

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In 1965, immigration from Asia to the United States quickly escalated after U.S. Congress passed The Hart-Celler Immigration Act. It abolished the previous national-quotas system that sharply limited Asian immigrants to come to the United States. The law also liberalized the rules for immigration by prioritizing family reunification and allowing naturalized immigrants to sponsor relatives from the country of their origin (Kammer, 2015, p.1). It made Asian immigrants' population rapidly grew from 491,000 in 1960 to 11.3 million in 2010. Among all the Asian countries, Indian immigrant population in the United States reached 1.78 million people in 2010 while 7% of them resided in each city of Illinois (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Therefore, they became the second largest immigrant group in the United States in 2010.

Indian immigrants first arrived in the United States as low skilled farm laborers but nowadays they moved to the United States as international students or high-skilled workers in STEM fields who mostly come to the United States through H-1B visa (Zong & Batalova, 2017). This visa allows employer to hire foreign professionals to work in the job fields that require at least bachelor degree (American Immigration Council, 2018, p.1), which often becomes the reason for Indian immigrants to stay and pursue their U.S. permanent citizenship. Most of Indian immigrants are also more likely to be of working age, highly educated,

proficient in English, and have higher household incomes than overall immigrant population in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Unfortunately, they are still experience hate crimes due to their race as recorded in FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's data (2011) that showed 5.1 percent of 3,725 hate crimes in 2010 were anti-Asia/Pacific Islander. Therefore, they need to negotiate their identity in order to fit into the majority population and avoid the discrimination as minority in the United States.

Hall (1996, p.4) states that identity is a process of *becoming* rather than *being* which appears as someone raises questions using the resources of history, language and culture that shaped the way they have been represented and how they might represent themselves. It relates to individual's sense of belonging to a particular group of people from similar nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion that is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing knowledge collectively such as traditions, heritage, language, norms and customs (Chen, 2014). Meanwhile, Ting-Toomey (2015, p.2) defines identity negotiation as someone's process and strategies in compromising multiple cultural background in affirming the way someone will represent him/herself. Thus, identity negotiation happens to immigrants as they often cross the cultural boundaries within their lives in the destined country.

Since immigrants usually live in their 'in-between' space, identity negotiation plays important role in helping them to construct their identity and also influence their behavior and self-image among the majority population. Identity negotiation usually happens to the first and second generation of

immigrants (Liu, 2015, p.2-3). They negotiate their identity by integrating the cultural differences surround them (Murray, 2011, p.4) such as their lifestyle, education, norms and values, religion, or even social norms including marriage and dating (Sharma, 2014, p. 127). Hence, immigrants often modify the cultures of their heritages in order to be able to maintain the cultures of their origin while also assimilated with the majority population.

For Indian-American, the cultural differences that they often negotiate are arranged marriage and education for the children. Arranged marriage is a very common tradition in India. The parents usually become the only one who will decide the suitable partner for their children based on caste, religion, job or education of the prospective partner while their children will have no right to say otherwise (Kōu et al., 2017, p. 2792). In terms of education, Indian parents often limit their children to only study engineer, medical or at least law in their higher education because they believe that any career related to science will improve their children's life in the future as it will pay them higher than any career related to arts, literature or psychology that will pay less and make them struggle in the future (Deb et al., 2015, p.27). Contrarily, American parents often give freedom to their children to choose any fields that they would like to study in their higher education because they feel that their children will be the only one who is responsible for their future (Shield et al., 2017). Meanwhile, marriage in the United States is in the hands of the children and not the parents, the couple usually prioritize the love and commitment from each individual instead of their religion, caste, job or education (Geiger & Livingston, 2018). These cultural differences

usually negotiated by Indian-American through modifying the cultures and combining the Indian and American values within the traditions, they also give more freedom to the children to pursue what they would like to study as long as they still obey the rules regarding their lifestyle, or religious norms and values.

In line with that, Beyers (2017, p.1) states that belonging to a particular culture implies belonging to a particular religion so both cannot be separated from one another. There is only 10% of the overall Indian-American who identified themselves as Muslim (Desilver, 2014, p.2). Just like other religions, Indian-American Muslim must obey certain rules prescribed by Islam such as never eat pork nor drink alcohol (Rahman et al., 2014, p.135) and some clothing restrictions such as not wearing tight or revealing clothes and particularly wear *hijab* for women (Fatima, Susan & Russ 2011, p.232). Unfortunately, they often negotiate these Islamic rules by wearing jeans and t-shirt, removing their *hijab* or normalizing Islamic dietary restrictions when they hang out with their peers in order to be more assimilated in the American society and avoid Islamophobia (El-Aswad, 2013, p.39). Islamophobia means acts of hatred, or prejudice against Islam and Muslims (Council on American-Islamic Relation, 2010, p.11).

In the United States, Islamophobia reached its peak in 2001 after 9/11 attack. Unfortunately, media coverage that often framed Muslim as the perpetrator in every terrorist attacks is also influenced the majority American citizens to generalize Muslims as violent and threat to their surrounding that resulted in negative impact on Muslim liberties in the United States (Powell, 2018, p.10, 11). It showed by 546 hate crimes in 2001 and 200 hate crimes throughout 2010 in the United States were motivated by Islamophobia (FBI UCR, 2011, p. 2). It included

physical and verbal assault, mosque or private properties vandalism and racial slurs (Council on American-Islamic Relation, 2010, p.29).

The issue of identity negotiation of Indian-American Muslim can be found in Samira Ahmed's young adult novel, *Love, Hate & Other Filters*. This novel was published in 2018 by Soho Press and become New York Times bestselling young adult in the same year. The novel occurs in Batavia, Illinois around 2009 that tells a story about Maya Aziz, a 17-year old Indian-American Muslim who is torn between worlds to be a good Indian Muslim daughter as her parents always expected and to live her life the way she wants it to be just like all her American peers. Maya and her parents who live in Batavia in 2009 often negotiate their multiple identities through mimic the 'western' clothing style, even Maya has tried alcohol behind her parents' back when she hangs out with her best friend. However, it was not only left Maya with guilt as she knew she tried something against her Indian Muslim values but she also felt amazed when she saw Kareem who sounds sophisticated when he ordered wine on their date. Other than that, Maya and her parents have also modified the tradition of arranged marriage that is a deeply rooted tradition for Indian family by combining the Indian and American values throughout the process. In line with that, Maya's parents have given her more freedom to choose what she would like to study in university as long as she promised that she will still obey the rules given by them.

As the second generation, Maya often mixes some words in Urdu when she talks to her parents with English since she only understands Urdu but unable to speak fluently. Unfortunately, when Maya and her parents experience Islamophobia, her parents suddenly feel that they do not belong in America because they are simply different from the majority, so they will always become

the scapegoats for all terrible racist things in their surroundings. At the end, Maya is able to convince her parents to embrace their multiple identities despite all the terrible things happened in their surrounding.

Samira Ahmed is a Mumbai-born author of young adult novel based in Chicago. She was born in Mumbai and grew up in Batavia, Illinois from the parents of Indian-Muslim immigrant. She encountered racism, Islamophobia and name-calling especially after 9/11 when she resided in New York. She told Chicago Magazine (2018) about being minority in her childhood “*My community there was good but it was far from perfect, Batavia was a predominantly white town and I was the only Indian Muslim in my graduating class.*” Through this novel, she wants to give support to the people who have been struggling to figure out where they belong and convince the readers to stand up against Islamophobia and any kind of prejudices and discrimination within their society.

The issue of identity negotiation in this novel can be analyzed by deploying Bhabha’s postcolonialism concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. Bhabha (1994) defines the process of the colonized in mimic the colonizer’s culture as mimicry. It creates double vision of colonial discourse that usually raises the desire of the colonized to be recognized as similar as the colonizer though they also realize they are not quite the same. Mimicry can also be said as an effective way for colonizer to implement their culture and enforce its power to the colonized. For immigrants, mimicry occurs as they teared between two different cultures and wanted to be accepted in the majority population (p. 85-88). By deploying mimicry, the writer will analyze the way Maya mimics the American culture in her life as the effect of her identity negotiation process in order to be seen as similar being with her American peers. However, Maya also

caught between ambivalent feelings whenever she mimics American cultures against her Indian Muslim values.

Ambivalence is defined as a feeling where a person experiencing two opposing emotions (Olsson, 2010, p. 4). It usually emerges as someone's raising questions regarding their moralistic positions (Bhabha, 1994, p.67). There is a 'border line' that occurs as someone is in ambivalent positions that produce differences of their identity in the past and present (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). Through this concept, it would be effective to analyze the opposite feelings within Maya and her parents when they negotiate their identities through mimic American cultures against their Indian Muslim values. Nevertheless, since immigrants live in their 'in-between' space then they would more likely to hybridize their cultures.

Bhabha (1994, p.18) defines hybridity as the cultural mixture between east and west that creates an intimacy to someone's self within his 'in-between' reality. It often happens to a person within the transnational community that creates a feeling of 'newness' in one's self and produce the new identity (Bhabha, 1994, p.7). Hybridity also refers to people from Asia or Africa who have found the balance between their cultural attributes and western cultural attributes (Singh, 2009). The writer applies this concept in order to analyze the mixing culture of Maya and her parents to be more assimilated with the majority population.

In order to complement Bhabha's postcolonial concepts, the writer employs orientalism theory postulated by Edward Said. Said (1978, p.2) defines orientalism as a style of thought based upon the distinction between "the Orient or the East" and "the Occident or the West". Orientalism is usually used by the western for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the east. Along with that notion, the west often define the east as backward, uncivilized or racially

inferior compared to them that makes the east become a non-free subject of thought or action. Then, this idea of the east is also used by the west to define themselves as the opposite images of the east (Said, 1978, p. 3,7). As in the United States, the idea of orientalism is also affected by the way media has represented the immigrants and its cultures differently than the Western that plays a role in influencing the way American people imagine and interpret those cultures (El-Aswad, 2013, p.40). By employing orientalism, the writer will analyze the inferiority that Maya and her parents feel towards American cultures that become their reason to negotiate their Indian Muslim identities in order to be more accepted by American society and avoid discrimination towards them.

There have been several studies discussing similar issue on identity negotiation. Adegbola, Labador & Oviedo (2018) in research “Africans’ Student Identity Negotiation and Relational Conflict Management: Being “Foreign”, Being “Careful” ” analyzed how African students in the U.S. negotiate their identity in interactions with domestic students within a relational-conflict context by employing face-negotiation and co-cultural theory. This study found that African students often feel uncertain of their self-representation that resulted from experiencing gaps between their personal and enacted identity while racial discrimination that they experienced can affect their willingness to forge the meaningful relationship with domestic students but create stronger bonds with other African students.

Toomey, Dorjee & Ting-Toomey (2013) in their research entitled “Bicultural Identity Negotiation, Conflicts, and Intergroup Communication Studies”. This study applied identity negotiation theory postulated by Ting-

Toomey and communication accommodation theory postulated by Giles in order to examine how bicultural individuals of Asian-Caucasian background construct their identity meaning by relate to others using diverse communication strategies. This study found that bicultural individual negotiate their identity by perceiving their two cultural communities as something equal so they can integrate both cultures in their everyday lives comfortably as well as easily switch their verbal and nonverbal behaviors depending on the cultural situation around them.

Meanwhile, Franceschelli & O'Brien (2015) in their research entitled "Being modern and modest: South Asian young British Muslim negotiating multiple influences on their identity" analyzed the way young South Asian Muslim negotiate their identity which originates in the family field under the influence of South Asian cultures and Islam when come into contact with non-Islamic fields by applying the extended Bordieu's theory of habitus. The South Asian young Muslim that interviewed by the researcher said that they often combining, converging and diverging their multiple identities in order to reconcile the influences from three different social and cultural context that mostly can be seen through the hybrid of their clothing styles such as combine the 'modern' western clothes of jeans, dresses, legging or t-shirt with the 'modesty' style of covering the head with hijab especially for women.

Differing from the previous related studies above, the writer determines to analyze the identity negotiation of Indian-American Muslim first and second generation in young adult novel *Love, Hate & Other Filters* by Samira Ahmed. This study employs three postcolonial concepts postulated by Homi K. Bhabha which are mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity in order to analyze the process of the Indian-American first and second generation in negotiating their identities.

Meanwhile, the orientalism theory postulated by Edward Said is applied in order to analyze the opposite way of seeing the Indian Muslim and the American cultures within Indian-American Muslim's life that caused them to negotiate their identity.

1.2 Research Question

How do the Indian-American Muslims negotiate their identities in *Love, Hate & Other Filters*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to reveal how Indian-American Muslim negotiates their identity in Samira Ahmed's *Love, Hate & Other Filters*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on narrations that indicate the way Indian-American Muslim first and second generations negotiate their multiple identities. Deploying Bhabha's post-colonial concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity as well as Said's orientalism theory in order to analyze the process and the reason of Indian-American Muslim in negotiating their multiple identities.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this research is expected to give deeper understanding about post-colonial concepts by Homi K. Bhabha and orientalism theory by Edward Said. For researchers, this research could be the reference source if the researcher wants to conduct another further research about identity negotiation particularly about the Indian-American Muslim.