

**Tribhuvan University**

**Interface between Identity and Geography in Shobhaa De's *Superstar India***

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## Interface between Identity and Geography in ShobhaaDe's *Superstar India*

### **Abstract**

*The present research paper undertakes the study of interface between identity and geography as reflected in ShobhaaDe's Superstar India. It explores the course of action of shaping ones' identity with changing scenario and its geography. It also investigates how dominant culture has hegemonized the Indian way of life. Effect of Western culture is presented in order to project the neo identity shaped after the legitimization of English language and other various changes after India got its freedom from the clutch of British rule. By using Halls concept it finds out how Indians and their culture are represented, using Gramsci's notion the research paper explores the dominance of one group over another, at the same time to reinforce the marginalized discourse and identity. This research paper initiates the Althusser's notion of 'Interpellation' and finally the concept and effects of 'State Apparatuses' from Gramsci in order to investigate De's articulation of identity and culture in Indian geography. By using the concept of above theorists, this research paper finds out how Indians and their geography are represented by embedding the ideology, dominance of mainstream culture over marginalized and at the same time this paper scrutinizes the marginalized discourse and identity of a place. Thus, it is concluded that interface helps De, to discover the identity set by geography to make India more incredible and unstoppable.*

**Keywords:** Identity, Geography, Hegemony, Identity, Interface, State-apparatus

The research paper tries to examine the embeddedness of an individual identity with space as reflected in ShobhaDe's *Superstar India* (2008). De in this autobiography makes radical use of an identity and geography in order to demonstrate technology, neo English culture in urban areas, gender discrimination, religious differences, new identity of commoners, drastic change in youngsters, over all changes in India. Moreover, her writing in *Superstar India* not only supports the new India but also illustrates the issues raised by identity and geographical difference. The popularity of ShobhaDe's novel is due to their contents, her mastery over the art of storytelling, and her use of the language. De began her career as a journalist in 1970, in the course of which she founded and edited there popular magazines- *Stardust*, *Society and Celebrity* and acted as a consulting editor to *Sunday and Mega City*. It may be partly on account of her experiences as a journalist that she is able to say things in teasingly and with a courage of conviction in a language uniquely her own. Shobha De uses bilingual narrative technique. Her writings are straightforward and free of any sort of fancy language and clearly describe the true Indian self through her Hinglish. Her identity is set by the misogynist culture since many years thus somewhere we find the attitude of philogynist in her tone of interpreting the history and the changes over seen in India since sixty years. Shobha De is claimed to be "a pioneer" in the field of "popular fiction" writing, to be "among the first to explore the world of the urban women in India" (Surendren 9).

Through her novels and essays namely, *Spouse: The truth about marriage*, *Surviving Men*, *Strange Obsession*, etc. Dehas tried to project patriarchal hegemony and the traditional norms and values which are the sole cause for shattering India from over all geographical development. Ankitashukla writes for *The Times of India* in 2016, 'unignorable has been ShobhaDe's wpmen range from traditional, subjugated

and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated women. De's novels take a leaf the urban woman's life, also revealing her plight in the present day society' (7). Urme Khan writes for *The Guardian* in 2007, 'Her books are steeped in a lifetime's observation of Bollywood, and they describe a side of the country that western audiences rarely encounter, her central themes being power, identity, greed, lust and sex' (1).

In *Superstar India*, De describes the identity of her mother shaped by the traditional culture and society of Maharashtra and contrasts her own identity shaped in the modern world. According to Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary, "An individual or group's sense of attachment to the country, region, city, or village in which they live is geographical identity. De's mother is culturally rooted and has no sense of profanity towards her inherited values whereas Shobhaa discards the patriarchal domination.

From the beginning of human history it is known that geography has an important place in the lives of individuals. People lifestyles are shaped by geography. The professions we choose, economic activities, nutrition and human relationships are under the influence of geography. De claims, "the significant thing is that attitude have changed and changed pretty radically" (111). Individuals learn the characteristics of the place they live in, thanks to geography. Geography is also important in shaping the identities of individuals. It is therefore seen that there is a direct relationship between geography and identity. Shobhaa De in *Superstar India* critically examines her parent ideology in given lines:

This is one of our most endearing habits. Endearing and enduring. I can recall my father's law ministry colleagues coming over to our home in New Delhi way back in the 50s and shyly introducing their wives thus. The 'Mrs' would

fold her hands and say 'namaste' to my father's own 'Mrs' - my mother. In my mother's time being a 'Mrs' was end in itself. Men those days weren't self-conscious or politically correct about committing such a faux pas. They spoke naturally as their forefathers used to. The voiced what was true in any patriarchal society. Women were men's possessions. Just like men owned cars, horses, tractors, bicycles, cows...they owned their 'Mrs'. There was proprietorial pride in such an introduction. (110)

People develop their identity according to the region and social values and norms they live in. People's view of life, the values they have and the expectations they all have are shaped by geographical conditions. Hence, the writer's mother is shaped accordingly. She neither hesitates nor tries to revolt against patriarchal dominance. She seems enjoying what she did in view of the fact that the dominance of western idea was absent.

Marx argued that a worker's self was defined by their relationship to their work and the way in which the worker would carry it out. Marx imagined that the subjectivity would be developed collectively, who you were was also defined by the people you worked with. In this line of thought Althusser believed that "we are all necessarily part of the system of ideology in which we live; that is we are interpellated by ideology" ( Althusser 131-87). In order to dominate the society, the ruling class impose ideas on the people in such a manner that it appears to be true, appears to be natural. For e.g. Subash in *Superstar India* is interpellated by the English culture. Why would a simple man from village prefer English medium school for his son? It is because he has seen ShobhaaDe's and other children of elite families. They indirectly have affected the ideology of poor man like Subhash. Not only this, De herself is dominated by Western culture in several aspects. The subject is never

outside ideology, the system of culture, government, church, school, media, and so on. The subject is directly affected by these institutions, 'ideological apparatuses'. Althusser argues that ideology and subjectivity are inextricably connected and that no one is outside the ideology, although one of the effects of ideology is that it appear natural and inevitable. So, for Althusser the individual can never be outside ideology, since it is through interaction with ideology that the individual subject comes into being. So, language and culture transmit and reproduce subject position. Language is a part of culture, it is transmitted culturally; that is, it is learned. De's children and other urban kids have generalized English language and English culture. They take it as their birth right. If language is transmitted as part of culture, it is no less true that culture as a whole is transmitted very largely through language. This is why urban kids have no hesitation asking BMW, plastic cards, etc. with their parents and enjoying at disco clubs lavishly.

Shobhaa de in *Superstar India* is heavily dominated by the English culture and language. She has legitimized English language because she says:

My medium of thought is English. It's not a 'foreign' language to us. In many ways, it is our only language. People find it strange when I tell them I dream in English, or count in English. If someone were to shake me awake in the middle of the night, I'd yell, 'hey...stop it. What's happened?' Not, 'kya ho gaya? Is this a plus or minus? Frankly, I don't care. It is the way it is. Not just for me, but for millions of other urban Indians who grew up believing English was 'their' language. (136)

De's identity is already shaped by Scottish missionary school and Spanish Jesuit College. She studied there, and grew up with people who also used English as a first language. Therefore, she contradicts from her mother in every aspect. She likes to

introduce her husband in other version: ‘Meet my Mr’, she loves it. Her husband blushes but rarely protests. Mankind is shaping its life to the extent facilities that the geography offers itself. For this reason, modernization and the formation of identity in the development of civilization history have a direct relation to the geography where human life is spent. In different parts of the world, civilizations developed within geographical possibilities and geography became influential in the discovery of who is man himself and in the formation of identity.

De, narrates the upbringing of her children and compares there life with hers. She recalls her childhood days where she panicked if they had to suffer food deprivation. She understood the challenge posed to her father to ensure his four strapping children, with healthy appetites, ate well on a bureaucrat’s modest salary. She even thinks of his father and mother sacrificing many goodies themselves. Her mother made do with two silk sarees and the same small pieces of gold jewelry she’d received from at the time of wedding. Her father also had two suits in his cupboard and wore them with a good deal of personal style. The meals De was served on their dining table were always wholesome, simple and tasty- standard Maharastrian fare, low on oil- far from gooey or rich, but served on time with a loving smile by her mother. She never demanded any other expensive dishes.

Whereas her children are just opposite because of the changes that has covered the urban areas. She writes:

When I see my kids turning up their noses at our over laden dining table these days, I feel angry and hurt. I see their expressions and flip out. I see packets of imported foods. (32)

De was brought up in Maharastra in a joint family where her grandma taught several family values and cultural importance to De’s mother and her mother got shaped



accordingly. She was kind of hegemonized by the environment around her. Female were kitchen machine, they did what they were asked to do and the women never questioned the then existing rules and dichotomy. Nonetheless, educated and rational De took the shape of changing India. With the swapping of India after independence the identity of maximum citizens started to swap. Colonized India got its freedom but India never remained same. Somehow India got hegemonized. The concept of hegemony in *Cultural theory and Popular culture* written by John Storey quotes Gramsci to refer to a condition in process in which a dominant class does not merely rule a society but leads it through the exercise of intellectual and moral leadership (75).

Furthermore, John Storey in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* writes:

Hegemony involves a special kind of consensus: a social group seeks to present its own particular interests as the general interests of the society as a whole. In this sense, the concept is used to suggest a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation, there is a high degree of consensus, a large measure of social stability; a society in which subordinate groups and classes appear to actively support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings, which bind them to, and ‘incorporate’ them into, the prevailing structures of power. (80)

In *Superstar India* De narrates an example of her old cook Subhash who is semi-literate but smart. Though British left the shores of India but urban Indian dwellers associate a ‘good’ education with the ability to speak the language they inherited from British. Subhash decided to quit his job in De’s house to relocate to a distant suburb. When questioned, why? He answered “I want my children to go to a good school and speak good English” (136). The school he had enrolled them into De’s neighborhood

was not a bad school at all, but the medium of education was Hindi, with Marathi as a second subject. Subhash has a doubt, what will his son do with Hindi and Marathi? He wants his son to be a big man with a good education someday. Therefore, he insists his son must enroll in an English-medium school. Today, Subhash's son is in merchant navy, and only speaks English. This is how Subhash is hegemonized by the identity of new India. Hegemony is maintained and will be continually maintained: it is an ongoing process by dominating groups and classes 'negotiating' with and making concessions to, subordinate groups and classes.

Man is shaped and fashioned by what he loves. There are various Subhash all around India who are motivated by the dominant class. The particular interests of some intellectuals become the general interests of the society as a whole. Hegemony is never simply power imposed from above: it is always the result of 'negotiations' between dominant and subordinate groups, a process marked by both 'resistance' and 'incorporation'. To elaborate this I would like to bring an example from *Superstar India*. The great Indian wedding has enhanced the economy and contributed to its growth, however on a more mundane level, it has become a social disease, with families unable to cope with growing expectations from everybody, to impress and outdo the neighbors. De narrates a story of Budhmashi, a part time worker (sweeper) who had a blast of his own. She writes:

Budhmashi decided to marry off two daughters in one go, the celebrations lasted for over a week in the neighborhood slum where he lives in a shabby jhopdi. He borrowed heavily for the functions he'd organized, one of which involved feeding 700 people from the slum- a grand feast. Apart from the lavish gifts he was expected to bestow on his sons-in-law (motorbikes' refrigerator, bed, kitchen utensils, beside suit lengths and sarees for their

extended families), the man also had to keep appearances within his own community in the slums. (57)

We can understand the mind set of daughters' father from Bihar. Bihari people have different ideology than that of other regions. They are the orthodox and conservative people. They call it sin to not follow their ancestors' awful culture. Such person when asked worriedly, they answer 'Bhagwan will take care of everything- this is my duty'. India is a culmination of various caste and creed. They are deeply rooted into their ancestral axioms. People are habituated to align into the tagline that has been handover through the discourse. Geography plays a significant role in shaping the mind. The physical environment causes social and identity development. Bihar is a typical state in itself. When the whole India is facing west direction, Bihar doesn't hesitate following what they know because they are grounded deep into the discourse of their predecessor.

Ideology is the expression of the relation between men and their world, that is, the unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence. People follow the popular culture. "The world is ruled by platinum and titanium and also plastic cards", says De (32). She narrates her own daughter's birthday story. Her youngest child when asked what she wanted for her eighteenth birthday, her daughter did not miss a bit before saying, 'A credit card'. De gasped at her daughter's audacity and seeing this her daughter replied with a satiric smile, 'Be thankful I did not say a BMW, like one of my friends did' (33). This is what the today's popular culture is. Maximum urban spoiled kids do not hesitate demanding the world's most expensive things. She writes:

The first image that come to me was that of a fourteen year-old Indian girl I had met in Singapore, nearly ten years ago. Her indulgent father's idea of a

birthday gift had been to give the teenager a bouquet of credit cards. Her Louis Vuitton wallet was so stuffed with imaginable Privilege Card that when she hits the malls she would virtually pick up whatever she fancied. 'It's normal', she told me breezily, while offering to pay for my purchases! I watched local teens shopping at mall- they all paid with plastic. (172)

Jameson writes, "I think that it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space, rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism" (1991:16). Modernism is changing the world and has changed much. Plastic card are modern eras innovation. Demand in an individual is gradually rupturing because of mass media, internet, public -platform or in one word we can say it is 'State Apparatus'. People are both the consumers and producers. None can be blamed. It is the play of geography and identity. Soja, the cultural geography theorists writes, "we must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (1989:6). This is what is happening globally today. Urban areas like Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Gujarat, Bengaluru, Kolkata, etc are dominated by the notions of modernity. The western powerful countries have hegemonized the thought of modern kids. Elite people send their children to foreign colleges and from there, they carry the notions of western culture. India is also a byproduct of such influence.

India was colonized since 1858 to 1947. The aftermath of colonization still remains in India. With the new found success in virtually every field, including fashion, Indians are still enamoured of all things western. De questions 'Is it just a

hang-over from the colonial past?’ over fifty percent of one billion people in India have no recall of pre-Independence India. They neither care know nor care what happened before India’s freedom. Young generation are far too busy enjoying the here and now. This is the portrait of new India and new identity of Indians. This is where they interface, the geography and identity. Some old people do not like the ideology of new India, hence they are heard complaining, ‘India was better off under the British. They even say British children are well-behaved compared to the junglebachchas of today’s natives’ (155) without shame or self-consciousness.

Hence the ‘new identity’ and ‘identity crisis’ is assumed and felt in the process of changing identity; dislocation of the central structure in the social world. Hall writes “modern identified are being de-centered that is dislocated or fragmented” (274). Hall further quotes KobenaMevcers and expresses that identity only becomes an issue when something assumed to be fixed , coherent and stable, is displaced by the experiences of doubt and uncertainty. Therefore, identity is constructed under certain circumstances which are not chosen deliberately and is questioned when it is in crisis. Thus identity crisis evokes the sense of belongingness to a specific culture in a certain time and place.

India is a perplexing country if we meditate on the above lines. In a summation, India has two identities, i.e. pre-India and Post-India. De falls into the latter one because she thinks every Indian has to be unconditionally pro-India because for her it is shameful to want to go back to virtual slavery, regardless of how enlightened and terrific the masters were.

No self-respecting individual would want to endorse non-freedom. But a person is known through such ideology. Some people have not been able to fit themselves in new identity of India. They feel suffocated, where as there are some

poor people who enjoy the freedom and are also paying the modernity. Like Budhmashi, Subhash, and other servants in De's house are reluctant to like the new India. Imitation of western cultures and copying other elites group has caused a severe damage but these damages are hiding under the new geography. There are other positive dimensions of new geography and the modern identity as well. Identities are not the fixed markers people assume them to be but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment. Overwhelming evidence has been produced to show that space has by no means lost its importance, differences between countries and regions are at the very core of globalization, and a global culture is appropriated very differently in the different parts of the world. Shobha De writes:

There is this lovely, hard-working Maharashtrian journalist who whizzes around the city on a scooter, while her husband manages their young daughter, and works part time in an office close to their suburban home. Even in his absence she always but always refers to him as her 'Mr'. I meet quite a few such 'Misters' who have no problem either with their nomenclatures or their roles. In fact, it was only the other day that an old girlfriend of mine announced at the table that she'd asked her *husband* to quit his job and come work for her! To my utter delight, her husband, a retired banker, laughed and said, 'My wife is a remarkable woman her business is doing well. I might take her up on the offer. (110)

Such is the story of neo Indian who are devouring the taste of newness. The male domination amongst such leading ladies is ending so far. Men are known after the recognition of their women. Gender roles have switched and swapped. Females in their seventies are also glowing like in the sixteens, thanks to the cosmetics and the new definition of males who have brought such a huge transformation. So the

common ground is gender role. Females and males of new India have changed the definition of role play. Women are seen doing kitty parties and other recreational activities in *Superstar India* and their men take their over drunken women. New identity has changed the old India into modern India where new women are swimming in shark-infested waters, learning to negotiate, compelling themselves to 'cope'. Cornal west opines, identity has "desire for recognition, quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledged; a deep desire for association" (15). Therefore, identity is associated with desire- desire for recognition, association and protection over time and in space (geography). The known identity, which stabilized the social world ebbs out producing new identity and fragmentation of the modern individual's subjects.

Shobha De adopts the dominant culture by acculturation and choice but somewhere she seeks the traces of the specific culture, tradition, language, etc. in which she was brought up. Stuart Hall calls such emerging culture as "cultural hybridity" (274). She herself is a hybrid because she voices that she loves to imagine in English, talk in English, likes to be a recognized figure, appreciates when her husband swaps the gender role, and also does not like the new changes in Subhash and other servants life, today's teen using plastic cards, etc. This is an irony in her voice. One cannot be in two different places at a same time. Though she may not like what today's generation are doing but she has to deal with this fragmented modern individual subjects.

Currently, the spatial logic of postmodern capitalism is simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented – a kind of 'schizo-space'. For Jameson, schizophrenic is to claim that it has lost its sense of history. It is a culture suffering from 'historical amnesia', locked into the discontinuous flow of perpetual presents. The 'temporal' culture of modernism has given way to the 'spatial' culture of postmodernism. It

seems to have become the mark of the age: old loyalties of class or gender or race fragment; dislocate, rupture, disperse, new loyalties of class and gender and race interrupt, disrupt, recombine and fuse (193). No one is quite sure of the ground on which they stand, which direction they are facing or where they are going. Superstar India from incredible to unstoppable is also in this same phase. For De, the old notions of parenting, family values, fashion, education, female rights, male domination, gender roles, etc. have disrupted and fused.

De cites an example of wedding in India. When she got stuck at the traffic intersection right where the village begins and the boats festooned with multi colored flags were moored. She heard the sound of drummers and looked up to see a small wedding procession, en route to the temple inside the village. Those peoples were from the bride's side. She spotted a pretty young girl dressed in a traditional turmeric-tinted saree. She was walking with eyes downcast, and could not have been more than nineteen years old. In contrast to this she also narrates another wedding in another part of Mumbai. Celebrities from across the world had gathered to celebrate the wedding of a forty-two-year-old famous British person named Elizabeth Hurley. She mentions had she been a documentary film maker she would have covered both weddings for the same reason.

De compares and contrasts the both weddings. Both represented the same thing but it was only a matter of scale and perception. The humble fisher folk were also sending off the bride with accompanying music and revelry. While Ms. Hurley entourage was doing pretty much the same. The question she raises is 'Who knows which brides would be happier in the long run?' The contrast is there for all to see, but it does not matter to anyone in this newly shaped India. The way of wedding is also a product of ideology. How a person wants to marry is their choice but it reflects the



dominant ideology and culture. Nothing happens in a second, one gets buried under the dominant discourse and plays the role accordingly. What one happens to see in TV, mass media, internet, etc. they surprisingly start making home inside ones' mind set. People start dreaming what they like and gets shaped accordingly. The world of science and technology has influenced every beings. Today's India is a byproduct of British colonization.

Indians do not like British people but do not hate their culture as well. They have adopted the English from British. India has various kinds of English namely Bihari English, Mumbai English, Bengali English, Assamese English, South Indian English, North Indian English, etc. legitimization of English all over India. The speaker is shaped by the new geography and holds identity accordingly. She enjoys dancing the tango with Al Pacino, belly dancing in Cairo, swimming in the Bosphorus, dining in Moscow with a mafia hit-man, smoking in an opium den in Shanghai.

When she, listens NusratFateh Ali Khan's 'Dhadkan', and 'Dulhekaseherasuhanalagtahai', she can see a newly minted 'Mr' with his 'Mrs'. It bring a smile to her lips, and tears in her eyes and she quotes, 'but the tears in my eyes are equally real. I will never be that Mrs. And I do not know whether that is a blessing or a curse'. These lines written by De, projects departure from traditional culture to modern culture.

Talking about the narrators' father, De quotes her father dialogue, 'father pointed out in a self-congratulatory way, I never left your mother out while attending official functions. She was always by my side.' She also explicitly tells her father introduced her with the 'Meet my Mrs' opening line. As opposed to her parent she compares her own mobility, travelling around the world, booking online tickets,

arriving at strange destinations with knowing anyone and somehow managing.

Today's new women recognition has interchanged. They can compel themselves to cope in any harsh situations.

Contemporary world's geography does not allow women to feel dominated, they disapprove keeping their eyes lowered, rejects being three steps behind their men, speaking only when spoken to, never interrupting, never arguing, and never contradicting. They decline to be the asset of the old-fashioned kind- quiet, non-threatening, willing to compromise, eager to please, not looking beyond the hearth of well-run home, forgetting about the enticing world out there. Hence, the radical change is seen amongst the urban women in ShobhaDe's *Superstar India*. Newly discovered India is a geography where the brand new identity for Indian people is born. Post Marxist cultural studies defines culture as the production, circulation, and consumption of meanings. According to Hall:

Culture is not so much a set of things- novels and paintings or TV programs and comics- as a process, a set of practices. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings- the giving and taking of meaning'.(2)

Hence, De usually critiques the ideology of Bihari people. De is a production of modern world, she sees things in a non-Indian way. Her schooling, her nature of work and the company she keeps up with has made her modern lady. Her life style is that of a celebrity because she also used to be a glamorous model. So, the way of production and exchange of meanings that she practices sets her specific culture. She dislikes some of her parental culture too. The straight forward nature in De is a byproduct of liking western culture. She seems to be in dilemma somewhere in her life because she acts like to be or not to be, she sometimes support some poor desi

peoples and sometimes uses derogatory terms to define them. India is hovering around its junction of identities because after the colonization they have not been able to stay intact with their Indian root. De writes, “I am amazed that with all our new-found success in virtually every field, including fashion, we are still enamoured of all things Western. Is it just hangover from the colonial past?” (155).

According to Raymond William, “As culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior” (32). In *Superstar India*, which is a semi autobiography of De herself and a Biography of India, De brings several examples from different institutions. She talks about marriage, education, children, rural areas, concerts, etc. the way of life she projects is different among different regional and states people. She is a semi flag bearer of English as well as Indian culture. Though she appreciates various Western cultures but her heart is Hindustani. This is where her identity and geography meet.

In the case of business tycoons she compares and contrast past and present business holders. She voices:

The profile of the successful Indian businessman has changed dramatically.

Compare the sartorial swish of a Sunil Mittal to the homespun appeal of the late G.D. Birla, and you will get the picture. The earlier tycoons conformed to the political mood of the nation- they wore khadi kurtas and finely spun dhotis. They were insanely affluent even then, but looking at them, you could have mistaken them for modest grain merchants in a mandi.

The current day Birlas come in different moulds. Yash Birla is avantgarde in his attire, spiritual in his personal beliefs, and a trend-setter in his lifestyle.

Kumarmangalam carries the old Birla tradition forward, but has replaced

dhotis with charcoal-grey suits. Kumar is seen as the face of conservative face of business. He lives like a maharajah in a palatial home filled with priceless art. It is believed his sculpture collection is virtually priceless- no curator to date can put a value to it (188).

The way she attacks upon their nationality and the way they present themselves is direct. She tries to shade light upon the changes that business tycoons have brought in there way of life. Western dominance is seen amongst new businessman. Their nationality is off the road and are celebrating the modern way of life whereas the old times business tycoon remained grounded, carried nationality in their every fashion and actions. Their actions spoke louder than the words.

Furthermore she talks about Indian habits and compares that with her own incident that happened in New York. We Asians have habit of staring at something or someone if they fascinates or annoys us. De narrates, when we go to any government office, or an unknown persons home and you will feel dozens of eyes boring holes into you. Indians do not find this sort of behavior odd or offensive. They love to stare, basically Bihar and Bengali people. Often, at nothing. The logic being if someone is staring, there must be something there and soon the small group will start growing from three persons, it will grow to thirty. And in contrast to this she tells her New York story:

When I am in New York, I forgot not to stare. Particularly in the subway or bus. I am an inquisitive person to begin with hungry for the smallest, silliest detail. Bad news! I remember a beautiful black girl in a trendy Miami club walking up to me and saying aggressively, 'whatdyastarin' at? You have a problem, lady? I shook my head vehemently and said, 'No problem...I like your earrings. She was not convinced but let it go. Phew that was a close call.

(241)

This is what Indians do, staring at people. If someone keeps staring at somebody people categorize them as Indians. It shows the poor civilization. Indians still do not mind their own business. They keep poking on others business. They are nosy. This is still common in New India. People even comment on others English. She narrates a story of some women. She heard some women saying, 'she is knowing very good English... she, is coming from a cultured family, you know. This is rather worrying since it implies that those who have not been exposed to English in school or college are either uneducated or, worse, uncultured!

This is how English has dominated the mind set of home makers. Everyone is so conscious about English language. Almost every Indians can tell the importance of English language and the maximum urban and suburbs children, teenagers and adults converse in this dominated language. Bollywood movies and songs are explicitly written in English language. There is not a place where English has not dominated. It is the language that comes most easily to every educated Indians. India is known worldwide by their English as well. They have been able to awe struck some foreigners too.

De talks about digital India; where children teach parents to surf internet because it is compulsory to learn using modern gadgets. She being an updated lady is also taught by her own daughter Arundhati. De while exploring on Facebook stares hungrily at images of her daughter's friend, she visions these are the new generations given birth by New India. As these colorful girls change their geography, they seem to have swapped their identity too. She looks at the picture of the girls who are exploring the newer heights in the land of dreams i.e. America also termed as 'Bowl of Salad'. She mentions these are the young, hip, intelligent, affluent Indian students studying at

some of the top B-school in America. She views them positively because they had their priorities figured out and were all set to take on the world after making most of the opportunities their parents had provided. This is what about adaptation. Indians are adapting globally.

This new image of modern India makes her feel completely left out. De, the representative of ancient India is fighting to adjust in the definition set by dynamic world. She whines to venture the heights of Western culture. This is how geography plays an important role in attracting people and the reason is it gives unexplored identity. People crave for this new identity.

While talking about modern India, to the new generation caste do not really matter.. Irrespective to this, there are number of pretenders ready to define themselves as Dalits to take advantage of the prevailing situation. Whether I am described as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, or Dalit, as long as I am good at what I do, that is what counts. Hence the pretenders do not regret the fraud if their kids are doing well after swallowing others quota. Caste may not be a big issue in urban India but religious differences are major issues. Religious differences may be blurring, but even those who cling to age old prejudices are aware of how shrewdly politicians manipulate both- the conformists and those who ignore such differences. In a city like Mumbai, what one witnesses over and over again is the increasing irrelevance of both.

De recalls her old times where her childhood never felt any religious differences. She recalls growing up in a multi-religious, multi-cultured apartment block, where Diwali was celebrated was celebrated with as much enthusiasm as Id. She writes:

I find it hard to believe all those sentiments have vanished in the intervening years. The character of a city has more staying power and endurance than that,

surely? Yes, Mumbai has been devastated, and attempts to divide and polarize it further still continue. But what puzzles me is if India's youth remains indifferent to these issues and middle-aged India is too tired of being pushed around to suit the shifting agendas of the parties in power- who is involved in furthering the divide? Who cares? (332)

In India the ageing population has no voice to speak of. Senior citizens are far more preoccupied with issues that impact their lives directly, like being abandoned by their families, to bother with the caste or sub-caste of their neighbors. Though the country is raising digitally there are these factors that needs to be addressed otherwise the identity of India will be judged accordingly.

Newer identity is made among the middle class people because they want to make money- not war. Women want to get ahead in their careers at all costs. The upper class have always played the ball with whosoever best serves their financial interests. But what about poor class is the question. It is these suppressed for centuries individuals who are being seduced by irresponsible, disingenuous promises made by politicians only interested in hanging on to their precarious power. These poor Indians are willing to do anything. They play a vital role in suicide bombing, mass attack, murder, kidnapping, etc. Struggle and hunger is not new to these poor Indians. Once holed up in ratty tin shacks, they become soft targets for agents in search of helpless youth, willing to try anything in order to survive- smuggling, drugs, prostitution, extortion- and that final, most terrifying option- terrorism. Uneducated Indians are easy to influence, there wild-eye travel vast distances to get a shot of a better life. This is the bitter truth of poor Indians.

Shobhaa De in *Superstar India* does the comparative study of career development. During her time exciting opportunities did not exist. Studious siblings

and contemporaries opted for safe, steady but boring careers, since their own parents had endured years of uncertainty, and they did not want to repeat the experience. If we look at Indian youngsters' today- they give the appearance of being unmotivated bums, taking ten years to graduate and ten more to find proper jobs. But in fact, they are actually living life far more fully than the old anxious generation. The thoughts of youngsters are bold, out-of-the-box and vastly stimulating. Their outlook is adventurous and daring. They challenge the status quo all the time, and take the crazy sort of chances which old generation never did or could. De's reaction go from panic to admiration, even envy at times. She writes:

Look at their body language, man! That says it all. They walk tall. They strut, not shuffle. The gait is brisk and confident. Gone is the typical 'Indian stoop' and apologetic demeanor. How terrific a shift is that? (420)

After she identifies the youngsters of Neo India, she jumps into the commoners identity set by New Superstar India. India is now a big player on the global scene. Mega success of India fuels mega ambitions. De suggests, today, any and every Indian can dream big and reach for the sky. The notion of success itself has undergone so much change. She writes:

Talk to that chaiwallah boy in the modest, roadside canteen. Listen to him boast about how he will own a trucking company when he grows up. He believes it is possible. He is as fully invested in India as that ambitious entrepreneur who plans to make a killing in the IT field. Both have a bloody chance of making it. This new found buoyancy is based on sound fundamentals, despite the misgivings of Indian-watchers who'd like the bubble to burst-sooner rather than later. (421)

This depicts another demonstration of India's growing prosperity. Old people



had no such luxury. Saying this she also portrays the voice of some sceptic people who unhesitatingly say, 'oh, look how lazy they are. They do nothing but eat and sleep. Where will these people be twenty years from now? Their values are hopeless. They smoke, drink, have indiscriminate sex, do drugs, show scant respect for elders, cannot speak any Indian language correctly, are indifferent to history and tradition, live selfishly, dress absurdly, waste money...they are gone cases' (420-421). This is also a part of India. Reflection of various mind set is projected by De.

Nationality amongst the Indian is a fundamental thing. There are Non-Resident Indians seeking 'Suitable Boys' for their daughters, look eagerly for alliances in India. Everything is happening in India now. Available of good food, good homes, good education, hence NRI girls want to settle with Indian boys. This is the drastic change that has occurred in India. There was a time when Indian girls of a marriageable age would have given anything to marry a foreigner and settle overseas. It was considered a one way ticket to a better life but since India started adding feathers to it, nobody needs to depend on others success. One can afford success if they want it. India gaining its power in every fields has fueled the patriotism amongst youngsters.

Love for India amongst NRI and others who have settled abroad have ever lasting feelings for India. Shobha De brings a story of a NRI married girl, she writes:

'I do not want to let go of India,' a beautiful woman from Mumbai said to me with tears in her eyes. Married to a European for the past five years, she now lives in a small town in Austria with a husband who adores her. Though she visits Mumbai frequently (at least thrice a year), she is unable to get enough of a fill one each trip. 'I miss everything about our crazy country,' she confessed over a lassi. 'My life in Austria could not be more luxurious. I have every

imaginable comfort-including a driver and a maid- which is rare in Europe.

My husband's family loves me and I love them, too. But when I am in Austria,

I long for India. Is there something wrong with me?' (423)

This is how a geography shapes a persons' mind set. This kind of love for country is amazing. The identity of India is identity of its people.

India has seen several changes and some are marvelous changes and some are average. The most significant change is Hunger Eradication from India. Shortage of food was plenty. Hunger has haunted India for far too long. Today, perhaps for the first time in Independent India's history, hunger has been dealt with says De. With the development in India, self-sufficiency in this crucial area has given every Indian the confidence that a full belly provides. Today, every Indian knows food is available in plenty. Food shortages are manmade in India. It is the lack of a will to ensure food gets to the mouths that most need it. Due to the negligence of the government officers in charge of distributing grains most of the rice and pulses rot. Due to the laziness and negligence of government officers: foreigners discourse is derogatory. De recalls an accidental airport conversation between a foreigner and herself.

'So where are you from? When I replied, 'India', he looked startled. 'India?' he kept repeating disbelief written all over his florid face. Finally, he could not help himself and blurted, 'Oh my God! But...but...you do not look poor!' I laughed and felt sorry for the guy. I also wanted to sock him and say, 'Come over to my part of the world, buddy. There are thousands and thousands of people there who could buy you over...along with the airline you work for.'

(426-427)

How has such discourse spread? As speaker is triggered with this unusual question of a foreigner, there are various Indians who has to undergo such domination because of

the weak government policy. De in *Superstar India* unhesitatingly uncovers the uncanny identity of India. It is everyone's prerogative right to not feel humiliated and marginalized for being a citizen of a particular country. Let's hope India gets deserving respect from other nations too.

De, projects the gender biasness in her writing. She writes in every Indian home a child's parents are called by son's name even if they have elder daughter at home. Parents love being called by sons name as well, because a superstitious belief still inherits into their blood, especially amongst the family of poor class and middle class. De herself has monitored the transformation that takes place the moment a wife becomes a mother. Especially the mother of a son is instantly promoted and accorded a special position within her immediate community. She becomes a universal mother. This is how a woman's identity is build up after she gives birth to a son. Having only daughters is not the same thing because the first daughter may be tolerated but after first girl child, any other female additions are regarded as liabilities.

What is different in India is, the mother complex is not restricted to any one segment of India's society. There are pompous industrialists behaving like whimpering puppies in their mother's presence. One can see the reverence with which the sweepers in building's compound treat old ailing mothers who arrive from the village just to die in some ratty clinic in the slum nearby. But while they are in the son's care, it is so touching to see the devotion and effort that goes into looking after them. To understand Indian society more thoroughly it is imperative to understand Mother's unique position. De, herself says she melts and her resistance breaks down instantly when any stranger call her 'Ma' at a traffic signal. She suddenly feels like giving all the coins in her wallet and her eyes mist over. It is how India's emotion work.

De expresses her doubt of attachment towards ones mother after twenty years. She questions, 'Will the next generation be equally attached? Equally sensitive? Doubtful'. From the 'Ma' generation to the 'Me' generation – one tiny letter of the alphabet, but a sea change is taking place these days. De narrates her own family story of this sea change, she inscribes:

I was talking to both of my daughters as we sipped tea and watched a spectacular sunset. They asked me why I always muttered a prayer when the sun sank out of the sight. I answered simply that I thanked God for the gift of another day. I thought they would laugh. But both of them were serious. They asked with some concern, 'But why thank God for the gift of a day...there will be several more, even better ones...' will there, really? I teased. Arundhati said sharply, 'Oh please, Ma, stop being such a drama queen.' I changed the subject and we talked about other, less depressing things. (182)

De's mother and De also met over tea after De's marriage, but it was understood that she would serve the tea and De would sip, while chatting lightly about family matters. Her mother could never access her world as fully as De explores her daughters. The hierarchy was more structured and a certain level of formality indicated exactly where and how the line was drawn between informality and license. They respected their respective boundaries and rarely transgressed them. The equation they had before and what they have now is different.

At the last part of *Superstar India*, she talks about the typical endearing attributes of Indian people. The habit of spitting, scratching, belching and passing wind in public without the slightest self-consciousness. These are the national traits that need to be addressed and modified since nobody finds them anything but offensive. Perhaps the neo-Indians who are global globs, blending seamlessly into the

international circuit, will be more conscious of tailoring their social behavior to confirm to what's universally acceptable. The writer gives an account of such changes, she writes:

One can already see this change taking place, as young adults squirm, pull faces, and sharply correct parents and grandparents who burp contentedly after a heavy meal in a posh restaurant. My heart shrinks a little, as the older folks shrink, look shamefaced and humiliated. In their time and setting, an audible belch was considered a compliment to kitchen staff. Hosts waited to hear it at the end of the meal. Suddenly, age old habits are being rudely challenged by our sophisticated internationalists, leading to hurt and alienation. (433)

These habits may appear to be small, inconsequential issues. But in fact, it is the Indian belch that is the benchmark of the society in transition. The belch is a symbol of a passing era, when Indians could be themselves. When the belch goes, a lot more will go with it.

Hopefully new identities may be formed after this belching era.

Neo India belongs to the young. De, claims, 'It is rightfully their India and they should be intensely proud of it...cherish it. For it is a rare gift that has come to them with no strings attached. Like the best gifts always are. One only hopes and prays that this new generation of bright and beautiful Indians values its extraordinary legacy...enriches it. (430)

India is now an influential and zestful nation. One cannot grasp what India is exactly because it is now a super express train. It changes rapidly, constantly, taking new avatars as it deftly recolors itself, chameleon-like, to match shifting attitudes and global tilts. Indians are surprising. A man with tea stall can fix laptops, unimaginable skills are found here and there in India. Everybody is an expert. It is the very never-

say-die attitude that makes India incredible. 'Impossible is nothing' in India.

After years of both struggle and apathy, India has joyously rediscovered self which is writers self too. Its secret strength is its citizen. India has found its suppressed voice after the colonial phase. The diverse geography shapes the Indians identity. Indians are free to explore the unexplored wilderness after gaining there authority from British. Indians buried ambitions, identity and space are now taking the global shape. Most importantly, India has recognized its precious resource- its people. Global superpower is India which is now incredible and unstoppable. The structure, the very foundation of India's society, stands threatened, as India rapidly alters to compete in a world driven by materialism, consumerism and other 'isms'. The one 'ism' that has been India's staple- spiritualism- remains virtually intact. The challenge then, remains India's indomitable ability to succeed spectacularly despite the odds. Divisiveness, religious bigotry, terrorist threats, disintegration of family and galloping economic ambitions- these will all be there in India but De claims, Indians will deal with each, in turn, with endurance. To conclude, this research paper discovers the nexus between India's geography and identity of Indian people.

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