

Exploring the concept of Mimicry in Diaspora Literature: A study of “An American Brat”



Snober Gull	Visiting Lecturer, Dept. of English, University of Sargodha snoberchaudary88@gmail.com
Muhammad Maarooof Iqbal	Visiting Lecturer, Dept. of English, University of Sargodha maarooof_i@yahoo.com
Mahnoor Khalid	M. A English, University of Sargodha mahnoor.khalid1997@gmail.com

Abstract: As colonizers, literature continues to arise from the diaspora of South Asian across the world, such narratives are repeatedly used to bring to highlight dilemma of fictional characters trapped between two diverse cultures. Same is the situation with the famous novel of Bapsi Sidhwa “An American Brat” (2012). This novel is often investigated through the perspective of the identity conflicts that are faced by the protagonist of novel, Feroza. This research deals with the novel “An American brat” with different lens. The main aim behind this research is to explore the concept of mimicry in novel “An American Brat”. This study has been done in the milieu of framework given by Homi. K. Bhabha. The results of this research show that protagonist of novel “Feroza” is following the concept of mimicry. She is following an American culture. Feroza experience a multifaceted method of “interpellation”, which forms her relationship to the America and to Pakistan. Moreover, Manek is not only following an American culture, but also insisting Feroza to follow the American culture. Feroza and Manek both are inspired by American norms. He was Manek who taught Feroza about the American norms. He taught her not only about American lifestyle as well. Furthermore, this study investigates that Bapsi Sidhwa has portrayed the differences between American and Pakistani culture in her novel “An American Brat”.

Keywords: Mimicry, Homi.K. Bhaba, cultural Differences, An American Brat

Introduction:

In the whole world, there are diverse cultures, and people of different cultures share the different norms and ethics. Sometimes one thing that is considered as appropriate in one culture is considered as in appropriate in other culture. These standards make the purpose of civilization and offer its residents with a logic of fitting, and this is one part in the enigma of how our individualities become both alike and yet distinctive. Even if there are many individuals with diverse personalities in every culture, the majority of them adhere to the laws and customs of the community they are a part of. The beliefs and customs that these laws and conventions

contain are passed down from one generation to the next, but many people never ever stop to consider them. This cultural system gives one a sense of stability and security. But what happens if another culture, with values so different from our own, puts so much pressure on us to change that the world as we know it vanishes? We must all adjust to this societal shift, and we all do so in different ways to the new norms. Authors can utilize and relate to this perhaps troublesome shift in life in their works. Every novelist has the ability to offer their characters distinct personalities and individual approaches to coping with life. One of the key concepts employed by Diaspora writers is immigration.

Whenever persons or characters migrate, possibility of Mimicry arises. Different people have defined the term mimicry in different way. According to Singh (2009), Mimicry in colonial, post-colonial and diaspora and postcolonial literature is most normally becomes prominent when supporters of a colonized community (for example, Indians or Africans) copy the “language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers” (for example, the British or the French). According to Merriam- Webster, dictionary (1882) mimicry means the deed, rehearsal, or skill of mimicking. Mambrol (2016) say that mimicry is used to define the hesitant association between colonizers and colonized. Moreover, in mimicry, colonized people adopted the cultural habits, norms, behaviors, dresses, assumptions, institutions and values of colonizers. Furthermore, Mimicry explains the weaknesses of Imperialism. Ian (2010) said Mimicry is a term used in “Postcolonial Studies” to define the inconsistent form of matters in expatriate nations whereby the expatriate control needs its dominated others, specifically the aboriginal inhabitants of the engaged country, to stare or at least perform identical as the inhabitants and yet distress that consequence because it would weak their own intellect of alteration and authority. Mimicry is, an undecided policy whereby subaltern individuals concurrently direct their subservience to the more influential and destabilize that authority by building mimicry appear like ridicule. Poulsen (2015) said Mimicry results in a state of ambivalence between colonizers and colonized (p.3). Moreover he said Mimicry is appropriate to the colonial state in that is insightful of the meshed binary association, a technique of canon, as well as it shows out the uniqueness especially as illuminating inconsistency with the prospective for capsizing control or undermining the colonizer (p.6). Mimicry has a potential to undermine the leading control (p.6). Mostafae (2016) says Mimicry stimulates resemblance, on the settled to mold into the settler. They always will be situated inversely. Mimicry criticizes the inevitability of expatriate supremacy and generates indecision in the conduct of the colonized. Yet, it acts as influential

demonstration of counter-strength (p.165).

Statement of problem:

Copying or imitating the behavior of powerful peoples by the powerless, or imitating the culture of colonized people by colonizers is an important theme in post-colonial literature. In post-colonial terms, this concept is often termed as mimicry. The main aim behind this research is to examine the concept of mimicry in post-colonial and Diasporic novel “An American Brat”.

Objectives of Research:

This research has following objectives:

1. To explore the concept of mimicry in Diasporic novel “An American Brat”.
2. To investigate the immigrants experience in Diasporic novel “An American Brat”.
3. To find out the difference between American and Pakistani culture as highlighted in novel “American Brat”.

Research questions:

The current research is dealing with the given below research Questions:

1. How Bapsi Sidhwa, 2012 has used the concept of mimicry in her novel “American brat”
2. What is the experience of immigrants in novel American Brat?
3. What type of difference between Pakistani and American culture is depicted in novel “American Brat”?

Introduction of Author and Novel:

Bapsi Sidhwa, 2012 is a Pakistani American author. Her identity is Parsee. She transcribes in English philology. She took a birth in Pakistani city named as Karachi. Her parents are Peshotan and Tehmina Bhandar. When she was of the age 19 she gets wedded. She was detached by her spouse and then she gets re-wedded. She is a writer of diverse texts. Her famous works are “Their Language of Love, “Jungle Wala Sahib, “City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore” (2006, US)”. “American Brat”, Cracking India, “The bride” (Bapsi Sidhwa,

2012-wikipedia).

American Brat is a story of female migrant named as Feroza. Sidhwa begins her novel in Pakistani city Lahore. Her main protagonist is named as Feroza. Feroza Gunwalla is a girl of 16 years of age. She is a Parsee girl. Her mother sends her to America. When she left for America, she become more open-minded. She remained with her uncle and her uncle and her roommate taught her about the life style of American people.

Significance of the study:

The worth of this research lies in the element that it enables the reader to explore the values of two diverse nations Pakistan and America. Moreover, it aids the readers in understanding the effects of colonialism. Furthermore, it will benefit them in understanding of behaviors of individuals of powerful nations with individuals of less powerful nations. It helps the readers to understand the concept that how people of less powerful or inferior countries imitate the cultures of different nations, when they went to powerful or superior countries. It also helps them to understand the notion that how the concept of mimicry arose the phenomenon of ambivalence.

Theoretical Framework:

Bhaba (2012) wrote a book "Location of culture" in which he wrote a chapter entitled "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in which he says, "Mimicry develops as the depiction of a modification that is itself a practice of negation. Mimicry is, thus, the symbol of a twofold articulation; a multifaceted approach of improvement, parameter, and discipline, which "assumes" the other as it envisages power. Mimicry is also the symbol of the unsuitable; however, a difference or resistance, which adheres the dominant planned function of colonial authority, strengthens scrutiny, and poses a forthcoming threat to both "regularized" knowledge and disciplinary authorities" (p.126). According to Bhaba (1994) Mimicry is 'one of the greatest vague and operative policies of colonial control and knowledge. (p.85). "The copying of the settling values, standards, behaviors and canons

by the settled inhabits both disdain and a firm 'menace', 'so that mimicry is a mixture of repetitiveness and danger" (Bhaba as cited by Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). "Mimicry happens when followers of a colonized society copy and adopt the culture of the colonizers." (Homi K Bhaba-wikipedia). "Mimicry appears from the anxious marrying of the wish for seeing the self-reflected in the other with the wish for endorsing domination of the other based on concepts of vital difference". (Bhaba, 1994 as cited by Bick, 2014-15).

Literature Review:

Gul, Noor, and Singh (2016) worked on the postcolonial concept of hybridity. They explored that protagonist of novel is showing the phenomenon of hybridity. They also talked about mimicry and say that mimicry is a Greek concept. Aristotle was the first person to use the concept of mimicry. According to them, Bhaba was influenced by the Aristotelian concept that is the reason that he has explained this concept. According to them, Feroza left for America and after sometimes, she adopted the culture of American country.

Kumar (2011) examined the concept of mimicry in V.S.Naipul work. He has chosen "A Bend in the River" for his study. He says that writer has used the mixed feelings in order to portray the lives of émigrés. Moreover, clash of culture is prominent theme in Diasporic post-colonial literature. In addition, in postcolonial writings characters are showing the mimicking tendency.

Poulsen (2015) has examined the mimicry in post-colonial literature. He says that mimicry and colonial literature are related to each other. It gives an insight into the intertwined binary relationship and method of rule. Moreover, it plays an important in the shaping of identity. According to him, Mimicry is a method for the inborn subject to seem as the colonial specialist, but will never be equivalent in representation to such a midpoint of authority. Again, "it is a method in which to exercise soft, as disparate to hard power". Furthermore, Mimicry is used to highlight the tension in the setting of post-colonial.

Olsson (2010) says when a person senses his

personality is of inferior position in the society one option is to imitate another person's performance and mode of life; to become a mimic of somebody else. He examined that mimicry is common in literature having the people of two different continents. In addition, he says Mimicry is that it defines how the characters sense a person should perform and act to appropriate into the old or new society.

Parvin, Sasani, and Nemati (2017) say that Bhaba explained the shared association between immigrants and settled. The association between whites and Blacks is mutual. "Settlers and settled both rely upon one another".

Methodology:

The main viewpoint behind this research is to examine the notion of mimicry in diasporic literature. It is a qualitative type of research. In this research the novel "American Brat" written by Bapsi Sidhwa in 2012 is taken as a sample. In this investigation, textual analysis has been implemented. Firstly, a novel American Brat has been carefully chosen; Secondly, the novel was read through the viewpoint of Bhaba's idea mimicry. Thirdly, researcher has recognized the passages of text in which cultural difference between Pakistan and America was highlighted. Finally, researcher has practiced a textual analysis in the background of framework of mimicry given by Homi. K. Bhaba.

Data Analysis and Discussion:

Manek in novel "An American Brat" is showing the experience of mimicry. He is the major individual who familiarizes Feroza to American beliefs. He is an uncle of girl named as Feroza in novel An American Brat. He is a Pakistani individual and he left to United States with the intention of continuing Education at MIT. He developed in two countries. One is Pakistan and other is America. When he left for America, he accepted the values of American country and start imitation of American culture. He soon modifies himself into an American man. He is very familiar with the life style of US. He often offers Feroza with and valuable and redundant bit of information on how to perform and behave in America. Moreover, he provided diverse ideas to Feroza about the values and norms of

American country. He requests Feroza to convert herself according to the American behavior of life. Feroza encountered with Manek for the first time in America, and she look that he had grown-up whiskers "Even from the distance,filled her with delight" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 77). Manek demands from her to adjust the rage according to American individuals. He said Feroza to regulate her feelings in front of individuals. When Feroza begins awful behavior in obverse of majors, Manek shows his rage and anger for Feroza "Choop kar,"to shut up" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 86). Manek said her to modify the temper according to American people. He realizes to Feroza that, the standards of America are diverse from the customs of Pakistani individual "You're in America now:to bail you out!" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 87). He has adopted the sleeping norms from American nation and he recommended to Feroza to go for a nap on time. "Turn offin the morning" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 89). He requested Feroza to practice the American sprays on her body. He said to Feroza that you are typical woman and bad smell arose from you. On this conversation, Feroza supposed due to this reason Pakistani people are retrograde because they are uneducated "You can't smell.....any minute" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 97). Moreover, he determines her to appeal for pardon when she encroaches. He communicated her that American individuals do not suppose the interruption. American people do not allow somebody to intervene in their discussion, when they are chatting "How icilyfind it out for himself" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 130). He communicated her about the concept of struggling of individuals in America. He communicated to her that in America you have to fight firm for the reason of achieving anything. You are not capable to achieve anything in this world without any cost. Pampering is not found here. Not even a solitary object is served you in the bowl in America "The first lesson you learn in America is 'You don't get something for nothing,'" Manek said. "If you want.....works in Pakistan" (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 160). Moreover, he explained Feroza about the eating habits of people of America. He requested her to accept the American values as a

replacement for Pakistani habits of ingesting “He looked at herthem sick” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 187). Manek satirizing remark discloses that Manek has altered himself according to American nation. The notion of making a girl as a friend is a norm of American beliefs “Yeah, I’vegirlfriend” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 200).

Jo is the character in the novel, which influences Feroza to imitate an American culture. She is roommate of Feroza and she taught her about an American culture. Jo herself is an actual American lady. Feroza was impressed by her costumes and her method of talking “Otherwise Jo wore....., T-shirts and sweaters” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 209). She stimulated Feroza on the mocking of American philosophy and requested her to rehearsal an American pronunciation “She made Ferozamay I have that?” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 199). Feroza was fascinated by Jo. Jo and Feroza influenced one another. Jo explained Feroza regarding to the American existence and Feroza expressed her about life style of Pakistani people. She made Feroza practice saying “And it was all right.influenced Jo” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 200). Within a very short moment, Feroza appears to developed more and more “spattered”.

Feroza who is protagonist of novel “American Brat” follows the concept of mimicry. Feroza experience a multifaceted method of “interpellation”, which forms their relationship to the America and to Pakistan. Feroza is a student of matriculation. Feroza has a gorgeous temperament. In the beginning of the novel Feroza is in seen in Pakistan and she is represented as a spiritual girl “Feroza fiddled..... Don’t phone, please” (Sidhwa, 2012, p.22). When she was in Pakistan her mother was worried about her narrow mindedness. One day she told to her husband Cyrus that “She won’t even answer the phone anymore! ‘What if it’sphone to bite you!’” (Sidhwa, 2010, p.14). Due to the narrow minded personality of Feroza, her mother decided to send her to America. Moreover, Feroza did not permit her mother to wear Sleeveless dress. She criticized her mother, when her mother went in sleeveless dress to pick her from school. “In the car she said: ‘Mummy,

please don’t come to school dressed like that.’ She objected to my sleeveless sari-blouse! Really, this narrow-minded attitude touted by General Zia is infecting her, too. I told her: ‘Look, we’re Parsee, everybody knows we dress differently’ “When I was her age,act like that” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 15). After this incident her mother and father decided to send her out of country. They choses a country named as America (U.S) in order to send her daughter. When Feroza went to America, she meets with her uncle Manek, she was totally unfamiliar with the culture, norms, behaviors, conducts and personalities of American people at that time. Gradually she tries to mold her personality according to American norms, and tries to learn the norms and values of American people. Different people played their role to influence her about American norms. In the novel, different people taught her about the American culture. American culture impressed her and soon she modifies her personality according to American culture. Manek and Jo played a great role in her modification. They trained her about the life style of American people. It is from the influence of Jo that Feroza hoses to talk in an American accent and uses an American method of pronunciation, and quickly modifies her method of language for example “Pretty soonGitme a Coke” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 199). When Feroza goes back to Pakistan for a minor time, she discusses about the life style of American folks. She chooses American topics with the intention of talking with her helpers. Her associates have offspring, partners, and sister in laws. They prefer to chat about their matrimonial associations but Feroza enjoys talking about the matters similar to scarceness, inequality among blacks and whites, Spanish Americans (Hispanics) and job anxiety “Some of Feroza’sin the least bit interested in” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 308). Feroza was to a great extent pampered in American beliefs that she feels eccentric on her homecoming to Pakistan. At the stage of wedding, over again she performs like American lass. She picks her life spouse by herself. She gets involved with boys and rapidly made her mind to get wedded. When the problem of occupation came, she ponders for the occupation like American lass. Occupations,

which are unsuitable for Pakistani individuals, do not seem unfitting for her. “Feroza considered ...for less than minimum wage. (Sidhwa, 2012, p.279-280). Feroza modifies her personality as well “Feroza’s Pakistani outfitssweaters, and blouses” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 195). Zareen who is a mother of Feroza thought that Feroza has altered her nature conferring to American philosophy “Zareen suddenly felt so wretchedly alone in this faraway country. “I should have listened.....you’ve become an American brat!” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 362). Feroza leads her dissatisfactions in America as valued competence and grows as a bolder, spirited, and more confident woman who is skillful of creating her private varieties and possibilities. One day, she faiths to reach that “self-sufficient” residence, which if occurs, for Feroza, would no doubt be in America rather than in Pakistan. “There would neverof the same Adam and Eve?. (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 409-410).

In the beginning of her life in America, she is unfamiliar with an American culture, but gradually she becomes familiarizes with an American culture.

In ‘An American Brat’, writer seems to be more fascinated in investigating the prospects of distinction and contrast of Pakistani and American civilizations. She has talked about the Pakistani culture based on concept of government, Economic Dependence of Women, sexual freedom, Strong Religious and Moral Institution, and obedience. On the other hand, she talked about the western culture based on the concepts of atheism, Independence, Family Structure, Political Insight, Different Set of Manners, and Potential of Growth for Everyone. Sidhwa has talked about the fundamentalism that is prominent in Pakistan. She has talked about this fundamentalist concept through the character of Feroza

“Could you imaginemy daughter can’t do in 1978.” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 16).

Moreover, she said that In Pakistani system woman wholly relies on men for their economic, social and psychological needs. In addition, she said In Pakistani system parents and families demand indisputable compliance of children. On

the other hand, in American culture, secularism is prominent “Jeroo and Behram’s daughter tossed frequently, said,” (Sidhwa, 2012, p. 347). Moreover, she talked about the independence of women in America. She has shown the readers a character of Jo, which highlighted that women are more independent in America than in Pakistan. Unlike Pakistan, in America there is cracked family system. Parents and children do not live together rather they lived unconnectedly from each other. American people have completely diverse set of behaviors.

Findings:

The detailed study of the novel "An American brat" (2012) shows that Bapsi Sidhwa has followed the concept of mimicry in her novel in many ways. She has portrayed the characters who are imitating the culture of America. Firstly, Manek (uncle of Feroza) is copying the American culture. He is following the American norms, customs, conducts and the ways of life. He insists Feroza to adopt the American culture. He changed his temperament style according to American culture and he asked Feroza to control her temper in front of people. He is imitating the American way of talking. He is imitating the American Education style. In addition, he copied the concept of hard work from American culture. Similarly, Feroza (protagonist of novel) is another character who is imitating an American culture. She is imitating the dress style of American culture. Furthermore, she has adopted an American accent. Moreover, she made a boyfriend in America and turned her friendship into love marriage. When Feroza returned to Pakistan for a sometime, she feels misfit in an American culture. Her immigrant experience shows that in the beginning of her life in America, Feroza is unacquainted with the American norms, but gradually she becomes familiar with American values and beliefs. The analysis shows that writer has depicted a difference between American and Pakistani culture in terms of self-governing vs reliant women, Secularism vs fundamentalism and has portrayed the different life styles of American and Pakistani culture.

Conclusion and Future Recommendations:

Overall, in this research the researcher performs a vigilant observation of the novel “An American Brat” within the theoretical background of postcolonial censure based on the prominent post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhaba’s model of mimicry. The textual analysis of novel American Brat highlighted the fact that Bapsi Sidhwa has used the concept of mimicry of Homi.K. Bhaba in her novel. Her characters Manek and Feroza are imitating the culture of America. Moreover, she has portrayed the difference between American and Pakistani culture.

This research is delimited to the concept of Mimicry in novel “An American Brat”. The academics can additionally add into this study by exploring the idea of Feminism in novel an “An American Brat”. Moreover, researchers can investigate the concept of mimicry in other novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. Additionally, investigators can investigate the phenomenon of multiple cultures in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel “An American Brat”.

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