

Chapter : One

Predicament of Immigrants in *The Woman Warrior*

This research studies Maxine Hong Kingston, a Chinese American writer's text *The Woman Warrior*, through multicultural perspective. It explores how the author's cultural differences create identity problem for immigrants as the writer faced in new location in America. As a narrator, Kingston narrates her own story as well as others' from her family, Brave Orchid, her mother, her sister Moon Orchid, her dead aunt, No Name Woman. She also interconnects Chinese myths and American cultures within which she is bounded. She interlinks these own stories, family stories, and myths so as to reassert cultural identity. So, the study explores problems of identity and cultural challenges faced by immigrants in America.

In the novel, the first-generation Asian American, both Moon Orchid and Brave Orchid consciously keep the traditional culture and customs, however the second generation, Maxine initially has great desire to leave her Chinese family and hates the Chinese tradition, eager to assimilate into the mainstream American culture. But eventually, she realizes that she cannot discard the Chinese culture, which has been playing an important role in her life, especially, in her spiritual life.

In the twentieth century, American society has gone through the vast changes. These changes have obviously blurred the clear cut boundary between the cultures, ethnic groups, and races within American society. Since the mid-nineteenth century, many people from all over the world immigrated into America and also from China. Frank Chin notes, "Pushed out by these powerful forces at home as well as attracted by the discovery of Gold in California, and . . . by jobs that became available as the American West developed the Chinese first immigrated to America"(3). If we study the history, Asian immigrants have contributed a lot in building and sustaining America.

But America has always treated Asian immigrants as "other foreigner," because the influx of the various ethnic people into American society had been gradually disrupting the US Nation-state system. The state worried that "yellow peril" threatens to replace white immigrants (Lowe 5). So, America views Asians as culturally and racially "other" as per the immigration laws and policies. Thus, the racism, violence, exclusion and domination against Chinese immigrants rises from the idea that Asians are absolutely different from European immigrants who are treated as others.

The images of Asian Americans had not been changed a lot until the early 1970s when Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Frank Chin, and Shawn Hsu Wong presented a manifesto in the search of a different direction in the field of Asian-American literature, "through which they wanted to express the "genuine spirit of Asian American history and culture" (Kim 173). Affected by the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement in the United States, many Asian Americans realized how necessary is it to assert an ethnic identity and to challenge the old stereotypes. They attempted to express the predecessor's experiences of inequality and injustice through their points of view.

Chinese American literature first tried to represent the real definition and boundary of Asian American literature after 1960s. Through his works, Frank Chin proclaims that Asian Americans should recover their real identities, free from a racial stereotype that is fixed by American prejudice. However, his ideal of the recovery of real identity does not seem to be so optimistic. His definition of self-identity depends on the distinction between Chinese and Chinese American identity. Thus, he stands on the ethnicity of the origin of her mother, he thrust to break from the origin.

Unlike Chin, Maxine Hong Kingston thinks that ethnic origin seems to be dissolved and to be absorbed into their new American identity. Influenced by the

multicultural circumstances, the pursuit of identity is bound to follow the inevitable tendency. For the later Americans who are Asian, whose culture is rooted in Asia but have grown up in America, multiplicity of self-recognition should be there and the best way to survive with the new identity, just like what Maxine Hong Kingston expresses.

The Chinese-American literature emerged in the mid-nineteenth century when numerous Chinese laborers immigrated to the America to build railroads and work in mines on the west coast. But great development for them did not happen until the 1970s when a group of Chinese American writers worked their way into the mainstream of American literature. Among the writers, Maxine Hong Kingston has drawn much critical attention. Although she is not a productive writer, she plays vital role for the development of Chinese American literature.

Kingston was born in Stockton, California on 27, October of 1940. She was born as the first child to her parents, Tom Hong and Ying Lan Chew Hong, who had migrated from China. Her parents gave birth to six other siblings in the United States. She started her writing career at the age of nine. At the age of sixteen, she was honored with the first writing award --- a journalism contest at UC Berkeley. In 1976 her introductory book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, was published by Knopf, In 1980. She was entitled by "Living Treasure of Hawaii" by the Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, In 1997. She was honored with the 'National Humanities Medal' by President Bill Clinton and was introduced into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and received an Honorary Doctoral Degree. People believe it was she who guided the way for upcoming generations of Asian American writers to be accepted by the mainstream America.

The book became very popular. After its publication in 1976, it immediately won 'The National Book Critics Circle Award' for nonfiction and the American Book

Award. *The New York Times* praised the book by comparing with Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, saying "it is an investigation of soul Its sources are dream and memory, myth and desire. Its crises are crises of the heart in exile from roots that bind and terrorize it" (2). After two years, the autobiography also won the Ainsfield-Wolf Race Relations Award, and was regarded among the top most nonfictions of the decade. Former president Bill Clinton praised the book as "a book that changed forever the face and status of li, "Can Maxine Hong Kingston Speak?" (44). It was widely taught in American high schools and colleges. In the article, "The Poetics of Liminality and Misidentification: Winnifred Eaton's *Me*" and Maxine Hong Kingston's "*The Woman Warrior*," Katherine Hyunmi Lee, which expresses the viewpoint in the gender and racial perspective that comments on the detrimental effects of having to lead one's life through predefined race and gender roles. Kingston was marginalized from both the sides, Chinese for being a woman (gender) and by Americans for being Chinese (race), which becomes increasingly displaced within inside and outside the realm of her works (Lee27).

At the age of 36, Kingston captured national attention after publishing her debut book *The Woman Warrior*. Appealing equally to general and academic readers, it has become the most frequently assigned text in high schools, colleges, and universities by a living American author, according to the Modern language Association. The existence of *The Woman Warrior* on the literary world in 1976 created a massive revolution in Asian American literary and feminist studies. No sooner, the book was published, it surged wining several awards, and virtually making Kingston a celebrity as the undisputed sovereign of Asian American writing.

The book *The Woman Warrior* has received widespread critical responses from different critics. The first issue was whether this book should be categorized as fiction

or non-fiction. The book was awarded the 'National Book Critics Circle Award' for nonfiction, but there were disputes regarding its validity whether to call the book nonfiction or autobiography when it had such large amount of fictional elements in it. For example, Chin suspected the form of Kingston's writing and publicly declared his view in the essay. But King-kok Cheung has pointed out that "the failure to discern her shifting point of view and deliberate fusion of fictive and empirical incidents not only eclipses the author's artistry but obscures the very 'truth' her texts convey" (17). In fact, this book has recorded her personal life experiences, using fictional techniques. It should be a blend of fiction and autobiography. Now, most critics agree that this book is a semi-autobiography. "The unique value of her story recounts the living experience of a Chinese American woman in America. Instead of giving us dates and everyday details, (Bonetti 37), Kingston is more interested in telling us the dreams and her real stories of her life.

The Woman Warrior was also thought to be a book dealing with the relationship between mothers and daughters and also about the dispute between Chinese and American cultures. The book that reveals the ideas and values of Chinese traditional women, which are full of mysterious oriental images and legends. Because of this, some Chinese American writers such as Chin accused Kingston of simplifying and misrepresenting the traditional stories in order to make them appeal to an Anglo-American audience. Chin argues: "People who know nothing about China, about Chinese-Americans, the railroad, the opera and who don't want to know more than they know –know Maxine Hong Kingston an Hwang, and that's all they care to know" (27). For Chin, the only structure of autobiography is a matter of a suspicion because it has association with Chinese tradition of confession. His rationale is that "All autobiography demonstrates admission of guilt, submission of myself for judgment, for

approval by outsiders" (36). More explanation about this idea can be taken from Saul-ling Cynthia Wong's essay, "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour?" Such critics said that Kingston distorted the taste of the original version of Chinese folktales and accused her of lacking genuine knowledge of China, as she put many extraneous and seemingly irrelevant elements together and distorted the "original" truth to cater to western taste. Accepting all these comments, Kingston claimed, "We have to do more than record myth. The way I keep the old Chinese myths alive is by telling them in a new American way. I know that what I have to say is what a Chinese American person is thinking. I don't have to go out and make a survey" (Pfaff 18). The changes of the original story were necessary from her points of view.

She wanted to practice experimental truth rather than historical. She was not representing Chinese culture or tradition. She should not be blamed for not being loyal to Chinese culture and tradition. In this text, she has recorded the mental activities of being a Chinese American girl living in America. Besides, some critics attacked Kingston for writing about subjects other than the common racial experience of Chinese Americans. Kingston's choice of her own experience and that of her family as her subject in *The Woman Warrior* has been judged by critics as a betrayal of her community and her race. But Kingston has exclaimed, "I don't worry whether my voice is 'our' voice. Even though I have a peculiar voice, I'm able to speak to everyone from my stance of exile, as outsider, and then I can make my way in" (Hoy 50). Hoy finds that Kingston possesses exiled consciousness as she lives in different socio-political conditions.

Some scholars have argued that Kingston shows a strong feminist inclination in the book. As Benjamin Tong has pointed out, "it is a fashionably feminist work written with white acceptance in mind" (118). Truly, Kingston never denies the bitter truth that

she is a feminist, and also as King-kok Cheung claimed, "When Asian American women seek to expose anti-female prejudices in their own ethnic community, the men are likely to feel betrayed" (119). Zhang Ziqing, however, believes that Kingston is a great feminist who not only finds a voice for women who are deprived of the right of speech, but also makes women into the invincible warriors and heroes (96). So, according to Ziqing, Kingston is for making women stronger and empowered.

Research Question and Objective

In Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, she dramatizes the conflict between Chinese cultural roots and adopted American culture while portraying struggle of major characters for existence in new cultural milieu in postmodern time. For living, they have to face discrimination at every step of their life. The cultural conflict exposes the duality of an individual who is caught between two different cultures, which is explored through facing psychological fear of survival, and constructed reality offers a fictional articulation of a postmodern identity in postmodern period. So, this research tries to basically answer why are they facing existential crisis and problem of identity for an immigrant throughout the whole analysis.

This research attempts to respond to the quest of cultural identity in *The Woman Warrior* and how that cultural conflict is presented through several characters. So, the major objective of this research work is to show the problem of cultural identity in the novel. Hence, the focus of this research is the analysis cultural theory.

The study certainly makes contributions to the related study in both practical and theoretical way at a time when immigrants are found to be living in different culture. In a theoretical way, this study is expected for the contribution and consideration of literary studies, especially in understanding of psychology of literature on the main character of the text. In the practical form, this research also

carries out to provide benefits and is expected to be useful for further researchers, especially for the students of English department who would like to analyze the novel using the theory of existentialism. For the teachers, this research work is expected to provide contribution or be an additional material for literature courses.

Methodology

In this study, I begin my research by performing library research first by reading *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston's as a primary text. Next, to support my study in analytical section, I have searched reading materials through reference books and Internet and I have obtained more relevant information on the theory related to the approach that has been used and applied to the analysis of the thesis. I have used cultural criticism discussed by Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Homi K. Bhabha to understand the protagonists' dislocation and struggle for assimilation into different cultural life with the exposure of the protagonist. I have learnt about the protagonist's crisis, problem of identity, which leads the protagonist into cultural conflict with American culture.

The thesis is divided into four chapters: The first chapter is the introduction, which consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and methodology of research and the organization of the thesis. The second chapter is an analysis of cultural criticism. The third chapter presents the analysis of primary text of *The Woman Warrior*. The thesis ends with conclusion of the entire work.

Chapter Two

Multiculturalism and Identity

Culture is one of the most motivating and stimulating subjects of study in academic circles that includes anthropology, history, sociology, literature and politics. It is not born or created but evolves and grows. Therefore, the scope and relevance of culture is not clearly illustrated and defined in terms. It is often used as a synonym for 'the social' in nature. It is a way of living, a set of beliefs, behaviors and values that makes one particular way of life distinguishable from one another. The meaning of culture in social science is vague enough to include all human behaviors and social structures which are acquired in the process of socialization. In general non-innate characters are presumed to be different in multiple societies and the variation contributes to the establishment of multiple cultures.

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field. It is related with the shaping of culture and social institutions that play a vital role in it. It is believed that cultural studies appeared in Britain during late 1950s that spread internationally, particularly in the United States of America and elsewhere in the world. It was initially recognized by the 'Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies' at the University of Birmingham (founded 1964) and by the support of many scholars like Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams. Cultural studies later became a well-known field in many academic institutions, and then it had a great influence in multiple disciplines like sociology, anthropology, historiography, literary criticism, philosophy, and art criticism. Despite its good linkage with many faculties, the major concerns are the place of race or ethnicity, class, and gender for the production of cultural knowledge.

In literary criticism, cultural studies is concerned on how different cultural identities are expressed in literary works, especially the identities of marginalized

community and oppressed people on the basis of their gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, or ability. British cultural studies in communication studies is the most popular in the contemporary moment as other critical traditions like queer theory, feminism, ability and critical studies of race and ethnicity. All the critical theorists believe that the power structures are relevant to cultural identity that are as socially and politically significant as relevant to class of the society.

Scholars of cultural studies hold the opinion that it is done through the representations of identity categories are basically socially constructed. Thus, they accept how various cultural discourses – like educational, legal, media, or scientific discourses – lead identities and, ultimately, helps to create and implement sociopolitical hierarchies. Alternatively, many scholars of cultural studies may research on the elements of culture that conflict with the stereotypical, misleading, or in any way problematic to cultural representations. Hence, Cultural studies research the representations of multicultural debate as the locations where dominating power is related with traditional belief that are enforced with some spaces of potential resistance.

Multiculturalism can be understood as the process where cultural and ethnical divergence and variations can be accepted in socio-political and economic arrangements. Cultural forms of certain groups are established as worthy to recognize official which is protected and possessed in multicultural societies. Yet the multicultural societies are successful in accepting such divergence and variations.

Simply the term ‘multiculturalism’ describes a state of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity within the space of a specified place. It targets to maintain the variation in cultures or its identities after recognizing and celebrating the cultural harmony in the society to promote better social cohesion. Hence, multiculturalism

promotes in distinct cultural and religious groups, with no culture dominated in a society that extends equitable status.

Like other social theories, multiculturalism also has distinctive connotations and implications, both positive and negative. Multiculturalism is not a collection of homogeneous ideas. Rather it is an assortment of different thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Multicultural societies vary in their composition so, there are different versions of multiculturalism. Definitions of multiculturalism will illustrate this perspective. According to Turner Terence, "Multiculturalism is one manifestation of the postmodernist reaction to the delegitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the dominant culture in advanced capitalist countries" (419). Terence connects multicultural concept with the post modernist ideology that has dismantled the traditional views. In his view, multiculturalism has reduced values of the dominant culture that has marginalized other sub-cultures in a society. With the concept of multiculturalism, different cultures have received their identification/ existence. Today, in multicultural society, even the state cannot dominate a culture that is not prominent in a society. Terence's claim has significance in today's global society that is practicing multiculturalism.

Therefore, multiculturalism responds to the issue of cultural discrimination by privileging the goal of respecting minority culture. It means that there is no point of comparing one culture with another, because all cultures are equally rich and deserve equal value and respect. And there is no objective evidence for claiming that some cultures are 'inferior' or 'superior' for human development and social stability. Bhikhu Parekh remarks on the equivalent to that of culture:

Multiculturalism makes culture the central fact of moral and political life and is committed to some form of moral relativism. It holds that

individuals are culturally embedded and shaped, that their culture is the most important fact of their life, that cultures are self-contained wholes and neither permit nor can be evaluated by trans cultural and universal standards, that they are or should be presumed to be equal value, and that cultural practices need no further authority than the fact they are part of a group's culture (136).

Advocates of multiculturalism view that all cultures, especially minority cultures within a society, should be protected and made secure. The idea of preserving cultures is a way of recognizing minority culture and representing them as equals in the public arena.

Multiculturalism values dignity and status of the minority culture.

Multicultural thoughts and policies have the wide range of cultural diversity for the advocacy of equality in the society. People of such multi-ethnic and religious groups are equally addressed by the authorities as it is defined by the community of their belonging. The multiculturalism of India has its early history, unique geographic location and diverse demography. India's customs, languages, religions, music, dances, etc. differs from place to place in the country, and however it possesses the commonality. The Indian society has been multiethnic ,multicultural, multi religious, multiracial, and multilingual from a long historical period. The same condition applies in the context of Nepal too. Hence, multiculturalism has been defined as a salad bowl of culture.

However, diversity in America has also jostled multiple strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the greatest hurdle for countries like America is to conserve the multicultural tradition and to promote the spirit of multiculturalism or multicultural identity by bringing together those various communities into the mainstream society.

The term "identity" is defined as "the qualities and attitudes you have that make you feel you have your own character and are different from other people" (Longman706). From the above definition, we understand the alteration to "other people;" therefore, everyone has to know the difference between "our own kind" and "the others." In other words, identity is a description of relationship. As Cooley has pointed out in his "Looking-glass self" theory, "A self-idea ... seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgments of that appearance and some sort of self-feeling such as pride or fortification" (qtd in Riley 82). Therefore, only when we are placed among others can one tend to find out his identity. As Jan Aart Scholte points out in his article 'Globalization and Collective Identities', "the need for recognition – to define oneself (or who one wants to become) and to have that identity acknowledged by others – is a first-order preoccupation in social relations" (39-40). In multicultural setting, a member of a sub-culture has identity crises, therefore, these people struggled to establish a type of status in that setting. These members are always worried about their existence that has significance in extending social relations in the society.

Various kinds of identities like, class identity, familial identity, gender identity, sexual identity, national identity, social identity, cultural identity etc. exist in the same place. In this thesis, emphasis is placed on the analysis of Chinese-American women's pursuit of cultural and gender identity in *The Woman Warrior*, "Cultural identity is the identity of a cultural group or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a cultural group" (40). That is to say, cultural identity is a person's sense of belonging to a certain group who shares a common culture. The term cultural identity, however, tends to refer to one's nationality. However, it matters when a person was born at one country and lives at another country, that is to say, when one attempts

to integrate into more than one culture.

As post-colonialism inquires how dislocated people suffer from the problem of social assimilation, it helps us to examine how the characters in *The Woman Warrior* suffer from frustration and fragmentation in the novel. As a result of upheavals, they lose their self and suffer from displacement. The process of emigration to immigration is very strange because crossing the border as a refugee is the most dangerous and traumatic part. The situation let us on different situation of dislocated people with their experience as a refugee. The protagonists in the novel adopt themselves to a very different situation in unfamiliar places.

This situation shows the condition of the migrants as having the status of rootlessness. As described by Appadurai because of the separation and unstable interplay the role of media to promote the national politics and consumer fantasies, "ethnicity, once a genie contained in the bottle of some sort of locality (however large) has now become a global force, forever slipping in and through the cracks between state and borders" (qtd. in Szeman 290). Nadia and Saeed live in a polis "teetering on the abyss", filling up with refugees and prone to random violence (1). As they are portrayed as people on the move, Nadia and Saeed's hometown could be cosmopolitan city and they seem to assume multiple identities, which renders them dislocated and rootless.

The major theoretical framework is drawn from postcolonial criticism of Appadurai sees disjuncture in global culture as result of the flow of people, technology, finance, media and ideas across the globe. He mentions the speed, scale and volume of each and every flow that are now so huge to separate to become central to the politics of cosmopolitanism in the present world. In Appadurai's view, an "uncertain landscape has been created in and through these junctures" (226). So, the

cultural disjunctive processes in the globalized world go in different directions and cause ruptures, tensions or conflicts.

Similarly, Bhabha defends that mixed results from different forms of old as well as new colonization that leads to cultural exchange and intercultural acceptance. In order to exercise colonial power to generate the English subjects, "[t]he trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different--a mutation, a hybrid" (111). Culture as a way of life or the historically transmitted patterns of meanings codified in symbol is vast in itself. The elements of culture such as: family relationship, marriage, love affairs, sexual means, attitude towards religion, attitude towards having children or attitudes, lifestyle and living standards are the main dominating elements. Homi Bhabha argues that culture acts as means of social survival for those who have undergone subjugation, domination, diaspora and displacement as it helps provide the foreigner as everyday an 'aura' of selfhood to create a symbolic textuality and a promise of pleasure. So, Bhabha observes that culture is a "strategy of survival" (48) amidst dominant and powerful cultures as they possess the power to influence or dominate the other. This 'strategy of survival' helps to keep one alive and one's identity intact. Similarly, Mathew Arnold regards culture as powerful means of differentiation. He says that culture is the "main agency of powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond too" (qtd in Said 9). Thus, culture helps people of different community to keep people' separate identity in diaspora thereby helping them to live in a harmonious way.

Immigration and Diaspora

Due to multiple reasons like economic, social, cultural, academic and climatic condition, people are forced to flee their home as immigrants. The concept of diaspora initially started from emigrants to leave their native land but afterwards it

developed into the various form of extensive discourses like post colonialism, nationalism, hybridity and multiculturalism. The concept is derived from the scattered form of experiences of the ancient Jewish people who were forced to flee from all the European countries to their homeland Israel. At present the context of immigration and diaspora has merged into the many political theories. Sudhir Kumar, an Indian critic, expresses his idea of diasporic condition and experience in the following way:

The diasporic consciousness, as some critic ever, presupposed the predominance of such feelings as alienation, dispersal, longing for the ancestral homeland, a double identification with the original homeland and the adopted country, identity crisis, remembering myths related to the homeland, protest against discrimination of all sorts in a new land etc. the metaphor of imaginary homelands does cum up the conditions of the diasporic communities well (70).

Diasporic writing mainly focuses on problems and traumas of people who switch themselves from their native land.

As immigrants who has tried themselves to settle in the very different lands do not get things in common and easy because they have reached out to be treated as an alien and the cultural, religious and linguistic variation is one factor for them to settle. Their feeling of loss in every sense is sensible because they face so hard to reach the destine country. Thus, the consequences of their experience that basically talks about the stories of the refuge, within their status of dislocation. The writings of the migrated writers are the lived experiences of their origin idea of origin culture, which are used in identifying them. The migrated writers such as Hamid in the case of present study get their self-identity through writing.

Chapter Three

Cultural Challenges and Problems of Identity

Through the fictional work *The Woman Warrior* Kingston, as a Chinese American writer, describes the plight of Chinese immigrants and her own plight in America. This researcher interprets silence and depicts Chinese immigrants' hard work and tough working conditions in the US, thereby revealing the socio-economic problems, ethical dilemmas, and the legal dominance which they are still facing regardless of much discussed globalization process and borderless world.

As they face problems of identity in America, the immigrants first turned to their own roots to counter host culture. In order to find their self in the host country, the first-generation Chinese immigrants tended to conform to Chinese traditions after they settled in America. They kept their Chinese life style and always dreamed of going back to China after they had accumulated enough money on this Promised Land. American culture thus became something they were not willing to accept.

The home country remains the ultimate destination when problems emerge in the new place. The last and the most significant reason is that Chinese immigrants encountered all kinds of racism in America. They were discriminated just because of their difference in skin color and appearance. According to the Chinese Exclusion Law passed in 1882, Chinese could neither obtain land in America, nor could they get American citizenship (Kim 96). When discussing the limitation on Chinese immigration, a Chinese laundryman ever mentioned, "We Chinese are not even allowed to become citizens. If the migrants were allowed that might be a different story. In that case, I think many of us Chinese would not think so much of going back home" (Kim 98). Thus, Chinese immigrants were not allowed to turn themselves into Americans, their only alternative was to live there as temporary immigrants.

Kingston captures this pattern of cultural identity pursuit by the early Chinese immigrants through her mother Brave Orchid. Brave Orchid has a strong inclination to preserve Chinese culture, which is powerfully portrayed in her "telling stories to her children" (8). At the very beginning of *The Woman Warrior*, the mother recites her daughter the story of "No Name Woman," who became pregnant during the absence of her. The similar kind of argument can also be found in Qin Hongli's essay, "From Singular Preservation to Bidirectional Amalgamation: on the Cultural Identity Pursuit in *The Woman Warrior*," which says:

The mother in the book cannot understand English. ... She would like to preserve her love for China and her relatives as well as her admiration for Chinese culture through her story-telling to her children. "husband, and was raided by the villagers in her bedroom on the day when she was to give birth to her illegitimate child. Being a great disgrace to the family, she was cursed severely, "Aiaa, we're going to die. Death is coming. Death is coming. Look what you've done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! Ghost! You've never been born. (9)

Here, by telling Chinese stories to the children in America, Kingston tries to keep herself and her family intact with Chinese culture.

Committing adultery may not be as serious crime in America as it is in China. No-name aunt's adultery had undoubtedly brought a deadly shame to her parents' family. In order to clean the family's name, the aunt must be punished severely according to Chinese culture. No-name aunt must die for the honor of the family. That is the only way for other members of the family to live on and to face their neighbors. Even death is not enough for her punishment. In order to get rid of this adulterous woman completely, the family has removed her name from the family record, and no

one is allowed to mention her name in the house. But Brave Orchid has broken this rule because she is using the story not only to impart to her daughter this piece of knowledge about Chinese culture which places high of the fame of family rather than individual needs, but also to warn her not to bring shame to the family: "Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you have never been born. The villagers are watchful" (5). "The villagers" here represent the Chinese immigrants residing in America. This shows that even in America, traditional Chinese values prevail among Chinese immigrants. Any violation of the traditional rule on the part of Chinese American children may possibly bring humiliation to the family. This is the example countering American culture in America.

Furthermore, mother warns her daughter not to tell anyone of this aunt, because the mentioning of her name will do her father mysterious harm. She tells her daughter that they have "settled among immigrants who had also been their neighbors in the ancestral land", and her family "needed to clean their name, and a wrong word would incite the kins people even here" (16). Thus, by adhering to traditional culture in new surroundings, immigrants struggle for living. Brave Orchid tells such stories to the children to make sure that her children will grow up as Chinese citizens. In this way, she keeps her Chinese customary practically alive in their new land. Kingston writes,

Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told stories that ran like this one, a story to grow up on. She tested our strength to establish realities. Those in the emigrant generations who could not reassert brute survival died young and far from home. Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fit in solid America (5).

In addition to preserving Chinese tradition by telling stories, Brave Orchid's behavior itself reveals that she is completely traditionalist. She feels it her responsibility to protect her family and to promote her traditions against the dominating culture of Westernized "ghosts" in America, a foreign land, as a traditional Chinese woman. She cooks Chinese food, keeps the family secrets, tells the cautionary stories, and keeps traditional Chinese cultural ritual intact even if her children dislike them. Realizing the importance of preservation of their Chinese culture including history of the family, Brave Orchid tries to handover to the children the essence of Chinese culture. Even though there are oppression and inequality for women within the traditional Chinese family and society, the Chinese mother still attempts to instill the knowledge and behaviors that are assumed as ideally feminist in traditional Chinese culture in the young daughters. That is why she tells her daughters the tale of the "No Name Woman."

Brave Orchid is not willing to give up her Chinese identity. It is because she never forgets her "home." Kingston states in *The Woman Warrior*, "whenever my parents said 'home', they suspended America" (99). Her parents' home is definitely China, and they never give up hope of returning to China. However, this longing to go back home actually becomes but a habit. In other words, it is no longer an urgent need from the bottom of heart. After living in America for so many years, Brave Orchid subconsciously began to adopt American culture. That's why when she knew she couldn't return to China, she was not as frustrated as the readers have expected. She tells her daughter:

"We're not going back to China for sure now."...

"We got a letter from the villagers yesterday. They asked if it was all right with us that they took over the land. The last uncles have been

killed so your father is the only person left to say it is all right, you see. He has written saying they can have it. So. We have no more China to go home to (106).

The news should have been a great disappointment to Brave Orchid, who has always dreamed of going back to China someday, but her mind is changing unconsciously:

I don't want go back anyway," she said, "I've gotten used to eating... You should see the ones I meet in the field. They bring back sacks under their clothes to steal grapes and tomatoes from the growers. They come with trucks on Sundays. And they are killing each other in San Francisco. (73) They are Chinese, and Chinese are mischievous. No, I'm too old to keep up with them (74).

Here, Brave Orchid is using "they" to show she is different from other Chinese people in America. She no longer identifies herself as Chinese as she tends to adopt American way of life to exist in new surroundings.

Such a change can also be found in Brave Orchid's dressing. "She recently took to wearing shawls and granny glasses, American fashion" (100). Dreaming of going back to China gradually becomes a ritual which has more practical power on her life, and in fact, she begins to accept American life style. To regulate her identity as a Chinese woman, she sticks to Chinese traditions. Meanwhile, she has no choice but to accept American culture, which is the only way to establish immigrants' cultural identity. This is the plight of Chinese Diaspora in America.

Unlike first generation immigrants, the second-generation immigrants follow another pattern to form their identity in the new cultural surroundings in America. Chinese Americans internalize white superiority, and thus feel themselves to be inferior to American citizens. What's worse, the internalized racism in turn results in intra-

racism – discrimination among Chinese Americans against those with more Chinese characteristics. The American-born Chinese American's critical attitude toward their immigrant parents is typical.

Secondly, the relationship between Chinese Americans and the American mainstream culture can be understood in terms of colonial relationship. Education in American schools makes many second-generation Chinese Americans become "colonial subjects" (12). In American schools, American culture and values are inculcated. Colonial ideology naturally becomes a strong force among Chinese Americans. Colonial subjects are taught to believe in American superiority and, therefore, in their own inferiority. Hence it is difficult for these colonial subjects to rebel against colonial subjugation. As a result, many Chinese Americans youngsters have tried to imitate the colonizers as much as possible in dress, speech, behavior and lifestyle. They often learn to identify themselves with white Americans and to look down upon their parents' native country and culture. They see their gone history as a source of shame, something to be hidden. In order to appear completely Euro-American they reject or deny everything Chinese, even though their Chinese features cannot be changed. Homi K. Bhabha refers to such a phenomenon as "mimicry," which constitutes the first stage of their identity seeking – trying to be one hundred percent Americans, but not quite.

Maxine the narrator as well as protagonist is a representative figure in this sense. As she was born in a Chinese family, it is not hard to imagine that she tries to maintain Chinese tradition. In Chapter of "White Tigers" in *The Woman Warrior*, we find a remarkable examples. When the girl encounters the old couple in the mountains, they have a conversation as follows:

"Have you eaten rice today, little girl?" they greeted me.

"Yes, I have." I said out of politeness. "Thank you."

("No, I haven't." I would have said in real life, mad at the Chinese for lying so much. "I'm starved. Do you have any cookies? I like chocolate chip. (12)

The idea about the project of domesticating and civilizing indigenous populations and mimicry are founded on theory of Homi. K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory.

The girl could not understand why Chinese people always wondered if they had eaten, but she unconsciously followed this odd Chinese custom and told a "lie." Thinking back on the life of the second-generation immigrants, it is easy to understand their behavior. Born Chinese, and brought up in Chinatown, they cannot completely get rid of the influence of Chinese culture. So, in trying to reside in America adopting their tradition and culture come in between, which makes them feel a sense of cultural crisis.

Maxine's silence at the early stages of her life is another example. Although born in America, she did not feel like an American at all. "During the first silent year I spoke to no one at school, did not ask before going to the lavatory and flunked kindergarten"(165). She didn't like her American school, where she didn't respond frankly for three years. She was miserable at school and her black paintings reflected her sadness, despair, and fears. She felt better in a Chinese school that she attended after her regular school.

The Chinese school is crowded with Chinese language, screams, and laughing. Obviously, Maxine, in her early years, identifies herself as Chinese and isolates herself from Americans. Although greatly influenced by Chinese traditions, the second-generation Chinese Americans inevitably accept a lot of American culture and when facing conflicts caused by the two different cultures, they are more willing to be on the

side of American culture. Maxine talks to herself: "To make my waking life American-normal, I turn on the lights before anything untoward makes an appearance. I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories. Before we can leave our parents, they stuff our heads like the suitcases which they jam-pack with home-made underwear" (87). Apparently, Maxine was embarrassed by the "homemade underwear" packed into her suitcase, although she realized the determined parental love expressed in that undesirable action. Such embarrassment is a symptom of intra-racial racism prevalent among successor of first Chinese generation to Chinese-Americans.

The second generation of Chinese-Americans is believed that the old generation's customs and practices are inscrutable and superstitious. In the concluding chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," the episode about "reparation candy" tells the reader clearly this belief. The local druggist mistakenly sent some medicine to the narrator's house, which means a sign of misfortune for traditional Chinese people. Following Chinese tradition, the mother asked young Maxine to demand some "reparation candy" from him. Maxine knew that the drug addict would never be capable of think of her parents' anger about medicine being unknowingly delivered to their home. She felt so embarrassed that she couldn't speak clearly to the druggist.

Maxine looks frustrated with her belonging and is eager to stay outside of her world. In order to get out of the hating range, she has no choice but to leave the immigrant community. "When I'm away from here, I don't get sick. I can breathe" (108). However, when she begins her ideal life in the United States, she feels a sense of pity because the Chinese representation of imaginative and mythical habits of thought have been lost. China is a land full of richness and fertility of myths; whereas, American rationalism that provides justification for an eclipse of the moon scientifically

saying instead the "frog swallowing the moon" (169). As she grows up in America, Maxine loses the ability to see spirits. She writes in the last chapter, "Now colors are gentler and fewer; smells are antiseptic. Now when I peek in the basement window" (13). Elaine H. Kim has said in his article, "Chinatown Cowboys and Warrior Women:" "The Chinese American girl must leave the immigrant community 'to get out of hating range,' but it is from this vibrant community, that she has drawn the sustenance of her spirit. It is not the colorless world she seeks refuge in that has taught her to see who the 'enemies' are." King-kok, Cheung has also pointed out in his essay "Provocative Silence: The Woman Warrior and China Men", "these stories told by her mother have become very much a part of the narrator's self, thanks to her mother's influence. "villagers say they see a girl dancing like a bottle imp, I can no longer see a spirit in a skirt made of light, but a voiceless girl dancing when she thought no one was looking" (205).

In the past she was quite exasperated by Chinese secrecy, but now she comes to realize the charm of this kind of secrecy that American directness does not possess. She comes to be aware that China is the land of permanent dreams of impossible stories that are expressed metaphorically and paradoxically in their own Chinese language. In America, "Things follow in lines at school. They take stories and teach us to turn them into essays" (201). Now Maxine, as a mature adult, has the desire to associate with her Chinese heritage and her mother. In the space created from distinct and contrasting view points, Maxine continues to "sort out what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living" (205). Having left home and seen the world differently, she might have possibility of returning into the uncertain reality and myths of her life and her mother's. She can make them as raw materials and find innovative inspiration without absence of her increasing sense of an

isolated self in her divided community in which she is brought up. The mature narrator examines a way to return to Chinese culture. She even expresses a longing to be welcome back by the folk of the community through her art:

The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our backs . . . And I have so many words --- 'chink' words and 'gook' words too--- that they do not fit on my skin. (53)

Kingston's writing suggests that it is difficult to forge one's identity in new surroundings. Therefore, she has found her special way to forge her identity. She has left Chinatown; however, she is attached with her own ethnic community. The cyclic movement in the form of departure and return is the warmest welcoming possibility for Chinese-Americans. Finally, Maxine decides to confirm the identity that lies between the two countries, neither belonging to Chinese nor white Americans, but it is different from Chinese American, which makes their life torn between two cultures. This situation exposes the problems of identity and cultural challenges faced by immigrants in America.

In the novel, the final story deals with another Chinese legend also the second-century Chinese woman poet Ts'ai Yen who is captured by the barbarians. Kingston subverts its original moral that she reveals with the stories about the "No Name Woman" and the women warrior. "The Chinese version highlights her eventual return to the Han people. Kingston's version, by contrast, emphasizes the interethnic harmony" (Cheung, 94). Instead, we see a baffled Ts'ai Yen residing among the noble barbarians, receiving gifts from the savages' chieftain after making her pregnant he, riding on his horse, charges into villages. One day, she is also clicked by the music of

barbarian reed pipes filling the upset mind that she could not help but to sing.

The poet is no longer lonely who is in exile; this passage creates a mythic vision, crossing boundaries and transcending differences, towards happiness and wholeness. The acceptance of human diversity, mutual respect, and communal sharing in several field is suggested by the final juxtaposition. The book begins with mother's story about "No Name Woman," but ends with Maxine's story of Ts'ai Yen. The daughter gets her mother's power and follows mother's way to speak out their own special feeling and life. Both, mother and daughter are immigrants who share both the common culture that is Chinese-American culture. The final reconciliation tells us that it is significant for Chinese Americans to adjust to the new world without being swallowed up by it when modern life seems so divisive and problematic.

The immigrants of two different generations have something in common: they struggle to find their self by combining Chinese with American culture. This is how Chinese Americans to form their cultural identity. The first-generation immigrants would rather keep their Chinese traditions because they always think they are Chinese and dream of returning to China. They live in a foreign country whose culture is different from their own; therefore, they do not feel belonging to this place. But things change when they find they have to live in this country permanently. They feel they have no "home" to go back, and the feeling of having no root forces them to find a new way to establish their self, so they begin to adapt to and accept American culture. Meanwhile, it is impossible for them to desert their Chinese tradition totally. For short period of time, the first-generation immigrants have to identify themselves as Chinese Americans if they want to have a clear identity and a feeling of belongingness.

However, for the second-generation immigrants, or maybe all Chinese American people, the formation of Chinese American cultural identity seems much

harder than their parents. In their daily life outside Chinatown, especially in interaction with their white classmates, Chinese American youngsters are constantly reminded of their status as outsiders. They are constantly haunted by the feeling that they are stereotyped and looked down upon. Even to those American-born Chinese Americans whose families have lived for many generations in the United States, they are frequently to feel foreign and alien. Naturally, sense of shame and anger will grow inside them. Such self-hatred may discourage them in their desire to fit into the mainstream society. And some may take use of the anger as a tool to discard their past.

In modern world, the immigrants may begin to realize the impossibility of getting rid of their background in the hope of belonging to the white American culture is only a fantasy. They find that they must go back to their Chinese roots and make an effort to establish a connection with their original Chinese culture and to feel proud of such back ground, if they want to be known and accepted in a multicultural environment. However, racism is still the toughest hindrance to their attempt in forging the new identity. In spite of all that, Chinese Americans have traced back to their origin, their roots to challenge and resist the white dominance in American society. They cherish the glorious part of their ethnic culture and the great contributions their forefathers have made to the development of America. By rejecting the American prevailing ideology which defines them as inferior, Chinese Americans have achieved a cultural identity as part of Chinese and feel proud of it through the revisit of their Chinese American history and their Chinese roots.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to totally go back to the Chinese traditions used to be held by their ancestors while living in new places. As Jill Krause has noted in her article "Gendered Identities in International Relations," our perception of both individual and social identity is increasingly affected by a "whole range of factors

specific to the immediate social and cultural context in which we carry out our day to day activities" (100). So, Chinese Americans find themselves entangled into a hybrid creature. They realize themselves a Chinese-Americans identity, who are always ready to face the multiple challenges that can appear as a conflicting idea. This cultural hybrid has become an assimilated culture in a world in an extreme increasing level. This makes immigrants' lives problematic in new surroundings. Thus, this chapter explores the problems of identity and cultural challenges faced by Chinese American immigrants in America.

Chapter Four

Search for Cultural Roots and Self-Identity

This research explores the challenges of bringing up and living of a first generation Chinese Americans in the United States through Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* as the book expresses feelings of displacement and alienation from both societies. The writer and narrator Kingston is in dilemma between two diverged cultures with multiple values without clinging to either. The writer is unable to transform completely as an American because she attends the Chinese school and spends most of her time with her mother sharing different ideas including values and norms related to Chinese culture. Also, she isn't completely Chinese native either. Like many other Chinese immigrant children, Kingston has to switch her identity from two completely opposing worlds that is totally inconvenient to her. She has to face the ascetic customs of her Chinese culture at home on the one hand, on the other hand, she has to assimilate into more liberal way of American life. In this way, Chinese-Americans must be in regular quest of their identity in order to find themselves and their place in society.

The analysis of *The Woman Warrior* reveals the truth about the Chinese immigrant settlers those who gave birth to their children in America. It is really challenging/ tough to cope with the variation in culture of two opposite poles and accepting the traditions of the emigrants with the relative freedom of life in America. As an immigrant it is always a hard thing to play a role of double identity of Chinese as well as American. Kingston feels self-distinct from her American classmates as she does from her own relatives.

In *The Woman Warrior* the Chinese immigrants' hardship is explored through the conflict between first generation of immigrants and the born second generation.

First-generation immigrants' attitude changes from total acceptance of Chinese culture and rejection of American culture to combination of Chinese and American culture. The other pattern is followed by the second-generation immigrants whose attitude changes from total acceptance of American culture and rejection of Chinese culture to combination of the two cultures. Through their life experience, both generations of immigrants come to realize that a conciliation of the two cultures is the ultimate way to establish Chinese Americans' cultural identity. In other words, multiplicity of self is the destination of cultural identity pursuit.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston deploys memory narratives and Chinese myths as a screen to project her identification as a second-generation Chinese diasporic woman. She is trying to find her real identity. She attempts to find herself as a lady in a man's world, as a Chinese in America. In most of her writings, we can observe her enthusiasm to find her real identity as *The Woman Warrior* as well. We can also understand the rebellious convention as she opts to break the restrictions bounded by the society and culture, also her desire to make a utopian world where everyone is treated equally regardless of variation in multiple dimensions of class, race, gender and culture.

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