

Understanding Gender Trans/formation in Trans/national Racial Communities: Pakistani Women in First-World Diaspora

Abstract

Gender is a social and cultural construct and every society imposes different characteristics pertaining to gender roles for men and women. Often these roles are manifested in the actions of people in certain settings with gender based practices or constructions differing from one society to another. The patriarchal mode of society deems less liberal positions for women than a society which is matriarchal. Pakistan's mainly patriarchal culture deems women subservient to men but migration and resettlement in a new environment enable these women to exhibit resilience and determination. The rationale of this inquiry is to analyze the impact of migration on Pakistani women diaspora and how female gender roles are transformed, and represented in diaspora literature.

Key words: Migration, Gender, Transnationalism, Racial Relations, Transformation

INTRODUCTION

The term diaspora is taken from the Greek word ‘*diaspeirein*’ meaning ‘scattering of seed’. It entails the process of migration of an individual or a group of people from their homeland to adopted-land. The word diaspora has been translated in all dictionaries in relation to the dispersal of Jews after the Babylonian captivity that is believed to be associated with the Jewish experience. However the term has now taken up metaphoric connotations for every one living away from their roots like expatriates, immigrants, refugees, displaced communities and ethnic minorities (Tölölyan, 1991, p. 5). Over the years the term diaspora has proliferated and due to an immense exploration in the field, many issues pertaining to diaspora have looked in like nostalgia, memory, identity crisis, etc. Diaspora, being part of migration, is a fundamental phenomenon

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since it involves the process of moving from one material setting to different and perhaps new and unfamiliar surroundings. Diaspora has always been a part of human civilization around the world due to the large scale migration of people from their homeland to other societies, though the reasons have been different for these displacements. Diaspora is a dynamic process affecting the thinking and way of life of migrants. Diasporic state posits influence on the minds of the immigrants. It not only requires physical relocation but also involves psychological resettlement in host culture. Gender representation and transformation is an important aspect of diaspora as diasporic community forms a trans[national] gendered society, in which they undergo gender based relations and differences, and try to adjust themselves in new surroundings. The recent scholarship has “emphasized the continuous and ongoing process through which immigrants [male and female] reconstitute and negotiate their identity[ies]” (Bhatia and Ram, 2001, p. 2).

Diaspora influences men and women in a different way depending upon their earlier socio-political and cultural contexts. Cultural embeddedness is a matrix of gender, where identities, behaviors and roles are constructed between men and women. This means that gender based roles and practices differ from one society to another. When men and women socially interact with each other in a particular gendered setting, their behaviors transform accordingly. For instance, in most developing countries women are given the roles of caretaker of the house, confined within the four walls but when these women migrate to first world countries they shift from household role to wage earner for family as a result of social mobility, economic autonomy and self-empowerment in diasporic setting. Passing from house-confinement to working outside gives women a certain gender reconstruction by opposing earlier gender stereotypes. Migration also affects men; power that has been traditionally accorded to men and home grown cultural ideology changes when men and women work together inside and outside the home with equal authority. Since ‘diasporic identities are always configured through gender’ (Dwyer, 2000, p. 475), migration in the globalized context provides re-construction and reshaping of gender roles among men and women. Thus it can be conceded that gender is not a static phenomenon but changes constantly and in this way is socially constructed and reconstructed through time and space. Diaspora offers new foundation to gender constructions and reconstructions for migrants, therefore gender roles and/or practices are bound to undergo negotiation and trans/formational process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diaspora studies have been male centered phenomenon until very recently. But with the onset of different women’s movements and developmental studies in the field during the 1980’s women have been brought to the center of migration studies in

addition with other fields of inquiries. As a result diaspora is now studied from both male and female perspectives, focusing on different theoretical and analytical tools applicable to gendered analyses without elaboration of sex as a dichotomous instrument. For example Pessar (1986) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) take a critical stance against conventional hypotheses regarding gender and migration, and assert that diaspora is a gendered process but for a long time gender has been sidelined in scholarly discussions. Since the 1980s diaspora discipline has become gender responsive bringing women into the sphere of international migration experiences which is one of the most important corollaries of diaspora discourse. It emphasizes women's conditions in diaspora by asking questions whether women have been emancipated from presumed gender roles and behaviors of their home grown culture.

Olivia Espin (1999) in *Women Crossing Boundaries* attempts to explore trans/formation of gender and sexuality of women in diaspora through the narratives of women from different backgrounds. These women range in age from the 20s to 70s and their narratives are analyzed in the backdrop of their historical and socio-economic contexts of migration. Her stance is on the psychological impact of migration on women's sexuality and gender roles. Acculturation is a pivotal process for all migrants – men and women – but it entails psychological changes and affects differently in terms of gender. However, according to Espin, acculturation is not an easy process of integration since the internalization of cultural and familial norms has deep roots in the psychology and identity of all human beings (Espin, 1999, p. 5). Cultural up-rootedness formulates ideology and gender roles for people but the process of migration brings interaction between home grown and diasporic ideological understandings in which immigrants tend to be transformed. It may be surmised that the experiences of migrant women will ultimately result in significant social changes in their vantage point, gender relations and sense of identity.

Shahnaz Khan (2002) in her book, *Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora*, attempts to explore the process of negotiating gender identity among Muslim female immigrants in Canada. She interviewed fourteen Muslim female girls of different ages belonging to diverse backgrounds for the purpose of gaining insight into gender discourses and practices in multicultural context that help shape their identities. The accounts of these girls regarding social fluidity of their identities helps us to understand the issues that Muslim women might face in present-day western metropolitan societies and suggest how Islamic female identity is constructed and performed in Canada and how it may be constructed and performed elsewhere in the *First World* (Khan, 2002, p. 22). Individual women experience the diaspora process in different ways than men. Being in diasporic state, women create hybridized gender space for themselves between their previous and current gender ideological contestation and as a result their ontological existence

challenges the fixity of cultural and religious bonds, discursively constructing new and transformed gendered ideologies. According to Khan (2002), women as hybridized subjects initiate new signifiers and symbols of identities (p. 21). When a woman leaves her home grown society and settles in a new community, besides other social structures her gender orientation is deconstructed and reconstructed in a new place. The varying landscape of gender practices across borders allows women to negotiate and reconstruct their gender relations and beliefs.

Monica Ali, the South Asian diaspora writer of Bangladeshi descent, has presented the issues of gender among Bangladeshi diaspora women in her debut novel *Brick Lane* (2003). The protagonist of the novel Nazneen is a typical Bangladeshi teenage girl who settles in London after her marriage with Channu, a middle-aged man who has been living in England for many years. During her initial stay in London Nazneen is strictly inclined to her Bangladeshi traditional beliefs, cultural roots and parental socialization, just as she had promised her father before marriage, “Abba.... I hope I can be a good wife like Amma” (Ali, 2003, p. 27). She is intended for household chores, as a loyal and deferential wife, interacting only with Bangladeshi women and adhering to her traditional dress and norms. Later, however, she has to struggle to negotiate between her traditional self and cross-cultural transformed self; and we see gradual changes in her character. Earlier she had followed a fatalist philosophy; which made her feel that she had no say in her destiny and therefore had to succumb to fate, but as her interaction with her new surroundings expands, she gains self-confidence and forces herself to control her life. The only thing she aspires for is the freedom of which she has been deprived in her patriarchal native land but being in a diasporic state she finds opportunity to exercise her power according to her free will and therefore decides not to leave England. Her adulterous affair with Karim testifies to her sense of the independent self. Although adultery is a sin in Islam and forbidden in any Islamic society, Nazneen indulges in it without considering it as sinful or inappropriate. It is because of her hedonistic approach which grows out of her interaction and the overwhelming effects of western culture. Another example of diasporic gender representation is presented by Tahira Naqvi in her collection of short stories *Dying in a Strange Country* (2001).

All of these stories are interwoven with each other by a thread running through the stories by means of a female character named Zenab. Naqvi deals with the theme of gender and culture which is set in an extended immigrant Pakistani-American family living in North America. Her stories portray the immigrant experiences of women with recurring topics of daily life in a light manner without cultural or identity collision in diversified America. All characters are depicted in a way in which they come to reconcile and negotiate differences and bring a balance to their dual identities; “the search for identity, therefore seems to be maturing and mellowing into

a negotiation, where it is not necessary to be exclusively one or the other, and is more viable to be a hybrid product of several cultures” (Lisa, 2002, p. 277). Thus in diaspora gender identities are presented in relation to the other, where identities are accepted as transformed.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the responses and challenges of Pakistani trans-migrant women regarding gender roles, as presented in Pakistani diaspora literature. In developing the parameters of this inquiry, the following objectives are established; a) to analyze the psychological imprinting of diaspora on Pakistani immigrant women and b) to examine socio-cultural collision and aversion in diaspora with respect to gender roles and practices. Since this study is undertaken to explore the psychological imprinting of migration upon the female immigrants moving from their national and cultural boundaries to new adopted societies, it is a theoretical descriptive/interpretive analysis. I attempt to examine the gender transformational process and elements involved in this transformation in the backdrop of Lacan’s idea of ‘Innennwelt’ and ‘Umwelt’. Lacan develops a relationship between a person’s inner-self and the outer-world by using the German terms *Innennwelt* (inner world) and *Umwelt* (environment) to emphasize the interaction between inner and outer worlds for human entrance into society. This study is delimited to Kamila Shamsie’s novel *Salt and Saffron*.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The novel *Salt and Saffron* (2000) centers around the three dimensional experience of the Pakistani girl Aliya, who returns to Pakistan for summer vacations after graduating from America. On her way back from America she stays for a few days with her relatives in England. Aliya is the main character and narrator of the story: a natural storyteller, who develops her storytelling technique from her grandmother’s bedtime stories. The whole story is told in flash backs, in which she moves between Pakistan, America and England and from the present to the past. The stories within the story are very significant in understanding Aliya’s mental development and revisiting of old traditions and values. Her social and cultural dispersion in the diaspora contributes to her diasporic consciousness and interaction within the new socio-cultural environment and shapes her personal identity. The novel is not only a journey of the protagonist from Pakistan to America and England but it also portrays Aliya’s ideological travelling from Pakistani cultural conventions to Westernized cultural values. Aliya is a descendent of the aristocratic Dard-e-Dil family who settled in Pakistan after the emergence of Pakistan, during the middle of the twentieth century. The Dard-e-Dils are an influential and affluent family that traces its roots to the ancient feudal clan of Taimur Lang. The whole family is divided into the old and

new generations having traditional and modern mental makeup respectively. Characters belonging to the old generation continuously try to reestablish family ancestry and refer back to ancestral stories with keen pride whereas the younger group is skeptical about family claims and attempts to deconstruct these claims by questioning the authenticity of the past. Aliya is a new generation *Dard e Dil* who moves to America for higher studies. Transnational movement enables her to revisit her family history by looking into the familial and social constructs embedded in her family stories, time-and-again commenting about her family stories. After living for four years away from her family she deconstructs her familial aristocratic lineage and the class and gender division pertinent to her family tradition and Pakistani society. She finds herself caught between two ideological constructs; the Pakistani conservative outlook and the contemporary American diaspora where she becomes a liberal individual.

The trajectories of Lacan's *Innennwelt* and *Umwelt* (p. 63) are woven in Aliya's life in the form of old and new, eastern and western thoughts and values. According to Lacan, the idea of the self evolves through interaction between the self (*Innennwelt*) and the outer world (*Umwelt*). There is an evident connection between an individual and society since both are interdependent and interconnected. She considers class and gender discrimination critically and transcends the class snobbery infused in her character by her familial background. Her diasporic experience provides her with a broadminded view to investigate class snobbery and gender discrimination. Societies, whether patriarchal or matriarchal, operate on social and cultural standards that construct roles for the male and female. Social positions of male and female determine their roles in their home culture and in the diaspora.

The process of migration has psychological effect on immigrants' gender roles, practices and ideologies that challenge and structure the gender construct of male and female immigrants. Pakistani society is a patriarchal society where life for women is very restricted and women are expected to comply with tribal beliefs and traditions (Niaz, 2003, p. 175). Women have far less breathing space than men and are always subservient to their male counterparts. In Pakistan, like many other patriarchal societies, gender roles are defined on the basis of biological sex. Sex is a defining factor and determines social and political positions for men and women who are treated differently from the very beginning and are given attributes that are pertinent to masculine and feminine orientation. For instance, from very early life boys are given different toys from girls and girls are dressed differently from boys. These hierarchical patterns based on gender bifurcation ascribe roles for males and females and further lead to gender discrimination. Shamsie is against the prevalent gender oppression of women in Pakistani society and gives vent to her disillusionment with regards to the social structure that denies women equal space and significance in *Salt*

and Saffron (2000). Women have always been judged under strict social codes and they have minimal liberty. Shamsie presents this gender biasedness through the episode of Mariam's elopement. Mariam's character has been presented as caught in the gender wise segregation. She loves a man belonging to the lower strata of society but she is not allowed to express her sentiments or to talk to him throughout the story. Her love for Masood is as silent as the sea and conforms to societal norms. Aliya informs Celeste about Mariam's love and Celeste is touched by Mariam's passion and celibacy especially in terms of the social and cultural norms. She cannot believe Mariam's reticent temperament but Aliya confirms her views, stating that "Pakistan isn't as obvious as America. Our love stories are all about pining and separation and tiny gestures assuming grand significance" (p. 98).

The concept of love is altogether different in Pakistani society, where the majority of women are not permitted to choose their partners and marriages are arranged by family members. America is an egalitarian society with equal acceptance for men and women. Women are given adequate personal freedom and independence in American society and culture and are not socially and morally fettered; they are free to move in society; to develop relationships with whoever they wish to and live on their own without dependence on family members. In such a culture women are independent in deciding their future plans such as marriage and bearing children, they can make choices as to whether they wish to complete their studies and then, whenever they wish, to decide on the subject of marriage.

Certain cultures in our world promote various perspectives of the appropriate roles and place for women within the social order and do not offer much independence to women. For instance hierarchical cultures operate on the assumption that women are expected to hold marriage and children as their primary goals and interest (J. LaVelle Ingram, 2014). Similarly women who live on their own are considered morally bad, therefore they cannot abandon the protection of the family but being in America this autonomy is possible for women also. Whenever women from different cultural practices arrive in the US, their cultural norms collide with the new environment and they begin to question their homeland traditions, transforming their earlier ideologies with the passage of time. This is also true of Aliya's character; she lives in America for four years and these years prove to be transformative for her. The immigration to America and the liberal culture of the US results in the social and cultural repositioning of Aliya. She is influenced by western cultural traditions particularly those regarding gender and class equality. She belongs to a family structure where gender and class inequality are accepted and women are marginalized in a society dominated by men. In the same way, poor people are pushed to the periphery and looked down upon; Karachi, the city that forms the backdrop of the novel, is entangled in class consciousness and the city is divided on the basis of living

standards. Clifton and Defense areas are characterized as sophisticated and posh regions because the wealthiest strata of society live in these locations. People belonging to refined areas like Defense and Clifton, are reluctant to meet and establish family relations with the people of poor areas.

The character of Mariam is very important to understand Shamsie's disillusionment about class and gender discrimination. Mariam symbolizes the new generation that is against the gender and class intolerance embedded in aristocratic families. She is more concerned about humanity than about humanly constructed class consciousness. She loves Masood, the family cook, and without thinking about the class differences elopes with him. Her family members are so heartbroken that they regard it as a blot on the family pride. Everyone in the family reacts against it in its own way particularly the reaction of Dadi, who is hostile that she goes to the extent of calling the whole clan morally wrong and leaves the family saying; "I hate you. I hate this whole bloody clan" (p. 104). She was very angry at Mariam's elopement and labels her, 'whore' (p. 104) which Aliya cannot endure and slaps Dadi. She believes that, "In slapping Dadi I proved I did not think like her" (p. 113). Dadi's reaction against Mariam's elopement with Masood is testimony of the aristocratic and patriarchal construction of Pakistani society, since people are divided on the basis of class and gender, one class is distanced from another even as men from women. Masood is a servant and as such it is not acceptable for a member of a sophisticated family to elope with a servant.

Furthermore, Pakistani society is in favour of patriarchy and restricting females to prescribed yardsticks. Since Mariam elopes with Masood she commits two grave offenses and becomes a blot on the family honour. The family believes that they have been humiliated and consider it immoral. Aliya tries to defend Mariam against societal conventions; since she already knew that Mariam's case was not pardonable for the Dard e Dil family because they "couldn't see beyond their own class prejudices" (p. 112). Gender discrimination, coupled with the class consciousness and feudal structure of Karachi, engenders disparity between men and women and consequently leads to social hierarchy. In the class-conscious society of Karachi, people belonging to the upper strata of society look down upon the inferior strata of society. They do not want to mix with them and this status consciousness creates a gap between the different classes of society. Elite or aristocratic families do not mingle with the lower classes; let alone indulge in marriages. The Dard e Dil clan traces its roots to the royal Mughal family and is therefore concerned about family status. In their feudal structure no member of the family can think of mingling or marrying a person lower in status than them. In marrying the family servant, Mariam rebels against the social structure related to gender and class consciousness. None of the family members appear to accept this marriage except Aliya; who defends

Mariam against all the accusations of the family. Mariam's elopement with Masood is significant in Shamsie's disillusionment and the criticism of gender and class divide in Pakistan. Aliya is the mouthpiece of Shamsie in criticizing and deconstructing class boundaries which separate people on the basis of social status and transnational movement or diaspora, enables Aliya to transgress the barriers of class.

In reconstructing the story of Mariam and Masood beyond the class boundaries, she attempts to interpret her own love story with Khaleel who belongs to Liaquatabad, a socially inferior area of Karachi. She first meets Khaleel on a journey between America and the UK and learns that Khaleel is an American of Pakistani origin, who has never been to Pakistan and whose family belongs to Liaquatabad. In the beginning she displays an aristocratic demeanor when she realizes that Khaleel belongs to the wrong side of the city and that her cousin would make fun of her choice as Khaleel hails from Liaquatabad in Karachi. Aliya cannot think beyond her inborn snobbery and Khaleel comments on this when he says, 'Don't pigeon-hole me, or my family, in Liaquatabad' (p. 63). She finds it difficult to free herself from the inherited class consciousness though she tries 'very hard not to pigeon-hole Liaquatabad' (p. 63). Khaleel asks Aliya, if she would visit him in Liaquatabad and Aliya finds it difficult to answer the question: it is a 'moment when the whole world holds its breath' (p. 64) since the question takes her back to the time when she was in college.

Another boy belonging to the lower strata of society, wanted to converse with Aliya but it was difficult for her to carry on a conversation because she was incapable of thinking beyond class prejudice. The boy realizes this early on and tells Aliya, 'the insurmountable problem is that when you think of me there's logic to your thoughts' (p. 64). Sometimes, people are so entangled in social practices that they cannot deviate from these prevalent norms and even if they attempt to, they find it difficult to traverse social and familial fetters. Thus, she feels embarrassed to disclose to Khaleel about her cousin Samia who states, 'the poor live in Liaquatabad. The poor, the lower classes, the not-us' (p. 43) but since Khaleel is settled in America, he has assimilated into western life, where money and class do not matter in the same way that they do in Pakistan. She tries to console herself by thinking that Khaleel is not socially inferior though he belongs to a substandard area. Aliya's perception about the class divides, which form the major concern of her family, changes with the passage of time. Living in America provides Aliya a discernment to appraise people that is different from her earlier appraisal. Aristocratic family values have been transmitted to the younger generation by old family members through different means such as oral family tales, family roots, past events and personalities. In spite of the family ancestry and claims of superiority transmitted to Aliya's generation, Aliya looks for

its authenticity by questioning and reinterpreting past claims; she constructs and deconstructs family superiority claims at the same time ironically narrating the stories of Dard e Dil's affiliation with the Mughal dynasty. When she deconstructs the claims of Dard e Dils, she comments that Dard e Dil had such a small territory that it could hardly be called a kingdom; thus showing her skepticism about her family's claim to past glory.

Diaspora being a trans-national and trans-cultural movement influences Aliya's perceptions about class and gender relationships that have been inscribed in Pakistani society and passed on to the new generation. Diaspora develops Aliya's relationship with her adopted society thus enabling her to subvert class and gender boundaries in Pakistan. Since Lacan articulates the idea of self-reflection through social identity formation; according to him, self (identity) is not self-validated; rather it is understood only in relation to the external world. The existence of ego is based on the reliance of self to the outside world. The ego is formed in the mirror stage as the outcome of relational association of self and the external world. The geographical dislocation beyond the Indian subcontinent and into the West affects cultural and racial relationships among people, enabling them to reevaluate and reduce societal and gender differences. Class identification and class discrimination of Pakistani people remains inactive in the cosmopolitan movement and consequently affects social relationships with others at home and abroad. Relocation in the Western culture is symptomatic of construction of trans-national cosmopolitan identity.

The character of Aliya, drawn in the multicultural Western society, is the exponent of Shamsie's idea that nationalism or ethnicity has to be reconsidered in globalization and be transformed accordingly. Migration into transnational and global culture influences immigrants' perception about their identities leading them to adapt to the transformation into the social order so as to fit into mixed racial context. The world has become a composite of mixed origins, and what is required for the survival and sustenance is the sense of change. Immigration for Pakistani women and adaptation to the Western society offers fluidity in their identities. It provides new opportunities for them, offering them social and gender freedom. Pakistani patriarchy is negotiated in Western society, and this involves the gender position of Pakistani women being improved as a result of the interruption of established gender constructs of Pakistani society. Aliya's perceptions about different societal and cultural norms of her family change after living in America for four years. For instance, she reconsiders female subjugation and class biasedness in her family structure. Mariam Apa is a victim of gender biasedness since she is not given freedom to choose a match for herself. She loves Masood but it is hard for her to plead her case in the patriarchal and class conscious conventions of her family which result in her elopement with him. Elopement, itself, is a double edged offence in her family because on the one hand

she stands against gender oppression and on the other she rebels against the hierarchy of the feudal system. Mariam becomes the victim of the extended hatred of the entire family leading Aliya to acknowledge this atmosphere of hatred in these words; “I could almost hear the scissors snipping away the strings which bound Mariam Apa to our lives. Here, now, the story was shaping; the one that would be repeated, passed down, seducing us all with its symmetry” (p. 132). Since mixing with the socially inferior class is not acceptable in Aliya’s family therefore no one appears to endure her offense and some members even go to the extent of erasing Mariam’s existence from family records as she is considered a blot on the ‘family reputation’ (p. 132).

Aliya is the only person in the family who revisits Mariam’s story in order to prove her forgivable. She views her in relation to the strict social codes and concludes that she is more sinned against than sinning. Aliya’s perception about Mariam is not based on Pakistani societal conventions; rather she evaluates her in relation to the standards she receives from Western society and questions the unnatural limitations of gender and class. Aliya’s favourable attitude towards Mariam causes a rift between Aliya and Dadi who calls Mariam a ‘whore’. As a reaction Aliya slaps her showing that in slapping Dadi, Aliya does not look at things from her Dadi’s perception. Dadi is unable to think beyond the constraints of the feudal system but Aliya belongs to the new generation and living in America transforms her outlook, she challenges these social constructs. Although Dadi has been a significant personality in Aliya’s life and the foundation of Aliya’s stories but now they are in contrast with each other just because of differences in their ideologies.

Dadi’s ideology is based on past connections and can be determined from her expressions, ‘what we are, we are’ (p. 97); while for Aliya it is outdated. She believes in change and says, ‘just because a thing has always been so, it does not always have to be so’ (p. 173). Aliya believes in negotiation and reconstruction of identities and regards socio-cultural constructs as hurdles in the process of renewal of identities and her identity undergoes evolution through the process of negotiation in social and cultural interaction. This negation involves conscious and unconscious response of individuals to social and cultural constructs. Aliya attempts to deviate from stereotypical gender and social hierarchical patterns and feels that these conceptions regarding women and class should be changed and improved in our society.

CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that identity is a fluid phenomenon and involves a process of social structuring of an individual against social relations or internalization of dominant social norms and values Aliya develops her self-perception in relation to discursive social practices. Socio-cultural embedment structures her thinking and

behavior. The prevalent social situation provides her the basis to define her identity. Similarly identity is not a static phenomenon with ever changing social structures; the perception of identity whether individual or collective undergoes transition in a specific social order. Lacan states that the function of imagination or the mirror phase, 'is to establish a relationship between the organism and its reality – or, between the Innennwelt and the Umwelt. Lacan states that identity is a socio-psychological process of becoming subject and establishes interactional relations between inner and outer world for human entrance into society. In order to locate her self-identity in relation to social reality, Aliya feels her position to be contrary to her home grown ideologies. Whatever has been fed to her regarding gender structures and class system is negotiated and transformed in diaspora. She comes to her self-realization through conflict between her inner self and outer society. Diaspora upholds the daughterhood of Aliya; who is influenced by the new environment and some aspects of her personality are improved. Living in a gender-tolerant society where male and female are equal entities, she also develops a gender unbiased attitude. She also breaks away from the inherited snobbery and challenges class-clash and the societal discrimination prevalent in her family. She revolts against the Pakistani class system and untangles the mystery of Mariam Apa's elopement who preferred marrying a lower class servant to an arranged marriage within her same class. Diasporic mirroring plays a vital function in the realization and/or transformation of Aliya's gendered identity in contrast to the identity embedded in her familial and societal conventions.

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