

I. Selected Writers and Their Concern With Diaspora

This research project hovers around the issue of cultural mobility, diaspora and hybridity in the novels: *An American Brat* and *Desirable Daughters* by Bapsi Sidhwa and Bharati Mukharjee respectively. In Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat* the central character Feroza migrates to the United States of America from India to celebrate her leisure holidays. Her parents Zareen Ginwalla and Cyrus Ginwalla think that travel will broaden the mind of a child seeing new culture and place. The parents have to think a lot for the approaching days of their daughter in USA. Similarly, in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* Tara, Padma, and Parvati migrate to the United States of America as Indian immigrants. The cultural variations make Tara to forget her responsibility and leave her husband and child there. She lost in western culture forgetting her own culture. The researcher regards this migration with joys and sufferings as a diasporic experience. Feroza, Tara, Padma and Parvati think education leadsthem to gain freedom but the cultural inaptness makes them forget their native experience that they learnt in Indian culture.

In *An American Brat*, Feroza's connections to her cultural belongings become changed, as she becomes familiar with the new American culture. In the same way, in *Desirable Daughters*, the cultural affinity in Indian root also changed. These characters are representatives of other people who migrate to another country in search of freedom, wealth, education and security. However, their happiness does not remain always the same. The changed culture does not become befriend to them as they become more attached culturally in the United States of America. Despite their happiness, they go on remembering their original culture. Such type of memorization to their cultural root is a lost in the midst of immigrants in the United States of America. Feroza who grows in her ancient Parsee culture, now changes and adopts

desires of self-independence as others do in the cultural adaptation. Indeed, in *Desirable Daughters* Tara, though she is a girl, dares to reject her custom like Sari and starts to adopt T-Shirt and Pant, and her easiness towards divorce is due to the cultural flexibility. Ultimately, they found themselves in the whirl of in-betweens. The material satisfaction does not satisfy their happiness and they ruin in lost memory, which the researcher studies as the feature of Diaspora.

Desirable Daughters and *An American Brat* revolve around the struggle the female protagonists in each text undergo to become American or to be accepted as an American and acknowledging their ethnic loyalties. Tara, in *Desirable Daughters*, is born in the United States of America, her father is Indian and her mother is American, yet wants to define herself as Indian and American rather than only American or only Indian. Her counterpart in *An American Brat*, Feroza, is sent by her parents in Pakistan to visit the U.S. Feroza wants to perceive herself as Parsee and Pakistani as well as American. These desired terms of self-definition are contradistinctive to the definition of Americanism founded on discarding group belongings or ethnic identifications.

However, both characters do not see a contradiction between adopting ideals of individualism and personal freedom on the one hand and belonging to their ethnic/religious groups on the other. Slavoj Žižek in his text “Transubstantiation in Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism” holds that “transubstantiation is a process by means of which the tension between an individual’s primary particular ethnic identity and his/her universal identity as a member of a Nation-State is surpassed” (41). Building on the tension that Žižek describe as incomplete process of shifting from the particular ethnic identity to the universal identity as a member of a Nation-State. American is also a cumulative

identity that is formed by constantly deferring singular identification; hence challenges are both ethnic self-enclosures and essentialist national belongings. The non-national subject's affiliations and identifications are beyond geographical boundaries of nation-state, and are constructed and severed situationally. This subject's sense of belonging is formed at the disjuncture between the ideal of individualism and ethnic/religious group belongings. This disjuncture creates site of ambivalence in which I position the struggles of both Tara in *Desirable Daughters* and Feroza in *An American Brat* with notion of choice and individualism.

Ideals of individualism and freedom of choice are central to American liberalism that underwrites the image of an exceptional America. Bonnie Honig in *Democracy and the Foreigner* points out the problematic status of the immigrant in the exceptionalist account of American democracy, as both re-invigorating American exceptionalism, and also posing a threat to its core values of choice, individualism is just an economy, and sense of community. Along the same lines, Honig underlines the nation's ambivalence towards immigrants: while the discourse of exceptionalism valorizes America as a nation of immigrants, the immigrants are perceived as the other to be controlled and normalized.

Diaspora is a voluntarily or forcible movement of people from one geographical location to another location. When people move from one geographical location to another in search for opportunity, in such a condition cultural variation becomes difficult to adjust. Though a person becomes happy temporarily the cultural compensation is unbearable. The gained culture keeps her/him in the position of either rejection or assimilation to the original or acquired culture. In such a condition the person's hybrid identity becomes threat. Diaspora is "the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland" (Rushdie 1).

When an individual leaves his/her home country and migrates to another country in search of more opportunities loses the identity as scattered one and gains the identity of another culture, this condition is called Diaspora.

Stuart Hall, in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", establishes a discussion of Caribbean and "Third Cinema", and defines Diaspora in terms of cultural identity, cultural practice and cultural production. In this regard, Diaspora is the formation of identity with addition and losing of original identity. Indeed Stuart Hall further asserts that:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history culture and power. (225)

In such a condition, the identity of a person becomes hybridized. The gaining of new cultural practice makes the identity dual and keeps the immigrants in the state of in-between-ness. In the state of hegemonic construction of knowledge, there seems cultural confrontation in the presentia and absentia of culture.

Feroza, Tara, Padma and Parvati migrate to their dreamland that may not become as they imagined. The circumstances and the time do not always in the favor of the immigrant. The characters take divorce an easy medium to get rid from unhappiness and to search more gratification which the researcher studies as the feature of Diasporic experience. The cultural difference makes the character feel lost

which is irrevocable. They go on memorizing their past joyful days despite their material happiness that the researcher regards as the problem due to cultural variations. Why culture is superior to the luxurious life? Why people do not become happy in the early imagined and gained material satisfaction? Why people go on memorizing the lost belongingness? Why the immigrants become failure after adapting the new culture? Why they do not become successful culturally in the new land? Change in sexual behavior and loss of identity become the issue of research.

Feroza, Tara , Padma and Parvati cannot become happy and successful in the new migrated land. Though the means of migration is voluntarily, there always remains the unbridgeable gap between the two cultures. In the recent days of migration, an individual may celebrate the adopted culture but the remained gap always makes her/him sufferer and there creates nostalgic memorization to the original root culture. Anyone cannot be out of the original culture. Such a gap between the two cultures always creates lack to an individual and the the acquired culture becomes second in front of the past memories. Due to the unassimilated gap between cultural differences, the diasporic people remain in the state of inbetweenness.

Desirable Daughters and *An American Brat* have received views from different scholars. Purnima Gupta in "Diasporic Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*" asserts that the protagonist of the novel Tara assures to face the challenges in the migrated land San Francisco. But the days in the migrated land do not go according to the expectations. Gupta asserts that:

Divorce leads to solitariness and solitariness causes wantonness. In an attempt to satisfy her feminist urges-unlimited liberty, sexual adventure with a Hungarian lover and career building-she loses her

family, that is, husband and son. She does not realize her loss until a mysterious fellow Chris Dey enters her life and links her with her past. By introducing Chris, Bharati Mukherjee explores the psyche of Tara and her diasporic feelings. Chris compels her to search her cultural identity, to make self assessment and to reexamine her past life. (2)

In the targeted culture divorce is flexible there. Due to the cultural assimilation the main character, accepts the divorce rejecting her husband and child there. Ultimately, her realization to the native culture pushes her to feel the loss and dwells in loss and memory which she cannot revive. From this view, strictness in marital bondage and sexual purity crosses its boundary in order to survive in the targeted land, which threatens the identity of the person too.

Another critic Ira Pandey in *Desirable Daughters*, sees loss of original cultural norms. Migration becomes a turning point for the loss of person's feeling and attitude to adjust her in the new land. Pandey in "Loosing Track," asserts "That, sadly, is all it is. All those subtle subplots and nuances that make such novel richly textured palimpsest of many other lives introduced early on and then abandoned as excess baggage somewhere along the way" (2). Pandey asserts that the journey to the United States of America, was the palimpsest for immigrants. The immigrants cannot show their suffering but that is rooted in memory in the form of palimpsest. Such kind of suffering is manifested in the form of memorization. Here, palimpsest refers to the loss of original cultural identity.

Similarly, another scholar, Ashish Kumar Gupta, in the article, "Race, Multiculturalism and Immigrant Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*", shows the position of a person in binary countries. The person's thought and identity vary according to changed territory. This happens because a person

wants to live in double identity to adjust according to the situation. Ashish Gupta asserts that:

Life in India is webbed with lots of duties– social, political, economical, religious and personal. Man is nothing but a puppet in the hands of relationships. The personal world is lost in the fathomless realm of customary world. The glimpse of complex life reflects in Tara’s words: “When I speak of this [birthplace, *desh* and home] to my American friends– the iron-clad identifiers of region, language, caste, and subcaste– they call me “overdetermined” and of course they are right. When I tell them they should be thankful for their identity crises and feelings of alienation” (Desirable, 33). ... Mukherjee evinces a somewhat more positive view than Naipaul of immigrant life in the United States. (2)

These lines explore the difference in social, political and cultural difference in the two countries. Tara shows her suffering and struggle that leads to identity crisis and adaptation of dual culture, which the researcher studies as the diasporic experience.

Another scholar A.M. JamilaKani in the essay "Migratory Experiences in BapsiSidhwa’s Novels:*An American Brat and Ice-Candy-Man*" shows the diasporic experience in her novels.

The story line of *An American Brat* is simple and lucid. The novel unfolds the mental, psychological, social and cultural conflicts that the shy conservative Pakistani girl Feroza confronts during the process of her migration to America. It describes how she gets uprooted from her ‘mother culture’ and is forcibly transplanted in the alien American culture. Feroza is presented as a timid girl at the beginning of the novel

and as the narration progresses; Feroza's movement to America shapes her into a bold and confident woman. Later on, she begins to live her life independently. (2)

These remark by the scholar shows the condition of immigrants, who migrated to another country in search of new opportunities. It equally takes social and cultural variation of the immigrant in terms of chastity and purity which the society needs in women. The scholar further asserts that, "She acts talks and dresses like an American girl. She learns to drive, drink, dance and use the American slang. The shy and conservative Feroza turns into a confident and self-assertive girl" (5). It also shows how a person shifts her/his identity along with the change in geography. Such movements from one location to another in search of opportunities have cultural significance too. All these critics seem as if they are raising socio- political issues but no one of them is talking about the issue of diaspora state forward.

The term *diaspora* is derived from the Greek verb *diaspieroin* which *Speirom* means "I scatter" or "I spread about" and *diameans* "between, through, across". So *Diaspiero* means "I scatter between or across". Diasporic consciousness means awareness of being scattered. Classical philosophers and Hellenist writers used it in the contemporary period but it had a negative connotation. Epicurus, as reported by Plutarch, used 'diaspora' in the context of his philosophical treatises to refer to processes of dispersion and decomposition, dissolution into various parts (e.g. atoms) without any further relation to each other. 'Diaspora' had an adverse, devastating meaning and was not used to imply a geographical place or sociological group at that time. After the translation of the *Hebrew Bible* into Greek, the term diaspora began to develop from its original sense. The term diaspora is reviewed with its development

in detail by the scholar Stephane Dufoix in his book *Diasporas* (2008). He very strongly states that the modern use of the term diaspora:

. . . stems from its appearance and as a neologism in the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek by the legendary seventy scholars in Alexandria in the third century BC. . . citizens of a dominant city state who immigrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonization, to assimilate the territory into the empire. (1-2)

The word 'Diaspora' has a religious meaning in the context of the Hebrew Bible. It means to threaten the Hebrews if they fail to obey God's will. In the discourses of religion historians like Willem Cornelius, Johannes Tromp and Martin Baumann, it is pointed out that the meaning of the term later changed in the Jewish tradition and it designates scattered people of forceful dispersion. This reference about Jewish dispersion is included in the Old Testament. However, in the Christian tradition, New Testament explains church as a 'dispersed community'.

Whatever may be the case, the term diaspora carries a sense of displacement. In diaspora, there is a sense of being separated from its national territory, for whatever may be the reason. The people who live abroad away from their homeland have an aspiration to return to their ancestral homeland. Some critics have pointed out that diaspora may result in a loss of nostalgia for a single home as people re-root in a series of meaningful displacement. Some people may have multiple homes to maintain their attachment to other individuals in the group. Such groups have vestiges of their culture in their maintenance of traditional religious practices and their resistance to language change.

Diaspora is not just a technical term used to describe the literary tradition but it signifies something larger. The phenomenon is not so simple that it can be defined by a single author or can be understood by a single approach but on the contrary it is a

term used in diverse disciplines. The term has now emerged as a key term in cultural studies and anthropology. In contemporary discourse, exile and diaspora are taken to refer to various national, cultural, religious, and political groups and people.

The term is being explored with different layers of meanings in the twenty-first century as we have large number of instances of diaspora apart from classical notion of diaspora. However, it is necessary to discuss a wide ranging review of critics' theoretical approach to the term 'diaspora' for thorough comprehension of the term in socio-political and literary contexts as well. Commonly, the term denotes any type of migration, immigration, exile or returning from exile, legal or illegal border crossing territorialization. Modern scholars unanimously assume that sociological context of the term roots in the historical event of 587 BCE when Babylonians conquered the kingdom of Judea and forced the people to migrate to Babylonia in order to assimilate the territory and its people in their empire. In that sense the dispersion of the people during Babylonian period took place in a large number with the intention of expansion of the empire.

The word *Diasporais* originally applied to the forceful mass migration of the Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile. When the italicized, the word 'diaspora' may be used to refer to refugee or immigrant population of other origins or ethnicities living away from an established or ancestral homeland. The definition given by *Webster in New International Dictionary Part-I*, is limited to Jewish and Christian dispersion only. It is not a comprehensive and concrete definition. Another definition by *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* by A. S. Horn by expresses Jewish dispersion as well as the dispersion of the people from their original homeland in general. Other sources of the definition of diaspora mentioned above are stating basically Jewish exile from Palestine to Israel in particular and the

voluntary or forceful migration or dispersion or exile of the people of common origin, language and culture in general.

Diaspora, in a normal sense, is the dispersion or scattering and settling down of people with common origin, language or culture anywhere in the world away from their homeland. The non-national does not mean having no nation or lack of national affiliations but it means problematic national identifications that entail ambivalence and paradox. By non-national subject, it does not mean a subject merely occupying a liminal space between home-country and host-country but rather a subject reconfigures implications of here and there within that space. In my discussion of the non-national, this research problematizes the meanings of a liminal subject as simply being here and there or alternately, being neither here nor there. This work complicates occupying a space between belonging and un-belonging in migrant narratives. In the texts, I discuss in my study, all about two moments that help produce the non-national. These are the moments the main characters realize and yet they do not belong fully as Americans in the U.S. and the moment they realize that they are no longer perceived as natives of their countries of origin. The non-national moment is not intrinsic to a specific racial group has multiple meanings, not only among the texts I discuss here but even within the same minority group. This thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the texts by applying the concept of cultural dislocation. The third chapter unfolds the difficulties faced by the major characters of the novels as immigrants. And, the last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Cultural Mobility in *An American Brat*

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *An American Brat* revolves around Feroza's growing up story that is interwoven with her going-to-America story. It portrays the protagonist's struggle with the Islamization of Pakistan and notions of choice and individualism in the U.S. It emphasizes on the adjustments made by the protagonist to make herself fit in a new culture and the startling differences between the conservative East and the liberal West. Feroza decides to stay in the U.S. and accepts living away from the rest of her family. However, Feroza as possessing a diasporic sense of imagined community that imposes on Feroza dual moments of estrangement and assimilation in both Pakistan and the U.S. and yields glimpses of a non-national consciousness.

Diaspora straddles some of the most fundamental and problematic divisions in the field of migration. Among these is the distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration or in a broad sense, labour or economic migrants and refugees or forced migrants. There is another key division between analysis of migration itself such as the process, experience and dynamics of mobility on one hand and the outcomes of migration such as the integration, assimilation, segregation or exclusion of people of migrant background and the changes in society on the other. These divisions are found in both fields like analysis of migration and in migration policy field. To some extent, the notion of diaspora helps to reconcile these divisions.

Migration is the basic or fundamental cause of diaspora. The formation of diaspora can occur by accretion, as a result of gradual, routine migration. That may be a willful or a part of strategies of household and communities. Dispersal may be brought about by crisis or may involve coercion, catastrophe, expulsion or other forcible movements resulting from conflict or persecution. Dispersal may also result from a combination

of compulsion and choice, so that diasporas may emerge as a result of both cumulative processes and crises.

Feroza's sense of imagined community is diasporic by virtue of being a Parsee members of her family and it is dispersed among Pakistan, India, and the U.S. Nilufer Bharucha explains in "When Old Tracks are Lost: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction as Diasporic Discourse that Parsees have formed three diasporas: first, the precolonial India diaspora, second, the division by partition of India and third Western diaspora" (57). One can therefore infer that Parsees, scattered as they are in various countries, belong to multiple communities concurrently within and outside the country where they reside, which in turn troubles monolithic identifications as solely Parsee, Pakistani or Indian.

Diasporic writing mostly becomes a response to the lost homes and issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several factors which are the reasons for the dislocation of a community from their home country to a foreign land. These can be broadly divided into two such as voluntary and non-voluntary movements. Voluntary movements can occur due to two reasons namely i) educational need and ii) economic need. On the other hand, non-voluntary movements occur due to political and national compulsions and in the case of women, it could be marital causes. When diasporic people find themselves dislocated from the home society, they are upset mentally and strive to remember and locate themselves in a nostalgic past. Through nostalgia, they try to escape from the harsh realities of life in the settled land.

Feroza's dilemma of national identification in Pakistan occurs only after Pakistan became an Islamic state under the General Zia-Ul-Haq. The Islamization of

Pakistan has caused Feroza's feeling that she does not fit in Pakistan unless she assimilates the new Islamic rule and, in Zizek's terms, has created tension between her primary particular ethnic identity and her universal identity as a member of a Nation-State. For example, Feroza wants to adopt a strict Islamic dress code imposed by the Pakistani government, whereas Zareen, her mother, disapproves of orthodox traditions. In an argument with Feroza about how to dress, Zareen contends "we're Parsee, everybody knows we dress differently" (10). This moment of contention between Feroza, who dislikes the sleeveless blouse and sari, and her mother, who disapproves the fundamentalist turn in Pakistan, problematizes their affiliations with an Islamic state in two ways. First, dictating an Islamic dress in Pakistan means the Islamization or in other words, the de-secularizing of the public sphere, to borrow Jürgen Habermas's term. Second, the imposition of fundamentalist traditions on the "public sphere" has resulted in the exclusion of religious minorities such as Parsee, and of secular Pakistanis. Zareen, in order to save Feroza from the "puritanical", "mullah-ish mentality" decides to send her daughter to the U.S (13). which she sees as a more secular place. Despite this binarism between the Islamic state of Pakistan and secular liberal America, there is an interlocking relation between the U.S. and Pakistan, specifically the circulation of capitalism and fundamentalism.

The political changes in Pakistan that brought Zia-Ul-Haq to power and led to the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the more liberal political leader in Pakistan) was supported by and took place under the auspices of the United States. In order to combat the spread of communism in the region, Pakistan became the third biggest country after Israel and Egypt to receive American advertisement as well as a new market for the spread of commodities from in America. The spread of commodities from the U.S. and pro-American Pakistani government were accompanied by the

Islamization of Pakistan, thereby “turning religious identities into political ones” as Mahmood Mamdani holds in *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (249). Politicizing Islam in Pakistan has led to minoritizing the Parsee community as well as jeopardizing secular people who protested this regime. The circulation of Islamization in Pakistan is interrelated with the circulation of American capitalism. In the novel, there are references to “secondhand American garments” stores and American and British videos (17). One can therefore infer that Feroza’s encounter with capitalism and consumption starts in Pakistan rather than after she goes to America. However, both ideologies Islamic fundamentalism and capitalism, contribute to Feroza’s feelings of alienation and estrangement within Pakistan and the U.S. Feroza feels herself stranger and she needs to adapt in both Pakistan and the U.S. In Pakistan, Feroza feels a stranger, after the Islamization of Pakistan because she is Parsee and she feels a stranger in the U.S. because as Manek, her uncle, says, she is “a Paki Third Worlder” (27)). Within the course of her journey between Pakistan and the U.S., Feroza encounters moments of estrangement in the U.S. because she is a foreigner and within her Parsee community because of marrying a non-Parsee. These moments of estrangement, I argue, disrupt the assimilation story and complicate the formations of imagined communities to unfold instances of the non-national subject.

One of the key problems that a diasporic community faces is the predicament with regard to identity. Identity is one of the most common themes in the literature of diasporic authors and in many cases the search for self identity is portrayed as confusing, painful and only occasionally rewarding. Some write semi-autobiographical novels, delving into personal pasts in order to either discover or re-examine their motivations and affinities. Others use fictional characters and situations to question traditional norms, testing, trying, and occasionally reinforcing (whether

internally or otherwise) notions of race and culture. The second and later generations of the diasporic community generally display a dual identity. Although the second and later generations of the diasporic community consider the country in which they are born as the home country, the society still perceives them as outsiders and therefore they are caught in a hyphenated identity. This collective feeling of anonymity, among strangers, is paradoxically, at the core of Feroza's sense of freedom. She feels free from the "gravitational pull" of "the thousand constraints that [have] governed her life" (52, 58). Feroza at this moment has an intertwined feeling of being both a stranger and a free individual.

Feroza's intertwined feeling of being both a stranger and a free individual recalls GerogSimmel's correlating freedom to being a stranger in his essay "The Stranger" (1950). For Simmel, the stranger is a figure emblematic of modernity in urban cities at the turn of the twentieth century. Feroza's shopping expedition on Fifth Avenue resonates with the figure of the stranger in two senses: as a subject who is simultaneously attached to and distanced from life in the metropolis; and as a subject whose relationships are based on sharing common rather than specific qualities with other strangers. Feroza's ride with Manek into Manhattan is, for her, like "climbing into a futuristic spaghetti of curving and incredibly suspended roads, mile upon looping mile of wide highway that weaved in and out of the sky at all angles ... and sometimes they appeared to be aiming at the sky" (Mukharjee 67).

Feroza's perspective is that of the newcomer, who is fascinated by the vast and entangled layout of New York city (spaghetti of roads and highways). Her description of New York positions Feroza as an observer who is *not yet* part of what she describes. In Simmel's words, Feroza "embodies that synthesis of nearness and distance which constitutes the formal position of the stranger (404). This dual

moment of proximity and distance is even clearer when Feroza feels both shocked and bewildered by the filth and poverty of Eighth Avenue and Forty Second Street, in comparison to the luxury and opulence she has seen in Fifth Avenue. It is “an alien filth” that unveils “the callous heart of the rich country” to which Feroza cannot relate. It is a moment of (un)imagining communities that disrupts her assimilation and triggers her feeling of vulnerability(81). Feroza’s vulnerability can be interpreted as a moment of fear caused by encountering the exploitative face of capitalism. That is to say, behind the enchantments in America (highways, skyscrapers, abundant food and merchandise, and efficient infrastructure); there is also a sense of confusion, disorientation, hollowness, and loss. Metaphorically, trapped in the stairways of the YMCA, Feroza feels that “America assume[s] a ruthless, hollow, cylindrical shape without beginning or end, without sunlight, an unfathomable concrete tube inhabited by her fear” (90). This perception of the U.S. echoes the contrasting twist. Feroza’s earlier perception of New York as a *futuristic spaghetti* of roads and highways that aim at the sky. Besides, the metaphor of the locked exit door in the YMCA signifies Feroza’s in-betweenness, both in and out of this new world and the new terrains she treads. This moment of mixed feelings of fascination, confusion, and fear is also a moment of nostalgia to the network of family members and acquaintances in Pakistan.

The settled country considers the practice of a different culture by the diasporic community as a threat to its own culture and therefore it provokes the settled society to discriminate the diasporic community. When the settled society finds a mixing of the diasporic community’s culture with its own, it feels the danger of fragmentation of its cultural identity. As pointed out by Wieviorka:

Under such circumstances, the national majority considers migrants

tobe the root of its difficulties, and draws on racial definitions that combine the idea of natural race and the idea of culture in order to make them scapegoats. (71)

Therefore, the diasporic communities are greatly discriminated. Not only the settled government, but also the people of the country take law into their hand and discriminate the diasporic community in several ways. The discriminations shown against the diasporic community can be viewed in several ways such as cultural identity, national identity and religious identity.

Feroza's feeling of estrangement is not only within the U.S. but also within her Parsee community. Towards the final chapters in the novel, Feroza's complex romantic relationship with David problematizes her belonging to the Parsee community since a Parsee woman is excommunicated if she marries a non-Parsee. Nevertheless, a Parsee man can marry outside his religion. Marrying a non- parsee is a dilemma for a Parsee woman. When Feroza's parents receive the letter about her plans to marry David Press, a big family meeting is held in which stories are shared about Parsee women who are denied appropriate funerals and social status by the Parsee community for marrying outside their community. In her attempt to stop Feroza's marriage to David, Zareen flies to Denver.

Reiterating the rhetoric of individualism, Feroza ridicules her mother's concern with heritage and pedigree. She says: "If you [Zareen] go about talking of people's pedigree, the *Americans* will laugh at you" (277). It is not Feroza who abandons her religion and community but it is rather sexism that renders her a stranger to her community. Zareen starts questioning interfaith marriage in the Zoroastrian doctrine to conclude that the "mindless current of fundamentalism sweeping the world like a plague has spared no religion, not even their microscopic community of

120 thousand” (305-6). Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and sexism in the Zoroastrian religious tradition complicates Feroza’s national belonging and religious affiliation.

Feroza and David Press, although they surpass East-West boundaries in their relationship, are unable to overcome the traditional perception of roots and heritage as intrinsic to their sense of belonging. Consequently, what starts as an intriguing romantic interest between David and Feroza turns into an impossible relationship because of insurmountable cultural differences. The theme of cultural differences frames the whole novel. For example, Manek describes Pakistanis as “Third World Pakis” with a “snow- white Englishman gora complex” (26). Besides, in an argument between Feroza and her mother about Feroza’s relationship with David, Feroza asks her mother to think in new ways because “It’s a different culture”, but Zareen responds “It’s not your culture” (279). Cultural differences in *An American Brat* can be interpreted through the lens of American capitalism that commodifies difference per se. “[C]apital has fallen in love with difference” as Jonathan Rutherford reminds us in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990, 11). The novel, in a sense, criticizes the capitalist’s ideology of multiculturalism. As Žižek holds in “Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism” (1997), “the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism” (44). *An American Brat* depicts New York as an intertwined site of capitalism and multiculturalism. Feroza’s impression of New York is of “a kaleidoscope of perceptions in which paintings, dinosaurs, American Indian artifacts, and Egyptian mummies mingled with hamburgers, pretzels, sapphire earrings, deodorants, and glamorous window displays” (76).

Blurring the images of art and artifacts with food, clothing, and jewelry

conjures up what Richard Sennett concludes in “The Public Realm”, about diversity in New York and its planning. In New York there is “linear, sequential display of difference”; as he elaborates, New York is a mix of difference and indifference, races “who live segregated lives close together, and of social classes, who mix but do not socialize” (269). Along the same lines, Peter McLaren in “White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism” (1994) holds that despite claims of diversity, the ideology of multiculturalism either has its premises on assimilation or collapses into universalistic humanism that paradoxically re-enforces Anglo-American norms and essentializes differences (48-52). *An American Brat* seems not to break from essentializing difference and valorizing American ideals of diversity.

Structurally, the novel is a combination of stories that revolve around *difference* situating Pakistan in contrast to the U.S. It opens with Pakistan as a starting point and ends with the U.S. as a final destination, thus, it resonates with a conventional coming-to-America/assimilation narrative. Unlike *Desirable Daughters*, the first chapter in *An American Brat*, *dramatically* cuts between origin country of childhood and final destination, America” to borrow Rosemary George’s words (144). The opening chapter in *An American Brat* encapsulates the dilemma of the Parsee diaspora as well as the crisis of rising Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan versus the more secular, liberal America.

Furthermore, *An American Brat* shares some aspects of popular fiction, specifically, the romantic plot of Feroza and David. The romantic plot in *An American Brat* follows a familiar narrative pattern of pop fiction: a simple plot in which the young woman from the less privileged land of Pakistan comes to the U.S., meets her dream husband, and challenges her parents and family traditions of

marriage. Along these lines Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance* (1984) holds that romances are all about a “man and woman meeting, the obstacles to their love, and their final happy ending” (199). In a similar sense Walter Nash pinpoints, in *Language in Popular Fiction* (1990), the romantic story “is nothing if not predictable” (4). The predictability of Feroza’s and David’s falling in love, is precisely renders *An American Brat* as a popular romance. The going to America narrative is intertwined with the popular romance genre to reassert the ideology of individualism especially for the female protagonist, who challenges her community and its religious doctrines.

It is by now established that the authors writing on diaspora very often engage with the mixed notion of hybridity. In its most recent descriptive and realistic usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at the time of describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meet the host in the sense of migration. Nikos Papastergiadis mentions the twin processes of globalization and migration. He outlines a development that moves from the assimilation and integration of migrants in the host society of the nation state towards something more complex in the metropolitan societies of today. Papastergiadis argues:

As some members of the migrant communities came to prominence within the cultural and political circles of the dominant society, they began to argue the process of cultural interaction and to demonstrate the negative consequences of insisting upon the denial of the immigrant forms of cultural identity. (203)

However, Feroza’s and David’s love story does not end in marriage and living happily ever after. Unlike the typical closures in romantic popular fiction, Feroza and David cannot surpass their cultural differences. In Woodrow Wilson’s terms, Feroza

is “*not yet*” become American because they foreground their ethnic roots (87). That is to say, the un-conventional closure disrupts both the assimilation narrative and the popular romance story and as a corollary allegorizes a disrupted process of “transubstantiation” to recall Zizek, the shifting from the “particular ethnic identity” to the “universal identity as a member of a Nation-State”(76). Moreover, the love story between Feroza and David reverses what Mica Nava calls “the Orientalist critical gaze” (25). Nava explains that the Orientalist gaze is a “panoptic controlling male gaze,” “in which the oriental woman is cast as object of sexual desire” (26). Contrary to the Orientalist “panoptic” gaze, Feroza objectifies the white male body to her gaze. Feroza’s and David’s first meeting is described as follows:

At Feroza’s timid knock on the garage door, David Press *revealed himself, wearing only* his ragged shorts and a pair of square, metal-framed glasses. The longish gold-streaked hair that swept his forehead and framed his handsome face appeared, if anything, to enhance the wild effect of his *gleaming nudity*. (245)

While reading Sidhwa’s description, one cannot help but follow the slow rhythm of describing David’s physique and his slow appearance revealing himself, longish gold-streaked hair, gleaming nudity from his garage door. This portrayal renders the *white* male’s body exotic and erotic. To extend the reversed metaphor, unlike the Orientalist portrayals of the exotic women from the East as languid, lewd, and/or oppressed, Feroza is described as “impassive, imperious” (247). Feroza’s haughty manner unsettles the East-West dichotomy that frames the whole novel.

Similarly, *An American Brat* subtly exoticizes the U.S. The “America-returned” Pakistanis perceive the U.S. as an “*exotic culture*” (171). Echoing the pancake cooking scene in India in *Desirable Daughters* that ethnicizes *American* food,

the perception of the U.S. as an *exotic* place dismantles, what Žižek critiques to be, the U.S. “privileged universal position”, granted by its ideology of multiculturalism (44).

Multiculturalism sets the United States of America in the superior position that claims appreciation of *diversity*, yet is founded on a demarcation between the ethnic and the *American*. This re-configuration of the U.S. as an exotic culture can possibly renege the definition of national consciousness to be in terms of diversity and multiple identifications, not in terms of assimilation and “domestic Americanization”. Whereas on the surface level of meaning *An American Brat* reads as an assimilation narrative, on another layer it disrupts this narrative. To recall Simmel, Feroza ultimately decides that she—like the stranger figure—finds comfort living in the U.S. away from family, because her feelings of dislocation, unbelonging, and anonymity are shared by many newcomers like herself (312). The last chapter in the novel sounds like Feroza’s and Manek’s testimony about living in the U.S. and its advantages, which focus on opulence, material goods, freedom and technology. The whole chapter echoes and sums up the earlier chapters in which Manek underlines the stark differences between the U.S. and Pakistan. In this chapter, it is Feroza reiterating the same notions, and relieved that she is not in Pakistan, observing “grinding poverty and injustice” and “disturbing Hodood Ordinances” (312). In this final chapter, Feroza refrains from arguing with Manek. On the other hand, Aban, Manek’s wife and a *newcomer* in America, plays the same role that Feroza plays earlier in the novel. The implication is that characters in the novel follow the same linear journey of moving to America, are challenged by a new life style, adapt to the new life in America and finally are unable to give up their stay in the U.S. The linearity of this narrative does not break from traditional migrant narratives that

propagate Americanization as the final destination.

Intertwined with Feroza's journey to the U.S. is "a journey into the English language and into the 'ethnic' narrative of successful progress" as George points out (136). In the novel, Manek tells Feroza that she is lucky that her roommate—Jo—is a "real American" (148). Like Tara in *Desirable Daughters* who has to work on constructing her "American self" (135), Feroza works on *performing* "Americanness" by emulating Jo's informal way of talking, calling names, and eating canned and frozen food. In a similar way, Manek lies about being Christian to sell Bibles for Christian families. To make his sales' talk appealing, Manek uses words and phrases that Christian families would positively respond to: "How is little Jim (or Bill or Barbara) doing?" Have you started him on solids? ... The Reverend told me Kevin is a mighty smart boy for his age" (202). The foregrounding of a singular accent, way of talking, and a dominant faith re-confirms the notion of a unified national community. Thus, America becomes "the imagined nation signified by ... a monolingual tongue (English or rather, American English) and a determined assimilation of all differences into this national story", as George underscores (136).

Feroza ultimately decides that she finds comfort living in the U.S., away from family, because her feelings of dislocation, un-belongingness, and anonymity are shared by many newcomers like herself (312). That is to say, by the end of the novel, the community that Feroza imagines herself identifying with is a community of *strangers*. In that sense, *An American Brat* is similar to *Desirable Daughters*; the imagined communities in both novels are neither boundary oriented nor necessarily horizontal. The imagined communities in *An American Brat* are formed around a shared feeling of being amidst strangers.

Feroza's acceptance of being a stranger in the U.S. because others too are

newcomers and strangers and it is similar to the final scene in *Desirable Daughters* in which Bud starts his own fast food restaurant. The ending of both stories is paradoxical. On the one hand, these traditional closures offer the protagonists a place within the imagined community of the nation as Martin Japtok holds in another context (137). On the other hand, within the course of both novels, these are two-world novels. These texts unsettle the notions of a homogenous national consciousness and re nuance the formations of the imagined communities to be transnational and among strangers. In other words, structurally, especially in the dénouement, both texts, partake of a narrative of integration, the form of individualism that both novels depict is contingent and situational, and its *national* consciousness is not pre-set. By the end of both novels Diana, Bud, and Feroza accept being *both* American and Indian, or both American and Pakistani, without necessarily resolving the tension between the ethnic and the American.

III. Cultural Transformation In *Desirable Daughters*

Desirable Daughters is a tale of immigrants and the attitude of three sisters: Tara, Padma, Parvati and their ways of negotiating the multiple dislocations in three different perspectives. The three sisters, who are the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharjee and the great-grand daughters of Jaikrishna Gangooly, belong to a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. They search their own course of voyage towards their destiny. They are admixture of traditional and modern outlook. Padma and Parvati have their own trajectories of choices and Tara is an immigrant of ethnic origin New Jersey, and latter she married to a boy of her own choice and settled in Bombay with an entourage of servants to cater her. Tara, the narrator of the novel, takes the readers deep into the intricacies of the New World and seems to float rootless with time. The fluidity of her identity testifies not only her own but also the fluidity of the immigrants. She values her traditional upbringing but takes pride in moving forward in life. Her image of her family values, form a wall of security around her that camouflage the fragile vulnerable self. Tuberculosis is everywhere. The air, the water, the soil are septic. Thirty-five years is a long life. Smog obscures the moon and dims the man-made light to faintness deeper than the stars'. In such darkness perspective disappears. It is a two-dimensional world impossible to penetrate. (Mukharjee 12)

Tara is very much distressed with her cultural displacement and fragmentation. In spite of her consent to accept and adopt new culture, she is unable to manage with the traditional mould of an Indian woman. Tara, the protagonist in the novel is unable to adjust herself within the conventional gender role of a mother and wife. The traditional setting of Tara ensures her to reckon that she isn't, perhaps never will be, modern woman. Tara feels ripped between the double place and its culture

that brings her nothing else than the scattered identity. She reminds the attractive mountain resorts of India in San Francisco. She is acutely aware of her cultural differences. Her home at San Francisco seems as a sad home. She says: I am not the only blue jeaned woman with Pashmina shawl around my shoulders and broken down running shoes on my feet. I am not the only Indian on the block. All the same, I stand out, I am convinced. I don't belong here, despite my political leanings; worse, I don't want to belong. (Mukharjee79)

InIs naturalization into American citizenship empowerment or marginalization? R. Radhakrishnan raises this concern in the context of the Indian diaspora in the U.S., and I see it as relevant to the India-American community as well. He points out that naturalization makes the ethnic subject subordinate to its nationalized American status and the ethnic becomes a mere qualifier rather than a cultural or political identity (221- 2). The ethnic-racial-national identity of the India-American community in the U.S. complicates Radhakrishnan's question even more. Racially categorized as whites, Indian Americans, however, do not have legal position within the spectrum of minority cultures from which they can legally articulate their communal concerns about discrimination.

Categorized as "non-European whites," Indian-Americans are not perceived as the privileged white race. Lisa SuhairMajaj in "*Indian-Americans and the Meanings of Race*" (2000) describes Indian Americans' racial categorization as honorary whiteness (320). "Non-European white" is not a specific qualifier for Indian Americans. This renders Indian-Americans "the Most Invisibles of the Invisibles," as Joanna Kadi holds in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by India-American and India-Canadian Feminists* and as Bharati Mukherjee in an interview citing Edward Said says: "the India was the last ethnicity that it was okay to denigrate and to be

openly racist about” (219). One can infer that the national status of Indian-Americans as Americans is almost overlooked because of their India heritage and always conflated with being Muslims, although not all Indians are Muslims and not all Muslims come from India. Food and restaurants are other means of defining Indian-Americans, especially known for dishes like tabouleh, hummus, baba ghanouj, and falafel. However, restaurants that primarily offer these dishes are not categorized as specifically Indian-American. They are, rather, categorized as “Middle Eastern,” an equally ambiguous category for two reasons. First, it overlooks cultural diversity within the Indian region. Second, the category “Middle East” includes a wide range of countries that do not share Indian as the native tongue.

Desirable Daughters interrupt the assimilation narrative, reveals the complexity of defining Indian-Americans’ ethnic- national identity through cooking as improvisation, and produces a *not yet* American subject. The complexity of the ethnic-national identity of an Indian-American subject and its interpellation in America is right there on the very first page of Bharati Mukherjee’s Novel. Tara’s characteristics are a mixture of a white-American mother and an Indian father. Tara, mostly, talks after her mother, light skin/eye/hair color etc. In addition, her first name Tara is quite familiar in the U.S. and is easily pronounced. However, her last name sounds odd. In the opening scene of the novel, Tara is a hosted child, among others, in a TV show for children. The broadcaster, having difficulties pronouncing what seems to him foreign names such as Farouq, Ibtisam, Jaipur, Matussem relieved and, when he comes across Tara’s name, finds difficulty. However, the broadcaster “crashes into” Tara’s last name, trying to articulate it: “Ub-abb-yuh-yoo-jo- jee-buh-ha-ree-rah ...” When he asked, “what kind of a last name is that,” Tara sarcastically answers: “‘*English, you silly!*’ into his microphone” (3). This first scene of

miscommunication between Tara and the broadcaster evokes laughter. Tara's dilemma throughout the novel is whether she is perceived as ethnic or American in America or conversely as American or Indian (in India).

Althusser holds that interpellation is central to the subject *of* ideology who hence becomes "subject *to* it having to obey its rules and laws and behave as that ideology dictates" (135). Ideology functions through four apparatuses, which Althusser calls "realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions" (143). These apparatuses are: family, education, religion, and mass media (143). "The Brown DeMone" show that airs on national television and hosts and hails Tara, Farouq, Ibtisam, Jaipur, Matussem is in this scene an ideological apparatus that assumes acknowledgment of diversity as the foundation of Americanness. Nevertheless, the broadcaster's confusion about names that do not sound *English* unfolds a counter-ideology, interpellating Tara as a subject who belongs to a particular ethnic identity. Both Tara and the broadcaster in this scene are trapped in a moment of incomplete interpellation in which the conversation stops. He is confused by her last name, and she is surprised at his confusion too. However, the scene concludes with the broadcaster's and Tara's laughing, "but at two *different* jokes" (4). Un-understood, Tara is the *not yet* American subject who throughout the novel will feel an outsider both in America and in India. Every time Tara leaves the U.S. for India or India for the U.S., there are multiple scenes in which she occupies a place as an American or an Indian subject but *not yet*.

In this first scene Tara's features and first name categorize her as literally white, while her last name does not. Therefore, while Tara sees herself to be like the rest of the children in the show, the broadcaster sees her cultural belongings to be more problematic. On the one hand, Tara's first name sounds familiar to the

broadcaster, her last name does not. On the other hand, Tara does not see her name or herself to be in any way different from “Farouq, Ibtissam, Jaipur, Matussem”. Tara says that her name is “English” into the microphone on national TV which is like an announcement made to emphasize belongingness and asks for an acknowledgment of that belonging. It stands for bringing Indian-Americans into the public sphere and making them visible in the mainstream Anglo-American media discourse. It is also an attempt to naturalize Indian-Americans into American citizenship which can work either to help acknowledge the presence of Indian-Americans who are both Americans and Indians or paradoxically, minoritize the ethnic/racial identity of Indians. However, if Indians are white but not precisely white as Tara’s grandmother describes Tara’s father, the white becomes a problematic signifier for Indian-Americans; it does not empower Indians to be perceived as white community because their racial identity is overlooked and conflated with Islam. Tara, a hybrid of a not precisely white-Indian father and a white-European-American mother; is not a happy hybrid mix. When Tara’s father re-locates the whole family in India, Tara starts to feel her mother’s and her own difference from the rest of the family members. She says: “I sense a deep weirdness about my own existence in the world. How could these two people have ever found each other? How could I have ever come to be?” Tara starts questioning her mixed heritage only when the family moves to India. Tara’s confusion about where she belongs in this scene stands in contrast to her assertive answer to the broadcaster in the first page of the memoir about her last name or to her mother when she describes herself as simply born in Syracuse: “I was born into the Syracuse world. I have no inkling of what other worlds are like.” (20) What Tara experiences as a child in Syracuse is her father’s feelings of homesickness and nostalgia, not hers. Therefore, when her mother tells her that they are moving to live

in India, Tara simply asks “don’t we live in America?” This means that Tara has a first-hand experience of belonging to the U.S. and second hand experience through her father, of belonging to India.

The opening of the novel diverges from the going to America which usually begins with “a brief chapter that dramatically cuts between origin (the past country of childhood and final destination present location in the U.S.)”, as George points out (144). In Tara’s story the past country of childhood is the U.S. rather than India and the final destination can be the U.S. or India. Tara’s father, Bud, insists that his daughters will *grow up* in India, unlike his acquaintances who are keen that their children grow up and become American. Tara grows up in both India and the U.S. Thus, the linearity of the growing-up and going to American story is disrupted. Another twist in the growing-up story in *Desirable Daughters* is that the first chapter itself exposes “Tuberculosis is everywhere..... In such darkness perspective disappears. It is a two-dimensional world impossible to penetrate.”(3) That is to say, the novel is not only about Tara's growing up in America/India but also about her father Bud who throughout the novel pursues the American Dream of success and having his own restaurant. On his way back from India to the U.S., Bud admits to an old friend that he is American and is not entirely Indian. Like Tara’s story there is no linear progression of Bud’s story. Bud pursues his dream restaurant in both the U.S. and India. An origin point and a past country of childhood are mediated in the novel through Bud’s nostalgia and memories about India. Bud’s story is mirrored in the chapter entitled Immigrants Kids. Some of the chapters are dedicated to fathers who are haunted by the past and insisted on teaching their children that they are not Americans. Olga’s father, Basilovich, Russian-Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish, struggle with severe homesickness, is unable to overcome his feelings of loss, and ultimately

commits suicide. Bud's story with no chapter of origin and Basilovich's sad story of maladjustments are glimpses of resistance to the generic going to America story that perpetuates the notion of the U.S. as the final destination.

Growing up in India, for Tara, is complex because it is mediated by her perception of herself as American. This complexity is encountered in two incidents: one in India at the age of seven when she eats native/Indian food but tries with her mother to cook pancakes and in a second incident when she is thirteen and bakes baklava with her aunt Aya from India in America.

Echoing the first scene of Tara's interpellation in the U.S. where her last name cannot be pronounced because it does not sound American in India, Tara's first name is confusing to some of her associates and is pronounced "dee-ahna" because Tara does not sound Indian. Her acquaintances in India attempt to make her first name more Indian. This is, implicitly, an attempt to make Tara a native of India. In contrast, Bennett, Tara's British friend in India attempts to *de-nativize/de-Indianize* her by scolding her for eating native Indian food. Bennett tells Tara:

You don't *belong* with them! You *know* that. You *know* that. The sort you are *belongs* with the sort I am. Like *belongs* with like. ... No in-betweens. The world isn't meant for in-betweens, it isn't done. You *know* that." Bennett impatiently sums up his argument with Tara, repeating the same idea: "They *belong* with their own kind. You with me, they with them....No in-betweens. It's not allowed". (49)

Bennett draws an affiliation with Tara on the basis of his perception of himself and of Tara as non-native of India. They do not belong to India and therefore have a shared knowledge of their un-belonging. At the other end of the spectrum, Munira the Bedouin woman who works for Tara's family in India, says to Tara: "this is [India]

where you *belong*” (67). In this sense, Bennett believes that Tara should not belong to India by virtue of her features that are closer to his British features than most Indians, and Munira believes that Tara should belong to India by virtue of having an Indian father. Though Tara starts to acquire some Indian customs and adjust to Indian food, both are acquired through habituation, she craves and misses American ice cream, pancakes, and hot chocolate.

In an effort to bake pancakes in India, Tara and her mother improvise with some ingredients, replacing syrup with honey. Though the ingredients are different, it doesn't matter too much because they call them pancakes and they look a bit like pancakes. Munira likes eating them and the neighbors like calling them “burnt American flat food.” (38) And they eat them side by side with local accompaniments: the sesame seeds, fragrant mint, yogurt, cheese, olives, tomatoes, eggs, and pistachios. Thus, a new dish comes into existence burnt American flat bread and new affiliations are formed around that dish among the American mother, the Indian natives, and the in-between daughter. Adding the marker 'burnt' to signify the peculiar taste of this new dish *ethnicizes* American pancakes in India by giving them a dark color. This confrontation blurs the demarcations between “ethnic” and “American” as absolute signifiers with inherent meanings attached to them. Thus Tara retorts: “Am I still an American? ... it seems like a kind of unbecoming or rebecoming” (58). The question about Tara's belonging has changed to a question of “unbecoming or rebecoming.” Is it un-becoming American or re-becoming ethnic or American in India? As I have pointed out earlier, according to Woodrow Wilson, possessing an American national consciousness is incongruent with belonging to national groups. Bharati Mukherjee re-writes this formula by destabilizing the notion of origin as a core principle of belonging to national groups so that belonging to a

national group and becoming American is not antithetical. Bharati Mukherjee in her *Desirable Daughters*, abandons the idea of origin in favor of becoming, which implies transformation. Native food is a land and a name constructed over different periods of time in history.

Tara being rebellious celebrates the new identity at the age of thirteen; she wants to identify herself and her family as Americans and hence rejects Indian food. Nevertheless, what Tara initially rejects baklava because of its India origin; she eventually finishes eating because of its non-specific origin. Thus the language of baklava is a shifting signifier that moves between the transnational and the ethnic, transcending geographical boundaries to form new communities and affiliations.

Denationalizing food, as the example of baklava demonstrates, reflects denationalization of American fast food chains that have spread globally. However, the de-centralization of the origin of baklava is different from the sense of decentralization latent in fast food chains. Recipes, although set as instructions for cooking a specific meal and meant to describe a specific dish from a specific region, are open to improvisation. In contrast, although the flavors of fast food meals are domesticated, it must appear to fit the standard taste of the same food anywhere in the world. In addition, a recipe reflects a food practice that emphasizes the process of cooking and preparing food, whereas fast food conceals the process of cooking from the consumer. In the novel, cooking and recipes are personalized, unlike ready to eat food that is represented as a standardized commodity. The recipes in the novel constitute a multivalent narrative which implies a set of images, tastes, choices, and values. They are personalized in two senses; first, they are situated within the context of the story to evoke a related emotional moment. For example, each recipe has a title that can be seen in the chapters in which it falls.” Second, the recipes step outside the

narrative to address the reader directly and elicit an engagement with the recipes, the described dishes, and the social contexts from which they emerge. The recipes emphasize the material process of cooking and, structurally, interrupt the growing up and assimilation story of Tara.

Food is a trope, in the novel, around which several affiliations are formed, severed, and crisscrossed along the lines of origins and racial and regional belongings. Anita Mannur in “Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Diaspora” coins the term “culinary citizenship,” which she defines as “a form of affective citizenship which grants subjects the ability to claim and inhabit certain subject positions via their relationship to food” (13). Borrowing Mannur’s concept, Tara’s grandmother and father stand for two senses of culinary citizenship, the former insists on classification and categories, while the latter hints at multiplicity and complexity. “Gram is a baker, Bud’s a cook.” While bakers are “measured, careful, rational, precise”, cooks are “dashing, improvisational, wayward, intuitive” (90). Tara’s grandmother, though she knows or perhaps does not know that Muslims do not eat pork, prepares a big dish of “glistening, clove-studded ham” on Tara’s father’s first visit to their house (90). The traditional act of cooking acquires an ethnic connotation in this scene to reveal the cultural tension between the grandmother and Bud whom she perceives as not precisely white. This, in a way, rehearses the movements by food reformers to unify a national cuisine for American citizens. Like the nineteenth century food fights, which Gabaccia analyzes, where American values are asserted by means of following specific diets. Mukherjee’s text is also over food and the values each eating tradition stands for.

In Roland Barthes’ “Toward a Psychology of Contemporary Food Consumption” (1961), he says that food in *Desirable Daughters*, “has a constant

tendency to transform itself into situation” (26). For example, in an incident in which Tara’s father grills some food in the front yard, the neighbors are irritated by that behavior which they perceive as *un-American*. Jaime, Tara’s schoolmate and one of the neighbors’ daughters, tells Tara in the school bus: “you better know that in this country nobody eats in the front yard. Really. Nobody, if your family does not know how to behave, my parents will have to find out about getting you out of this neighborhood” (82).

In the entire novel, Mukherjee presents numerous tips for becoming American. Thus, these tips are themselves national recipes for American way of life. Among the tips that Bharati Mukherjee includes to construct her American self are: “consuming and observing closely American culture, TV, music” (134). Especially in college Tara has “finally acquired hip hugger jeans and a long shag haircut, in the posthippie fallout look of the seventies” (135). Jeans, haircuts, clothing style transmitted through mass media and popular culture stand for what Stuart Hall calls “codes” which Tara imitates to construct her American self. Hall holds that ideology “once socialized, it becomes a code”; it is “a system of coding reality” (102). Despite the valorization of individual liberty, it is only by sharing the dominant “codes” of what looks American that Tara is looked American or not quite. This unfolds a conundrum between the principle of individualism as foundational to the notion of Americanness and what I have quoted earlier from Pease domestic Americanization.

Ironically, despite the actual diversity of American culture, this diversity is used to divide American culture into “American” and “ethnic”. For example, Tara’s grandmother wants to educate her granddaughter about the “Orient”. She decides to take Tara to downtown New York to watch the famous opera show “Madama Butterfly at the Metro-Politan” (93) and dine in a Chinese restaurant, the “Imperial

Palace” (98).

The choice of this specific opera in which the incidents of the story take place in Nagasaki of the early 1890s, when the Japanese navy claimed the city, implicitly recalls the victory of the U.S. in World War-II after bombing Nagasaki in 1945. The circulation of this specific show in the Metropolitan Opera house in New York since 1907 can imply a commoditization of diversity in cosmopolitan New York or a celebration of an imperialist America subduing the Japanese empire. More importantly, the circulation of this opera perpetuates what Aki Uchida calls “the orientalization of Asian women in America” (1998, 161). In the story of *Madame Butterfly* the Japanese wife is abandoned by her white husband who marries a white woman. *Madame Butterfly* gives up her child to be raised by her ex-husband and his new wife. The story recuperates the submissiveness of “Oriental” women as well as white superiority. Tara’s grandmother’s perception of the Orient and Orientals is also an example of orientalization. She praises Orientals as “dainty and refined”, “like little porcelain dolls with their little shoes and parasols” (97). However, this simile between ‘Orientals’ and ‘porcelain dolls’ de-humanizes ‘Orientals’ in the sense that they are compared to static artifacts that look alike. In other words, the term ‘Orientals’ becomes a signifier for objects rather than people or for people reified as objects. In the “Imperial Palace”, a Chinese restaurant, the grandmother tells the waiter that she has watched a show about people and tells him how “spectacular” and “extravagant” the show is (99). Making it a teaching moment, the grandmother tells Tara; feel it’s more polite to call them Orientals without making a distinction between the Japanese and the Chinese. Drawing a distinction between her people and his people, as well as homogenizing Orientals, is “racism with a distance,” to borrow Zizek’s words (44). The grandmother’s remarks imply that “we” refers to individuals

who identify as members of the nation-state and “them” or “his” refers to individuals who identify with their “particular” ethnic communities. By the same token, the slow enunciates Orientals, as “spectacular,” and “extravagant” is a reminder in the text where the broadcaster mispronounces Tara’s last name. Both incidents exemplify the contradictions in American Orientalism, “deeply committed to the U.S. primacy and to multiculturalism,” in Vijay Prashad’s words in “Orientalism” (2007, 176). In addition, unlike European Orientalism, as Uchida notes, “the Oriental geographically exist in the West.” (161) American Orientalism forms inside the geographical territories of America rather than in colonies. Tara’s and her grandmother’s excursion echoes the American Orientalist discourse as it developed around the migration of the immigrants as indentured laborers. The grandmother homogenizes Asians by assuming that the Chinese and the Japanese are one and the same people. Moreover, not only does she emphasize the exoticism, otherness, and foreignness of the Orientals but also reiterates the effeminate stereotype of Oriental men. Homogenizing, stereotyping, and emasculating the “Other” are strategies that resonate with colonial national ideologies of American Orientalism that expanded in the nineteenth century as the U.S. emerged as a global power. Ironically, the grandmother tries to imbue her half Indian granddaughter with this legacy of cultural imperialism.

The grandmother’s intention to educate Tara about Orientals resembles a touristic excursion to an exotic place that simultaneously ethnicizes and empties the signifier “Orientals” of its meaning. Mieke Bal in “Food, Form, and Visibility: Glue and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life” explains how ethnic restaurants are a “genre of ‘tourism at home’” and a “form of neo-colonialism.” She argues that “ethnic” food is “a visible token of foreignness” that is perceived as enriching the

diversity of the host country but also “incorporated [and] naturalized as a welcome element of otherness” (53). If “ethnicity” created by the host country is as Bal claims a form of neo-colonialism, then Tara and her grandmother exemplify these dynamics between ethnic restaurants and their customers. Reading the menu, Tara reads “a treasure map that takes me [Tara] on its dotted line over snowy mountains, through hushed trees, past jade lakes” (98). Comparing the menu to a map materializes “Oriental” food in Tara’s imagination. The topographic description of “Oriental” food in terms of mountains, trees, and lakes situates it as exotic food carried by people coming from afar way lands. Seeing and tasting the food arouse all Tara’s senses, “touch[ing] all the hidden places in [her] mouth” (102). At the center of the tourist experience is the “tourist gaze” as John Urry holds in *The Tourist Gaze* (2002, 1). One of its characteristics is that the “tourist gaze” is “constructed through signs” (3), hence tourists search for specific venues and landscapes. The grandmother’s *tour package*, visiting specific sites such as “Oriental” theaters and restaurants in metropolitan New York is allegedly to pursue knowledge about a “particular” community and to transmit this to her granddaughter. In fact, the grandmother is purchasing an “Oriental” cultural experience, which is not only pertinent to the tourist experience but also to a Eurocentric conception of “the other as a self- enclosed ‘authentic’ community”, to quote Zizek (44). In a complementary sense, the restaurant Imperial Palace, markets itself as a touristic place by virtue of its name and its location. It is what Dean MacCannell calls “staged authenticity” (qtd in Urry 9). Urry elaborates MacCannell’s concept and explains that “staged authenticity” aims at taking “advantage of the opportunities it presents for profitable investment” (9). Setting the stage for an authentic “Oriental” experience the fortune cookies that Tara and her grandmother open, are written in Chinese. Reading the slip; “no blame”

and translating it as “everything taste good if you hungry enough” (108), symbolically render the “ethnic” “Oriental” food generic and it is commercialization.

Nonetheless, there are two moments of resistance in this scene. First, Tara has a different consciousness of the waiter and the chef. Beginning to realize that the grandmother is talking about a Japanese, not a Chinese opera, Tara, the waiter, and the chef share a smile, as if they are “in on the joke together” (107). The subtle understanding between Tara, the chef, and the waiter in the scene renders the grandmother a member of a particular ethnic community. The second instance of resistance is when the chef and the waiter speak in Chinese, having an aside conversation among themselves, which only they can understand.

This experience of consuming “Oriental” food problematizes the “ethnic” as a qualifier for national identity. In the same sense, the “native” as foundational to the notion of “national” identity is also problematized in the novel. “Native” suggests a point of origin and authenticity. By extension, it defines where a native should belong. Tara is born in the U.S. by virtue of land of birth. Tara is a native of that land and therefore American. However, Tara’s father, as he sets the rules for his daughters, has taught them that they “are Indian at home and American in the streets” (5). To emphasize their Indian-ness, Bud does all the cooking and all the cooking follows Indian recipes. I interpret this, paradoxically, as a feminist gesture in the text that reverses gender roles and dismantles the arbitrary relation between women and domestic space. Yet, it can also mean more patriarchal hegemony over the domestic realm that allows Bud to control how he raises his daughters by imposing only Indian food in his family. Bud’s cooking, in addition, operates like “cultural mnemonics”; he cooks to remember India. (21). However, as I have pointed out earlier, Tara is not perceived, by her British friend, as a native of India. The mere fact that the purpose of

Bud's relocating the whole family in India to familiarize his daughters with his own land of origin implies that his daughters are non-national in India, *not yet* Indian. This is even underscored by Munira's description of India in terms which Tarais unfamiliar with: "The original scent of India is *here* [India]: sesame, olive, incense, rosewater, orange blossom water, dust, jasmine, thyme" (37). *Here* implies that it is not only Tarawho is alienated from the authentic scent of India but also her father since he does not reside in India. That is to say both Tara and Bud acculturate both Indian and the U.S. as they move between the two nations.

Bud desires to fulfill the American Dream, as I have previously mentioned, by means of having his own restaurant. His dream restaurant, as Bud imagines it "will be a real breakthrough, an amazing modern combination of Indian and American food" (169). Bud's restaurant is not only a combination of Indian and American food but also "a Shangri-la that finally heals the old wound between East and West. All languages will be spoken here, all religions honored" (172). This restaurant evokes multiple implicit meanings. It gathers the prevalent notion of America as the land of opportunities that welcomes and hosts all religions, all languages, and everyone whether from the old world or the new world. This implies that Bud's restaurant is a site for a heterogeneous imagined community. In addition, because it will be run by his family it is also a congregation site for his daughters. That is to say, the restaurant will transform Bud's perception of America as a place of foreignness to a place of fulfilled dreams and belonging. Nevertheless, the fact that the restaurant is run by Bud's family duplicates the family dynamics specifically his authority over his daughters to reaffirm Bud's dominance. Moreover, the reference to "Shangri-la" metonymically means not only a utopian place but also an exotic oriental land. Thus, simultaneously, the hospitality of the land of opportunities is intertwined with

ethnicization. While Bud dreams of a family restaurant in Syracuse, his own house in India has turned into a restaurant KanZaman. Visiting India and the restaurant, Bud fantasizes about owning that restaurant, erected on the land of his ancestors. Yet, the restaurant's name and its tent like entrance ethnicizes the place to attract more tourists.

Echoing the Imperial Palace Chinese restaurant in Metropolitan New York, KanZaman is an Indian restaurant, located on the desert highway in Amman. Visiting his family in India, Bud finds out that the house has turned into a restaurant, KanZaman in a touristic neighborhood in Amman and is commoditized as an authentic ethnic place by virtue of its name and location. That is to say, within India, the Indian restaurant becomes *ethnic* to share an experience of authenticity to tourists in India.

Tara's visit to India complicates the question of the national in the text even further through the example of the Sri-Lankan maid who works for her uncle Jimmy. Sri-Lankan young women are "shipped" (256) to India through a "slave agency" (260) to be adopted by Indian families for whom they work as maids. Many of these women leave their children in Sri Lanka while they work in India. The uncle's Anglicized name; Jimmy as well as the resonance between the living conditions of the Sri-Lankan maids in India and the history of slavery in the U.S., specifically ill-treatment and separating slave mothers from their children, reproduce the binary between masters and slaves that deny the sense of national belonging.

The Sri-Lankan maid cooking for uncle Jimmy's family adds another layer of complexity to the question of the non-national in India. The question is complicated specifically in terms of the Sri-Lankan cook's relationship to the food she cooks by virtue of which she can "claim and inhabit certain subject position," to quote from Mannur's theory of "Culinary Citizenship" (13). Unlike Tara's and her mother's

cooking pancakes in India that has facilitated the formation of new affiliations beyond geographical boundaries, cooking in Uncle Jimmy's house does not facilitate the formation of any communities. On the contrary, food in Uncle Jimmy's house rather evokes a sense of estrangement than affiliation. Tara and her friends, Audrey, are eager to leave, rather than stay to finish their dinner.

India as a site for the national is complicated not only by the presence of immigrant labor but also by the widely spread American mass media; specifically soap operas and news networks, which unfolds a disjuncture between what Arjun Appadurai says 'mediascapes' and 'ideoscapes'. Tara's uncles, when they set up, are always engaged in intricate discussions about nuclear weapons, oil crisis, and political turmoil and wonder "why is it... that America gets fatter, that American TV shows get louder, and that TV contestants win millions with a single answer, while rest of the world gets leaner, hungrier, sicker, angrier?" (274). This contradiction between the global political situation and the chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, to borrow Appadurai's words; "mirrors another disjuncture between the luxurious life styles portrayed in daytime so many people are hungry" (240). Appadurai expresses, "the lifestyles represented on both national and international TV and cinema completely overwhelm and undermine the rhetoric of national politics" (40).

In conclusion, the non-national subject in *Desirable Daughters* is formed at particular moments of incompleteness in its interpellation processes; these moments are marked by tension between "ethnic" belonging and "national" identifications in both America and India. This creates a new site for identification that disrupts the growing up and assimilation narrative in more than one way. Structurally, *Desirable Daughters* does not open with a chapter about the protagonist's past life before going

to the U.S. or about a country of origin. Intertwined with this non-traditional opening is a blurring of the demarcations between the qualifiers “ethnic” and “national” by virtue of the formation of communities and affiliations transnationally, confined neither to the geographical boundaries of India nor the U.S. Tara is the character who tries to define herself on several grounds but finds lacking at every point whether she is in India or in the America.

IV. Creating Home Through Writing

This research paper emphasizes on the implications of the expatriates narratives by Indian-American, women writers. As mentioned earlier in the introduction for this study, the non-national subject reconfigures implications of home-country and host-country in the migrant stories as discussed. The non-national, however, should not be confused or conflated with the transnational; it is rather a specific moment within the transnational that complicates meanings of national consciousness, national time, national space, and national belonging as the earlier chapters suggest. That is to say, the non-national subject contests and questions unproblematic assimilation and integration into the U.S. and resists singular belonging and binary between first-world and third-world or home and abroad as mentioned earlier, expand the meaning and use of the non-national. The analysis of the texts in this study shows that the non-national opens up narratives to multiple interpretations to rethink Americanness in light of intricate American domestic and foreign policies.

Selected texts share themes of migration and problematic belongings. However, themes of food and uneven economies also recur, which open up the possibility of comparing these texts from multiple angles. For example, *Desirable Daughters* can be read together as they share the theme of food as a cultural symbol that problematizes national affiliations. Similarly, *An American Brat* can be analyzed in light of the consequences of capitalism in Third World countriesdissertation have different histories in the United State of America, a contrapuntal reading brings them together, yet maintains the uniqueness of each text rather than seeking their similarities. A contrapuntal reading gives a way of understanding the moving between different spaces in United State of America, India, Pakistan and assimilation. Reading

contrapuntally, offers a broader perspective to analyze the notion of the nation, national consciousness, national time, national space, and national belonging not only in America but also in the native countries of the writers. Furthermore, this particular way of reading brings out the full diversity of Indian-American women's writing.

The goal of this study is not only drawing attention to Indian-American women's writing and demanding their inclusion in more literary anthologies. My aim is to explore, complicate, and open new questions about the meanings and use of the term "non-national" within new American studies. In my study I have emblematically used narratives by Asian-American women writers to underline what Indian-American women writers share which can be seen in Tara's returning after being unable to assimilate her in American culture. And it is not only physical returning, it is cultural as well. Due to ethnic identity, language, costumes, food, religion and ritual acts, she is inextricably linked to her native Indian culture. Similarly, Feroza, being humiliated, finds lack of favorable acceptance and feels alienated. Thus the aim of my study is to find the common point in both Asian American writers' texts; home is where the heart lies, as a diasporic experience.

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