

Problematics & Process of Pakistani Diasporic Identity in Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (1993)

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Abstract:

Present study, Taking Safran's and Clifford's concepts of diaspora, Stuart Hall's and Ericson's concepts of identity, and Bhabha's concept of hybridity as analytical tools, focuses on Bapsi Sidhwa's An American Brat. The study reveals that the selected novel has tried to portray the problematics and construction of diasporic identity of main characters when they encounter diasporic situations. However, each character, based on their homeland background, reacts in a different way in a diasporic situation. In case of Feroza, a protagonist in An American Brat, religion problematizes her diasporic identity. She is sent to America to change her religious rigidity and ironically, it is religion that is the biggest hurdle in her way to fully assimilate in American culture. Her Parsee background keeps her diasporic identity wavering and she is in a contentious struggle to cope with her diasporic identity. The newness and attractiveness of a host land and the rootedness of a homeland problematize her life; as a result, she faces issues such as identity crises, cultural shocks, otherness, alienation, and a sense of unhomeliness. She struggles hard to cope with these problems, however, the dominant narrative of identity and belonging of the host countries do not assimilate her who live "in-between". As a result, she is torn between two cultures without any stable base for their genuine identity and is in continuous struggle for constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing their genuine identities.

Keywords: *Diasporic Identity, Diasporic Resistance, Diasporic Conflicts and Problematics, An American Brat, Hybridity*

1. Introduction

With the rise in the number of international immigrations and the extension of the socio/geographical boundaries, the new people of the communities face a variety of complex cultural challenges. The migrated individuals and communities normally struggle towards making genuine identities; they are in a continuous struggle to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their genuine identities in a host country. In the process of their struggles, they face the hardships of displacement, the newness of host land, the sense of unhomeliness, the need of mimicking the host culture, ambivalent feelings towards host and homelands and in the end resulted in being a hybrid. Peter Wade (1999) in *Cultural Identity: Solution or Problem?*, terms this occurrence as “globalization”¹. Being affected by the advancement of technology, the process of globalization makes the people interact with each other freely and rapidly. But it eradicates local identities from their stems. It, according to Wada, makes the “cultures to be deterritorialized as the overlapping of people, property and places as they become less stable”². Here man is supposed to accord his idealistic horizons with those of the host society in order to build an identity. Therefore, the self, through losing his freedom, makes a new identity. In such a context, one may not expect the appearance of indigenous cultural identities. In turn, concerning this dislocation, everybody would take refuge in the shadows of new identities; he/she may not care whether these identities are “local, ethnic, racial or national”³.

Sidhwa’s *An American Brat* is a story of a Feroza, a Pakistani emigrant to America, who struggles to merge binary cultures in order to broaden her views. The paper discusses how marginalization and

discrimination in a host country problematize diasporic identity. Diasporic identity is a journey of becoming which shows discontinuity in our identity formation. It keeps on passing through different stages; each stage offers certain opportunities and challenges that problematize a diasporic journey, namely displacement, identity crises, alienation, cultural conflicts, unhomeliness, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity. The main character, Feroza, has been discussed through above-mentioned stages of diasporic journey.

2. Methodology

2.1. Approach of the Study

The approach of the study is a critical, qualitative investigation of the postcolonial matter of diasporic identity in the selected work of Bepsi Sidwa. This study is focused to investigate the process of diasporic identity in new colonial culture set up, the tyranny of cultural dislocation and the quest for home and self of the protagonist of Bepsi Sidwa.

Further, the study uses postcolonial approach. This approach is relevant because the writer wants to identify the influence and the hegemony of the dominant culture on the characters. Moreover, it is also relevant to use the postcolonial approach in order to answer the questions in the problem formulation.

Postcolonial study or criticism according to Barry has four characteristics. There are the non-western called as exotic 'Other', the language used, hybrid identity, and the last one is the existence of cross cultural interactions⁴. The selected novel is suitable to be analysed by postcolonial criticism since the story mostly talk about how the protagonists change their lives and identities when they fuse with the new culture. Some of them are more open in receiving the new culture even further becoming

a hybrid while some others development of identities contain resistance and conflicts.

The issues of cultural identity take part quite big in the selected novels. It is relevant to use the postcolonial criticism particularly analysing the diaspora context of the characters and the hybridity theory in which there is a cross-cultural interaction in the novels. The novels also tell how protagonists' dynamic growth as an individual with two cultures learnt and adapted by them. Then, the theory of hybridity and resistance are applied to analyse how different characters respond to newly adopted situations.

2. 2. Data Analysis Technique

Textual analysis, as an analytical technique, has been used to explore the notions of hybrid identities of diasporas. Textual analysis focuses on thematic aspects of discourse in specific context of migratory experiences of diasporas which is carried out under the postcolonial analytical tools for analysis with an insight of postcolonial concepts given by the theorists Homi K Bhabha, Edward Said, and others. The concepts of postcolonial theorists serve as supportive theoretical background for the discussion of Sidhwa's *The American Brat*.

2. 3. Theoretical Framework

Considering the theoretical work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, this research studies a post-colonial issue of diasporic identity in a context of Afro-Asian Novels. In analysing the identity in the context of diaspora, the writer needs several theories to be applied in this research. The researcher scrutinizes the characteristics of the main characters in the context of diaspora using diaspora theory, identity theory, and hybridity. The diaspora theory is needed to identify main characters as individuals who experience diaspora and to identify the traits they possess as a part of diasporic movement. The theory of identity functions to construct their

identity formations. Subsequently, the main characters are also analysed from the lens of hybridity theory. Hybridity theory is used to analyse main characters' identity traits that stand between two cultures.

3. Findings and Discussion

The world today is without borders. People continuously moving and shifting from one place to another with much ease, making possible a constant diffusion of language, race, and culture. In such a situation, fixed identities of immigrants are problematized when they are encountered by host country. They face problems to maintain connection and balance at a time in dealing with both countries. Mostly they are discriminated and marginalized in a host country. In such a situation they pass through different stages like sense of displacement, alienation, otherness, unhomeliness and so on. To cope with the situation they start to mimic the culture of host country. Through mimicry, they want to be accepted, however, even after such assimilation they are made feel othered. This makes them ambivalent towards host country, loving and hating a host country at the same time. At the end, they develop hybrid culture and identity. This whole diasporic journey can be seen in the works of Bapsi Sidhwa, who herself experienced migration to the US. Using her first hand diasporic experiences, she has used literature specially *An American Brat* as a medium to portray diasporic life and its problems.

The selected novel offers the opportunity to be discussed through the lens of diaspora and to analyse those elements which problematize diasporic identity and what and how strategies are used by Feroza to cope with diasporic situation. Further, it is tried to find out the elements of diasporic identity below to see whether they exist in Feroza and if they do, what impact they have on her identity.

3. 1. Displacement

Diaspora communities and individuals experience feelings of displacement, alienation and loneliness in the host country due to lack of indigenous people and hostility in the host country. Mostly people in diaspora find adjustment in a new land very tough and challenging. Feroza who is very excited about going to America finds America a different place. During the flight to America “she became conscious also about the gravitational pull of the country she was leaving behind”⁵. Her excitement got little bit disturbed when “the space within the aircraft, the atmosphere, had changed, become foreign”⁶. As she landed on her dreamy land, the cleanness and the hugeness of objects, buildings dazzled her. However, her astonishment got changed in confusion when “her Pakistani passport opened from the wrong end. There was a moment of confusion”⁷. It was the first sign of othernesses caused by displacement. This sense of otherness was felt further when Feroza “became aware of the pale green, almost colourless eyes studying her with startling intentness”⁸. After the inspection at airport, she felt little bit relaxed. However, her temporal gladness went away when her luggage was labelled for secondary inspection. Mixed feelings of humiliation, fear, displacement, and alienation took over her.

Displacement from an old place and disconnection with a new place causes the sense of unhomeliness, alienation, cultural shocks, and identity crises. After getting to America, Feroza felt them. She realized that living in America is not that easy, one has to pay the price to understand American ways.

Displacement not only disturbs immigrants’ life in a host country, which they do not regard as their true homeland, but at the same time, they have an uncertainty and hesitation about their acceptance by their native land. The situation for them is as if they do not belong to any place. As the

case of Feroza, who becomes ambivalent after coming to her homeland. She does not feel at home in her homeland. She goes back to America but there too she is misfit, she becomes in-between. She knew that “there would be no going back for her”⁹. She thought in mild concentration that “like Manek she had become used to the seductive entitlements of the First World”¹⁰.

3. 2. Identity Crises

The two main characters of novel Manek and Feroza went through severe identity crisis experiences at one time rejecting, and at other accepting it reluctantly. Manek, in his earlier days in America, had to face criticism from his fellow students but with the passage of time, some transformations took place in him and made him a little American thus, leading him to be in an ambivalent state regarding his identity. “Manek recalled the stony expressions of professors as they looked away whenever he tried to connect someone who was giving wrong answers in class.... Nobody had told him that America felt so strongly about interruptions. He’d had to find it out for himself”¹¹.

During his stay in America Manek also slightly changed his name from Manek to Mike in order to show his association with the host country. He was later called Mike Junglewala by his friends and he often felt nostalgic about his homeland in general and of his family in particular. When his mother sent him a sweater, he became emotional, “It had been a long time, since anyone had bothered to pamper him”¹².

The desire of many Asians to get US citizenship and be called as American (dual identity) is also revealed in the novel, as Manek’s child was born in America, ‘Manek’s child is born in America he is the heir to a goldmine..... so as to get “the coveted United States citizenship”¹³.

Like Manek, Feroza, the protagonist of novel also suffers identity crisis since her arrival in America and then finally deciding to live permanently in America. Airport episode is the most important of all the incidents that questioned her identity. She was asked various questions at the airport about her family, her uncle's business, when she could not reproduce appropriate answer she was suspected to arrive America illegally and that both she and her uncle were making them fools, even they suspected her uncle to be her fiancé. "She had no uncle in America. Her so-called "uncle" was in fact her fiancé"¹⁴.

After airport episode, she literally rejected American way of living and revealed her intention of going back home. Crying on her uncle she says "to hell with you and your damn country. I'll go back!"¹⁵.

3. 3. Cultural Conflicts

Culture is an indispensable part of human social life. Culture connects people as a unified group and give them a sense of ownership. Consciously or unconsciously, every single aspect of culture is inculcated in the mind of every member of a culture from the very childhood. Thus, their lives are controlled by the culture and they even do not resist it. They think that their culture is far superior to any other culture. However, when they move out of their culture and try to get settled in an another country they are faced with a new culture, mostly in tussle with their indigenous culture. The new culture is very challenging and shocking for them and for the first time they realize how powerfully they are controlled by their indigenous culture and they find it very difficult to come out of their cultural belongings. The novel has taken this issue of cultural differences and shocks and presented it through Feroza. The novel begins with a description of Feroza as a shy and calm girl. The time of the novel is the late 70s and politically it is the period of Zia. Islamic fundamentalism is growing in

Pakistan. Feroza's parents, who are open-minded, are very worried for Feroza's "narrow-minded attitude touted by General Zia"¹⁶.

They try to resolve the issue by sending her to America in order to get this "Puritanical rubbish out of her head" and think, "travel will broaden her outlook"¹⁷.

According to plan, she is sent to America to spend her three months vacation with her uncle, Monik. During her flight to America, she is very excited. However, suddenly, Feroza feels a sudden gravitational pull:

Her sense of self, enlarged by the osmosis of identity, with her community and with her group of school friends, stayed with her like permanence, like the support that ocean basis provides the wind and moon generated vagaries of its waters in a fleeting regularity of her heart.¹⁸

The flight of the plane symbolizes the shift in culture and tradition. As the flight stops at Dubai, Paris and London, new passengers replaced old passengers. Each new face had different look, showing their national and cultural background. Throughout the journey, substituting cultures for cultures meant preparing Feroza for the alien culture with its exotic milieu and atmosphere. The cultural differences started at her very land at airport. The regular traffic of people moving fast, bright lights and warm air, exceptional cleanliness and lustre of floors and furniture, thick width of greenhouses and steel made her feel surprised and shocked. At airport, customs officials asked few questions and checked the things of Feroza well. Being nervous in a new environment, she could not satisfy custom officer with her confusing response, her luggage was labelled for second and thorough investigation. She was quite new to such unfriendly dispositions, "It was Feroza's first moment of realization she was in a strange country amidst strangers..."¹⁹. During the checking, against her

cultural background, her very personal dresses were touched and checked by officials, even Feroza's relation with her uncle was questioned and doubted by officials. This humiliating mistrust injects mixed feelings of humiliation, anger, and fear in Feroza. On her coming out from the airport, after very tough investigation, she cries at her uncle "to hell with you and your damn country. I'll go back."²⁰

First few months of her stay was packed with varied culture shocks. As a Pakistani, Feroza was taught, since her very childhood, by her grandmother, submissiveness and dependence on male and Feroza had internalized those culturally inculcated ideas. She believed and strictly followed it and thought it the only way how female needed to behave. However, after landing in America, she found things quite different and opposing in nature to her inculcated cultural understanding. She was surprised to find that in America girls were independent, active, and confident. She was shocked, felt shy while noticed the dressing style of American women. As a Pakistani, Feroza cannot accept and follow such an approach, living without dependency. She strongly believes in a special code that women must be dependent on male and further she believed that male female could not be equal. Therefore, the freedom and independency of American girls was something unacceptable and somewhat a cultural shock for Feroza in the beginning.

Cultural shocks at the beginning and the reverse cultural shocks after assimilation, makes Feroza alienated in both host and home countries.

3. 4. Alienation

The gaping difference in the lifestyles between a host land and a homeland leads to a sense of alienation in immigrants. Alienation generally refers to a person's disintegration from something of earlier attachment. It also determines how a period of time and a number of circumstances

changes one's perspectives and relationships with certain entities. According to Rousseau, the term denotes man's detachment from his "natural self" and "natural form" from the various pressures of his mind and heart (p. 67). In the twentieth century, in a context of diaspora 'alienation' refers to estrangement, isolation, exile, distance, and rootlessness. Alienation is often the consequence of loss of identity, cultural differences and displacement.

Displacement, identity crises, and cultural shocks in a host land made Feroza alienated, however, from the very beginning, being a single child of her parents she mostly sensed lonely especially when at the dinnertime or evening family gathering, the members talked about the politics of Pakistan. The sense of alienation of Feroza in Pakistan was due to the religious and political turmoil in the state. As a child, Feroza was stubborn and anti-social. She used to spend her time, especially her off days at the house of her grandmother and with her classmates. As she, felt alienated and misfit at her home and did not take part in liberal and political discussion at home, she indulged herself in reading books. Her parents were very much concerned with her anti-social behavior and decided to send her to America in order to enlighten her worldview and to bring her out of alienation. When Feroza heard of her going to America, she felt very happy and excited. The night before her departure, through the night, she kept on repeating the word 'America' to make sure her going to America. She imagined America as a "... the land of glossy magazines, of 'Bewitched' and 'Star Trek', of rock stars and jeans..."²¹. In the morning of her departure, the whole family and her friends were gathered to say her goodbye. The movement she started moving out of her home all of a sudden her excitement melted into a gloominess.

Feroza becomes conscious of the gravitational pull of the country she is leaving behind. Her sense of self, enlarged by the osmosis of identity with her community and with her group of school friends, stayed with her like a permanence... like the support that ocean basins provide the wind and moon-generated vagaries of its waters.²²

She was surprised at her feelings for her homeland. She never felt its power so deeply. The text narrates the feelings of an immigrant through Feroza while leaving homeland. The departure for America made Feroza emotionally and geographically alienated. Feroza never felt the magnetism of Lahore in this way before and she realized that she would miss Lahore and her family very terribly.

American experience totally changed Feroza, took her away from her roots, and as a result made her alienated. After her tasting of liberty in America, Feroza became so fond of modernity and felt it nearly impossible to return to her native conservative community. She could easily witness the distinction between the cultures and all the other aspects of life in the two countries. Her bond with the American lifestyle on one hand broadens her mentality and lets her think in a new spirit and on second hand makes her alienated to her own community. Her break up, after her assimilation, with David makes her broken heart and alienated in a host country too as a result she starts feeling unhomeliness.

3. 5. Unhomeliness

Unhomeliness refers to the estranging sense of relocation of the home and the world in an “unhallowed place”²³. Unhomeliness is not a physical state rather it is a psychological state in which people do not feel at home even in their own homes; such a condition makes people

psychological refuges. The hypothesis, here, is that the feeling of unhomeliness is found in Feroza.

Feroza not only feel unhomely in her homeland, Pakistan but also in a host country, America. Before her departure to Denver, she “realizes with a sense of shock that she has outgrown her family’s expectations of her”²⁴ by her involvement in American culture and neglecting her own. Against her cultural differences, she starts friendship with American boy David shyly, however, with the passage of time; they got self-assured in each other’s presence. To her amazement, she felt very comfortable with him and found similarity between her and his approaches and behaviors. It was as if, through David, she had taken a “leap across some cultural barrier and found herself on the other side of it” to find out that everything was soothingly the same²⁵. Her sense of home also, in America, went through an evolution that extends beyond physical boundaries. Using Bhabha’s words, Feroza experiences “extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations”²⁶. She never thought she could have felt this complete trust in a stranger to take her “across the uncharted terrain of her emotions”²⁷. The “uncharted terrain of her emotions”²⁸ reflects Feroza’s sense of unhomeliness in the host land.

Feroza felt homed in the host land until her relation went well with David, However, as the break up occurred between them; she got extremely disturbed and felt a sense of relocation in the host country. She became concerned with spending rest of her life. She knew very well that she was misfit both in a host country and in home country because she had experienced unhomeliness in both countries. Comparatively she felt more dislocated and unhomed in America, however, she decided to spend rest of her life in America because “she felt living in America would be more tolerable because it was shared by thousands of newcomers like

herself”²⁹ and thought her wounds could be healed in America. She remembered Father Fibb’s advice that she was like a “young bird” that would have to “fly and fall, and fly and fall again till her wings become strong”³⁰. She wonders about the advice that if such a place exists, may be one day she would rise to that “self-contained place from which there was no falling,”³¹. Being alienated and unhomed both in host and in home countries, Feroza was confused and worried about such a place where she could fly and is healed and homed. However, even then she preferred America as a “self-contained place” to live in with her sense of unhomeliness because America provides:

Relief from observing the grinding poverty... injustices and other constraints that would crush her freedom, a freedom that had become central to her happiness. The abandon with which she could conduct her life without interference was possible only because of the distance from her family and the anonymity America provided.³²

The above paragraph reflects the positivity of unhomeliness on Feroza. Although, in a host country, sometimes, she missed her family and felt a sense of guilt, that she has outgrown her family’s expectations of her, however, at the same time the host country also provided her freedom and privacy as mentioned in the following para:

She was not alone in her desire for privacy and plenty. A sizable portion of the world was experiencing this phenomenon, on this scale at least, for the first time in human history, and the rest of the jam-packed and impoverished world—no matter how much they might moan about the loss of human contact, privacy, and the dwindling family—also hankered for it.³³

Feroza experiences unhomeliness in both home country and in host country, however, the unhomeliness that she feels in Pakistan makes her feel painful while the unhomeliness in America is helpful in making her free of the various restrictions imposed on her by her home country. Besides privacy and freedom, the host country, in form of excellent libraries and educational institutions, also provides huge opportunity of quenching her thirst for learning. In a case of her going back to her home country, she would have surely be deprived of many opportunities that are now central to her happiness. Unhomeliness also plays vital role in her descion of staying in the host country permanently as Kani says, “due to the change of ghetto makes Feroza able to make [her] own decisions regarding [her] own life”³⁴. Therefore, in a sense, unhomeliness helps to empower her in making decisions regarding her life.

3. 6. Mimicry

Feroza, on moving to America, finds herself on a new ground and she is troubled in finding a place in that society. At the beginning, she resist the new culture when she is humiliated at airport by migration officials, Feroza retorts, “to hell with you and your damn country. I’ll go back!”³⁵. Feroza find America “a ruthless, hollow, cylindrical shape without beginning or end, without sunlight, an unfathomable concrete tube inhabited by her fear. She was sure something monstrous was crouched in the impervious shadows that patrolled this alien domain”³⁶. However, in order to be accepted by a host country, she needs a “reformed, noticeable *Other*”³⁷ by brushing aside her own roots and imitating the masters’ culture of the host country especially in looks and language³⁸. The masters, in a form of her uncle and Jo, attempt to force their language, lifestyle, and American education on Feroza and trying to create a reformed and acceptable copy of her. They give her handy advices on how

to give up her old notions and reshape her behavior and life style in the host country to be accepted and respected. She is made felt by them that her manners and non-American accent and dialect are not up to the mark that could not fit neatly into the standardized trends of the American life style.

In order to be successfully camouflaged in the host environment she is advised by her uncle how to avoid the problems she would face in the host country.

After few months under her uncle's supervision, she learns somehow the American way of life and starts imitating it. However, in order to further develop Feroza's "personality and her induction into the self-sufficient, industrious, and independent way of American life"³⁹, her uncle convinced Feroza and her family to take admission in some good American college. In her uncle's view, getting admission in a college would provides opportunity of close contact with the culture and way of life of Americans and would help to ease Feroza's adaptation of Americans' lifestyle. Therefore, she gets admission in a junior college in Twin Falls, Idaho and starts living with a real American: Jo as a roommate. Jo introduces her to new aspects of American life that were previously unknown to Feroza who was meticulously supervised by Manek who sensibly selected the locations and people for her. Now living with adventurous Jo, Feroza gets exposed to real America and increasingly starts getting influenced by her in all spheres of life. Sensing that Feroza needs exposure to the new culture, Jo worked hard on Feroza's pronunciation, dialect, attitude, dressing sense, and even housekeeping skills.

She starts using expletives "with an abandon that epitomized for her the heady reality of being abroad"⁴⁰. Feroza also starts imitating Jo in her accent to sound like Americans. Jo teaches Feroza how to pronounce

mayonnaise as “may-nayze” and mother-fucker as “motha-fuka”⁴¹. Fanon argues that when black people uses colonizer’s language; it is regarded as predatory, and not transformative, which in turn may create insecurity in the black’s consciousness⁴². Feroza must learn to perform recognized American accent that grant acceptance into American society. As a result, she, under the influence of Jo, moves towards “becoming mottled”⁴³.

In order to get acceptance in American society, Feroza comuoflages⁴⁴ herself, accordingly, through modification in her personality. She starts doing several things that were hard to be done back in her home society like openly flirting and chatting up with strangers and doing jobs like working in a bar becoming a salesperson or selling tickets at an amusement park etc. In a selection of her job, it is evident that she has developed a reformed and acceptable “*other*” and just like Americans, she has no problem in doing these jobs. Bhabha calls this sort of mimicry a “sly civility”⁴⁴ which he considers as a sense of mockery to mimicry that is based on “ambivalence”. At the beginning, she is not feeling comfortable in shorts as she is imitating something against her cultural nature. However, she has learned an idea that adapting to the host environment is the only option and her entire effort of mimicry is important for Feroza to be more Americanized and to make her Otherness acceptable and to be included in to the host environment.

3. 7. Ambivalence

Ambivalence generally refers to “a state of being inbetween” and within the postcolonial context; it is seen as the characteristic predicament of the colonized subject’s double attitude of both attraction and repulsion towards the colonizers. People in diaspora also develop ambivalent feelings towards a host country when they do not get the desired acceptance in a host environment after imitating a host culture. Then they look back towards

their home country to rebuild their broken connection with it. However, upon a subsequent return to their home country, they often find it difficult to fully fix the cracked connection because their identities have been hybridized after mimicry and now they are misfit in a country where once they fit so well like the character Feroza. Such a situation causes double consciousness and develops ambivalent feelings in immigrants towards both their host country and a homecountry.

Feroza, after few cultural shocks in the host country, realizes the need to imitate the host country to be fully like them in order to get acceptance. However, her cultural roots with her home country are so strong that she feels a sense of guilt during and after assimilation process. As she begins mixing with Americans, “shades of ambivalence slowly become apparent in her character”⁴⁶. Her cultural background irritates her and keeps on injecting a sense of guilt for going against her roots. When Feroza starts “going out with Jo to parties and flirts with random guys, she first feels guilty and wonders what her family would think of her conduct were they to know about it”⁴⁷. However, “at the same time, she felt she was being initiated into some esoteric rites that governed the astonishingly independent and unsupervised lives of young people in America”⁴⁸. She, at a time, struggles to be completely American and Parsee as well. Since she cannot fully feel like both at the same time, she feels not whole. She feels divided and uncertain that further develops “conflicting feelings or attitudes”⁴⁹ in her. A tug of war between resisting and accepting American culture continues in her and she often keeps on thinking “the risqué nature of the pleasure the guilt afforded—the smoke-filled, twilight spaces inhabited by the boisterous, teasing, and amorously inclined young men—was well worth the gnawing battle with her conscience it also caused”⁵⁰.

Feroza's action of mimicry results ambivalent feeling inside her. She wants to be accepted in the new environment, she imitates the host country but she also feels a sense of guilt in imitating it and strongly feels the urge to resist it by keeping in touch with her Parsee background. Her sense of guilt and temptation of following the host culture go side by side, at the border of which, lies ambivalence:

Of course, we want these things. At the same time, we do not, or some part of ourselves we call our conscience gives us second thoughts: which appear in the form of a contradiction: No, I do not really want or need that. So the most basic type of ambivalence originates with desire, namely in the contradiction between the heart and the head.⁵¹

The complex mix of attraction and repulsion, like a hunting conscious, keeps on following Feroza. Whenever, she does something against her religion or culture, she feels uneasy and ambivalent. Once, at a party, upon the pressing demand of a boy fellow, she smokes a cigarette. However, as Parsees consider direct contact with fire a serious sin, she feels a deep sense of guilt and later on performs some rituals for her forgiveness⁵². Though later on she becomes a habitual smoker but even then, observing her cultural and religious restriction, she does not "smoke before Zareen"⁵³. It seems that now she does not feel the intensity of feeling guilty of smoking rather enjoys the pleasure of mimicry in the company of Jo. Even then, it is in "Feroza's guilt where most of her ambivalence lies"⁵⁴. She mimics the host environment and the next moment she feels a sense of guilt and repents it. As explained by Bhabha that ambivalence is the "slippage", "excess", and "difference" of mimicry⁵⁵. On one occasion, after having spent a night with David in his room, she creeps back to her room with her shoes in hand, "wondering if she was the same girl who had lived in Lahore and

gone to the Convent of the Sacred Heart”⁵⁶. She enjoys her newfound independence but is constantly haunted by guilt that triggers a sense of ambivalence in her.

3. 8. Hybridity

Permanent residence in the host country requires the diaspora to hybridize the host country instead of mere doing what the Bhabha calls a “mocking mimicry”⁵⁷. The relocated subject displays a certain cultural integration and resemblance with host country by the process of cultural hybridization. The resemblance to the dominant culture of a host country is attained through linguistic performatives and cultural mimicry. An effort is made by relocated subject to find common ground, through hybridity, with the people of host country with whom they wants to interact for social or intellectual reasons.

Parsis are culturally hybridized, as it is essential for their peaceful existence. The Parsi community willy-nilly adopts the ways of host society in which they live. Sidhwa in one of her interviews says:

This is especially true in Parsis community. We are a landless people, so we must take on the culture in which we find ourselves. I would like to call myself a Pakistani-Punjabi-Parsi woman, for the reason that I am influenced by all these three societies. I think I really have a mix of identity. And it's something very magnificent because this combination contributes hugely to make me the writer that I am.⁵⁸

In *An American Brat*, Sidhwa expresses the complexities of multicultural background of Feroza. She is described being Parsi, a Pakistani, and of migration to the West while carrying the other two identities. Feroza like liminal peoples marked and established the boundaries of their economic relocation as Bhabha’s quotation of Martin

Heidegger suggests, “the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing”. What begins its presence here is the fluidity of boundaries that characterizes contemporary metropolitan cultures of hybridity.

Belonging to Parsi community, Feroza, like Sidhwa, also develops hybrid personality. The hybrid nature of Parsi makes Feroza see more deeply into different people's lives. She adjusts herself well in the company of Jo, Rhonda, Gwen, Shashi, Shirley and Laura and then David Press. Despite the fact of growing up in Parisian culture with regular teachings of Zoroastrianism, after getting exposure to American society, Frieze became so liberal and free that she wouldn't mind marrying a Jewish, David Press. She starts loving his culture and discovers close connections between the two cultures. Finding similarities between the two cultures helps her to adjust herself within host society that at the beginning, she finds very different and cry “to hell with your country”⁵⁹ and she feels forced to go back. Being naturally hybrid, Feroza with pretty ease, understand David's religious beliefs. She realizes that beneath the surface of cultural and religious differences, she and David are the same. When she visits David's house, she finds very close similarities in gestures and rituals between her mother and David's mother. She is very happy with finding similarities and unconsciously tries to blend both of cultures and of religions. Her blending of both is cultural hybridity. Cultural hybridity is associated with the effects of multiple cultural attachments or the process of cultural mixture. By mixing both cultures and languages, Feroza develops a hybrid identity.

Like Feroza, Manek also develops a hybrid identity out of diasporic condition in a host country. Despite living for long time in America, he decides to marry someone from his own Parsi community, living in Pakistan. He slightly modifies his name by replacing Manek with Mike to be more Americanized. These two decision reflects his sense of belonging

both with host and with home country. He tries to be in touch with both by mixing both cultures. According to Bhabha, "These hyphenated, hybridized cultural conditions are also forms of a vernacular cosmopolitanism that emerges in multicultural societies and explicitly exceeds a particular national location"⁶⁰. Manek, out of hybridized cultural conditions, sees himself as a thoughtful person who without difficulty can adjust in the American culture; however, in the process of this assimilation, he develops a hybrid identity.

Both Feroza and Manek challenge, through hybridity, "the cultural authoritarianism official truths and the big voice of Master Narratives"⁶¹. They learn how to live on the margin. At the beginning, they felt exiled and alienated from their roots and did not find place of their own, however, at the end, after diasporic experiences, they learn how to effectively discharge their voices and to manage lives in their own hybridized way.

4. Conclusion

Sidhwa's *An American Brat* depicts diasporic experiences of all major characters, especially of Feroza. The diasporic struggle starts with a displacement and keeps on problematizing their identities. Displacement, on a way to America, makes Feroza "conscious about the gravitational pull of the country she was leaving behind"⁶². The "changing of atmosphere" in the aircraft and its turning into "foriegnness" further deepens her sense of displacement and she feels cultural differences⁶³. Her journey to US symbolizes the shift in culture and tradition. At each stop, new passengers replaced old passengers. Each new face looked different and represented a national or cultural background. Throughout the flight, cultutres kept on changing. It was necessary to prepare Feroza for foreign environment and culture. On landing in America, she found herself totally

in a different atmosphere. Her sense of unhomeliness and identity crises started when she was ill-treated in an unfriendly disposition by custom officials; she felt that she “was in a strange country amidst strangers...” under the influence of dominant narrative of the host country⁶⁴. She tried to resist the dominant discourse of identity and belonging by saying angrily “to hell with you and your damn country. I’ll go back”⁶⁵. However, the dominant culture melted down her temporary anger and she started learning how to live in the foreign environment by imitating it. She learns that that there is no need to completely brush aside the roots of her homegrown identity, but rather needs to blend in its features, through assimilation and mimicry, with those of the host society. She changes her personality by adding some modifications so as to “camouflage”⁶⁶ herself into host condition like flirting and dating with strangers, wearing shorts, becoming staunch patriot of America, marrying a non-Parsi, and so on. She as mentioned by Bhabha⁶⁷ “repeats the behaviour [of Americans] rather than just representing” them. Being mimic, Feroza is “almost the same, but not quite”⁶⁸.

Interestingly, mimicry on one hand gives Feroza exposure to enjoy the bounties of freedom and on other hand; shades of ambivalence slowly get developed in her behavior. She questions herself each time she ignores her roots and imitates the host society. She, at the same time, feels a sense of guilt and enlightened, at the border of which, as Weisbrod considers, lies ambivalence. Her ambivalence is inextricably linked with her mimicry; when she tries to mimic American society, her mimicry turns into confusion and as a result, she feels ambivalent. Bhabha calls it “discursive process”⁶⁹ that leads to her hybrid identity. The failure of her relation with David causes her hybrid identity. She was fully dependent on him and followed him blindly, however, the breach in their relation convinced her that her old

way of imitating him, did not work and she starts to blend both cultures by seeking comfort in the religion along with other belongings of her homeland. During and even after the displacement, Feroza moves across the clashing choices and stuck between the two different cultures of West and East. The diasporic experiences keeps on shaping and reshaping her identity through several stages of transformation and development that cause her conversion from a “conservative girl” to grow into a courageous and modern girl hence between the two distinct worlds that eventually shapes and reshapes her identity as hybrid identity.

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