving the homeland to her husband and tells him, “I am here because I had no choice. But don’t expect me to like it. I will do my duty as your wife, and when our time is up in this country, we will go back” (Daswani 67). Asha leaves the room after pouring out her grievances of displacement and makes everyone sad.

Asha’s plight deteriorates, Girish takes her to a psychiatrist who checks her and informs Girish that Asha has clinical depression. She isolates herself and stays in her room and watches Indian channels to feel at home in the hostland. Asha is given drugs to cope with her situation. Girish advises her to adapt to the new place, “You cannot continue this. We have all settled in here, and are leading very comfortable lives. Please Asha just snap out of it now” (Daswani 104).

The author through Asha tries to highlight the hardships faced by the first generation immigrant woman who settle as homemakers in the hostland and how they are caught between two cultures. Asha lives in her cocoon and is unable to assimilate or acculturate to the culture of the homeland. She tries her best but in vain, her problems get complicated, Dr. Gupta advises her to meet the support group and gives her new pills. He also advises the family members not to leave her alone and give her the personal and psychological space in the diaspora home and make her feel comfortable in the hostland.

When Shalini has a conflict about her relationship with Vikram, her fiancé and Toby, her friend in the hostland, she approaches her mother and sobs to her, “Ma, I need you” (Daswani 191), Asha immediately responds to give the emotional support to her daughter and says, “Don’t worry beta. I’m here” (Daswani 191). Girish too spends time with his family, he gives additional care and concern to his wife, by taking her to the beach and as they enjoy the breeze, Asha tries to feel at home as the nostalgic memories flash in her mind about the Chowpatty beach in Mumbai.
where she had gone with her daughters when they were young and she turns to look around and see her daughters enjoy in the beach in the U.S. and feels happy to be with her family, who were initially too busy with their school and work. It is very difficult for the first generation immigrants to adapt to the new culture. And being a homemaker, who is left all alone when the other members are exposed to the mainstream culture, outside the home, makes the transition process of the homemaker, a very complicated one. When Asha is made to feel important and taken good care by the family members, her condition improves. It is slow acculturation which will help such immigrants to adapt to the new land. Thus with the help of her family members who try to give her the comfort in the hostland, Asha tries to integrate towards the end of the novel.

If Asha, the mother, who is a first generation immigrant faces hardships in incorporating to the lifestyle in the host culture; her daughter Shalini too faces discrimination, racism, and the politics of difference in the school. Though Shalini and Sangita visit the U.S. for the first time, Sangita, the younger sister integrates easily to the host culture. Shalini, finds it difficult in the host land. In India, she has lived with thirty seven people of four generations in a joint family setup and in the U.S., she lives with her parents and sibling, she thinks of her cousins, Geeta and Leela. She got engaged in India, with Vikram, son of Bhushan, a close friend of her father, and she finds it difficult to cope with the estrangement from her fiancé due to the trip to the U.S.

In the U.S., Shalini finds discrimination in the school. Her classmates, Sasha and Magali tease her on a daily basis; Charlie and another classmate too comment, "So what happened? All the call centre jobs were taken and you had to come here?" and hurt Shalini (Daswani 28). Through Charlie’s remark, the author points out the misconceptions, the natives have about the immigrants. The natives feel Indian immigrants take away their jobs and cause unemployment, whereas the economists believe that it is immigration which opens up job opportunities for natives. This kind of misconception puts the Indian immigrants in an emotional issue and they face different kinds of racism and find it difficult to adapt to their new identities in the society. Shalini who is already hurt by the snide remarks is further insulted, Sasha calls her Miss Al Qaeda and also gives her "Cream Hair Remover for the face" (Daswani 40). Shalini faces "everyday racism" due to her classmates’ attitudes in school. Everyday racism is a concept where the immigrants face “acts of prejudice, antipathy, discrimination and hatred” (Braziel 134). In the Halloween Horror Rock Show, Shalini is teased by her classmates, she feels the pangs of discrimination and is annoyed at her helpless plight, she states, “I felt angry, angry that even after a few weeks here, people still felt the need to pick on me, and angrier still that I didn’t have a clue what to do about it” (Daswani 50-51). Shalini feels the politics of difference due to anti-immigrant hostility.

Shalini who does not want to share her problems with her sister or parents finds solace when she meets another Indian friend Renuka. Shalini’s father makes her meet the Indian couple Haresh Idrani, his wife Poonam and their daughter Renuka. Renuka becomes very friendly with Shalini and advises her to adapt to the new culture. Immigrants feel comfortable with “immigrant enclaves – communities of coethnic immigrants” (Martinez-Ebers 33). Shalini finds comfortable to share her immigrant hardships with Renuka who helps her to grow accustomed to the new culture. She takes her to movies, and other places such as “Santa Monica,” “Santa Barbara” and “Prema’s Traditional Indian Beauty Services for Threading” (Daswani 86).

When Shalini performs well in her tests, Mr. Jeffries makes Shalini the tutor for Charlie. Whereas Charlie who has got a D in his test refuses to accept her as a tutor, “What? He snarled. No way. I’m not having her anywhere near me” (Daswani 94). Charlie’s attitude towards Shalini shows how the immigrants are treated as outsiders and as cultural others. Shalini agrees to teach him after he gets convinced to accept her as a tutor.

Shalini tries to take steps to incorporate into the mainstream culture, she volunteers for the school project and enrols her name and thus gets new set of friends: Amina, Justine, Patrick, Catherine and Toby. Shalini finds comfort in the new group who are also immigrants of different ethnicities. Intermingling with the new friends help Shalini overcome her problems of discrimination. Amina who has started Food4Life helps Shalini in the integration process.

When Amina assigns Shalini the job of liaising with Toby for the concert, Shalini is caught between two cultures again, Her love for her fiancé Vikram and her liking for Toby in the U.S. puts her into a conflict. Meeting Toby makes her forget about Vikram and she starts thinking about Toby as her “perpetual imaginary companion” (Daswani 112). Shalini realises the fact that her family will not approve of Toby, as she is already engaged to Vikram, and Vikram too will not approve: “What of Vikram? My betrothed and my intended? Was I even allowed to be thinking of another boy? What would my parents say? And his? And worst of all, Dada?” (Daswani 113).
Shalini is caught between the heritage culture and the mainstream culture. In the heritage culture of India, arranged marriages are accepted whereas in the mainstream culture, love marriages are also accepted. Shalini who is taking steps to gain the social identity in the mainstream culture, tries to be friendly with Toby and others. As she gains proximity to Toby, she distances herself from Vikram, she doesn’t mention about Toby in her mails to Vikram. Though Shalini is in touch with Vikram, she becomes more intimate with Toby and joins the summer camp because of him and enjoys his company. She has certain inhibitions to be in the company of Toby, so she tells him the truth about her fiancé in India. Thus Toby who comes to know about her relationship with Vikram distances himself, while Shalini is heartbroken caught between Vikram, the lover of the East and Toby, the lover of the West.

Vikram pays a surprise visit to the U.S. and finds about Shalini’s new relationship with Toby. He sees that Shalini shares a very close relationship with Toby in School and understands her aloofness from him. He takes the ring from Shalini’s hand and gives it to her and tells her to use it only if she is willing to continue the engagement. He also gives her the assurance that he will manage the issue with his family members. Thus Shalini who is caught between the cultures regarding her love is able to solve her problem and continue her life in the U.S. Thus she finally tries to acculturate to the mainstream culture, by resolving issues with her personal and social identity. She resumes her life happily and continues her friendship with Amina and others. Thus Shalini is able to overcome the discrimination, identity crisis and relationship issues of the East and the West and integrates to the mainstream culture.

The writers of immigrant literature usually focus on immigrant characters undergoing problems in the native land or in the host land or in both the places, whereas Kavita Daswani in her novel, Lovetorn, tries to focus on two characters of the same family - the mother and the daughter. The author through Asha, the mother highlights the problems and the impact of cross cultural crisis and how the mother, as a first generation immigrant retains the heritage culture, whereas through Shalini, the daughter, the author highlights the process of assimilation and integration of young immigrants in the U.S. The author finally highlights the fact that though Indian immigrants are caught between two cultures, they try to adapt and balance the heritage culture and mainstream culture.

References :