

NEGOTIATING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: A DIASPORIC STUDY OF MALIK'S *THE GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND*

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ABSTRACT

*This paper analyzes the issues of identity, community, and belonging against the backdrop of Ayisha Malik's work *The Green and Pleasant Land*. This paper strives to establish how the various characters relate to the multiple boundaries in depth, in their identity development within their communities. This study focuses on the lives of British Pakistanis and their struggle to find their cultural niche in integrating into British society. It fits the concept of identity and community, what it is to be part of a minority and the challenges immigrant people face while living in a new culture and simultaneously maintaining the traditional culture. The author paints a picture of the life of Bilal Hasham, a British Pakistani Muslim. The main challenge the main character faces is building a mosque in Babel's End—inhabited by non-Muslims—as his late mother had wished. This act illustrates Bilal's confusion as he is a man who straddles two spheres of existence but is marginalized in both. This book also covers the issues of micro-aggression, Islamophobia and the cultural conflict between the two worlds-- which is typical for diasporic literature. The relationships described in the work show the social tensions and discrimination connected with cultural and religious differences and the fight for identity in the adaptation process. Thus, textual analysis reveals that it provides the theme of acceptance of the different religious and cultural groups in a multicultural society.*

Keywords: Diaspora, Blending, Bilingualism, Minority, Persistence, Marginalization, Nostalgia, Culture, Heritage, Dominance, hope, Hybridity

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the scholar has examined Ayisha Malik's work *The Green and Pleasant Land*, which explores the concepts of identity, community, and belonging. This exploration also involves navigating cultural borders and the influence of socio-political changes in both Pakistan and the nations where migration has played a role in shaping literature. This analysis is framed within the context of Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity Theory. Additionally, Malik portrays the lives of individuals who exist at the intersection of diverse cultural identities and are faced with the intricate task of belonging to multiple communities. Malik's storytelling highlights the ever-evolving relationship between personal and collective identities, underscoring the significance of empathy and inclusiveness in nurturing a feeling of belonging. The form of bias depicted in this work is predominantly subtle yet deeply harmful, resonating with the experiences of many Muslims and people of color. Ayisha Malik's brilliance lies in her ability to craft a well-developed ensemble of characters surrounding the main character, each of whom possesses unique lives and perspectives. Ayisha has illustrated the fragility of relationships when the fear of the 'other' is introduced, how precarious the equilibrium is between what is deemed an acceptable form of divergence and what is not, and how deeply ingrained racism is within British society. Hall's

research on the problem of cultural identity is instructive, as can be seen from the solution to the real problems of British society (Yang, Zhao, & Liu, 2021). This book provides a nuanced exploration of themes of diaspora, hybridity, and cultural boundaries presenting the characters' struggles and triumphs as they navigate their identities in a multicultural landscape.

On the other hand, Hall's work *Questions of Cultural Identity* provides a foundation for understanding the characters' experiences in Malik's work. Hall's discussion of identity as a 'production' that is "never complete, always in process" (Hall, 1996, p. 2) is evident in Bilal's evolving sense of self. Malik explains it by saying, "Bilal finally understood that he was not a black or white simple man of two worlds, was a mixture of two different organizations where the values and experiences were blended" (Malik, 2019, p.50). This aligns with Hall's notion that people are evolving beings and that their identity is a fluid status that continues to be negotiated as they engage in different activities. Moreover, Malik writes, "Bilal's journey was far from over. Each day brought new challenges and revelations, shaping his identity in unexpected ways" (Malik, 2019, p. 204). This aligns with Hall's perspective that identity is fluid and continuously shaped by experiences. Hall's research on the problem of cultural identity is rather helpful, which can be pointed out from the degree of identification of the real issues of British society (Yang, B. S. Zhao, D. & Liu, and L. 2021).

Diaspora, which was used to describe the dispersion of Jews outside the geographical location of Israel, has taken a more generalized meaning that defines the movements, settlements, and cultural expressions of people who have been displaced from their original territories. This phenomenon practice entails a multiplicity of historical, social, and political interactions that explain the identities and experiences of diaspora groups in the global community. There has been much controversy on the origin of diaspora with the Jewish diaspora being viewed as one of the earliest cases. Robin Cohen in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997) looks at the Jews as a good example of this argument because their dispersal was forced and due to this they developed a very strong group identity despite being spread across the world" (Cohen 1997. p 22-26).

Cultural identity is a very popular concept nowadays, especially in multicultural societies where the subjective identities of people shape them collectively or socially. His conceptual framework assists the researchers in understanding the process of identity creation and how this process is influenced and leads to social and cultural changes in societies. The work *The Green and Pleasant Land* by Ayisha Malik is an attempt to venture out of the genres that she often engages with as a British Muslim living in London, and does quite well, although there is a bit of an inconsistency in shifting to an omniscient third person narrative. When we come to the characters the application of Hall's theory of cultural identity seems to be appropriate, especially in the case of Bilal who struggles to be accepted as a British Pakistani in a predominantly white English village.

Objectives of Research

- To scrutinize the challenges encountered by individuals belonging to minority groups and obstacles inherent in multiculturalism in contemporary Britain.
- The intention is to uncover the highs and lows of life and the blend of emotions such as anger, sadness, loss, and hope.

Research Questions

- To what degree does Malik's work *The Green and Pleasant Land* provide a representation of possibilities brought about by multiculturalism being part of the minority while preserving their heritage?
- How does Ayisha Malik's *The Green and Pleasant Land* explore the tension and pressure on diasporic members to abandon their identity and beliefs in order to assimilate into British society?

Literature Review

Diaspora is a meeting point with differences which can be of culture, language, history, people, geographic location, or time of the population living outside their conventional ancestral territory. In many of the current cultural theories, there is a glorification of diaspora and hybridization as oppositional sites. For example, the general dispersion or scattering of a diasporic population has been known most comprehensively with the dispersion of Jewish people among other nations or Gentiles. Diaspora effaces the process of transformation, where societies come and go in diasporic depending on opportunities" (Clifford, 1994 p. 306). Identifying nomadic people with multiple loyalties is vital for scholars studying hegemonic and normative views of nations and cultures. Hybridity is one of the concepts that makes up diasporic discourse.

Homi Bhabha demystifies in his essay "Science Taken for Wonders" regarding hybridity. This identity construct of hybridity comes with a blurring of the realm of existence which dilutes the line of national divide of language and culture, thus facilitating the crossing of borders in the real sense. This crossing is closely associated with interpersonal and inter-family quarrels, conflicts, and proclaimed or denied experiences. Cultural interaction was the common social theme in bear narratives of Bharati Mukherjee which focused on India and the United States. Her first book, *The Tiger's Daughter* published in 1971 is quite rich and complicated telling the story of displacement and emergence at the interface of two cultures. Mukherjee comes out with a strong message that immigration is not trauma and that those people who choose to leave their home country can and will conquer the trauma of migration and alienation. In contexts, Dimple becomes passionate and fulfilled by thinking that "She starts dreaming of freedom with the news of their going to the United States which defines a new concept of independence which she finds tempting". Although Bapsi Sidhwa's writings in English reside in the United States and finds living in America as freedom she is very much a patriot at heart she loves her country of birth and especially her city Lahore and she feels Punjabi. In her interview with Bachi Karkaria, she says, "I am Parsee, Pakistani, Punjabi woman is the only way I can describe myself based on my gender, and do not feel at all American" (Singh, p.3).

Similarly, Kiran Desai's Man Booker Prize-winning work *The Inheritance of Loss* published in 2006 poses social, political and economic issues for the people of modern Indian society both at rural as well as urban levels on one hand and social and psychological issues of Indian immigrants settled in America and England on the other. The work touches on different aspects of society like immigration, repressive systems of class and government, violent uprisings, and isolation and identity issues while it's simply a representation of the dualism of life.

Hazel Smith and Paul Stares bring out the dynamism that is involved in the diaspora issue. Their principal arguments are "Diasporas can be forces of peace and of war; at the same time" (Smith and Stares 2007, p.9). As summarized by Bercovitch, it is suggested that "one may evaluate the possible roles that any diaspora may play by trying to think about the nature of conflicts in terms of the phases or stages of any conflict possible (Smith and Stares 2007, p. 26-37).

In the Castle of My Skin is predominantly an exploration of the notions of identity, mimicry, hybridity, third space, and ambivalence where the protagonist of the story has passed through his childhood in crisis. Since childhood G. has the issue of the search for an identity and he begins to attend school where at high school he discovers he has ancestral roots from slaves, which he was not aware of before. "In the Caribbean, there was hope for a white boy to find a job and make a reputable position in the society, but there was no hope at all for the blacks. Despite hardworking, striving to be wise and educated, the non-whites in the society just had the civil service job where they sorted papers" (Lamming, 1953, p. 12). G. wishes to be a doctor one day. Hearing this, the doctor says to him, "G. can never become a doctor as he does not have fair skin" (1953, p.82).

According to Fanon, "who lived during the radical decolonization in Africa particularly Algeria, de-colonization is a violent process" (Fanon, p. 27). In his argument, he said "The violence of the colonial regime and counter-violence of the native balance each other and answer each other is an extraordinary homogeneity" (Fanon, p. 69). According to Terry Goldie, "the indigene is just a semiotic pawn in a therefore, whites in oriental discourse were depicted as 'masculine', 'democrat', 'rational', 'moral', 'dynamic', and 'progressive' people. Otherwise, because the writing was under the direct control of the Europeans, the non-Europeans were depicted as 'voiceless', 'sensual', 'female', 'despotic', 'irrational', and 'backward'. Bill Ashcraft outlines that an outcome of such a menace among the colonizers is that they end up losing their ethnicity and superiority of being tainted with native practices" (Ashcroft, 1998, p.159).

Hybridity, this mixed identity has been recently assigned to the work of Homi Bhabha whose focus is on the colonizer/colonized relationship that presupposes their interdependence as well as the construction of their subjectivity. According to Bhabha all the cultural emphases and all the formations of authority are set out in a space that he calls "the third space of the enunciation" (Bhabha, 1994, p.37).

According to Kymlicka, "One of the crucial issues that liberalism speaks to is the relationship between the individual and society, between the individual's citizenship and culture. Kymlicka highlighted individual freedom is either freedom of coercion, moral autonomy, or the right to the individual self-fulfillment" (Seidman, p. 15). Rejecting his claim that he would not say that he is British but Welsh, Parekh responds that "England is liberally funded by the taxpayers of England. I always say Welsh. Yeah. My children would state that, yes, they do feel Welsh because they were born in Wales. This conclusion means that however black or brown your skin is if it is not white, you're not British" (Seidman, 2000, p. 8).

Samatar mentions that there were so many cases of white men taking time to convert the villagers to their religion. They forced them to abandon their gods they believed in telling them that worshipping was irrelevant since their gods were dead. The imperial masters further expected the villagers to attend church on the seventh day. Similarly, when a person violates the established guidelines that are in force, they are severely punished. For instance, "one day Okonkwo 'spat' a woman, which is equivalent to beating her, during the week of peace and he was made to suffer for his act. Hence there was no compromise for those who violated the laws" (Achebe, 1958, p. 87).

In *The Namesake*, "the transforming to a private 'Gogol' and a public 'Nikhil' indicates that he feels angered at the creation of the discrete public self thus erasing an unquestionable filial bond where his America would seclusion his parent's culture from his self" (2003, p. 57). Similarly it was stated that "it is claimed that those groups whose identities are mainly based on statelessness

and marginalization are usually easily recruited able, and they are likely to support nationalism in their places of origin” (Sheffer 2007, p.68).

The English translation of an Afrikaans book, *Isobel’s Journey* (2002, p.121), an extraordinary work by Elsa Joubert has a major character Isobelle in Part 3 born in the 1950s. The thatched-roof room where Isobelle stays during her visit is the visible sign of her entering a new world: “Now she was standing in the space normally occupied by the strange dark man. She had never been in the room or home of a colored person or an Indian come away, stand at the gate and call, don’t go in, her mother had always told her. Now she was not even permitted to buy things in petty shops in what was known as the lower part of the town for you get germs her mother used to say” (Joubert 2002, p. 284).

Research Methodology

This research has used qualitative methods to analyze data. Textual analysis is the method which is used for analyzing the work. Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural identity is used as a theoretical framework when analyzing the work of Ayesha Malik. By using Hall’s framework the study provides a further understanding of the cultural diplomacy that is involved in the creation of cultural identity within the work. This is a world where the effects of colonialism notably migration and the formation of Diaspora, and indeed the general processes of globalization have challenged the very taken-for-granted constructs that are being held regarding identity and belonging.

The central idea of this theory states that ethnic identity is not innate and unchangeable but a product of complex processes that include history, language, and other aspects of the social setting. He stressed the importance of cultural creolization and stated that people’s identities are made of different cultural elements and seldom truly distinct. It questions how racisms are sustained in fixing how people are classified and how they classify themselves.

Hall also looked at the idea of Diaspora and ways in which it fits into culture’s configuration and specifically, migration and other forms of displacement. It recognizes that identities are always complex and in the period of late modernity more and more pluralized, never integrated but always intersectionality constructed through, often contradictory, discourses, practices and vocations. He says “They are open to a process of radical historicization and are always under the process of change and transformation” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Hall was greatly influenced by Structuralism and Post-Structuralism specifically ideas from Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida. These extremely shaped his understanding of language, representation, and identity. “This is why in semiosis woman stands as a mark against black or as a marked term against the unmarked terms of man and white” (Hall, 1996, p. 5).

He further says, “Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not identity, or origins, as much as potential, recuperation and the conditions of possibility of a representation” (Stuart, 1996, p. 4). He develops how dominating cultural discourses affect and shape the subjectivities of the oppressed groups. He concedes that due to globalization, there is always a noticeable imprint on how people and groups perceive their cultures. It erases other more formal distinctions and brings in new forms of complexity for identity processes. Hall avails an understanding that cultural identities are dynamic and have always been in the process of becoming. They are not rigid and do not become set and instead of becoming set, they continue to negotiate their social identity construction as influenced by social and cultural contexts.

Identity is therefore not as transparent or unproblematic as the concept is portrayed. Instead, identity is a production, which is never complete, bound and punctual, but always in the

making and unmaking, and always within and not beyond representation. This view complicates any conception of authority and authenticity to which the term cultural identity may refer (Hall 1990, p. 201). In cultural studies in the last few years or so, class is the ugly step-sister of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. “Feeling of pride and satisfaction was when at the age of eleven I transferred from a Southeast Asia School to a School in Japan and few of my new classmates immediately pointed out that I was darker, non-Japanese and native. Since I did not necessarily want to be Japanese after having spent most of my early childhood years in what is now the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, I was relieved to learn that apparently, I did not look like one, at least to some of my friends, irrespective of my passport status” (Shimizu, 2003, p.1).

According to Stuart Hall identity is neither a superficial notion nor is as simple as we imagine it to be. He has pointed out that instead of waving it off as something that is already given or achieved, then the concept of identity is better understood as a “production”. Thus, identity from this perspective is always an ongoing project and is produced within representation. Cultures are distinctive and created: they are not chosen and they have pasts. But like everything historical, they are in a state of constant change” (Hall, 1990, p.52). As many members of minorities, are oppressed in one or another way, it is up to the dominant majority in society, culture, state, or other relevant power structures to educate themselves on the minority’s experience, subjectivity, and identity.

Analysis and Discussion

The Green and Pleasant Land by Ayisha focuses on the lives of individuals of different origins, including British Muslims and it investigates the complexity of their existence and difficulties within a white environment. The author presents a complex view of the village and the people, their dreams and challenges. This work takes us chronologically through the steps of Bilal Hasham, whose mother, on her death bed wished to set up a mosque on the slopes of his small English village. The backlash and struggle Bilal faced is due to the simple proposal of a mosque, which introduces not only conflict but also the main aspects of Belonging and Identity and what minority feels in modern Britain.

With this, the reader feels the raw reality of the elimination of their minority and how to learn and change while being insulted and ignored most of the time. Persistence of change is another noticeable and quite dominating motif of the work; the characters change with time, including their self-perception and perceptions of other people, and this transformation is presented concerning the village setting. Thus, to be ‘British’, one has to give up all his distinctiveness and values or, at least, will instruct that they set a definite sign on the land belonging to them. By the end of the work, one can come to the understanding that Malik is asserting both, Muslims in the West need their own space and with that one gets the space required to co-exist to this tune things will remain. All and all, there is anger, sadness, loss and hope and it is this blend of emotion that is so encapsulating of life and which makes *The Green and Pleasant Land* a worthwhile read.

Bilal, Sakina, Khala, and Rukhsana as Diasporic Characters

Bilal’s mother Sakina had been an amazing woman who found herself living an average life. “Beta, she said you should grow a beard? She whispered hopefully” (Malik, 2019, p. 1). She asked him to construct a mosque and it was not a joke to construct a mosque especially when the man who was asked to do it is an immigrant. “Build them a mosque, beta. Build them a mosque. Explain to these people what our religion, Islam is. Now is the time for talking. Hear me, son, there is a guidance that you have to steer into goodness, Beta. And every around you. In the same way as those Christian missionaries, she said” (Malik, 2019, p. 4).

In this work, the diasporic experience is captured through the character's discussions of what it is like to live in a predominantly white society as a Pakistani family. The awkwardness associated with the silence and the absence of blacks, which is evidenced by the predominantly white faces reveals feelings of homesickness and being away from home which applies in many cases of diaspora. This discussion entails a clear generational conflict as the older people may be rigid especially while trying to come to terms with diaspora while the younger generation may accept the society's dual nature as people try to balance between two cultures. Margrit was now eyeing over the purchased dress of Rukhsana where she was donning a green and purple printed Shalwar kameez. What year group is she in? Asked Margrit. In her mid-seventies, probably" (Malik, 2019, p. 21). Similarly, "Rukhsana looked up and saw that the sky was becoming overcast and there was a speck of rain and for a moment this English weather was her soul. One day she said to herself she hadn't been back to Pakistan in thirty-seven years but she remembered the smell of the soil after rains; Jahangir's hand linked with hers and the shawl he put over her shoulders and sighed wondering about the geography of love" (Malik, 2019, p. 89). She started tearing but smiled when she was able to recognize and assert the feel. Rukhsana took a deep breath in the air. Ya Allah. It was nothing like Pakistan. When he arrived at Babel's End, he was continuously asked, "Of what stock are you?" (Malik, 2019, p. 98).

Bilal working as an employee, was seldom irritated and he had to honestly admit that the question was answered for the thirteenth time in a row and he had to take a deep breath three times before responding. It represents a common theme that is inherent in numerous immigrants and descendants of immigrants. Such questions represent not only people's interest in his background but also the problem of integration into a society that might consider him a "different" person because of his origins. This constant reminder of his alleged low origin underscores the conflict between his social standing and the ancestry that he carries. "This is England, Isn't Bilal English? Was born here, wasn't he and anyway Mrs. Pankhurst had leaned forward, he's Pakistani, isn't he? It's still about links, isn't it? You send me to any country to live and I tell you, England will always be in my blood, said Copperthwaite (Malik, 2019, p. 105). This captures the tension within the domain of identity, ethnic nationality and racism prevailing in the diaspora. "I am writing a book," Mariam said "I am sure it will be wonderful," said Jenny's mum, Will it be in English? Of course, it will be in English Mum." Jenny said in a feeble attempt at humor before guiding her mom away. It is through the interaction between Mariam and the two female characters which are Jenny and her mother that the diasporic context becomes visible. Thus, Mariam's determination to write a book reports a desire and the will of a diasporic subject to engage in the host culture's production and recognition while advocating for oneself and telling one's story.

Furthermore, in another incident "Irked, Rukhsana looked at Mariam whose eyes had welled up with tears or anger it was hard to tell. They do not want us here, Khala, Mariam replied. But this is your home. They want to change their minds and kick us out. Maybe you should think about your ammi's request. Maybe these people are not ready. Everything has its time even if they do not want us here they have no right to say we are not welcome" (Malik, 2019, p. 137). Two women, Rukhsana and Mariam, belonging to a cross-cultural migrant population, experience rejection in a country in which, they intended to make their new home. "Teach these people a thing or two and what do you think they'll learn? Tom stared at Richard, holding, the man's gaze. Would they learn that the fucking earth is not theirs?"(Malik, 2019, p. 40). Tom's declaration that the fucking earth is not theirs perfectly captures the efforts of the Diasporas to find and take their place as people inhabiting this world although the latter often tries to ignore their existence to varying

degrees. “Let’s do it, said Copperthwaite, who was already leading the way with his placard in hand: One of them said into the reporter’s camera: Home is where the church is. We are here because we want a United Britain. A Britain in which Muslims and non-Muslims, black and white, Christians and pagans learn from each other. One man said to the camera: Let’s all be civil. We don’t care what outsiders think” announced Copperthwaites. You are not welcome here” (Malik, 2019, p. 201). The words expressed by the characters reveal the issues of diasporic identity and citizenship. Copperthwaite’s declaration represents a conflict between staying faithful to culture and religion and being a part of a greater society that is diverse. This internal conflict gives a nod to one of the major issues in such literature which is the dilemma of assimilation and the maintenance of the cultural identities of the people in the diaspora.

Diaspora concerned the migration of people from their aboriginal land/territory but with the continued preservation of their culture in the new region. Referring to familiar places, and implying that they miss them, there is use of significant transitional characters in the work that helps to underpin the concept of a homeland and living away from it. Although they were not from the same blood Bilal and his mum were very close friends and there was nothing like feelings that the diaspora created to foster friendship. A chilling phrase was put in his mum’s mouth which always played in his mind “We belong to no one and no one belongs to us (Malik, 2019, p. 12).

Similarly, “His mother could never do things like a normal mum. The way she’d say hi to her other non-White mates in their parent’s native language, the way other Pakistani mums once stared at her as if she wanted to be Anglo-Saxon. Well, it was England, and where Sophie came from should not be an issue, why did not she look English? Except he’d think of how his English friends would smile at her, uncomfortable, pitying when she said I’ll just have a tippie, as she filled her glass with Fanta” (Malik, 2019, p. 32). One can explore, through her actions, one of the major issues of immigrants which was the conflict between preserving one’s culture and assimilation. From the multicultural point of view, it is possible to speak about the presence of the pariah’s hybrid accent as she tries to combine the elements of her native and the host cultures. However, this blending is usual and creates misunderstanding as well as nervousness among both, the native English people and herself. British Harris had no prior knowledge of Urdu and Punjabi as he was raised in English culture. “Oh, Haaris does not know Punjabi or Urdu at all, exclaimed Khala Rukhsana. I know it a little and can at least speak it, well my dad is going to teach me it properly though, said Haaris. The dialogic compiled as saying I talk too much like an angraiz da puttar” (Malik, 2019, p. 36).

Rukhsana thought about Margaret. “Goray, white people could be so kind. Of course they’d be angry about a mosque but see how she barged in and offered her support?” (Malik, 2019, p. 89). Rukhsana rose from her seat feeling lighter and went to sort through some of the fabrics she had brought with her to determine the suitable material that she would use in sewing Margaret a shalwar kameez.

Sakeena continued to say, “Gora place, Gora ways” (Malik, 2019, p. 136). By saying this, Sakeena is stressing the impact of “the way of the white man” in their lives and it becomes imperative to do “it their way”. “You know, I wish I was a king, continued Haaris in English I mean, I’d put a stop to wars and stuff, and if people wanted to build mosques or churches or synagogues and things like that I’d let ‘me” (Malik, 2019, p. 150). In this respect, the vision that Haaris has painted reflects this by raising a curled hand with different religious practices as its implication means that the society would comprise people from different religions and cultures. “Hi, how are you? They asked, I am, Fine, answered Shelley, English people were just like this

weather, one day sunny and the other grey, and you are Rukhsana, your English is quite good now, no? Better than your Punjabi, haina?" (Malik, 2019, p. 221). Focus on the diasporic experience due to the relations between Rukhsana and Shelley regarding the aspects of cultural orientations and identification. This work is typical of how Rukhsana probably represents the South Asian diaspora attempting to come to terms with her bilingualism by proving her enhanced linguistic proficiency in English as opposed to Punjabi. Shelley posed another question: "Would you want a church in your home in Pakistan?" Rukhsana asked, "Where is home?" Shelley said, "Where you were born of course." Rukhsana wished to tell Shelley that home must be where the heart is but she was not sure as to how to put it into words. This relates to Kim's idea of the work embodying the concept of hybridity because it shows the complex notion of identity and feeling of belongingness. Rukhsana demonstrates the inextricable connection between the cultural, emotional/ affective experiences in fashioning a new concept of home.

Cultural and Identity Challenges: Dressing, Language, and Degradation

Although Bilal would like to adapt to the American cultural norms which are assertively manifesting themselves in a more formal style of dressing, represented by a suit, he cannot alter the color of his skin. "Bilal looked at his hands; the cut of his suit could not camouflage the fact that he had brown colored skin which cannot wash away no matter how light he got of faith and culture" (Malik, 2019, p. 66). It brings out the relationship between culture, identity, and appearance as core features of people in cultures across the globe. "This world, said Margaret. Always quantity over quality, though we're grateful, added Bilal. What we need is Land. Margaret glanced at Khala Rukhsana. I feel rather rude speaking in English when your aunt can't understand. She gave Khala an emphatic smile. Khala did the same between her and whispered Allah hu Akbars" (Malik, 2019, p. 85).

Margaret's consciousness about language differences reveals the cultural clash situation of families in the diaspora. The fact that she feels embarrassed to speak English in front of Khala Rukhsana, who does not know the language, reveals the politico-semantic aspect of language concerning identity and the process of being included or rejected. "Hesitant, Mariam, even though she never made a Pakistani dessert before, she said. Why not? No matter what's happening. Wait a minute, do I need to make Ladoos now? Mariam quipped to Haaris, The height of Cultural experience" (Malik, 2019, p. 109). This story gives a clear example of how, such laid-back forms of culture as preparing something sweet, can be used as markers of cultural affiliation and ways of crossing divides. Afterward, "Khala said she'd help make zarda for the bake sale. Are you happy with that? Or do you just want cupcakes? Like everyone else? Asked Mariam. Mariam said, Well we are giving them bite-size culture" (Malik, 2019, p.115). This exchange underlines that it is crucial to preserve cultural values and indigenous people's identity by utilizing daily needs and community events.

Likewise, "Mariam told Bilal that Khala complained to her that she was now too old to learn anything new. Well, let's get her a phone, get an app and, in this manner, she will be able to learn. It was Harris' idea" (Malik, 2019, p. 118). This initiative can be explained against the background of the processes that many Eastern cultures gradually undergo the process of orientation towards Western models, innovative technologies and digital learning as key aspects of civilization, which unites generations and at the same time transforms traditional education and self-education in Eastern countries. Mariam went to Khala's door and knocked with enthusiasm and entered the room to find papers all over her bed writing in Urdu. Indeed, there is nothing she'd have loved more than to be able to read and write in it, especially if she had paid more attention

when her mum attempted to teach her”. Except what could have been more mortifying than identifying with your heritage when coming of age, and even that is regrettable later on in life.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to create an understanding of cultural allegiance and a human’s settlement status in a diverse society. The outcomes of this study reveal that the story of the construction of Bilal’s interior conflict-- about his Muslim mother’s deathbed request to construct a mosque in the three-household—which is not simply the construction of a mosque rather it is Bilal and his efforts for acceptance into a community that does not fully accept him as one of its own. Through the containment of the villagers’ reaction to the mosque proposal, Malik becomes a metaphor for society’s tendencies to racially stereotype and oppress Islam and immigrants. Characters’ feelings such as discomfort, anger, and alienation emerged as the text’s major theme that depicted the challenges of holding on to one’s cultural and religious identity amidst homogenized America. Furthermore, the voices of the various characters such as Margaret, Mariam, and Khala Rukhsana portray the different facets of the conflict and embrace the subject of the assimilation of different cultures and the issue of the clash of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity. The work also describes how culture and spirituality or religion remain influential factors that dictate identity, especially in the diaspora. Malik has made despicable characters warm, which is very fitting because the kind nature of all the people that the Hashams knew and liked is utterly betrayed by these spineless individuals and now they are either being treated like they don’t exist or have their previous companions giving them the cold shoulder.

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