

**The Different Articulations of Homi Bhabha`s Mimicry and The
Third Space in The Diasporic Female Characters in Jhumpa Lahiri`s
The Namesake and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner***

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*(2003) and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*(2003) are brilliant expositions of female characters across two generations of a family (mothers and daughters), living in diasporic communities. Families in both the novels flee to the United States to seek a better life. However, they go through transitions within their identities, which lead them to become hybrid, developing a sense of ambivalence and indifference to their culture of origin. This essay will examine Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, through the changes in personalities of Ashima, Sonia Ganguli and Moushumi in Lahiri's novel and the roles of Khala Jmailah and her daughter Soraya in shaping their personalities for dealing with their original culture, American culture, parents and relationships with men. Will the mimicry of American culture eventually make them Americans, or

will it lead to some other outcome? Do these hybrid changes lead them to develop resistance at certain points in their life or will lead them into a traumatic end especially if they swing with a vigorous rejection between patriarchal controlling fathers and Western borderless culture?

The Different Articulations of Homi Bhabha's Mimicry and The Third Space in The Diasporic Female Characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) are brilliant expositions of cultural transformations of female characters, spread across two generations of a family (mothers and daughters), living in diasporic communities. The storylines overlap in that families in both novels move to the United States in search of a better life. In the process of adaptation, they go through transitions within their identities, which lead them to become hybrid individuals, developing a sense of ambivalence and indifference to their cultures of origin. This essay examines Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, through the changes in personalities of Ashima, Sonia Ganguli and Moushumi in Lahiri's novel and the Soraya in Hosseini's novel. Additionally, this paper will go further to highlight the intertwined relationship between mimicry and patriarchy, as strongly illustrated in the second generation of female characters in both novels. These changes are brought forward by the efforts of the characters who shape their personalities in order to deal with their original cultural backgrounds, the new American culture, their patriarchal controlling parents and their relationships with men. Will the mimicry of American culture eventually make them Americans, or will it lead to other outcomes? Do these changes into hybrid personalities lead them to develop resistance towards certain things from their old and new cultures, at certain points in their life? What forms does this hybridization of personalities appear in, as is examined by Bhabha, Fanon and other theorists?

In *Location of Culture*(2004), Homi Bhabha discusses several terms like mimicry and hybridity that explain the transformations in the identity of both the colonizer and the colonized within a postcolonial discourse. The two novels do not use a colonial setting but examine the lives of minority immigrants whose countries have experienced colonization and poverty and how this affects their parent's attitudes in keeping themselves in a way that they remain "the other", the "inferior". According to Bhabha, hybridity refers to an intersection of the interlocutors' cultures, that are reconstructed in a space called "Third Space of Enunciation" (37). The process of hybridization of personalities leads to mimicry, which Bhabha sees as a form of resistance, mockery and power. However, I will argue that the concept of "mimicry" in these characters, does not portray a form of resistance, but a form of change in original identities, such that there is an eventual rejection of both one's original culture and the new culture. This rejection is shown by the dilemma of the second generation female characters in both the novels, between belongingness and acceptance - "the third space". This will be illustrated by putting forward instances from the novel and interpreting them using Fanon's concept of "closed consciousness" or "dual narcissism" (33). Here female characters, mainly the second generation, experience this internal dilemma while practicing their lives in a "third place of enunciation", where there is a hegemonic power against the people of color - the colonized immigrants. They feel like Americans and tend to fashion their lives in that spirit. Simultaneously, they become tourists in their original country, where their original people are fascinated by the American education, accent and lives. Does mimicry allow these diasporic women to be accepted by the Americans as white American women? How do they compromise with their parents, especially the dominating patriarchal fathers, who force them to adhere to their original cultural norms in life choices like marriage, while themselves living by a Western Ideology that calls for boundless liberties?

Lahiri's novel revolves around two different generations of female characters living within

the American diaspora, who come from a Bengali background. The first generation is the mother, who accompanied her husband to the new world in search of a better quality of life. This is mainly portrayed by the character of Ashima Ganguli and briefly shown by Mashoumi's mother, Rian Mashi. Ashima initially resists all the changes she is faced with, on moving to the new country. She finds everything new, especially the food, the water and the weather. She even condemns her husband when he asks her to get pregnant because she believes bringing a child into this foreign world would mean raising only half a human, who would not know anything about her/ his own culture and might even take on the American values and culture to blend in this country. Lahiri brings out the scene as Ashima saying, "I won't," she insists thickly, looking neither at the baby nor at him. She pulls back a bit of the curtain, then lets it fall. 'Not here. Not like this'" (13). She is shown to be strictly adherent to her culture and values from her city, Calcutta. Her initial few days in the USA, become a turning point in her life, delving her soul into a deep nostalgia. She remembers and longs for her family, wishing her husband could take a vacation from his work so they can travel to Calcutta. She misses engaging in the various social gatherings and listening to the bustle of loved ones around her, which was conspicuously missing in America .

Ashima's character is understood to be just another victim of the patriarchal system of arranged marriages, just like other women in the third world, where marriages are set up completely by their parents with no free choice of the women themselves. Additionally, their lives after those marriages are determined entirely by the husbands and what they wish. However, deep amidst this rootedness in Bengali and Indian culture, I believe that Ashima harbors a strong admiration for the values of freedom in the Western culture, including the language. This is explicitly revealed in her admiration of English literature. She is shown to be well-versed with the language and its notable works, as her parents encourage her to recite a Woodsworth poem for her husband and his family, during the engagement. On the flip side, this scene is also construed as her parents being anxious to

show her off in front of the groom, as being well - educated and bilingual and in some ways. Another evidence for her admiration of the Western culture is given in the novel, where she is shown to be moved by her husband's unique shoes, which read the word "USA" at the bottom. This indicated her, as well as the general Easterner's, subconscious attraction towards America and the Western culture, as a hegemonic power. The narrator renders Ashima's first impression on seeing the shoes as, " She saw the size, eight and a half, and the initials the USA. As her mother continued to sing her praises, Ashima, unable to resist a sudden and overwhelming urge, stepped into the shoes at her feet" (Lahiri, 16). Ashima is shown to be inspired by the USA logo on the shoes and is tempted to try these on, something she had never seen before: "that were not like any she'd ever seen on the streets and trams and buses of Calcutta, or even in the windows of Bata" (Lahiri, 16). When she steps into the shoes, she is shown to be kindling within herself, a desire to try a new experience, a new chapter and a new western life. This scene in the novel symbolizes a sort of movement for her outside of Calcutta, for the first time .

In the course of the novel, the changes in her thoughts and personality are brought about gradually as Ashima succumbs to her husband's insistence on living in the US A and even raising children. Her getting pregnant can be seen as the first diasporic translation of her identity. Gross and Rudiger explain the translation of culture as "... a wider term covering the interaction of culture, the transfer of cultural experience, and intercultural understanding" (20). The moments of delivering her first child reveal not only physical transformation but cultural and ideological understanding of the new "host's" place. The first moment is shown when she acknowledges the differences in women's behavior within the Bengali culture and American: American women are at a higher liberty of showing their emotions and thoughts, including anger, to their husbands whom they call by name; Bengali women like Ashima, in contrast, never complain to their husbands but mostly cry in silence. Ashima is shown to reveal her sadness only in the letters she writes to her family in India.

This indicates the man's superiority in Eastern cultures and supreme patriarchal nature of the treatment of women. Lahiri poignantly captures this cultural essence in the lonely moments Ashima goes through in the hospital's delivery room:

Carol lies to her left. "Goddamnit, goddamn you, this is hell," she hears one of them say. And then, a man's voice: "I love you, sweetheart." Words Ashima has neither heard nor expects to hear from her husband; this is not how they are. It is the first time in her life she has slept alone, surrounded by strangers; all her life, she has slept either in a room with her parents or with Ashoke at her side. (13)

As one analyzes the novel, the question arises, does the solitude that Ashima faces in the hospital reflect the possibility of bringing about changes in her life and accepting the new culture for coping with differences? For a long way through the novel, such changes are unseen as Ashima is shown to dwell in the past. Bhabha illustrates such nostalgia as creating anxiety for immigrants since it "links us to the memory of the past while we struggle to choose a path through the ambiguous history of the present" (14). Ashima misses her parents and as is characteristic in the Bengali culture, waits for her grandmother's letter to arrive that will carry the name of her first child. However, this scene brings about a sense of disconnection with home and the accompanying anxiety, as her grandmother's letter gets lost on its way, leaving Ashima waiting a long time. The distress of disconnection is again made evident in the first birthday party she throws for her child as he turns one year old: According to ritual, it is her brother who should feed the child, but this time it is replaced with other Bengali acquaintances, bringing upon evident distress upon Ashima who misses her family. However, in the passage of the story, Ashima eventually does cope with all these changes as she names her second child without waiting for a letter .

Consequently, as time passes, Ashima becomes hybrid and ambivalent. Bhabha believes that

such mimicry leads to parallel resistance, which appears in Ashima celebrating Christian holidays, like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and birthdays. However, she still maintains a sense of connection as she celebrates these only in the company of her Bengali friends. They celebrate these holidays as part of their newly formed hybridity. She mixes these celebrations with Bengali food and costumes, decorating the place with red cloths and designing Christmas cards with elephants figurines, symbolic of Bengali culture. The celebrations are also done, in a large part, to please the desires of their children, who feel that what goes in their houses contradict what they learn from school and their American friends. Ashima is shown to participate in all such celebrations, wearing a sari and lots of bangles on her wrist, cooking Indian food and extending Indian hospitality, making sure that everyone has enough food. These instances show how she observes the new culture, but always through a filter of her own Bengali background. Thus, I describe this "mimicry" of Ashima's transmigration to American culture as being ambivalent. Moreover, she knows that this new American culture will never fully accept her as one of their own.

Gogol, Ashima's son, takes a negative stance towards this ambivalent hybridity, his parents' clinging on to their cultural roots and being resistant to changes: " He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world" (Lahiri 167). Ashima is unable to accept that Gogol is in a relationship with an American girl, Maxine. Having the strong impression that Americans do not care about social ties as much and neither do they visit their parents as frequently, she is disturbed by how her son is dragged away from his family and his originality. In order to illustrate her strict adherence to her Indian roots, Ashima receives Maxine wearing a saree and serving her Bengali food. Up until this point in the novel, Ashima's ambivalent hybridity as an immigrant is portrayed by both her desire to explore the new world for a better life, along with a cultural resistance to American values. She successfully

creates a dual world where she explores parts of the new culture, while still meeting with her own people .

Surprisingly, Ashima's character shows the most striking change when Ashok, her husband, passes away. In coping and moving on, she learns to adapt to American life and survive in loneliness. This is indicated in the novel when she wears robes for the first time and refers to her husband by his name while hosting a Christmas party. This signifies a turning point in her life when she sees the world through her own eyes, not her husband's. She learns to be independent of her children and drives a car to her work. The change is strongly felt when one thinks about her first impression of the house she buys with her husband, "leafless trees with ice-covered branches [...]. Not a soul on the street" (Lahiri 30) and compares it with her attitude by the end of the novel, where she talks about her original city as not being home either, " She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign" (Lahiri 267). Respectively, this leads me to look at Ashima`s striking change as being a victim of what Fanon describes as "dual narcissism", where she struggles being proud of her heritage and original culture and at the same time feeling compelled to adapt to the hegemonic American culture to fit into the new society better. Fanon defines "dual narcissism or closed consciousness" as, "There one lies body to body, with one`s blackness or one`s whiteness in full narcissistic cry, each sealed into his own particularity with, it is true, now and then a flash or so" (13). In America, Ashima develops her voice as a woman and finds her independence in the little things she enjoys, like driving the car, working in the library and spending time with her daughter. However, Calcutta, where she was raised as a child and a place where she always felt loved and accepted before, now becomes a place with two memories, two ideologies and two cultures, where she dwells in duality and thus, loss .

Conversely, mimicry is more intense for the new generation of Bengali women, who were

born in America, educated in American institutions and nourished within the Western culture. This

is portrayed by the characters of Sonia and Moushumi in Lahiri's novel. They suffer the "twoness" (DuBois15) of the two cultures so strongly that they end up with what Bhabha describes, "The Third World"(315). Moushumi, as a child, shows a distinguished sense of identity. An instance is shown when at a Bengali gathering, she tries to detach herself from the gathering by reading a book. Though her parents push her to align with her original culture with small things such as wearing sarees at gatherings, she tries to resist and reject this constantly. In an instance of a gathering of Bengali families, she changes into jeans and t-shirt in the middle of the party. She pushes against the idea of being dominated by her father, whom she has seen has dominated her mother, by preventing her from getting educated and working. In fact, the resistance is so strong that Moushumi rejects everything that connects her to her people. She feels that she is American and should have the same freedom that Western women have, in their choices of education and relationship. This leads her to reject an arranged marriage with a Bengali man. Such a mimicry of the hegemonic western culture and rejection of her past, affects her relationship choices as well. She falls in love with an American man, Graham, who is a bank manager and starts living with him in his apartment without telling her parents, " They lived there in secret, with two telephone lines so that her parents would never know" (Lahiri 265). Moushumi's character is shown to be desperate to define her choices away from her culture and, at the same time, become more American. To that end, she chooses to marry a white American man. Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, describes this as the mesmerism of the woman of color to the white man or Western man and vice versa "I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness" (176). However, she comes to a heartbreaking realization that even by mimicking western culture, Westerners would not receive her as one of their own and continue to look down upon her as an outsider. This is what Bhabha discusses in his book, *The Location of Culture*, where he argues that mimicry leads to mockery in a way that when a woman

or a man of color imitates the look, costume, way of talking and everything of the hegemonic culture, they represent this in a very strange way, the superior white people can observe that as simply imitation. He notes: "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 122). Graham is shown to look down with inferiority and criticism upon Moushumi's culture and customs. Though she considers herself sufficiently Americanized, she is able to detect the look and language of otherness in Graham's speech. Graham comes across as highly judgemental of Moushumi's culture of origin, despite the fact that he is going to marry her:

A few weeks before the wedding, they were out to dinner with friends, happily drunk, and she heard Graham talking about their time in Calcutta. To her surprise, he was complaining about it, commenting that he found it taxing, found the culture repressed. (Lahiri 202)

Though Moushumi tries to ignore the inferiority judgment towards her parents and culture, she realizes that the relationship itself was not based on love but was banking upon cultural superiority that Graham felt. This realization brings about a strong rebuttal from Moushumi, "she had removed his grandmother's ring from her finger and tossed it into the street" (Lahiri 203). This failed relationship allows her parents to interfere. They try to set her up with Gogol, who is similar to her in his denial of his culture and family. Moreover, Gogol has gone through a similar failed relationship where Maxine rejected him. The latter could not understand his relationship with his mother and sister and their domination over him and his time. In an ironic turn of events, Moushumi gets married to Gogol, an American Bengali man, arranged by the parents, just like the arranged marriage of her mother and father. Such a start to the relationship makes her uncomfortable in the marriage itself.

Given that this was the thing that she had always run away from, she feels this marriage will take her back to her culture of origin. Voicing this to Gogol, she realizes he has the same fears. During

the marriage, she feels burdened by the expectations of being a Bengali wife, who is expected to return to her apartment and carry out her responsibilities as a wife. She admits this to Gogol as well: "He does not feel insulted when she tells him that for most of her life, he was exactly the sort of person she had sought to avoid"(Lahiri 200).

Given a strong resentment against her original cultural values throughout her childhood, the marriage traditions and expectations from the wife lead Moushumi to feel marginalized within her community. She tries to find her little escapes, like in her friends, Astride and Donald. She lies to her husband about work and goes alone for shopping or dining in the restaurant, all in desperate attempts to recreate the older self that she now feels to be buried in her past. Her escapes lead her towards having an extra-marital affair with Dimitri, an old friend of hers. However, she does not feel guilty about this, "...the affair causes her to feel strangely at peace, the complication of it calming her, structuring her day" (Lahiri 205). Moushumi becomes a proponent of a "double consciousness" (Du Bois 216), which is interpreted in Owen "A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness" as an "adaptive as a survival technique, but it can be considered maladaptive because it can generate mental conflicts"(725). This is clearly revealed in her personality when she resists and struggles with the Bengali norms of conduct, which are forced upon her when she visits Calcutta with her parents and the white supremacy of Americans in the host culture. Feeling she cannot cope with both cultures and feeling misjudged in both, she ends up escaping both these nations into a third world, France and studied French literature. Bhabha believes that one identity is shaped by society as he illustrates, "home and community are ideological determinants of identity; however, individuals respond to these determinants in indifferent ways" (292). Thus, Moshoumi`s identity is different in the two places: Calcutta and America, where she feels like a stranger in both cultures. This rejection is intensified after she failed relationship with Graham and then the arranged marriage with Gogol, reminding her of a lifetime struggle to be accepted into the American culture:

And the familiarity that had once drawn her to him has begun to keep her bay. Though

she knows it's not his fault, she cannot help but associate him, at times, with a sense of regeneration with the very life she has resisted, has struggled so mightily to leave behind (Lahiri 262).

Hence, the cases of both Ashima and Moushumi show the same components of a transition into and rejection from the host culture and the dilemma between belongingness and resistance towards their original cultures, albeit in remarkably different forms. Ashima chooses to experience the change by marrying Ashok, who is going to build a new life in a new world and finds herself having to change in order to cope with the community. She resembles the post-1965 Indian immigrants who flee to America for a better life, education and stronger material gains, or, as Moushumi describes her parents' situation, " their ability to turn their backs on their homes" (Lahiri 245). Moushumi, on the other hand, is born within this host culture and embraces it completely, only to find herself feeling like an outsider. The first generation of women - like Ashima and Moshoumi`s mother - therefore, have to mimic the host culture but are restricted to their original culture. Whereas their children - Moushumi and Gogol - being born and educated here, feel trapped by their original culture but are not fully accepted to be American either. As Brah says in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, "Clearly the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations"(256).

This leads me to bring into discussion Sonia's character, who shows yet another side of this transformation of identities. However, her character is revealed with less dramatic changes or psychological conflicts, unlike her brother Gogol or Moshoumi. Sonia is shown to be less stressed about her identity throughout and grows up in an environment where her father gives her mother much more freedom than other traditional families, like Moshoumi`s. Does this mean Sonia can cope better with both cultures, without expecting too much from either? Or is it her parents who rarely push her hard to stick with her original culture? It must be noted that Sonia also lives in what Trina Minh-h calls, the "in-between zone" or what Bhabha describes as hybrid and ambivalent, just

like the other characters in the novel. She wears sarees on Christmas and eats American food at Bengali gatherings. However, what helps Sonia is that she knows her choices in life better than the other female characters in the novel. She recognizes that she will always be a tourist in her original city and thus, never gives her parents the chance to make her meet a Bengali man. She is aware that though she has been Americanized, an American man will never fully accept her.

Moreover, she realizes how little Americans care about their family ties. The experience that her brother went through with his girlfriend instills into Sonia the fact that in some ways, she must always remain the 'other'. So even while she mimics the American culture, she stays aware of the downfalls of this culture. Bhabha illustrates that even if mimicry is "the sign of a double articulation", it also "visualizes power" (124) for the 'other' or people of color. Sonia is shown to be softer towards her family, as she moves from California to live in an apartment next to her family's house and help out her mother and family. Her father's death strikes her hard, taking her out of the American materialistic culture. So mimicry in the cases of both Sonia and Moushumi, as Bhabha claims, has a "partial presence by 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'" (125). After comprehending the American stance toward Indian immigrant women, Sonia marries a hybrid man, just like herself, a Jewish-Chinese journalist in Boston, Ben. Moushumi understands this limitation when she hears Graham talking about her city of origin (Lahiri 265).

After investigating the dramatic vicissitudes of mimicry in the characters in Lahiri's novel, can it be argued that it is the stance of the family and the patriarchal father that, in some sense, infuses conflict in the second generations of immigrants, living within foreign cultures? I further explore this by reference to characters in Khaled Hosseini's brilliant novel, *The Kite Runner*. In the remainder of this essay, I trace the mimicry concepts, ambivalence, and hybridization of personality through the personality of Soraya and other surrounding characters in *The Kite Runner*. Soraya moved with her family in 1970 to the USA, after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Her father was a great general in Afghanistan and always dreamt of returning to his country, showing the

negligible effects of mimicry on the first generation. During the representation of the flea market, the novel brings forward the conservativeness of the Afghani culture, especially its women's treatment. Women's reputation, if young and found talking to a man alone, can be besmirched in communities very easily, bringing about promiscuity judgments. Soraya arrives in Virginia with her family at a young age and instantly becomes inspired by the American culture. She goes through a rapid phase of mimicry of the host culture. She tries leading a liberal life and starts living with a young man, away from her family. The young man, however, is shown as an immoral character, with a drinking habit. Her father, being a strict patriarchal Afghani man, refuses to accept such dramatic changes in his daughter. He brings her back to the house and then moves away from Virginia to escape the scandals that Soraya did. Regardless of the strict patriarchal treatment she receives, Soraya realizes that her father saves her from an unhealthy relationship, which could have led her to eventual destruction. Soraya meets Amir in the flea market. She admires his Americanized way of thinking, never talking about his past, his culture, or becoming judgmental like other Afghani immigrants. Amir, whom Soraya accepts to marry, does not react negatively to Soraya's affairs with other men in the past. He says, "Nothing you said changes anything" (Hosseini 212).

The admiration is extended on both sides as Amir admires her confidence and courage in sharing her secrets with him. Amir's character, throughout the novel, is shown to be very progressive compared to the average Afghani man who cares about "Nang, Namoos, Honor and pride....", especially when it comes to the chastity of a wife or daughter. Soraya is shown to be Americanized in her dress, language, and even her way of reading books. Fanon reveals that the first thing that people of color do to imitate the hegemonic power is to master their language, in order to be accepted. Unlike Moushumi, Soraya comes out of her failed relationships in the past with the lesson that even if she mimics the host culture, she will not become them. This feeds into her decision to marry Amir, who never judged her or was scared to talk to a woman about his writing. He says, "I held my breath. Suddenly, I felt the collective eyes of the flea market Afghans shift to us...eyes

narrowing with keen interest" (Hosseini 213). As any second-generation immigrant woman in America, Soraya is shown to live the struggle between her patriarchal father and conservative culture and the liberty she witnesses all other American women to have. Thus, there is a continuing conflict of being hybrid. However, her ongoing conflict is acutely disrupted by a moment of realization, where the limitations and "menace" (Bhabha 231) of the host culture suddenly become apparent to her. She starts looking back upon her relationship with the drunk young man with regret, "I was eighteen at the time...rebellious...stupid, and... he was into drugs...We lived together for almost a month" (Hosseini, 126). The story poignantly expresses the to and from changes in personalities and dilemmas that immigrants face, who cannot detach themselves completely from the past, even if they try to disclaim their history, as is revealed in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora": "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narration of the past" (Voicu 40). For Soraya, her past leads her to reshape her ideology in life as she begins to define her future as a hybrid Afghani American woman, not limiting herself to either one or the other .

Going through both these thought-provoking novels, can it be said that moments of realization in the double articulation, help the female characters get rid of hybridity and return to their original cultures? Or do they move the opposite way and reject their original cultures completely and simply take on a new identity in the new culture? My answer would be that the transition of identities is more complex than that and come in various shades of grey. Both novels, in their ways, show all the female characters to end up in the unknown space in between the original and the host culture. Or what Bhabha coined it as a "third space". He notes:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an

ambivalence in the act of interpretation. (53)

After comprehending the limitations of the host culture, Sonia chooses the third world in her future husband that he is neither American nor Afghani, but a reflection of her hybrid diasporic identity. Moushumi's conflicted identity passes through many contradicting changes, starting with her name, unable to find assimilation with the hegemonic culture and finally ending up in a neutral place, less judgmental of her background. Thus, she could start a new life, leaving behind the forced connection with her original culture and the fake ties that her family had tried to establish in the USA.

As most Indian families in the 1960s, families in both these novels moved not because of war or poverty, but out of personal choice, searching for a better life and personal gain. However, this does not save them from the negative impacts of such a move. Ashima suffered the agony of loneliness and belongingness as "she still does not feel fully at home" (Lahiri 280). Moushumi, even with her strong mimicry of American culture, is constantly tied up between the strictness of her parents and the patriarchal father figure. Soraya realizes that escaping with a man was not the right way to feel liberated, and finds her third space in Amir, a man who reflects her hybridity as he describes America as "a place to bury my memory" (Hosseini 11).

Moreover, he resonated with her conflicts in his own life, "I didn't care about Soraya's past that I had one of my own" (Hosseini 155). Finally, all the female characters from both novels end up torn and collide with huge changes, no matter how much they try to be accepted by the host culture. They find themselves "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, coreless, stateless, rootless" (Fanon 176).

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