# Exile: Immigrant Experience

## The Immigrant Experience

In his book “*Cutting for Stone,*” Abraham Verghese brings out the aspects of migration and exile through the book’s characters. While some have been forced into exile, some have voluntarily imposed a form of exile on themselves. These characters such as Hemaltha, Thomas, and Marion go on to depict the immigrant experiences, how going into exile has impacted their lives as well as the medical challenges they face regarding illnesses, and health issues (Dontsov & Zotova, 2013). The characters all being medical practitioners have varying experiences and reasons for their migration.

Marion is originally from Ethiopia. Her self-imposed exile is premised on her belief that she has a calling to help and which she pursues. This is reinforced more by her faith that is more pragmatic (Verghese, 2010). According to Marion, there are people in Ethiopia that are sick and suffering that need help more than those in Yorkshire. She seems to have blended into the Ethiopian life so much that it feels like home and the loss of any valuables she had moved with does not seem to bother her. To her, those things are replaceable (Verghese, 2010). For instance, despite having lost her Bible, she sees another Bible will serve just the same purpose as the initial one. Further, she has come to value intangible things more than the tangible ones she has lost. These include her resourcefulness at the hospital and even the position of a matron which she seems to love. Her Immigrant experience is no doubt a satisfying one as she gets to respond to her calling which is to help the sick and suffering.

Hemaltha, on the other hand, is originally from India. While living in Ethiopia, she feels the juxtaposition of brutality and culture are her reason for staying in Addis all those years. To her, the evolution of the city is an exciting experience, and she is happy to be part of it. This is unlike in Madras where she feels everything had evolved long before her birth. Her reason for leaving India, however, is due to the lack of jobs, and she feels that it is not enough to just offer charity work from her home (Verghese, 2010). According to Hema, the government should hire her given they need her services. She paints a picture of a government that fails to give jobs to its merited citizens and instead expects some bribe in exchange for jobs. In Ethiopia, at the Missing Hospital, Hema’s value is seen and appreciated. She is considered an asset in the hospital, and to her, the immigrant experience is more rewarding. This is quite different from India as depicted by the author in “*Cutting for Stone*” where getting jobs depends on one’s willingness to offer bribes. Even so, she is always sad if she parts with her parents each time.

As for Thomas, he is originally from India and later Ethiopia. His immigrant experience is a packed one considering his stay in various countries. His experience in India, for instance, is a seemingly good one where he describes his patients as uncomplaining and trusting. His experience in Ethiopia is, however, a bit sad especially after Sister Mary Joseph’s ordeal which impacts heavily on him. Overall, these characters undergo different experiences that show the immigrant experiences from different angles (Dontsov & Zotova, 2013). As health practitioners, they face numerous health challenges that lead them to make certain comparisons especially with regards to how the various countries address health issues.

## References

Dontsov, A. I., & Zotova, O. Y. (2013). Reasons for migration decision making and migrants security notions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *86*, 76-81.

Verghese, A (2010). Cutting for stone: a novel. Knopf