



The Concept of *The Other* as Constructed in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*

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Abstract

Dichotomy of the West and the East has become an issue after colonial era ended. The colonized countries such as India are seen as inferior to the Western countries—European countries and America. Moreover, according to Orientalism by Edward Said, the Westerners regard the East as *The Other*. This study aimed to explain (1) the concept of *The Other* as constructed in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* and (2) how it affects the personality of the main characters. Observation sheets were used as research instrument and the data were obtained from library research. This qualitative descriptive study employed Orientalism theory by Edward Said in analyzing the data. It is found that the concept of *The Other* in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* are constructed on three (3) keys which are (1) Westerners perspective on Indian people as well as Indian perspective on the Westerners, (2) the *otherness* of India, (3) and the imagery of India. Meanwhile, the construction of *The Other* has affected the main characters' personality. From the construction of *The Other*, Indian are seen as inferior, powerless, poor, restricted, and traditional. It shows that Western hegemony can even change people's personality and how they think about their identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Right before the Indian independence in 1947, British Empire had ruled the Indian subcontinent for ninety years. Despite the fact that India now is a sovereign country, it remains depending on British common wealth. That they get much influenced by their ex-colonizer is the fact that should be inevitable. The India's powerlessness in the British colonization made them experience severe poverty for years. In this relation, Sakhkhane (2012) describes that India is those who are "marginalized, neglected lower classes whose voice can achieve audibility only through the mediation of antagonistic element".

In the same lens but different term, India is also considered as *The Other*. *The Other*, according to Edward Said's Orientalism, is determined as the negatively contrast depiction of the East towards the West. In this term, India is seen as inferior which has a bunch of bad cachet compared to Western countries. The comparison between the East and the West comes into notion that the West will forever be over the East. The superior one is considered as *The Self* and the inferior one is as *The Other*. This dichotomy of West and East leads to the today's postcolonial phenomenon in the ex-colonialized countries, not exception in India. The phenomenon is conveyed in the theoretical view called "Orientalism" proposed by Edward Said in his book entitled *Orientalism*.

The inferiority of India is also further conveyed by Inden (1990) in his book entitled *Imagining India*. He explains the westerners' idea seeing the inferior India. According to him, India is conceptualized as having the inherited "essences" which determine India's order and history. This discourse, according to Inden, could help the Western world conceive themselves as free individual, having practical reason as well as rational order of society. There are three essences which India has included imprisoning caste system, unchanging village, and divine kingship. These are the essences which determine a world inferior to the West.

The today's India is certainly influenced by the colonial practices. Therefore, Indian independence means that postcolonial discourse began. According to Şafak (2014), the literatures and arts in the colonized countries become the subject of post-colonial study. India is unexceptionally being the subject of the discourse of post-colonialism. With the discourse appearing into the surface, many critics spilled out their ideas relating to the voice of the oppressed as well as the identity of colonized countries, for example Gayatri Spivak whose work brings out the voice of Indian people. There are also abundant of writers coming from India giving voice to Third World (non-western) countries. Bharati Mukherjee is one of those writers who rejects that the colonized countries are helpless and doomed.

Most of Mukherjee's works are raising issues of searching identity and migration with nostalgic memories of India. *Desirable Daughters* (2002) is one of her literary works narrating about those issues. By bringing the Indian myths collaborated with American life, Mukherjee succeeded giving the ideas of postcolonial problems in her novel. *Desirable Daughters* serves the story of three Brahmin daughters who have different decision in coping with different culture from their homeland. In the novel, India is the hometown for the main characters and as well belongs to Third World countries with a thousand of traditions it possesses. Mukherjee describes India as though India were helpless with its bunch of problems; poverty, crimes, and injustice. On the other hand, America is such a fresh breeze for Indian people to live in. In fact, America is considered as the First World with its all-super-things it possesses even though it was also one of British colonies. After the World War II, America spread its wings to be the most superpower country. This disparity of two countries stimulates the issue of West and East dichotomy which related to the key of Orientalism. As a result, how Mukherjee describing India and America makes researcher curious whether there is America superiority over India as well as the representation of India as *The Other* reflected in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*.

There are some researchers who used Orientalism to analyze *The Other* in a literary works. These researches on Orientalism were further used as references to analyze the findings of this study. Firstly, it comes from Talaie (2016) who found that in a novel entitled *Water with Berries* by George Lamming, *The Other* is represented through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism. According to her, the representation of *The Other* then defines the identity of *The Self*. Moreover, she also found that in Firoozeh Dumas's *Funny in Farsi*, *The Self* is represented by American people, while *The Other* is the main character who is an immigrant from Iran. Secondly, Maliyana (2012) in her study explained that the plot of a novel entitled *Gardens of Water* by Alan Drew illustrates the East (*The Other*) as weak, powerless, and dependent creatures. She conveyed that the author of the novel wanted to show that the West existed to help the East to become civilized.

As for the previous studies which analyze *Desirable Daughters*, many of them discuss the changing identity and personality of the main characters as an effect of being an Indian immigrant in America. One of them is a research by Bhadrusha & Mohanty (2018) whose findings showed that the cultural clash faced by the immigrant characters in *Desirable Daughters* can cause the psychic damage and the change of their identity. They concluded that in the case of Tara, the effect of cultural clash is that she can celebrate cultural hybridity where she can live and adjust herself in both cultures. In addition, Vidyavati (2018) supports the argument of the previous study mentioned above that Padma is represented in American color, Parvati is portrayed totally in Indian color, but Tara always swings between Indian and American color. On the other hand, Preetha and Tyagi (2016) found that Tara makes a transformation of her life from traditional Indian to be a modern American woman but she is caught in the struggle between tradition and modern. Moreover, they explained that Padma and Parvati lead a complacent and a passive life, adopt a safe path, remain suspicious

about a new identity, do not feel the need to widen their horizon, and are less assertive.

By examining the previous studies above, the researcher of this study found research gap which is then served in the findings and discussion of this article. Thus, by carrying out Said's theory about Orientalism, the concept of *The Other* and how the condition of being *The Other* shaped the main characters' personality will be conveyed in this research.

METHODS

The researcher of this study used qualitative descriptive since the topic of this study is about a phenomenon, as what Cresswell (2014) claims. Thus, the data in this final project are in the form of words such as sentences, dialogues, and quotation. Furthermore, the data found in the object of the study must be interpreted and described by the researcher since qualitative research is interpretative research (Locke, et.al. 2013). The data should be relevant to the topic of the study so that it can answer the statements of the study. The data of this study are in the form of words, sentences, and quotation found in the *Desirable Daughters* novel by Bharati Mukherjee.

The theory used in this study is Orientalism which focuses on the binary opposition between *The Self/West* and *The Other/East*. The binary then will determine the representation of *The Other* and the personality of the main characters.

To obtain the data, the researcher did several steps. They were (1) reading to get a better understanding about the novel, and to gain the primary data, (2) identifying the data needed which are contained in the novel by underlying and bracketing the words which are related to the topic (3) inventorying all the quotations found in the novel as much as the researcher can find in the observation sheet, (4) classifying the data into two kinds of data which are the data needed and non-data. Finally, the non-data will be eliminated.

The following numbers are some steps of data analysis based on Said's theory (1978): (1)

the researcher selected the data showing the representation of *The Other* as reflected on the novel, (2) then the researcher selected the data showing the binary opposition between *The Self* and *The Other*, (3) and finally the researcher described the effect of *The Other* construction on main characters' personality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Concept of *The Other* Constructed in Mukherjee's "Desirable Daughters"

Based on the analysis, the researcher comes into some notions that Indian people represent *The Other* which lay in three principles. They are the Western perspective on Indian people and Indian perspective on the Westerners, the *otherness* of Indian, and the imagery of India.

Westerners perspective on Indian people and Indian perspective on Western people

In the second chapter, the narrator explains where their homeland is, how it looks like, how it is seen by other world people. Calcutta, the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal, is where she lived together with her family. American people are not the exception to speak their mind about Calcutta. Tara has found it wretched as well as to confirm at once that her homeland is known as a poor, cruel, and abject place in the world. She explains that,

My American friends in California say God, Tara, Calcutta! As though to suggest I have returned to earth after a journey to one of the outer planets. It's one of those cities in the world with negative cachet, a city to escape, one of those hellholes made famous by Mother Theresa and mindless comparison in the American press: Dirtier than Calcutta. Crueler than Calcutta. Poorer than Calcutta. I grew up in a city that never pitied itself, that deflected all the abuse. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 21).

From the statement above, American people regard Calcutta as though it is a place from the outer planet. Calcutta, based on www.indianpanorama.in, is India's former capital city which is well-known for its rich culture, artforms, and revolutionary heritage. It is

also called as the Cultural Capital of India. Therefore, it is one of the most prominent cities in India. However, in the eyes of Americans, Calcutta is somewhere so far away that either nobody lives there or aliens are its inhabitants. She further adds that Mother Theresa, a famous Albanian-Indian Roman Catholic nun as well as missionary, also took part to lead public opinion that the city is one of those hellholes where everyone is suffering. Bad predicates of Calcutta do not stop there, American press makes the comparison on which Calcutta as the reference of a state's bad condition. Thus, in the researcher's opinion, by seeing that Americans regard India as an outer planet and a city of hellholes, it obviously shows that Americans hold true of India as *The Other*.

Another thing which shows how Americans look down on Indian people is when Tara told stories about Indian things, they would be like giggling or appalled, she conveys that "I have told my Calcutta stories many times, and American seems to find them amusing and appalling" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 26). It can be interpreted that the Americans put Indians in the position as a joke that can make them amused and appalled all at once. Therefore, it can be implied that Indians are seen as unique that any of their stories cannot be found in America, and thus position Indians as *The Other*.

On one side, the Westerners regard Indian people as inferior; on the other side, the superiority of the Westerners basically makes it become the role model for the Indian people. Many of them imitate what the Westerner do in clothing, education, or even manner. They regard the Westerners whose every decent thing Indian want to have as a high society. Supporting that the West is Indian's role model, mastering English language is one of Indian prides. The main character conveys how English language give power to the Indian people, especially the Hindus of East Bengal.

By mastering English language, someone is considered as an educated person. For example, the character Jai Krishna, the father of the Tree Bride, is the perfect representation of an

educated Indian people who mellifluously speaks English. It is said that,

Gentleman like Jai Krishna Gangopadhaya, a pleader in the Dacca High Court, whose surname the colonial authorities lightened to Gangooly... He spoke mellifluous English and one high court judge had even recommended him for a scholarship to Oxford. Had he played by the rules, he should have been a great success, a prince, and a power. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 6)

By the description, it can be seen that the fluency of English language becomes the standard of a brilliant future. Jai Krishna, who is adored by the Englishmen because of his mellifluous English, is the character who is potential to be the powerful man in India because of his cleverness. It also conveys that India is powerless without English. How Indian people praise English is further shown in the whole next chapters related to the main characters' life. Because the main characters were raised in a Hindu Brahmin family, they were sent to a convent school of which pupils were mostly Christian and of which language used was English. As a matter of fact, "the standard of education for Indian people is none other than English-standard" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 151).

It is when Tara and Padma have time together to look back on what had happened in their lives. Back to when they were teenager, it comes a name "Ray" who is famous figure in Indian film industry in that time. He is as arrogant as the British, explained Tara, because of his "Western" knowledge he masters. It means that he feels more superior to the other groups, that is why he becomes that arrogant. Thus, by imitating the Westerners, *The Other* will feel powerful because they believe that the Westerners is very powerful. It indicates that *The Other* is considered as powerless.

The Otherness of India Religious Life

In *Desirable Daughters* Mukherjee conveys how Hinduism fills the lives and gives color to Indian people as well as how it interacts with another religion such as Islam and Christian. Thus, in carrying out their daily lives, most of

Indian people basically hold onto their beliefs to God. There are some religions in India, and Hinduism is the largest religion with 79.8% of population while the second one is Islam. Hence, one of some things that comes into mind when there is a word "India" is Hindu. She mentions that Andi likes to hit the holy places and knows the religious practices like what Indian people usually do (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 46). All what her boyfriend likes to do represents enough how Indian people are seen, thus she claims that Andi looks more Indian than she does.

Furthermore, even in the first chapter of the novel, the author illustrates the power of their deities in the eyes of Indian people through the story of Tara Lata. In fact, she shows how their deities control over their lives mainly through the marriage practices throughout the story. Mukherjee, by means of the main character, expresses the obedient Indians to their God and Goddess, for example, the case of Tara's grand-grandfather. Before the day of the marriage, Jai Krishna had to carry out some rituals in order to get blessed by their God and Goddess as well as to ask their protection from Goddess Manasha who can send a poisonous snake to bite the groom. Jai Krishna and Tara Lata had already done all of the rituals, but it turns out to be failed. It is because, as what people accused, Jai Krishna did not do the rituals properly (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 8). By examining this case, it can be seen that they strongly believe that their lives are depended on their Gods. Everything might turn out bad even though they have already followed the rituals as best as they can do.

In additional, they consider astrologers can help them in knowing their future, or in other word they believe the horoscope. Before a couple carry out the marriage, they have to be matched in the horoscope so that they can be blessed. Otherwise, if they are not matched to each other, then they must never do the marriage. Furthermore, in the novel, the religious Indian can be seen from the schools they choose which at least hold onto a religious practices.

These values are, as a matter of fact, almost totally different with Western value. Both of their

beliefs actually contradicting to each other, it is why India becomes *The Other* for having thick religious value. The contradiction can be detected when Jai Krishna had fallen out with his colleagues who were progressive people Tara calls them (Mukherjee, 2002, p.8). Progressive people, according to Tara, are those who already absorb the value of the Westerners, and nearly get rid of their Indian value. Sir Keshub and Dr. Ashim are the example of the most westernized people who oppose every Indian customs. Thus, in the researcher's opinion, they are the closest representation of Western people. They turn out to say that those rituals which are full of astral promise would bring Indian people to disasters. Moreover, they consider child-marriage is a barbarous demeanor and think that the best dowry is an educated bride. In fact, they do not believe in something astral such as horoscope and ritual.

On one side, Indian people are those who really hold their culture and religion; on the other side, Western people are those who have free spirits and considered having a profane or 'secular' lifestyle. Thus, Western people and westernized ones then do not believe in spirit or astral power like Sir Keshub and Dr. Ashim. The westernized ones, furthermore, against their former values. Tara, one of the characters in the novel who live in America for years, seems to show how the secular life works in America and how it affects her Hindu life.

Caste System

Caste plays an important role to regulate the pattern of interaction among Indian people. They cannot unimpededly interact to just anyone who are not in their level. In the novel, it is clearly seen that the main characters will only socialize with either the same Brahmin or those who is considered westernized. Nonetheless, Tara says that they can be friends with "those who come from the lower-class, but never for marriage" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 32).

Sure, in India marriage is a sacred occasion which requires a right person with the right religion as well as caste. It is related with Didi's

relationship with Ron Dey who is a Christian, and Tara says that "The Deys, as their name proclaimed, were not only Christian today, but had sprung from a Hindu caste that was not even Brahmin" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 52). As what has been mentioned before, that the Hindus are hardly married with those non-Hindus which cause a problem in Didi's relationship especially when they are not the same caste which is Brahmin. Indeed, the upper-class will always be looking for the same class like what Auntie Bandana did to find her son a suitable woman (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 107).

The requirements shows that caste is the most important thing to be looked to. It goes without saying that someone comes from the upper-class or Brahmin is known for their brain-beauty, manner, and prosperity, thus it becomes the prior condition for the Brahmin future-spouse in order to keep them on their high horse.

Moreover, there is absolute privilege only for those who are in the upper-class which causes the lower-class stand no chance to gain their opportunities such upper-class get. Consequently, it will then cause social inequality which also is the cause of poverty and crimes happened in India. As for the middle-class, they luckily can get coeducational classroom. Tara's mother has ever said that "only middle-class women went to coeducational classroom and studied useful things like law or medicine or engineering" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 106). They are considered as having opportunities to earn a better living than the lower-class.

Meanwhile, America as the antithesis of India has a more flexible rule. There is no such caste which separates its citizens. The Americans have their freedom to choose their identity. Tara further describes that America is a freedom land where nobody can ever clamp her down for doing everything she wants. She conveys that,

Jackson Heights is a landscape of potentialities that had been denied in India ... No caste or regional or familial strings to pull, no favors to trade. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 200)

For Tara, Jackson Heights is a place where Indian people can dig their potentialities because

there is no caste as well as regional or familial bound which can hinder them for getting opportunities. Jackson Heights itself is located in the New York City, is a multicultural place where South Asian micro-neighborhood sow their capital to trade, hoping that they will get richer and richer. She reckons that America represents a fortunate destination as it opens up a big chance for Indian people to build up their business without taking into account that a person has a higher or lower social class. This is what makes America superior to India because it even gives the Indian people freedom.

The Patriarchy Land

Indian culture is stick to the patriarchal system where men gain more privilege than women. Moreover, deifying men as God's proxy in Earth is considered as a loyal. Tara once said that,

The "boy" (they are always "boys" to jumpstart my life, to be worshipped as a god according to scripture, was (and is) Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a first son from an outstanding family. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 23)

She used the word "worshipped" to equate a man and her God, enough to show that it is definitely the patriarchal system. The worship starts from the dowry when a girl are married off with a boy chosen by her parents. It is she who is burdened to prepare the dowry for the groom.

Furthermore, the burden comes not only from the dowry but also from some bad luck happened in their marriage. It is because all the bad luck will always be linked to women. In the story of Tara Lata the Tree Bride, the one who was blamed is she whose fate is becoming a forever-widow because her husband-to-be was bitten by snake (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 8). It is stated that when the husband-to-be is dead because of the snakebite, it means that the girl is doomed in all of her life. Basically, Indian people believe that women bring the negative aura, thus rituals must be gone through. For a Bengali Hindu woman, being a widow means being a misfortune woman which means being a must-avoided person by the society. The society, for sure, dumped her and did not let anyone marry

her because of her cursed-state. How much suffering a woman is not even because of her deeds. Such rules and punishments make women only revolve around men and obedient to their commands whether like it or not to pursue a heavenly safe life. It requires women to be an obedient woman, and spend her lifetime in a confinement.

Unlike India, America gives women all the freedom of being herself. Working, driving, studying, and even making scandals are not the sins women must bear. She confirms that,

In America, it seemed to us, every woman was expected to create her own scandal, be the center of her own tangled love nest. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 83)

In America, women can be the center instead of men. Furthermore, Tara confirms that modern American women "have passed through at least one unarranged marriage and who are raising at least one child with or without the bottom line of child support" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 27). It implies that being a divorcee in America is considered as a modern woman which represents liberation of women in America.

Collectivist Culture

For Indian people, family is everything who is captured as collectivist. According to Kendra Cherry in the verywellmind.com (2020) "collectivist culture emphasizes the goals of the group as a whole over the needs and desires of each individual." Mukherjee serves the atmosphere of togetherness in the novel by showing how Indian people regard another people who come from the same descent and region as family. Tara's son reassures it by saying "isn't family is a big Indian things?" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 89) which at once confirming that family is no other than a serious matter for Indian people as what Tara claims that "in India, every word relating to family carries a special meaning." (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 36). She continues,

Children are taught to call every family friend "auntie" and "uncle," or, in our language, mashi and mesho for the mother's side, pishi and pishemasha or kaki and kaku for the father's side. ... Close friends, or the vaguely connected from the same desh, the

same remote village, are enfolded as “cousin-brothers, ...”. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 36)

The statement above describes how Indian people are related to each other. The closeness of each other can be seen from the way they give and call a certain name to everyone based on the relatedness. Even though someone definitely do not have familial string but is the same region, they still can call him/her as cousin-brothers. The togetherness is also illustrated through the way Parvati settled for her husband’s family friends sleeping over or even joining in her apartment for days or months (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 53).

It is obviously seen that family is one of those stuff to be considered if one is going to marry someone. It is because in the marriage, the wife will entangle with not only her husband, but also his whole family, and vice versa. In addition, in India the woman is usually moved to the house of the man’s family which demands her to get to know her husband’s whole family. Moreover, the way of Indian people gather along in America, and exclusively socialize with each other reflects that they maintain the togetherness over individuals.

This value is what differs India and America. America is illustrated in the novel as Individualist rather than collectivist/holistic. The Americans mostly do not put it in any efforts to pay attention to other people’s stuff. Furthermore, Tara’s divorce becomes the point, and Jack Sidhu’s statement makes it sharper,

“I know that. The State of California knows that, but that doesn’t matter. ‘In the eye of Brahma...’ isn’t that what Hindus say? Under California law five years is a long time, people move on with their lives. But in the eyes of Indians you’ll always be linked. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 143)

Jack Sidhu, a cross-cultural police officer in California, said that Indian will always be linked even though they already divorced. Contrary to Indians, American people seem to make it none of their business when a couple got divorced. India seems to take into account the importance of family, relatives, and their society. Clearly seen that Indians hold the collectivism value which focus on the community’s importance rather than individual’s.

The Imagery of India

Poor

“... Some of these guys,” he pointed to the books, “they hang out in the lobbies of the cheapest hotels where they know Third World tourists are booked and will be too shy to cancel once they see their rooms ...” (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 146)

It is the statement of Jack Sidhu showing that Third World is poor which can be seen through the description of Third World tourists who booked the cheapest hotels in America. Furthermore, India is considered as one of the Third World countries around the world, and mostly come from Asia.

The main character, Tara, describes India as a poor country in the first place where criminals grow up massively. This bad cachet is established by both the Westerners and Indian people themselves. India is not an alternative country to live in if someone must choose, as like when Ron Dey chose to stay on in India, and people started regretting his decision. Ron Dey is a Christian well-established man who had ever been in a special relationship with Padma. He continued his study in England after high school, and then became a surgeon. However, people were talking behind his back that they wondered why he moved to Calcutta and lived there with his wife and children instead of staying in England. It is such throwing away diamond and picking up a stone because deep in Indian people’s mind, Western countries such as Canada gives more opportunities for them than India does. In this case, it can be seen that even Indian people admit that their country is not better than Western countries.

A country can be considered poor when crimes are everywhere to be found, and India is one of those countries where crimes thrive. Jack Sidhu has also explained Tara why he was interested that much in India’s culture which changed into violence lately,

“I am interested in the fact that an essentially peaceful culture like India’s can periodically erupt with such violence...”. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 145)

The occasion happened when Tara asked police officer, Jack Sidhu, to undergo an investigation as for Chris Dey who claimed himself as Tara's nephew. Jack Sidhu, then, showed Tara a bunch of Indian criminals both in India and America. Some cases in the novel definitely reflect the condition of India. There is no guarantee for citizen's safety, thus there is no one to keep yourself safe unless you keep yourself vigilant and watchful for your own sake.

The bandits are becoming pro in finding everyone's private information, meaning that everyone must absolutely be insecure to get to know new people (Mukherjee, 2002, p 62). That is so dangerous and terribly risky that Parvati is told by her husband not to trust anyone in Bombay. Parvati was warned when the case of Urmila-bai happened in her neighborhood, and she almost became the victim of that treacherous housekeeper. Urmila-bai, Parvati's live-in maid, became the culprit of robbery-murder, and Mr. and Mrs. Sen were the victims. Parvati informed that "there was a robbery-murder in our building! Can you imagine that? I know it happens all the time in Delhi, but in our building? Just four floors from us?" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 56). It can be seen that robbery-murder is a common thing happened in India especially Delhi, and now it also stands a chance to happen even in apartment area in Bombay which is typically guarded by security officer. Obviously, it is indicated that there is social gap between the poor and the rich which causes crimes committal. Furthermore, being poor, many Indian people were smuggled to America to earn money by doing crimes as they know the targets must be Indian moneybags.

Being contrary, America is known for its high safety rate. In addition, the whole story does not show the poorness of America. Moreover, the characters believe that America is far safer than that India. It is explained when Auro, Parvati's husband, scolded Rabi when Rabi went outside the apartment. He yelled,

"That's an outrageous idea!" Auro exploded when he got wind of Rabi's pleas. "Doesn't the boy understand he's not in San Francisco?". (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 65)

He cannot not believe that Rabi does not understand how dangerous Indian places are. There is a bunch of crooks hanging around the streets, waiting for their prey. He as well implies that Rabi can go everywhere in San Francisco without any fear.

It is clearly seen in the novel that India is represented as having a high rate of poverty. Based on the binary opposition above, the high poverty rate definitely influences the crime rate in India, thus positions India as an unsafe place compared to America with a high rate of safety.

Traditional

In *Desirable Daughter*, Indian people are seen as traditional since they strongly hold into the culture and religion which are the opposite of modernity of which technology and science are its foothold. The image of traditional can be seen from the way Indian people are craving to be a modern people. For Indian people, being modern means being westernized. Tara complains,

Your parents, Tara, get a grip! What do they know of the needs of a modern woman? The simple answer could never satisfy them: I wasn't, perhaps I'll never be, a modern woman. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 27)

She infers that her parents are traditional for indeed they were not that progressive to follow the fast-changing India, unlike Tara. She thinks that,

This is the life I've been waiting for, I thought, the liberating promise of marriage and the travel and the wider world. Bless Daddy and Mummy, they found me the only man in the world who could transport me from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s, which has to count as one of the intellectual wonders of the modern world. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 81)

For Tara, being modern means the liberating promise of marriage, travel, everything of course based on the liberation of self-love and the stream of modernity. She used a metaphor "enchanted garden" to illustrate India, while "the intellectual wonders of the modern world" to represent America. It is crystal clear India or enchanted garden is a place where people are appreciating the nature as much as God's grace. As what has been explained above, Indian people

are strongly obedient to their deities, and holding onto their culture. On the other hand, America or the intellectual wonders of the modern world is a place where people are praising over science and technology and setting aside God's intervention.

The researcher inferred that Indian is seen as traditional because their all of the aspects of their lives are determined by the culture and religious values. It differs with America which is technology and science-oriented. Technology and science are the leading values to live the American life, so it is considered as modern.

Restricted

Seeing how Indian people are bound by their culture and religion, and thus their every carrying-on will always be controlled and supervised. For instance, with whom they could interact in society and what rituals they must do to praise their deities as well as to demand protection are the essential thing.

She conveys that her behavior never changed because there is an absolute limitation which must not be crossed over; otherwise, consequences await. Therefore, she said "nothing to rebel against" because there is no choice to be considered, and she said it not only once, but several times (Mukherjee, 200, p. 27). It seems like a hint that Indian people need to make it come to the surface to be discussed. She, furthermore, adds,

Anyone entering or exiting was carefully monitored. We honored the proprieties. There was no rebellion, no seeking after individual identity. Why would there be? (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 43)

So everything is absolutely determined, Indian people even do not stand a chance to search their own identity. Moreover, the main characters belong to Brahmin or high society class which makes them feel like in prison because their father cannot let the outside world touch them. She said that every person who was entering and exiting is monitored shows how tight is the protection.

As the time passed, Tara realizes that she in fact rebels everything her father has taught her as she has long lived in America. She consciously

understands that India is a different world from America. She liberates herself from being burdened as an Indian woman because America offers liberation towards women. One place in America which reflects how America opens a great opportunity for Indian, it is Jackson Heights. Jackson Heights for Tara is a place where everyone in the world including herself and other Indian people can step their foot and hang their hope. Tara describes Jackson Heights in a further explanation that,

Jackson Heights rewards Indian immigrants for all the skills that three thousand years of caste confinement have imposed; it liberates the class of Indian that India itself kept bottled up. Jackson Heights is a landscape of potentialities that had been denied in India. ... No caste or regional or familial strings to pull, no favors to trade. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 200)

Jackson Height is like the light at the end of the tunnel for Indian people for its liberation. The confined Indians can freely interact or socialize with just everyone without minding the caste and familial strings. In the end, Indian is represented as those who are needed to be liberated from their prison.

Indian people as being restricted means that they are always under the control of either the culture or religion rules. Their acts are fully monitored by those rules which makes their freedom to do as they wish is limited and even restricted. Differed from India, America always gives the people to act as they want even if it is something ambiguous or extreme, no one cannot proscribe it. The freedom given to the people is widely known as American dream whose aim is to give Individual freedom to the fullest.

The Effect of The Other Construction on The Main Characters' Personality as Represented in Mukherjee's "Desirable Daughters"

Tara's Personality

As what Tara has conveyed that American people seem to look at Indian immigrant differently. She said before, that her American friends always take her Indianness as amusing and appalling. Moreover, her being South Asian

turns out to be invisible in the eye of the white people. Thus, it unconsciously influences how Tara sees the world. Being different in the middle of the homogeneity makes her inferior. That inferiority grows insecurity in Tara's self.

Tara does not define herself as an Asian, she claims herself as all things or it can be said that she does not want to belong. It shows that she is hiding her identity as an Indian (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 78). It indicates that she actually is insecure by her identity, that she makes herself over shows that she wants to be another one. The next pages, Tara confirm that she is sick of being invisible,

Nobody pays attention to me other than to ask for spare change or press a handbill into my closed fist.

I am tired of explaining India to Americans. I am sick of feeling an alien. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 79)

The first point she wants to convey is that the Americans do not consider her there. She feels that everybody is ignorant towards her just because she is Indian. The second point is that she feels that she is seen as an alien. Every time she meets Americans, she has to explain India to them like India is not the part of the world. Thus, it makes her feel as an alien, and she is sick of it. Being *The Other*, for Tara, means either being invisible or alien. Once she wants to be herself by looking like Indians wearing sari and gold, she feels the most alien,

Wrapped in sari for the first time ... I was jostled, I heard curses, and I felt hostile eyes assessing me. In a city of foreigners, I was feeling the most alien. A commute like this, twice a day, would press the life of me. If nothing else came of this trip, at least I would know I belonged in California. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 194)

Seeing how Americans treat her—giving hostile eyes and cursing—makes her insecurity comes up. She said she would be under pressured for being a commuter who twice a day must feel like an alien. Moreover, now she said she belonged to California which before she said she did not want to belong. She will define herself as American when she is afraid of being alien. It clearly shows her insecurity of being *The Other*.

On the one hand, she is insecure by being *The Other*; on the other hand, she tries to overcome it by making herself over to become someone else. She is someone with progressive character in the novel who, even though, she must feel insecurity. Progressive here means that Tara is someone who likes changes, and she will do everything which is—she thinks—right and good for her.

She tries to cope with American custom which in this case is by calling her husband "Bish" as what Americans do which means "poison" in Indian. Moreover, the vermilion which Indian people wear in their head is used to represent someone is married, but Tara does not wear it even though she is married to Bish. In addition, she also does not wear sari which is usually worn by Indians despite of being abroad. She wears sari for the first time in America when she visits Padma in New Jersey (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 194). Those are basically the very Indian things, but Tara keep them away. Clearly declared, her progressive personality thrives well in America. Moreover, she cannot resist that she cannot preserved Indianness any longer. She further confessed,

... I loved my family and culture but had walked away from the struggle to preserve them. In San Francisco, I barely knew any Indians. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 180)

She knows that she has walked away from keeping her family and culture in her radar. Furthermore, based on the story, the most progressive thing Tara has done is the divorce. The reason behind her divorce is because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 82). Padma also thinks that Tara becomes Americanized because of it. As a matter of fact, divorce is very taboo among Indian society. It is because they consider marriage is a lifetime engagement. Marriage is also considered as the embodiment of the obedience towards their Gods. Nonetheless, Tara does not hedge herself for doing it as long as she gets as much freedom. Therefore, one of the motivations she is being progressive is to enjoy her freedom a being a human. Furthermore, Tara decides to enroll her son in the school he likes

which is in a liberal arts school. This kind of school is totally contrast to Indian schools which mostly focus on student's sciences academic. This decision is hard of Indian mother but Tara keeps on her track to cope with American culture.

Padma's Personality

Didi is considered as Americanized since she was a teenager, and she even knew American songs when the time Tara was born. However, since Didi moved to America, which was before she lived in England, she has been more into Indian than American which she used to be. She admits that,

"I'd just come from those months in London, and London was full of the fabulously bright young Indian girls. No one noticed me in London, I had to go to New York..." (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 229)

The reason why she moved to America was because no one noticed her in London and her talent as a model or movie star had never been channeled there. She implied that the people in London only gave their attention to genius young Indian girls which make her stand no chance. It does not mean that Didi is not a bright young Indian girl when everyone knows how brilliant is Bhattacharjee's daughters are, but the desire Didi possessed at that time is not in the field of sciences, but in the screenplay. It indirectly shows that Didi is seeking for westerners' recognition, to show the world that she has something to be shown, and America gives her a chance. This is the turning point when the Americanized Didi turns to be Indian. As the minority in America, she does not flow with the American mainstream, but she makes her own flow as an Indian instead. Based on Tara's perspective, what Didi wants to point out is that "change is corruption; she seemed to be saying. Take what America can give, but don't let it tarnish you in anyway" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 134). Thus, it shows the wise side of Didi when she thinks the best action to cope with new culture is taking what it gives, but do not forget who you are and where you come from. This what makes Didi and Tara have different perspective on the Westerners as well as towards themselves. Moreover, her adventure

throughout years shapes her personality to be a brave or pathbreaking woman. She is not afraid to show her color in the middle of American society.

Her condition as *The Other* in England and America then does not make her mortgage her identity and turn out to be someone else. It even makes her become braver and confident because she has that goal to make India become recognized by the world. Meanwhile, actually Didi also has the dark side when she was in the most westernized type when in India and London. Meanwhile, her dark memory when she was in the most that westernized impulses is her son, Chris Dey. Her belief in Western culture brought her to cross the regulation Indian society hold into. She wants to bury all of that dark secret, and moves on. Thus, it is one of the reasons she decides to be more Indian.

Parvati's Personality

Parvati is the middle daughter of Bhattacharjee family. Her personality is not really prominent in the story. She is the only one between the three who stays in India. Moreover, she is less progressive person compared to her other sisters. She complains her sister, Tara for being too American, said that,

I hope you aren't doing bad things to yourself like taking Prozac and having cosmetic surgery. Please, please, don't become that Americanized. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 105)

According to the statement, it can be inferred that Parvati is worried if Tara who is taking any antidepressant medicine and plastic surgery. Parvati believes that those actions are considered as Americanized. It shows that she does not want neither of her family become much influenced by Western culture. It is because she lives among the Indian which does not demand her to take any cross-cultural decision. It, somehow, shows her vigilant side as she is an Indian who are brought up that way.

However, she lives in Bombay which is the most modern place in India because it is the center of Indian business, and Bombay is much like America. Therefore, the way she thinks is

influenced by the Western knowledge. Parvati says,

I don't know where they come up with such strict observance in this time and age, but I suspect it has something to do with living in Calcutta and never having left. A few weeks in Bombay and believe, you lose all sense of who you are and where you came from. We're getting to be mongrelized as you Americans. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 108)

She thinks that by living in Bombay, she lives like American since Bombay is the Indian metropolitan. As being *The Other*, she never feels that she is inferior and alienated for she is always in the comfort of home. On the other hand, she does not lead a thick traditional Indian because her environment does not demand her. To sum up, she is not eager to be westernized nor to be traditional Indian neither.

CONCLUSION

The researcher draws some conclusions according to the findings and discussion in the previous chapter that can be stated as follow:

The first conclusion is that the concept of *The Other* constructed in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is constructed through three (3) keys which are (1) Westerners perspective on Indian people as well as Indian perspective on the Westerners, (2) the *otherness* of India, (3) and the imagery of India as reflected in the novel. From those keys, the researcher concludes that *The Other* in the novel is a group of people who are considered as inferior, powerless, poor, restricted, and traditional compared with *The Self* who are represented as superior, powerful, rich, liberated, and modern.

The second conclusion is that the construction of *The Other* affecting the main characters' personality can be seen by the way the main characters think and presume that the West is better than India. Being *The Other* has made Tara turn to be Americanized, and thus makes her to be confident and independent. Meanwhile, Padma becomes a traditional Indian woman in America which shows her brave and wise personality. On the other hand, Parvati's vigilant side becomes sharpened because she does not

want to be too traditional Indian nor too westernized.

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