ANALYZING CULTURAL AMBITIOUS IDENTITIES AND TRANSITIONAL PHASES UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF IMPERIALISM PRESENTED IN ANITA DESAI’S VOICES IN THE CITY

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This research explores Anita Desai’s Voices in the City from the cultural ambivalence and cultural imperialism aspects. Anita Desai’s Voices in the City (1964) is about the story of an archetypal Indian protagonist Nirode and his family.

Methodology: This research is qualitative. Theories presented by Homi K. Bhabha and K. R. Lyenger support this research study as a major theoretical framework. This research is based on textual analysis. It discusses the issues of the remains of colonization and the impact of British imperialism during the transitional phase of the socio-cultural and socio-political situation of Indian society that reflects the ambivalent identity of the protagonist and other characters as well.

Main Findings: Nirode is a colonial subject who distinctly observes the city of Calcutta and tends to escape from such cultural tendencies of modern Indian cultures and British cultures which causes his identity ambivalent. Nirode’s position as a victim and resistant to both cultures, his subject is determined amidst the socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political power relations played by both British and Indian institutional cultural values and practices of the transitional phase of Indian society that creates ambivalent identity in the life of the protagonist and other characters which happens around the city of Calcutta.

Applications of the study: The research is a contribution to the existing theories on one hand and an explanation and impact of the cultural ambivalence and cultural imperialism on Indian literature and society as depicted in the novel.

Novelty/Originality of the study: This research is novel as it investigates socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political power relations played by both British and Indian institutional cultural values and practices of the transitional phase of Indian society that creates ambivalent identity in the life of the protagonist and other characters which happens around the city of Calcutta. The theoretical framework is taken from two different theories in order to draw more argumentative discussion.

Keywords: Socio-Political, Imperialism, Socio-Cultural, Ambivalence, Identity.

INTRODUCTION

Desai’s Voices in the City (1964) tries to depict the city life of a middle-class family set in Calcutta. It narrates the story of Bohemian brother Nirode and his two sisters who are highly caught in the transitional phase of India’s changing sociocultural norms. The novel’s major concerns are to focus mainly on the cause-and-effect relations of city life and the impacts of colonial and imperial dominant practices upon an Indian middle family. Along with their own Indian Hindu traditional society and its norms, they have to practice. On the other hand, colonial and imperial tendencies to practice are deeply rooted in the mind of Indian city dwellers and they experience such tendencies as victims and resistance. Such tendencies remain a common phenomenon even after the Indians got independence. We can measure these transitional phases of Indian history through middle-class people like Nirode and his family who struggle with ambivalent identities due to the remains of the colonization and the impact of imperialism. Moreover, the protagonist wants to escape from the encroaching double cultural practices that he comes across in the novel. They appear as the riddle and unpleasant realities of the past and present that also show the reflection of ambivalent identity within the city lives of distinguished people. The pursued title wants to explore the underlying facts behind the protagonist’s wish to escape and experience the causal effects of the remains of colonization and the impact of imperialism that gives an ambivalent identity to the main character and his family. So this research is more contextual and significant to understand the life of the city dwellers and their voices to know about their ambivalent identity.

In the present context, we cannot see the presence of colonization and imperialism that they pervasively covered most of the lands in the world. They came in different masks. But in the underlying structure, they have reached the remote village of different places in the form of globalization, free market to do business and education. The means of technology have made their journey easier. For instance, British rulers came to different parts of Indian States targeting to lead their business. Later, they established themselves as colonizers and imperialists dominantly exercised their cultural practices. They are still rooted in India as remains of colonization and the impact of cultural imperialism can be taken as the post-colonial hegemony which randomly covers the major cities has become the source of ambivalent identity. We can freely observe such a scene set in Desai’s Voices in the City.
In other ways, when we go to other places hoping to get appropriate opportunities, we go along with the cultures. So is the case in other's life while going for an opportunity. In this situation, neither we can avoid our own cultures nor can we accept other cultures. We partially share and are culturally ambivalent. In this reference, the writer from Indian society has shown the ambivalent identity of the modern individual and groups by presenting fictional characters with a fictional story in the novel. Further, Desai presents the ambivalent character with an ambivalent identity to depict the real situation of Indian society and how there still exists remains of colonization and the impact of cultural imperialism in the mind of Indian citizens that resembles the themes of ambivalent identity.

Thus, Desai in her novel *Voices in the City* deals with the issues of ambivalent identity through the struggle of the main character Nirode. As we come across the novel, we can see some of the features and facts of postcolonial tendencies in Desai's writing. The setting of Calcutta city is one of the examples that give a clear picture of the means of colonial and imperial dominance. It is difficult for the marginalized middle-class family to identify in such a complex city. The protagonist tends to escape from the city experience that keeps him dominated and worrisome which is a result of the remains of colonialism and the impact of cultural imperialism that later continues as the post-colonial practices of indirect extension of the power, production, and distribution. They easily appear in the city and impact the city dwellers. To be victims and to resist are the consequences for modern people as the writer has shown similar features through the protagonist in the novel. Thus, the means of resistance is another evidence of post-colonial practice. The dominated and colonized individual and groups want to resist those trends such as education, culture, technology, and business as an attempt and struggle to survive with their cultural practice.

Desai exploits the climatic and anticlimactic moments to structure her text to search for solace in the meaning of society and social norms. According to Leela Gandhi, "Like many romantic and post–romantic works, Desai, in parts, derives her structure from a series of climactic and anticlimactic perfect moments, instants of vision, and epiphanies, which provide solace and meaning" (Gandhi 1998, p.7). She is familiar with the sensitive portrayal of the inner life of her female characters and her biased patriarchal social construction. Several of her novels explore the tension between family members and their sense of alienation from middle-class society. Characterization is one of the strengths of Desai's novel. The suffering of middle-class Indian women has occupied enough space in her works. Being a woman, she has made a conscious effort to campaign for the cause of all the alienated and suffering females. They have often been victims at the hand of their husbands. Their strictness and refusal to accept what their husbands enforce turn into their tragedy. In the Indian context, she is one of the foremost novelists to choose a female's quest for selfishness as her recurring theme. She writes of women as simplification, producing an identity that silently screams out against their oppressed positioning in Indian society. The neatness and fair judgment in her characterization is the key aspect of the mass appeal to enlighten and empower the women in their society that constructs the meaning, and norms and exercises them. A simple incident and reality in the public to emphasize the prevailing social norms of Indian society that they exercise over women as practiced by males has been presented through her characterization. Yashodhara Dalmia also believes, “One thread in myself sees interest in characters who don’t represent the mundane” (Dalmia 1979, p.8). It focuses on the characters and their representation of extraordinary life to compete in a male-dominated society. They are unlike the very kind of social phenomenon through which they have to carry out their life. These become other kinds of themes in writing and characterization.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Desai’s *Voices in the City* has been analyzed from various perspectives such as feminist, New Historicist, Marxist, Existentialism, and many others. Some critics have given their voices to the novel as the autobiographical experience of writers. Gadendrakumar comments, the novel is a tragic exploration of personal suffering, which arises out of the feverish sensibility of a young intellectual who has lost in the way in contemporary India. It delves into the inner climate of youthful despair and is permeated by declaring, "It brings about self-recognition and self-restoration in the protagonist"(VC123). It reveals that this is the actualization of the protagonist in his due course of life. Another critic K. R. S. Lyenger has underlined the problem of the meaningless existence of modern man in a modern world through Desai’s novel. It also raises the issues of the impact of alienation and a kind of generation gap. It draws a clear picture of her existing society:

"Desai's forte is the exploration of sensibility of the particular kind of modern India. The sensibility that is ill at ease in a sterile setup. The modern man is doomed to suffer the corrosive impact of alienation, which manifests itself variously in the form of the generation gap, the compartmentalization of life, the stunning of personal development, and the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaninglessness of life." (Lyenger 1964, p.58)

It explores the way of the modern man who is forced to get in touch with a different form of isolation and alienation. As the city develops rapidly, people get congestion in every corner of the city. The protagonist faces similar kinds of experiences throughout the novel. We could hardly see single houses. They are narrowed into compartmentalization as the modern concept that we can vividly see in the city of Calcutta. They are bound to lose the personal development of life. They have to face some problems along with the absence of a sense of meaninglessness in life. However, he fails to understand the reality and underlying meaning of the text that the remains of colonization and the impact of cultural imperialism have caused the protagonist to possess an ambivalent identity.
Likewise, D.K. Pabby comments on ideas that her presentation of the issues and ideas about Laurence. Her writing in a broader sense covers not only the heroic struggles of the individuals, community, and humanity:

"Like Laurence, Anita Desai arrives at the same conclusion that a comprehensive meaning and understanding of life mean the genuine attempts and heroic struggles of the individual to establish a human relationship with other individuals and through them with community and humanity."

(Pabby 1995, p.57)

It was also explored by Bindhu, V.S & Kumar, R. P.(2016) the reflection of society in Anita Desai’s novel which viewed issues faced by women in a patriarchal-dominated society in India. There are various flaws regarding women’s status in India. So there is a very rapid growth of women writing contributions in India. Desai shares her ideas and feeling that match with ideas of Laurence. Comprehensive meaning and understanding of life have a link with the of their struggles of individual and their relation with that of other individual communities and humanity. She can narrate the changing values of modern Indian society from society to individuality. They give priority to individual freedom where we can see a generation gap in various arguments regarding social issues.

J. P. Tripathy states the protagonist’s position of transformation into self-actualization.

He regards this attempt as the positive growth of the protagonist. The novels of Anita Desai are an exploration of individuals, their passion, and their emotions. Desai probes into the inner recess of her characters. In dealing with the growth of the protagonist from alienation to self-actualization, J.P. Tripathy says, "A pattern of positive growth."

(Tripathy 1986, p.57)

In this regard, the novel needs a clear departure though it has been analyzed through various perspectives. They are the common issues they present throughout the novel. So, there exists a strong need to research this novel from a new perspective. Without a proper study on this issue, the meaning will remain incomplete. However, cultural ambivalence and cultural imperialism have not been applied yet. Having considered this fact, the present research proposes to study cultural ambivalence and imperialism which falls under the heading of postcolonial approaches.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To present the characteristics of ambivalent identity.
- To highlight the issues of British imperialism in India.
- To project the issues of oppressed Indian society in the selected novel.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1- How has Anita Desai presented the socio-cultural and socio-political elements in her novel *Voices in the City*?
2- How British imperialism has created its impacted Indian society and how these thematic values have been projected in the selected text?

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative. Theories presented by Homi K. Bhabha and K. R. Lyenger support this research study as a major theoretical framework. This research is based on textual analysis. Post-colonial studies posit its legitimacy as an interesting discipline and even contextualize relevant issues in distinct academic institutions of Euro-American and non-western countries. Postcolonial studies both as theory and method try to cover the significance and drawback of globalization covering some ideas as how humans from different geographical locations are extremely connected with various literary, socio-political, socio-economical, socio-cultural, geographical, and historical backgrounds. About the introductory notes on an establishment of post-colonial theory, Bill Ashcroft and others mention; "Once colonized peoples had to reflect on and express the tension which ensured from this problematic and contested, but eventually vibrant and powerful mixture of imperial language and local experience post-colonial theory came into being”

(Bhabha 1995, p.1)

Another way of judging postcolonial studies is that it deals with the process and belongings of the cultural displacements and dislocations of the marginalized voices and their upcoming circumstances. Moreover, it, in this response, recognizes such displacements and dislocations in the forms of the contact zone, cultural ambivalence, hybridity, and multicultural forms as globalizing tendencies in a greater sense have gone together with great changes and progress in the field of various academic courses as postcolonial discourses. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha informs:

"Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the context of political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of the third-world countries and the discourses of minorities within the geopolitical division of East and West, North and South. [. . .] They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the ‘rationalizations’ of modernity.”

(Bhabha 1994, p.171)
For Bhabha, postcolonial perspectives emerge as an attempt and struggle to resist and respond to the tendencies of the West to disclose their hegemony and ideologies towards the East. It also reveals the antagonistic and ambivalent moments regarding the socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic issues within the Eurocentric and American rationalization of modernity through the eyes of the non-western communities.

FINDINGS

We can observe the clear scene of the characters’ dissatisfaction. Unlike others, Dhubra also likes to leave the city of Calcutta because he finds the city more messy and troublesome. This city life keeps the character more bored and troublesome in which they see increasing cases of British culture which keeps the local one decreasing. These kinds of nature of not being constant are also the result of the remains of colonization and the impact of imperialism that keeps the characters culturally ambivalent is the main motif of the research can be found through the voices and scenes of the research text.

The novel ends with a white step to look at the outside which gives the exit of the novel with the self-actualization of the protagonist towards his lingering search for proper settlement. He learns the pitfalls of the remains of colonization and the impact of imperialism that keeps him movable during the transitional phase of India's changing sociocultural values and practices. Other characters also happen to inter into the same faith that they knew about their instability and disturbance and the result of ambivalent identity. Therefore, the thesis deals with the protagonist's ambivalent identity; he is culturally ambivalent that is due to the remains of colonization and the impact of British cultural imperialism using the expansion of its civilization. This research explicitly shows the protagonist Nirode’s ambivalent position. This takes place as a consequence of the remains of colonization and the impact of cultural imperialism in the transitional phase of India's changing society. He engages in different phases of life with distinct individuals of his own cultures and colonial and imperialist ones.

The cultural, political, educational, and technological powers circulated are examples that we can through imaginative characters with an imaginative story that resulted in ambivalent identities. The text highly focuses on the life of city dwellers of a middle-class family in Calcutta city. It narrates the story of a Bohemian brother Nirode and his two sisters caught in the transitional phase of India's changing socio-cultural practices. The novel highlights the consequences of Indian city life for the family whose identity is culturally ambivalent. His possessions own Indian Hindu conventional society out of which he could not be away and the impacts of imperial practices are rooted in the minds of Indian city dwellers and appear as a common phenomenon during the transitional phase of Indian history to the middle-class people.

In this case, the writer can catch the psychic condition of the Indian people of her era through the protagonist Nirode who wants to escape from metropolitan Calcutta and imperial cultures. That is the riddle and unpleasant realities of the past and present in which he is highly trapped is the reflection of his ambivalent identity. The researcher's task to explore the underlying facts behind the protagonist's wish to escape is the result of the common consequences of colonization and the impact of imperialism. The research seems to be more practical to understand the life of the city dwellers and their voices to emphasize the cultural ambivalence. In this case, the protagonist becomes aware of his ambivalent experience through involvement with the people of the city of Calcutta. As we have theorized the concept of cultural ambivalence is the situation of being culturally in dilemma or duality between and among individuals, groups, and communities. It is more applicable to the life of the protagonist Nirode.

In different colonial countries, British colonial and imperial power settled and practised their political, cultural, educational, and economic dominance become one of the major causes behind the protagonist's wish to escape. Further, those people who have experienced imperial dominance, could not separate from the imperial metropolitan cultures or accept their own cultures. In this stance, they remain culturally ambivalent which can be taken as a causal relation between cultural ambivalence and imperialism. While analyzing Desai’s *Voices in the City*, we can see sufficient proof of the cultural ambivalence and imperialism through which the characters mainly the protagonist pass and remains culturally ambivalent due to his entry into the city of Calcutta which possess the common features of cultural composition, especially British imperial impact, and dominance.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Postcolonial studies embody an umbrella sphere below which the issues like colonialism, neo-colonialism post-colonialism, nation, nationalism, imperialism, ethnicity, race, gender, globalization and hybridity, contact zone, and multiculturalism.

Ashcroft, et al further state:

"Post-colonial theory involves a discussion about experiences of various kinds, migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses [colonial discourse] of imperial Europe such as history philosophy and linguistics and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being." *(Ashcroft et al. 1995, p.2)*
Helen Tiffen defines postcolonial theory as a broader domain of knowledge that targets to deconstruct of distinct literary and socio-cultural disciplines and their practices of European and American thoughts. She writes, "Postcolonial theory is an umbrella term that covers different critical approaches which deconstruct European thoughts in areas as wide-ranging as philosophy, history, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, and political science" (Tiffen 1995, p.2). Post-colonialism is a project that deals with the effects and influences of colonialism or is caused by colonialism as the result of cultural ambivalence. Here, Leela Gandhi tries to make it clear, "rarely did the onslaught of colonialism entirely obliterate colonized societies. But also, far from being exclusively oppositional, the encounter with colonial power occurred along a variety of ambivalent registers" (Gandhi 1998, p.124).

The term ambivalence is a concept developed in psychoanalysis to deal with a continual flux between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also posits an oppositional reaction of attraction and repulsion from an object, person, or action. In psychological expression, ambivalence refers to a state of mind in which contradictory tendencies, attitudes, or feelings exist in the relationship to a single object, especially, the existence of love and hate, good and bad, colonizer and colonized. Lois Tyson says, "The positive and negative components of the emotional attitude are simultaneously in evidence and inseparable" (Tyson 1999, p.10). In The Dictionary of Behavioral Science, compiled and edited by Benjamin B. Wolman defines the term 'ambivalence' in terms of the mixed kinds of reactions of the individual and emotional attitudes of opponent groups or communities. He says:

"Ambivalence is the co-existence of opposing emotions, attitudes or traits in the same individual, as the rapid alternation of emotional attitudes towards another and as the state of being able to view two or more aspects of an issue or to view a person in terms of more than one dimension or value." (Wolman 1973, p.14)

As we observe ambivalence from a historical point of view, it is highly formed by the dynamic of an epoch of transition that drives human beings into the continuous situation of oppositional reaction. In the transitional epoch, the traditional beliefs in which an individual is accustomed to having two phases of time framework such as dead, and the new beliefs are in the process of birth. In this circumstance, an individual is interwoven between at least two cultures at the same time- one is traditional and another is new, which does not have any perfect form. P.K. Rajan describes:

"Ambivalence as a pattern of behavior is a characteristic expression of great ages of transition. The individual caught between a transitional ethos, which has become part of his blood, and a new ethos which perplexes him toward which he aspires, finds himself in an inescapable predicament, and he is seen wandering between two worlds, one dead and the other powerless to born." (Rajan 1995, p.10)

As Bhaba says, “Ambivalence describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion, which characterizes the relationship between colonized and colonizers. The relation is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer” (Bhabha 1992, p.12). Colonial mentalities tend to dominate the colonized. Jenny Sharpe draws a clear picture of the colonized Indian psychology or mentality that signifies the acceptance or temptation of British culture. It appears as another segment of adaptation of other cultures out of which the colonized could not be away. Sharpe points out:

“Colonial fantasies about Indian centre on a pseudo-aristocratic world the Anglo Indians created with their sprawling bungalows, country clubs, and polite parties or 'frolics.' Accompanying a public display of civilized life are images that show the natives being freed from the despotic rule, rising from their ignorance, and saved from cruel and barbarous practices. These vignettes tell of the civilizing mission, which is primarily a story about the colonizing culture as an emissary of light.” (Sharpe 1995, p.100)

English literary education exists in British India as cultural ideologies through which they extended all means of exercises to produce and reproduce their own cultures. It highlights, "Humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature-for example the shaping of [desired] character or the disciplines of ethical thinking are also essential to the process of socio-political control" (Procter 1995, p.431).

They found education a successful and safe landing to appear in other geographical spaces to exercise their hegemony in association with literary and non-literary disciplines. How the British imperialists surpassed the Indian subjects appear more transparent in Thomas Macaulay's statements. As he says that they showed their 'civilizing mission in India to control the socio-cultural and political, geographical issues. Macaulay writes:

“We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between the millions and us whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialect of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.” (Macaulay 1995, p.430)
Through the novel, we can experience the life of the main character Nirode and his involvement with family members and friends give a kind of dilemma through which he struggles to survive. When observing the life and his experience with that of other characters provide a glimpse of his ambivalent identity. He tends to experience that natural beauty out of loneliness. His watchful moment outside the window exemplifies to know about the natural beauty that vanished around the busy city of Calcutta. Instead, he has finds the materialization of so many cultural practices which could not keep him stable and constant. The given lines help us to know how he experiences the city of Calcutta:

“Nirode turned aside to the window so no one saw him flush; no one saw the fury with which he struck a match. . . . Was a man for whom aloneness alone was the sole natural condition, aloneness alone the treasure worth treasuring? But he had already gone too far in his confidences, he found himself incapable of retracting.” (VC 26)

Nirode struggles to find the proper way to adjust to the cultural practices, had in the past were a natural beauty and his pure cultural practices. Literarily, both of them have vanished and the British cultural practices have highly dominated such trends and natural beauty as a result of which the protagonist remains in tension Indian changing norms of the transitional phase of Indian society.

This dialogue also helps us to understand how the system of education rapidly spread in India. The overall system of education in Indian schools, colleges, and universities is highly dominant, suppressive, and self-centred as can be found through David’s voices. The metropolitan Calcutta is depicted as new dimensions full of contradiction, problems, and troubles through which the characters undergo. Rather than giving any significant meaning create monotonous, loneliness in the characters mainly in the case of the protagonist. At the beginning of the novel, Nirode could find his problem that was the root cause of the British imperial practice. So Calcutta assumes the cultural ambivalence out of the impact of British cultural practice. The aforementioned lines try to reveal the facts:

“We can see Desai’s novel as the true revelation of the history that portrays the true picture of the Indian transitional society of her time. It also shows the colonial and imperial continuation of British history. In this regard, there remain two cultural practices- one is the Indian metropolitans and the other is former British culture that gives him an ambivalent identity. So this results from cultural ambivalence. As British cultural practices were established, so many changes took place in the history of Indian society. The city of Calcutta represents the contact zone for city dwellers from which they learn such kinds of experiences in which marriage, bodies, touch, and torture also become one of the parts of the Indian culture filled with imperial cultural practices.

It depicts the changing environment of the cultures of the city of Calcutta. We can see cultural composition in metropolitan Calcutta which has highly dominated other cultures of remote countryside migrated people. As a result, we see certain changes in the social system that caused environmental pollution. Those changes that occurred in all social institutions are symptoms of the British Empire and their way of engagement in Indian society. Thus, the text is more contextual and historical in its nature and content to express the meaning of the character's ambivalent identity. The English language is also the result of colonialism and the impact of imperialism. Mother has written a letter in Bengali which becomes strange to her children. She remembers that it was her childhood language. It shows her past in which she sang a song flew a kite and sounded whistles. The lines say, "She had written in Bengali which was unusual. Bengali had been the childhood tongue in their house, the tongue in which she had sung songs to them and they had begged for kites and whistles" (VC 36). It indicates the changing scene of Indian society in which there is conflict among the family members. They are the consequences of colonization and the impact of imperialism that even occur in the changing history of transitional Indian society and its cultures. Consequently, Indian families have favoured speaking in English. This is due to the encroachment of British culture in India. This has appeared as a practice that can be seen even in education, health, and living standards. The successful policy can be seen in the form of education through which they can rule and occupy the places of most of the schools, colleges, and universities in Indian cities even in these recent days. The family members such as brothers, sisters, and mothers speak in English which is also influenced by British culture. The protagonist finds the tone of the language very touching which was unexpected to him. The mentioned lines also reveal:

"They had outgrown it and brothers, sisters, and mother now conversed and corresponded almost exclusively in English. It touched him. He did not want to but the softly rounded; chirping sounds of his childhood language touched him. She wrote in a quick, minute, frightened hand, betraying reserves and uncertainties of which as a son could never know." (VC 36)
The text tends to explore the common nature of Calcutta city. There are different kinds of experiences that they meet in certain places of Calcutta that can heat his pulses of him. There is a mix of different things which creates the city complex and is difficult. They can act, and react to different issues but find no solutions to come out of the difficulties. The composition of distinct communities tries to adjust but finds difficulties to locate them. It results from the arrival of the British Empire in the past that continue in the present as an unpleasant riddle and realities remain in the transitional phase of Indian society. In these cases, the city of Calcutta shows the land of Indian cultures and the impact of imperialism. There are festivals in which we can observe the beauty of Durga, Laksmi, Saroshoti, and Kali. They represent the Orient cultures that exist in the city of Calcutta. The protagonist learns these experiences at the same spots of Eastern and Western cultural values and practices. There are different models of cars and other uses such as cinemas, slaughterhouses, and pan booths around the city of Calcutta become examples of both cultural meets that had made the protagonist very complicated and exhausted.

The city of Calcutta has become a city of distinct institutions and social and non-social organizations in which the protagonist involved and remains the viewer, observer, and critic to them. It also creates complications for the characters. He is surrounded by those issues and things such as dancers, drunkards, sailors, and prostitutes. These all appear as a wild celebration that ultimately destroys the native cultural traits out of which neither the protagonist can escape nor accepts other cultural practices. In the end, he remains ambivalent culturally. His sister Monisha also appears in the same city of Calcutta where she happens to share similar experiences and share ambivalent identity is exposed through the lines of the novel. She is fond of reading different book materials rather than going outside. Within her, the influence of imperial cultural practices captures her rather than the outside environment. Therefore, there is a conflict between brother and sister that is grounded by the means of colonial and imperial remains and impact gives the cultural ambivalence.

In other cases, she also studies Indian women especially Bengali who appear in the pose of typical sari. She criticizes them for being baggy and dull. She enjoys great epics of Eastern cultures such as Bhagvad-Gita and Ramayan. It shows that she is also not constant and stable in her nature and way of life. The way she acts exposes her ambivalent identity. These kinds of Eastern and Western cultural practices come together within the characters about which they have to accept or resist and come under the attempt of theorizing cultural ambivalence in post-colonial discourses. All the characters share similar experiences. It also happens in the case of Nirode’s younger sister Amla. Furthermore, Amla seems to be very happy and enjoys the life of her freedom. She is described as a happy and lucky girl to have such a kind of life and also predict the future, the possibilities, and endless traps. They are in the elms of cultural changes out of which she gets relaxed and satisfied. The cultural changes might have struck the minds of the young generation which they find more interesting and engaged themselves.

The protagonist moves along with that the crisis mentally and physically. His means of alienation and unusual appearance as his mother remains watchful and constraining comes as the true knowledge to search for his identity that remains to be ambivalent. Beyond, similar cases occur in the life of Monisha and other women. They are presented in a conventional way which reflects the Orient cultural practices. This Calcutta city has emerged as a city of different voices. They come differently. They show the worrisome and exhausted life. The way freedom has been shown and conceived also comes as a paradox. It is regarded as strange and exhausting to the common people. It is taken as old as the mother is in similar ages because she experiences the past and even the present. There is a bridge between the past and the present which come along with cultural ambivalence. There is the form of the generation gap that creates problems between the generations. The basic foundation of the changes remains under the dominance of the former involvement of the imperial impact. Concerning the major changes even freedom contradicts the transitional phase of Indian society.

Amla also gets irritated with city life which differs from her previous life as we mentioned in previous pages. She understood her brother Nirode’s life and his wish to go to the locality. It shows the protagonist’s disrespect and disinterest towards the increasing trends of changes in the city of Calcutta creating problems for them out of which they want to escape and tend to rest in local villages.

“Grinding through the city in a tired, bulging bus, she kept her face fiercely turned to the window, away from . . . Amla understood why Nirode chose to live in a locality such as this: it could not, after all, make any difference to him whether he lived amongst men serene and reasonable and gentle or men who fought like crows over every flesh carcass.” (VC 183)

He even involves such activities as drugs in his veins to escape from the tension but he realizes that this is not the cause of ordinary events that brought great changes in the life of characters and the city of Calcutta for what he sees everything like flesh carcass. He learns nothing but the ultimate cultural ambivalence that is a result remains of colonization and the impact of imperialism leaves the characters one after another ambivalent identity.

CONCLUSION

Cultural imperialism by its nature means of controlling and imposing power towards others, the British imperialist followed the same policies and strategic power to become equally the dominant sources in Indian society. That also got open space in the transitional period of Indian history that we can find in Desai’s Voices in the City. This output of the
The impact of cultural imperialism has depicted the life of the protagonist as culturally ambivalent among several voices that come together in a single metropolitan city of Calcutta. Therefore, *Voices in the City* extremely concretizes the condition and problem of the protagonist and other characters as a result of the colonial effect and impact of cultural imperialism sums up the ambivalent identity. In this way, there are distinct characters which involve in plural cultures. The characters are presented in a way with the interaction of distinct cultural contacts that results in a plural voice which vividly represents the ambivalent nature of the characters. They are conscious of their way of life which can be seen through the character Nirode and others. It is a clear example of ambivalence that gives consciousness to the human being as a whole. In this response, we conclude that ambivalence as the process of identity formation shapes the meaning of the text. Because of the protagonist's position of self-actualization, his wishes to escape from inseparable pains, difficulties, and troublesome situations that are observed in the text in a greater sense reflect the underlying structure of ambivalence.

**LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD**

This study covers the research gap with the presentation of a detailed analysis of sociocultural values and thematic elements along with the characteristics of British Imperialism. These highlighted areas and research angularities make this study novel and unique.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL STANDARDS**

There is neither ant conflict of interest in the publication of this paper nor any unethical practice adopted during this research study.

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**AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION**

Hassan Bin Zubair hypothesized the main idea of the research and wrote the abstract, introduction and literature review. Nelofir Shaber developed the research methodology and did data analysis. Iqrak hadam worked on the findings, conclusion and reference settings.

**REFERENCES**