

Received : 15 March 2024, Accepted: 09 April 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.217>

Hybrid Identity in Pak-Bangladeshi Anglophone Literature: A Comparative Study of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

**Ali Mortaza¹, Junaid Iqbal², Jawaria Rehman³, Mujahid Niaz Qureshi⁴,
Muhammad Afzal⁵**

1. Lecturer in English, Govt. Graduate College Shakargarh, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M.Phil English, Department of English, BZU, Multan Email: junaid.rana1010@gmail.com
3. Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Punjab Group of Colleges , Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan. jawariarehman097@gmail.com
4. M.Phil English Literature, Department of English, Minhaj university Lahore. Email: mujahidqureshi.ik@gmail.com
5. PhD Scholar (English Literature), Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

Identity crisis/hybrid identity is a dominant theme of literature in the rapidly growing globalized society. It has become a highly debatable issue. In the postcolonial world, cultural hybridity is an ever-present phenomenon, characterized by the constant blending of cultures. Therefore, this research paper, through comparative mode, intends to examine the theme of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context, in Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Ali's *Brick Lane*, applying Bhabha's theory of 'Cultural Hybridity'. Bhabha is a postcolonial theorist, having authored a lot on the issues and problems confronted by the postcolonial population. This research paper explores how the characters in both the selected novels navigate their identities, encompassing cultural, linguistic, religious, and gender dimensions, within the framework of their Pak-Bangladeshi heritage. It highlights the narrative strategies employed by the authors to depict the challenges and complexities faced by individuals living in multicultural societies. This research paper concludes that both the selected texts, *Burnt Shadows* and *Brick Lane* represent

the effects of cultural hybridity in Pak-Bangladeshi context. Moreover, it deepens our comprehension of the intricacies and dynamics of hybrid identities in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Hybrid Identity, Ambivalence, Diaspora, Assimilation, Immigrants, Pak-Bangladeshi Anglophone literature, postcolonial, *Burnt Shadows*, *Brick Lane*, Shamsie, Ali

Introduction

The postcolonial society is characterized by a constant mixing and blending of cultures, rendering it hybrid. Cultural hybridity emerges as an outcome of colonialism, bringing diverse cultures into contact and leading to a large-scale mixing of cultures. Postcolonial society “is essentially polarized in which many cultures meet, contend, and contrast, but do not overlap one another” (Sarvat, 2014, p. 474). Hybrid identity in literature has become increasingly relevant in the context of postcolonial societies. Individuals are faced with the intricacies of various national, cultural, and religious links. Pakistani and Bangladeshi literature deal with the theme of hybrid identity as both the countries have gone through the experience of colonized societies. Both the countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh were affected by colonial rule. Pakistan and Bangladesh were parts of British colonized Indian subcontinent. This shared history of colonial influence has had lasting effects on the political, social, and cultural aspects of both countries. Both countries have same religious and cultural background and life changing colonial history and even in post-colonial phase, they faced the similar cultural hybridity related issues like blending of different cultural values, religious and societal norms which transformed the whole interface of their landscapes.

Kamila Shamsie is a distinguished Pakistani-British writer, renowned for her critically acclaimed novel, *Home Fire*. She has been recognized by *Granta* magazine as one of the 20 best young British writers, and *The New Indian Express* has lauded her as “a novelist to reckon with and to look forward to.” Notably, apart from novel writing, Shamsie has been a columnist for some of the most widely circulated British media such as *The Guardian*, *New Statesman* and *Index on Censorship*, as well as *Prospect*. She is also involved in broadcasting with the radio as a media. *Burnt Shadows* makes use of the theme of cultural hybridity, as it is manifested in the life of the main character Hiroko Tanaka and the other characters. The path that Hiroko follows covers several continents and she travels from Japan to India, from India to Turkey, from Turkey

to Pakistan as well as leaving Pakistan and moving to America shortly after the September 11, 2001 tragedy. This geographical and cultural odyssey results in Hiroko adopting multiple identities: she gets to India from Japan and leaves Pakistan for America with a Pakistani identification. In this way, Shamsie (2009) provides the readers with various Western cultures, thus offering the audience a tapestry of cultures. Her character can be seen: as the 'third space' according to Bhabha; 'liminal'; 'hybrid'; 'in-between'; and 'beyond'. Even though, the woman is not a native of this country, the mentioned subjects also signify that despite the fact that she embraced the ways of the foreign culture, she cannot become free from her cultural past and the experience that makes up the multiple layer of her personality rather than a single one.

Monica Ali is a talented writer who was born in Dhaka in 1967 in Bangladesh but later came to live in England. Monica Ali is a prominent British novelist with Bangladeshi and English roots who has higher recognition due to her writings. In 2003, she was honored as one of the Granta Best of *Young British Novelists* award, a prize granted for an unpublished text, indeed. Her first fiction work, published in the same year was, *Brick Lane* which received a lot of appreciation and was even a contender for the *Man Booker prize*. Due to its cultural and social relevance, the novel was elected for a screen adaptation in 2007 into a movie. In her work, identity, cultural conflict, and social issues are explored as the main themes which can be attributed to her research experience as daughter of Pakistani immigrant and her academic training. The main theme in Monica Ali's first published work of fiction is hybrid identity. *Brick Lane* turned her into a noteworthy writer of a Bangladeshi family in Britain. The advantages of the story of *Brick Lane* are that it makes one informed of the difficulties faced by immigrants and the process of constructing a transnational self-identity. At its core is Nazneen, who emigrates young, eighteen years old, from Bangladesh to England with her much older husband Chanu. Chanu, though highly educated, is pompous, ineffectual, and physically unattractive, leading to his frustration and irritability, especially as his white colleagues at the council fail to acknowledge his qualifications and eventually dismiss him. In stark contrast, Nazneen arrives in London, knowing only two English words. She quickly assumes the traditional roles of a dutiful wife and mother. Her constant awareness of her outsider status and her Bangladeshi heritage keeps her in a subservient position within the family, highlighting her ongoing struggle to reconcile her new life with her roots. Rehman (2021) argues that Nazneen resides neither within

her native Bengali homeland nor within the Western domain, but rather in an intermediate realm. In the terms of Homi Bhabha, she is endeavoring to construct a new identity grounded in the convergence of two distinct and contrasting cultures, rather than striving to forge a singular composite identity (p, 973).

Drawing upon the theoretical framework of 'Postcolonialism', particularly Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity, this research paper examines how the characters in *Burnt Shadows* and *Brick Lane* negotiate their identities in the context of their Pak-Bangladeshi heritage. Bhabha argues that cultures cannot be seamlessly yoked together to create a harmonious whole; instead, cultural identities are formed and boundaries re-cited in contradictory, conflictual, and ambivalent spaces. (Bhabha, 1994). The comparative analysis of these two novels highlights the similarities in the authors' approaches to depicting hybrid identity and its effects. It deals with the theme of identity crisis in Pak-Bangladeshi literature with detailed consideration of *Burnt Shadows* and *Brick Lane*. Both the novels depict the hardships and obstacles that their characters have to face while encountering some cultural and national positions. They provide insights into the various modes of hybridity concerning cultural, language, religion and even gender.

Research Questions

- 1, How do *Burnt Shadows* and *Monica Brick Lane* portray the concept of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context?
- 2, How far are the two novelists (Kamila Shamsie and Monica Ali) similar in the depiction of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context?

Objectives of the Research

1. To critically analyze the representation of hybrid identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* in the context of Pak-Bangladeshi literature.
2. To investigate how far are the two writers (Kamila Shamsie and Monica Ali) similar in their depiction of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context.

Significance of the Research

This comparative analysis has significance because *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie and *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali offer an understanding of the conflicted hybrid identity set in the

Pak-Bangladeshi context. Studying such literary works helps provide a better understanding of the multicultural essences and their real-life challenges, struggles, and bargaining. Drawing from the Pak-Bangladeshi context, this research paper provides an understanding of the socio-political and historically contextualized hybrid identities in this microcosm. Therefore, the findings of this research paper shall contribute to the ongoing discourses on multiculturalism, diaspora and identity construction in postcolonial societies.

Literature Review

Since postcolonial writers being a product of colonialization and racism, one is likely to find aspects of identity, agency and dissatisfaction echoed most in their literature. In their resistance against colonial domination, fundamental is what might be referred to as ‘counter-translation,’ an act of re-reading and rewriting of colonial texts. Through the lens of intertextuality, this process becomes a valuable instrument that can help to analyze postcolonial literature. Postcolonial writers resist colonial discourses and rewrite the story in the colonialist’s language where they reclaim the colonial script that was fashioned by the colonizers. In this way, they resist the ideology established by the colonialists and provide a different perspective that prioritizes the agency of the colonized people (Komal, 2019).

Literature is one of the significant avenues by means of which the themes of postcolonial cultural creolization are communicated, affecting the character of people. It highlights issues of the diverse mixed modes of operations that can be racial, cultural, linguistic, and in the political sphere. Thus, in the linguistic area of creolization, motives including Parole and Pidgin provide the realistic focus on the processes of languages integration. However, it is within the domain of cultural hybridity that literature emerges as a potent vehicle for the propagation of hybrid identities and the cultivation of linguistic consciousness. Within the discourse of postcolonial cultural studies, cultural identities have assumed a central position as recurrent themes. Scholars, notably Bhabha, contend that literature functions as a subversive force, challenging the hegemony of dominant cultures over the marginalized and asserting alternative narratives of identity (Komal, 2019).

Vitolo (2016) investigates the theme of identity performance in Kamila Shamsie’s novel *Burnt Shadows*. The researcher examines how identity is constructed, enacted, and transformed

by the characters, emphasizing the complexities inherent in individual and collective identities within a globalized framework. By analyzing the interaction between personal narratives and broader historical and political contexts, the research elucidates the intricate dynamics of identity formation and representation in Shamsie's work. According to Soukaï (2018), the duality in the partition novels makes it a focal point of Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. These novels systematically rearrange the geopolitics of identity by presenting characters and stories that are not confined to national divisions. Postcolonial identities as well the relationship between cultural hybridity and history represented by literature by Ghosh and Shamsie.

According to Babar (2016), Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* deals with the idea home, cosmopolitanism and hybridized identity. Relationships and dynamics associated with home, home-seeking and identification are developed among cosmopolitan social locations. As for the main point in analyzing the characters' experiences and the ways they are represented in the media space, the researcher concentrates on the ways the given media texts reveal the hybridization of cultural and national identities. More than that, the novel deals with the issues of diaspora, the blurring of boundaries, and the construction of hybrid identity. In more detail, Mavrommatis (2006) accounts for the multicultural interactions described by Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* within the framework of multiculturalism in London. Using this writing style, Ali explores the hopes, challenges and lifestyles of people living in this culturally diverse area. Mavrommatis (2006) challenges the notion of the 'creative' in *Brick Lane*, thus, analyzing the ways how heritage and contemporary interactions influence the area's identity. Hence, the study sheds light on encounter, negotiation and hybridity within multicultural travelling spaces and in so doing, brings into perspective the subject's experience in cultural diversity.

Abu-Samra (2016) notes an intricate inscribing of the themes of identity crisis among characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and *Brick Lane* by Monica. The researcher examines the nature of the experiences that female protagonists who feel lost in terms of finding their identity, cultural identity and the conflict that lies therein and the role that intersexual matters play in these works. Exploring such themes as the construction of postcolonial identity, gender and roles, as well as the social and cultural factors affecting the characters' development, the study provides a sophisticated understanding of the novel. Thus, conducting a comparative

analysis, the researcher sheds light on the motifs of identity, relevance in the main feminine characters, and the search for individuality in both novels. Yousef (2019) takes an analysis of cultural representation in Monica Ali's book, *Brick Lane*, with special consideration of Homi K. Bhabha's perspective. He also pointed out that the characters in the novel struggle with their identities within the context of the themes such as migration, hybridity, and the postcolonial. Following the theoretical framework outlined by Bhabha, the researcher analyzes how culture, culture conflict as well as cultural change occur in a given narrative.

There is no focused comparative reading of the concept of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context, available in the existing body of literature, exploring Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Although both novels touch on themes of cultural hybridity and identity formation, there remains a significant research gap in examining how these authors depict hybrid identities in relation to the Pakistan-Bangladeshi context. Conducting a comparative study would elucidate the similarities and differences in the portrayal of hybridity, diasporic experiences, and the negotiation of multiple identities in these two works.

Theoretical Framework

The term 'postcolonial' describes the era following the independence of territories from European colonial domination. It encompasses the effects of colonialism on various cultures and societies. Historians began using this term after World War II to denote the time period after these regions gained their independence. (Dizayi, 2015, p. 999). Many "people living of the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p.1). Though there was a shift in politics, several countries gained freedom and were no longer colonies. However, there were many cultural and economic dilemmas and crises, and many were still unsure of their culture and identity. The development of national and cultural identity was challenged and redefined after the collapse of the Empire, with the continuous movement between margin and center, influencing the understanding and interpretation of shared historical events. Additionally, the movement of people and migration from former colonies to the colonizing nations led to the creation of new, mixed, hybrid civilizations. This resulted in cultural conflicts both within these new societies and between established citizens and the incoming migrants. Societies that got independence "are still subject in one way or another to"

colonizer domination, and “independence has not solved this problem” (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 2).

One of the challenges faced by colonized nations is ‘cultural hybridity.’ It denotes the amalgamation of diverse cultural elements, manifesting across various domains such as linguistic, racial, cultural, and political spheres. The concept of hybridity began to gain prominence in Postcolonialism after the work of Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin (2010), who approaches hybridity from a linguistic perspective, suggests that hybridity can be double-voiced. This means that one voice can simultaneously ironize and unmask the other within the same utterance. Bhabha’s ‘hybridity’ concept, heavily influenced by Said, is one of his most well-known ideas. Bhabha interpreted hybridity as the ambivalence of conventional authoritative discourse, which loses its univocal grasp on meaning and opens up to the language of the Other (Ackermann, 2012).

“Bhabha mentioned that, colonial time was not only a straightforward oppression, domination, violence but it was also a complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. HomiBhabha combines cultural, literary theory with colonial archives” (Tetik, 2020, p. 7). In literary discourse, cultural hybridity emerges as the juncture where a culture assimilates the linguistic nuances indicative of another culture, signifying a pivotal moment of cultural interplay (Bhabha, 1994). Hybridity undermines the narratives perpetuated by dominant cultures by challenging the binary constructs of inclusion and exclusion upon which they are founded (Bhabha, 1994). Hybridity operates as a counter-narrative, destabilizing entrenched power dynamics and fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape. Bhabha’s conceptualization of cultural hybridity transcends the scope of many postcolonial theorists, offering a comprehensive and expansive framework that underscores the creative potential inherent in hybridity. Hybridity signifies the emergence of a ‘third space’ that facilitates the emergence of alternative perspectives (Bhabha, 1994, p. 211). This space allows for a cultural hybridity “that entertains the difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994, p.4). Contrary to the notion that hybridity arises merely from the convergence of disparate cultural forms, Bhabha posits that it illuminates the very processes through which cultures come into being. He refutes the idea that hybridity results from a process of ‘dialectal sublation,’ wherein thesis and antithesis merge to form a synthesis. According to Bhabha (1994), human experience is

characterized by perpetual engagement with this fluidity, with no definitive beginnings or ends. Individuals find themselves in the midst of ongoing transformations, tasked with shaping their identities within this dynamic framework.

Research Methodology

Adopting qualitative research approach, this research paper, through comparative mode, is intended to examine the theme of hybrid identity in the Pak-Bangladeshi context, in Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Ali's *Brick Lane*, applying Bhabha's theory of 'Cultural Hybridity'. Bhabha is a postcolonial theorist, having authored a lot of on the issues and problems confronting the postcolonial population.

Textual Analysis

Kamila Shamsie and Monica Ali are diasporic writers. They mostly focus upon issues related to diaspora. *Burnt Shadows* by Shamsie and *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali are famous novels, touching upon the theme of identity crisis in Pak-Bangaladeshi context. Both the novels *Burnt Shadows* and *Brick Lane* are the outcome of diasporic experiences. They deal with the problems and struggles of the immigrants' assimilation of the western identity. Cultural hybridity is a key theme in both the narratives. Both novels probe into the theme of intergenerational conflict within immigrant families, illuminating the tension between traditional values and contemporary ideals. Through their respective narratives, Shamsie (2003) and Ali (2009) articulate the challenges encountered by younger immigrants as they negotiate their identities and confront the generational tensions that emerge. These works focus on immigration and ethnicity, depicting the challenges of those in-between in two different cultures. They reveal the vague construct of immigration and the constant fight for the integrity of self while assimilating into new societies.

Burnt Shadows is a realistic portrayal of cultural hybridity through the journey of Hiroko Tanaka. Her travels take her from Japan to India, from India to Turkey, from Turkey to Pakistan, and eventually to America in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Throughout her journey, Hiroko adopts various identities, transitioning from a Japanese subject in India to a Pakistani emigrant

heading to America. This novel transports reader in a diverse array of global cultures (Sarvat, 2014).

Burnt Shadows touches upon the intermingling of diverse cultures and identities through the experiences of its central characters. Hiroko Tanaka, a member of the Japanese diaspora, epitomizes the concept of cultural hybridity as she traverses various countries and cultural landscapes. This hybridity is exemplified in Hiroko's relationship with Sajjad Ali Ashraf, an individual of Indian diaspora. Despite their disparate cultural and religious backgrounds, Hiroko and Sajjad fall in love and ultimately marry. Their union, both in love and marriage, symbolizes the fusion of Japanese and Indian cultures, underscoring the potential for connection and understanding between different cultural traditions. This amalgamation represents the integration of two distinct societies, cultures, and backgrounds. Despite these differences, they begin their life together within Pakistani society. Throughout the novel, Hiroko yearns for her lost homeland and strives to preserve her Japanese identity. She expresses her longing for the lost home, stating, "I want to look like people around me...I want to eat kasutera" (Shamsie, 2009, pp. 99-100).

Hiroko's aspiration to maintain her cultural heritage while adapting to new surroundings exemplifies cultural hybridity. This is further emphasized through her interactions with other members of the Japanese diaspora in Karachi. Regular meetings with a group of Japanese women at Jimmy's Coffee Shop provide her with solace through their shared language and cultural background. However, when the Japanese Embassy relocates to Islamabad, Hiroko mourns the loss of this vital connection to her cultural roots, highlighting the complexities of preserving one's heritage amidst displacement. (Shamsie, 2009, p. 141). Hiroko Tanaka, as a member of the Japanese diaspora, embodies the concept of cultural hybridity. As a direct victim of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki, she leaves Japan and eventually settles in Pakistan. Despite residing in Pakistan for over five decades, Hiroko continues to identify herself with her Japanese heritage, illustrating the enduring impact of her cultural roots as a "demure Japanese woman" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 130). She yearns for the familiarity of her lost homeland, expressing a deep desire to hear the Japanese language, savor Japanese cuisine, and be immersed in the sights and sounds reminiscent of Japan (Shamsie, 2009, pp. 99-100). Hiroko's longing for her homeland mirrors the experience of many individuals in the diaspora, who frequently feel nostalgia and a yearning for the familiar. This desire to maintain a connection to one's cultural roots is a

prevalent aspect of cultural hybridity (Brubaker, 2005). Despite her longing, Hiroko is conscious that returning to Japan would confine her identity to that of an atomic bomb survivor, a reduction she resists (Shamsie, 2009, p. 99-100). She finds solace in occasional meetings with other Japanese women in Karachi, where she can speak her native language and share in their laughter (Shamsie, 2009, p. 140). Hiroko's yearning for her lost home and her struggle to find a sense of belonging are recurring themes throughout the novel. She persistently longs for the familiarity of the Japanese way of life, expressing a desire to hear the Japanese language, savor Japanese cuisine, and be in the company of Japanese people. This longing is particularly evident during her visit to Mussoorie, where she experiences profound nostalgia for the landscapes and traditions of her homeland. She reflects on the profound loss of her home and homeland, underscoring her enduring connection to her cultural roots, stating that her world "doesn't exist anymore" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 113). Hiroko's longing for her lost home and her struggle to find a place where she truly belongs exemplify the cultural hybridity central to her character. She maintains her connection to Japan through her correspondence with Yoshi Watanabe, a friend of her deceased lover Konrad. Yoshi serves as her final link to Nagasaki and their shared experiences as atomic bomb survivors, reinforcing her enduring bond with her cultural roots.

Abdullah, an Afghan diaspora, escapes Afghanistan amidst the tumult of the Soviet-Afghan War, seeking sanctuary in Karachi. There, he forges deep bonds of friendship and alliance with Hiroko and Sajjad. Abdullah's narrative underscores the intricate dynamics of identity and belonging experienced by diasporic individuals. Struggling with his Afghan heritage, he confronts the challenges of assimilating into a foreign land. Caught between his allegiance to his homeland and the imperative to acclimate to a new cultural milieu, Abdullah grapples with the complexities inherent in navigating the intersection of personal identity and societal adaptation. Abdullahe tells Sajjad, that "I am not sure where I belong. I feel like a guest here in Pakistan, and yet I can never truly go back to Afghanistan" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 225). Abdullah, portrayed as an Afghan diaspora figure, embodies the concept of cultural hybridity as he navigates the intersection of his Afghan heritage and the Western influences that permeate his existence. This juxtaposition becomes palpable during his visit to the United States, where he experiences a profound longing for the rustic simplicity of his Afghan village. This internal conflict underscores the nuanced interplay between Abdullah's cultural origins and the external

influences shaping his identity, highlighting the complexities inherent in his experience as a diasporic individual. Abdullah's statement that "he could belong anywhere. And instead he belonged nowhere" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 407) also emphasizes hybrid identity.

Sajjad's identity is molded by his Indian lineage, yet subsequent to his migration to Pakistan, he assimilates aspects of Pakistani culture into his persona. He grapples with a profound sense of belonging and contends with the complexities inherent in his dual identity. As he tells Hiroko that "I feel I've strayed too far from my own land. Other times I feel I haven't strayed far enough" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 113). The aforementioned instances underscore the characters' endeavors in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* to negotiate their manifold cultural identities and the attendant obstacles encountered in harmonizing their past with their present circumstances. The narrative accentuates the intricate nature of cultural hybridity and its ramifications for individuals ensconced within the diasporic milieu. According to Perloff (1998), the novel *Burnt Shadows* serves as a vivid manifestation and portrayal of the realm of cultural hybridity.

Similarly, the theme of hybrid identity appears in *Brick Lane*. In *Brick Lane*, Ali portrays the character of Chanu as an archetypal illustration of an immigrant ensnared within the conundrum of straddling two distinct worlds. Additionally, Ali deals with the immigrant experience as a tragic narrative, explicating: "To be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy" (Ali, p. 112). This poignant assertion underscores the profound ramifications of immigration upon individuals, encompassing their core identity, interpersonal dynamics, and societal integration. It accentuates the formidable challenges confronting immigrants, including sentiments of displacement and the arduous quest for belonging within a novel cultural milieu. Ali (2003) adeptly portrays the disillusionment and vexation endured by immigrants, epitomized by Chanu's poignant recognition that "things were a bit different" (p. 21) in England. The novelist adeptly captures the disjunction and disillusionment experienced by immigrants as their aspirations collide with the harsh realities of their unfamiliar surroundings. This narrative element significantly contributes to the overarching tragic ethos characterizing the immigrant experience portrayed within the novel. Hussain (2019) argues that *Brick Lane* focuses on the theme of migration, portraying the initial shock of arrival, the complex process of settlement, and the ensuing challenges associated with transitioning from one country to another. Rehman (2021)

asserts that the depiction of cultural identity acknowledges the presence of diverse cultures within British society, while also critiquing the naive perspectives that overlook the significance of power dynamics, especially within the context of a liberal and democratic culture such as that of the United Kingdom.

The tension between the assimilation of the Western culture and the quest to maintain the personal identity becomes another viable characteristic of the immigrant experience painted in the novel *Brick Lane*. Ali (2003) writes: “I’m talking about the clash between Western values and our own. I’m talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one’s identity and heritage” (p, 113). This quote embodies the paradoxes that immigrants face when they are in new territories living in societies that do not share their cultural background while at the same time they are expected not to forget their roots. Moreover, Ali (2003) broaches the theme of racial discrimination and the poignant repercussions of societal inequity within her narrative, as evident in her statement: “The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don’t have to change one thing. That is the tragedy” (p. 114). This statement elaborates the suffering and discrimination of immigrants; it amplifies the need of the society to change, to provide an environment that embraces and accepts immigrant’s worthiness. In *Brick Lane*, the character’s adherence to cultural traditions is depicted through the line, “Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish. All sorts. I am not old-fashioned. I keep purdah in my mind, which is the most important thing” (p. 29). This quotation elucidates the protagonist's endeavor to negotiate the terrain between divergent cultures, all the while maintaining fidelity to the values and traditions that constitute their sense of self.

Shifting focus to Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows*, the novel deals with the complexities of cultural identity through intermingling and intermarriages. Shamsie delves into the concept of cultural amalgamation, depicting the seamless fusion of disparate cultures, as evidenced in the following excerpt: “Europeans and Japanese mixing uncomplicatedly” (Shamsie, 2009, p .6) and “Stories of Nagasaki’s turn-of-the-century cosmopolitan world, unique in Japan—its English language newspapers, its International Club, its liaisons and intermarriages between European men and Japanese women” (Shamsie,2009, p. 12). These quotations exemplify the presence of multicultural connections and intercultural interactions, illustrating the multifaceted nature and diversity inherent in cultural identity. Both literary works underscore the nuanced understanding

that immigration entails traversing not only geographical borders but also cultural boundaries, as articulated in the following excerpt: “Immigration is not just about crossing borders; it is also about crossing cultures” (Shamsie, 2009, p. 10). This statement underscores the formidable obstacles encountered by immigrants as they contend with the preservation of their cultural identity amidst the process of acclimating to unfamiliar surroundings. Immigrants thus experience a conflict between their original culture and the culture of their new society; a conflict that is aptly captured by Raza in *Burnt Shadows* who leads a dual existence. Shamsie (2009) points out that “For months now, Raza had been living two lives” (p.210). Here the novelist portrays the mental status of a man in distress and loses everything in his identity struggle of being Raza and trying to find out who he is and how he fits to the society and his family.

Both novels, *Burnt Shadows* and *Brick Lane*, have reflected the problem of conflict between generations within an immigrant family, which shows the clash between the old and the new generations’ forward thinking. Through their individual narratives, Shamsie (2009) and Ali (2003) articulate the challenges encountered by younger immigrants as they negotiate the complexities of their identities and contend with the intergenerational tensions inherent within immigrant families. Shamsie (2009) and Ali (2003) explore the subject matters of the difficulties faced by young immigrants in terms of their identity crisis, and the conflicts within the immigrant families. In both novels intergenerational conflict is portrayed as an issue young immigrants struggle with when trying to adapt to the new world while embracing traditions. I also see the conflicts as the dilemma of an individual in search of his/her identity within one’s community.

Shamsie (2009) brings the aspect of intergenerational conflict acknowledging the young character’s search for the cultural self. The quote from the text “You write about a Nagasaki filled with foreigners. You write about it longingly. That’s one step away from cheering on an American occupation” (p. 9), reflects the older generation’s resistance to embracing change and the tension that arises when younger individuals express interest in the outside world. Further, the novel presents the isolation and the rift between individuals within the immigrant community leading to conflict between the generations.

Similarly, in *Brick Lane*, Ali (2003) paints the picture of a struggle between traditional and liberal set-up to show how it becomes a source of a clash between the generations. Ali (2003) points out that “The clash between traditional values and modern ideals often leads to intergenerational conflict within immigrant families” (p. 42). Here, the novelist shows the difficulties that younger immigrants may have new attitudes and behaviors which may conflict with old-world standards as exemplified by older relatives. Another instance of intergeneration conflict evident in the novel is the ignorance and inability of previous generations to appreciate the lifestyle, decisions, and conduct of the young immigrants. Ali (2003) states that “Older generations may struggle to understand and accept the choices and behaviors of younger immigrants, leading to tension and conflict” (p. 58). This quote presents the conflict occurring between generations and the struggles that young immigrants face trying to adapt to the changing identities while dealing with traditionalist elders. Yousef (2019) points out that *Brick Lane* addresses the issue of multiculturalism, demonstrating the unity of people with different ethnic backgrounds as the diverse part of the British population. These different identities are evident in the novel and the book is not naïve to power relations despite acting in a liberal democracy such as Britain. It paints cultural identity in the UK as being plural, complex and in a constant state of flux (p. 84).

Kamila Shamsie (2009) and Monica Ali (2003) use clash of cultures to show the effects of conflict between different cultural beings. In her novel, Shamsie (2009) stresses the aspects of cultural flexibility and conflict, which is typical for cultural interactions. Ali (2003), in contrast, deals with the conflict of cultures that is characteristic of immigrant populations and his work explores the way identity is affected by these collisions. Shamsie (2009) portrays the complexities of cultural clashes through the quote from the text, “Konrad had been right to say barriers were made of metals that could turn fluid when touched simultaneously by people on either side” (p. 83). This statement captures the complexities of cross-cultural relations and the difficulties people face when they try to navigate conflicting cultures.

In the same manner, it is clear that through *Brick Lane*, Ali (2003) portrays the struggle between the western way of life and the immigrants, as brought out in the quote, “I’m talking about the clash between Western values and our own. I’m talking about children who don’t know what their identity is. I’m talking about the feelings of alienation brought by a society that has

racism” (p. 113). This quote can be said a quintessential of the culture clashes and identity crisis of young immigrants, attempting to live in a society that does not subscribe to the cultural norms of their original home. Both novels provide profound examples of the severities of the cultural conflict, misinterpretation, prejudice, and discrimination. Shamsie (2009) notes that such things as ‘Intercultural conflict can mean that one group of immigrants perceives the other as being different, strange, or even inferior. On the other hand, as a result of clashes, which are characterized as tendencies by every group to defend its own moral standards and cultural perceptions, Ali (2003) expounded the adverse impacts, especially on immigrant communities. These novels paint a picture of the daily battles, conflicts, and prejudice common among people from different cultural backgrounds. Both authors shed light on the complexities and challenges faced by individuals as they navigate clashes of values, stereotypes, and cultural preservation within a diverse society. Ali (2003) states that, “Behind every story of immigrant success, there lies a deeper tragedy” (p. 113). Here, she underscores the hidden struggles and sacrifices that accompany the pursuit of success and integration, suggesting that beneath apparent triumphs, there are personal and collective tragedies such as the loss of cultural heritage and disconnection from one’s roots. Ali (2003) also depicts a longing for lost history and cultural pride in by pointing out that the people who “look down at us as peasants know nothing of history” (p. 185) of Bengal that was known as “the Paradise of Nations” (p. 185). Here, she highlights the importance of understanding one’s heritage and history as a means of reclaiming dignity and challenging stereotypes faced by immigrant community. Ali (2003) addresses cultural clashes and the pressures of assimilation by starting that “if you drink, you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don’t drink you risk the same thing” (p. 110).

Both Shamsie (2009) and Ali (2003) explore the immigrant experience and the challenges faced by individuals and communities in adapting to new cultures. Both authors give deeper perspective to the issue of immigrations and at the same time shows how crucial it is to know one’s culture regarding identity within the society. While both writers share the concern with the subjects of trauma and loss within the immigrant framework, they both add important emotional dimensions into the discourse. They elaborate the critic and traumatic aspects of the immigrants’ lives, such as the emotional stress, disillusionment, and identity crises in their novels. They underscore necessity of being sensitive, helping, and at least, acknowledging the fact that the

immigrants undergo significant burdens trying to adapt to a new life in a strange country. They present all the characters with elements of cultural hybridity which can only be palatable in understanding that the directors and writers have been dealing with their diasporic experiences. They reveal the complexities of the elements involving hybridity where cultures, languages, religions, and gender come into play.

Conclusion

The comparative study of both the selected novels shows that Shamsie (2009) and Ali (2003) deals with the theme of cultural hybridity with reference to the Pak-Bangladeshi experience. It explores the concepts of identity loss as it raises and explores the several questions of ethnicity and nationality and the issues that main characters' experience while being in-between in foreign countries. Both novels depict characters with their elements of cultural dubbing, which is typical for people from the diaspora. They explain the complex structure of implementing hybrid identity where cultural, linguistic, religious, and gender components are involved. Such aspects are explained in detail to reveal how these novels offer the opportunity for marginalized groups to have a voice and create a better understanding of the issues related to cultural oppression, displacement, and self-definition. In addition, it underscores the significance of literature at the conceptualization of the multiple cultural experiences of those living in postcolonial realities and generation of new and fresh discourse on multiculturalism and identity.

References

Ackermann, R. (2012). Cultural hybridity: Between metaphor and empiricism.

Ali, M. (2003). *Brick Lane*. Doubleday.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1989). *The Empire writes back: Theory and practice in postcolonial literatures*. London: Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1998). *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*. London: Routledge.

Babar, S. (2016). *Burnt Shadows*: "Home", "cosmopolitanism" and "hybridization". *The Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 24(2), 109-126.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Komal, S. (2019). Tasting the pickles of history: A post-colonial study of *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie (Doctoral dissertation).

Mavrommatis, G. (2006). The new 'creative' *Brick Lane*: A narrative study of local multicultural encounters. *Ethnicities*, 6(4), 498-517.

Perloff, M. (1998). Cultural liminality/aesthetic closure? The interstitial perspective of HomiBhabha. Retrieved from <http://epc.buffalo.edu/perloff/bhabha.htm> on 31st October 2010.

Rehman, R. (2021). Cultural identity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: A Bhabhian perspective. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(7), 969-980.

Sarvat, H. (2014). Cultural hybridity in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*.

Shamsie, K. (2009). *Burnt Shadows*. New York: Picador.

Soukaï, S. (2018). The hybridity of partition novels in English: Reshaping national identities in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40(40.2), 69-79.

Tetik, S. (2020). Postcolonial international relations theory: The concept of "hybridity" (Master's thesis). *South Asian Studies and International Relations*.

Vitolo, D. (2016). The performance of identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. *Transnational Literature*, 8(2), 1.

Yousef, T. (2019). Cultural identity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: A Bhabhian perspective. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 19(1), 54-86.

Abu-Samra, R. M. (2016). Identity crisis: A comparative study between Antoinette in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. *Middle East University*.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.). University of Texas Press. (Original work published 1930).

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. Heinemann. (Reprint, 2010).