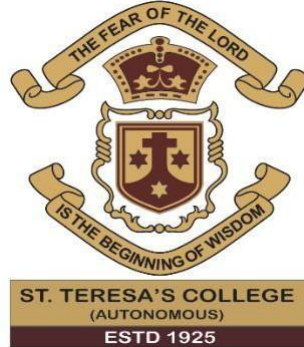


**AN EXPLORATION OF DUAL CULTURAL
IDENTITIES IN THE HISTORICAL FICTION NOVEL
*PACHINKO***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language
and Literature*

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Introduction

Identity formation developed from the early stages of life is an important component in a person's life. It helps in self-perception as well as acquiring a sense of belonging, because human beings are social animals, hence there requires a vital need for examination of your own beliefs and motives. In the social world we belong, interactions and interconnections with our peers, family and friends, as well as every other group we come in contact with, is imperative. Therefore, cultural identity, formed through these bonds, becomes a staple of our existence and in how we perceive ourselves and the world we live in.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication, cultural identity is "The definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender)" (Daniel Chandler, Rod Munday, 2011). The building blocks of an individual's cultural identity lie in their age, religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexuality etc. These are powerful factors deeply influencing how we shape our relationships, identity, values, and beliefs which in turn is crucial to help us understand and validate our existence in a social circle as well as our standing in a broader world brimming with an array of varying individuals and groups. It is an active process where we engage and disengage within the cultural context we exist in, so it is reasonable to suggest that our cultural identities are flexible and ever-shifting and not fixed to a singular state. Achieving cultural identity brings forth only positive outcomes as it engages in the acceptance and motivation of an individual with their surroundings, heritage, connection with their ancestral history, knowledge and practices passed across generations. Being proud of your cultural identity is empowering and reaps emancipating results in the form of physical, spiritual, social and

cultural liberty. But establishing a stable cultural identity is no bed of roses. It may be especially excruciating for individuals hailing from a multicultural social world to find a balance within finding themselves while learning to gain acceptance from the world around them. So is the case, for example, of immigrants who are adjusting to a new way of life in a country completely removed from their original cultural and social institution. The process of settling is harsh, confusing, and often belittling. One may find themselves lost in the midst of their identity formation. This is why it is important to acknowledge and recognize the existence of hybrid cultural identities and how it smooths the way for the aforementioned activity.

Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*, an epic historical saga about a Korean immigrant family's survival and sacrifice on the settler soil of Japan, is a story that cycles across four generations told through a three-part story and their perseverance in a cultural setting alienated from them. From the main character Baek Sunja to her children and grandchildren, we see different characters pursuing a world dissimilar to them in ethnicity and culture as they learn to assimilate its cultural values, worldviews and practices. It is an insight into two different worlds, two different cultures, and of the people who are stranded in between, desperately trying to cling to one while unable to let the other go. We see a sweeping and intimate fable of struggle and endurance of those caught in the net, of outsiders, minorities and of the politically disenfranchised. It presents a rather melancholic viewpoint of what happens when you are able to sink into the roots of your multicultural identity or when you actively defy it.

The aim of this project is to analyze this above-mentioned historical novel through the lenses of theories pertaining to the ideas of cultural identity and hybridity put forth by Homi K. Bhabha. He is a British-Indian scholar and theorist known for his various works on postcolonial theory and cultural identity discourse. Although subjected to criticism and judgements, Bhabha's

theory of Third Space is vital in exploring the conflicting nature of a hybrid identity and how one can learn to negotiate and accept themselves in such a condition, a problem persistent throughout the novel. Bhabha postulates that this in-between space helps to subvert degenerative colonial ideas and domination of the colonizers over the colonized by giving grounds for negotiation. His study of oppression, the impact of globalization, and traumatic colonial feelings which produced hybrid cultures, multicultural identities and diversity are deeply influenced by other leading philosophers and theorists such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan etc. The Third Space helps to create new cultural forms by pushing beyond the reductive boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity.

This project aims to analyze the novel by reading it against the aforementioned theory. Chapter One outlines the meaning of cultural identity, hybridity and third space. It elucidates the definition of cultural identity, its emergence, the theories associated with and its importance in personal development. The overlap of cultural identities leads to the concept of hybridization formed due to the increasing globalization, migration and colonialism of the world. The concept of hybridity occupies a central space in the cultural and colonial discourse put forth by Homi K. Bhabha, and the chapter closely follows his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) where hybridity is seen as a “sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities” (pp. 112). This is where the idea of Third Space emerges, which is the main theory in focus of the project and is defined as a liminal in-between space where new meanings and representations are formed and the narrative is controlled and led by the colonized, untainted by the oppressive restrictions of the colonizers. Chapter Two briefly sketches the summary of the historical fiction novel *Pachinko* written by Min Jin Lee and the chapter attempts to analyze the novel within the framework of the theories discussed in chapter one.

Chapter 1

Cultural Identity, Hybridity, and The Third Space

An individual's cultural identity represents their sense of belonging to a particular group of people, categorized by race, ethnicity, religion, language, etc. This identification with the culture of a community of people becomes a characteristic integral to the person exercising it and is essential in how they perceive themselves. It is a network of connections that establishes stability and a feeling of belonging and ensures the survival of social and cultural structures. In *Cultural Identity: An Interpretive Perspective*, Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas discuss three components of cultural identity. They are individual identity, relational identity and communal identity. The interaction of these components reflects the identity of the individual and the group. Hence it plays a vital role in dictating who we are and how we see ourselves. Countless factors play a frequent role in shaping one's sense of identity, which is ever-changing and constantly evolving. Cultural identities are dynamic, they overlap each other and differences arise as individuals construct and negotiate their group identities and relationships, influenced by political, social, and economic factors. An established cultural identity has reaped positive outcomes as it is an essential contributor to the well-being of people. But the foundation upon which it is built is dealt a blow when outside factors such as globalization and colonialism come into play.

Over eighty percent of the world's total population has been colonized, significantly altering and shaping their lives and known history. Experiences of colonialism, global impacting developments, and the phenomenon of globalization has contributed to a widening gap of irreconcilable differences and introduced a lot of cultural variation within a culture and nation. A

line is drawn that separates the colonizer from the other, where the theory of self and other is examined. Schwalbe coins the idea as “the defining into existence of a group of people who are identifiable, from the standpoint of a group with the capacity to dominate, as inferior” (2000, p. 777). It was introduced as a theoretical concept by Indian literary theorist Gayatri Spivak (1987) and further elucidated by French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1997) where she argues about the otherness of women in a society where men are regarded as the norm. In the early works of Jaques Lacan, he referred to small ‘a’ as another person while big ‘A’ was cited as the concept of otherness, sorting it as a separate entity. Othering as a concept in post-colonial writings can be seen in the works of Edward Said, where he positions the Orient as the other in a devaluing and pathologizing way, but at the same time is exoticized. Binary divisions such as self/other, colonizer/colonized, etc. dictated by the authority in charge separate people, races, and religions. It is not easy to reverse these differences, thus it is important to deconstruct them by examining and evaluating the complex processes involved in cultural contact and identity formation. Hence the key concept in cultural studies is hybridity.

“All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). Hybridity is creation of new cultural forms when the colonizer and the colonized interact, principally on a common ground of understanding. It takes many shapes and forms, including cultural, political, linguistic, etc., and a primary example being pidgin and creole languages. Pidgin are languages that emerged as a new medium of communication between speakers of different languages, predominantly between the colonizer and the colonized as an easy way of conversation, and creole is a pidgin language that has evolved to form the native tongue of people who spoke it. Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin used it to emphasize the transformative power of language. Homi K. Bhabha, British-Indian literary and

cultural critic, famously advanced this concept and explained the foundation and structure that interlocks culture and identity to form hybridity. According to him, a hybrid cultural identity arises from cultural negotiations between colonized people and the colonial power. In their encounter with colonial domains, the identity of the colonized is modified to produce something new yet recognizable to the colonial eye. But in Bhabha's pioneering work 'The Location of Work' (1994) he stresses that the concept of hybridization is ever changing and evolving, offering a chance at amplifying voices of the marginalized in a society that dismissed their daily struggles. He defines hybridity as "the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative" (1994, p. 159). Different types of hybridizations produced due to the interactions of various colonial and post-colonial societies are analyzed by Bhabha. Cultural hybridity hence emerges as a result of these encounters, where the self and other are inseparable from mutual influence. In Bhabha's words, "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition." (1994, p. 114). As mentioned before, a conference of cultural differences of the colonizer and colonized forms new hybrid identities in their constant interaction with each other.

The purpose of hybridity, for Bhabha, is set in its ability to subvert from the colonial authority they are subjugated under. The hegemonic domination of colonialism cripples under this concept, where the governing authority topples down from its position of power to influence narratives. Under a colonial situation, it is not the conqueror who helms a widespread reach, but it is the marginalized cultures, languages, and traditions who have the power to produce meaning as they deem fit. According to Bhabha "The effect of colonial power is seen to be the production

of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions” (112). The colonized subjects refute the annexations of colonial power. This cracks open a gap between the colonized who want their expectations to be met and the occupied who react in defiance. This is the foreground of hybrid identities, which stresses the interdependence of colonizer and colonized relations, and the push and pull of their subjective meaning. Homi Bhabha's analyses on mimicry, liminality, hybridity, and ambivalence are influenced by the works and ideas of Bakhtin, Foucault, Said, Derrida, etc. These studies are important as they “describe ways in which colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer, a power that is never as secure as it seems to be” (Huddart, 2006, p. 1). The presence of the Other dismantles any absolute authority an imperialist power may possess, accentuating the colonizer's ambivalence. Hybridity serves as a counter-narrative, a critique of the exclusion of the disempowered and the disenfranchised.

Hence hybridity is not a concept that simply serves as a third-party intervention between two cultures, but instead is an empowering space where cultural identities can operate without the crushing weight of colonial tyranny. This liminal or in-between space forms the basis of Homi K. Bhabha's most important cultural and linguistic theory, ‘The Third Space’ in his defining work *The Location of Culture* (1994). He contends the idea of a cultural system assembled in the ‘in-between’ space, regarded by him as the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ (1994, p. 37). It is an important concept as this is where the notion of hybrid cultural identities emerges from and as Bhabha states “where the cutting edge of translation and negotiations occurs” (1994). The main idea of the Third Space theory is the subversion of colonialism, where—along with globalization—has enabled interaction between cultures where a dire imbalance of power exists, which later on develops into imperialism. It is important to recognize the existence of this

space as “it is significant that the productive capacities of this third space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). Here, there is no “primordial unity or fixity” (Bhabha, 1994) but sponsors an acknowledgment of the shifting, developing ideals of culture and representation we constantly engage in. The Third Space is not a sole third culture that springs up from the interlinkage of two other cultures but allows several other cultures to emerge, exist and prosper in its place, allowing room for more expression. It “carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38)

“The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 34). The Third Space is crucial in its ideology to deconstruct binary divisions such as self/other, colonizer/colonized, etc. due to the backward principles of binary thought exerted by the occupying power. There is no “simple ‘black-and-white distinction between two conventional parties to the colonial relationship” (Boehmer, 2005, p. 355). The interconnection of cultures gives rise to new spaces, which not only are transformed and rearticulated in their making but also push the boundaries and rules of their preceding, original cultures. The intersecting space challenges values and norms, negotiates previous terms, contests the presented ideas, and offers fresh new perspectives. When there is an acceptance of differences, there exists a safe place for the marginalized to lodge and recuperate, and hence is given an area of representation. It is not an actual space but an abstract concept where cultural identity formation happens, where spiritual and psychological liberation—also known as the

decolonization of the mind—takes place. As quoted in *The Locations of Culture*, “The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Under his concept, the cultures formed are never solitary in nature nor homogenous, or binary in its relation with each other. In the Third Space, there is no reduction to the self or the other, to the dominant or the subordinate. There is simply the negotiation, the systems that arise due to it, and the production of a brand-new cultural meaning fit for the incongruent.

As mentioned before, Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of Hybridity and the Third Space has been inspired by the works of many acclaimed philosophers, literary critics and theologians. Through the revolutionary work of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), the idea of the Orient or the Other and its contrast to the Occident took root and brought in widespread recognition and impact on post-colonial discourses. The European viewpoint of Asia, or what they dub as the Orient, is the main topic of discussion. The string of researches they conducted boiled down to stereotypical conclusions of the East, where the supremacy of European traditions and practices was undoubtedly upheld. “the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient, despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ‘real’ Orient.” (Said, 1978, pg 1-3, 5). In his collection of essays *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha debates the merits and demerits of Said’s proposed work, disputing the claim that colonial discourse is driven entirely by the colonizer. This is where his concept of Third Space is set in motion.

The term hybridity was first used as a linguistic phenomenon by Mikhail Bakhtin, to elaborate on how a word can possess different meanings in a social setting and carry various

connotations as the scenario changes, in an attempt to understand the composition of language and words. Bhabha actively developed his theory of hybridity from Bakhtin, using it as the chassis to propel his Third Space concept. The works of philosophers he indulged in to derive inspiration for his own propositions did not end with Edward Said or Mikhail Bakhtin. Editor and academic Jonathan Rutherford in his collection of essays titled *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990) addresses Hybridity as “the Third Space which enables other positions to emerge” (211). He successfully analyses the fluidity of culture and its constantly evolving framework. French thinkers Jacques Derrida and Jaques Lacan are sources from whom Bhabha has acquired a copious number of terminologies for his key concepts such as the idea for the term hybridity. The analysis of mimicry in Bhabha’s essay *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (1997) was influenced by Lacan’s idea of mimicry and the relationship he established between mimicry and camouflage. “Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha, 1997, pg. 126).

Since its publication, Bhabha’s theories have been under scrutiny. It is in fact, one of the most widely debated, reviewed, analyzed, and criticized theories in post-colonial studies. A prime example is Robert Young’s controversial study *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (1995), where he traces the development of the term hybridity, identifying the “sado-masochistic violence of colonial desire” (108). He warns about the dangers of post-colonial theories of today being too close to the right-wing extremist ideas and colonial discourse of the 19th century. Young criticizes Bhabha’s theories, mentioning how he leaves “the problems of agency up in the air” (1995).

The theories mentioned above is integral in comprehending one's relationship with one's self as such an understanding stem heavily from the culture that sowed its seed in the development of an individual's character and persona. It is an integral and inviolable part of one's identity. Hence it is crucial to not only recognize your space in this world but to also accept who you are in the light of this acknowledgment, otherwise, indifference to your own self can lead to disastrous results, a theme explored in the novel Pachinko.

Chapter 2

Analysis of the historical fiction novel *Pachinko*

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee is a powerful and enduring saga of a Korean immigrant family in Japan in the 20th century, spanning across the expanse of four generations. It is rich in its textured themes of resilience, prosperity and destitute, familial loyalty, generational trauma, and most importantly, hybrid cultural identities. A deep dive into the history of Korea, of the Japanese colonization that plunged the country into a cruel fate of war and destruction, *Pachinko* does not shy away from exploring the state of a country and its people troubled by the epidemic of a cultural, social and political shift. But the compassion, empathy and integrity of the suffering families, from one generation to another, kept the knots tight, which was the case of Sunja, the protagonist and anchor of the story, and her family, in *Pachinko*. The story unfolds with the quote “History has failed us, but no matter” (3). It is a sentiment relevant to this day, reverberating through the hearts of those burdened by a bloody, brutal history. Followed by this is an account of Sunja’s father, Hoonie, born with a cleft palate and a twisted foot – an identity that alienated him from society, and his marriage to Sunja’s mother, Yangjin, a mild and tender woman too young to complain. This is the origin of Baek Sunja, from whom was birthed the stories for generations to come, and whose choices and identities set in motion their fortunes and misfortunes.

Following the Japanese colonization “The poor men mocked their powerful colonizer within shabby walls of the boardinghouse, feeling secure from the colonial police” (14) as they were forced to suppress their anger at being politically disadvantaged, and stripped away of their cultural and social identity. The Korean peasants spoke of China’s strengths “Their hearts

yearning for another nation to be strong since their own rulers had failed them” (14). The political and economic exploitation of the colonized, leading to the creation of an environment with unequal access to resources and opportunities, has weakened the people’s faith on the country and their social standing as a citizen. This is why Homi K. Bhabha proposes the idea of an intermediate space called the ‘Third Space’ where the colonized and colonizers interact and negotiate, making it possible for the oppressed to carve an identity not steeped in the woes of the oppressors. But the renunciation of colonial authority is not an easy task. There are instances seen in the story where Japanese use Korean identities in belittling terms, and one of such is the word ‘yobo’ which normally meant ‘dear’ in Korean, but was later spurned to be used as a derogatory epithet by the Japanese to describe Koreans. There was an “overwhelming sense of brokenness in the people” (63) and “The country had been under the colonial government for over two decades, and no one could see an end in sight” (64)

Naïve, young Sunja, who worked at her mother’s boardinghouse, lived a plain, monotonous life, up until the arrival of Koh Hansu. He was a rich fish broker old enough to be her father, who was a Korean native living in Osaka, Japan. His inappropriate advances toward Sunja, a vulnerable girl, came with the consequence of her bearing his child, where his status as a husband and a father of three children was revealed to a devastated Sunja. She leaves, ashamed yet determined to live a life without him, but scared of the aftermath of birthing a child before marriage. But Baek Isak, a Christian pastor who had fallen ill from Tuberculosis and was saved by the combined effort and care of Yangjin and Sunja, asked for the latter’s hand in marriage to reciprocate their kindness as well as to save Sunja from her predicament. Literary theorist Gayatri Spivak talks about ‘disenfranchised woman’ in her book *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), who in her opinion is the figure “most consistently exiled from episteme” (102–103),

which is the case for Sunja and the female figures in the book buckling under colonialism and patriarchy.

Following her marriage, Sunja and Isak moved to Japan to live with his brother and sister-in-law. Cake seller Cho, Yangjin's acquaintance, spoke of how "he could not imagine living in a nation where the Koreans were treated no better than barn animals" (97). This reflects the harsh realities of the lives of Korean immigrants who moved to Japan during the war for either job opportunities or forcefully shipped to the country for cheap labour. Ikaino, their place of residence, was labelled as "the ghetto where the Koreans lived" (111). No matter how appealing their personality, distinguished in behaviour, respectful and well managed they are, Korean immigrants were dubbed as belonging to a "cunning and wily tribe" (106). This stereotyping of a group of oppressed people is on par with the definition of othering provided by author and literary theorist Derek Attridge, "The other tends to stand for the colonized culture or people as viewed by the dominant power" (2004, p. 32)

The subversion of colonial mindset for Sunja and Kyunghee, her sister-in-law, can be seen taking subliminal root when they ignore what the Japanese thought of them as "none of it would matter if they survived and succeeded" (pp. 117). They were faced with further more generalizations and restrictions in the country, one of such being their names. Due to the colonial government's requirements, Koreans under Japanese rule had to adopt Japanese tsumei or Japanese names. When they had to choose a Japanese surname, Isak's father had chosen Bando because it had sounded like the Korean word ban-deh meaning objection. In a way, it was a show of resistance, no matter how vague. Still, the name, culture, and country change produced hybridity, a duality in nature of existence, forced to jump between one to another and unable to fit into a box. According to Bhabha, this is a space of "ambiguity and uncertainty" (The Location

of Culture, 1994). The hybrid third space is fit to challenge and resist the dominant cultural power, in fact it is “celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweeness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 158)

After the arrest of Isak under allegations of involvement with activists working against Japanese colonialism, Sunja was left behind, along with Kyunghee and her husband Yoseb, to take care of her two sons, Noa, the eldest and Mozasu, the youngest. To support the crumbling financial state of their life, Sunja decided to sell Korean side dishes at the market against Yoseb’s wishes. “if the Korean nationalists couldn’t get their country back, then let your kids learn Japanese and try to get ahead. Adapt” (192) was the recurring sentiment of the immigrants, moulding and remoulding themselves into essentialist cultural identities. As Noa Baek grew, his disassociation with his self as a Japanese born Korean man expanded, the clash of his status rendering him expunged. “at school, he went by his Japanese name Nobuo Boku, rather than Noa Baek; and though everyone in his class knew he was Korean from his Japanized surname, if he met anyone who didn’t know this fact, Noa wasn’t forthcoming about this detail” (195). Not only did he condition himself into hiding his Korean side, he even dreaded the mention of his home country and actively pushed himself to learn Japanese seamlessly. To help pay for his college tuition, Noa worked as a part time bookkeeper and secretary for Hoji-san, the Japanese who owned most of the houses in the neighbourhood. Although he could have made more money working for Koreans in the pachinko business or in yakiniku restaurants, he never did, stating that “he wanted to work in a Japanese office and have a desk job” (267), further solidifying his need for a solitary identity rather than work to accept his hybrid culture.

The Third Space is a “fighting term, a theoretical weapon, which intervenes in existing

debates and resists certain political and philosophical constructions” (Lazarus, 2004, p. 4). It is important to understand that colonial mindsets thrust upon the vulnerable needs resistance and push back to unveil their true potent self. It is not only about reclaiming the past, or reclaiming your culture, but also about refiguring it as an in between space where one can interrupt, interact, debate and negotiate into deconstructing essentialist culture. Eleanor Byrne (2009) states that Bhabha's third space “is not simply one thing or the other, nor both at the same time, but a kind of negotiation between both positions” (Homi K. Bhabha, p. 42). “Living everyday in the presence of the people who refuse to acknowledge your humanity takes great courage” (214) is what Isak had told once told Noa. But Noa, unable to find a common ground, swung back and forth from the momentum of oppositional polarities, only to settle on colonial soil, leading to his own ultimate demise.

For Mozasu, school was a misery. He was not a prodigious son like Noa but spoke Japanese just as well as his peers with tremendous verbal facility. His teachers called him a Korean fool and he was biding his time so he could be done with his education and move out. Noa mentions how his former teachers had told him he was a good Korean, and Mozasu understood with his own poor grades and manners that they will never honour him with that title, that he was categorized to sit with the ‘bad’ Koreans. Mosazu, however “did not intend to be a good Korean. What was the point in that?” (270). Here lies a clear distinction between the two brothers Noa and Mosazu, who represents the two spectrum of people and the way each deal with a postcolonial world with a multicultural identity. While one intends to fight, the other intends to submit.

When the formative years of the children of immigrants are spend in a new land, they experience a disconnect from their identity and heritage. Especially when they face

discrimination and bigotry, the disconnect can be particularly hard and problematic which produces tension and stress. The constant need to transition between cultural practices and beliefs between home and outside becomes a difficult task as the incompatibility of the two cultures becomes apparent. This leads to the development of dual cultural identities, and *Pachinko* as a novel is relentless in its show of this subject. Noa studied at Wasida, a prestigious Japanese school along with his Japanese peers. He assimilated so much into his Japanese identity and his fluency in their culture that when the truth about his birthparents were revealed, it utterly devastated him. His father being Koh Hansu, a Korean yakuza, and not the just and intelligent Baek Isak, was a catastrophic disclosure for him. The identity crisis swallowed him like an emerging black hole, so much that he dropped out of the institution he worked so hard for and ran away from home, completely cutting his connection with everyone. Noa, on the other hand, dropped out of school to join Goro in running pachinko parlours. Not only was it a booming business where he earned in bulks, he was also always in contact with the Koreans of the country, who were the main customers of their store. Noa moved to another part of the country, took on a Japanese identity and completely hid his Korean ethnicity. He proceeded to live as a Japanese man with a desk job and a wife and kids and lived for decades in seclusion from his family. Another character who shared his detest for their ethnicity of origin was Yumi, Noa's wife, who exclaims that "she could not muster any affection for either nation. To her, being Korean was just another horrible encumbrance, much like being poor or having a shameful family you could not cast off" (327). Most Koreans in Japan has never returned or been to Korea, as they believe, in a way that all of them had lost the home in their minds for good. When Koh Hansu finally tracks down Noa, he sets up a meeting between him and Sunja, who is delighted to meet her son after decades of separation. But after their meeting, however, Sunja is presented

with the devastating news that Noa had shot himself dead shortly after his reunion with Sunja. This is a pivotal moment in the novel and presents the significance of the Third Space theory and why there needs an urgency in acknowledging its importance. The hegemonic Japanese culture that undermined, overworked and tormented the Korean immigrants was a heavy, brawny wall they needed to overcome. After the World War, and the Japanese leaving Korea, the conditions for Koreans in Korea as well as in Japan may have become slightly better, but they were alarmed by the growing disparity between their culture and the culture that was enforced upon them. Thus, hybridity plays a crucial role in building a ladder to overcome this impenetrable wall. According to Bill Ashcroft, hybridity is the “creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies, 1998). When there is an acceptance of two cultures an individual is melded in, especially when one is a colonizer culture and the other colonized, the colonial authority loses its univocal claim to power and narrative. Colonial fixity is broken and opposition is met with resistance as cultures evolve and overlap to form a new identity where there is no collision of self-doubt and reluctance. Homi K. Bhabha refers to the space where such an act takes place as the Third Space and speaks on its ability to deconstruct essentialist values and provide freedom of thought, conscience and speech. Noa Baek, from his birth to death, is a prime example of a man unable to break free from the clashes of self-hood and otherness. He is split within himself, with his growing dislike of the crassness of Korean people and their culture on one hand and the refined identity possessed by a Japanese man on the other. There is no hybrid cultural formation happening, as he chooses not to subvert colonial domination by becoming a part of it. Which is seen to cause results detrimental to his life in the end. This is why it is important to acknowledge the Third Space where the dilemma Noa Baek faces can be eradicated and people can be encouraged to carve identities for

themselves that is meaningful and empowering. Even for Yumi, who yearns to go to the U.S than feel trapped by her Korean ethnicity and Japanese nationality could have been able to resolve her differences and break free of these oppressive chains.

Mosazu's business grew expeditiously. He became rich, stayed true to his roots as well as fulfilled his wish to earn back the money and energy this country had stolen from him. After the birth of his son Solomon, and the death of his wife Yumi, there were moments of discord in his mind about his home country and birth country. Although he was born in Japan, he was a Korean, which denied him access to the Japanese passport. But as a Korean, he did not wish to return to his divided country, where people suffered in the North and endured insufficiency in the South. "Mosazu wouldn't leave the country he was born. Where would he go anyway? So Japan didn't want them, so what?" Despite being a successful businessman who earned enough profit to give his family a comfortable, rich life, he still suffered the consequences of his identity and the maltreatment that came with it. This plight is addressed by Byrne, who states that the Third Space is not "simply one thing or the other, nor both at the same time, but a kind of negotiation between both positions" (2009, p. 42). A negotiation is crucial to ensure survival so that they are no longer exploited by the narrative. The Pachinko business itself serve as metaphors for the history of Koreans in Japan, a people caught in seemingly random global conflicts, as they win, lose, and struggle for their place and for their lives.

The story of the fourth and last generation is heralded by Solomon, Mosazu and Yumi's son. He spoke English and Japanese and although he understood a bit of Korean, he did not learn how to speak it. Once again, we see a delineation of culture from a character in the story, where Solomon is affiliated more to his foreign roots than his Korean one, another disparity where the nature of his relationship with his Korean family conflicts with that of his work and friends who

were all Japanese. As mentioned before, it is important to integrate not only with the mainstream culture but also to preserve and engage in native culture. The Third Space provides a similar ground of negotiation where one can find an output to dislodge from both origins and find a space of comfort and relatability, which he does by the end of the story. He was often sidelined at work, and no matter what his qualifications were, his identity as a Korean tainted his chances. But no matter, as the story concludes, he decides to invest in his father's Pachinko business, much to the surprise of Mosazu.

Immigrants are continuously made to feel physically vulnerable to the political instability and violence across the globe. But now we also witness each day how ordinary people resist the indignities of life and history with conviction by taking care of their families and communities along with their individual identities and goals. As people move, cultures evolve. This place is a "being in beyond" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 10) that branches out to multiple directions, encouraging the involvement of the people confused and lost. Sunja, who started this journey and is the catalyst for much of the book's plot, persevered to the very end. She never gave up on herself or the people around her, nor did she slap away the identity of her blood to appease another. Noa Baek, who unfortunately fell prey to the colonial power, struggled with his cause which ended in his demise. Mosazu Baek refused to bow down to authority and their conditions and built an empire on the soil that soaked their blood and sweat for generations. Solomon, though removed from his native culture and exposed to more than one culture at a time, was still able to find a place of peace where he met, in the end, people who understood his struggles and empathized with it. History often fails to represent all, hence this novel plays its part in providing all experiences as it is, and teaches an idea of how dual cultural identities presents in different types of people.

The novel ends with Sunja who visits the cemetery where Isak and Noa is cremated. Then

she returns home, dreaming of a life where the violence she was subjected to never existed.

“What was she seeing again was her youth, her beginning, and her wishes...beyond the dailiness, there had been moments of shimmering beauty and some glory too” This in particular prompts a recollection of Bhabha’s saying “It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness...” (The Locations of Culture, 1994). Although Sunja dreams of a different life, an alternative, her choices were already made, which set in motion a generational story of endurance and prosperity. The characters learn to adapt to the clamour and pressure of traversing across different cultural worlds in which they live, along with assembling the necessary skills and abilities necessary for success. The idea of an in-between space, a third space, is not only the “essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge” (The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 276) but also illuminates the way in which one can protest tyranny, oppose coercion, and enable the transformation of colonial narrative into something meaningful and righteous. It is not an actual space that can be represented, but, as seen through the characters of the story, is rather produced by the willingness to accept one’s self with all its varying degree of culture and identity.

Conclusion

The Guardian describes the novel as a “vivid, immersive multigenerational saga about life for Koreans in Japan is a tale of resilience and poignant emotional conflict” (Tash Aw). A novel that terrifically captures the plight of Korean immigrants in Japan, each character is gripped by the reality of their situation, that no matter how prosperous they are, their Korean identities dent any chances they have at life. They are forced by their positions to compromise, make painful sacrifices and suffer the consequences of their decisions at a level different than that of their Japanese peers. They are riddled with the failure of reconciling with one’s self, but at the same time, is able to overcome hardships through sheer endurance and fortitude. Pachinko is successful in its capability to portray hybridity, cultural identity, generational trauma and familial bond through simple themes and persuasive writing.

The contents of the novel are analyzed through postcolonial and literary theories of hybridity and cultural identity. The concept of hybridization and theories from the great works of philosophers such as Edward Said, Jaques Derrida, Jacques Lacan inspired Homi K. Bhabha to postulate the idea of the Third Space. According to Bhabha, the in-between space carries the burden of culture (38), which rings true while analyzing the characters and their motives throughout the novel. These theories, however, do come under scrutiny for several reasons. The definition of Hybridity itself sees backlash from several aspects of culture, identity and philosophy. It emerged as a postcolonial theory, but some regards it as a colonial concept. Therefore, various communities and societies find themselves in a predicament of not fitting in with the notion of hybridity. Professor Anjali Prabhu in *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* emphasizes its tendency to fall into “a discourse of victimhood and/or of narrow

ethnicities” (2012, p. 14). In the third space, the overturn of colonial power may help in spiritual and psychological liberation, and helps in the decolonization of the mind, but it does not help in physical or material liberation. That is, it does not put an emphasize and provide a critique of the conditions of labour and exploitation, unequal access to resources and opportunities, economic suppression etc.

However, from the analysis of the novel against the backdrop of the theory of Homi Bhabha it can be concluded that the idea of third space and hybridity holds value as seen from the panorama of one family’s path through suffering to prosperity in *Pachinko*. It is a riveting tale that blurs the line separating people from achieving emancipation through dual cultural identities on their own terms. As explored through the tragic story of Noa Baek, and struggles of characters such as Sunja, Mosazu, and Solomon across their generational conflicts, we understand the swift need of hybrid identity and how important multicultural recognition can be in the liberation of self. Cultural identity is a complex tapestry. To untangle and navigate it requires great strength and patience. One might face blockades in the form of self-doubt, tension, stress and hesitancy, especially in the face of colonial powers working to press you down, but as long as one strives towards it and keep their head high, one’s dual cultural identity can reap positive outcomes, and find solace in the proposed third space.

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