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Research Article



Mapping of Transcultural Identity: A Study of Anita Desai and Githa Hariharan Select Novels

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Abstract

We live in an era of interconnectivity, in which political borders and cultural boundaries are blurring and connecting numbers of people from all walks of life across the globe, experiencing the effects of dislocation, deterritorialization and cross-cultural acculturation. A hybrid culture has emerged, and multiculturalism appears to have progressed beyond simply combining and cohabiting different cultures to describe the growing phenomenon of cultural annihilation, which occurs when cultures collide, resulting in the first signs of a future universal culture. The writers of Indian roots put the world in a single frame by presenting multiple cultures through alien characters with different socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political background. The frequent journeys by characters to different places absorb the cultures of that places that

arise multiple cultures conflicting ideologies. The research studies focus on mapping of transnational identity, transcultural encounters, and contradictory ideologies. The figuration of multiple displaced identities is to key to question of cultural borders and linguistic perturbed articulations.

Keywords: Transcultural identity, Transnational Ties, Conflicting Ideologies, Gender Identity, Cross-cultural Interaction, Hybrid Identities

Introduction

The last ten years have been distinguished by the proliferation of discourse on the terminology 'trans' (translation and translational, transnational transcultural), if the late twentieth century was dominated by the prefix 'post' (post colonialism, post feminism, post-postmodernism). The emerge of it is a universal and concept of world as a village, the Indian writers adopted a small model of fiction, in which they depict the world into a single prism of diverse cultures through the main characters other than India. Cultural boundaries have been turn down and borders become pliable as a way of survival to become transnational and translational. However, India being a nation itself consists of multiple cultures with diversity; each with its own distinct colour and specificity, resulting in a curry full of heterogeneous flavours which become the part and parcel of the Indian authors. It develops the cross-cultural interactions and transnational ties that frequently effects into contradictory ideas. The present paper focused on cultural identities and conflicting ideas in the works of Anita Desai and Githa Hariharan.

The world has ended up; through an intensification of the time-space compression that's the trademark of the new globalized world; within the common elation of these romanticized dreams of display and future reality. Thus, diverse cultures have weakened the ties between the cultural and vacates the place for mutual prosperity like hybrid cultures, and deterritorialization. The cosmopolitan transnational structure suggested and presented various cultural backgrounds with languages and different identities, that has provided not only economic resources, but also cultural, social and capital resource. In a globalised world, the methods of capital accumulation and related consumption processes differ significantly for different individuals and groups of people, with many of them being excluded or barred from participating in some circuits of trade due to the various permutations of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality that decide access to power and privilege.

The interplay between movement and fixity or the "routs" and "roots" of people and cultures are the origin of James Clifford's book, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late in the Twentieth Century*. His justification for re-framing culture and cultural identity around the concept of "dwelling-in-travel is well known. Clifford flips the rootedness issue on its head, seeing it as a function of routes and travel rather than fixedness. He is very cautious makes the point about various modes of travel, such as forced migration and violent displacement of "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" (36).

However, migration and cultural displacement, inspired by the increasing pattern of globalization and transnationality depicted in the postcolonial novel, are causing a

phenomenon that is distinct from cultural pluralism or multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was one of the key issues in the American culture wars of the 1990, according to Milner and Browitt (142).

The Indian novelists such as Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shahi Tharoor, Mulk Raj Anand, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, and Githa Hariharan distinctly portrayed Indian diversity, transcultural identity, and multiculturalism which resulting in transnational ties and conflicting ideologies in their fictional works.

This is a dilemma that Anita Desai addresses in her novel *Fasting Feasting*, through the figure of Uma, her stay-at-home female protagonist and the lack of formal education, travel, and economic freedom that Uma faces. How such access differs for gendered subjects in transcultural world, but still there is hope to resolve transnational inequality as the novel focused the importance of gendered subject's access to mobility and consumption (of food, culture, and cultural dress as well. Desai portrayed the formation of gendered subjectivities in and out through different modes of travel and consumption (both literal and metaphorical) to express the disparities, inconsistencies, relations, and epiphanies of a multi-textured transnational culture. Anita Desai's novel *Fasting Feasting* (1999) tells the story of Uma, a spinster and the family's older daughter who spends her life serving her parents, and Arun, who goes to Massachusetts for further studies in the second half of the novel. The first part portrayed Indian life style, completely with all of its traditions and values, while the second focuses on American life and culture. Uma's parents reflect the psyche of people who believed that girls should be taught, dowery and domestic abuse problems validate patriarchy once again. Uma is expelled from school, and her cousin Anamika, while receiving an oxford scholarship, is forced to surrender and marry, while Arun is given a special tutor and sent to the USA for further studies. Within the moment of portion, amid summer occasions, Arun, in USA, lives with Patton's and the social contrasts make it difficult for him to get adjusted, where the families, who clearly near, are in reality far from one another, which is in exceptionally much differentiate to Arun's concept of family.

Fasting, Feasting (1999) by Anita Desai embodies the self/other dialectic in its portrayal of male/female relationships in India. Melanie, the Patton's' rebellious and self reliant daughter, is the opposite of Uma, the unfortunate suppressed Indian child. Uma, on the other hand, is aware of her own worth, and her determination to learn despite her inability exemplifies Desai's feminist stance, which holds that education is important for women's emancipation and liberation. Melanie enjoys benefits that Uma does not. However, the American Melanie, who is more comfortable and has more freedom, represents a new universalism. Melanie is given permission to eat candy and other delicacies that Uma forbids. Desai juxtaposes her characters to highlight the differences between Indian and American cultures. In the Indian context, each character can be compared and/or contrasted with a character in the American context.

Githa Hariharan to begin with her maiden novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* is exceedingly acclaimed and won the commonwealth writer's prize in 1993. This delicately depicts the condition of Indian women caught between old convention and in modern convention. Arvind Mehrotra says that the novel deals with "the positioning of Indian Women in relation to this orientalist idea of tradition. Githa Hariharan herself returned to India after attending

graduate school in the United States and this novel is an account of the foreign returned Devi's attempt to find a way of living in contemporary India." - Devi, a young educated girl with 'the American experience' struggles to cope with her husband Mahesh, who is often away for business. She feels alienated in her own house of dreams...

Devi, Sita's daughter, is much more modern in her thought than her mother. Thus, before she married, she yearned for her own identity. She develops an affection for the American cultural environment, where she spent a few years pursuing her higher education. Dan's relationship and their carefree lifestyle seem to be more relaxed than in India. When she returns from America, she begins to reflect on every aspect of her life, including the atmosphere, family bonds, friendships, and the people she encounters. Devi wants to shed her heavy heart loaded with inhibitions and blend in with the lighter society, having been deprived of feelings and emotions in an Indian sense. In the course of transforming from traditional culture to modernity, she suffers both emotional and physical trauma. Simultaneously, she attempts to fix her identity, but she sacrifices her simple life in the process as a virtuous woman, this demonstrates her disappointment.

We may ascertain cultural crisis as one of the most critical aspects of individuals' loss of identity from the life of the young protagonist Devi. The protagonist is torn between the traditional Indian setup and the new American setup. Because of the ethnical conflicts, the mindsets of people have changed drastically. Cultural differences are a direct consequence of colonialism. People's thought processes seem to shift from day to day. The colonized attracted the Indians because of their sophistication. People were mesmerized by an education and a glamorous lifestyle made possible by newly introduced technologies. Women are the ultimate victims of this mixed society. The majority of them are stranded in this new world. Multiculturalism becomes a challenge to women as the family bonds that once bound them begin to crumble. When people begin to prioritize schooling, jobs, and gender equality, the institution of marriage loses its meaning. As a result, husbands and wives' relationships are broken. Despite their desire to assert their individual identity in society, educated middle-class women must conform to norms and customs.

Marriage, on the other hand, is the social foundation of a happy family. Therefore, women find themselves in a position where they must choose between the two. Either they must trample their desires in order to save their family bonding, or another way around.

Women in India are oppressed on two levels: as women in a patriarchal society and as residents of a colonial state. They were horrified by the British colonization and the colonization of patriarchal society. Thus, women looked at the value of living a life that allows them to make their own decisions. Despite the fact that external influences play a significant role in a woman's actions and lifestyle, it is preferable for her to adhere original custom and culture to the greatest extent possible, as these will all help her to thrive. Weather, food, schooling, clothing, and, most importantly, personality traits are all examples. In today's world, women's roles are extremely valuable in a family and society. Woman can go to any extent to prove herself that she is powerful and gain respect in some way. Living together, such as Devi and artist Gopal, and having children through surrogacy has become increasingly popular in recent years. All of the events mentioned above in India are influenced by western culture. And now, there is a plurality

of people who are opposed to such events. In comparison to other countries, India's divorce rate is also low, but it has increased significantly in recent decades relative to the early postcolonial era.

This novel is separated into three parts taken after by prologue that sets the tone and center of the subject, i.e. Mayamma's stories of enduring and Devi's travel into life. At the starting of the novel, Devi shows up as a youthful young lady with present day viewpoint. She lives in America and cherishes an American boy, Dan. But at the same time, she adores her mother within the sanctuary of her heart. She is well mindful of this exceptional reality that her conventional mother and her open-minded boyfriend would never come to terms with each other.

Dan was different. His charm lay in the vast distance they have travelled towards each other, and in Devi's awareness that this distance was not, would not be, completely bridged. This awareness hovered over them like a memory, protective because it remained undiminished. (TTFN, 5)

Devi plans to live with her mother, when she returns to Madras from America. She has some problems adjusting to day-to-day realities at first. She discovers that changing the good to old Indian set order with new ideas is difficult. She decides to relocate to India to care for her mother, as the two of them are pulled together like a single cell. "Sita becomes her anchor, never wrong, never to be questioned, a self-evident fact of our existence" (TTFN, 16).

Eventually after, Devi marries Mahesh, a Regional Manager for a multinational company to whom she often travels for weeks on work equipment. Even so, she tries to accommodate and adapt herself as a wife and lives up to her husband's aspirations. She has a positive impression of Mahesh, especially when he chats about marriage.

Although she quickly realizes that Mahesh is also an Indian man who treats women as objects. She believes Mahesh has deceived her with his cold and disrespectful nature. Finally, she is unable to fully adapt to a conventional life because she has been influenced by western modernist ideas that she learned during her studies and stay abroad. In the Indian male-dominated culture, she loses her identity as a wife, lover, and most importantly, a woman. Marriage is a source of torture for her, and it hangs like a knife around her neck. When Devi's husband entertains, she develops a dislike for him. When Devi's husband entertains his friends by turning the house into a venue for parties and card games, she develops a dislike for him. On one level, she becomes irrational in her dreams and finds solace in her strange imaginings. Her marital life gradually loses the glamour and enthusiasm that it once possessed.

Devi comes back to her mum, with the intention of starting over new life. The novelist does not have a response to what will happen in the future. Her novel's characters are true representations of various sections of Indian society.

Conclusion

Children develop a positive personality with strong enough to uphold such basic manners in them, such as respect and obedience. Listening to elders' firsthand experience guides them in the right direction. Instead of allowing western culture to affect them, oriental culture should take control of the situation. This is only possible if each of us has a thorough understanding of the current social situation and is committed to the upbringing of future generations. In reality,

the novel's freelance writer is dissatisfied with women's passive roles as wives and mothers. It is obvious that in Indian English literature, cross-cultural experiences and the ensuing ideological differences are popular. Cross-cultural identities and contrasting philosophies have now become an integral part of Indian English Fiction, because of their own transnational identities or because of the idea of universalism and globalization. Melanie's eating disorder has a physical equivalent to Uma's moral, intellectual, and emotional starvation. This is Arun's enlightenment, and the only visible connection between two worlds and two topics. *Fasting, Feasting*, by Desai, puts its own collection of images and ideas about the level of connectedness that is possible and impossible in a transnational world into circulation and competition with other creative worlds in a wider public discourse. Githa Hariharan heroines transform into more liberated individuals than their biological existence or society have sanctioned by forcing them to go through stages of self-introspection and self-reflection. These women fight valiantly to transcend their cultural conditioning and societal obstacles in matters of tradition and behavior. They eventually emerge as free, self-sufficient individuals, no longer content to be guided but eager to lead. Women today are still looking for their own identities, primarily within the family circle, in order to maintain the Indian family's status quo. Anita Desai and Githa Hariharan female protagonists both go through this process of figuring out who they are. To conclude, *The Thousand Faces Night* depicts women's struggle for survival in their interactions with men and society. It depicts over a thousand women who are still battling for survival in a patriarchal society that is rife with despair and dissatisfaction. Her anger is portrayed in satirical, ironic, and sarcastic ways. This is very interesting Devi's confession about Mahesh's attitude towards her is obvious, "He is far too civilized to raise his hand and bring it down on my rebellious body. He Snarls instead about woman's neuroses and my faulty upbringing" (TTFN, P.74)

Societal disintegration is unavoidable when parents are more concerned with their careers than with their children. So everyone must be careful in shaping and reshaping their children with healthy social interference because their future is in their hands. Society parents and individuals are responsible for every improvement in the world today.

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