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**ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCE OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY: A
MULTICULTURAL APPROACH TO JULIA ALVAREZ' RETURN TO
SENDER**

Ms. Sobia Sikandar¹, Dr. Imran Ali^{2*}, Ms. Ayesha Rabbi³

¹Senior Lecturer of English at Akhuwat Women College Chakwal, and a PhD Research Scholar at Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

²Assistant Professor of English Literature at the Department of Linguistics (English), The University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan.

³Senior Lecturer of English at NUML Islamabad, and a PhD Research Scholar at Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

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Abstract

Multiculturalism celebrates diversity in different cultures and ethnic groups. This study analyzes multicultural tenets/debates in Julia Alvarez' novel, Return to Sender (2009) in the light of Charles Taylor (1931) and Bhikhu Parekh's (1935) theoretical framework of multiculturalism. Alvarez (1950), who works for the recognition of Mexican culture in the U.S, is a Latino-American author. Her works explore the themes of quest for identity and assimilation in multi cultural settings like America. Return to Sender is her young adult novel, which deals with the experiences of a Mexican immigrant family in America. Exploring the nuanced aspects of identity crisis and misrecognition of different minority groups, the study investigates the complexities and challenges of individuals in a multicultural society which demands equal status and dignity for all majority and minority groups. Being qualitative in nature, the study chooses to analyze the select text through close reading and exegesis. The broader impact of the study

signifies the complexities and real-life-problems of multicultural thoughts that are directly associated with multicultural rights, socio-economic status, and the role of young adults—in establishing their individual as well as national identities in multicultural settings like America.

1. Introduction

Jacqueline Woodson says, “Diversity is about all of us and about us having to figure out how to walk through this world together”. Multiculturalism is a liberal and cultural school of thought that describes the diversity of different cultures and ethnic groups in the society. Twentieth century has witnessed a magnificent rise in the debates on policies about cultural amalgamation in various European and Eastern societies. The phenomenon of cultural diversity is not something new to the literary studies; it took its significant start in the period of colonization. Imperial invasions and different strategies of the developed nations gave birth to the multicultural societies across the World. Advances in transportation and growing international trade have also contributed a great deal to the embryonic ethnic inclusiveness. In sum, simultaneous coexistence and growth of diverse cultures unswervingly contributes to the steady progress in society.

In the early twentieth century, racial discrimination, cultural riots, and ethnic violence were way common in culturally diverse societies. Many scholars and critics took cultural diversity for a burning issue and came up with novel approaches of acculturation¹ to solve these racial concerns. Thus mid- twentieth century substituted the racial discrimination with—harmony, embracement of ethnic diversity and acceptance of religious and cultural tolerance (shodhganga).

According to the Oxford advance Learners Dictionary multiculturalism translates to equally respect, all the diverse cultures, ethnic groups, religions and languages in a society. In anthropology, multiculturalism stands for the post-modernist reaction to the state rule and abrasion of dominant culture. Moreover, the term multiculturalism is introduced in relation to the demands of black and minority groups to have an equal recognition and participation in the cultural and societal fabric. Multiculturalism considers all cultures worth study and concentration. Plural societies like the US. pioneered in awarding equal respect and recognition to all ethnic groups. Besides the historical idea of melting pot, a new form of multiculturalism was introduced where fresh identities contributed to the societal progress and development. Indian political scientist, Valerian Rodrigues' (1949) article “Is There a Case for Multiculturalism?”, contributed immensely to the idea of multiculturalism which instead of commonalities, signifies the fundamental social differences among assorted ethnic groups. The subject matter of the article explicitly asks for acceptance, promotion and celebration of different cultures in both academic and non-academic social spheres. This approach does not vary from the historical concept of “salad bowl” in which each piece of fruit-vegetable maintains its taste while at the same time it contributes to the collective taste. It defends the rights of the minority, and cultural groups extending a sense of understanding among different groups and develops harmony as well as peace (shodhganga).

Charles Taylor (1931) introduces the concept of cultural recognition in his famous essay on multiculturalism. He argues: all cultures should be recognized otherwise misrecognition would hold the ground. He further signposts grounds of cultural recognition to avoid harmful effects of

¹ Acculturation is a process of social, psychological, and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the society.

misrecognition. There is a close connection of personal identity and recognition. Taylor calls recognition a vital human need which has a major role in forming the identities of individuals and groups. Recognition is a normative behavior which certainly goes different for individuals. Every group in the society needs to be recognized appropriately to avoid misrecognition. Human life is “dialogical” in character because it develops in the dialogues with others. Thus, recognition is a mutual or reciprocal concept of identity forming. Every individual and group are to be equally respected to form an authentic identity. The politics of universality deals with the concept of equal respect for all. The politics of difference is considered another way of recognition which respects all regardless of caste, color, creed, etc. (Hirvonen).

Multiculturalism is a balanced approach to racism and discrimination. According to Parekh ², multiculturalism is not a political philosophy, it is rather a perspective of living human life. Cultural diversity respects religious and cultural rights of all groups. It also extends mutual cooperation to different cultures for promoting peace and prosperity. It provides equal opportunities to different groups particularly minorities for expressing themselves. With the weight of dominant culture and in the presence of apprehensions and fears, it welcomes minorities to be aboard the ship of equality and prosperity. Parekh thinks cultural diversity is a value not a fact in the diverse society of the Great Britain. He worries about both the dangers of ignoring it and the hazards of over addressing it.

Parekh was immensely influenced by Taylor,³ who believes that multicultural values should not be ignored particularly in education and gender constructions. Parekh believes human beings cannot be taken equal on the basis of uniformity. The idea of the equality of human race on the basis of shared human values is the least coherent and often results in problems. Human beings could be similar in some characteristics. But they considerably differ in terms of cultures, needs and capacities of understanding. Human beings are similar and different at the same time, so they should be treated under this relaxation. Thus equality is an interplay of uniformity and diversity which involves the domains of freedom and independence. Consequently, for sowing productivity equality in society, human beings should be accepted be with both their similarities and differences (Parekh).

Alvarez (1950) is a Dominican-American novelist and poet, who wrote for young readers to preserve her ancestral legacy and heritage. In her major works, she focuses on the issues of assimilation and identity. Reflecting her immigrant experiences as Dominican American, her works contribute to the emerging debate of multi-culturalism. *Return to Sender* is a compassionate novel that highlights the phenomenon of multi-culturalism in the American society. Eleven years old Taylor, worries for his family farm in Vermont. His mother hires some Mexican people to work on the farm. Taylor work with the different people and about learns about their fears and apprehensions. The title of the novel itself is taken from the name of U.S immigrants program, “Return to Senders”. The novel is an actual multicultural representation of unification in American society. Culturally different, Marie and Taylor live together advocating multi cultural equality, compassion and recognition for the societal progress (Bolle).

² Bhikhu Chotalal Parekh, Baron Parekh (1935) is a British political theorist, academic, and life peer.

³ Charles Margrave Taylor (born 1931) is a Canadian philosopher from Montreal, Quebec, and professor emeritus at McGill University best known for his contributions to political philosophy, the philosophy of social science, the history of philosophy, and intellectual history

2. Literature Review

Raquel Alonso in his dissertation, *Authority, Privilege and Violation: the Role of the subaltern and the intellectual in the Novels of Julia Alvarez* (2010) grieves over the epistemic violence of oppressive forces in society highlighting the intellectuals' problematic relationship with the marginalized. Alvarez like other Latino authors have faced the effects of migration and separation in person. For the intellectuals, the story telling becomes a necessary medium to remember and revive their forgotten cultural heritage.

Alonso focuses on Alvarez' two significant aspects of writings: Alvarez mostly emphasizes on the relationship of oppressor and subaltern in multi-cultural societies. She seems more interested in the issues of identity and representation of the silenced and marginalized in a multi-cultural society. Other aspect of Alvarez' writings deals with the themes of reparation. She attests the power of words; her protagonists also tries to regain autonomy through the power of writing. Alvarez herself uses the power of writing to convey her two senses of selves as Dominican American. Thus, Alvarez' writings reflect the issues of national identity and representation of subaltern in culturally diverse societies (Alonso).

Varun Uberoi in his article, "The 'Parekh Report' – National identities without nations and nationalism" (2015) argues about the issues of national identity in the theoretical domain of multi-culturalism. Uberoi explores the multiculturalist approach towards national identity. Some multiculturalist theorists advocate the importance of national identity to maintain the value of inter-cultural dialogue and cultural diversity. Considering the diversity of cultures as progressive entities, some liberal nationalists support the value of multiculturalism and its policies. According to the Commission for Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB) report (revisited in 2004)⁴, a nation must be taken as a community of diverse cultures rather than 'a community of communities'. It means: a state—Britain—must also absorb other individuals and culturally diverse groups. Regional, racial and cultural differences must be respected to have a prosperous society. The CMEB reflects the importance of national identity in a multi-cultural society like Britain. Understanding of national identities helps in rising collective conscious for the collective benefits and goals and challenges.

Such understandings in the societies like Britain often exclude minorities from the sense of collective conscious. This exclusion results in the cultivation of fears and apprehensions of discrimination among minorities and culturally diverse groups. The CMEB (2000) also asserts other ways to include minorities in a multi-cultural society. In public disputes, views of the minority groups must include teaching children about the multi-cultural policies of Britain, public funded arts, and educational implications of racial discrimination. In sum, the declaration of a political community needs to be multi-cultural and egalitarian (Uberoi).

Eda Henao in her dissertation *Nation, Culture, and Identity: The Colonial Subject's Search for Identity in the Works of Julia Alvarez, Rosario Ferre, and Ana Lydia Vega* (2001) explores the relationship between a colonial subject and national identity. The flagging of individual quest for national identity leads to the issues of representation in literary works. Literary works of

⁴ The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain was set up by Runnymede in January 1998.

The commission's remit was to analyze the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage, making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity.

Caribbean authors—like Julia Alvarez—point out the new-fangled issues of homogenizing culture, ethnicity and national identity marking questions of identity crucial for the individuals and countries. Cultural wholeness and integrity are significant issues at both individual and national level. In Latin American Literature, a person's identity as an individual or as a member of society is one of the significant themes. The texts of these authors use discourse as a technique to subvert the authority of dominant culture (Hena).

Maya Socolovsky in the article "Cultural (II) literacy: Narratives of Epistolary Resistance and Transnational Citizenship in Julia Alvarez's Return to Sender (2015)" explores the role of epistolary narrative against racial discrimination and the issues of transnational citizenship. Media has played a beneficial role in giving voices to the diasporic identities. In 20th century, because of access to various modes of writings, the youth have maintained more powerful voice than before. Their modes of writings shape their trans-cultural identities and offer various interactive opportunities to young people. Complex literary practices of youth are related to their identities that lend them a sense of connection and belonging to other communities. Maya explores Return to Sender (2009) as a semi-epistolary novel that transforms the experiences of the author and her community (Socolovsky).

Wendy Sue Blauman in the dissertation, Language and Border Crossings in the Works of Julia Alvarez: Identity, Homeland, Education, and Orality (2008) talks about the duplicity in the recurrent themes of identity, language and homeland. Alvarez has extended the linguistic boundaries by using two different languages in her works. Her "self" is vividly represented in the female characters. Blauman notes Alvarez, through her minority feminist literature, represents Dominican history and heritage in the diverse U.S society. With the surge in the Dominican population in America, the need for the native understanding increases. Thus, the significance of English speaking texts arises bringing a sense of connectedness to the main stream of collective consciousness. Language and cultural values, and traditions are the part of an individual identity. Alvarez's works establish the continuity of acculturation by expanding the language and cultural boundaries (Blauman).

Throwing light on the representation of cultural diversity and identity, this research categorically contributes to the ongoing debate of individual and national identities in multi-cultural societies. The discussion clearly objectifies the study to identify basic tenets of multiculturalism in the target text. As a solution to racism, the study also explores the theory of recognition for ethnically diverse groups. Finally the research builds its argument on the significance of ethnic autonomy and equal recognition to expand a collective consciousness for the development of the society.

3. Research Objectives

1. To identify the basic tenets of multiculturalism in Return to Sender
2. To explore the theory of recognizing diverse ethnic groups in multi-cultural society to solve racial problems
3. To comprehend and maintain the significance of ethnic inclusiveness in diverse cultures

4. Research Methodology

This article explores the tenets of multi-culturalism in *Return to Sender* in light of Taylor's essay, "The Politics of Recognition" (1992), which details his multicultural philosophical considerations in depth. Likewise Parekh (1995) does not do different in his famous book, *Rethinking multi-culturalism* (2000). With the help of close reading and exegesis, tenets of multi-culturalism are both identified and explained in the text. Under the shade of qualitative research paradigm—which codifies data—the outlined data is collected from the concerned books, internet sources, research articles, journals, online databases, and archives for the multicultural analysis.

5. Theoretical Framework

Multiculturalism is a political philosophy that deals with cultural diversity and human independence exploring the relationship between minorities and the dominant groups in society. It includes identity crisis, the politics of recognition, and national and multi-national politics and religious/cultural diversity. Among these theories, each multiculturalism theory has its unique set of assumptions, arguments and normative principles but all the theories intersect each other on the similar concerns. Some multicultural theorists consider immigrants and linguistics groups as minorities while others take them for stateless nations and indigenous people (cultural minorities). However, multicultural theorists focus on the demands of these groups to recognize their unique identities and cultures. Different theorists cannot agree on creating the balance between the rights for minor ethnic groups and the demands of the national liberal concerns (Murphy).

Debates on the rights of cultural minorities rose in the late 20th century with the consideration of individual rights and role of communities. Van Dyke⁵ is the one of the earliest philosophers in the 20th century to talk about minority rights in communities. Liberal political theorists focus on the relationship of state and the individual. The discussion on the rights of citizens and the role of state further focus on the heterogeneity of mankind. Consequently, the equal rights of all the ethnic groups and communities are included in this debate. Dyke (1998) explains the term ethnic community as a group of people who possess a separate identity based on shared cultural, and religious characteristics. This ethnic community may not take themselves for a nation but their demands for political autonomy and independence are considered. He further argues about two types of the rights for groups and communities that are derivative and intrinsic. He explains that a group's right is derivative when it is delegated by the original right holder, a member of the group and the community. On the other side, it is intrinsic when it is delegated by the aboriginal members. Dyke (1998) advocates the extension of political liberal theory to realize the intrinsic rights of the groups. If the rights of ethnic groups and individuals are recognized in the society, it impact the psychological health of its members.

The usual stress on the personal merit in individualism is as dangerous as a dominant culture. Among different institutions, schools promote dominant culture and undermine other cultures. Elites from the dominant culture are preferred than the individuals from the minority groups. This kind of attitude has a destructive effect on the self-respect of the group members. It is unjust to exclude minority ethnic groups from the debates of rights and independence. Ignoring minor ethnic communities, it is unjust to give all rights to the first class citizens—members of the dominant culture (Dyke 1998).

⁵ Professor Vernon Van Dyke died on May 26, 1998 was a political philosopher.

Recognition of cultural groups is another significant point of discussion in the theory of multiculturalism. Taylor in *The Politics of Recognition* (1992) notices the problem of recognizing various cultural groups in multicultural society and puts stress on the issues of misrecognition and individuals' disrespect. Individuals' homogenizing into a dominant culture makes a national identity. Disagreement between individual and collective identities are the forms of misrecognition and disrespect of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity out to be recognized to avoid harmful effects of misrecognition on the identities of diverse groups.

Taylor stresses on the reconciliation of cultural groups with the individual rights. Recognition is dialogic in nature and can occur between two persons. Identity of an individual or any group is shaped by the recognition or misrecognition. Groups and people can suffer distortion and damage if society considers them inferior. Demand of equal recognition of cultural identities can lead to the questioning of national identity. Some of the cultural practices can hinder the individual growth. Consequently, groups' cultural identities can prove a challenge to the individual identities which views Taylor as a reciprocal process of recognition between persons (Hirvonen).

There was a time when the thought of cultural diversity was only an aesthetic ability or a matter of personal preferences. Stanley Fish⁶ calls it 'boutique multiculturalism'. In many schools, there was a tradition of weekly celebration of cultural diversity. However, with increasing pressures of global conflicts and incidents like 9/11, multiculturalism acquires new dimensions and connotations. Multiculturalism has become a phenomenon to deal with the issues of war and peace; it also deals with the survival of humankind. Parekh (1935) is one of the prominent scholars, who has spent plenty of time on understanding the nature of Western philosophy and colonial/post-colonial studies. Arguing about the multiple dimensions of multiculturalism, Parekh discusses the nature of multiculturalism: every type and form of cultural diversity cannot be called multi-culturalism. Dealing with the plurality of different cultural communities, multiculturalism is not about all kinds of differences. Rather it only deals with cultural differences of groups and individuals who understand themselves culturally different communities from the rest of the world.

Unlike to the individual differences, culturally derived differences share a sense of authority. The groups share sense of customs and traditions that can have political implications. Parekh describes the meanings of multi-cultural in two terms: empirical and normative. On empirical level, the term 'multicultural' deals with cultural diversity. On normative, it deals with responses of acceptance and rejection of cultural plurality. Parekh focuses on the normative sense of the term that deals with the repression and celebration of cultural differences.

Contemporary circumstances lead the discussion to cultural plurality (four kinds of situations). Contemporarily the struggle for the recognition of cultural diversity is intensified by various incidents and events. First, individuals and groups do not accept the minor or subordinate status. Secondly, the experiences from colonial oppression have developed a sense of awareness among ethnic groups against all kinds of violence. It leads towards an awareness of political and economic oppression among different communities and establishes the fact that groups can also be culturally humiliated. Thus, the critique of multiculturalism is necessary for the well-being culturally diverse groups and minorities (Dallmayr).

⁶ Stanley Eugene Fish (1938) is an American literary theorist, legal scholar, author and public intellectual. He is currently the Floersheimer Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law at Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York City.

Parekh (1935) in *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000) talks about the nexus between political structure of the state and the cultural diversity in modern times. Modern state is different from the past structures of political states because they have grown dominant in homogenizing people's ethnic, cultural, religious and social identities. He marks modern state liberal –monist structure—which removes the cultural and ethnic identity. Modern state has its unique sense of national identity which uplifts it to the superior position. Consequently, modern robust concept of multiculturalism presents a challenge to the existence of modern state. Parekh insists on re-conceptualizing the role of state. A multicultural society needs cultural sharing on broader terms based on the interactions between various groups that rightly respects cultural diversity (Dallmayr).

In recognition of cultural diversity, this research is a direct contribution to the prevalent concept of multiculturalism. It further argues about the rejection of idea, “melting pot”— assimilation of minority groups into one dominant culture. In addition to this, it focuses on equality and dignity in diverse cultural groups through dialogue. Multiculturalists call it a "Salad bowl" approach⁷. In the light of *Return to Sender*, the study elucidates the importance of different cultures' recognition to maintain autonomy and freedom of its members.

6. Analysis and Discussion

Alvarez (1950) has experienced the effects of migration and separation in her life; therefore, most of her works represent the themes of assimilation and identity. Her works investigate the cultural stereotypes and highlight the issues of minority groups. In a multi-cultural society, minority groups often face forced assimilation into dominant cultures. It is not only a matter of cultural identity but also of political and economic interests. However, language and religion are the part of cultural formations which are mainly the markers of cultural accommodation for immigrants. Modern states are normally constituted on the norms and cultures of dominant groups which ignore the distinct identity of minority groups. Members of the minority cultural groups often face challenges in achieving their economic goals and cultural practices (Song).

The dominant group generally views minority groups as ‘trespassers’ (p.16). They are not considered equal citizens (p.9). Multicultural societies often take cultural diversity and its recognition for granted. Anti-racism and multicultural concepts are different but, at the same time, they are interlinked with each other. Antiracism deals with the issues of victimization and resistance whereas multicultural concepts do with cultural life and expression. Alvarez (1950) in *Return to Senders* (2009) represents the issues of Mexican immigrants who are a minority group in the U.S.

Exploring *Return to Senders* (2009) as a multicultural text, the study represents issues of diasporas identities with the notion of co-existing distinct cultures in a society. It narrates the story of a young boy, Tyler, who struggles to understand the concept of a multi-cultural society with his family in Vermont. Michelle Honeyford⁸ augments the role of media in shaping diasporas identities in young adult writings. She focuses on the young adults who are central to

⁷ A multicultural society where different cultures can co-exist and integrate while keeping their separate identities and distinct traits.

⁸ Michelle Honeyford is an Associate Professor in Language and Literacy in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba where she teaches courses in English Language Arts, Language & Literacy, Reading, Writing, and Qualitative Research in the B.Ed., M.Ed., and Ph.D programs

cultural inclusiveness. Tyler with his mother's help tries to figure out the concept of a multicultural society. His mother asks him to welcome the Mexican family on the farm as helpers. Tyler points out "Sometimes in life he just has to accept stuff he'll never ever understand" (p.19).

Being the part of increasing trans-cultural communications, young adults play a significant role in quest of cultural identities (Honeyford). It is the youth who have faced the hazards of marginalization owing to their linguistic and cultural differences (Socolovsky). Co-protagonist, Mari, in the novel represents the problems of minority groups through her writings which they face in the process of assimilation. Feeling alienated within her family and society Mari—a Mexican born—struggles through her identity construction. She is usually marked an 'illegal alien' (p.22) by her school mates because she was born on the other side of the border whereas her sisters fail to understand this concept who were born on this side of the border in America.

"I am not like my sisters, who are little American girls as they were born here and don't know anything else. I was born in México, but I don't feel Mexican, not like Papá and my uncles with all their memories and stories and missing it all the time" (Alvarez 22).

Mari lives an undocumented migrant life in Vermont with her family. She suffers a loss of connection and belonging to the community she lives in. The epistolary form of writing in the novel is a tool to voice to the marginalized groups in a multicultural society. Alvarez (1950) uses the epistolary form to voice Mari's narrative which is silenced and marginalized by the dominant culture. Her letters or diary writing give a strong voice to all the experiences of a female migrant who is living in the U.S with her family. An epistolary way of writing is a reciprocal way of exchanging information with the addressee because the process of recognition in different cultures is dialogic.

Taylor (1931) defines cultural recognition as a reciprocal process that occurs between two people. It results in failure if, owing to inferiority, the minority group feels disrespected. Misrecognition of cultural diversity, according to Taylor, hinders the growth of minority groups. Mari's written letters are never sent to any of the addressees in the novel; they represent the addressees' reciprocity which is delayed or made unavailable by the dominant cultural group. Although Mari's letters and diary writings are not read by any of the addressees in the novel, they lend her an authoritative role to construct and transform her and her community's cultural identity (Socolovsky). Mari confesses the power of writing in her words: "Paper can hold anything. Sorrows that might otherwise break your heart. Joys with wings that lift you above the sad things in your life" (Alvarez 22).

Misrecognition of different cultural groups restricts the freedom of minority individuals hindering the flourishing of cultural independence. Mari's uncle, Tio Felipe, regrets the crime he never committed. But he was charged because of his inability to communicate in the dominant language. "But Tío Felipe could not defend himself because he does not know enough English" (p.25). Thus, the linguistic marginalization is a form of misrecognition of cultural diversity that badly affects the individual growth. A society needs to develop a collective consciousness for the steady progression.

Return to Sender (2009) is a multicultural text that represents an American family which welcomes the undocumented Mexican immigrants on their farm as workers. Tyler and his family particularly his mother's welcoming behavior is a significant portrayal of multicultural tenets by Alvarez in the text. She helps Tyler in accepting cultural diversity and makes him treat individual equal who appear different from them. She calls those Mexican workers as "angels" (p.17) who have come to help them in times of difficulty. She insists Tyler to welcome the three little girls on the farm and advises him to keep their service secret. Instead of exposing, Tyler's family gives the minority group a welcoming gesture. Tyler's mother claims explicitly, "We believe in public education. And many of us who still remember what it really means to be an American welcome outsiders, especially those, who have come here to help us" (p.35).

Although Tyler fails to comprehend the idea of keeping secret about the presence of Mexican family at their farm, he does accept his mother's good ideas of equality and dignity. Tyler's notion of not understanding the distinct cultural identity of Mexican workers is a reflection of the constant strain between the cultural identity and the question of national identity in a multicultural society. Parekh (1935) says modern concept of multiculturalism is a challenge to the existence of modern state. He insists to re- conceptualize the role of state in accepting the new robust concept of multiculturalism. Tyler's confusion between the American constitution—which he has been taught in school by Ms.Swenson—and the 'good ideas' (p.33) of his mother, is a mirror to the re-conceptualization of the role of law and state in meeting the demands of cultural plurality. The division in the Mari's family shows that a nation or a state can hold differences in terms of cultural and national identities. Mari takes herself and her parents for Mexicans because they were born there whereas her two younger sisters are Americans because they were born in America.

It is interesting to discuss the multicultural theory, supplanted with the ideas of equality and sameness to homogenize different cultural groups into a dominant culture and identity. However, multicultural theory focuses on the equal dignity and rights of the minority groups. Parekh (1935) argues that individuals cannot be taken equal on the basis of uniformity. Every individual is different from other and has distinctive individual and cultural identity. Individuals can have some shared characteristics but they cannot be treated similar. Tyler's cows naming activity on the farm reflects on the fact: every individual has different characteristics and should be given a distinct identity. Thus, naming cows on different states of America is an activity to give every cow a separate identity on the farm. Moreover, human beings can be similar on some humanly characteristics but their cultural structures are different. Likewise equality is an interplay of differences and similarities. In a multi-cultural society, it is necessary to understand the differences of individuals, and groups. Minority groups should be given freedom to be culturally different.

Tyler and Mari learns to grow together on the farm. In this way, the farm is a place of integration between the two distinctive cultural groups. 'Farm' has a significant role to play in peaceful co-existence of two culturally different groups. Anglo-American family of Tyler has a deep attachment with their farm. It, particularly for Tyler, has an emotional attachment. Tyler grew up on the farm and any thought of its selling is equal to 'Trail of Tears' for him (p.11); its selling stands for a loss of inheritance, "But Tyler knew for a fact that selling the farm would kill his dad. It would kill Tyler!" (p.11). The peace of land is usually associated with the question of identity among different groups. In indigenous cultures of America, land has a very significant role to play in the identities of the native tribes. Mexican family of Mari knows the importance of

farms and farming. They had to leave the place and gave up farming due to poor finances but they still love to work on the farm.

Tyler and Mari get befriended and accept each others' differences on the farm. Tyler learns Spanish from Mari; she learns about constellations and using telescope. With their cultural differences, both families live together peacefully on the farm. Furthermore, they study at the same school acknowledging their equal right to education. Tyler points out that they are not able to decide the name of the farm yet. The nameless farm represents a place that belongs to no one but to all who work on it and have no fixed identity.

Recognition of different cultures is equally valuable in a society and is the key point in the debates of multi-cultural theory. Minority groups practice freedom of their distinctive cultural norms. At the same time, it is necessary for the dominant group to value different cultural celebrations. Return to Sender (2009) gives an obvious picture of recognition to cultural diversity through Tyler's respect to cultural differences in society. When Tyler sees his grandmother feeling better in the company of three Mexican girls, his point of view gradually changes towards the Mexican family workers. He notices grandmother accepting a different cultural practice of praying and remembering the dead loved ones on the 'Day of Dead' (p.64). Tyler finds that apparently weird cultural practices of different groups are benign, and give a gentle lesson of morality. However, throughout the book Tyler's struggle to defend her friend Mari from the American laws, shows up his courage to stand up with the concept of cultural diversity and equal human rights. On the other side, Mari's struggle with her family portrays the journey of cultural transformation. She transforms the identity of her family with her epistolary efforts and the cooperation of Paquette family. It can be rightly summed up in Mr. Bicknell's words: "We're all born human beings. But we have to earn that at the end of human with our actions so we can truly call ourselves humane beings" (Alvarez 140).

7. Conclusion

Return to Sender (2009) represents identity crisis faced by Mexican immigrants in the American multicultural society. The study categorically highlights the tenets/debates of multiculturalism with identity crisis of/for minority groups. Multi-cultural theories focus on recognition of minority and cultural differences. They celebrate cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. However, the study elucidates the significant role of young adults in understanding the concept of a multi-cultural society. Furthermore, it lays emphasis on developing collective consciousness for the well-being of the society. The study appears highly beneficial in highlighting the complexities of law and constitution which need to be revised to stimulate a deserving habitat for cultural inclusiveness. The study also signifies an understanding of differences which is absolutely vital for human life to maintain a sustainable social growth.

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