

## CULTURAL HYBRIDITY DRIFTS TOWARDS ROOTLESSNESS

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### **Abstract:**

*In the Indian literature we witness cultural hybridism of the western culture with the eastern culture. Let us observe the conflicts, turmoil's and changes through which the protagonists have to go until they reach a balance among different cultures, values and customs. Also study the circumstances which bring about a swap of culture in them.*

**Keywords:** *circumstances, eastern, hybridism, literature, swap.*

### **Introduction:**

A person readily alters his place of work, place of home for better prospects of life. The protagonists also for the betterment of their future reluctantly and stealthily change their attitude towards the detestable customs or different cultures. They give up their rigidity to survive in the new environment they find themselves in.

### **Culture dictated through stories:**

In India a woman is taught since childhood to be submissive, sacrificing, to live in the shade of her father, husband and son. These women then take pains to be like the role models of their holy scriptures - Sita, Draupadi, Savitri and Damayanti. Daughters brought up in this culture find it difficult to carve new paths for themselves.

Nayantara Sahgal's father – Papu, tells her about the princesses of Indian history and legend, when Nayantara feels an urgent need to identify herself with the princess of golden hair in her book. By the time the girl becomes a woman, this tradition has become her culture from which she finds it difficult to recognize her own wishes as an individual or to establish her identity.

### **Loss of individuality:**

Social archetypes regarding the status and behavior of women has taken deep roots in the life of the Indian people. The Indian girls imitate these archetypes and do not develop a separate identity for themselves. Soon they realize its futility. They observe that they have been brought up as slaves, to serve the men of the house. Their selfless devotion, ceaseless work and sacrifices towards their home and husband bring no recognition or value to them. They realize that they have lost

their identity, wishes, wants and are left with no desires of their own.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* by Anita Desai the protagonist is educated and foreign based. When in England, Adit selects Sarah, a foreigner as his wife. But, Adit is a typical Indian male chauvinist who takes pleasure in ill-treating Sarah. Sarah changes herself from an open minded westerner into a docile eastern Indian woman. She adopts the eastern traditional ways to belong and to be accepted in the Indian household. She tries her best to satisfy Adit, her husband, and in her futile attempt transforms herself so much that she loses her identity. A stage comes in her life when she is finally compelled to live a stranger's life. This is the predicament of practically all-Indian women.

### **Marriage as cause of cultural mix:**

Marriage with a non resident Indian is like having hit a jackpot for the eastern Indian women. Most of the cultural hybrids are fabricated due to marriages.

In *The Immigrant* by Manju Kapur, Ananda migrates to Canada for better education. He marries Nina a school teacher from India. Nina is carried away by the pomp and show of wealth and a rich husband. Nina's degree is useless here in Canada, so she decides to study to secure a job at a local library to keep up the household expenses.

Nina as a committed Hindu wife tries to create an Indian life in her new surroundings and accept it as home. She wants to be loyal to her upbringing, so retains only rice and dal. She feels her clothes keep her identity intact and so keeps on wearing her traditional clothes. Back in India she wished to join the religious custom of going on a pilgrim to the- Kumbh Mela, to purify her body and soul. She wants a baby to get settled in this new place. With a baby she feels she would easily be busy for twenty years.

Nina soon gets sick of her traditional food. Soon she undergoes transformation. She tries to blend in with the country people. She changes her traditional dress, food and also her views. She finds weather conditions difficult to maintain her traditional clothes. Her food habits move from fish, red meat of cow to the chicken and everything. She feels more liberated as no one is

here to judge her actions. Soon she feels all taboos should be dismissed.

Nina feels her body belongs to her and feels liberated to explore its virility. She enters into a liaison with her classmate. Her need to be herself expresses itself boldly. After she discovers her husband's infidelity and her mother's death there is nothing to stop her from being autonomous. She decides to migrate on to further lands with her new found confidence, independent spirit and now her new attitude. She packs her bags, takes a bus to Fredericton and fully well knows that she shall surely get a job in this new place with her education. She never thinks of returning back to her roots or traditional motherland.

**Adopt surrounding culture for convenience:**

Tara in *Desirable Daughters* of Bharati Mukherjee also shows great boldness by breaking away from the bond of marriage from her multimillionaire husband. Tara is a docile wife when she moves to America. She builds a mini India in her home. But when her husband works for fourteen hours in the office, she decides to divorce him and move on towards a better life. This feminist tries to explore her individuality. In eastern culture women stayed married till death and accepted it as their fate. They never tried to change their fate. As for divorce it was unthought-of.

**Hybrid culture takes a turn:**

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* unveils the struggle of Jasmine to belong to the new culture. Jyoti lives in a small village of Punjab, Hansapur. She soon learns that she must rebel against the traditions for survival. Jyoti has to rebel for getting education, for getting married to the man of her choice, for travelling to America unescorted after being a widow, thus breaking the patriarchal traditional rules.

The Indian patriarchal culture was unacceptable to her. In it there is practically no place for women other than inside the four walls of a home. As for a widow she is reduced to a non-living thing by denying her participation in all types of rituals, customs and festivals.

Jyoti wishes to live for herself. Alone and weak, Jyoti is raped on foreign land. She decides to wash this scar of her soul by revenging her rapist. Thus she decides to reincarnate herself. She draws strength from her Indian culture and takes on the form of Goddess Kali, out to kill evil. She moves forward in life drawing strength from the American life around her. Soon she transforms herself. From a helpless immigrant Jyoti changes into a confident working woman, unwed mother, a reckless lover and a self which is ever ready for a

new adventure. Each time she shuts her past or moves forward she takes on a new identity, from Jyoti to Jasmin, then Kali, Jazzy, Jase and Jane.

Kali becomes Jazzy when Lilian rescues her and introduces her to American culture. Jazzy is frustrated by the lonely and empty people of the industrial society. Jazzy moves to another city to take up a job of babysitter. They slowly transform her into a sophisticated American and name her Jase. Earlier Jase is not comfortable with her sexuality now she explores it. Fed up with her meaningless exploration she moves on to another place. She takes on new identity- Jane and decides to begin anew.

On the path of her journey Jyoti loses all that she valued most back in India. In America chaste body, virginity, love, emotions, relations were mere meaningless words. Jyoti moves from place to place to kill some memories leave pain behind and enjoy life. This empty enjoyment of life makes her more restless. She has moved so much forward that now there is no turning back. Her soul and mind is empty. She now lives only in the present trying to forget both the worried past and the worry of the future. She has adapted the American life and culture, but for the Americans she is still an outsider. The Kali who was out to destroy evil now does not seem to be affected by it. Nothing was evil now. Her spirit enjoyed complete freedom but her consciousness has no solace. It was ever surrounded by loneliness and emptiness. Nothing could bind it not even happiness. She had become rootless. Her soul was dislocated with change of place, city, country, culture, tradition and people. She felt like a tornado which had arisen from nowhere and which may evaporate into a cloud. Ultimately she transforms into a woman with a strong identity but inside she feels like a fallen woman. Whenever something goes wrong in her life she shifts to another city in an attempt to forget it and begin her life all over again. New surroundings, identity and people no longer worry her. She lives a disillusioned life.

In her book *Desirable Daughters*, Bharti Mukherjee has well stated the dilemma of such new generation which is growing in the hybrid culture. Their unending quest for identity and forgeries with oneself has been well brought out in the following words.

"No one behind, no one ahead. The path the ancients cleared has closed. And the other path, everyone's path, easy and wide, goes nowhere. I am alone and find my way." (Mukherjee, *Desirable Daughters*12)

**Observation:**

People are attached with the intricate customs, values and traditions of the place where they are born. Hence knowing these persons is like knowing their culture. Culture gives them purpose, identity and strengthens their bonds with others.

Yet, when they sense that there is no salvation in the imposed socio-tradition- cultural values, then they cross those barriers to make a place of their own elsewhere, regardless of being isolated from society or of being all alone. The dilemma of displacement gets replaced with western attitude of being autonomous and carefree.

The difference between human societies is due to these cultural differences more than biological. Hence separating the protagonists from their culture is like uprooting a tree from its roots. A rootless tree is supervised by the wind. The protagonists also become wayward and restless on being misplaced.

**Conclusion:**

All the codes of conduct created by the Indian patriarchal society are beneficial to the males only while the women get nothing more than a security of home in return for their selfless lifelong devotion. Today they do not anymore want to be a Sita or Savitri, that is belong to the traditional

Indian culture. The eastern women of today wish to break away from their culture and establish their individuality like the western women. The eastern women of today are aware that her dreams are broken by their stale customs and traditions, so they have moved on to new dimensions and new ambitions. Thus breaking away from the tradition makes them a feminist.

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