

**REFUGEE INTEGRATION WITHIN HOST
CULTURES: A STUDY OF VIET THANH
NGUYEN'S *THE SYMPATHIZER* AND *THE
COMMITTED***

BY

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**Refugee Integration within Host Cultures: A Study of Viet
Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed***

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ABSTRACT

Title: Refugee Integration within Host Cultures: A Study of Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed*

This study aims to analyze Viet Thanh Nguyen's works, *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* for the evidence of refugees' problems in the host cultures and their integration process therein. Using Tony Bennet's cultural studies as a research method, the selected works have been analyzed through the lens of Gulay Ugur Goksel's theoretical concept on integrating refugees within the host cultures. Goksel challenges assimilation and multiculturalism as inadequate ideologies because these offer a one-way route. Contrarily, Goksel introduces the concept of integration as a two-way process that stimulates both the dominant group (host countries) and marginalized groups of refugees to live together. The current research investigates Nguyen's works as a representative voice of the marginalized section of refugees. The study reflects upon the Vietnamese refugees' issues/concerns after their displacement from their country to the host cultures due to the persecution of the American-Vietnam War. The refugees face multiple issues that hamper the integration process because the local community of the host countries takes them as security threats and economic burdens. Therefore, the people of the host countries refuse to give them acceptance and basic rights. However, the refugees have to face racial discrimination, gender inequality, and economic problems in the host countries due to their ethno-cultural background. The study concludes that there are certain individuals and institutions in the host countries which give acceptance to refugees to accelerate the integration process. They help the refugees by providing them with education, jobs, citizenship, and basic human rights. In the selected texts, the characters like Claude and the Congressman from America and BFD, and Maoist PhD from France seem active in promoting the integration process.

Keywords: *Integration, refugees, host culture, multiculturalism, assimilation, national identity*

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the analysis of two selected works *The Sympathizer* (2015) and *The Committed* (2021) written by Vietnamese writer Viet Thanh Nguyen in the backdrop of the integration of Vietnamese refugees into the host/target cultures of USA and France respectively. For the analysis of the selected novels, the theoretical perspective propounded by Turkish author Gulay Ugur Goksel in her book *Integration of Immigrants and the Theory of Recognition: 'Just Integration'* (2018) has been employed to explore the integration process of the refugees within the host cultures.

The primary focus of my research is to see how the selected works address the issue of the integration of refugees within the host cultures. The refugees in the Western countries often lead them to think about their adjustability and adaptability. The last few decades have surely witnessed the insurgent mobility of refugees in host countries. Undoubtedly, it is not easy for host countries to take care of refugees from food, shelter, and health to better standards of life. The refugees face many problems in host societies and to ensure their survival they try to assimilate in those societies. The process of assimilation and multiculturalism leads refugees to the process of integration through which they try to adjust to the host cultures. The concept of integration goes beyond the host/refugees dichotomy and tilts towards the possibilities of the adjustment of refugees in alien soils. Integration is a two-way process where the refugees gain acceptance from the foreign lands, which in return offer them essential support and resources for their survival.

1.1 Migrant vs. Refugee

Migration is natural to animals and human beings. Human beings move from one place to another for various reasons – jobs, protection, pleasure, war, cultural clashes, natural calamities, climate change, pandemics, political and social unrest, to mention a few. Since migration may be willful or forced; this intentional (willful) and nonintentional (forced) migration determine the identity of the migrant – an immigrant or a refugee. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines a refugee as “a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution” (“Refugee,” def. 1). The Cambridge Dictionary gives another aspect of the definition of a refugee

by counting the reasons behind this escape. According to it, a refugee is “a person who has escaped from their own country for political, religious, or economic reasons or because of a war” (“Refugee,” def. B2). The Britannica Dictionary almost resonates with the same reasons that the Cambridge Dictionary counts. According to it, “someone who has been forced to leave a country because of war or for religious or for political reasons” (“Refugee,” def. 1) is called a refugee. The critical look at the aforementioned understanding about a refugee explicates that refugees leave their country under compulsion, forced by some factors, which are beyond their control including life threat, because of war or some other untoward circumstances that may put their life in danger – political unrest, religious fanaticism or natural calamities.

Saul Kassin et al in their book *Social Psychology* give a definition of refugee by taking reference from the concept/definition of a refugee from UNHCR’s definition of a refugee and its subtle differences from other terms including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Asylum Seekers and stateless persons. For them,

A refugee is a person who is outside of their home country or habitual residence and who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or because they have a particular political opinion. They are fleeing war or persecution from their own country and they have no protection from their own country - in fact, it is often their own government that is responsible for their persecution (554).

This definition gives a legal aspect of the identity of a refugee. It posits a refugee outside of their home because they have threats on account of their attachment to a particular faction and hold an opinion which is conflicting with the narrative of their government.

The selected texts fall in the category of refugee literature, which is related to diasporic literature. Diasporic literature is a branch in the paradigm of Postcolonial literature which deals with issues like “quest for identity, nostalgia for the roots” (Sarangi 1). For a long time, the term “diaspora” has only been referred to the physical activity of a “religious community” (Mehta 57) because, for religious preaching and practices, people move from one place to another place. However, in 1990 Diaspora changed its meaning and is now used for the group or community of the people belonging to different ethnicities who migrate from their homeland and settle in the host countries to make their lives better. They dislocate themselves either forcibly or

voluntarily and encounter various challenges which concern their settlement, identity, sense of “alienation, and fear of being displaced” (Rani 1) in the host societies. Diaspora therefore can include the “victim diaspora, labor diaspora, trade diaspora, imperial diaspora, and cultural diaspora” (Cohen 158).

Refugee literature portrays the experiences of the refugees and how they overcome the onerous circumstances. Its purpose is to spread awareness to the people about the issues of refugees and how the host states negotiate with them. This study aims to analyze Vietnam-American writer Viet Thanh Nguyen’s selected texts *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* under the umbrella of Postcolonial ideology with a key focus on the issues of diaspora, especially the refugees who leave their homeland to take shelter in other countries.

1.2 Literary Representation of Refugees

Bidisha Banerjee in the article “Picturing Precarity: Diasporic Belonging and Camp Life in Leila Abdelrazaq’s *Baddawi*” describes that Palestinian refugees have been a hotly debated topic for researchers for a long time because up till now they have not gotten a proper status in the world yet they “occupy a unique position in refugee studies” (Banerjee 13). Banerjee gives an in-depth study of Leila Abdelrazaq’s novel *Baddawi*, in which she portrays that along with violence, persecution, and ferocity, Palestinian refugees get a “communal space where families live together, preserving cultural traditions and performing daily rituals of life” (13). She conceptualizes *Baddawi* as a “space of belonging” (13), representing a significant site of identity and connection. Furthermore, she frames it as a definitive refuge, offering solace and relief from the struggles and hardships faced by the individuals. The struggles and hardships experienced by refugees often go unacknowledged by the global community, resulting in their marginalization and treatment as if they are expendable, disregarded without meaningful consideration. Therefore, the global world has failed to supply adequate assistance to the problems of the refugees. The “transnational affiliations” (13) also could not facilitate them in shaping refugees’ identities and hence there is a vacuum for “camp inhabitants” (13) to be filled. Talking about the camp cities, Banerjee goes on to say that cities like *Baddawi* give a sufficient amount of aid to the refugees in making them their identities because “they are ethnic enclaves, spaces of difference and resistance: temporary, liminal spaces” (18). These cities have become homes for refugees where they can preserve their culture and think of the safety and security of

their lives. Showing concerns about refugees in camp cities, Banerjee says that it is impossible to deny the fact that camp cities are Eden or livable spaces for the vulnerable victims and it is unimaginable to think that the host countries would extend their hands of friendship with them. Therefore, “despite precarity and quality of permanent-temporariness of camps” (18), the camp inhabitants feel a strong affiliation with those places. Banerjee never ceases her, she further elongates her standpoint that the camp inhabitants profoundly and overwhelmingly organize their camps “according to their origin of villages” (18) and they also carry the names of the streets of the villages of Palestine for their camps. With the incessant pressure of the fact that they cannot return to their homelands, “camps become spaces of Palestine where memories are inherited” (18) and they are told, retold, and transmitted from older generations to the next generations and thus it becomes the culture of inheriting and transmitting memories. The refugees seek the camps as a proper place where they “consolidate their identities” (18), and where they keep reminiscences of their homelands alive. They also connect themselves with the camps to such an extent that they cannot stop themselves from hoping to return to their homeland. Thus, “this liminal space of assemblage” (18) helps refugees to find a place like their own country where they do formation of their identities and transmit their cultural heritage and hence they do not consider the precariousness and savagery of the host countries.

Thus, the whole article concludes with the remarks that despite the oppression, brutishness, and barbarousness that refugees face in the camps, they take out the ways anyway to fix themselves into the camps. To make their lives cherishable, they keep themselves on the periphery of transnational boundaries and nurture in a way that they feed their soul and body with happiness and solace. Even the inadequacy of the supply of basic needs (which they are badly needed for) from the world could not harm making them adjustable in the camps.

Michael Perfect in his article “Black Holes in the Fabric of the Nation: Refugees in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*” explores the crisis that the refugees encounter. Right from the opening lines of the novel, the two characters seemingly refugees are talking about the distressing situation of the particular city although the name of the city is concealed in the whole novel. The way both the characters adopt deliverance and exchange their words about the present condition of the city seems quite ordinary and no damage could touch the city. The phrase “just some shootings and odd car bombing”

(qtd. in Perfect 8) witnesses the fact that both the refugees know the severity of the situation, albeit they are hiding this usual happening into the very corner of their eyes. The words just and odd are likely to present the intrinsic negligence of the refugees in this daily routine. It can also be observed with the serious concern that the fear of being executed and killed has diminished from their hearts. Perfect quoting the lines from the 2nd Chapter of the novel, presents the life-taking situation of the refugees. Most of the refugees have occupied the larger part of the cities, they parked themselves on the pavement, and others guard their fellow refugees under the open sky. Some of them try to normalize their daily activities, a few of them sleep in the middle of the streets, and a family of two to four members accommodates themselves under the plastic sheet with the help of tree branches and lay their heads on the bricks. Other refugees look at the city with abhorrence, revulsion, and envy and few of them keep themselves busy in making supplications. Here, Perfect lays his emphasis on “the marginality of the refugees” (Perfect 9) because “they are between roads and next to boundaries” (9). Quoting Hamid’s original line from the text, Perfect says that the book *Exit West* echoes the notion that “human beings are not only temporal but also relational migrants” (22).

Pradip Sharma's “The Politics of ‘Bare Life’ in Sharon Bala’s *The Boat People: A Biopolitical Perspective*” orates the problems of Tamil refugees of Sri Lanka which Canadian writer Sharon Bala incorporates in her book. The paper deals with the issues of five hundred refugees who undauntedly save their lives from the hazardous waves of the sea. These are the people who are entangled in the war-hit areas of Sri Lanka and to escape their lives from the pitiless condition of their country, they flee from their native country and deliberately leave their lives at the mercy of the Canadian government. A large group of Tamil people emit themselves from Sri Lanka and continues their journey to Canada because there they are under extreme pressure and threat. In the search for heaven in Canada, “they undergo Ariadne’s thread like an unending trial for refugee status” (Sharma 65). Therefore, they rely neither upon their rights at home nor out of the country. The refugees or shelter seekers from Sri Lanka “fall victim to power technology” (65) not only at home but in Canada as well. Thus, they are subdued and enforced to undergo the trials of “hegemony of the regime” (65) which usually shrink them from the status of sanctity (which in Agambian terms is called *homo sacer*) and hence, they are discriminated against with full liberty and impunity and made their lives into “bare life” (65), a life having no political privileges

and rights. Bala's novel enunciates the maltreatment and injustice of the state of Sri Lanka which for their benefit starts marring and blemishing their country fellows and in this way "the state turns out to be careless to vanguard its citizens" (66). Moreover, the hardships faced by Tamil refugees extend beyond their homes, persisting throughout their journey until they reach Canada.

Unfortunately, in Canada, they fail to grapple with the circumstances and hence they unquestionably are victimized. There, they go through many physical and mental exertions and after that hard labor they are "subjected to terrorism", (67) and therefore they are inflicted heavy punishments for looking for a tranquilized place. To tackle the severity of the situation, the Canadian government "regards them as the upcoming challenge for the Canadian society" (67) and they make them pass through "the unending traumatic trials" (67). Through the exertion of state power over refugees, they are systematically categorized, marginalized, and stripped of their status as ordinary human beings, ultimately being designated as terrorists by the state. In this regard, the refugees are neither granted asylums nor basic longings of life. They are stranded in both places with the same position and status and finally, no social values are registered for refugees by the Canadian government. "Thus the refugees are *superstes* of Sri Lankan and Canadian politics that subjected them to outlawry" (73). Hence it considers the bio-political element of governing the life of the refugees as the state designs it.

1.3 The Vietnam War: Historical Context and Literary Representations

The late fifties of the 20th Century was a time of turbulence and commotion for the Vietnamese because they went under the control of external agencies and had great fears of internal forces. Vietnam was divided into two parts; communist North and anti-communist South and both parties were not ready to accept each other in the present situation. Therefore, they started encountering each other and after that, these small encounters changed into big riots. Sensing the gravity of the situation, America decided to take the matter into its own hands, and under the leadership of John F. Kennedy, America got involved with Operation Rolling Thunder and efficaciously changed the regime of Vietnam.

Before the partition of Vietnam, it had been a colony of France since 1887 and lasted for three decades. Consequently, the initial phase of the conflict was primarily

fought between France and North Vietnam, with the latter, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, having largely reclaimed control from French colonial rule. On the other hand, the second part of the war was fought between America and South Vietnam. The people of South Vietnam had to face a lot of damage and annihilation from Americans and the supporters of the National Liberation Front. Due to the political unrest and deteriorating situation of the country, people started fleeing from their own country and decided to settle in other countries like America and France for which they had already waged the war. They left themselves at the mercy of the host cultures that were not ready to accept them. Hence, the refugees' miseries were multiplied. Helplessly and hopelessly, they moved from one country to the other to seek refuge but no one was willing to give space to these refugees.

Viet Thanh Nguyen's texts provide a detailed account of the historical background of the America-Vietnam War and their (Vietnamese) misrepresentation in Hollywood. Therefore, *The Sympathizer* unfolds the misrepresentation of the Vietnamese people and challenges the stereotypes that American screenplays, literature, and media abound in. The Vietnamese, in these movies and literary productions are "brutal, savage, bloodthirsty, abusive villains" who are far away from the civilized world and thus the Americans justify their war waged against Vietnam (Lee 77). Lee believes that *The Sympathizer* is the author's conscious effort to challenge the generalized assumptions and inaccurate and partial representation of Vietnam.

Lee expands his debate on the purpose of writing the novel by acknowledging that it denotes the insider's voice on the status of refugees in the American and European lands. For him, the author remembers the refugees' identity and their stories. He does this with an aim to safeguard the otherwise diminishing and waning character of the refugees in the host culture. Hinting towards the refugee integration into the host culture and the problems they face in the process of integration, Lee states that "American society is a contradictory, immigrant country"; it welcomes the immigrants, "but [is] also fraught with xenophobia, exclusion, salver, and colonization" (82). Lee establishes a distinction between refugees and immigrants here. For him, the major difference, despite having certain similarities, lies in the fact that, unlike immigrants, "the refugees do not arrive of their free will" (83). They are stuck between a place of no return and a sense of being at home. The indeterminacy creates a dilemma regarding their position in the host country.

Similar to Nguyen, other Vietnamese authors also produce works that reflect the concerns of Vietnamese refugees. For instance, Eric Nguyen in his novel *Things We Lost to the Water* (2021) streamlines the story of a Vietnamese refugee family that settled in New Orleans after the persecution of the American-Vietnam war. The family faces many problems in America with the title of refugee. The protagonist of the novel Huong tries to connect with her husband Cong who was stranded in Vietnam due to war. Her efforts do not help her to find her husband. After a few years, she with her two sons Tuan and Binh adapted to the American culture and found ways to normalize their lives. All the family members faced issues like identity crisis and a sense of alienation in America.

Stealing Buddha's Dinner (2008) is a memoir by Bich Minh Nguyen that navigates the writer's experiences in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as a Vietnamese refugee during the 1980s and 1990s. Nguyen in her memoir recalls her childhood memories, Vietnamese food, and cultural heritage in America. She pursues her journey with a complex identity, blending her Vietnamese heritage with her desire to assimilate into American culture. The book deals with the intricacy of the refugees' experience, assimilation, and cultural identity, through the lens of Vietnamese traditional food.

Dao Strom in her book, *We Are Meant to Be a Gentle People* (2015), also explores the themes of identity crisis, displacement, a sense of alienation, and memory. She highlights the struggles to assimilate into the American culture but does not find a way to resolve her issues. Therefore, Strom in her book tries to reconnect with her roots and wants to go back to her father (a well-renowned writer) stuck in Vietnam due to war. She with her mother settles in America but always delves into the complexity of dual cultures. The book examines the perennial effects of the Vietnam War on the lives of the people. Therefore, in her book, she discusses the psychological and emotional trauma that she has been going through.

Another Vietnamese author Thi Bui in her graphic memoir *The Best We Could Do* (2017) sheds light on the problems of Vietnamese refugees and the long-lasting impact of the Vietnam War. To understand refugees' problem of identity, she articulates her familial experiences in Vietnam and the United States. Therefore, Bui explores the themes of war trauma, identity, displacement, and strong family bonds. After the fall of Saigon in 1970, Bui's family fled from Vietnam to California to save their life from the persecution of war. Thus, she provides an ample account of her experiences during the

war, its aftermath, and settlement in America. Her narrative navigates the challenges that refugees face in the host country. Being a Vietnamese refugee, she faces difficulty in adjusting to herself as other in America. She also feels a feeling of detachment in the American community.

Besides Viet Thanh Nguyen, other Vietnamese writers also have highlighted the destruction of the war and its repercussions in their respective works. They have provided various viewpoints on the war and refugee problems in the host countries.

1.4 Overview of the Selected Texts

Viet Thanh Nguyen (1971 -) is a Vietnamese-American Novelist, critic, and Professor of English and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. His parents Linda and Joseph Thanh Nguyen moved to the South in 1954 as refugees. His mother has had a great influence on his personality. His family, as refugees, has to undergo many hardships and struggles to find a proper settlement. In his childhood, he developed a liking for literature about the Vietnam War, which was a rarity in the overwhelming rush of American narratives not only in print but also on screen.

As a novelist, he has published renowned novels, a few of which earned him different awards and prizes including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, a California Book Award, and the Asian/Pacific Award for Literature in Fiction, to name but a few. His famous works include novels like *The Sympathizer*, *The Committed*, *A Man of Two Faces*, and *Nothing Ever Dies*; in addition to these, he has written *The Refugees* (A Collection of short stories), *Chicken of the Sea* (Children's literature), *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, *Trans-Pacific Studies*, and *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America*.

Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Pulitzer Prize winner, “boldly *deals* with *issues* of race, identity, and stereotyping” (Ayaka & Hague 228). Most of his works reflect the problems and sufferings of refugees because he is a refugee. Therefore, he knows the miseries of this marginalized community. When he and his family left their country due to the Vietnam War in 1975, they set off on their journey towards America and settled there as refugees. One thing that Nguyen deeply meditated upon was the misrepresentation of the Vietnam War in American movies and literature. Nguyen took this as a challenge and began to write to give voice to the marginalized community of

Vietnamese refugees. His fictional works address the issues of refugees. He not only succeeds in giving the voices back to the subjugated community of Vietnam, but he also removes Western's misunderstanding about the Vietnam War. Usually, it is believed that America does not give space to Vietnamese refugees in their country. Here, it is important to note that the issue of this marginalized section needs to be addressed in a way that they can get space within host societies.

Nguyen's debut novel *The Sympathizer* (2015) addresses the problems of refugees that they face in the host countries. The story begins in April 1975, when Saigon is in chaos. At his villa, a general of the South Vietnamese army is drinking whiskey and, with the help of his trusted captain, drawing up a list of those who will be given passage aboard the last flights out of the country. The general and his compatriots start a new life in Los Angeles, unaware that one among their number, the captain, is secretly observing and reporting on the group to a higher-up in the Viet Cong. *The Sympathizer* is the story of this captain: a man brought up by an absent French father and a poor Vietnamese mother, a man who went to university in America but returned to Vietnam to fight for the Communist cause. A gripping spy novel, an astute exploration of extreme politics, and a moving love story, *The Sympathizer* explores a life between two worlds and examines the legacy of the Vietnam War in literature, film, and the wars we fight today.

The Sympathizer presents a war narrative from an insider's perspective. The effects of American-Vietnam war and the subsequent emergence of a refugee identity are the key subjects of the novel under discussion. In this context, Jade Tsui-Yu Lee in his study entitled *Trauma, Precarity and War Memories in Asian American Writings* reviews *The Sympathizer* and locates the issues that influence the refugee identity. *The Sympathizer* was published to commemorate the anniversary of the Fall of Saigon to give a Vietnamese perspective on the war and to fill in the "blanks" created by the American voice on this war (Lee 77). The missing link is the lack of the insider's voice that this novel attempts to fill in. Nguyen's narrative of the Vietnamese War is a counter-narrative to the American perspective "to complement the sometimes distorted versions of the war" (77).

The Sympathizer significantly incorporates the problems of the refugees within a sense of loss of home and place. Lee concludes his essay on the following note,

highlighting the representation of the refugees in terms of their marginalization, fragmentation, and depravity in the social setup. He says that:

Perhaps unreliability or fragmentation is what the writer is trying to highlight, as the world that refugees inhabit is destabilizing and shattered. Indeed, what is lacking in the novel is an anchor that provides the war persona a point of departure, a purpose, a meaning, self-referentiality. (86)

The Committed (2021) follows *The Sympathizer* as he arrives in Paris as a refugee. There he and his friend Bon try to get rid of their past and think about their future by putting their hands into entrepreneurship in one of its purest forms: drug dealing. The protagonist does not sense any physical danger because inwardly he is tortured by his former best friend. He also struggles to assimilate into a dominant culture and is fascinated and charmed by Paris. As he falls in with a group of left-wing intellectuals and politicians who frequent come on dinner parties given by his French Vietnamese aunt. He finds not just stimulation for his mind but also customers for his merchandise—but the new life he is making has dangers he has not foreseen, from the oppression of the state to the self-torture of addiction, to the seemingly unresolvable paradox of how he can reunite his two closest friends, men whose worldviews put them in absolute opposition.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

For the past few decades, the world has seen multiple disruptions featuring political upheavals, economic instabilities, human issues and global wars especially in the eastern parts of the world. The Vietnam War, the gulf war, war on terror and quite recently, the Israeli attack on Gaza and Palestine have changed the political complexion of the globe resulting into serious human crises. The crises of refugees, not new though, have been a matter of concern for the civilized world. In the recent times, this crisis has gained significance and is finding space in the literary productions round the globe. The problems which these refugees face, are manifold and affecting the international politics as well. Thus, choosing an author that is intimately familiar with the said problems and understands the subtleties of the problems faced by those who are refugees vs. those who are immigrants is imperative.

The situatedness of Nguyen and the selection of those texts which are based on his personal experiences and contexts will thus be valid sources that detail

contemporary concerns. The multiple refugee crises in particular – which are quite contemporary and contingent to the global policies. Some human concerns, especially those dealing with the problems refugees face in the target country/culture intrigued me to conduct a study on the selected literary texts to see how the issues of the refugees are represented and ascertain if the integration of these refugees within the host cultures is a possible solution to mitigate their problems. Thus, by selecting the works of an author who himself is a refugee and has a hands-on empirical understanding of the problems of the refugees, *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* are those of his works that best incorporate the refugees' voices. Not only that, but these texts can also potentially present viable solutions to the problems of Vietnamese refugees by narratively describing the process and hurdles in their integration process within the host cultures. The texts also offer a range of refugee voices and perspectives by delving deeply into critiques of colonialism, war, and exploring the intersections of ideology and identity.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

The selected texts *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* have been analyzed to explore the multifaceted two-way aspect of refugees' integration into the host cultures and its reciprocation. Goksel's concept of integration helps substantiate the refugees' common identity and sharing national identity in the integration process.

1.7 Research Objectives

- To analyze the selected text for the representations of the issues of the refugees.
- To investigate the portrayal of refugees' integration onto the host culture in the selected texts.
- To highlight the role of individuals and institutions in the process of refugee integration as portrayed in the selected works.
- To find out the process of integration as a possible solution of the refugees concerns as evidenced in the selected literary texts.

1.8 Research Questions

1. How do the selected works of Nguyen highlight the problems/issues the refugees face in the host countries?

2. How do the selected texts streamline the efforts of the refugees towards their integration within host/target cultures?
3. How do the individuals/institutions in the host countries contribute, as presented in the selected novels, towards integrating the refugees into their cultures?

1.9 Significance of the Study

Previous researches conducted on the issues of the refugees represented in the literary texts give an insufficient outlook. These studies mostly address the unidimensional aspect of the refugees' adjustment into the host cultures thus leaving a significant gap in terms of two-dimensional (integration) efforts by including the host culture as an active participant in welcoming the refugee communities and individuals. The present study is expected to bridge this gap by tracing the issues of refugees along with the suggestions/solutions for their survival in two-dimensional perspectives. The present study explores that a unidimensional solution to the issue of the refugees is insufficient and its reciprocation from the host/target culture is imperative. The research spreads awareness amongst the readers that the dilemma of refugees can be resolved with a better look and approach to integration.

1.10 Delimitation

The present research is delimited to the analysis of the two selected novels of American Vietnamese fiction writer Viet Thanh Nguyen, who himself is a refugee, *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* in the backdrop of the theoretical framework propounded by Gulay Ugur Goksel. The analysis is limited only to the thematic concerns related to the issues of refugees.

1.11 Structure of the Study

The first chapter presents a brief introduction of the topic. It also presents the statement of the problem and the research questions. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature that helps to find the gap for the study. The chapter incorporates the critique of the theoretical perspectives that is used for the analyses of the literary works. Chapter 3 chalks out the research methodology. It provides sufficient details for the research method for the research. Furthermore, it offers a research model to analyze the selected works. Chapter 4 begins with the analysis of the select literary works of Viet Thanh Nguyen with a focus on the refugees' concerns and their integration process within the

host countries. It presents the analyses of *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* in the backdrop of Gulay Ugur Goksel's theoretical perspective. Chapter 5, the final chapter, details the findings of the study and the suggestions that the analyses of the primary texts have suggested. It also gives a brief description of the suggestions/recommendations that the study offers. Finally, it offers some routes for future researchers they work on in the field of refugee integration.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter deals with the review of the scholarship available on the concept of integration of refugees into the host cultures. It also presents a critical review of the literature on the works of Viet Thanh Nguyen regarding the issues these highlight and the problems his works incorporate. The thorough review of the related literature leads to finding out the research gap that this study is going to plug in.

2.1 Theorizing Integration

Susan Oppen in her article “Multiculturalism in Sweden: A Case of Assimilation and Integration” explicates the process of integration in Britain and Sweden. After World War II, “the two linguistically and culturally homogeneous countries” (Oppen 193) became the world’s largest refugees-immigrants-accommodating countries. Therefore, the policymakers of both countries started contemplating the serious issue of their accommodation. The policies were hence sequentialized in a way where the “immigrants and refugees have to stay” (193) for a longer period. To integrate with the immigrants, “responsible authorities” (193) came up with the consideration that the process of integration could be fast-tracked by providing a proper education system, and lodging facilities and through uni-lingual strategies. To support immigrant children, “specific measures” (193) were taken to lessen the implications for the educational system. Oppen in this article gives an insight into integration through the educational system, home facilities, and acquiring a single language but she is unable to describe how integration can be done culturally. Cultural integration is important for immigrants in a way that when they land on the soil of other countries, they try to adjust themselves by adopting the culture of host countries. The immigrants are provided with a better socio-economic environment in which they not only serve them and/or try to assimilate into their culture but also facilitate them with the gains in trade. On the other hand, refugees are deprived of the necessities of life, and hence they are only given a piece of land where they lead an unenjoyable life and in this way, the circle of their lives is tightened. Unlike immigrants, the contribution of refugees is not welcomed in the fields of economics, trade, and business.

Erik Bleich, in a critical essay, scrutinizes the phenomenon of integration that took place in France and Britain. After World War II, millions of immigrants and

refugees moved to these two countries to have better living standards and to save their lives from the heavy strokes of war-clinging areas. Both countries, which have vast experience in upholding the problems of immigrants and refugees embraced them and handed them over to the policy makers of the respective countries. Britain was in favor of the “decentralized (indirect)” (Bleich 178) tendency in encouraging the process of integration. France seemed undertaking the matter to the “state-centric level” (178) and hence, valued the process of assimilation and integration. There are, of course, many shreds of evidence that assist the notion that British immigrants are taken as local bodies based on “race and ethnicity” (178) to promote the process of integration. On the other hand, the French government does not use the channel, which supports the process of integration based on race and ethnicity. However, British policymakers introspect that “the role of the education system” (179) can help the immigrants and refugees to assimilate into the British culture under the same “National Curriculum” (179). The British policymakers suggest that immigrants and refugee pupils should properly be provided with the education of “British Heritage” (180) that helps them integrate into the British culture. Furthermore, since 2000, to strengthen the process of integration for refugees, the Labour Government of Britain has also been arranging different “English language training programs” (180). French policymakers, on the other hand, attempt to stimulate the process of integration for Muslim refugees and to make it livable, they not only embrace their identities but also start giving them “religious support” (181). The French Government has made decisions to assist its religious community by raising the salaries of Imams, providing maximum Islamic books, and “through increased tolerance of Islamic practices in factories and local public housing” (181). The French Government’s other plausible step is to promote the “mother tongue” (181) for refugee schoolchildren so that they can feasibly communicate with the inhabitants of the host countries. To continue the process of integration more aptly, the French Government has on-aired a television program named “Mosaic” (181) for the Muslim Community. In this way, the adjustability of the Muslim Community in France can be found more practical and convenient.

Opportuna Kweka, in his study, talks about another dimension of integration. Refugees make considerable efforts to integrate into host countries. However, they frequently fail to secure “flexible citizenship” (Kweka 76). The process of getting flexible citizenship is negotiable between refugees and the host countries and it can be

realized through the process of integration. Kweka opines that for the process of integration, refugees have to adopt a route of “naturalization” (78). This process provides the refugees an “access to citizenship” (78) and helps them integrate within the target lands. Kweka further goes on to say that “local integration” is a prerequisite for the process of naturalization in which both “states and non-state actors” (78) can give refugees their due rights. These states grant the refugees citizenship and can play a pivotal role in promoting the process of integration. Therefore, “collaborative efforts” (78) are needed for the local integration between the refugees, the local communities, and the state and non-state actors. To strengthen his point of view, Kweka refers to Kibreab who outlines three steps for local integration, which include “social, economic and political integration” (qtd. in Kweka 78). To make his point emphatic, Kweka takes the stance of Strang and Ager who describe other forms of integration comprising “social services, social capital, language and agency of the refugees” (79) which can further accelerate the process of integration.

Rochelle Davis et al in their study “Hosting Guests, creating Citizens” highlight the accommodating role of Jordan and Egypt in treating refugees and their problems. They assert that both these countries have their state policies to give space to the refugees. In their models, both countries intensively pay attention to the process of integration. Drawing on “ethnic and religious relations” (Davis et al 2) between host countries and refugees these countries have chalked out certain policies which allow them to include the refugees in their mainstream social and cultural frameworks. They include “integration, separation, absorption, and exclusion” (2) in the policies but exclude “citizenship” (2) which they are unwilling to grant to the refugees. Besides giving diversity to the management models of integration for the refugees, policymakers also include other factors like “political authorities, national policies, and domestic consideration” (2) which are likely to help the refugees adjust in the host countries. After getting freedom from the colonial powers, they have moved towards the policies of “separation and exclusion” (3) in which refugees are allowed to live in the host countries “but not to become citizens” (3). As far as the Jordanian government is concerned, they give “access to citizenship” (3) to the refugees who live within “Transjordan’s boundaries” (3). Therefore, the foreigners, refugees, and immigrants are given “the status of nationals” (6) in Transjordanian terms. Egypt, on the other hand, does not leave itself far behind welcoming the bulk of the deserted population of

different countries. The Egyptian government, after the genocidal attack in 1915, not only has welcomed the refugees of Armenia but also has extended the hands of friendship towards them “but with only limited legal rights” (6). For integration, the maximum they can do for them is to provide “a small community of varying wealth, power and social assimilation” (6). Unlike the Jordanian government, Egypt has slowed down the process of integration and hence cannot facilitate the migrants and refugees with “citizenship” (6). However, after some years, the Egyptian government has offered Armenian refugees to apply for “Egyptian citizenship” (6). In this way, through official channels, Armenian refugees obtain Egyptian citizenship and get the status of nationals from the host country.

Halim I. Barakat in his study “The Palestinian Refugees: An Uprooted Community Seeking Repatriation” attempts to classify refugees on socio-economic conditions, and the reasons for their migration in the background of the 1947-48 and 1967 wars. Furthermore, he explains the problems that refugees have been facing for long. To make a better understanding of the refugees, he classifies them into four major groups. The first group comprises those people who are “capitalists, landowners, and professional families” (Barakat 150). The second one is comparatively a larger group “of varied occupations from villages and towns” (150). The third and fourth groups include the refugees who live in caves and camps. Barakat concludes that the refugees who live in camps are mostly “peasants, unskilled and semiskilled workers” (150). Then come non-camp refugees who are “professional men, skilled and clerical workers, and businessmen” (151). Skillful refugees have the potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of the host country, which makes their absorption (integration) in the target country relatively easier.

The term refugee finds its roots in French origin, initially refers to millions of “Reformed Protestant French migrants” (Baak 56) who wanted to save their lives from the persecution of French Catholic monarch. Melanie Baak in his study “Once a Refugee, always a Refugee” defines the perception of refugees as a general population, specifically in host societies. The “legal and moral status” (56) of refugees came forward with appropriation in 1951, where refugees attempted to seek a complete identification but in a different way by host countries. The visual and political views of the host countries never leave refugees unattended, therefore they conceptualize their position as “Other, but as a threatening, undesired Other” (56). The population of

refugees is so vulnerable that any host country can frame them through “normative processes” (56) and hence it becomes intrinsically impossible to recognize them as a subject. The current studies of the present century articulate that it is imperative to advertise the meaning of refugees and find its traces. Thus, the term “refugee” has been used for those millions of people who are forcibly “uprooted, exiled and displaced” (qtd. in Baak 56) within their homelands because of “intolerance, war or other human factors” (57). Additionally, Baak infuses the projection of the refugees that it is not only the host countries that “blacken and stigmatize” (57) the concept of refugees but it is also the “photojournalism, media and films” (57) which are responsible for exhibiting the wrong projection of the portrayal of the refugees. The images circulating on social media play a significant role in shaping the position of refugees as to how they are “publicly perceived and politically debated” (57).

He further goes on to say that the media has shown the images of refugees in such a way that whenever this word comes into anyone’s mind, he/she cannot resist himself/herself imagining them as “refugee camps, hunger, war, and trauma” (57). In political discourses, others understand them internationally as “asylum seekers, queue jumpers, terrorists, and fear” (57). The sensation of the refugees does not stop here, the images show them as “needy victims” (57) and “undesirable parasites of the states” (58) who have gone through different psychological traumas, and therefore, they do not show their consent to “integrate into the host community” (58). Plugging himself into the facts about refugees, Baak states that labeling the term refugee is not the problem, rather it is the way they are framed and presented. There is a need to reconceptualize the socially constructed meaning of the term “refugee” (68), although it is difficult, but it will help understand the meaning of refugees without considering them “Others” (68).

Dalia Abdelhady and Ov Cristian Norocel, in their study, “Re-Envisioning Immigrant Integration: Toward Multidirectional Conceptual Flows,” not only strengthen Goksel’s theoretical perspective but also move beyond her theoretical underpinning. Taking the thread from Goksel’s stance on refugees’ integration into the host cultures, they re-envision the concept of integration. Their theoretical perspective underscores the issues of refugees and provides a solution to their problems in terms of integration. Their theory raises concern about a new wave of migration that poses multiple questions about “integration and social cohesion” (Abdelhady & Norocel 119). This is the ongoing debate that enfolds different concerns about “citizenship,

rights, and belonging” (119). The recent events in the Global North have aggravated the fears of theorists with this conclusion that the integration process is failing. The reason they consider is “integration as a form of neo-colonial knowledge servicing contemporary workings of power” (119), which is getting control over racialized and subjugated communities. In their study, the aim of achieving this goal is to break all the power dynamics that halt the integration process.

In the past few years, integration has been a positive process “whereby those marginalized or excluded can receive equal treatment and access to rights” (qtd. in Abdelhady & Norocel 120). This process helps the subjugated communities and their descendants to enjoy equal rights and dealing in the host countries. Goksel has incorporated this concept into her theory, but her debate is only for first-generation refugees. Using Alba and Foner’s model, Abdelhady and Norocel come up with the definition of integration, “The processes that increase the opportunities of refugees and their descendants to obtain the valued “stuff” of a society, as well as social acceptance, through participation in major institutions such as the educational and political system and the labor and housing markets” (120). Hence, integration is a mechanism that helps the refugees and the next generation gain acceptance in host societies by participating in different institutions. Goksel’s perspective of integration is only limited to political institutions, whereas Abdelhady and Norocel include integration into the fields of education and housing markets. They further clarify their stance: “Full integration implies parity of life chances with members of the native majority group and being recognized as a legitimate part of the national community” (120). Like Goksel, they are also in favor of providing full recognition to refugees in host societies. The integration process is completed when the refugees enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and life security as the natives do. Moreover, they should be considered an integral part of the society. Adding to Goksel’s perspective of integration, they bring another definition of integration “We define integration as a set of processes that bring people in a given society together at the legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious levels of interaction” (120). This stance implies that through integration, people stay connected at higher levels in any society. The policymakers of host societies, while making the policies of integration, keep the factors in mind that facilitate refugees in integrating into the host societies. The factors include the personal efforts of the individuals, the support of their families, government policies, other social networks, and the facilities

provided by society such as jobs and education. Above all, an extensive range of social, individual, and “transnational connections” (120) affect the refugees integrating into the societies.

Abdelhady and Norocel add to the concept by including second-generation refugees in the context of integration into the host cultures. They come up with the strategies like education, jobs and participation in housing markets and political system of the host communities that help the refugees integrating into them despite the fact they face challenges of racism.

Where there are positive impacts of integration in the lives of refugees, there are some negative circumstances they face in the host countries. “The interest on integration outcomes also yields a discussion on the factors that can affect integration negatively such as racism” (120). According to them, racism is a key factor that hinders in the way of integration. The refugees are treated indiscriminately in the host countries due to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This results in fewer job opportunities and low wages despite their good qualification.

Across the world, racial imagination informs decisions on who belongs to the nation-state, but in some contexts such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, they are also enshrined into laws that shape trajectories of refugees’ integration. Colonial legacies are given special attention, as they inform the ethno-racial hierarchies shaping the contexts for refugees’ integration (125).

Therefore, different voices emphasize upon improving and “operationaliz[ing] the concept” of integration (121). In addition to Goksel’s perspective of attaining citizenship, Abdelhady and Norocel present their viewpoint that many regions and states around the world are offering refugee citizenship. Highlighting the formal mechanism, they incorporate the means through which refugees “establish social attachments, demand inclusion, and forge a sense of belonging to their host societies” (127). These important aspects help in understanding the integration process in multiple settings. By attaining citizenship, refugees extend their social relationships with the common people of the host societies. This creates harmony and connectedness with the host countries. Hence, the integration process does not only rely on states’ discourses and policies but “integration as a fluid, strategic process that is often embedded in daily practices of refugees and citizens alike” (127). Both refugees and citizens engage in

routine practices that help to establish social ties, value their rights, and a feeling of acceptance with their group of people. This perception enfolds the significance of going beyond the formal mechanism to comprehend the integration process. It also contributes in shaping the life experiences of refugees who later become part of that environment.

2.2 Review of Past Literature on Nguyen's Works

Viet Thanh Nguyen, the Pulitzer Prize winner novelist is a Vietnamese refugee who at the age of four, along with his family scarcely fled from his country due to the outbreak of the war. The war was fought between Vietnam and America and it left several wounded, hurt, aggrieved, and many dead. The capsized Vietnamese could not escape from the war and succumbing to their injuries they lost their lives. Few lucky ones could get a narrow escape to run to the neighboring countries and save their lives from the deadly war. As Nguyen is the eyewitness of the war, therefore in his novels he highlights the issues of the refugees on a larger scale. Refugism can widely be traced in his novel because it originated from his pedigree and ancestry. In his novels and collection of short stories, the way he represents the identities and individualities of the refugees surely opens the doors for the readers to explore this subject matter related to the refugees. The way he travels around this area is yet to be widely read and taught. Nguyen is a writer who not only traces and localizes the issues of the refugees but also supports them and gives solutions to their problems on international forums. He vows to present the history of Vietnamese refugees differently so the world can know how they fought for freedom, laid down their lives for the country, and finally won the war from America.

Dr. Abdoulaye Ndiaye in his study entitled “A Hollywoodian Mis-Representations of the Vietnam War in *The Sympathizer* (2015) by Viet Thanh Nguyen: In Light of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Platoon* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987)” highlights the position of Vietnamese in American-Vietnam war in the context of *The Sympathizer*. In this study, Ndiaye reveals that even in Hollywood movies, Vietnamese are voiceless and they are kept silent by all means. Thus, the frequent agenda that Americans raise in their movies is “how to mute Vietnamese” (Ndiaye 2) in their movies. Ndiaye observes that in the novel, Nguyen specifies a section named “Hamlet” for refugees who are not given voice and space in the host countries. They represent them in their movies “in a debasing way” (3), likely they are not treated as human

beings, and their identities are relinquished. Americans use positive content in their movies for themselves just to show that they are humanity's savior and save the world from chaos and disorder.

The research further highlights that the majority of the filmmakers pre-suppose the positionality of Vietnamese and hence claim that “they know Vietnamese better than themselves” (4). They believe that Vietnamese cannot represent themselves, it is Hollywood that can adequately represent them. The study also reveals that by adopting a “condescending attitude” (4), American filmmakers substantiate their hostility towards Vietnamese. They perpetuate their ideology against the Vietnamese to further defy the values and norms of the latter. Another reason the study gives is that they do not study the culture of Vietnamese and hence do not have profound knowledge about them. Ndiaye in his study shows that the purpose of misrepresenting Vietnamese in American films is to raise an agenda against them and they do it just to serve American ideology.

Kala and Bernita in their study analyze Nguyen’s one of the short stories “Black-eyed Woman” taken from the collection *The Refugees*. They observe that having a diasporic identity makes it hard to live and survive. The Diasporas have to face many trials and hardships to maintain their position in the host society, they are the people “who migrate to an alien land by interest in search of greener pastures” (Kala and Bernita 2024). When the states do not help their people find better job opportunities and other sources of life, then, without showing their willingness, they decide to move to alien places for better living standards. On the other hand, keeping concerns of security measures in mind, the people of host countries do not give them proper space as they consider them a threat to their country. Therefore, the Diasporas cannot move forward and they keep finding some ways to survive.

To grapple with this grave situation, Diasporas start living in memories because “memories give them an enormous strength” (2024) and help them lift their gloom and a direction for them to start a new chapter of their lives. They are treated with contempt and “hostility” (2024) in the foreign land. Thus, a gap exists between Diasporas and host societies. To fill this gap, the authors propose the better choice of “adopting others' culture, language and customs” (2024) to sustain their position and identity in the “adopted lands” (2024). Another solution to confront the issues in host countries is “memory”. Through this powerful tool, Diasporas shape their personalities and they try

to adjust themselves in the host cultures. Memories cherish them, they can bring them back to the moderate intervals, and can also provide an escape from the troubling past which they have passed in their native soil. To proceed further, the Kala and Bernita go on to say that most of the memories are “fearsome, terrifying, and alarming” (2025) for those who have escaped from their native lands. Thus, memories play a dual role in the survival of diasporic communities; while they serve as a crucial mechanism for sustaining identity and continuity, they also possess a distressing aspect, as they can evoke profound suffering and a sense of loss.

By taking help from Nguyen’s short story collection *The Refugees*, Dr. Sherine Abdelghafar in her research article raises the question of “how it feels and what it means to be a refugee” (854) their issues and identities in host nations. She explains that being a refugee in alienated spaces is a difficult labor to retain identities. After the American invasion, it is even more difficult for the Vietnamese to sustain identities in their native land. When the Vietnamese migrated from their native country to America, “they carried traumatic vision with them” (855) in search of a new home. This trauma stemmed from the violence and upheaval they experienced during the war. Their journey was driven by the hope of establishing a new home and rebuilding their lives. When Vietnamese lose their status and dignity in their own country and reach the USA, the next trouble is waiting for them because the people of the host community are not always ready to accept them as their part and hence they call them “others” (856). Therefore, they are maltreated in the alienated soils. Since they lose their sense of identity in host nations, therefore, they come forward to devise new means for their survival. With the help of reminiscence and rumination, they resurrect themselves from the dearth and obliterated situation.

Another point that the Abdelghafar discerns is that “refugees seldom discuss the war” (856) which is responsible for their demolition and reshaping of their identities, therefore, “instead; they keep living in the past” (856). The other thing the researcher makes is that to settle themselves in the adopted land, the refugees demand “recognition and acceptance” (857) from the people of host countries because they take it their right which should be given to them but they have to face cultural differences and hence no place, worth and space is given to them. That is why they demand to be recognized as the native citizens of the country in which they are living.

Kavya Chandran in his research paper reveals the reasons for being a refugee and its hardships. After imparting the ways with French colonialism, Vietnam has to undergo many political uncertainties and instabilities; therefore, they are compelled to move from their area to other geographic lands. When they camped there, “life became very difficult” (Chandran 301) and they were given no rights to live there. For the survival of any creature, “freedom, stability, and acceptance” (301) are required to meet both ends. In this regard, refugees also need the liberty of speech, constancy, and “recognition” (301) from host societies; otherwise, without them it is hard to define their identities. The riddle of Vietnamese refugees cannot be solved in foreign lands because they have lost the sense of freedom and due rights. The ambiguity of their strange identities follows them whenever they leave their homeland and start living in other countries.

The study also shows that to accommodate themselves in new societies, they not only try to “assimilate” (301) into the host culture but adopt their values and norms for their living. However, the irony of the situation is that “Americans do not want to equalize refugees” (303) and hence do not welcome them. To avoid misfortune, Americans do not allow refugees to stay in their country and share their culture with them. Furthermore, a conflict arises between two different ideologies of both nations, and as a result of this conflict refugees have to bear damage. Despite being “hybrid identities” (303), the people of the host culture do not give refugees a space to live rather they objectify them as others. Thus, refugees have to put up with the consequences in the form of ethnic differences and mortification in xenophobic societies. Host cultures overlook the necessities of refugees and do not provide them with proper medical assistance and food as well. The researcher also navigates that the lives of refugees have been alarming and threatening in host communities because in those areas they are considered minority groups and therefore, are mistreated like slaves.

Hayley C. Stefan in her study “Tortured Images in Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* & the War on Terror” focuses on the main protagonist (refugee) and highlights the issues of being tortured in host societies. The people of the host culture use “torture as a tool of war” (Stefan 209) and therefore, they easily manipulate “Brown bodies” (210). The fact remains persistent that people of the US starts brutally murdering and torturing the people of Vietnam and label them as “Brown bodies” (210).

It clearly shows America's biasedness and xenophobia in American society. Based on racial discrimination, America inflicts violence on the Vietnamese and "justifies" (210) the ways of torturing them. To maintain the "credibility of information" (210) the people of America would put them through severe torture. Stefan also observes an "ironic idea" (210) that the more America oppresses them, the more immigrants develop "ethical behavior" (210). The "hypocritical stance" (211) taken by the US government is a piece of evidence that Americans do not possess good intentions for marginalized communities. They sanction and propagate violence in terms of their security measures and concerns. In the United States, the government legalizes torment and with the help of "broader national legacies of racialized violence" (211) allows its agencies to take charge of domestic and state violence. In this way not only do masses face injuries and damages but the state also faces the same. "Police injuries, mass detention and incarceration, and the genocide and displacement of indigenous peoples" (211) all become legitimate acts in torture-promoting states. Based on this legitimacy, the states promote racialism and discriminate against immigrants as "others" (212).

One of the studies conducted by Mahdi Teimouri compares Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* with the early works of Coetzee's *The Vietnam Project* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* in the backdrop of the "American imperialistic" (Teimouri 63) perspective. All three works deal with the barbarous invasion of US military forces into Vietnam. His study also gives a deep insight view of US war mongering in the post-World War II era. Another evident concern that shows resemblance among these novels is "the issue of torture and the infliction of pain on the body" (64). The works are, in one or the other way, connected in terms of violence, obliteration, and intimidation. On the other hand, Nguyen's novel *The Sympathizer* is concerned with the American imperialistic/colonialist approach towards Vietnamese, in terms of the propagation of their ideologies.

Having a diasporic identity is always a sign of horror for host countries. They do not facilitate diaspora with necessities of life like proper education, food, medical aid, and shelter. Therefore, they think of moving back to their native country. Yaniv Voller highlights the aforementioned issues that diaspora faces in host countries. When they try to strengthen their position in their adopted culture, the response they receive is not welcoming, they are deprived of the basic right of education. Voller focuses on the "diaspora returnees" (8) who face turbulent issues on their mother's soil and bear all

those circumstances in host societies as well. They leave their country in the desire of better opportunities and facilities but host countries fail to provide them with better living standards. The first devastating sight is the poor and pathetic “infrastructure” (9) in which immigrants get an education, all the educational institutions have less modern equipment and furniture where they can sit properly and pursue their educational goals. Voller also reveals the truth about “health infrastructure” (10), those are also in despicable situations and there is always a risk of their breakage. The irony of the time is that the immigrants have to “pay for medical assistance” (10). Instead of sensing their pitiful condition, the people of the host country oppress them by charging more and more for medical support. When the immigrants detect the oppression and unfair dealing with them in every means, they decide to return to their homeland because both lands do not prove favorable for them.

Rainer, Baubock and Thomas, Faist in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories, and Methods* explain that to meet the challenges of this mobilized and “industrialized” (43) era everyone is seeking for his/her new place where they can do good in handful amount of their salaries. Both the writers focus on the people that have lower status and earning minimal wages. Such kind of group of people is ready to take the flight to another country easily and they eagerly express their desire to cross the border “in search of employment” (43). The people belonging to inferior/third world countries in times of migration do not think about the sufferings that force them to migrate from their native place to the host country. What do they think are the benefits they would take from the host country? When the members of the “transnational community” (43) reach the host country, their priority, according to both writers is “to acquire citizenship” (43) from the host society. To retain their position in the host culture, they “adapt” (43) to the culture of the host country and try to assimilate into it. In this way, neither they go away from their roots nor do they feel alienation from the host society and conveniently manage themselves in the host country. Hence, they do not foster a strong longing to return to their origins because they have adjusted themselves to such an extent that they can easily maintain the responsibilities of sustenance. Another reason for not returning to their homeland, which both the writers mention in their book, is “regularity and safety of communication” (44). Therefore, staying away from loved ones has not been difficult in this advanced and technological period. Substantially, the trans-migrants endeavor to hold citizenship in the host

country. They not only donate their efforts to get a place but they also transgress from their own culture to mix in the society but they fail to please the people of host countries, hence, they miss out on getting their place. The writers hold the opinion that no matter how “economically oriented” (45) they become “political interest is restricted” (45) for them, therefore, they are kept away from politics. They are not given due rights to take an active part in politics. In this way, it can be inferred that those people do not want to give trans-migrants a place in their hometown.

In the heated debate of the surroundings, the study “Challenges Facing Racial Minority Immigrants” continues to explore that “migrant families, and refugees and asylum seekers” (Narra 3) are still a matter of controversy in the host country like America. They are being racially discriminated and America number of times has proved that immigrants and refugees are the members of the marginalized section which should not be facilitated with the necessities of life in the dominant countries. The political ideologies of such countries also do not support immigrants and refugees to give them their due rights. They are further “fueled by anti-immigrants amid the COVID-19 pandemic” (3) in the United States. In this way, “racial minorities” (3) are dually marginalized by the virus and the inappropriateness of the host cultures. Therefore, the public health sectors have further increased their social distances from racially discriminated groups and they come up with outrageous spokes that they will not consider the resources such as “clean water, health care, and health insurance, higher density housing, and greater exposure to the coronavirus in the workplace among many racial minority communities” (3).

Talking about the hate crimes which have surged up to 59.6% till 2017, Amy K. Marks, G. Alice Woolverton, and Marit D. Murry in their study “Xenophobia and Racism, Immigrant Youth Experiences, Stress, and Resilience” claim that all these crimes are directed towards “immigrant communities as fueled by increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States” (Marks et.al. 51). In this way, based on racial discrimination, refugees and immigrants are being held guilty for these crimes. During the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, more than 1000 hate crimes were reported in just 2 weeks, and “Asian-origin immigrant communities” (51) were primarily targeted in this regard. Therefore, by using the platforms of social media and online articles and through “hate speeches” (51) both on domestic and international levels, anti-immigrants have amenably expressed their abhorrence for racially discriminated minorities. Such

attitudes have further added to the fuel “in the United States aimed at children and adolescents from immigrant and refugee families” (51). In the United States, the history of racism is related to “xenophobia and color” (52), and people hold opinions that are fed by the government and states. Thus, “immigrant youth and families of color may experience doubly marginalized statuses of both immigrant (i.e., xenophobia) and person of color (i.e., racism) social groups” (52).

Indhushree Rajan and Thema Bryant-Davis in their study note that “intersecting forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, xenophobia, and classism” (Rajan & Davis 165) increase the risk for human trafficking and create barriers for refugees and immigrants. Therefore, they are not entertained and welcomed in the host societies and all the services are ceased so that refugees cannot get access to inter-personal amenities. Hence, every effort is foreshadowed to do human trafficking based on racism. Inequality across the borders of “race, gender, and socio-economic status” (168) generates cavernous divides among societies that feed the growing pandemic of human trafficking worldwide. “Racial and gender-based discrimination” (168) has become fashionable around the globe to hit the most vulnerable population of the world “to suffer disproportionate abuses” (168).

Rainer K. Silbereisen, Peter F. Titzmann, and Yossi Shavit in their book *The Challenges of Diaspora Migration* tell some ways of returning and not returning Diasporas to the “country of birth” (Silbereisen et al 25). The first reason of moving away from their homeland to the host countries is the economical instabilities and wavering political situation. The immigrants or “ethnic” (25) do not think about returning to “their ethnic homelands” (26) because they make themselves prosperous and successful by doing good jobs, getting handsome amount of salaries, and having “better living standards” (26) but even then they are attached to their roots to such an extent that the memories of their fatherland “invoke” (26) them to return to their homeland. On the other hand, there are many “ethnic migrants” (26) who suffer a lot in host countries do not live with suitable living standards, and find no shelter better than their lands, therefore, they prefer to move back to their native lands. Another reason for these returnees is their “ancestral heritage” (27). They are deeply rooted in their cultural values, religious customs, norms, heritage, and creed and they find no pacific place in their adopted lands. Their hearts remain perplexed when they do not find freedom for their religious practices because the people of host countries think that giving minimal

space to immigrants means losing their values and culture. In this way, refugees are perpetuating their religious ideologies and they also fear that probably immigrants become conquerors by escalating their religious teachings. Therefore, they want to keep them away from their own country and culture.

Ma Vang in her article stresses the course of the refugees which should be taught in the universities as a subject. Being a professor at the University of California, her contribution to the field of Refugees as a subject is significant. She emphasizes that refugees should be accepted by the world instead of counting them as a problem. The latest reports of the UN and literature are trying to address the issues of displacement of the refugees but fail to exclude the underlying power structures of oppression that cause their dislocation. Therefore, the course “Critical Refugee Studies” does not merely rely on the sociological approaches, rather the course focuses on the methods of storytelling which are taught to have a deep insight into the concerns of the refugees. This helps to redefine the term refugee which is based on terror and oppression.

The review of the literature reveals that most of the studies conducted on the works of Nguyen primarily deal with the issues of assimilation of the refugees in the host culture and thus neglect integration, a two-way process, which is more holistic, of the Vietnamese refugees in the target cultures of the USA and France. Moreover, the previous studies present an insufficient evidence regarding the viable solutions to the refugees’ concerns in the host cultures. Therefore, this study helps to fill this gap after a careful analysis of the selected works.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the research methodology, which I have opted for the analysis of the selected works. It elaborates on the paradigm of the research and the research method that I have employed for the evaluation of the two novels. It also designs a theoretical framework for the study carefully by focusing on the theoretical stance that Gulay Ugur Goksel has taken in the backdrop of the integration process of the refugees.

3.1 Research Methods

This study falls in a qualitative paradigm with a key focus on the cultural representations of the issues the refugees face in the host cultures. Moreover, the integration of the refugees into the target cultures is also the main issue that this study seeks to address. Cultural studies help the readers understand contextual as well as conceptual meanings of the text in several perceptions.

Tony Bennet's reflections in his essay "Towards a Pragmatics for Cultural Studies" on the use of the method for cultural representations in the selected texts model the backdrop of the cultural studies wherein the theoretical framework that I have mentioned in the forthcoming section has been used to answer the research questions raised at the starting section of this study. This method of cultural studies suits to my research because it deals with the interdisciplinarity that "concerns with the functioning of the cultural practices and institutions" (Bennet 51). The main concern of my research is to study the role of the different government and nongovernment institutions in the process of refugee integration within the host cultures. Bennet argues that cultural studies, along with other disciplines, influences "literary studies" (44) as well. The study focuses on the examination of the cultural forms of the host as well as the refugees' culture to understand the role these play within the power relations and also the "forms of practical actions" that both cultures take to negotiate the issues related to the integration of the refugees (49).

Bennet's debate on the power relations between the different social groups also aligns with my area of studies. I have brought under discussion the "political

estimation” of the “social agents” – both groups and individuals and they are “involved in the process of changing the functioning of ... power relations” in a culture, social, and political context and also those who are the “beneficiaries” of these changes (52). In my case, these beneficiaries are the refugees who are affected by these power dynamics. Bennet’s bureaucratic question – “what can you do for us” is the one, which the refugees ask from the people in power in the host countries. They want an assurance from the powerful political and administrative quarters of the society in terms of providing them asylum, citizenship, political and social recognition and absorption into their culture. It is through the connection of social administration and management with the refugees in which “the social and political demands of different constituencies are translated into practicable administrative options” (57). This can help the refugees overcome their hardships they face in the process of their integration within the host cultures.

Moreover, my study concerns the function of the “cultural practices” and “institutions” in the contexts of relations of powers of diverse kinds (Bennet 51). This methodological approach suits to my research design as it deals with “practices, institutions and systems” through which certain “values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct” (52) are constructed. My analysis of the selected works transcends the mere mentioning of the issues the refugees face; rather, it addresses the aforementioned cultural constructs that expedite the process of integration in the host cultures.

One of the main purposes of this research is to explore the issues (themes) related to the refugees they face in the host culture(s). To cope with this aspect of my analysis of the selected texts, I have used Thematic Analysis propounded by Virginia Braun et al in their essay with the same title. This method suits to my research design because themes, as Braun et al puts it, are “reflecting a pattern of shared meaning, organized around a core concept or idea” (845). In my study, integration of the refugees in the host culture is the core idea I am working on and. therefore, this method is appropriate for my research design. The main idea has been split into “smaller meaning units (codes)” (845) like racism, assimilation, adjustment, cultural and economic acceptance, misrepresentation in the cultural productions and the integration itself. In this coding process, I have gone through the selected works and, guided by “coding frame” (847) or theoretical perspective, and have, by the method of exclusion or

qualifications, highlighted the themes which map to these codes. Besides, my research deals with the “lived experiences” (850) of the refugees in the host land – how they are received, how they react/respond to the cultural behaviors of the natives and how they suffer when they fail to get a recognition in the target land. Moreover, it examines the elements “that influence, underpin, or contextualize particular process or phenomenon” (850) such as factors that shape the refugees’ identity in the host cultures.

Braun et al’s guidelines on six phases of reflexive thematic analysis are helpful in identifying, in a systematic way, the relevant data (textual evidences) for thematic analysis from the selected texts. I “immersed” (852) and familiarize myself in the selected texts by going through them, made notes, developed connections with my theoretical stance and categorizing the same into different codes and themes. This involves “reading and rereading textual data” (852), making notes according to the research questions and objectives of the study. This leads to the second phase of the thematic analysis, where the loosely collected/selected data (textual evidences) is given “focused attention, to systematically and make sense of the data” (853). My coding technique is deductive where I approach “the data with various ideas, concepts, and theories, or even potential codes” (853) which relate to my study design. My research does not preferably look for surface meaning, rather it is more concerned with the deeper and latent meanings of the texts.

On the basis of the data collected and assigning codes to the dataset, next phase aligns with, what Braun et al term as “generating themes” (854). This is significant part of the thematic analysis of the selected texts because this has helped me test out the textual evidences in the light of the research questions and the thesis statement. These themes are coherent and insightful in relation to the research questions. The codified textual references have worked as the building blocks for generation of the themes from the texts because these contain meaningful pattern to qualify them as a prominent theme in the texts. The next two phases namely revising and defining themes go parallel in my study. The selected codes and the subsequent generation of the themes have been revised, (re)named to sieve the best out of these to avoid the “thinness” (Braun et al, 855) or the superficiality of the ideas so that a single theme come out of it. Through this process of revision, my research aims for “an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the central organizing concept and boundaries of each theme, including [sub/overarching] themes, and the overall theme story” (856). Once the process of data

collection/textual references is accomplished, I have analyzed the texts and am producing the report in the form of my thesis write up.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens that I use to substantiate my argument concerning the primary texts has been taken from *Integration of Immigrants and the Theory of Recognition: 'Just Integration'* (2018) propounded by Gulay Ugur Goksel in which she introduces the concept of integration in the background of assimilation and multiculturalism.

3.2.1 Integration

Goksel in her book uses the term “integration” in the context of “minorities or refugees” (Thorburn 158). She also explains the differences among the terms; assimilation, multiculturalism, and integration. In her book, she marks the trajectory of the global phenomenon of refugees. For decades, various factors such as economic and socio-political disruptions have been involved in emanating refugees from their birthplaces and are therefore, in search of some shelter and asylum. She emphasizes upon the terminology integration so that she can do justice to the concerns of the inhabitants of the Western countries.

By integration, she means incorporating one’s ideologies, culture, and normative values into the countries where they will live. Goksel does not stop here; her main focus leads her to tell integration as a solution. She calls it “common ground” on which the construction of “common identity” depends (Goksel 4). There are some concerns of the host countries to resolve the issues of national security, but the answer to these concerns, which Goksel gives, is integration, through which the dilemma of security can be warded off. However, the question persists: Can the host states manage plural cultures and diverse races with their existing people? To find out the answer to this question Goksel gives her point of view that this issue has been put forward to policymakers and academics and they call it a “collective goal” (4).

Talking about individual development, Goksel claims that for practical relations, “mutual recognition” (64) is required for a being to collaborate in the host societies. Mutual recognition can be instituted over and done with “three distinguished forms of integration, namely, love, rights, and solidarity” (64). With the help of these spheres, a protected environment can be created. In this way, Goksel not only invites

visiting communities but also the host countries to come forward and greet each other, hence, she claims that integration is a two-way process “between individual, state and corporation” (64). She further enhances the stance of mutual cooperation by stating that “together with equal and free political participation” (64) the dynamic process can be stimulated. Thus, the process of integration can only be accelerated when the refugees find doors open in host societies for “equal social, economic, and cultural values so that they can participate in public negotiations on an equal footing” (67). To safeguard minorities from the scorching heat of injustice, the process of integration can protect them from harmful layers of infidelity in host societies.

3.2.2 Assimilation and Multiculturalism

Goksel further explains that policymakers and academia verify their goal against the backdrop of “assimilationists and multiculturalists” thinking (5). According to assimilationists, refugees or minorities can be acquainted and integrate if they are ready to leave their “ethno-cultural identities” (5) behind and hence they will be called “nationals” of the host states. On the other hand, multiculturalists contradict assimilationists and hold their point of view about integration. They argue that to be called “nationals” of the host country, it is dispensable to leave “ethno-cultural identities” rather perennial thing is to “respect and tolerate” (5) cultural identities.

Goksel inexplicably comments that the issue of integration swings in back-and-forth motion between assimilationists and multiculturalists and yet no coherence and final verdict has been found in their results. However, the fact remains that both groups deal with the problem of “social cohesion, national identity, and security of the host country” (12). Goksel does not give satisfactory remarks on the dominant approach of the “assimilation-multiculturalism axis” (12) because she thinks that this approach diverts our attention from the facts of “structural problems of inequality, discrimination, and political exclusion” (12). Therefore, she rejects this approach and calls it a “fictitious problem” (12). Therefore, she further moves on to the solution of integration.

3.2.3 Concerns of Refugees in a Multi-Cultural Society

Considering the gravity of the situation regarding the concerns of the refugees, Goksel proposes a “liberal political theory” (28) through which the issues of refugees can easily be located either they face individually or collectively. In liberal political theory, Goksel takes a stance on how to liberalize individuals and hence constructs an

“understanding of freedom and equality” (29) based on imaginative and “atomistic individuals” (29). Residing in the liberal framework, Goksel suggests that refugees who are living in Western liberal states demand “public recognition, and support for their language, practices and identities” (29). To further broaden her point of view about “individual identity” (29), Goksel argues that to develop independent individuals, minorities should be given a culture where they can have freedom of speech and where they can hold their decisions and opinions.

As a result of the rejection of assimilationists’ and multiculturalists’ approaches, she gives her stance that the problem of refugees can be taken over through “citizenship, national identity, and social cohesion” (12). To support her concept of “citizenship” she says that this can be acquired by living in the premises of “nation-state and national identity” (12). She joins “national identity” (13) with citizenship to crystallize her point of view that by sharing a common ethnic identity, “national homogenization” (13) can be created. Furthermore, she transgresses from her aforementioned statements and takes another stance that “political integration” (17) must be given to the refugees to acquire citizenship and maintain national integrity in the host countries.

Goksel argues that refugees belonging to different ethnicities and races in host countries become a problem and burden for them rather they are taken as “threats to national security” (2). Diversities in ethnicities and multiple cultures are also conceived as threats in Western countries. Goksel further illustrates this point that people belonging to different countries and groups identify themselves as threatening power for the reason that most of the refugees do not look, behave, speak, or “in general live like nationals in the host countries” (3). On the other hand, nationals of host countries demand minorities either to reconcile with their liberal values or “adapt to host culture in time” (3).

Locating the sufferings of refugees in host countries, Goksel illustrates that there are “socio-economic barriers” (75) that have been neglected when it comes to refugees’ sufferings. She strongly argues that being society “we need to adjust our cultural focus” (75) so that we can easily locate the “socio-economic sufferings of refugees” (75). For that purpose, she lays her emphasis on “relational dynamics” (75) which can play a vital role in refugee studies and speed up the integration process. The suffering of minorities can be lessened if they get recognition in the host societies. She argues that every human being possesses a longing “to be united with the “other”

through mutual recognition” (75). Thus, Goksel calls group formation necessary for recognition in capitalist/host societies. She is not oblivious to the repercussions of group formation, but she makes her stance strong by saying that “to eliminate black spots of one-sided approaches” (77), group formation needs to be worked on.

Giving a concluding stance, Goksel says that integration is a “two-way adjustment process” (85) that completely transmutes the practices of recognition of both the governing groups and marginalized groups. She also states that it is a sensible step to have expectations from well-developed and capitalist states to acknowledge the identities of refugees and show their willingness to provide lodgings and shelters to their refugees “based on values of fairness and equality” (85). This “transformative understanding” (85) throws questions to the assimilationists who presume the process of integration is a one-way route for refugees to adapt to the norms and culture of their host societies but in this process, the people of host societies do not give access to marginalized communities to enjoy equal rights.

The rationale behind selecting Goksel’s take on refugee integration as theoretical framework for the analyses of the selected works is to explore the multifaceted two-way aspect of refugees’ integration into the host cultures and its reciprocation. Her stance on refugee integration lays emphasis on a multidimensional approach combining political, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions to foster inclusive societies. Goksel goes beyond the concept of mere assimilation and multiculturalism and introduces the concept of integration that helps refugees get space into the host cultures. She also proposes that by giving refugees a common identity and sharing national identity, the process of integration can be accelerated.

CHAPTER 4

INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN THE HOST CULTURES: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *THE SYMPATHIZER AND THE COMMITTED*

The novel *The Sympathizer* by Vietnamese-based American emerging novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen was published in 2015. The novel primarily deals with the America-Vietnam war, which brought destruction for both countries, particularly for Vietnam. The narrator, a communist agent, remains unnamed throughout the novel. He prefers to be called by different names like “SPY”, “a sleeper”, “a spook”, “a man of two faces” and “a man of two minds” (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 1) instead of revealing his true/real name.

The protagonist of the novel works as a captain in the South Vietnamese army and secretly works as a secret agent for the opposite side - the North Vietnamese faction. After the fall of Saigon, the protagonist moves to America as a refugee where he carries on his espionage with the people of Vietnam. With his dual identity, the protagonist delves into both private and political complexities. The narrator moves to the host country to explore the complexities of the life of dual allegiances. The novel deals with the story of the protagonist’s confession in his imprisonment, providing a different nuance of the struggles that he put during the period of unrest in the recent history of Vietnam. The novel gives a deep insight into the miserable conditions of the Vietnamese refugees and migrants; they face after the war in the lands of the United States.

With a refugee identity, Viet Thanh Nguyen explores the problems and experiences of the refugees. His style of narration about Vietnamese refugees unfolds a variety of the facts that he experienced during the war. Therefore, he portrays the struggles of the displaced personages, which they face on the alienated soil. Besides, Nguyen reconnoiters the complexities of the individuals and their encounters with the people of the United States. This is the fact that Nguyen meticulously develops his characters and gives in-depth discernment that helps the people understand the identity of the refugees.

Nguyen's second text, *The Committed*, is a sequel to his first novel, *The Sympathizer*, published in 2021. In this novel, the protagonist is named "Vo Danh" which means "nameless" (Nguyen *The Committed* 174). Like the first novel, again in the second novel the protagonist represents himself, as "We were the unwanted, the unneeded, and the unseen, invisible to all but ourselves" (1). This introduction is sufficient for declaring his identity as a refugee. After being tortured in the re-education camp in the United States, he starts his journey in France where the man with two faces suffers a lot. This time the situation is not favorable for him and his friend Bon. Both of the men start navigating the land of France but soon they realize that this land is not meant for Vietnamese refugees. Right from the beginning, they try to assimilate into the host culture and therefore with the help of the protagonist's "Parisian Aunt" (18) they get a place to live. The aunt is French Vietnamese and secretly works as a spy with the collaboration of her nephew "Man" (18).

The refugee protagonist conceals his identity in both texts because he does not want to expose himself on an individual level rather, he feels comfortable presenting himself as a member of the refugee community. Therefore, the new life that he along with his Vietnamese refugee community begins in France is full of dangers he has not considered. He goes through different obstacles in finding a new job in France. His race, color, and ethnic background hinder him from getting a high status in French society. Another issue he and his community face is the acceptance from the French people. They are not ready to absorb them into their land as the natives. For that purpose, the French social and political institutions play their role in dehumanizing them. The characters like BFD (a French Politician and socialist) and Maoist PhD (a French politician) do not give space to the refugees and halt the progression of their basic needs.

Furthermore, all the refugees get minimal jobs in France and to take off the economic burden, they accept them and provide their services to the French community. Exploring a new job, the protagonist once undergoes the Parisian underworld but soon escapes. Every Vietnamese refugee tries to assimilate into the host culture but the response he/she gets is not promising.

The selected works, at the least, talk about the experiences of the migrants and refugees which they gain in the host countries like America and France. The protagonist

and the other Vietnamese carry with them their label of refugees in the host countries, which hinders them in the realization of their dream of settling there. Besides being refugees, they are nonwhites and orientalist and belong to a country, which was at war against The US and French armies. The subjugated position of these Vietnamese posits them in a situation where acceptance by the host countries seems improbable.

4.1 Racism: An Impediment to Integration

Racial discrimination and biasedness are some significant factors that obstruct the acceptance of non-American immigrants/refugees in American society. The narrator (the protagonist) in the selected novels, *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed* faces racial partiality. In discussing *The Sympathizer*, the behavior of the American woman is the reflection of racial prejudice towards the narrator. His “face” and “yellowness” of his skin usher in sternness and rigidity in her treatment (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 6). The narrator realizes how racial superiority is permeated in American individuals, which extends to American society in general, and questions the assimilation process of the nonwhites. He assimilates himself into the American culture including language and appearance but still his half-Asianness-half-Americanness (hybrid identity) does not change the color of his skin. He realizes the position of nonwhite Asians in the eyes of racist Americans, even outside America. “You were either white or you were nothing” (95). The non-Americans lose their identity to nothingness when it comes to the question of race. Both Americans and the French demonstrated a significant engagement with practices and ideologies associated with racism.

The narrator’s story continues in the second novel selected for the study, *The Committed*, where the narrator leaves America for France that is to say his second homeland from his parental side, and hopes to get acceptance there. He thinks that France will help him to forget his race and identity and give a proper space to him. Unfortunately, he gets a frosty reception there. His dual identity first as an Asian and second as a refugee does not allow him to be settled on the soil of France. Sharing empirical thoughts about racism the narrator exposes the general attitude of French people towards Vietnamese refugees. “Any Frenchman or woman or child, rich or poor, beautiful or plain, could call us anything he or she wanted and, occasionally, did. *Yellow-skinned bastard! Slanty-eyed chink!*” (Nguyen *The Committed* 36). The lines portray a ubiquitous and indifferent sort of racism the narrator experiences. Regardless

of his ethnic identity and social status, he receives racially derogatory remarks from the French people. In the aforementioned lines, Nguyen highlights a wide range of people who verbally abuse the narrator because of his yellow skin. It seems that this color is an emblem of dirt, which is polluting the conducive ambiance of France. To mention the proper yellow skin color with abusive language is a way to degrade and dehumanize the Asians and this reflects the deep-rooted prejudice of French people for them. “The most perfectly formed lips and the whitest teeth, borne about by the nicest shoes and daintiest footwear, could spit these seeds at us” (36). In a meeting with BFD, the narrator gets consciousness of his colonized identity as being more oppressed under the French-racial superiority. The physical attributes of perfectly carved lips and whitest teeth show their racial discrimination. This deep-seated biasedness can be seen in the Hollywood movies of America as well as in the theatrical plays of France.

As soon as the war broke in between America and Vietnam, Hollywood filmmakers included their perspectives regarding the war to show the Vietnamese as “primitive,’ ‘lazy,’ ‘cowardly,’ ‘vain,’ ‘dishonest,’ ‘unclean,’ and ‘somnolent” (Brenda M. Boyle *The Vietnam War 2*) because for them Films have didactic effects and so these were not simply “entertainment” (2). Hollywood movies, like American literature, never disappoint their audience in indoctrinating American racist ideology. Therefore, Hollywood proficiently infuses its white racial supremacy in its movies. When the narrator fails to persuade Auteur to pour out his dogmatic beliefs about the people of Vietnam into his script, he emphatically refutes the narrator’s arguments considering them as raw stuff. The Auteur aspires to create a film that encourages the Vietnamese to embrace silence; however, what emerges instead is an inarticulate yet profound scream, devoid of words. Showing the sovereignty and American man’s burden, Auteur encounters the narrator saying, “White men saving good yellow people from bad yellow people” (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 100). The statement of Auteur shows that America narrow-mindedly looks upon the Vietnamese people based on their skin color and hence takes the matter into its hands as a responsibility to protect and guard them from other yellowish-skinned people. The racial biasedness prompts Americans to microprint Vietnamese in their print and screen literature.

The American-Vietnam War fought in the years 1968-1975 was an unprecedented incident in the history of Vietnam. The people of Vietnam were already in a state of distress due to the French-Vietnam War because they were struggling to

free themselves from French colonial rule. Meanwhile, American intervention in Vietnam's territories made the situation vilest for the Vietnamese. The war had long-lasting impacts on both the countries. They had to endure far-fetched socio-economic and psychological repercussions. The militaries of both countries fought undauntedly and made every effort possible to defeat each other. Luckily, after the long-fought war, the Vietnamese succeeded in not only defeating America but also gaining victory in forcing them to leave Vietnam. Since then, Vietnamese have been facing racial bigotries in America. "The majority of Americans regarded us with ambivalence" (87). Most of the indigenous population of America does not embrace the people of Vietnam because "we are living reminders of their stinging defeat" (87). The text delineates the mixed feelings of Americans and their hatred for the Vietnamese, as they are the constant reminder of the loss and defeat. The text further implies the position of Asian Americans which disrupts America because they "threatened the sanctity and symmetry of a white and Black America" (87) and therefore left no space for any other skin color. Before the arrival of yellow-skinned Asians, America did not know any other color except white and black for racial discrimination. Soon after the immigration of Vietnamese, America is to accept "pathetic little, yellow-skinned people pickpocketing the American purse" (87).

4.2 Underrepresentation of East Asians in Art and Literature

"Art and literature were crucial to revolution," (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 129) said by one of the leading figures of Vietnam, Mao. The narrator and his friend Man follow the teachings of this leader. He is not oblivious to the importance of art and literature, but he is aware of the fact that these could act as a tool for the negative representation of the subordinated nations and individuals. He warns his people "art and literature could also be tools of domination" (129). He unfolds the political side of the use of art and talks about their interdependence. "Art could not be separated from politics, and politics needed art to reach the people where they lived, through entertaining them" (129). On the contrary, the American president does not consider art and literature worth to make them his topic of speeches. American art and literature are replete with content that, while maintaining silence on the Vietnamese refugees, strives to portray them as "Vietnamese extras" (117) in American movies because "as for the extras, the boat people, they would be forgotten. No one remembered the extras" (117). The conscious efforts of the filmmakers and the artists to relegate these Vietnamese

artists and people to a marginalized status underscore a general tendency of the American people in the background of racist ideology. At the same time, to present their softer and nonracist image to the world, they produce such movies for the reason, that “movies were America’s way of softening up the rest of the world” (129). The purpose of making movies like “The Hamlet” (99) is a promise to ensure their good intentions before the world. The American producer, Auteur only sees these movies “purely as art” (129) in which he repeatedly tries to underrepresent the Vietnamese and gives no space to them to inaugurate new places of the world. Through these movies, America not only discreetly plays with the minds of the watchers but also enfold the multiple layers of sympathies from outside the American world. The narrator who is the part of the movie “The Hamlet” (99) witnesses, “it mattered not what story these audiences watched. The point was that it was the American story they watched and loved” (129). The statement suggests that following the successful conceptualization of the American Dream, America is progressively aligning itself with the preferences of its audience, adapting to their cultural and racial identities. The narrator also holds the point of view that the audience would love such kind of movies “until the day that they might be bombed by the planes they had seen in American movies” (129). Movies like *The Hamlet* deploy another aspect of American ideology, which hampers the process of integration between refugees and the host culture. This is the aspect that Goksel is unable to bring forth in her debate on the integration of refugees into the host culture and this neglected side should be incorporated and discussed in the academic discourse.

Regarding Vietnamese female refugees, their roles in the movie are deliberately portrayed as subdued and silent. They are shown being raped, assaulted, and tortured in the movie. Hollywood often portrays Asian woman as objects of desire, emphasizing their physicality while neglecting their emotional depth and individuality. Therefore, the script of the movie allows only one woman to come on the stage to produce the sound of “*AIEYAAHHH!*” (118), delineates the American ill-treatment towards women. The sound of *AIEYAAHHH* explicates the pain and agony that she feels in her life and movie as well. This scream, which she echoes, is not of any joy and happiness but of distress. Auteur deems it insufficient to introduce only a single woman for being tortured and hence adds another young girl Mai as a younger sister who “would then be kidnapped and raped by King Cong” (128). This darker side of the movie portrays American misogynistic and misanthropic ideology for the women of other countries.

Unfortunately, the gender treatment throughout the whole movie does not favor any of the Vietnamese female characters.

Amongst the muted and faintly lit quarters of the furtive brothel, an old woman Madame Sans lives, and the Green Berets (American soldiers) often pay visits to those quarters. This scene is set on the stage to humiliate and devalue the sanctity of the Vietnamese woman. To make an Asian woman the owner of the brothel humiliates the holiness of a woman. Targeting the decorum and decency of an Asian woman, this time Auteur selects the character of an old woman, which shows his evil intentions for the Vietnamese woman. He deliberately adds the character that sheds light on his misogynistic behavior. After her appearance on the scene, the Green Berets are amazed to see this enigmatic figure and identify “her as the friendly, black-toothed Madame of the dismal brothel” (132). The black color of her teeth and assigning the term friendly to a woman exhibit the misogynistic portrayal of Vietnamese women. The dismal brothel suggests that the condition of the brothel is not favorable for women to live. The woman’s wrinkled and weathered face vividly discloses her painful story because right after the deadly scene of the movie where every extra has to die, she “dashed from the cave to fall, wailing, onto the body of her dead VC son” (131). The stereotypical approach of Auteur against Asian women propagates Western ideology and thinking patterns, which often leads them to either exotic characters or submissive ones. The portrayals of such characters reinforce detrimental stereotypes, which hinder the proper understanding of Asian women. The general attitude of the West also aligns such characters as being objectified and connected with the sexual trade. This is the reason when the Green Berets see the woman; they remember the brothel where they made certain visits “to play the venereal disease lottery” (132).

The language which the lady uses suffices to dehumanize her. It highlights the homogenization of Asian women as pleasure objects for sex for the American soldiers. The scene also highlights the contrasting thinking of the Green Berets how they initially perceive the lady as the brothel owner and when they find her wailing on the dead body of her son. This typical approach of American soldiers accentuates the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Asian women.

Another scene of the movie concocts the American misrepresentation of the real war between America and Vietnam. This scene supports American supremacy and goes against Vietnam. The potential motif of this movie is to show American power over

Vietnamese, by showing the killing of Vietnamese only. The scene takes many a week to complete the shoots “popping with helicopters, rocket fire, gun battles, and the utter and magnificent destruction” (131). Several supplies of smoke, fire, and explosives ensure the blazing effects of the war, which would soon vanish everything on the set. This horrifying stuff could not satisfy Auteur’s wants for realistic carnages; thus he adds another scene in which “all the extras had to be killed off” (131). Adding this scene (a digression of course) materializes the American coercive ideology against the Vietnamese. After this scene, they are called “*Dead Vietnamese*” (131) which illustrates American verbal power over Vietnamese. When these dead people take their places, it feels as if “an obedient tribe of zombies rose from the earth” (131). The actors act like mutilated deceased men, staggering from the makeup room. Their appearance is so pathetic that the scene can make anyone cry on the set. They all come up with “bruised and bloodied, clothing ripped and torn” (131). Some are leaning on their comrades and shambling on a single leg because “the other leg strapped up to their thigh” (131). The hand, which is left free for the actors, carries a “fake limb, the white bone protruding” (131), and their position is set to make them lay down somewhere to hide themselves from the enemies. This deadly scene establishes the fact of American power, which they exercised on the Vietnamese in the real war. Amid this despondent place, the war has obliterated the landscapes and crushed the flesh of wounded soldiers. In the ruins, the dismal faces of the soldiers can easily be seen when the flames of the bombs cast their creepy shadows on them. The performances of the actors vividly express their pain, with heavy emotions carved on their faces. Quite astoundingly, not a single American soldier is murdered in the scene; rather they all are attacking the Vietnamese to show their supremacy and power.

The issue of misrepresentation of the Vietnamese in the movies irks the narrator in such a way that he cannot abstain from looking into it after he departs from Philippines. On the set, he (the narrator) keeps on listening American narrative against the Vietnamese “*They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented*” (133). The statement supports the powerful American narrative where they think the Vietnamese are unable to build themselves as a nation independently. Therefore, they need compassionate support to help them achieve self-reliance and face the challenges of the world. Thus, they wait for a time when the dominant societies will acknowledge and hear their unheard voices.

4.3 Objectification of East Asian Refugee Women

The objectification of Asian women is not limited to the movies alone. These women face sexual degradation in their real lives. The second selected novel, *The Committed* throws ample light on this aspect. Most of the women are destined to be a part of brothels where they have to sell their bodies against their will as they are left with no alternative. The repressive circumstances that Asian women confront are the same in America and France. *The Committed* evocatively portrays the prejudices and inequalities that women have to tolerate. The French, during their colonial period, set up brothels in Cambodia (an East Asian country), for their sexual pleasures. “Prostitution was practiced in various urban centers within Cambodia” (Derks 128). This was the time when France invaded Cambodia and made it its colony. The French government makes special centers for sex workers to maintain public health and morals and issues numerous orders to legally regulate the “*filles publiques*” (128). This anticipates the French cruelty toward Asian women. Thus, when the protagonist goes into Heaven (a brothel) and confronts an old woman who “was of retirement age,” (Nguyen *The Committed* 110) seems to be the head of that brothel. Her retirement age is a confirmation of dedicating her life to this French bordello. She welcomes the protagonist and asks him “May I take your coat? May I untie your shoes? May I show you to the living room?” (110). Her Filipina accent tells that the old woman belongs to the Philippines, a poor country that cannot foster its women, therefore, developed countries like France manipulate them and endanger them to enslavement. Her entertaining way of talking and rhetorical sentences pour light on the fact that she has been working in a French whorehouse for many decades. That is why she knows how to deal with the men. To be in Heaven explicitly illustrates the French government’s monopoly over Asian women who do not allow them to do any reputable work in the society. Hence, the French government deliberately drags them into the contaminated pool where they move blindly and unwillingly. They are doubly marginalized; firstly, as women and secondly as Asians. When the mistress reaches the protagonist into a room, he defines her look as “a woman whose stark expressionist makeup accentuated both her attractiveness and her avariciousness” (114). Irrespective of the age, the appearance of the mistress delineates her grabbing nature, which allures the hearts of the men. The makeup, that she wears, is a complete conjecture of her personality that helps her to gain extra attention from the men. The matter of subjugation in France is

not limited to this Philippines mistress but it continues until Cambodian and Laotian women.

The other woman who works in the brothel is Madeleine, a Cambodian woman. The mistress introduces her, as “Madeleine will be with you soon. You will like her. Everybody likes Madeleine” (114). After invading Cambodia, the French people start women trafficking into their country for physical gratification. So, they bring many women to France and Madeleine is one of them. The misogynistic behavior of France leaves a dark impact on the women belonging to underdeveloped countries. Despite the reputation that France shares with the developed countries, it has an elongated history of embedded misogyny. Therefore, the French treatment of Asian women is purely objectifying and demeaning. Describing her outlook, the protagonist says, “Madeleine was not, by conventional definitions, the most beautiful of women. She radiated softness, warmth, tenderness, and, most of all, *desire for me*” (115). The appearance suggests that the woman does not possess all the beauty standards according to the societal norms, but she endures the inner beauty. Probably the protagonist highlights the inward beauty of the Asian women, which he feels with Madeleine. He knows the inner qualities of Asian women who may not be attractive, but their qualities enhance them the most. After some time when the protagonist completely consigns himself to the woman, he desires to be loved. Madeleine comes near him and says “Why, hello, big boy. Poor you. So, neglected. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of you” (116). The way Madeleine greets the protagonist feels that she is taking pity on him because he needs some help and rescue from the woman. This idea is generally associated with the stereotyping of Asian women as docile and submissive, with their role confined to nurturing and caring the men. Madeleine, embodying an Asian sensibility, empathizes with the protagonist's pain and humbles herself further to comfort him. She takes him as a neglected person who needs her help and attention. She also believes this is solely her job to take care of him.

When the protagonist returns to his place after spending seven days in Heaven, he meets with a French businessperson, Ronin who tells the protagonist that Boss has sent him to make a business deal with him. As the negotiation begins between both the men, another Asian woman, Laotian originated Crème Brulee interrupts them. Seeing her, Ronin “winked at me” (121) making fun of the Laotian girl and immediately calling her “Come here, my Laotian love, it’s been a long time” (121). The statement reinforces

the misrepresentation of the Asian woman whose work is to give erotic satisfaction to men. The love that Ronin has for Crème Brûlée is not pure; rather it is just fun to satisfy his carnal needs.

The notion of civilizing Asians reflects a colonialist perspective historically employed by Western powers to justify their cultural and political dominance. Like Americans, the French also propagates the same ideology of making the Vietnamese a civilized nation but in a different way. The people like BFD, a French socialist, do not accept the Vietnamese refugees wholeheartedly in their country. They look down upon them and take them as “others” (136). When the narrator reaches Paris, where his aunt is waiting for him, he sets off on his journey with the French socialist BFD and Maoist PhD and suddenly “it struck me that I was not just seen as an “other” by the White people. They heard me as other” (37). This shows that in the domain of White people, Asian refugees are always at the periphery. The White people of France create feelings of marginalization in refugees’ hearts and exclude them from the mainstream of their society. On the one hand, they identify them visually different and on the other hand, they ignore their voices and opinions. Both the French men perceive the narrator’s voice as other which often leads this attitude to prejudice and misunderstanding. In the host countries, it is common practice to see the refugees as a threat or burden as Goksel in her theoretical viewpoint calls them “refugees as undesirable” (5).

After encountering BFD at his aunt’s house, the narrator experiences a sense of inferiority upon hearing derogatory remarks about Vietnamese people. “*You, too. A boat person. Like them. verrry saaad. They have nothing. We have everything. We must help them. We must help you*” (38). The BFD’s statement highlights the Western approach of us and them where he takes all the privileges of superiority over the marginalized community of Vietnamese. The tone he uses for the narrator is mocking and patronizing because it feels that he still thinks of them as uncultured and primitive. Calling the narrator a boat person validates the French perspective about Vietnamese refugees. “In France, very few people use the term “Vietnamese Diaspora,” but prefer the denomination of “Vietnamese Community. They call them boat people” (Eve-Blanc 3). Probably he freshens the moment with the memory of the glorifying French-colonial era in which they took over the Vietnamese and started horrific genocidal attacks. As a result, the Vietnamese could not endure the aftermaths of the war and started fleeing from their own country to the different countries including America and France. Most

of them navigate through boats to reach these countries; therefore, the people of the host countries sarcastically give them the title of the boat people.

Through the successful sea journey, Vietnamese refugees reach the worlds where their investments of hardships, labor, and pain could not help them gain a proper status and acceptance. Thus, using the Western lens of superiority, BFD humiliates the narrator and makes him realize that his nation does not enjoy what they enjoy. They (the refugees) are unable to rely on either source, as French-colonial rule deprived them of the privileges and resources, they once enjoyed in their home country. They steal everything from them and bring them home to cherish their people. On one side, BFD's realization of refugees' dispossession and on the other side his way of taking pity on them with the word *saaad* vigorously shows the double standards of the West. First, they brutally snatch their belongings including their land and then make them colonized by injecting the ideology that they have nothing and now this is the sole responsibility of the West to aid them. The promise of helping Vietnamese refugees and extending the hands of compassion is purely a hypocritical approach of the French in which they intend to exploit and oppress the Vietnamese. It has always been the struggle of the French government to bring progress to Vietnam, but in reality, the efforts resulted in cultural erasure and exploitation.

Later on, that evening, as the narrator lies on the sofa in his aunt's house, he closes his eyes and occupies himself with piecing together fragments of the past. He remembers the power dynamics of the French who "imagined themselves as divine as my professor, fancied themselves as priests and disciples" (34). The narrator brings the French ideology onto the broader canvas where they view themselves as supernatural beings like God and prophets. They think themselves divine and superior for the reason that they are made perfect to rule over the irrational Vietnamese. "Not surprisingly, the colonizers looked down on us as savages, infants, or sheep, while we looked up at them as demigods, masters, or brutes" (34). The line further opens the secretive approach of the French-racial dominance over the colonized nation. The French thinking justifies its perception where they position themselves as enlightened colonizers whose task is to bring modernity and progress into the lives of Vietnamese. It is common practice for the narrator and his people to hear disparaging remarks from their masters. For the French, the Vietnamese are savages because they cannot cultivate themselves as a developed nation, they are infants and sheep because they are innocent and hence,

cannot represent themselves as a mature nation amongst the developed countries. On the contrary, the Vietnamese internalize the French-colonial narrative with esteem and reverence because of its military power, advanced technology, and strong cultural legacy.

4.4 Linking Multiculturalism, Assimilation and Refugee Integration

Assimilation, generally, is taken as the process by which immigrants, refugees, or any ethnic group adapts to the culture and language of the host countries. “A process of assimilation, in which the immigrant groups must be submitted to the system of hegemonic cultural practices that prevail in the society” (Sequeira 59). Therefore, the process is inclined to adopt the customs and values of the dominant culture, regardless of the ethnic plural cultures they have before. This is the reason the narrator states, “I was not the senior officer on the staff, but as the aide-de-camp and the most fluent in American culture” (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 5). The protagonist is amongst the people who want to evacuate their country due to the persecution of the war. Their native land has become the marionette in the hands of France and America; therefore, they need help to leave their country. On the instructions of the General, the narrator calls Claude (an American CIA Officer) for help. When he talks to the narrator, he informs Claude that he “attended all the General’s meeting with Americans” (5) which is an indication of being assimilated into the American culture and language. Not only the narrator who has adopted the American language but “some of my countrymen spoke English as well” (5). Speaking American English for Vietnamese is a prerequisite, and it is taking a distinctive position in the world. To strengthen his idea about learning English, the narrator proclaims, “If an American closed his eye to hear me speak, he would think I was one of his kind” (5). The line infers that the speaker belongs to a different ethnicity and hence enjoys being a distinguished person who can speak English proficiently and even Americans cannot judge who the speaker is. In the meeting, the native interlocutor astonishingly inquires him how the narrator learned English. “Americans expected me to be like those millions who spoke no English, pidgin English, or accented English” (5). Most of the Americans still believe that people belonging to different cultures cannot speak English fluently like them. The narrator dislikes this type of stereotyping and says, “My vocabulary was broader, my grammar more precise than the average educated American” (5). He has assimilated himself into the American culture to such

an extent that he feels no trouble in understanding American English which is why he is “always eager to demonstrate, in both spoken and written word” (5).

In a meeting with American politicians, the delegation of refugees including the General and narrator seek help to get ammunition, which they can use, for their enemies. They make every situation possible to win politicians’ trust. While making bilateral terms stronger, the representatives of both groups remember the dire situations of the past, particularly the famine (a tragedy) in Vietnam which took thousands of lives after the war. “The tragedy was a long time ago, I said. To tell you the truth, most of our countrymen here are less focused on the past than they are on becoming Americans” (189). Here, the writer refers to the tragedy of the historical event (the war), which happened in the past. Long time ago implies that even the temporal distance has not harmed the present situation. Sitting at one table side by side and discussing the ongoing situation is proof that whatever happened in the past has not given harm to any of the nations. The narrator also assures the politicians that most of his compatriots have forgotten the grievances and menaces that they have had with the Americans because they always lead them to deteriorating endings. The prior focus of his nationals is to become Americans. Despite the historical conflict between Vietnam and the United States, many Vietnamese individuals choose the United States as a destination for refuge. The emphasis on becoming Americans shows that the Vietnamese have diffused themselves into the American norms and culture to such an extent that they want to be called Americans. This strong desire exhibits that Vietnamese want to hold American citizenship permanently. The shift of forgetting the past and their own culture to breathe in America is a clear indication of the process of assimilation. Possibly, either the indigenous population becomes weary of the devastation caused by war or seeks to restore peace.

The people of different cultures undergo many sufferings while assimilating, especially into the culture of America. The ambiance of America has not been kind to the immigrants and refugees of multiple ethnicities. “Assimilation in the United States generally has been a coercive and largely one-sided process better described by the terms Americanization or Anglo-conformity” (45). The personnel of the high ranks in their native lands, once come to America may be transient to low works. “One colonel, an asthmatic quartermaster who became unreasonably excited discussing dehydrated rations, was a janitor” (67). This person of high rank once belonged to the Vietnamese

army, served as a senior officer having enough knowledge about supplies and rations has now become a gatekeeper in America. “A dashing major who flew gunships, now a mechanic” (67). This major, whose job in his own country is to fly gunships to protect his land from rivals has turned into a mechanic in the host culture. The transience from a higher position to a lower-status job in a liberal state shows the loss of identity. This can be one of the aspects of assimilation, where the people have to adapt to the minor-status jobs to become part of that country. “A grizzled captain with a talent for hunting guerrillas: short-order cooks. An affectless lieutenant, the sole survivor of an ambushed company: deliveryman” (67). Like other military personnel, the captain and lieutenant could not keep themselves away from the “metastasizing cancer called assimilation” (67). The narrator metaphorically calls the process of assimilation a life-taking disease, cancer due to its non-curable effect. Assimilation may cause damage and chaos for the veterans who seek blue-collar work in the host cultures. The concept illuminates that the nationals of the host cultures keep the immigrants and refugees at the periphery to avoid any threat and damage.

The process of assimilation helps the people of the second generation to absorb into the dominant culture. “Their afflicted kids were talking back, not in their native language but in a foreign tongue they were mastering faster than their fathers” (68). The people of the second generation endure some distinctive qualities to live in the host lands and hence with ease, they assimilate into the host societies. Therefore, with these significant abilities, they mark a distinct position in both worlds (native land and host culture). Continuing the legacy of their parents, they keep the traditions and customs of their parents’ native country alive. This dual identity schools them in their cultural deftness and also enables them to fill the breach between their culture and the heritage they have adopted. The more they navigate into the host cultures, the more they show the power of maintaining their ethnic and cultural exchange. Therefore, they succeed in preserving the splendor of multiculturalism in both worlds. “Education, economic status, age, and even gender play a significant role in adaptation patterns” (qtd. in Barbara 11). The role of the female gender in the host societies is also negotiable when it comes to the adaptation configurations. “As for the wives, most had been forced to find jobs...The women all have their own” (68). The word force implies that it is quite essential for women to seek out jobs in the host societies. Therefore, to adopt the fashions of the host culture, women of other ethnicities deploy themselves to seek new

job opportunities in the host lands. They do so for the economic necessities and for the adaptation to the host culture to meet the challenges of society, which is different from their land. Winsome lotuses underscore the delicacy of the women in their own country but as soon as they move to the host societies, they forget their fragility and assimilate into the alienated soils, they start working in. The shift in gender roles reevaluates the preconceived ideas of males about finding the jobs of women in the host cultures. The women in their land are weak and passive and hence are unable to do anything but in the other lands, they sustain the power to assimilate into the host culture. Therefore, another character Madame who is also a female-leading role in the novel keeps the latter legacy alive and shows her resistant nature against masculinity. She along with her husband empowers a complete military unit of refugees in America; she also helps the General to start a campaign against their enemy. It is worth mentioning that she could only do all activities in the host culture; probably her own country is not the place where she could feed her dream and build her strength to excel in the fields where she is a master. The dual dominant part of her personality comes to the forefront when she feels herself absorbed into the American culture and tries to assimilate into it. “She, like the General, wore off-the-rack clothing consisting of a mannish polo shirt, shapeless khakis, and the American footwear of choice, sneakers” (146). Madame like her husband is all free to wear American-styled attire in the alienated soils. Quite consciously, she adopts an American-patriarchal lifestyle and hence breaks all the stereotypes that are aligned with Asian women. She wears a mannish polo shirt instead of her traditional attire and also prefers sneakers which is purely an American style to wear. This exhibits Madame’s economic status and gender role in the host culture that could not have been played in her own country due to various reasons.

The United States of America has often been visualized as a land that fosters multiple ethnicities and cultures yet maintains its dominance and standards over all the plural cultures. “Immigrants and refugees often speak of experiences that require them to leave their heritage culture to fully absorb into the American way of life, a process known as *assimilation* (Goforth and Pham 106)”. This leads immigrants and refugees to leave their cultural heritage and submerge themselves completely into American social norms. Due to this reason, Major Crapulent (a Chinese) gives American names to his twin sons. “At least they’re American citizens, he said, chewing on his doughy treat. Spinach and Broccoli. These are their American names” (71). Names are the

cultural identity of any country. People are often known by the names they keep. But Major goes backward to this common practice and contrarily absorbs himself into the American culture that he forgets his cultural names. Giving American names to the children may often be categorized as a type of assimilation, where the people try to adjust themselves to American society. Keeping these names may also be taken as pride for the individuals who hold immigrants and refugees' identities. They do so to have a distinct position in the dominant culture.

When immigrants and refugees forcibly move from their lands to take shelter in the host countries, both the government and some other societal sections perceive them as undesirable and economic burdens on them. To cope with this dire situation, the policymakers of the host countries made a policy named "Anglo-conformity" (Goksel 5) in which refugees were demanded to get assimilated into the host countries. The governments of the host countries also required the immigrants and refugees to internalize their cultures and norms to get a proper place in society. In this way, refugees can integrate into the receiving nations through assimilation. Therefore, Goksel in her book specifies the process of assimilation as "unilateral adaptation" (5) because this is the process that facilitates refugees to absorb into the host nations unilaterally. This is the reason the process of integration is treated as "identical with assimilation" (5), and the nationals of the host nations expect refugees to behave, act, and speak like them. In the process of assimilation and multiculturalism, the efforts from the host countries are uncounted. The labor is only taken from the immigrants and refugees to submerge into the host societies. Therefore, Goksel in her theoretical perspective, goes beyond the process of assimilation and multiculturalism and comes up with the solution integration in which she considers and prioritizes the efforts of the host countries as well to get refugees absorbed into their soils. Goksel also uses the term integration for the creation of a common identity as social cohesion and unification of a diverse population. Following the same thread, the selected texts highlight the efforts for integration at the social and individual levels and in different nuances.

4.5 Role of State Institutions in Integration

State institutions play a significant role in accommodating refugees in the host countries. Goksel in her theoretical perspective shifts all the responsibilities of refugees' integration onto the state personnel. In *The Sympathizer*, the Congressman

(an American politician) welcomes all the Vietnamese refugees in South California and promises to give them a proper place in America. BFD (a French politician) in *The Committed* acknowledges the cultural identity of the Vietnamese refugees and assures them of their free movement in France.

4.5.1 Congressman

The Congressman, an American anti-red politician, was the only person in South California who not only greeted the Vietnamese refugees in Los Angeles but also accepted the offer to attend the wedding ceremony of Vietnamese. “The Congressman, however, had written editorials defending us and welcoming the emigres” (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 88). The positive attitude of the Congressman accentuates the process of integration and broadens his vision about refugees. He is the character in the novel who does not want the refugee community to deconstruct their identities to adapt to the culture and norms of America. Rather, he gives them the open way to make the settlements in America. He goes against all those liberals of the states who support multicultural policies in which refugees are enclaved to follow the cultural particularistic policies of the state. The Congressman liberates the refugees from the obligations that constrict them to leave their constitutive attachments. He addresses them in the matrimonial ceremony as “Look at yourselves, ladies and gentlemen, look at yourselves the way I wish my fellow Americans” (88). The seminal words of the speech heighten his idea of greeting refugees that minorities should be greeted and welcomed in the same way as Americans are. “I am truly thankful for the chance to be here tonight and to share in the joy of this occasion” (88), the unpretentiousness of the Congressman shows his avidity in attending the marriage ceremony of two Vietnamese refugees. Even though he has a contrastive ethnicity to the Vietnamese refugees, his arrival upon the ceremony is to escalate the process of integration because he knows that if the Western liberal societies give some public recognition to the refugees and support their identities, practices, and language, in response, this minority group will reciprocate and help them to share their economic burden. His statement “This marriage of two lovely young Vietnamese people in a Chinese restaurant on California soil under an American moon and in a Christian universe” (88) strengthens the aforementioned stance of Goksel’s theoretical perspective.

The text further delineates that the narrator deliberately introduces three different races and ethnicities to exhibit how holistically the process of integration helps the plural ethnicities to merge into one another. The wedding ceremony of the Vietnamese held in a Chinese restaurant which is open in the soil of California inclusively shows that Chinese and Vietnamese have the freedom in the host cultures to live with unbounded self-determination. “Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen... hopes, dreams, and aspirations would be fulfilled in your homeland” (88), to proceed his speech further, the Congressman tells the people of Vietnam that on the battlefield, he has fought with the Vietnamese, and he knows very well how valiantly they defend themselves. Appreciating the soldiers, the Congressman applauds their dreams and ambitions, which they own for their lives. He then vows to give them a proper place where they can have freedom to fulfill their dreams. He is also cognizant of the fact that these refugees whom he is addressing have their own societal culture which they want to preserve while integrating into the host societies. The congressional representative assures them of the day, which is not far away from them to accommodate the refugees on his land, America. “I am here to tell you that what you remind me of is America’s great promise! The promise of the immigrant! The promise of the American Dream!” (88).

Appreciating the contributions of refugees and immigrants, the Congressman mentions the efforts that they make to submerge into the American fabric. Being the state personnel, the Congressman respects them as Goksel discusses those liberal states should give respect to the minorities to fuel their efforts. It looks as if the Congressman is giving them recognition on American soil. This is the very idea Goksel advocates in her theoretical perspective that political institutions must take part in recognizing the identities, which are not universally acknowledged. The Congressman in this statement illuminates the American Dream in which every individual in the world can come to America and pursue his/her dreams. Observing the Vietnamese refugees before him, he immediately recalls America’s promise, reflecting his willingness to offer space to refugees in his homeland. This political leader is showing his modesty and fair attitude towards refugees to bring them closer to their culture. The political institutions of any country have the authority and power to direct the policymakers in designing the policies, which could facilitate the refugees. Goksel in her theory perpetuates political institutions are responsible for providing recognition and respect to the refugees’

community as they think about the indigenous population. It is also the liability of the government to provide adequate conditions for refugees to execute the integration process. Supporting Goksel's stance, the writer introduces the character of a politician, the Congressman, to augment the process of integration. Lauding America's promise, the Congressman addresses the august gathering of the Vietnamese refugees, "The promise that the people of this country used to hold dear and will one day soon hold dear again" (89) that America has not forgotten its promise to hold refugees a dear place to live in, because "America is a land of freedom and independence... a land that welcomes people like you" (89). The thought ignites the American politician's vision that perpetuates everyone's independence, freedom, and basic rights. This affirms that America is always ready to open its doors to those who want to pursue their dreams, get aspirations for livelihood, and find liberty to enjoy their beliefs. This might be impossible in their origins because probably they have fewer resources left in the country due to certain reasons.

Due to the surpassing efforts of the Congressman, the state allows refugees to do their businesses and live freely. As Goksel's theoretical stance sprouts out for the process of integration into the host culture, political and social investment is necessary. Therefore, the General and his wife, Madame make their investments in the economic sphere by opening a Vietnamese restaurant in Los Angeles. They invite all the refugees to the inauguration of the restaurant. The purpose of opening this restaurant is to provide job opportunities to the refugees who have been ignored by the liberal states for centuries. Like immigrants, refugees also migrate to other countries "due to the deprivation of economic and social rights" (Foster 401). They have the right to earn independently in the countries where they have been pushed forcibly. No matter which of the circumstances forces them to fly from their own countries to another, according to humanitarian law, they deserve to earn and live independently in alienated soils. Not only did the Vietnamese refugees get the freedom to open a restaurant in Los Angeles but the Chinese also worked near them. The cultural blend of these two minority groups promotes integration in America. "Once we had surrounded the Chinese in Cholon, the General said from behind his cash register. Now we're surrounded by them" (145), watching the Chinese near the restaurant, the General flashes back to the time when all the Chinese used to work in Cholon (the Vietnamese city) with them but as the time changes, they (Vietnamese) are working with them. Both the minority groups working

together in the host soils show the American kind attitude that allows them to invest and earn profits being accommodating themselves in America. “Remember when I came here with nothing?” (145). The General reflects on his past, recalling how he seized the opportunity to journey to America empty-handed in pursuit of his goals. He also remembers his minimal resources, inadequate possessions, and scarce support with which he steps on the alienated soils. Nevertheless, once he gets the chance to live on American soil, he makes his effort for self-esteem, self-respect, and self-formation even better with the help of American politicians.

4.5.2 Claude’s Solidarity for Vietnamese Refugees

On the other hand, another predominant character of Claude in the novel is negotiable who is an American CIA and gives services to the refugees to show his solidarity with them. This is the heeding point, that Goksel brings forth in her theory as a route of integration to stimulate the connection of refugees and the indigenous people of the host cultures. Therefore, she emphasizes the multiple spheres of social integration, in which solidarity, rights, and love occupy prominent status. Thus, to solidify Goksel’s stance of solidarity, Nguyen builds up the character of Claude who helps refugees in dire situations. “Claude was our most trusted friend, our relationship so intimate” (3). In the opening pages of the novel, the narrator introduces Claude with the fact that he has an American identity but out of millions, his treatment towards refugees is not scornful. He plays a pivotal role in helping them to evacuate from the war-stricken areas. Gradually on their native grounds, he gets acquainted with the refugees and tries to show his solidarity and love with them. He is not only an ordinary man for the narrator and his fellow refugees but also a trustworthy man whom they can trust thoughtlessly. It seems that Claude is infusing emotional support to shape the self-formation of the refugees. Goksel proposes solidarity for salubrious self-formation because it helps to constitute an integrative and holistic relationship. Therefore, Claude’s intimacy is an assurance of the provision of equal and basic rights to the refugees. “We had known each other for more than two decades, ever since he had spotted me on a refugee barge in ‘54 and recognized my talents” (3). The period that is mentioned here shows America’s detention and captivity that has been going on in Vietnam for decades. This confinement causes genocide for thousands of Vietnamese on their home grounds.

The general attitude of the Americans toward the Vietnamese was degrading on humanitarian grounds. The systematic structures that the United States perceives as instruments of peace are, in reality, reflective of the atrocities it intentionally commits in every country it invades. However, one cannot deny the fact that some people like Claude are propagating humanity and harmony for the oppressed. That is why his attitude towards Vietnamese refugees is contrary to his fellow human beings. He opposes American general behavior with the besieged and supports the idea of love, peace, and solidarity with the enslaved refugees. Therefore, he gets close to the narrator and is cognizant of the qualities and talents of the narrator. Through this friendship and love, Claude enables the narrator to get self-confidence, which Goksel considers eminent to shape the personality of the refugee. This can be possible when the process of integration helps to give the proper place to the refugees on the host soil.

Claude's intimacy and compassion for the refugees extend further, as he empathizes with their struggles during difficult times. When there is bomb shelling all around and American artilleries are incessantly striking Vietnamese grounds, Claude comes forward and tries to rescue the Vietnamese as much as he can. He does not dishearten them and says, "I'll see what I can arrange" (4). In the war-stricken areas, where the native population faces ruthless assaults and hostility from intruders, the kind gesture of one of the invaders helping the indigenous people amidst the onslaught seems unbelievable. His assurance in the form of words and actions proves his solidarity and love for the enslaved people of Vietnam. Under the heavy pressure of military orders, it is hard for any soldier to betray his country, but Claude keeps his life at stake to prevent the innocent civilians from the heart-shattering scenes of the war. He promises to save their lives from the war and assist them to evacuate from their own country. When the circumstances in Vietnam deteriorated and were unfavorable for the civilians, Claude tells the narrator "Our plane was leaving in two days" (7). This unusual help from the American CIA is exceptional in the case of evacuating Vietnamese from their own country. He transgresses in his solidarity to such an extent that he completely forgets his faithfulness with his own country.

Unconsciously, he starts aiding them without knowing the repercussions and reactions from his military. His assistance is not only limited to the collective population, but he also shows his love for the individuals. Despite the fact, that Claude's job is to investigate and assassinate the suspects and strangers "he could be sentimental

about some things, such as our friendship” (Nguyen *The Committed* 3). The line informs us about the nature of Claude and his job. His work is multifaceted and comprises several responsibilities like collecting data, protecting his country from threats, and suspecting every unusual activity in the United States. The nature of his job compels him to make so hard decisions when it comes to the security of his country. Despite all these limitations and restrictions, he keeps himself busy in making strong relationships with the refugees. He provides an ample amount of services to them to sustain the process of integration. The word sentimental implies Claude’s tender disposition for the refugees as well as setting a dichotomy of soft/hard demeanor. Nothing can make the CIA so kind and soft, but it is only friendship, which makes a person mild and compassionate. “The rucksack was a gift from Claude, given in honor of my college graduation” (10).

It has been mentioned earlier that all American soldiers including Claude have been in Vietnam for two decades, therefore they (Claude and the narrator) develop a close bond of affection for each other. Luckily, Claude has to look after the refugee camp and collect data for better understanding. Instead, he dislikes them, he starts cultivating a mature relationship with them. This is the reason that he presents a rucksack bag to the narrator to make their friendship even deeper and stronger. “It was the handsomest thing I owned, capable of being worn on my back” (10). Claude does not show the bond of fondness only, but the narrator also reciprocates it with full devotion and loyalty. His exhilarating sentiments soar high when he carries the bag on his shoulders; probably this is the prettiest thing in his life that he receives from any foreigner. The narrator feels elevated when Claude helps him evacuate from his refugee camp and reaches the American college. Feeling deserted in the camp, the narrator writes a letter to his former American teacher Avery Wright Hammer “seeking his help in leaving the camp” (43). He is the person who is Claude’s college roommate as well as a very close friend. Due to Claude’s deep concern and affection for a refugee friend, he becomes successful in evacuating him from the refugee camp. In Goksel’s theoretical perspective, she demands this kind of love and friendship from the host countries for the self-respect of the refugees. She makes her stance clear that self-respect is significant for any individual because it fosters the idea of self-formation. To strengthen Goksel’s point, Claude gives a huge amount of self-respect to the narrator so that he may enable himself to shape his personality. This is the reason Claude assists

his refugee friend by writing a letter to Aver Wright Hammer in which he “told about a promising young Vietnamese who needed a scholarship to come to study in America” (43). Claude again shows his solidarity, which Goksel thinks is highly needed to make a strong bond between host countries and refugees. He goes out of the way and makes every situation possible for the narrator’s promising future. Claude is not the only American who accelerates the process of integration, but Professor Hammer also comes in the field to gear up this process. The narrator appreciates the efforts of the Professor and applauds him “Not only did Professor Hammer find that scholarship for me; he also became my most important teacher after Claude and Man” (43). The words of the narrator demonstrate that not only do refugees integrate with the people of the host countries, but they also come forward to speed up this process. Luckily, when the handful of the refugees, including the narrator successfully save their lives from the horrific war, they prefer to begin their journey on the soil of America. Therefore, they try to assimilate into the host culture and adopt their ways of living.

The people of America like Claude, Congressman, and Professor Hammer highlight the process of integration. Unlike other Americans, they do not find the refugees' burden on the chest of their country rather they help them to adjust to their own country. All the above-mentioned Americans create opportunities for the refugees so that they can easily find ways to integrate with them. Thus, the narrator finds his consolation in getting an education from America. He did his graduation and afterward got his master's degree from America. Acknowledging the sincere efforts of the Professor, the narrator says, “It was the professor who had guided my American studies and who had agreed to venture out of his field to supervise my senior thesis” (43). The sentence shows the feelings of the narrator for his American teacher who realizes his qualities and thirst for knowledge. Therefore, the professor guides his studies out of the way and helps him in getting his higher degree. He deliberately makes the ways for him in which he could experience his qualities. Thus, he agrees to be his supervisor because he has already anticipated his hidden talent. This educational side of cultural integration is a missing link in Goksel’s theory, which needs more space and attention from the theorists. The efforts of the professor are not confined with the accomplishment of the degree, rather it is rooted until the narrator finds a job. “Now that good man leaped to action once again on my behalf, volunteering to be my sponsor and, by the middle of the summer, arranging a clerical position for me in the department of Oriental Studies”

(43). Calling the professor a good man illustrates that finally; the narrator has met with the American who is noble by nature and good in his actions because he provides him with a healthy environment in which he can integrate with the host culture. His support and assistance are enough for the narrator to adjust to the alienated soil. The professor is not the man who only blows the trumpet, but he also inspires the narrator with his actions. Leaped to action once again, further clears the strong position of the professor as a man of deeds. It elucidates that the professor has already put his exertions for the narrator, but now once again he does not leave the narrator alone on American soil. He takes pain for himself and steps ahead to facilitate the narrator with a conducive environment.

The process of integration is further deepened by the members of the host country, The Professor and Claude, when they willingly sponsor the narrator and arrange a clerical job for him. This flow of help shows the commitment of the professor in actively supporting and facilitating the narrator's success and adjustment. Bringing the narrator into the field of the academic community and giving him a privileged position among the intellectuals is the assurance of his trust in the narrator's abilities. In this way, the professor further fuels the process of integration. The more he relies upon the refugee, the more he promotes the integration. This is how the professor recognizes and acknowledges the identity of the refugees. The narrator is lucky enough to get a job in an American college, "my job was to serve as the first line of defense against students who sought audiences with the secretary or the Department Chair" (44). Initially, the narrator was assigned a job to defend the secretary and Dean from the college students. The students who want to have a meeting with their Dean and secretary must have an encounter with the narrator. Most of the students know him by his name. Therefore, whenever they confront each other, they address him by his name. "I was a moderate celebrity on campus because of the feature the student newspaper had run on me" (44). Gradually, the narrator becomes an acclaimed personality among the students, and they start publishing articles on him in the student newspaper. Everyone in the college begins realizing his identity because he is the "sole Vietnamese student in the history" (44) of any American college who got fame at this level. Probably he belongs to a different ethnicity, having unique physical features that seek the students' attention in the college. The narrator being a refugee and an American student is recognized due to his skills in the advanced society. Goksel advocates that

modern societies should give self-recognition and respect to refugees based on their abilities and skills. Furthermore, she states that host societies should be advanced enough to acknowledge the expertise of individuals despite their severe class division. This is the reason the narrator, due to his unique skills, not only gets his degree but also pursues his future in America. He has to perform multiple tasks in his office like “answering the phone, typing professional manuscripts, filing documents, and fetching the books, as well as helping the secretary” (45). The hodgepodge of the multiple jobs for which he is paid minimal wage shows his resilience and loyalty to his duties.

The Congressman in his speech spreads his vision of integrating Vietnamese refugees into his own country America. He makes surplus efforts with his fellow citizens to prioritize them in his land. Furthermore, his visit to attend the private ceremony of Vietnamese refugees is a promise to lap them in America. His words swear that the American liberal state allows them the freedom to move in every corner of the country. Similar passion and concerns can be seen in the second novel *The Committed* where BFD, a French socialist and Maoist PhD gives the same thought process for Vietnamese refugees in France. One imperialist state (America) and the other colonizers (France) both share the same ideology of incorporating them into their respective countries.

4.5.3 BFD’s Speech: A Way Forward to Cultural Integration

BFD’s¹ speech overlaps the Congressman’s speech which he delivers in *The Sympathizer*. The Congressman, in his speech, stresses upon giving proper space to the Vietnamese refugees in America. On the other hand, BFD emphasizes cross-cultural acceptance. An evening in the aunt’s house, BFD and Maoist PhD pay their frequent visit and start passing their formal compliments to the aunt, which she delightedly accepts. This time their visit is not a conventional one rather they race to multiple topics in prime time. They play an unusually soft tone with the protagonist. Anyhow, they proceed with their conversation with contemptuous voices, which tell that they are scornful at the Right Politician “who had been making news with his attacks on immigrants and foreigners” (Nguyen *The Committed* 138). Both the French men are unhappy with the politician’s decision, which goes against immigrants and foreigners.

¹ A pretentious politician named BFD who Nguyen says was modeled, in part, on Dominique Strauss-Kahn, or DSK (<https://electricliterature.com/viet-thanh-nguyen-novel-the-committed/>)

This kind of attitude of the French people toward the exotics represents the inclination towards the process of integration. They agree, “France must continue to be a country of hospitality for immigrants and asylum for refugees, like those from Indochina...” (138). It is a fact that after the USA, France gained a historic position in accommodating many refugees and immigrants in the post-World War II scenario. It successfully maintains its generosity for immigrants and refugees as it did for the people of Indochina. Liberating himself from the shackles of the French colonial regime, BFD decides to visit the place where the Vietnamese refugees perform the show. Therefore, he comes to the show at night as a guest of honor. The change in the BFD’s conduct shows his keen interest in propagating the integration process.

As soon as the show ends, the Chairman introduces the guest of honor as “a friend of Vietnam and Vietnamese people. It was-who else? BFD” (202). The introduction shows that BFD has forgotten all the French power dynamics and looking forward to having a healthy relationship with the Vietnamese. After a few moments, BFD steps onto the stage to deliver his speech. “My dear friends, he began. It’s such a pleasure to be here tonight as you celebrate Vietnamese culture” (203). The seminal words of his speech highlight the fact of acknowledging and celebrating the Vietnamese culture in France. This acknowledgment is an effort to pay tribute to the Vietnamese heritage in French society. Calling them friends further enhances the strong bond that BFD wants to build with the Vietnamese refugees. The celebration of Vietnamese cultural heritage in French society further exacerbates the integration process. He continues, “We are two peoples, the French and the Vietnamese, with a long history that also deserves celebration” (203). BFD’s speech is a nuanced reflection of the cultural and historical dynamics that tells the Vietnamese people that they are two different nations of the past because France has ruled over Vietnam for decades. He emphasizes fostering mutual understanding and respect between two different cultural communities. His words also embrace France among the host nations that welcome refugees and immigrants. “You have been a part of France for a long time now, and you remind us of the greatness of French culture and the greatness of Vietnamese culture, which the French have not always appreciated” (203). BFD gives warm acceptance to the Vietnamese community in France. He acknowledges their contributions to promoting French culture over an extended period in France, appreciates French culture, and values Vietnamese culture. Although both countries have diverse

ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and political conflicts, they should respect each other. His words embark on the truth that Vietnamese people are always ready to assimilate into the French culture to promote it, but history witnesses that French people do not acknowledge Vietnamese culture.

BFD continues further, “When we came to Vietnam, we did not always behave the way we should have. Colonization was wrong, my friends. The French should never take away another country’s independence” (203). The apologetic words from the colonizers for the colonized nation seem astonishing. Therefore, BFD’s speech gives a remorseful and critical acknowledgment of the atrocities committed in the colonization era in Vietnam. Unfortunately, during that time, the Vietnamese endured racial and ethnic biasedness, injustices, and barbaric treatment from the French colonizers. He recalls the carnages that should not have happened in the past to feel sorry for the Vietnamese they had to bear in the colonial era. His speech also conveys an insightful view of the unethical oppression of the French government. He does not appreciate the misconduct of the French colonizers and considers it morally inappropriate. Therefore, he condemns the atrocities of colonizers because they left an indelible negative impact on the psyche of the Vietnamese nation. This kind of condemnation and confession creates sympathy in the hearts of Vietnamese refugees and intensifies the integration process. He honors the retaliatory acts of the Vietnamese in the war because “they taught us a lesson we sorely needed” (203). BFD recognizes their efforts to teach the French army a lesson because he knows what the French government has done to Vietnam and its nation. The lesson BFD refers to is a monumental incident in which the Vietnamese won a victory over French colonization under the Ho Chi Minh government. Luckily, the war resulted in the withdrawal of the French military from Vietnam. It was needed to make the French government realize its war strategies and policies.

The concluding part of BFD’s speech counts the favors the French government did for the Vietnamese. “We brought liberty, equality, and fraternity. We built roads. We built canals and drained swamps. We built Saigon. We built lycees and universities so that everyone would have a chance to get an education and govern their country, not just the mandarins” (203). His thought reflects the French colonial perspective in which, they rule over the colonized and bestow favors on them. His declaration of support for the Vietnamese shows his repentance for the acts which they did in the past. The French

government has facilitated the Vietnamese to make them a modern and economically strong nation. His stance is clear that like America, “we never committed the horrors the Americans did” (203). Recalling American complicities in Vietnam, he clarifies his position that the French government, unlike the Americans, did not bring destruction. His statement distinguishes French acts from American atrocities. However, Van Khanh Nguyen disagrees with what BFD has stated in his speech. For him, the methods and nature of inflicting sufferings and hardships on Vietnamese are different but the purpose they serve is the same. The French intervention included oppression, cultural suppression, and economic exploitation. He asserts that “[a]long with economic activities, the French colonial rulers also exploited our people by various forms of taxes” (Van Khanh Nguyen *The Nationalist Party* 15). Seeing these forms of exploitation and oppression in Vietnam, the people started resisting the French rulers and ended their rule. After their withdrawal, America in 1960, inflicted severe attacks on Vietnam and took millions of lives. Therefore, appreciating Vietnamese courage against America, BFD says “Let us hope that the American imperialists have learned their lesson from Vietnam, too. If they have, they, too, will one day thank the courageous people of Vietnam” (203). BFD criticizes American imperialists who with evil attentions attacked Vietnam and drowned Vietnam in the blood bath.

After giving a historical viewpoint, BFD turns towards the efforts he makes for Vietnamese refugees in France. “We brought Vietnamese students to France and gave them the tools to fight against us!” (204). When the French colonial regime ended in 1954, the French government first kept its eyes on the students who could change the destiny of their country. In this respect, the French state provided Vietnamese students with good educational institutions where they could get quality education to serve their country. This effort creates a feeling of sympathy in Vietnamese hearts and promotes the integration process. He says, “I have met many Vietnamese people who are happy here in France, where they feel at home” (204). The narrative is an explicit success in accelerating the integration process. The Vietnamese refugees who had to leave their country and take shelter in France after World War II are now happy because the government makes them feel safe and secure. The positive image of France created by BFD is an assurance for refugees to seek happiness and stability in their new home, France. However, it is also pleasant for the refugees to recognize the multiple experiences in the host community. Knowing all the obstacles and challenges in the

way of integration in the host country, the Vietnamese refugees adapt to the host culture where they feel a homely contentment.

Of course they do! [*Applause*] Your presence in France shows us that we can put the past behind us. Your presence tells us we are all French. Your presence in France proves the greatness of our French culture. Long live the Republic! Long live France! (204).

The ending lines of the speech reflect a positive and ideological viewpoint of the integration process in French society. BFD's words move forward to the reconciliation between the French government and Vietnamese refugees. He focuses on refugees' current status, which the French state welcomes. The presence of the refugees in an august gathering and applauding every word of a French politician indicates that they have forgotten every nuance of the past and are willing to shape their future in the host country. The statement we all are French underscores the sincere efforts of BFD in accommodating and granting them citizenship in France. It reflects his country's greatness that always shows its hospitality and generosity to the refugees and immigrants. It also reinforces that France considers the refugees and their descendants an important part of the French community because they willingly adopt its enriched culture. This kind of attitude of the French government mitigates the way of cultural integration for refugees.

4.6 Cultural Integration of Refugees

After 1975, most Vietnamese preferably settled in the South region of France because this was the most desirable place to live. Afterward, they spread to every region of the country and started searching for their new jobs. Gradually, the process intensified and the Vietnamese refugees in France left their roots in it. They are free to move in the country other than their asylums. Using Kymlicka's model of cultural integration, Goksel argues "In order for individuals to develop autonomous personalities, they need to grow up in a culture where they can freely find symbolic expressions for their decisions and opinions" (Goksel 29). Her theory highlights the importance of a supportive culture for individuals' growth in which they can express their thoughts freely. Therefore, when the narrator and his friend Bon, go outside their refugee camp in search of a job, they see their people there. "So have a lot of our countrymen here" (Nguyen *The Committed* 67). Both of the refugees know very well

that their people are less in number, and the host country does not like to assemble in one place, “but one place where we could find them and begin doing some investigations is the Vietnamese Union” (67). The existence of the Union in France vigorously portrays the acceptance of the Vietnamese refugees as a nation. This acceptance from a host country like France is a sign to gear up the process of integration. “The Union’s various activities: promoting the learning of the Vietnamese language, celebrating Vietnamese culture, advocating for the Vietnamese community’s interest in France” (67). The line suggests that the Vietnamese Union has largely engaged its host community in their activities and sanctioning them to promote their culture, fosters the idea of integration. Although, it is difficult to understand the Vietnamese language because of its Chinese origin, even then the people of Vietnam are fond of speaking their language. The language of any country is not only a means of communication, but it also shows the cultural identity. Thus, to preserve their cultural heritage, the Vietnamese refugees encourage the French to learn their language, which is a gesture of maintaining their connection with their culture. By encouraging the learning of their language, the Union is enabling the French as well as their people to stick to their roots.

To facilitate the process of integration, proficiency in the Vietnamese language is compulsory because it helps to get involved in their heritage. Celebrating Vietnamese culture in France explicitly manifests the French contributions to the process of integration. It shows that the French government does not impose any restrictions on Vietnamese to endorse their culture rather it provides a proper platform through which they can propagate their social norms and values. These celebrations assist both nations to come together and widely understand each other’s traditions. Furthermore, these celebrations create harmony and a sense of belongingness with the Vietnamese people on the larger spectrum. The people of both nations also feel a relation of connectedness with each other, which helps to continue the process of integration. The events also reduce the long distances and misapprehensions between both nations and bring the people often closer. The purpose of the events is not to justify the cultural preservation in France but to advocate their interests in France. Unfortunately, due to the political interests of the French government in Vietnam, the people of both countries always kept misinterpreting each other and, hence, could not produce a healthy relationship. After the end of the French-Vietnam War, Vietnamese of the first generation fled from

their country and started settling in France. When they reach France, they do not get acceptance from them and therefore, are adjusted in asylums or refugee camps. The French government also does not allow them to mix up with their indigenous population. Like the American government, they also take them as a threat and therefore, keep Vietnamese refugees at the periphery of their society. Due to this indifference and maltreatment, the refugees could not show their identity and culture and consequently, they fail to be submerged into the host country. However, after some decades, the second generation gets some acceptance, and the French state allows them to move within the country other than their refugee camps and asylums. Thus, they actively plunge into the activities that directly go into their favor. The way the Vietnamese Union advocates the interests of its people and addresses their issues and concerns in front of the French people shows the inclination of France towards integration. By addressing these interests, the Union seeks the assurance for every Vietnamese individual from the French government to allow them to participate in society. The breach, which has been created between both nations, must be filled with solidarity, love, and basic human rights.

Two weeks later, the protagonist and Bon have a meeting with the Chairman (a French man) of the Tet show who informs them “This particular meeting’s purpose was to plan the annual Tet show” (69). Quite surprisingly, the Chairman is the only person who organizes this show to promote Vietnamese culture every year. His interest in arranging the show illustrates that he is well aware of Vietnamese traditions and with the help of this show; he encourages his French community to forget the past and help the refugees to adjust themselves in their country. Like other few Frenchmen, the Chairman welcomes these two refugees unequivocally and offers them to participate in the show to promote their culture. Besides the broad understanding of their culture, “both his Vietnamese and French were flawless” (69). The Chairman’s expertise in the Vietnamese language and extensive knowledge of Vietnamese culture reflects a tendency towards integration. His invitation to the refugees and asking them to participate in the show is evidence of integrating them into his country. He explains the show to the protagonist and Bon, “There will be traditional dancing and singing and there will also be traditional costumes and foods” (69) in the show. The word traditional indicates his acknowledgment of their cultural heritage. He incorporates all the elements in the event, which enhance the beauty of Vietnamese culture. In this way, he

gives value to their heritage and gives a clue for their acceptance by the French community. With the help of the show, the Chairman promotes their culture and gives a space to them where they can settle themselves and take support from France. He also makes them feel a sense of belonging and appreciation from his native people. The traditional costumes and foods are not only the manifestation of their ethnicity and lifestyle but also assist in stimulating cultural integration. To present the show on a broader level is a way of getting recognition and respect from the local French community and facilitating integration. All cultural constituents including food, singing, and dancing retain the power to accommodate the people across the border. Participation in the show together builds a strong connection between refugees and the native population and strengthens integration efforts.

After a long meeting with the Chairman, both the refugees agreed to participate in the show because “it’s a way for us to present our authentic Vietnamese culture” (69). Through this platform, they present their culture in the right way because, in America, they do not get a chance to present themselves authentically. Unfortunately, in the Hollywood movie *The Hamlet*, they misrepresent Vietnamese and their culture and take as their responsibility to present them in the American way. In that movie, the American director presents his narrative about the Vietnamese and makes all the refugees silent. He gives no space to them to show their own culture but France on the other hand behaves differently in respect to demonstrate their culture. Thus, the protagonist feels overjoyed when the Chairman offers him a role. On this kind gesture, he says, “I nodded sympathetically, even vigorously, and said, promoting our authentic culture is very important, to which the cheerful Chairman nodded even more vigorously” (69). As the protagonist has faced racial prejudice in America while performing his character in the movie, therefore, when in France he receives a different narrative about his people, he overwhelmingly participates in the show. He even more emphatically stresses upon promoting his culture. It may be said that there is a division in opinion in presenting/misrepresenting the Vietnamese culture. In America and France, some people have a holistic view of propagating the process of integration. They accept the national identities of refugees, but some are biased in accepting them. The American ideology about the Vietnamese is more rigid and contradictory than that of France. The movie *The Hamlet* and the Tet Show justifies the aforementioned statement.

The Chairman does not restrict his show to the Vietnamese Union only but “he pointed to a bulletin board, on which was pinned a large poster with garish colors and bold lettering, the most significant word of which was *FANTASIA*” (73). He requests the board to air his show in a program like *FANTASIA*. By using the media and on airing his show highlights his deep interest in the culture show. His theatrical effort could not satisfy him; therefore, he approached the board to present Vietnamese culture on a higher level. Through this channel, he wants to show the authenticity of Vietnamese heritage. His efforts to lessen the French superiority in the society unified the Vietnamese refugees and his community. When the protagonist hears the name Fantasia, he “immediately understood that *Fantasia* the show was based on the nightclub in Los Angeles of the same name” (74). The purpose of making this show in America is not to promote Vietnamese culture but it is only for the entertainment of the Americans. After returning to the show, Bon feels lonely and remembers his dead wife and child. The protagonist tries to make him happy and requests him saying, “You have to see *Fantasia* with your own eyes. And you have to see it with other Vietnamese people. Because it’s a show about us, by us, and for us. We are the stars and the emcees, the singers and the dancers, the actors and the comedians, the performers and spectators! We’re doing what we do best---sing, dance, and have fun” (75). The protagonist shows his concern for his friend Bon. He encourages him to see the show because it will help to get to know the French locales about their unique and captivating culture. Goksel uses Taylor’s model in her theory, in which he emphasizes the culture, which helps to construct self-identities. Watching the show with other Vietnamese refugees underlies the fact that France is ready to integrate with mutual recognition with the refugees. Goksel mentions this mutual recognition in her theoretical perspective as the “institutionalization of freedom” (37) which helps to form the “actualization of freedom” (37). The government of France institutionalizes freedom just to ensure the refugees’ safety in the host culture.

The protagonist witnesses’ severe experiences in America in terms of his role in *The Hamlet* but in France, he enjoys his role because he feels a sense of unity and belongingness with his people. The state of France allows them to cherish the moments with their fellow beings. First time in his life, the protagonist feels secure enough to celebrate his culture without any fear or confrontation. He also enjoys his character because the Chairman enables him to express himself and his cultural manifestation.

The thought, which relishes him, is the active participation of his people, they are not silent in their roles rather they are the contributors in various places. In the selected text, Nguyen builds the Vietnamese narrative about his people in France. He desires his cultural recognition, visibility, and agency on a broader level. Therefore, his people in *Fantasia* show their cultural vibrancy, creativity, and resilience through their characters. The least the Chairman does for Vietnamese people is to let them speak and hear. In his presence, the Vietnamese community expresses themselves and their culture in their way.

Finally, the show reaches the height of success. It starts surfacing at the governmental level and the French community begins anticipating the show again. The protagonist and Bon at the Union are extremely happy to see “the rare sight of harmony in the lobby, as Vietnamese people of all kinds mixed in joyful anticipation of *Fantasia*” (326). Both men capture the beautiful scene of harmony and unity of their people. The sight is rare because it does not happen so often to come together in France. The scene takes a holistic view of integrating themselves in France. Regardless of their diverse ethnic background, they share the same stage and enjoy the show in which they see their people presenting their cultural thread with accuracy and authenticity. The Vietnamese people of all kinds mean “the liberal to left-wing to outright communist members of the Union, who had been in France two or three generations” (326). During the French colonial era, Vietnam was divided into two groups: South Vietnam (communists) and North Vietnam (anti-communists). A civil war breaks out in Vietnam and the level of disliking spreads to an extent that they start killing each other. Watching all of them unified in a single platform makes the protagonist and Bon contend. “The conservative to right-wing to outright fascist members of the Association, who were recent refugees and tended to be very poor to somewhat poor to working class” (326). The mention of Vietnamese people belonging to different political groups but now with refugee identity suggests their deep involvement in promoting cultural heritage. They have now become poor because they migrated to France. In Vietnam, they do not have economic issues but after their migration, their financial status completely changes. Meanwhile, Bon points out, “It is the ambassador. He was with a woman in an *ao dai*, presumably his wife, and two teenaged children, a boy and a girl, the former in an ill-fitting suit, the latter in an *ao dai* like her mother” (326). The refugees’ community feels privileged when they see a French ambassador between them and “Members of the

Union flocked to greet them” (326). The ambassador along with his family comes to see the Vietnamese cultural show. It shows the state’s interest in and acceptance of them. The traditional Vietnamese attire of the ambassador’s wife symbolizes her inclination towards the integration process.

4.7 Freedom to Move and Citizenship: The Constituents of Integration

Free movement in the host cultures is a way to minimize the problems of the refugees. To perpetuate Hegel’s concept of freedom, Goksel in her theory strengthens the ideology of the free movement of the refugees in the host cultures. She supports his idea that the governments of the host countries should institutionalize freedom to grant basic rights and duties to the refugees. Trust and acknowledgment give way to the refugees to perform proficiently. Therefore, the General in *The Sympathizer* gathers hundreds of Vietnamese refugees in Los Angeles to make an army unit for training. The General addresses them, “Here the goal is to build discipline, harden bodies, prepare minds, get these volunteers to think of themselves as an army again, get them to imagine the future” (Nguyen *The Sympathizer* 163). The purpose of gathering the refugees is to make them disciplined and prepared for future hardships. Moreover, the General could accommodate the refugees in a place where they can move freely. This shows the American government’s unwavering support of granting a place to the Vietnamese refugees where they can plan their future. They also achieve their goals in America through American structured policies and programs that stimulate resilience, future-oriented perspectives, and community.

The American political institutions allow the General and the protagonist to approach them and roam freely in Los Angeles. Therefore, the Congressman invites the General and the protagonist to a meeting. Soon after their arrival, the Congressman begins his speech “Gentleman, we are delighted you can join us. Let me introduce you” (187). Inviting the refugees to his meeting, the Congressman stabilizes his relationship with the refugees. He is the one who owns refugees and allows them to move independently in America. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce the refugees in front of other American politicians. Therefore, in his meeting, he invites those who have already played their role in integrating the refugees. “Dr. Hedd Very Important Person, the others, including the General, were Semi-important Persons” (187). Dr. Hedd is a professor at the University of California and is the protagonist’s teacher. He is important in the meeting because of his major contributions in promoting the

integration process for refugees. On the other hand, the General is semi-important because of implementing some parts of the integration strategies. Their togetherness at one table shows their concern for each other.

The protagonist and his friend Bon intend to visit the crapulent major's apartment. Therefore, the protagonist says, "On the Saturday before our appointment with the crapulent major, Bon and I drove to Chinatown" (77). The crapulent major is a Chinese refugee in America and has a healthy relationship with the Vietnamese refugees. Before they visit the major's apartment, the protagonist and Bon go to Chinatown to buy "UCLA sweatshirts and baseball caps at prices that guaranteed they were not merchandise" (77). Driving to Chinatown symbolizes America's efforts to support refugees in integrating them into society. The support fosters the idea of freedom and a sense of comfort and normalcy for refugees as they settle and move freely in the country. The sweatshirts and baseball caps are part of an aid program set in the market with an aim to help refugees. The program makes it easier for the refugees to settle into the new culture without economic burden. "After a lunch of barbecued pork and noodles, we browsed one of the curio shops where all manner of Orientalia was sold, primarily to the non-Oriental" (77). In the context of the free movement of Vietnamese refugees, the statement reflects the subtle interaction of commodification, integration, and cultural preservation. With the intricacies of identity and cultural acceptance in America, refugees play a vital role in contributing cultural mosaic in the host country.

The protagonist in *The Committed* feels free to move within Paris in his leisure time. He says, "I explored Paris in my free time or on my deliveries, the city a setting for a musical performed by my headphones" (Nguyen *The Committed* 81). The government of France like America allows Vietnamese refugees to move free into the country and to take off the financial burden, they permit them to earn money in the host country. Therefore, the protagonist leaves his refugee camp and explores the city for a job. The mention of free time and deliveries illustrates the protagonist's interest in navigating the city and dedication to his work. The statement fulfills the French promise of providing maximum job opportunities to the refugees for their better livelihood. In this way, the French government accepts the refugees' cultural and national identity and frees them to move into the country. Moreover, the protagonist's seamless drive in Paris assures the French states' struggles in accommodating refugees in their territories. Exploring Paris in his free time, the protagonist and Bon decide to join the show where

the rehearsals are done. “Bon and I were mad enough to join the biweekly rehearsals for the culture show, where our limited talents turned us into background dancers, if “dancing” was the right word” (81). France like other European countries, has vast experience in merging refugees into its different places. Therefore, French policymakers make strategies for the refugees in a way that they can move independently into the country to show their culture. Having a deep experience in the refugee movement, the French government knows how to integrate the refugees into the host culture. Thus, the government allows the refugees to express their culture and its diversity. Cultural and local shows bring awareness to the refugees’ talents, stories, and diverse cultural legacy, and through these events and shows, the host community aggravates the integration process.

Another constituent of integration that helps the refugees to resolve their issues in the host cultures is getting citizenship. By giving citizenship to the refugees, the host countries accept their national identity and give space for settlement. I have mentioned Kweka’s perspective on page 16 which shows by getting citizenship from the host country, the refugees can move freely into the host country. In *The Committed*, the Parisian aunt (a Vietnamese refugee in Paris) gets citizenship from the French government and has intimacy with the state personnel. When the protagonist and his friend go to the aunt’s house, they begin their discussion with the oppression of the communists. Bon tells the protagonist that:

“There are communists everywhere.

In our community.

You are talking about my aunt.

She’s not a part of our community. She’s turned French” (67).

After the fall of Saigon and the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese refugees moved to France, seeking refuge from the communist party. The protagonist’s aunt is one of them who moved to France as a refugee. After spending scores of years in France, the French government grants her citizenship due to her loyalty to the country. Due to social and political instability in Vietnam, the French government refused to give access to citizenship to the Vietnamese in 1975. But after some years, the government with strict policies started awarding citizenship to the Vietnamese refugees. The aunt assimilates into the French culture to such an extent that she leaves her

ethnicity and identity and becomes a French citizen. Therefore, she has a very close relationship with BFD and Maoist PhD.

During the stay in the aunt's house, the protagonist comes to know the intimacy of her aunt with BFD. "They walked out of the bedroom rumpled yet elegant, but they saw me as just rumpled" (37). Both get out of the room after spending exhilarating time with each other. Their appearance is disheveled and unkempt, but they walk gracefully. This shows that the couple knows the aura of elegance and maintenance of the situation before the protagonist. After a few minutes, "they chatted amiably as they smoked and drank civet coffee while skimming the newspaper" (37). BFD's affection for the aunt indicates his deep interest in her. Therefore, he takes her as a fellow citizen with whom he talks freely. The newspaper the couple skims is "*L'Humanite*, aunt's newspaper of choice" (38). The French name of the newspaper shows the aunt's understanding of reading it. With the acquisition of the French language, the aunt gets citizenship which helps her integrate into the host culture.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to analyze the incorporation of refugees' concerns in the selected fictional works of Nguyen i.e. *The Sympathizer* and *The Committed*. The main objective of the study was to explore the selected texts for the two-way process of refugees' integration into the host cultures and how the host cultures reciprocate it. The theoretical framework primarily draws on Goksel's philosophical debate on the concept of the integration of refugees into the host cultures. Under the umbrella of Tony Bennet's Cultural Studies as research methods, the study has explored how cultural barriers hamper the integration of refugees. It also focuses upon the process of integration and its representation in the selected texts. The analysis was delimited only to the thematic concerns related to the issues of refugees. After the detailed interpretations of the selected texts under study, I find that all the research questions have adequately been answered. This chapter details the findings of the study coupled with some recommendations for future researchers who are interested in carrying out their research on refugee literature.

I began this research by keeping some key questions in my mind. The study area of my research is reflected in the questions. My research is based on the concerns of the refugees and the integration process by the host cultures as represented in the Nguyens' selected works. My key focus has been on the issues of the refugees which they face in the host cultures, and secondary is on the behavior of the host community for the marginalized group of refugees. I have found sufficient material in both texts to which relate to the issues of the refugees. I have also analyzed the texts in the host cultures' context. The outcomes/findings are here.

The selected texts propagate that the territories of Vietnam have always been fascinating for American and European continents due to their enshrined and enriched lands. Therefore, describing the repercussions of World War II, Nguyen in both novels tells that France besieged Vietnam in 1945 and made it its colony. This is also called the First Indochina War which lasted till August 1, 1954. It took almost a decade to end this colonial era. The Vietnamese protagonist, a spy, with his military, fought bravely under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and successfully defeated them. However, the selected texts show that the colonial regime had long-lasting impacts on the

Vietnamese. During that era, the French government had taken almost every right including, education, medication, socioeconomics, and culture from the Vietnamese people and left them with heavy taxation. The helpless Vietnamese like the protagonist, the General, and his wife Madame, Bon, and a few saviors of the war started searching for a proper place to take shelter. But the time was not merciful for them because soon, America intervened in the Indochina war and split Vietnam into two groups: South Vietnam and North Vietnam. America began horrible massacres in Vietnam and brought havoc to them that was irreparable. To save their lives from the deadly war, the Vietnamese had to do a forcible movement from their country. They took shelter in America and France with the label of “refugees”. The first issue they faced in the host cultures was their identity as refugees. The people of the USA and France were not ready to accept them, rather they took the refugees as a threat to the countries or an economic burden on them. Goksel in her theoretical stance names them, “boat people” and “threats” for the host countries. Therefore, when the narrator goes to France, the French politicians and socialists mockingly call him the boat people because they have reached France on the boats.

The identity of the refugees has been doubly marginalized in the USA and France; firstly, as an oppressed nation and secondly as refugees. In *The Sympathizer*, when the refugee protagonist goes to America, he experiences the multifaceted challenges of getting acceptance. The American people often treat him as an “outsider” or “other”. His status as a refugee causes difficulties for him in American society. Rather than on his abilities, the American community sees him as a marginalized and oppressed man. His struggles for acceptance continue in the novel, but America keeps him at the periphery of the streamlining of its society. Therefore, the Americans do not accept him as a member of their country. In *The Committed*, the refugee protagonist is again marginalized for his dual status. In France, the protagonist experiences economic manipulation, political suppression in the hands of BFD and Maoist PhD, social oppression, and cultural injustices that he has to bear. These multilayers of subjugation highlight the facts that in the imperialist state America and the colonizers like France give challenges to the refugees for their adjustability in both countries. The more the protagonist navigates into the host countries, with the label of refugee, the more challenges he faces.

The selected texts provide another concern of the refugees, which hampers the integration process. Nguyen, in both texts, highlights the issue of racism, which creates a gap between refugees and host countries. Racism plays a significant role in obstructing Vietnamese refugees from getting integrated into the host countries. This barrier affects their lives from social gatherings and interactions, and job opportunities to mental and physical health and shaping their identities. Therefore, when the protagonist encounters an American lady in the Philippines, he calls him with his yellowish skin color. This highlights America's racial supremacy, which it still owns. In the spectrum of racism, the Vietnamese refugees face racial prejudices and negative stereotypes based on their nationality, ethnicity, and historical background. These stereotypes often lead the refugees to social discrimination and injustice. It becomes difficult for them to build a strong and healthy relationship with the local community. Thus, racial prejudices hinder daily interactions with the people of host countries because Vietnamese refugees are treated with hostility and suspicion. Racism further makes the refugees isolated from the host societies and prevents them from social integration. Due to racial bigotries, and yellow skin color, host societies view Vietnamese refugees and their practices as threatening and inferior. Therefore, they often force the refugees to abandon their practices to assimilate into the host cultures. These issues related to the refugees were amply addressed in the texts to combat racism in the host societies.

Another concern of the Vietnamese refugees that Nguyen raised in *The Sympathizer* is their misrepresentation in art, literature, and Hollywood movies. He knows the powerful impact of Hollywood on people's psychology. Nguyen in the text has allocated a whole section "The Hamlet" wherein he details the instances in the context of the misrepresentation of the Vietnamese refugees. This movie strengthens the stereotypes and Western ideology for them. Hollywood films have the power to shape public perceptions by showing various cultural shows, films, and events. Therefore, the producer (Auteur) of the movie "The Hamlet", misrepresents the Vietnamese refugees by giving them minimal roles. They are kept voiceless in the film to show the audience that the refugees have no voice to raise. Even they cannot raise their voices against oppression and violence. That is why every character in the text produces soft and minimal sounds rather than saying anything. Through this movie, Nguyen brings the American narrative, which claims that the Vietnamese refugees

cannot represent themselves, it is America that represents them in its movies. Nguyen through the American producer, highlights another American perspective i.e. it does not matter who is being represented/misrepresented, the matter is who is showing them in the movie. The Auteur takes the protagonist's help to study further the problems of the refugees, thus, he calls on the protagonist to provide sufficient knowledge regarding his community. However, he misconceives the protagonist's knowledge and starts manipulating him due to his status. Western media exclusively misrepresents the Vietnamese refugees because of the lack of understanding and inaccuracies, and their stereotyping.

Nguyen, in the selected texts, vividly portrays the misrepresentation of East Asian women in Hollywood movies and daily life. Their misrepresentation in films and daily life is an entrenched issue that propagates their biases and stereotypes in both texts. They are given roles in "The Hamlet", in which they are dehumanized and degraded. In *The Sympathizer*, the Auteur deliberately gives the Vietnamese refugee women the role of prostitutes, which reflects the American misogynistic approach. The character Madame is shown as the brothel's owner, and her job is to entertain the American soldiers who often go there for physical pleasures. Nguyen, through these characters, shows the general American approach for the Vietnamese women. The objectification and fetishization of these women are stereotyped in various interactions and events described in the novel. Nguyen's second novel *The Committed* follows the same pattern of misrepresenting East Asian women in their daily lives. The female character Madeleine is also objectified and toyed with the stereotypes. Being an East Asian woman, she as a prostitute works in a French brothel and attends a few men daily. Nguyen's observations unveiled the fact that Asian women are deliberately misrepresented in the US entertainment industry and France's brothels.

Assimilation is a way to adjust in the host societies, but for the Vietnamese refugees, it is an issue. In the selected texts, Nguyen gives an insightful view of this issue. After the horrific American-Vietnam war, the Vietnamese set off on their journey to America for a better place. When they reached there, they tried to assimilate into the American culture and faced the complexities of nationality, ethnicity, and identity. They are left isolated in their new home and realize they are aliens in the host country. Nguyen in his texts, delves into the matter because he is the victim of this issue. The protagonist and his fellow refugees learn English in America and are proficient in the

language that Americans get confused in recognizing their ethnicity. Through their language, they assimilate into the American culture but receive a cold response from them. The refugee protagonist struggles to reconcile with his roots and endures the pressure to assimilate into American society, highlighting the Vietnamese refugees' difficulties in American culture. The texts highlight the issues of low wages given to the refugees by the host cultures. In their country, they are posted at the high ranks, but in the host countries with the label of a refugee, they live at low costs. This obstructs the integration process between the refugees and host countries.

For Goksel, solidarity, love, and friendship are the main constituents of integration which help to give a proper space to the refugees in the host countries. In the selected texts, Nguyen suggests these constituents as a solution to the concerns of the refugees. For instance, in *The Sympathizer*, Claude expresses his solidarity with the protagonist, Bon, the General, his wife, and other evacuees to evacuate them from their country. After the American invasion, his duty was to look after the refugees in their camps. Despite his authority, he makes a strong bond of friendship with the protagonist and teaches English which advocates Claude's interest in making the Vietnamese refugees feel secure. Hence, he breaks all the stereotypes associated with the American CIA officers.

The politicians of the host countries play a significant role in recognizing the identity of the refugees. In *The Sympathizer*, the Congressman helps the refugees seek a place in America. He welcomes them in Los Angeles and attends the marriage ceremony of the Vietnamese refugees. Doing a marriage ceremony in the host country aligns with Goksel's stance on the free movement of refugees in the host country. She suggests free movement as a solution to the issues of the refugees. According to her, the politicians of the liberal states should respect the refugees and accept their identities. In *The Committed*, BFD like the Congressman, agrees with the refugees' identities and allows them to present their culture in France. In this way, the local community builds a strong bond with the refugees and creates an environment in which they accept each other's culture.

Mutual recognition, an integral part of Goksel's theory, is reflected in Nguyen's texts as a solution to the refugees' concerns. Through it, the freedom of the refugees is institutionalized in the host countries. This important step unifies the bilateral relationships between refugees and the host countries. Mutual recognition in the texts

also ensures the security of the refugees' rights. In the texts, both politicians emphasize the rights of the refugees. They reinforce the integration process that helps the refugees to get acquainted in their respective countries. This invites a cooperative approach in which America and France give cultural acceptance to the refugees.

The psychological struggles the refugees face towards integration include anxiety, depression, trauma, and cultural dislocation—profoundly impact their ability to integrate into host societies. Many suffer post-migration stress, uncertainty, grappling with loss, and the pressure to adapt, which can hinder social and economic participation. They are stuck to the roots, live in nostalgia, and balancing their heritage causes disruption for them and hamper the integration process. Passing with the time, the negotiation of their identity in the host countries becomes another challenge when they develop hybrid identity expecting their adjustment with the local community. Keeping this hybrid identity may also lead them to the belonging ambiguity, where they are neither fully rooted in their past nor completely accepted in their present. Social discrimination and exclusion further exacerbate refugees' struggles, reinforcing a sense of alienation.

Citizenship, a significant aspect of the integration process in Goksel's theoretical perspective, offers numerous benefits for refugees that secure their economic opportunities, social inclusion, political participation, and legal security. To minimize the refugees' problems, the government of France in *The Committed* grants citizenship to the refugees to enjoy their equal rights. For instance, Man's aunt, an unnamed Vietnamese refugee in France, enjoys the status of French citizenship. Gradually, she builds a strong relationship with the French politicians and moves freely in France. In this way, France naturalizes the integration process and gives maximum benefits of citizenship to the Vietnamese refugees. It also implements an efficient and fair process to support refugees in their jobs, freedom, and basic rights.

5.1 Findings of the Study

The current study was carried out to analyze the selected texts for the representation of the issues of the refugees in the target land. The preceding findings of the study also lead to some of the recommendations that may contribute to handling the problems of the refugees, lessening their issues, and integrating them into the host culture. A few of these are detailed below:

- Although, we have a body of refugee literature that addresses the issues of refugees globally, yet, we need to have literary productions that could highlight their issues at the regional level.
- There should be more movies and dramas on the subject of refugees.
- There is a need to raise the issues of the refugees in literary productions, especially in fiction. The authors from the host countries should come forward and take up the refugee issues in their writings and suggest some alternative but workable models for the solutions to the challenges these refugees face around the globe.
- In the local context, refugee writers and artists contribute to literary production by documenting their experiences, enriching national discourse with transnational perspectives, and challenging monolithic notions of identity.
- These narratives serve as both a form of resistance and a bridge between communities, fostering empathy and social cohesion. Without institutional support, such voices risk marginalization, underscoring the need for culturally inclusive platforms in publishing and education.
- The policymakers should design certain policies that are more inclusive and give room for the refugees to adjust themselves to the host culture. The legal, political, and cultural aspects of refugee integration into the host culture demand the immediate attention of policymakers to properly address the global needs of the refugees.
- Policymakers must collaborate with cultural stakeholders to amplify refugee stories while addressing systemic barriers to belonging.
- Recognizing the interplay between psychological well-being, cultural expression, and policy frameworks is essential for shaping a more equitable and inclusive society—one where refugees are not merely integrated but empowered to redefine collective identity.
- There is a need to look into the issues of the refugees on humanitarian grounds. The refugees are humans, and they should not be treated as outcasts. The human crisis which arises due to the unaddressed issues of the refugees need to be prioritized in the political and legal discourses.

- The public should come forward and welcome refugees into their social system regardless of the racial, ethnic, national, religious, and cultural identities of the refugees. The countries will have to abandon/review their discriminatory and dualized policies towards refugees and allow them to settle on their land. They should be given opportunities to adapt themselves to the culture of the host countries and contribute to the development process.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies can analyze other literary works for the exploration of the issues the refugees face in the host countries. The texts that I selected for my studies are the production of a person who himself is a refugee. The researchers can select texts written by the people from the host culture and see their point of view on the concept of integration of refugees in the target culture. Similarly, Pakistani researchers can pick texts from any Afghan author to see what they have to say about the Afghan Refugees. The texts by Pakistani authors can also be explored under the same lens.

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