

**SADIA SHEPARD'S MEMOIR *THE GIRL FROM FOREIGN*:  
A QUEST FOR CULTURAL ROOTS**

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**Abstract**

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the ineffectiveness of searching for cultural roots in Sadia Shepard's literary work, *A Girl from Foreign*, and its correlation with the narrator's sense of dislocation and rootlessness. The researcher has utilized the perspective of diaspora and postcolonialism to analyze the protagonist's journey from America to India in pursuit of her cultural roots. The study entails a thorough analysis of the novel to identify the narrator's motivations, experiences, and discoveries. The findings indicate that the narrator's quest for cultural roots is bound to fail due to her mixed cultural upbringing and lack of a sense of belonging. The protagonist's journey to India to explore her family history and ancestry leads to a distressing realization of her Jewish and Muslim religious background. The research demonstrates that the narrator's feeling of rootlessness and dislocation in the foreign land is the driving force behind her search for cultural roots. In conclusion, the study affirms that the search for cultural roots is an evasive and ultimately futile undertaking in Sadia Shepard's *The Girl from Foreign*. The narrator's experiences underscore the intricacies of cultural identity and the challenges of reconciling numerous cultural influences. The research also emphasizes the significance of comprehending the effects of diaspora and post colonialism on cultural identity and the search for roots.

**Keywords:** Cultural Roots, Diaspora, Post Colonialism, Dislocation, Genealogy, Expatriation.

## **Introduction**

The research investigates how immigrant Indian women feel exiled in western metropolises and yearn for an imaginary homeland. Shepard expresses dissatisfaction with the fragmented situation, hybridized identities, plural identities, and rootlessness in *The Girl from Foreign*. Her attempts to live in the diasporic land have resulted in some of these displacement and dislocation situations. This project is based on Sadia Shepard's novel *The Girl from Foreign*, which is about an immigrant family's search for cultural roots in America.

As her father relocates to America, the major character is compelled to stay there. Her father is a Christian from Colorado, while her mother is a Muslim. Her maternal grandmother is a Bene Jew married to a Muslim. She has hazy memories of Pakistan after leaving, and she is unaware of her father and mother's cultural roots. Sadia's obscure memories and dislocation cause her to seek cultural roots to which she belongs. She travels to India and Pakistan to look for relatives and ancestors. The postcolonial theory's search for cultural roots is utilized as a method to study the text. Based on Said, Bhabha, Rushdie, and Fanon's theories, Sadia Shepard suffers from rootlessness, identity crisis of displacement, alienation, and breakup with her real ancestors.

There are no cultures that merge to generate hybrid forms. Cultures are the result of attempts to stop the flow of cultural hybridity, rather than starting with the concept of pure cultures interacting. Bhabha (2004) calls our attention to what happens on the borderlines of cultures. He is curious to see what takes place in-between cultures.

The narrator is well aware of her inner mental state. She is not uninformed about how she is impacted by nightmare and confusions. She continues in her internal monologue that as a child, she used to spend hours playing with her shadow, which her father warned may cause her nightmares, dreams like watching voices spin in a cyclone of rainbow colors and hearing unusual shapes of things come up and talk to identify themselves. Playing with her shadow made her feel less alone as an only child. The aftereffects of her parents' deaths left her in a disturbed and tortured state. This project contributes significantly to several aspects of migration. First, the project intends to concentrate on the female character during the critical analysis preview. It also establishes an important theoretical link between the quest for cultural

roots and the postcolonial critique of British imperialism. The objective of this study is to deconstruct the colonial effect and cultural binaries.

Shepard addresses the issues of adaptability, cultural dispossession, and diasporic agony in her writing. She is an author who focuses on cultural roots. Furthermore, it elucidates the source and consequence of rootlessness. She travels to India and Pakistan in quest of relatives and ancestors, the ultimate source of her cultural heritage. Plaumer (2022) is a well-known critic of Sadia Shepard. He praises Shepard for his ability to express his unwavering faith in the subtle power of personal mystery. In addition to dealing with personal mysteries, she raises geopolitical concerns.

Shepard's upbringing may be traced back to the Indian subcontinents shared past. She gets double exposure to not just the culture of Hindus but also to the culture of Islam. That is why she has such a soft spot for cultural upbringing. Shepard is asked to relate her grandmother's narrative in her grandmother's dying years. The elderly lady sends the young woman on a perilous physical and emotional quest to trace her grandmother's ancestors. She embarks on a journey that turns out to be a journey of self-discovery.

Emily Cappel is the author of Sadia Shepard's biography. Cappel (2014) thinks that Shepard's personal past has to be investigated for the sake of the full study of her book. Cappel (2014) offers the following remark in this connection:

For a start, Sadia Shepard is a very clever woman. She is a filmmaker who came back to India on a Fulbright scholarship and she clearly understands communication. You cannot fault her writing, which is lucid, honest and bare of unnecessary adjectives. She also has an attractive humility. And on top of this, as all families have secrets, at least as strange as fiction; she also has a story to tell. (17)

They are not familiar with the virus of Muslim-Jewish enmity. Shepard describes the people she meets as well-rounded individuals. The head of the family tells her that their forefathers were shipwrecked

off the Indian coast many centuries ago. Shepard's positivity and sensitivity are mirrored in all she meets.

### **Objectives if the Research**

1. To explore the experiences of immigrant Indian women in western metropolises, specifically their feelings of exile and yearning for an imaginary homeland, as depicted in Sadia Shepard's novel *The Girl from Foreign*.
2. To examine the themes of rootlessness, identity crisis, cultural dispossession, and diasporic agony in Shepard's writing, and to analyze the ways in which postcolonial theory can be used to understand these themes.
3. To deconstruct the colonial effect and cultural binaries through the lens of Shepard's work, with a particular focus on the female character and the quest for cultural roots.

### **Review of Literature**

Numerous critics have analyzed the memoir of Saida Shepard from different theoretical perspectives. Brown (2004) provides a positive review of Sadia Shepard's memoir, *The Girl from Foreign*, describing it as a beautiful tribute to her departed maternal grandmother and a compelling narrative. Brown (2004) also praises Shepard's skills as a filmmaker and photographer, stating that she knows how to capture the essence of a scene and keep readers engaged with her writing. Brown ends the review by expressing anticipation for more work from Shepard in the future. (28)

Ellis (2014) analyzes Shepard's book as a subjective perspective on the emerging concept of multiculturalism. The benefits and drawbacks of diversity are analyzed with a critical eye. About the multicultural aspect of this memoir, Ellis (2014) expresses the following views:

The word diversity has been so often used to describe a blithe multiculturalism that it has lost its edge. What does it mean to really long to belong to more than one place, to be part of more than one culture? It becomes impossible to be anything but in awe of the bravery with which she tries to

understand her grandmother's doubts, and to work through her own. (47)

This memory is also a love story. But, it is veiled under Shepard's subjective experiences. Multiculturalism is an indisputably growing phenomenon. As a result, it is not surprising that certain features of multiculturalism may be found in this narrative. Though it is not Shepard's main focus, it looks to be a major thematic component. There are many other factors that are as important.

See (2012) observes the memoir's meditative aspect. Religion, culture, political backdrop, and a life-affirming point of view are among the topics on which the first person narrator expresses her opinion. See (2012) projects her point of view as follows:

Besides being a personal memoir and a portrait of a family that includes the world's three major monotheistic religions, *The Girl from Foreign* is a meditation on how our individual memories inevitably slip away, either into oblivion or into that dull collective consciousness we call history. But Indians have the nerve to be fascinated by the events that occurred in their own country that year, the public history that overlaps, vividly, with their personal memories. (15)

Indian culture and the possibility of Jewishness evolving in an Indian cultural context are two thematic clues around which the narrator's mediation revolves. Though the meditative dimension is more prominent in the story, other parts are equally important. Though they are subordinate to the meditative aspect of the story, the value of the other aspects cannot be neglected.

Shepard's dissatisfaction with his unique and solitary identity is highlighted by Peter Smith. Smith (2012) hints to the conclusion that in the globalized community, finding a distinct identity is difficult. Everyone who makes an attempt to obtain it is condemned to fail. Shepard indicates at her proclivity to place a priority on the requirement of fluid, multiple hybrid identity by adopting a tacit tone. Smith (2012) makes the following claims concerning *The Girl from Foreign Country*:

Little Sadia Shepard and her younger brother, Cassim, grew up first in Denver, then Chestnut Hill, Mass., in what she considered to be a wonderful and normal life with three terrific adults: her American dad, a tall, rangy, white Protestant; her beautiful Muslim mother, who was born and raised in an affluent home in Karachi, the first capital of Pakistan; and her sweet maternal grandmother, who raised the kids and kept the house while the adult couple ran an architectural firm. This grandma has a set of slightly dissonant memories. (31)

People might forget their ethnic origins over time. People are tempted by beautiful modernism and wealth, and they forget their great origins. As they were confronted with a crisis of conscience, they couldn't help but delve deeply into their racial background, cultural conventions, and religious faith. They had forgotten their religion. Sadia's grandmother had spent her early adulthood as a Muslim wife in a lovely seaside villa in Bombay. People are only persuaded to reflect on their condition at the eleventh hour.

Ferguson extensively investigates Shepard's narrative's use of direct speaking. According to Ferguson (2002), the constant use of direct speech seeks to create an atmosphere of open-mindedness. The tale features a dialogic framework, which allows for a wide range of interpretation alternatives. Ferguson (2002) expands on this point:

In her memoir, Shepard uses direct and reported speech to create the background necessary for her own voice. She repeats and refashions the words of resistance that are the legacy of her own community, giving special attention to the words of love and support from her mother, her father and her husband. Self is crafted in dialogue with the voices of fellow slaves and the voices of the world that opposes it. (160)

The ego that the narrator presents in this book is entrenched in the words that she uses. The narrator's subjectivity is shaped by the words she is forced to employ. She must consider various factors while

describing events in order to build a sense of resistance. The use of direct speaking is effective in emphasizing the historical feeling of urgency to initiate resistance.

Francis Douglass is tremendously grateful of *The Girl from Foreign*. India is represented as the homeland that nourishes Shephard's strong desire to return home. The basic component of narrative is this unwavering desire to return to one's past. One feature of Douglass (2001) presents the following excerpt:

Shepard's memoir reveals a profound identification with the India as a territorial cradle. The trope of return to one's native land is fully formed here as a return to the west Indies-past, present, and future. Shepard is born of intercultural breeding and union; her estranged past and necessary future is located geographically and historically in India. India is a means to an end; it is not the fulfillment of her dream of freedom. (3)

The narrator's recurring sensation of affinity with territorial cradle propels her forward in her quest for mental relief. The geographical purity and historical roots have a great feeling of effect on her. The memoir alludes to the potential of self-realization.

Although all of these reviewers discussed various aspects of the novel, none of them dealt with the subject of diaporic pain caused by immigrants' self-fragmentation. Immigrants must deal with feelings of alienation, estrangement, cultural dislocation, and rootlessness. In the midst of these challenges and crises, immigrants are obliged to recreate their imaginary homeland. They're conflicted between nostalgia and memory. Immigrants' defining qualities include dilemma, indecision, and a vacillating trend. Shepard is also facing similar difficulties. This research is centered on this topic, drawing on the theoretical insights of postcolonial theorists such as Rushdie, Bhabha, Fanon, Naipaul, and Bill Ashcroft. The issue is worthy of investigation because it is new and authentic.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Method**

The research employs a qualitative approach to investigate the ineffectiveness of searching for cultural roots in Sadia Shepard's literary work, *A Girl from Foreign*, and its correlation with the narrator's sense of dislocation and rootlessness. The study utilizes the perspective of diaspora and postcolonialism to analyze the protagonist's journey from America to India in pursuit of her cultural roots. The researcher conducts a thorough analysis of the novel to identify the narrator's motivations, experiences, and discoveries.

### **Data Collection**

The primary data source for this research is the literary work, *A Girl from Foreign* by Sadia Shepard. The researcher conducts a close reading of the novel and employs critical discourse analysis to identify the themes related to the narrator's search for cultural roots, sense of dislocation, and rootlessness. The data collection also includes the collection of secondary sources, such as scholarly articles and books related to diaspora, postcolonialism, and cultural identity, to support the analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The research analyzes the data through critical discourse analysis, which involves the deconstruction and interpretation of the text to identify the underlying themes, motifs, and symbols related to the narrator's search for cultural roots, sense of dislocation, and rootlessness. The analysis utilizes the perspective of diaspora and postcolonialism to examine the protagonist's journey from America to India and her search for cultural roots. The research also employs thematic analysis to identify recurring themes in the text related to the narrator's experiences, motivations, and discoveries. The findings are presented in a narrative form, supported by quotes from the novel and secondary sources.

### **Theoretical Tools Used in This Research**

Exile, diaspora, and migration are only a few examples of the dislocations that have been actively and thoroughly discussed in postcolonial philosophy and literary works. Diaspora has definitely



brought about enormous changes in the demography, cultures, epistemologies and politics of the post-colonial globe. The postcolonial predicament is accurately represented by the only focus on relocation. Unquestionably, due to significant political upheavals, the past century has seen widespread population dispersal and relocation around the world. Diaspora is viewed as historically diverse and heterogeneous phenomena rather than as a "single phenomenon. People's cross-border movement may be the consequence of expulsion, self-exile, or forced migration (Reflection on Exile 23). War, interethnic conflict, and natural disaster are the causes of refugees and persons in transit.

Theorizing the new phenomena of borders and borderlands, mixing, hybridity, language for translation, double consciousness, history and its absence, and the emotive components of migration and diaspora are of particular interest to postcolonial cultural studies. It discusses sorrow, nostalgia, homesickness, and memories. Diaspora studies spans several academic disciplines. Bhabha (2004) elaborates on "the liminal or interstitial category that occupies a gap between opposing cultural traditions, historical periods, and critical techniques" in *The Location of Culture* (The Location of Culture 65).

Bhabha (2004) analyses "the ambiguity of colonial rule and suggests that it offers a potential for resistance in the performative mimicking of the English book," once more using intricate semiotics and psychoanalytic criteria. Bhabha aims to locate culture in the unsettling, eerie areas between dominating social structures while discussing artists (47). For his idea of cultural hybridity, Bhabha is the most well-known. He contends that diverse types of colonization lead to hybridity. Cultural scuffling and mingling result from it. In an effort to establish colonial dominance in order to produce Anglicized people

Rushdie (2003) states that hybrid space project adapts poststructuralist challenges to stable or fixed identities, allowing sustained attention to the ways in which race, gender, community, and nationality converge. In *Imaginary Homeland*, he examines the curious position of the migrant or exile, which transforms their relationship with both their home country and new host country. This new diaspora identity is seen as potentially a position of strength.

Migrants are not dressed in continuity and belonging. They are able to see life in a different way from anybody else. It gives them greater insight and perspective. They are able to combine aspects of

both their home culture and their host culture in their life. It enables them to exploit their diaspora identity. In Rushdie's imagining therefore migrants with their diaspora identity occupy a curious position that is a site of great opportunity.

Exile is a dream of a glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution. It is "an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back. The exile is a ball hurled high into the air" (Imaginary Homelands 76). Rushdie therefore argues that being a migrant is "a ball hurled high into the air," (Salman Rushdie 54) with massive potential and possibilities. What the migrant does with those possibilities is up to them, according to Rushdie.

A magnificent return is a fantasy of exile. A vision of revolution is exile. Looking forward while always gazing back is "an eternal contradiction. The exile is a ball thrown into the sky high (Imaginary Homelands 76). So, according to Rushdie (2003), being a migrant is like "throwing a ball high into the air" (Rushdie 54), with a lot of potential and opportunities. According to Rushdie, the migrant is free to decide what to do with those options.

## **Textual Analysis**

### **Saida Shepard's Search for cultural Roots**

The narrator of *The Girl from Foreign* describes grief and helplessness, nostalgia and memory, despair and hope, and the dream of cultural rootedness and cultural rootlessness. In addition to pleasure and optimism, the narrator's existence as an immigrant in America is also filled with displacement and dislocation. She yearns for her own country despite the comfort and hope around her. The narrator hopes to mentally reassemble a vision of her own country through the narratives and narrative recollections told by her mother and grandmother. The literature of the descendants is replete with references to the historical brutality of the age of empire and colonies. The literature that has come to be referred to as post-colonial is replete with the voices of its victims. The term "postcolonial" falls short of encompassing the depth and range of the authors who have been assigned it. The writings of those writers have something in common. The narrator skillfully demonstrates how the experience of exile and its ramifications continue to be relevant to the creation of fiction beyond national lines. She draws important

parallels between exile's role in their literature as a circumstance and as a concept.

With a postcolonial lens, the book examines the violence and discrimination faced by immigrants. While they have been uprooted and cut off from their homes, the immigrants are united by their language, cuisine, history, and culture. At trying circumstances, memory is viewed as a source of strength. The narrative focuses on displaced populations and their relocation to new nations, a typical topic in literature from the diaspora. A cross-cultural or cross-civilizational crossing is crucial for the particular awareness of the diasporic, and the quest for roots and a sense of belonging are significant features of diaspora literature. The only family member who is knowledgeable of the protagonist's family's American heritage is her grandmother.

The researcher makes use of theory of diaspora, hybridity and certain theoretical insight from postcolonial theory and diaspora. *In Culture and Imperialism*, Said captures the basic thought behind colonization and imperialism. This line “They’re not like us, and for that reason deserve to be ruled.” Shows the basis on which the project of imperialism is constructed. “The colonized, Said maintains, “becomes the other, the not me. Hence, the established binary opposition of “the West”/“the Other” must be abolished along with its intricate web of racial and religious prejudices” (64). This erroneous view of humanity creates a simplistic interpretation of human experience.

Postcolonial theory is a historical view that emphasizes the variety of human experiences in all cultures and seeks to present them in an objective way. It moves beyond traditional literary studies by investigating the social, political, and economic concerns of the colonized and the colonizer. Cultural imperialism is a part of the system of oppression and genocide, and Western literature is an integral part of that system. Postcolonial theory can play an important role in the ongoing struggle for political and economic freedom of the Third World. African criticism is a practice that has its own analogue in postcolonial theory, and white racism against Africa is a normal way of thinking.

Brewer (2007) identifies several important indicators as to how cultural representation occurs in speech and how the process of cultural interpretation ends up being problematic. Brewer (2007) develops a strategy to bridge the cultural gap between the culture portrayed in the

book and other cultures. According to Brewer, the system of representation creates meaning. The code, which establishes the connection between our mental and linguistic systems, constructs and fixes it. One approach to think about culture is in terms of shared conceptual frameworks, lingua francas, and the rules that control how words are translated between them.

The narrator muses about all of the written or spoken discourses in an effort to create identity. "The things my grandma told me are outlines, markings in black ink on a paper, the essential information," she admits. The narrator searches for a resolution while torn between hopelessness and dream, nostalgia and remembrance. She cannot escape her western identity at this time. She also lacks the ability to embrace her native roots and traditions. She is aware of the circumstance. She nonetheless strives to engage with the idea of a blended identity. The following extract shows how the narrator raises questions about who she is and what she is expected to do in her present predicament:

I worried that someday, when I needed to tell these stories to explain who I am, I would wonder about the color of the dress she wore in a certain black-and-white photo and she would no longer be alive to tell me. The sum total of what I could imagine about India was contained in my grandmother's brown vinyl album, hundreds of tiny prints with scalloped edges. What comes in between these details is my own invention; the shape and shade are the work of a grandchild to embroider. I have spent years trying to paint the colors in. (2)

Shepard is nostalgic for her homeland, India, but feels a deeper sense of lag. To come out of her restlessness, she makes an excursion to India, where she realizes the root cause of her sufferings is cultural imperialism.

According to Said (2002) the division of the world into the civilized West and the uncivilized East by Europeans served as justification for the latter's colonialism. The idea of "them" and "us" served as the foundation for this artificial border. Orientalism was a strategy employed by the Europeans to establish their superiority over

the orientals and to defend their need to civilize them. The generalization of features attributed to orientals, however, resulted in the depiction of manufactured traits in the West via various media outlets. Said contends that rather than accurately representing reality, orientalism produces politically charged realities about oriental cultures and histories that support colonial goals.

The narrator, who lives in a remote area of the transatlantic country, cherishes the notion of being near to Chestnut Hill. Her upbringing was in Chestnut Hill. Each fleeting memory of her grandmother makes her happy. Behind this exhilaration comes the misery of cultural and psychological uprooting. She completely relies on her imaginative mode to delve into the origins of her upbringing. In her monologue, she states, "I feel very distant from Chestnut Hill, from the white clapboard house where I was raised, yet the vigilant, golden mansion clings with me, its small eyes of Mughal miniature paintings" (93). When the narrator gets closer to Mumbai, memories start to become more vivid and recent. The narrator seeks to rebuild the entire using his or her memories. The narrator journeys from America to Bombay in search of a coherent self and identity. She constructs a fictitious whole, but it does not give her a complete sense of understanding who she is. It is an attempt to impose a gloss and glitter on the already anarchic turbulence.

According to Young (2003), diaspora and transnationalism notions have functioned as significant study lenses through which to analyze the consequences of international migration and the shifting of state borders among populations during the past several decades (76). Delineating the origins and perpetuation of transnational social forms has been the researcher's main concern. The idea of diaspora is frequently used by nationalist organizations or governments to further their goals of creating new nations or governing populations overseas.

It is obvious that the narrator is obsessed with the portrait of her mother and other family members who passed away. By means of portraits and photos, she wants to penetrate the mystery that encircles the lineage and genealogy. In her musings, she says, 'in the upstairs front hallway of my childhood home near Boston there hung a large, vivid portrait of my mother. The following extract clarifies the things related to the explorative search of the narrator:

The house looks familiar, as if I have seen it a million times, and I realize that I must have seen photographs of it passed into my grandmother's album. Where it should say "Rahat Villa" it now reads "Shandilya Villa", but it is unmistakably the same house. I ask the driver to stop and I send him away, before realizing that I do not know where I will find a taxi back. But I am here. I walk up driveway, toward the house, with the sea at my back.  
(10)

As the narrator drives closer to Bombay, her memories become more vivid and meaningful, but also raise new questions. She tries to explore their significance, but ultimately fails. Despite this, a sense of unexpressed excitement and possibility remains, grounding her in the present.

The most crucial technique employed in this research is the idea of third space. Bhabha (2004) develops a number of ideas in *The Location of Culture* that aim to challenge the straightforward division of the world into self and other. He places a strong emphasis on the cultures' hybridity, which alludes to a fundamentally mixed nature of every aspect of identity. Although many writers of literature have expressed a desire to use and express hybrid cultural forms, Bhabha stresses on hybridization as opposed to pure or true cultural identities. He focuses on what occurs at cultural borders and approaches this through the concept of the liminal, which emphasizes the idea that what is in-between settles.

Even though her grandfather is no longer alive, she starts talking to him because of her frantic feeling of devotion to her ancestral roots and origin. She occasionally imagines the scene. She often speaks while she is in a state of pleasure. In this regard, the excerpt that follows serves as an illustration:

We walk up a central staircase, and my breath catches when I recognize a low set of drawers in one of the rooms; it has the same inlaid ivory pattern and carving as an armoire my grandmother had in our family home in Karachi, where she kept her jewelry and important papers. I motion to the

house boy to ask him if I may enter the room, and he nods. I imagine this could have been her bedroom. I post imaginary telegrams to her in my mind. (12)

She seems to find perpetual happiness and support in all the valuable and non-valuable items connected to her Nana's life. The narrator follows evidence of ancestral importance from jewelry and ivory pattern to bedrooms and paperwork. Yet nobody investigates this issue. It is easy to observe how the narrator rushes for items that are both urgent and valuable in the long run. All of these efforts are intended to stabilize her mental state.

For Bhabha (2004), the postponement of hybrid identity is essential to comprehending dialectical thought. Deferral is crucial for Bhabha and Fanon in regard to the demands of dialectical Marxism. Fanon (2002) replies to the universal needs of Marxist humanism in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Humanist accounts of anti-colonial struggle begin by imagining the racial language's transcendence and the emergence of unity. According to these stories, there is just one race of people. Fanon (2002) emphasizes the unique historical situations and cultural settings. The surface of the skin contains the essential identity. This really inhibits solidarity and recognition. That messes up the story of that fundamental identity.

The narrator recalls how Urdu, English, and Hindi were spoken in her home at the time as she reflects on her upbringing in Karachi as a youngster. She has access to a variety of languages, including Urdu, Hindi, and English, since she was a little child. She manages to instill a desire for many language speaking cultures as a result of her accessibility. The passage below demonstrates the point:

With Mama she spoke quickly, in Urdu, and often seemed to be angry. That day, I guessed that they were talking about the property disputes surrounding Siddiqi House, our family home in Karachi, shared among my grandfather's three widows and ten children. Nana's sons, my mother's four younger brothers, were scattered across Europe and the United States. Often we would not see them for long periods, and then they would arrive with

presents, driving fancy cars and wearing nice clothing. (16)

Since her early years, the narrator has been able to enjoy diversity and a voracious appetite for experience because to her multilingual background and international environment. She would benefit from having a strong enthusiasm for family history, genealogy, and cultural roots. At the period of her upbringing, several cultural forces coexist. She adopts a variety of ethnic customs from her upbringing. She overcomes the strict cultural barriers as a result. No culture can impose its rigorous rules and standards. She has the ability to act without being constrained or constrained by the rigid restraints of culture and tradition.

*The Imaginary Homeland* by Rushdie (2003) explores the unease that comes with having many identities as an immigrant. The historical brutality of empire and colonies resounds in the writing of the descendants, and the literature that has come to be referred to as post-colonial is replete with the voices of its victims. Rushdie offers a clear and succinct analysis of exile, and his choice of writers is both noteworthy and innovative. He draws important parallels between the way exile serves as both a theme and a precondition for their work and the ongoing applicability of the experience and consequences of exile to modern fiction writing.

Shepard has been exposed to poly identity, whether consciously or unconsciously. Heterogeneous factors exert enormous impact on the building of her identity. She occasionally feels uncomfortable with the many different sources that support her identity, which has lost its originality and distinctiveness. She yearns for a particular, distinct identity at one point. Yet contemplating on this element of solitary identity, she feels stifled and constrained. She then yearns for the composite identity that her cultural and comfortable upbringing has given her. This situation of the narrator is described in the following excerpt:

I chose India to fulfill my promise to Nana, but there is another reason, one I feel almost guilty about. I have a mobility here that I will never have in Pakistan. In Pakistan I am Samina's daughter, I am



Rahats' granddaughter, and I am the American cousin, the unmarried oddity, the occasional visitor. When we arrive in Karachi, we are met by my mother's friend Nariman's head servant, Sajjad, no matter what kind of ungodly not-morning-not night it is. As we drive to uncle Nariman's house, I always look out the window and marvel at the new buildings that have sprung up since my last visit. (23)

Timelessly, India tempts her. Pakistan tempts her as well. The thought that it is very impossible to pinpoint the source of pure origin and identity thrills the narrator as they reflect on the beginnings of Jewish history. The narrator feels both pride and grief in her current American identity. She is drawn to the culture of the Indian subcontinent. Something that causes her to get linked to India and the Indian subcontinent is buried deep within her.

According to Naipaul (2007), the postcolonial criticism embraces globalism but ignores the earlier concepts of colonialism and imperialism. While active colonialism still exists in the form of transnational corporatism, the nominal freedom obtained by colonial populations does not immediately entail decolonization and independence. The "representational systems of colonialism and imperialism" and the contestation of ideologically fabricated information are postcolonial preoccupations. It also signifies the end of the necessity to investigate the political economics and international social linkages of neo-colonialism.

She becomes increasingly conscious of her hybridized identity as she considers how her name is put together. Several of her family members call her and let her know that Sadia is a Muslim name. The passage that follows serves as a good example:

I take a seat in the phone booth and look up the phone number of one of the two Pune synagogues in my notebook. I dial the number of its director. I explain who I am and why I have come to India, and ask if I can make an appointment to come and see the synagogue the following day. I hear him put the phone to one side and say to someone else in the

room. It is Muslim name. Sadia is a Muslim name.  
Someone else says something muffled that I cannot  
hear. (29)

Cultural practices might be used to contest, confront, critique,  
and denounce imperialist ways of seeing, but it's important to realize  
that representation itself is inextricably linked to imperial enterprise.

The world of reading, writing, and representation does not  
totally transcend global social, historical, and material concerns. Said  
(2002) gives his argument in *Companion to Postcolonial Studies*,  
culture might very easily normalize, justify, and promote European  
colonialism. At least on one level—certainly not the only one, but still a  
significant one—colonialism was a representational issue. The  
production of culture may also perpetuate imperial ideological ideals,  
and cultural inventiveness contributed much to greasing the motor of  
colonization.

No doctrine is required when in exile. To maintain one's  
religious history and heritage, one does not need to adhere to any  
particular religious religion or creed. The Jews in India kept doing well  
without the Torah. The narrator says:

What did it mean to be Jewish, growing up in India?  
How did her ancestors practice their religion without  
a Torah? When Nana was in the mood to tell me  
about her childhood, she always began with the same  
story: the tale of her first prophetic dream. She told  
it quietly and urgently, to reaffirm for herself that it  
had happened, to warn me to careful. (35).

This finding triggers the unpleasant realization. Diasporic  
personalities with divided selves find it difficult to handle this  
circumstance. When synagogue and mosque cannot coexist, a great and  
novel vision emerges.

Bhabha (2004) states that, realism and colonial discourse are  
intimately related. He makes reference to stereotypes and reified  
versions of realism. If colonial discourse is not necessarily realism, then  
realism is always a type of colonial discourse. In other words, while  
colonial discourse consistently asserts that it accurately represents  
colonial reality, not all realistic stories have links to colonialism. The

impacts of a number of religions may be plainly observed in the narrator's family history, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. She was rarely conscious of this reality for as long as she had been an American resident. She finds it very beneficial that she realized this lesson while traveling to Mumbai. This kind of epiphany, in her view, is the wellspring of pride and power, creativity and chaos. Nonetheless, she stays away from chaos and focuses on the innovative aspect of hybridity. The next passage demonstrates how different religious philosophies inspire her artistic endeavors once more:

Three parents, three religions, it sounds fantastic and unusual to me now. As a child, it was merely our topic sentence. Whereas other children we knew had two parents, perhaps two pairs, Cassim and I had three: a grandmother, a mother, and a father. Two related by blood—my grandmother and mother; two related by temperament—my grandmother and father; and two related by devotion—my mother and father. An idea to explain our private world grew like an insatiable, invisible beanstalk in the spiral staircase of our house.

Religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism had an impact on early human history. She is astounded by the discovery of this reality herself. She used to believe that her parents and grandparents had Indian ancestry before moving to India. But, she is astounded by the unexpected results of her trip to India. She expresses her emotion of astonishment on the spontaneity of the moment.

During the period of European colonization, the Europeans encountered less developed countries in the east and found their civilization and culture to be exotic. They established the science of orientalism, which studied the people of these exotic civilizations. The Europeans created an artificial boundary between the east and the west or the civilized and the uncivilized based on the concept of "them and us" or "theirs and ours". The Europeans used orientalism to define themselves and associated particular attributes with the orientals, defining themselves as a superior race compared to them. This concept justified their colonization as their duty to civilize the uncivilized world. The Europeans started generalizing the attributes they associated with

orientals and portrayed them through their scientific reports, literary works, and other media sources in the Western world.

Against a tumultuous backdrop, Rachel Jacobs' Muslim spouse moved their family to Pakistan. The narrator ponders how Jacobs came to her conclusion. The Bene Israel identify with ancient Jewish customs, where polygamy may not have been as unusual or forbidden as it is today, especially under Israeli law. Her decision to marry a wealthy man during financially unstable times is understandable. Shepard, the narrator, lived among the Bene Israel for two years, seen largely as an outsider among outsiders in a foreign land. Shepard visits her mother's home in Pakistan and discovers that even her beloved relations have embraced a fundamentalist version of Islam, imposing its constrictive tenets on the most joyous of occasions.

Although the experience of researching and writing this book could have been disorienting, the narrator's growth and self-discovery are evident. She has been able to integrate her discoveries into her life, which allowed her to affirm a unique identity as an American writer with Indian-Jewish roots.

Home and dislocation are central themes in Indian diasporic writers. Diasporic memoir often acts as a bridge between two different cultures and is an extended form of return. Shepard's memoir reflects the freedom-oriented spirit of dislocated self and the entire spectrum of cultural thought. The narrator undergoes the harsh and harrowing process of enslavement and the idea of being free from slavery fills her with thrill and adventure. The chance of emancipation is the outcome of tripartite relation amidst culture, history, ancestry and genealogy.

The narrator's journey creates a tapestry in which each thread has its own appeal, exclusivity, and uniqueness. Islam was the religion of her father. Yet strangely, she has settled in America and became a Christian. The excerpt that follows details her father's conversion to Islam:

My father used to recite a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Difference of opinion is a mercy for my community. That is the way we were raised. He put his children in different kinds of schools- Catholic schools, British schools-just so that we would have different opinions. So that we could

debate! That is the way I was raised. That is the faith that I know, that my father practiced. (55)

The narrator is driven by a feeling of dislocation and alienation in a foreign land, resulting in pain, alienation, identity crisis, and other feelings to the acculturated ones. The immigrants and expatriates face cultural dilemmas in the foreign system, but Shepard gradually imbibes the cultural ways of the host country.

To sum up, people internalize nostalgia or suffer from forgetfulness when cultures migrate and take root or become dislocated. This is Shepard's main argument. This assertion is supported by her memoir. The experiences of the narrator and her ancestors, who reside in various socio-cultural contexts, are documented in *The Girl from Foreign Country*. Her decision to travel to India is motivated by her sense of displacement and rootlessness.

### **Conclusion**

The main conclusion of this study is that the narrator's quest for cultural roots reveals a plethora of amazing facts about her ancestors. *The Girl from Foreign Country* is a classic illustration of how someone without roots from a western metropolis visits her ancestral home and learns a number of amazing facts. The realization that Sadia Shepard's South Asian grandmother was Jewish and from the Bene Israel community of India inspired her to research her genetic history. This memoir examines the dwindling Jewish culture and what became of it in the religiously divided nations of India and Pakistan. Migration is a process of social change in which a person moves from one location for an extended period of time or permanent residence in another location. Migration is a transnational process that entails leaving social networks and going through things like loss, dislocation, alienation, and isolation before settling down and going through acculturation. Shepard, who was raised by a Pakistani Muslim mother and a Protestant American father, offers a unique viewpoint to the table.

Communities that have been uprooted and their relocation have an important role in it. All fall under the umbrella of diasporic literature, from indentured servants to educated persons seeking a better life abroad. The theme of diaspora literature is rootlessness and the quest for origins. Diasporic discussion must include both the quest for home and

the shifting of identities. A cross-cultural or cross-civilizational transit must occur throughout the diaspora. Only such a crossing gives rise to the distinct diasporic awareness. Diasporic literature often focuses on the significant conflict between the source and recipient cultures. The memoir of Shepard effectively makes this argument. This book is Shepard's way of expressing the dislocation and ambivalence she experienced. People carry their knowledge and displays of pain when they travel from one country or culture to another. They try to settle down by either assimilation or biculturalism, but as they get more ingrained in the new culture, their cultural identity is likely to shift, which fosters a sense of belonging.

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