

## **Transcontinental Coming-of-Age: An Analysis of the Psychosocial Development of Feroza Ginwalla in Sidhwa's *An American Brat***

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### **Abstract**

*Sidhwa's An American Brat is an account of the story of Feroza Ginwalla, as she learns and unlearns lessons that shape her identity after her move from Pakistan to America. This paper analyses her coming-of-age process in a transcultural setting, tracing it through the lens of Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development, and in extension, James Marcia's Identity Status Model. It does so, keeping in view her hybrid identity, in light of Bhabha's theory of Cultural Hybridity. As the novel progresses, her character develops, achieving and then shedding the diffusion, foreclosure and moratorium identity statuses. This research shows that growing up in two different cultures opens up her identity exploration to go beyond issues of class and gender, bringing considerable changes in her social, religious and sexual beliefs. Having to face things that an adolescent growing up in one culture alone would not get the chance to, Feroza struggles to find her identity, and as a result, finds herself to be too foreign for both Pakistan and the States.*

**Keywords:** Transcultural, Coming-of-Age, Psychosocial Development, Hybridity, Identity Status Model

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### **Introduction**

*An American Brat* was first published in 1993, and it tells the story of a sixteen-year-old girl, Feroza. When the novel opens, the protagonist has, under the influence of the prevalent fundamentalism of the Zia regime, asked her mother to conform to the dress code prescribed

by the government, regardless of the fact that they belong to the Parsee community. Disturbed by her growingly conservative views, Feroza's mother decides to send her for a few months to live with her maternal uncle Manek, in the United States, in hopes that the liberal atmosphere of America will undo the

damage. Manek, who is only six years older than Feroza, turns out to be her friend and her teacher, who in a series of practical lessons, gives her reality checks and crash-courses on the American way of life. Once there, she realizes that she likes the anonymity and independence that the States provide a little too much, and decides to stay for college, makes friends and then falls in love with David, an American Jew.

Feroza's coming of age process is initiated in Pakistan, in a close-knit elitist Parsee family, and comes to its end in the independence and anonymity of the United States of America, away from the cocooning adult supervision that her home-country provided. Her adolescence being spent in such a transcultural setting result in Feroza's development is completely different from what it would have been like, had she grown up in her childhood home and the culture her roots belong to.

The coming-of-age of an individual is perhaps the most important part of their life, as it is in this phase that teenagers, transitioning

to adulthood, begins to explore the self and carve out an identity for themselves. This being conducted in a transcultural setting has its implications.

This paper aims to analyze the bildungsroman aspect of the novel, studying the protagonist's coming-of-age process in light of her transcultural upbringing. This is an area that has not been researched so far. This paper will study it through Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, with its focus on the eighth stage, which Erikson titles 'Identity vs. Role Confusion'. Along with this particular theory, it employs another extension of it, proposed by James Marcia, called 'Marcia's Identity Status Model'. In order to study the psychosocial development of the protagonist in light of her childhood and early adolescence being spent in one country, and then her permanent settlement in another, Homi K Bhabha's Theory of Cultural Hybridity is referenced.

The paper addresses three major research questions:

- How does the process of ‘coming of age’, having started in one culture and coming to completion in another, affect Feroza?
- What aspects of identity get affected in spending adolescence in a transcultural setting?
- How does the “Third Space” that Feroza occupies affect her identity formation?

Although the three seem identical, all three questions relate to different things. The first research question is more relevant to Feroza’s understanding of who she is with respect to where she is. The second question deals with a shift in her beliefs, be they social, religious or sexual. The third question refers to the effect of the limbo between the two cultures, that she now inhabits, upon her identity.

### **Literature Review**

Sidhwa’s *American Brat* has received less critical attention than her *Cracking India*, perhaps because a larger number of people were directly affected by the partition of the Subcontinent, or as the name implies, the ‘cracking’ of India, than people

who experience growing up in another country. Furthermore, having grown up in a country not native to a person has a direct effect on the person in question, and at most, those of close kin. On the other hand, the trauma of partition is intergenerational and has trickled down to all generations post-partition. India, Pakistan, and now Bangladesh are countries that are no longer pieces of land, but rather “traumascape” which was coined by Tumarkin (2005).

Research conducted on *An American Brat* covers three major areas; identity, trans-culturalism, and marginalization. Identity-centric analyses focus on two aspects, namely hybridity and the diaspora. This is credited to the protagonist’s move from Pakistan, after spending a significant amount of time there, to the United States, choosing to live in a culture and setting wholly different from that in which she has grown up.

Dalia Gomaa’s (2017) article “Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*: Becoming American, but “not yet”” inquiries into the protagonist’s identity in light of her hybridity and

diasporic situation, attempting to place her within a community. She contends that Feroza faces “moments of estrangement in the US” (Gomaa, 2014, p.73), and yet this ‘estrangement’ is not specific to place, because, in Pakistan too, which is her birth country, she feels like an outsider, as she finds herself unable to conform to the principles of the Parsee community, in her desire to marry a Jew. Gomaa’s (2014) argument is, that despite having left a country in which she does not feel like she belongs, in America too, “Feroza ... becomes both a stranger and a free individual”.

Gul et al. (2016) too, have studied the concept of hybridity in the novel, in their paper titled “Hybridity in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*”. They argue that in reflecting “mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness”, Feroza is an embodiment of hybridity, and it is this hybridity that pushes her to move to the United States permanently.

Singh (2016) explores the construct of identity one step further, and in her article titled “Colonial

Ideologies: A Reading of Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*” claims that “religious fundamentalism is a modern practice by the state to cleanse its society of the supposed ills of colonialism that it believes has corrupted its present order”. She discusses this, especially in the context of the female gender, and says that in mentioning the cases of Famida, Allah Baksh and Safia Bibi, Sidhwa highlights the glaring drawbacks of laws like the Zina Ordinance.

Asif and Imtiaz’s (2011) article, “Speaking in Tongues”: Conceptualizing Femininities in Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*, is yet another paper that analyses the concept of identity, keeping the protagonist’s gender as the focal point. Asif and Imtiaz study the representation of women in the novel. They contend that the notion of identity being fixed is problematic in itself. Identity, according to them, is layered. In light of this argument, they study the multiple faceted identity of Feroza. In *An American Brat* and other works of Sidhwa, Asif and Imtiaz (2008) discuss the

“various types and levels of marginalization” that affect identity formation are recurrent themes.

Allen explores marginalization in Allen’s (2017) “Reading the Body-Politic in Bapsi Sidhwa’s Novels: *The Crow Eaters, Ice-Candy Man & An American Brat*”. In this postcolonial study, she distinguishes between the “body politic” which refers to an individual or group that exercises hegemony over another, and the “body proper”, which is defined as simply one’s own body. Allen points out that throughout the novel, Sidhwa “reflects important events taking place in the body politic by describing analogous events in the body proper”. An example of this is the representation of Feroza’s foreignness, a phenomenon of the body politic, through her distinct but condescendingly pointed out body odour, a phenomenon of the body proper.

Finally, Lori Novello (2017) studies borders in two of Sidhwa’s novels, namely *Ice-Candy Man* and *An American Brat*, in her research article titled “Dangerous Crossings in

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man & An American Brat*”. These borders do not refer solely to physical international borders, but also metaphoric, cultural, and mental borders that the characters cross, or attempt to cross in the texts. Novello (2017) explores how characters “negotiate the borders”. These borders represent the limitations acting upon the characters in their struggle to enter dominant social structures. These limitations, Novello argues, ensure that the marginalized remain marginalized. She further states that the limitations are not the same for each character, but rather these membranes are permeable for some, semi-permeable for others, and completely impermeable for yet others.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this paper can be divided into two major parts; the psychological and the socio-political. The psychological pertains to Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, and its extension, namely the Identity Status Model, propounded by James Marcia. On the other hand, Homi K. Bhabha’s

theory of cultural hybridity formulates the second half. It is interesting to note that Erikson himself, propounded his theory under the influence of the exiled nature of his own life.

Erikson divides psychosocial development into eight stages, each pertaining to an age group and a conflict, according to Amidon et. al. In this light, they say that “two conflicting ideas must be resolved successfully in order for a person to become a confident, contributing member of society. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy” (n.p.).

Elkind's (1970) eight stages are:

1. Trust vs Mistrust
2. Autonomy vs Doubt
3. Initiative vs Guilt
4. Industry vs Inferiority
5. Identity vs Role Confusion
6. Intimacy vs Isolation
7. Generativity vs Self-absorption
8. Integrity vs Despair

In her book, *The Life Cycle Completed*, Erikson (1982) states that

“most of these terms seem not foreign to the claim that, in the long run, they represent basic qualities that, in fact, “qualify” a young person to enter the generational cycle —and an adult to conclude it”.

For this research, the fifth stage, namely Identity vs Role Confusion will be employed to analyse the protagonist's coming-of-age. This stage lasts from ages 13-21, although this is an approximation since according to the World Health Organization “age is often more appropriate for assessing and comparing biological changes (e.g. puberty), which are fairly universal, than the social transitions, which vary more with the socio-cultural environment”.

According to Erikson (1970), “this period has to do with a sense of ego identity at the positive end and a sense of role confusion at the negative end”. This means that the individual tries to realize his identity, and a failure of this conflict resolution results in confusion regarding what his role is, with regard to his social surroundings. Elkind explains that

according to psychoanalysis, this stage marks the beginning of the child's search for a romantic partner, and Erikson does not deny this but rather claims that it is only one of the multiple factors defining this stage. During the growth spurt that takes place, the adolescent also inches towards mental and physiological maturity and experiences sensations and emotions that have previously been foreign to him.

Another important feature of this stage that Elkind (1970) explains, is that according to Erikson, the adolescent develops the ability to think about things from a second person's point of view, and also becomes concerned with what others might think of them. Now having the capacity to think of the world and theorizing societal phenomena, the adolescent "is an impatient idealist who believes that it is as easy to realize an ideal as it is to imagine it". During this stage then, the adolescent tries to integrate all their social roles into one, from which their psychosocial identity emerges. Hence Erikson claims that identity is

tripartite, its three components being biological, social and psychological.

However, the process of identity formation does not reach completion in this stage, nor any stage. In fact, Erikson (1993) himself contends that "while an initial resolution to the Identity vs. Role Confusion task often occurs during adolescence, identity is never resolved once and for all, but rather remains open to modifications and alterations throughout adult life" (1968). According to Elkind (1970), Erikson is "perhaps more than any other personality theorist, has emphasized that life is constant change and that confronting problems at one stage in life is not a guarantee against the reappearance of these problems at later stages, or against the finding of new solutions to them" (207).

To understand Erikson's (1993) idea of "optimal identity development", which he discusses in his books *Childhood and Society* and *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (Erikson, 1993 & 1968), it is important to note a few other concepts that he has propounded. The first to be noted is a

Moratorium Process, which Kroger in her article “Identity Development in Adolescence and Adulthood” (2017) defines as an “active consideration and exploration of future possible identity-defining roles and values”. It is here that the now common and often loosely used term ‘identity crises was introduced. According to Erikson, an identity crisis is a period in which an individual exhaustively and almost obsessively questions his identity direction.

Another important term that Erikson introduces is the accommodation challenge, which Loevinger (1976) in her book *Ego Development: Conceptions and Theories* defines as a “life stimulation [that] is critical for adult ego development”. Kroger (2019) defines it as “a circumstance or event that involves either a positive or negative disruption to one’s life”.

James E. Marcia (2011) extended Erikson’s theory, presenting his Identity Status Model. Kroger explains this model in the book chapter “The Identity Statuses: Origins, Meanings, and

Interpretations”, published in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. Kroger’s (2011) model has four statuses, namely “Identity Diffusion”, “Identity Foreclosure”, “Identity Moratorium” and “Identity Achievement” (34-36).

Identity Diffusion, as explained by Kroger (2011), is a status at which the adolescent has neither made a commitment nor are they willing to do so. In later writings, Erikson refers to it as “confusion”. He explains that since the adolescents are “faced with the imminence of adult tasks (e.g., getting a job, becoming a citizen, and planning marriage)”, at this stage, they “must relinquish the childhood position of being ‘given to’ and prepare to be the ‘giver’”. Furthermore, these adolescents “were not committed and had undergone little meaningful exploration”. As they pass through this stage, they acquire the strength to perform a larger set of developmental tasks.

Identity Foreclosure refers to the status at which adolescents are willing to conform and commit. They



have neither explored their options nor have they experienced an identity crisis. The individuals that the results of Marcia's Identity Status Interview (ISI) placed in this status were those who were seen to be "taking on commitments from significant others, with little or no exploration".

Adolescents of Identity Moratorium status have low levels of commitment. They are in their exploratory phase and are "actively attempting to form an identity... torn between alternatives". Kroger (2011) claims that "their future directions were present but vaguely defined". This is hence an identity development status with vigorous exploration.

The final status model is termed Identity Achievement. Kroger states that according to Marcia, these personalities are impressive in that their lives appear to have some focus or drive. This does not mean that they are rigid, but that "they are not easily swayed by external influences and pressures in their chosen life directions". After having undergone an identity crisis, they have finally committed to a sense of identity.

As discussed earlier, the second part of the theoretical framework for this study consists of Homi K. Bhabha's theory of Cultural Hybridity. Like Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development, only portions of the theory relevant to this research will be discussed here.

In the introduction of his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (2004) states that an exploration of identity occurs when one moves beyond the notions of class and gender:

primary conceptual and organizational categories resulted in an awareness of the subject positions - of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geographical locale, and sexual orientation - that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world.

Not only does identity exploration take place on a wider plain, but the search also becomes more rigorous. Newer avenues open and newer aspects of identity develop too. Bhabha (2004) speaks about this identity exploration and formation in the third-space, saying that "in-between spaces provide the terrain for

elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself’ (1-2).

The third space, the inhabitation of which denotes cultural hybridity affects the signifying processes so that a person sheds one identity and takes up another, but neither the possession, nor the casting off of identity can reach completion, and so previous values shift and newer ones always stay foreign to some degree. Regarding this shift of meaning in values Bhabha (2004) writes in “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences”,

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read a new (208).

## **Methodology**

The paper analyses Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*, studying the coming-of-age process of the protagonist in light of her transcultural upbringing, as she spends her childhood and early adolescence in Pakistan, and then moves to the United States, originally only to distance herself from the fanaticism prevalent in the Zia era, upon the insistence of her mother, but ends up moving there permanently, as the freedom she experiences there is too attractive for her to let go of. The research is descriptive and it employs Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, specifically the fifth stage, titled Identity vs. Role Confusion. An extension of this theory, the Identity Status Model by James Marcia analyses the different statuses that Feroza holds at different times of her life. The aspect of her transcultural upbringing is studied through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of Cultural Hybridity.

## **Discussion and Analysis**

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat* tells the story of Feroza

Ginwalla, an obstinate child, born to an elitist Parsi family in Lahore. With the Zia era fundamentalism on the rise, Feroza complains to her mother, disapproving of her sleeveless blouses. Alarmed by the colour of Islamic fundamentalism dyeing Feroza's outlook towards things, her mother decides to send her off to the United States, in the hopes that the liberal values of America might undo the extremism getting ingrained in her. Considering that she goes there at a very impressionable age, Feroza struggles but eventually finds herself more at home there than in her birthplace, although, of course, she finds complete belongingness in neither, and forever dwindles in the third space reserved for the diasporic community. What's interesting is, that Feroza reaches adolescence in two different cultures, and this makes her coming-of-age unique. This research will explore this aspect of her personality, analyzing every stage as she passes through it.

As mentioned earlier, Erikson claims that identity formation is constantly in flux and never reaches an end, and this research aims not to

come to an end of what the transcultural upbringing produces in her but rather traces the different stages and statuses she possesses at different times throughout the novel.

As a child, Feroza had been "a stubborn child with a streak of pride bordering on arrogance that compelled consideration not always due a child". She was "antisocial" and had a "steady stare and queenly composure [which] were disconcerting in a five-year-old". As the novel opens, she is sixteen years old, an age that coincides with Erikson's Identity vs. Role Confusion stage of psychosocial development. The struggle for the individual at this stage is to realize their identity, and that is what the reader sees Feroza strive for.

Even as a child, she has had no friends, as she "was being invited to an increasing number of birthday parties, and Zareen discovered that she was also antisocial... No matter how hard they all tried. Feroza did not smile or say a single word all evening". However, as the story progresses, we see her trying to make friends, and as a result, befriending

people who stand out equally: a Jewish boy, an almost exotic best friend, and a lesbian couple. In trying to negotiate her social roles, she goes back down memory lane and attempts to fix her relationship with her uncle Manek, with whom she stays in her early days in the states. Furthermore, during her visit to the states, we see Feroza find a romantic partner in David, which is yet another characteristic of this stage of development, according to Erikson.

As Marcia's Identity Status Model is built upon Erikson's theory, most of the analysis coincides with the status models. Hence it is more practical to explain through the model from here forth.

As Sidhwa's (1993) novel opens, sixteen year old Feroza still holds the diffusion status. According to Marcia, at this stage, neither has the adolescent committed to anything, nor is he willing to do so. When Feroza is introduced to us as at the age of sixteen, she is a difficult teenager, constantly living behind locked doors. Despite the fact that she holds certain social roles, she has not

yet realized them. Her isolation is a further reflection of her lack of adherence to any beliefs or roles. In fact, the first time she talks to Manek on a long-distance call, expressing her excitement about going to America, she exclaims, "I'm so excited!", so loudly that Manek says, "Don't yell, you're puncturing my ear drum", in response to which she "...directed a bloodcurdling shriek into the receiver", which is the first non-negative reaction that we get from her.

Feroza's freedom from commitment is again seen when her family and friends are seeing her off at the airport. As she and her school friends giggle amongst themselves, talking about all the "adventures", away from adult supervision, "everyone could tell their talk was full of wicked mischief and innuendo". Kroger (2019) explains in *Identity Development* that "Diffusions were relatively directionless, unconcerned about their lack of commitment, and easily swayed by external influences", and that they are in a

common a weak or non-existent exploratory period and an inability to make definite commitments. At their best, diffusions can appear extremely flexible, charming, and infinitely adaptable. They can be whatever current influences shape them to be. But, in the absence of an internal sense of self definition, they must constantly look externally to define who they are and will be. At their worst, diffusions are lost and isolated, beset by feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness.

Lacking any solid identity and “internal sense of self definition”, facing the first major change of her life, Feroza is faced with the first instances of thinking who she is, “as she hurtled through space, she became conscious also of the gravitational pull of the country she was leaving behind. In Sidhwa’s (1993) novel, 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”, and yet when the instance her flight lands in

America, she is suddenly “in a strange country amidst strangers”. “There was no answering smile in the cold, unblinking eyes staring at her”. This isolation is reflected in the physical universe too, as she is “confronted by a moving staircase, she came to a dead stop”. The displacement is disconcerting, and would have been less intense, had Feroza had a point of reference to hold on to.

As she moves to the states, her uncle Manek, who is both a chaperone and a friend, tells her that she will “have to learn to stand a lot of things in this world”. Her move across cultures teaches her lessons that would have remained unlearned had it not been the case. Cocooned in her elitist Parsee family, of which she was an only child, being fawned over by her family, especially her grandmother, and a mother who tried to avoid all conflict, her development had almost been stunted. She learns things she probably would never have learned, had she stayed in Pakistan. On the other hand, Mankeh tells her that she “better forget this honor-honor business. Nobody bothers

about that here". The protection that her gender provides her is something that the American culture does not offer. While in Pakistan her aunts had ensured that nobody harassed them in public, shouting at the flirtatious boys, "oye shamlesses", Feroza has no one looking out like that for her in America.

In *From Girl to Woman: American Women's Coming-of-Age Narratives*, Rishoi (2003) argues that

In adolescence, then, girls struggle not to lose what they know from childhood, as their coming-of-age narratives movingly demonstrate. That is, acting to preserve relationships improves girls' social and cultural capital, but often results in a loss of self and voice because many girls fear the isolation that often accompanies a woman who attends to her own wishes and feelings.

This is where Feroza's coming-of-age differs from that of other women, due to her transcultural upbringing. She has choices that those living in one culture alone would otherwise not have provided her. She struggles not to ensure that

she does not leave her voice, but rather to negotiate between the options that the two cultures provide. She inhabits the third space that Cashman (2021) has summarised Bhabha's concept which involves "a space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries".

Kroger (2011) states that "foreclosures may appear as strong and self-directed as achievements", and this is another thing that we see in Feroza's character. They further state that despite this, "there is a brittleness, and, hence, underlying fragility, to their position. Because of their difficulty in considering alternatives seriously, they must maintain their stances defensively and either deny or distort disconfirming information".

Once in the United States, and given the autonomy to make her own decisions, Feroza's conscious exploration of her identity begins. This is when she attains her foreclosure status. Her decision to stay in the states for college and then choose one for herself reflects her

readiness to commit and the commitment itself. Later, we see her decision-making abilities expand. A large portion of this owes to the transcultural nature of her coming-of-age. The culture of her birth-place would not have put her in the position to make any decisions. She breezes over a map, deciding on a city and a college for herself. This independence is a component of the American culture she is slowly adapting to. However, given that these are decisions that she has only started to take, they are not ones that she takes into consideration one should. For instance, she picks her college not on the basis that she should, like its ranking or quality of education, but rather because in California, she would be “too far away to keep an eye on”.

Furthermore, we see her willingness to commit in her attempts to understand and make peace with her past. For instance, she finally starts asking questions and accepting things with a higher level of psychological maturity. As she confronts her uncle about a childhood incident, when he had attempted to

drop her off a tree in hopes to kill her, him being a child himself at the time, she comments that he “must really have hated me”. Manek defends himself, saying that “those were childhood reactions”, explaining that his mother should not have given his due affection to her. Feroza understands.

As the story comes to a close, we see Feroza having attained the moratorium status. This is the most active stage of development. As moratoriums struggle to define themselves, things finally start to make more sense. Kroger (2011) says that “they may try to draw others into their identity formation project”, just as we see Feroza attempting to change her mother’s point of view towards marriage outside the Parsee community, and also almost succeeding at it. Other characteristics that Kroger (2011) quotes Marcia, who has pointed out are that

Moratoriums are often exquisitely morally sensitive. There are other Moratoriums who appear to be drowning in their struggles to swim against the tide of earlier authority based

identifications... In the best of outcomes, Moratoriums make self-relevant choices and move on to the firm commitments of identity achievement; in more unfortunate outcomes, they can become paralyzed in their vacillations.

In Feroza's case, we see her undergo a number of religious, sexual and social beliefs, in an attempt to achieve and understand identity.

From the very beginning of the story, Feroza is not too devout a believer, but she still felt at peace with her faith. As the narrator explains, "Feroza had a comfortable relationship with the faith she was born into; she accepted it as she did the colour of her eyes or the length of her limbs". This changes throughout the novel. There comes a point when she feels distant from it. As she is stranded in the YMCA staircase, she realizes that "she would not be able to struggle out of it by reciting the *Kemna Mazda* prayer as she usually did" (88). As time passes and she enters a relationship with David, her Jewish lover, she fails to understand

the distinctions between religions altogether, being able to see only meeting points amongst them. All religions coincide in many beliefs and traditions. She becomes most acutely aware of this when she has dinner with David and her family; "Breaking bread, sharing salt- these concepts curled in her thoughts with comforting familiarity- they belonged also into the Parsee, Christian and Muslim traditions in Pakistan". This is perhaps the foundation of her decision to denounce her faith altogether. As her mother asks her what the faith of her children would be, in case she married David, she claims that "the religious differences did not matter so much in America [and that] they had decided to resolve the issue by becoming Unitarian". Both David and Feroza would be Unitarian.

Likewise, her beliefs on sexuality shift too. This is perhaps because, as Bhabha (1995) says;

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories,



resulted in an awareness of the subject positions -of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geographical locale, sexual orientation -that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world.

After having moved into a society where things other than class and gender are present concerns, she explores her sexuality and is more accepting of her thoughts. She observes Gwen with a more sexual gaze, noticing that “Gwen had the longest legs dangling from her cut off denim shorts. The skin covering them was glossy mahogany and Feroza could not help noticing the way her legs stood out, delicate and beautiful amidst the criss cross stampede of pale or pink legs freshly bared to the summer sun”. Later when her mother is horrified at the realization that the girls Feroza is living with are lesbians, and fails to understand the concept of homosexuality, she exasperatedly explains that “some women just prefer women. Others are just fed up. It is interesting to note that she has changed so drastically, keeping in mind that Feroza had been

sent to America because her mother had been alarmed by the effect that Islamic fundamentalism was having on her.

Finally, her social beliefs too, have undergone a drastic, albeit gradual change. This is not only observed by the reader, but the protagonist herself is aware of the transfiguration, as “she wondered if she was the same girl who had lived in Lahore and gone to the Convent of the Sacred Heart”. Initially, she had wanted her mother to conform and not wear sleeveless blouses, but as time passes, she is seen defending America to her, almost as a reflection of Manek, who showed off the states to her when she first arrived. As the novel ends, a more self-realized Feroza emerges. Her mother knows and also explains to her that marrying David would mean that

he would deprive her daughter of her faith, her heritage, her family, and her community. She would be branded an adulteress and her children pronounced illegitimate. She would be accused of committing the most heinous sacrilegious. Cut off from her

culture and her surroundings like a fish in shallow waters, her child would eventually shrivel up.

Yet Feroza is firm enough in her beliefs to be ready for all of this. Putting her foot down to marry David in complete knowledge it would result in her ex-communication showing that she is, as Marcia (2011) says, ready to “swim against the tide of earlier authority based identifications”. It is also a reiteration of what Bhabha (1995) claims when he says that “the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew”.

She does not achieve the Identity Achievement Status, but we see that the process has been initiated, at least at an introspective level, in her realization that she wants to stay in America and figure out her way forward. The novel itself is open-ended and hence this is left to the reader's speculation. The last lines reflect this clearly, as the narrator states, “maybe one day she'd soar to that self-contained place from which

there was no falling if there was such a place”

During the entire process of her psychosocial development, Feroza faces two instances of what Erikson terms the Accommodation Challenge, which Kroger (2019) defines as “a circumstance or event that involves either a positive or negative disruption to one's life”. The first one occurs when she is locked out on the YMCA staircase. It is the first incident to shake her thoroughly. It is metaphoric for, and foreshadowing of her having a tough time settling in, and that her excursion is not to record herself in the edges of America, but instead the heart, and that it would be traumatic.

Her second accommodation challenge comes with her break-up with David, which leaves her with her first heartbreak. David realizes that “the very thing that had attracted him to Feroza, her exoticism, now frightened (him)”. By the time the novel ends, Feroza is no longer Pakistani, but still an exotic entity to those living in the states. She is a hybrid.

## **Conclusion**

Feroza's coming-of-age in a transcultural setting makes her a unique character. As it starts in one culture, and then restarts and reaches an end in another, she realizes that she likes her anonymity. This is otherwise something so natural to someone raised in the states that the thrill it provides Feroza, is absent for them. The pampered, antisocial and arrogant child that we see in her early adolescence, from which this paper starts tracing her psychosocial development, is humbled at the end. Her accommodation challenge itself affects her differently than it would have an average adolescent. Those incidents would not have occurred at all, had Feroza not been living in a transcultural setting.

Her identity is so affected that she feels like she belongs to neither place. The occurrence of her coming- of-age process in two very culturally divergent countries results in her having a hybrid identity: her exoticism scares her American ex-boyfriend, and her Pakistaniness is in a clash with that of her friends back home. She inhabits a third space that

is otherwise closed to her less-multifaceted companions. The Americans are more American than her, and so are the Pakistanis. Feroza is alone in the space she occupies. This habitation of the third space also affects her social, sexual, and religious beliefs, shaping them accordingly. In the context of religion, she goes from relishing comfort to abandoning it altogether. Sexually, she is more liberated and has developed a higher level of acceptance. In the social context, she no longer belongs to the social fabric of any particular place, which results in her growth in ways that her Pakistani friends had not, as she realizes that the things they fuss over, are no longer significant to her. Her coming of age is a process that transverses continents and places her in a limbo between the two. She is neither completely alienated from either, nor is she at home in one. Her identity is unique to her and the journey of its curation is one that will always remain foreign to those around her.

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