

**Longing for Belonging: A Diasporic Exploration of Identity and Displacement in
Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron***

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Abstract

This study explores the diasporic identity struggles of Aliya, the protagonist in Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* (2000), through Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the "unhomely." Using textual analysis, the research examines Aliya's navigation of dual cultural identities as a Pakistani migrant in the US, where her Western upbringing clashes with her inherited heritage, fostering psychological dislocation and fragmented selfhood. Bhabha's "Third Space" theory frames her liminal existence, caught between assimilation and nostalgia, as she negotiates to belong in neither fully Pakistani nor American contexts. The novel highlights Aliya's emotional ties to Karachi, reflecting diasporic longing for cultural authenticity amid Western pressures. Her hybrid identity manifests in linguistic blending (Urdu-English diction) and intergenerational trauma from partition, symbolized by her family's unresolved displacement. Contrasting first-generation diaspora figures like Mehr Dadi—who endured overt marginalization in England—with Aliya's subtler second-generation identity crisis, the study reveals evolving diasporic challenges. Despite attempts to adapt, Aliya's eventual return to Pakistan underscores the futility of integration in host cultures that perpetuate "otherness," emphasizing homeland reclamation as a response to alienation. Shamsie critiques globalization's erasure of cultural specificity while validating hybridity as a survival strategy. The analysis contributes to post-colonial discourse by illustrating identity as a dynamic negotiation of memory, place, and duality. Ultimately, *Salt and Saffron* captures the resilience of diasporic communities in preserving heritage, affirming that belonging remains an ongoing, contested process shaped by historical and cultural legacies.

Introduction

Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron* explores the diasporic experience of its protagonist, Aliya, as she navigates the complexities of identity, culture, and belonging. According to Homi K. Bhabha, Diaspora is a double-edged phenomenon signifying displacement and resilience. Aliya's experiences illustrate diasporic individuals' challenges in reconciling their multiple identities. As a Pakistani diasporic individual living in the West, Aliya struggles to balance her Pakistani heritage with her Western upbringing. This identity crisis is further complicated by cultural displacement as Aliya navigates different cultural norms and expectations. This article highlights the strong emotional bonds between diasporic individuals and their homeland. Aliya's experiences demonstrate a deep-seated longing for belonging as she seeks to connect with her roots and find her place in the world. This longing is reflective of the universal human desire for identity and connection. Aliya's identity is characterized by hybridity, shaped by multiple cultural influences. This hybridity is a hallmark of diasporic identity, reflecting the complexities of navigating multiple cultures, languages, and traditions.

This article also explores the emotional challenges of displacement, including feelings of alienation, loneliness, and disconnection. Through Aliya's story, Shamsie provides a nuanced exploration of the diasporic experience and longing for belonging. This article offers a powerful portrayal of the human desire for connection and belonging, inviting readers to reflect on the issues of identity and culture in a globalized world. Shamsie portrays diasporic individuals' challenges as they navigate multiple identities, cultures, and expectations. Diaspora refers to people who have left their origin and scattered around the globe, often maintaining strong cultural, social, and economic ties to their homelands. In *Salt and Saffron*, Aliya's experiences exemplify the challenges of a diasporic individual as she grapples with her Pakistani heritage and Western upbringing. Aliya's struggle to reconcile her multiple identities reflects the hybrid nature of diasporic experiences. Her identity is shaped by multiple cultural influences, resulting in a complex and multifaceted sense of self. This hybridity is a hallmark of diasporic identity as individuals navigate multiple cultures, languages, norms, and traditions. The selected novel also explores the emotional challenges of displacement, including feelings of alienation, loneliness, and disconnection. Displacement can be physical, emotional, or psychological, often leading to feelings of dislocation and disorientation. Aliya's experiences illustrate the strong emotional bonds between diasporic individuals and their homeland, highlighting the complexities of longing and belonging. Through Aliya's story, Shamsie portrays the longing for belonging that defines the diasporic experience. Aliya's desire to connect with her roots and find her place in the world reflects a universal human need for identity and connection. The novel invites readers to reflect on identity crisis and culture in a globalized world, highlighting the tensions between tradition and modernity. Shamsie's depiction of Aliya's experiences also underscores the importance of understanding the diasporic experience and the challenges these diasporic individuals face in foreign cultures and countries. The novel shows how diasporic individuals navigate multiple cultural norms and expectations, often resulting in feelings of dislocation and confusion. Ultimately, *Salt and Saffron* offers a nuanced exploration of the diasporic experience, highlighting identity crisis, culture, and belonging. Shamsie provides a powerful portrayal of the human desire for connection and belonging, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of identity and culture in a globalized world.

Research Objective:

- i. To analyze the diasporic experiences of the Aliya in the novel.

Research Question:

- i. What are Aliya's diasporic experiences as portrayed in *Salt and Saffron*?

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on Diaspora, specifically the diasporic study of protagonist Aliya in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron*, published in 2000. It examines the concept of Diaspora, hybridity, and identity crisis through Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical framework. It also finds the significance of transformation and desire for a homeland. It analyzes the protagonist's experiences as a Pakistani diaspora in America. This study explores how diasporic individuals navigate multiple cultures, languages, and identities, leading to hybridity and identity crises. Post-colonial and literary theorist Homi. K. Bhabha examines how culture and sociopolitical power interact. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha delves into hybridity and cultural identities. Hybridity and Third space are its most prominent and crucial concepts. Bhabha describes the mingling of culture and identity because of the diasporic and cross-cultural experience of colonizers. Bhabha claims that culture has been evaluated and subverted (Bhabha, 1994, p.159). The marginalization and double alienation of women, exploitation, encroachment of their rights in a family by men, use of conservative norms, and expansion of orthodox notions are the obvious tools for those women in the native context (Todd, 2021). According to Bhabha, the connection between the colonizer and the colonized is ambivalent because of hybridity and mimicry. Bhabha argues that interweaving aspects of

the colonizers and colonized create a new hybrid identity or subject position that calls into question the authenticity of any fundamental cultural identity (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha asserted that discussions of cosmopolitanism and Diaspora are typically theoretical. People often use these expressions, which are usually understood to convey ideas. In an interview (Diaspora and Home), Bhabha expressed his feelings and said that the Diaspora impacts citizenship, including a person's legal rights and cultural, social, and political aspects. When migrants consider their home country and search for their traditions and cultures, they often feel alienated and belonging. Diaspora literature deals with the idea of homesickness, dispersion, and displacement. People who belong to one nation have been scattered to another country; for example, Pakistanis belong to one nation but have been scattered to the U.S., England, Scotland, Russia, India, etc. These diasporic people shifted to other countries by choice or by compulsion. Several people from the East migrated to the West for education and economic benefits, leading to the Diaspora. Aliya migrated to the United States to pursue higher studies in the selected novel. Similarly, Parveen (2019) explores the character of Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Rashid et al. (2020) explore the character of Chuck in *Home Boy*; both characters migrated to the United States for education and financial stability. However, in the West, these characters like Changez and Chuck were degraded by the Westerners. Both protagonists leave their home country and embrace the American culture and customs, but they are ultimately rejected and return to Pakistan with a hybrid identity and psychological discomfort. Diaspora is recognized by their color, nature, behavior, habits, thought processes, religious practices, etc. Diaspora literature is also known as expatriate literature. People in their native country do not realize the Diaspora, but when they shift to other countries, they recognize the Diaspora. So, the writers living in the Diaspora in other countries are writing about their first country, culture, norms, and traditions. They are known as diaspora writers and diasporic literature. Diasporic literature is a term used to describe literary works that examine the identities, experiences, and hardships of people who have decided to relocate to a different nation, culture, or environment or who have been uprooted from their place of origin. Diaspora writers explicitly and implicitly have portrayed the impacts of alienation, otherization, experiences, and marginalization on immigrants and migrants in their narrative of diasporic literature comes from different backgrounds; they have often drawn from their own experiences of migration, exile, or displacement (Mishra, 2007). Diasporic literature explores the idea of 'home' and 'nostalgia,' one of its main characteristics. People frequently find themselves balancing several national, cultural, and linguistic identities; it also examines the intricacies of identity. It also offers a unique perspective on cultural diversity, global interconnectedness, and the human experiences of migration and displacement. In short, diasporic literature allows readers to gain insight into different cultures and traditions and enriches their understanding of different cultures and landscapes. The concept of Diaspora dates back to ancient times (Brown, 2005). A greater number of people shifted to other countries in the post-colonial era. These migrations have been forced or voluntary. Forced migration results from natural disasters like floods, famine, prolonged drought, war, etc. At the same time, voluntary Diaspora are those who have left their native countries for better economic opportunities, education, and employment. In addition to focusing on the country's economic improvements, the Pakistani Diaspora in Europe welcomed and helped their extended family members, assisting them in relocating to their new countries (Abbasi, 2005). According to the post-colonial concept of place and dislocation, a unique identity clash is connected to establishing or restoring a story, defining the bond between the person and the place (Ashcroft, 2002). Post-colonial literature frequently addressed the conflict between an individual's identity and conformity to those around them. It was difficult to distinguish between those unfamiliar with their feeling of native land and self. Bibi et al. (2021), in a Study of the Cultural Clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, stated that the novel *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is centered on a cultural conflict that arises from a post-

colonial understanding of self and the other. The novel impacts human psychology in two ways; from one viewpoint, he symbolizes the self, and from the other, from a different one, he represents the character dealing with such conflicts arising from cultural clashes. Through the character of Changez, the novelist draws attention to cultural clashes and tries to educate people about the harsh realities of the West. PA diasporic individuals project reflexivity and negation of strict notions of life (Ferdoush, 2020). For interactive and social purposes, such as alienation, displacement, repetitive trauma, migration exposure, hybridity, and diasporic challenges, increase the level of trauma in an individual's life. Teresa Matejeskova's article Deep Situationality: Interstitial Spaces and Limits of Identity in Ethnographies of Politics of Immigrant Integration explores identity in a diasporic context, particularly in immigrant integration. The research problem is understanding the nature of identity in diasporic communities where individuals navigate multiple cultures, languages, and social contexts. The findings reveal that identity is shaped by multicultural, language, and social interactions, which intersect in many ways, as posited by the intersectionality theory. He offers valuable insights into the experiences of diasporic communities and the politics of immigrants' integration in a diasporic context. The experiences and explorations of diasporic migrants face alienation and injustice by all means in their Indigenous territories and host land or country (Banerjee, McGuinness, & McKay, 2012). The book New Routes for Diaspora Studies has received valuable contributions to the field of migration studies. In this book, Banerjee, McGuinness, and McKay delve into the complexities of Diaspora as both a historical and analytical framework. Through case studies, they focused on African and Asian Diasporas and migration to the US. This book examines the concepts of displacement, belonging, and return to the native land and their impact on diasporic identities. Furthermore, this book explores how shared practices, such as food, languages, dressing, and cultural practices, become sources of identity and difference. The contributors of this book also investigate how literature and art emerge from diasporic experiences. Diaspora revolves around the homeland and the place where displacement occurs. Arie Glas's article Positionality, Power, and Position of Power: Reflexivity in Elite Interviewing examines the complexities of conducting elite interviews. His studies challenge the assumption that the category of elite leads to positionality. The finding of his article reveals that the elite category is not homogeneous, and diverse challenges relate to positionality. This article has significant implications for diaspora research, particularly when conducting elite interviews with influential figures. Similarly, this article highlights the need to consider positionality and power dynamics in these interviews, as diaspora researchers often navigate complex identities and cultural backgrounds. In short, Glas's article provides valuable insights for diaspora researchers. In the selected novel, America is the context of cross-cultural interaction. In her fiction, Kamila Shamsie has thoroughly projected the trendy issues of glocalization and globalization on her female protagonist (Glas, 2021). The protagonist faces the problem of homelessness and being stuck between two cultures due to globalization. On the one hand, globalization and glocalization lead the migrants to reclaim their identity, culture, and homeland. On the other hand, globalization and glocalization influences and impacts people away from their homeland. Being in a diasporic status, the protagonist gets stressed and dissatisfied in the alien land, so she reclaims her homeland and prefers to return to her country. The affiliation with the indigenous norms and cultural values of her female leading characters places her *Salt and Saffron* in diasporic literature (Nagar, 2002). Nagar's article Footloose Researchers, Traveling, Theories, and the Politics of Transnational Feminist Praxis examines the transnational feminist activism in the Diaspora, highlighting the feminist movements across borders. The research problem of his article addressed transnational feminism, recognizing the complexities of diasporic perspectives. Nagar's article offers insights into how diasporic communities can challenge dominant narratives and promote social justice. Jopi Nyman's article Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction delves into the complexities of home and global mobility in English language and

diasporic literature. The study explores how diasporic writers navigate the impact of globalization and transnational mobility on identity and the concept of home. His article reveals how migrants construct new identities and homes in the migrated countries, how diasporic literature challenges traditional notions of nationhood, and how migrants transform literary genres to explore themes of migration and transformation. By investigating identity, home, and mobility, his article offers valuable insights into the diasporic experience and its representation in contemporary literature. Kamila Shamsie uses her female protagonist in an international context to depict the native as well as diasporic experiences of Indigenous women (Nyman, 2009). Physically, Aliya is living in modern Western culture, but mentally, she is connected to Eastern culture. She tries to adapt to the Western culture and find a home, but at the same time, she is suffering from an identity crisis and feeling unhomey. One thing that unites most of Shamsie's characters is their passion and love for their language (Abbasi, 2010). Shamsie is so inspired by her native culture and language that she uses Urdu words in the selected novel *Salt and Saffron*. Using Urdu in English novels, she proved that she represents the Pakistani Diaspora. Diasporic people from different backgrounds establish distinct bonds, requiring them to communicate in a common language (Nash, 2012). Shamsie's writing exemplifies the juxtaposition between location and relocation, historical and cultural differences with identity and authenticity, and recounts historical events. Banerjee (2010) claims that although Kamila Shamsie depicts displacement in her writings as a reality, Shamsie treats the issue of displacement as merely an anxiety. When she was a little girl, captivated and fascinated by English novels, she noticed that no story in English books ever occurred in Karachi (Shamsie, 2014). So, she decided to write a book set in her native context (Banerjee, 2010). Helen Tiffin (1989) links a feeling of displacement and dislocation to alienation. When people consider their country and look for their innate values, he believes that individuals, especially those who identify with migrant cultures, feel displaced and a part of them (Puarr, 2007). In *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri depicts displacement and cultural conflicts. Her work portrays hatred for new cultures and love for one's culture. Similarly, through the character of Ashima, Jhumpa Lahiri shows that language is also diasporic for migrants (Lahiri, 2003). Stuart Hall explores the idea of Diaspora and how it relates to cultural identity in his work. He believes the diaspora plan is to return to their home country from the beginning. His research focuses on how diaspora individuals create their identities, their native countries, and their new environment (Hall, S. 1990). In his book *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), Avtar Brah explores the complexities and issues of Diaspora by addressing various topics, including hybridity, cross-cultural issues, and other difficulties encountered by diasporic communities in the host country. We have a history of diasporas in the form of Religious diasporas, such as the Jewish Diaspora, which refers to the global spread of the Jewish people from their homeland to other countries. The Old Testament Bible is translated into Greek, and the Diaspora is strongly associated with the Jewish Diaspora. Another important part of the Jewish Diaspora was when they migrated and settled in Muslim Spain, which is considered one of the golden ages of the Jewish Diaspora. The native Africans living beyond the continent are known as the African Diaspora. The Diaspora of Africa is eager to support the development and advancement of its home country. Similarly, people born abroad or immigrated to other countries are known as Pakistani. According to Sassen, Diaspora refers to citizens who have left their native country and moved abroad (Sassen, 2008). Indian Diaspora is the most significant Diaspora. According to Shah et al. (2021) in *Diasporic Fiction and Hybridity: An Analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's Selected Novels* on Homi. Bhaba's framework, the emergence of diasporic narrative from Asian migrants worldwide, the idea of identity, and repression imprisoned fictional characters who were caught between two cultures and gravitated towards hybridity. *The American Brat* (1993) and *The Crow Eaters* (1978), two of Bapsi Sidhwa's novels, deal with similar hybridity and cultural issues. Even though Sidhwa is a Pakistani novelist, the protagonists in both novels are American immigrants and well-versed in various cultural paradigms. The character

Fareedon Jangwalla in the novel *The Crow Eaters* depicts the changing social and cultural hybridity and how these Parties remained obedient to Western culture despite the native culture. Similarly, the character Ferouza in *The American Brat* migrates to the United States from her home country, Pakistan. She becomes spoiled by American culture, which she perceives as alien. In the selected novel *Salt and Saffron*, the protagonist compares the Diaspora to commas and exclamation marks. These migrants are confused and must describe their status to the world (Shamsie, 2000). Shamsie's protagonist, Aliya, is a Pakistani diaspora subject with place and displacement in America; however, her grandparents and their family are migrants from India and victims of displacement and suffer from identity crises. The identity issue in Ashcroft et al. (1990) can be called cultural denigration. In Shamsie's works, the biased histories are being questioned (Wong, 2023). Aliya looks into her family's past. Her family, which migrated from India, is traumatized by their separation. They settled in Pakistan; however, Aliya believed that the dispersal and memories of the past made their lives miserable and uncomfortable (Asma Zahoor, 2015). According to Nayman, Aliya's story seems to be a perfect example of a Diaspora that involves migration to the US, studying abroad, and migrating family members. All these experiences problematize and challenge the home's value (Nayman, 2009, p.109). Summing up the chapter, the selected novel *Salt and Saffron* has been studied from different perspectives, but I have studied the novel in light of diasporic identity and cultural discrimination. Diaspora is a powerful tool for the preservation and celebration of cultural diversity. Much research has been done on the issue of identity crisis. Still, the uniqueness of this article is that it explores the protagonist, who is shown as a diasporic and homesick character. Migrants are treated as 'Other' and do not have any identity. These Diasporas are marginalized and treated as aliens and others in the host countries, due to which they reclaim their native lands. The gap in this study is that in foreign countries, Pakistani cultures, language, and norms are not accepted, which is why the protagonist faced the problem of identity crisis and trans-culturalism, due to which she convinces herself to return to her homeland.

Methodology

Through qualitative textual analysis, this study examined Homi K. Bhabha's concept of Diaspora in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron*. The research explored the complexities of diasporic identity, migration, and the longing for belonging by focusing on the protagonist, Aliya. The analysis revealed how Aliya's experiences reflected the challenges faced by diasporic individuals, including alienation, displacement, and identity crisis. The study employed a qualitative approach to gain in-depth insights into human behavior and social issues, interpreting the text's structure, characters, themes, and literary devices. The findings highlighted the significance of understanding diasporic experiences and the importance of belonging in shaping individual identities.

Theoretical Framework

Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, particularly his concepts of hybridity and Diaspora, provided the framework for understanding identity issues in a globalized world. Bhabha introduced the notions of "Heimlich" (homely) and "Unheimlich" (unhomely) to describe the tensions between a sense of belonging and alienation. The "homely" represents a place of security, identity, and familiarity, while the "unhomely" signifies a feeling of estrangement and identity crisis, often resulting from the clash between two cultures (Bhabha, 1994, p.112). Bhabha argued that identity was not fixed or natural but a complex and strategic production. He highlighted the experiences of migrants, who embodied dual identities, caught between their original culture and a new location (Bhabha, 1994, p.124). This ambivalence created a sense of unhomeliness, where individuals felt like outsiders in their homes. Bhabha's work emphasizes the multifaceted nature of identity, shaped by colonial encounters and the interplay between different cultures. His concepts of hybridity and unhomeliness underscored the complexity of post-colonial identity, where individuals occupied ambivalent spaces

(ibid.,126). By exploring these ideas, Bhabha's theory provided valuable insights into the experiences of diasporic individuals and the challenges of navigating multiple cultural identities.

Analysis and Discussion

This section provides an in-depth analysis of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron* (2000) through Bhabha's concept of Diaspora. The selected novel explores the interconnected actions and experiences of displaced individuals. Through a diasporic perspective, this chapter examines the novel's portrayal of individuals who have left their native country and dispersed to other countries, negotiating their identities, cultures, and belongings. The analysis also delves into the theme of hybridity, which describes the blending of different cultures, identities, languages, norms, and beliefs. This chapter explores cultural experiences and issues dominated by diasporic individuals and explores why the protagonist, Aliya, is inspired by her home country. This chapter uses textual analysis to scrutinize excerpts from *Salt and Saffron*, highlighting how Shamsie's novel represents diasporic experiences. This study problematizes how diasporic individuals reclaim their cultural identities outside their homeland. In the cultural clash, hybridization occurs, and identities become mixed and hybrid. Hybridity is the central theme of post-colonial works. Pakistani Diaspora in the host country maintains cultural ties with the home country. In the chosen novel, Shamsie represents Pakistani Diasporas, as it is complicated for the Diaspora to integrate into the culture of the host land. Still, when they mingled with the host culture, even then, these Diasporas were not acceptable in the host country and culture. This conflict between host culture and home culture generates identity issues and Pakistani American hybridization. The selected novel explores the placement of individuals within the social hierarchy, focusing on the importance of family reputation and status, a common concern in diasporic communities. Diasporic individuals negotiate the space between two opposite cultures and contexts. Pakistani emigrants influence their home country culturally and emotionally by maintaining close ties, traveling to their homeland, and investing there (Abbasi, 2005). Migrants often leave their homelands for better lifestyles, higher education, and financial stability. When they shift to other countries, they realize that this shift from their home country to the host country generates identity clashes and difficulties for diasporic individuals. Consequently, this phenomenon of Diaspora leads individuals to hybrid identities. Similarly, these diasporic and migrant individuals face multiple issues in a host country, like ill-treatment and cultural and religious discrimination. The selected novel is analyzed in terms of cultural transformation in a diasporic context. The protagonist, Aliya, often lives between her land and her host land. Aliya shifted to America to achieve academic excellence. Due to her migration to the US, she gets entangled between two opposite cultures and contexts. Bhabha claims that hybridity constructs "in-betweenness" (Bhabha, 1999, p.4), which causes migrants to be stuck between two contrasting cultures. Shamsie highlights the problems of place, context, identity, and belonging. Aliya observes cultural practices, and her experiences are shaped by her diasporic identity and multiple cultural contexts. Aliya is considered a third-generation Pakistani Diaspora. She is very different from other members of her family. She is well-educated, broad-minded, and social. She belongs to the higher class, which represents 'Saffron' in the novel. She wants to maintain her Eastern identity in the West. She is connected with her home country despite living in the host country. Aliya, a diasporic individual, connects with her home culture and original roots. Her exposure to Western education and its values has created a clash in her mind. Even after living in a host country, the diasporic individuals faced some problems as 'others' and 'aliens' by native people and cultures, due to which the problem of discrimination and differences occurred. This clash problematizes her identity and forces her to navigate between her homeland and her desire for her original identity. Aliya's conflict shows a post-colonial dilemma, where the legacy of colonialism has created a conflict between tradition and modernity. Her exposure to Western countries created a sense of cultural differences, which caused a clash between the

desire for tradition and modernity. She tries to adopt Western culture, but at the same time, her native culture haunts her while she adjusts to the new culture. As Ilyas (2018) states, the feelings of isolation during unintentional integration into an opposite culture are the cultural notion of Diaspora. Aliya is a modern woman who tries to maintain her traditions. When Aliya hugs a Pakistani fellow, Khalil, who accompanies her, she illustrates —what would my grandmother say if she knew I had been hugging strange men in airports? (Shamsie, 2000, p.8) This represents her hybrid identity and adoption of Western culture. She wants to follow her cultural values but also embraces Western values and modernity. Aliya forgets about her rooted culture by hugging a man in love. On the contrary, she chooses a Pakistani fellow for marriage, showing her love for her country and people. Migrants face problems of alienation and dispersion even after returning to their native country. When Aliya returns to Pakistan, she feels alienated even in her own country. Aliya feels she is oscillating between two cultures and seeks to identify whether she belongs to the host or home culture. Her identity clash begins when she moves to America, reflecting the central aspect of the post-colonial Diaspora. Aliya struggles to create her original identity in the host land but fails and becomes isolated and alienated. Fareed (2013) states that Diasporic individuals, even after being assimilated into the host culture, can never forget the memories of the past. Aliya's strive to assimilate into a new context leads her to mimic her lifestyle, adapting to the host culture and language, resulting in mimicry. She mimics native people. According to Bhabha, mimicry is constructed around ambivalence (Bhabha, p.122). Bhabha states that cultural identity depends on the otherness of the Diaspora within the host country. He illustrates that these immigrants are caught geographically between two opposite cultures and identities. This process of in-betweenness constructs hybrid identities. Similarly, Aliya, as a diasporic individual, starts her journey with ambiguities and insecurity in the alien context of America, having no family support. She felt that her culture and people were considered inferior by Americans. She wants to connect with her people, but simultaneously, she is connected to the natives. She realized that the Diaspora is not accepted in other countries wholeheartedly. They are considered "aliens and others." Diaspora wants recognition in the new land, but they face failure to adjust to the host country's identity crisis. Aliya is ambivalent as she adopts the Western language but soon feels disgusted and cultural superiority. Initially, she was excited to adopt a foreign language, but her diasporic and hybrid nature is detected by mixing words from Urdu and English in her conversations. Shamsie gives her narrative a 'desi' touch by using many Urdu words in the selected novel. The use of Urdu diction shows how Shamsie and Aliya love their language. After completing Aliya's degree, she decided to return to her country, Pakistan.

Aliya's Sense of Belonging

When Aliya moved to America, she recalled her past and childhood. She is physically present in the US but emotionally reclaims her rooted country, Karachi. Her land and people inspire Aliya, so she decides to marry Khalil. Her marriage with Khalil shows her love for native people and culture. She wants to marry a person who belongs to her city, Karachi. Nevertheless, unfortunately, she came back with a sense of alienation and hybridization. Due to hybridization, she gains confidence that she will become independent in the host country's free environment, resulting in her decision to marry Khalil and reject her family's norms and traditions. The selected novel explores dispersed immigrants across the world, which is known as Diaspora. Diaspora is a way of self-awareness and reclamation. This study reveals the diasporic belonging and the cultural clash of Aliya. She preserves her identity in a new context. Diasporic individuals are struck between multiple contexts. They always missed their original roots and even settled in the host environment. The dispersed individuals felt alienated and marginalized and considered themselves as 'Pakistani Americans' even though they were living in America. This attachment to the homeland creates a sense of belonging and attachment. Once, while traveling, Aliya said she was Pakistani and not American while she was in a conversation with a taxi driver. The driver started by discussing the controversy

between two opposite cultures, but Aliya responded silently, representing her as part of the Pakistani Diaspora. She knows they consider Diaspora as 'Pakistani American' but not 'American Pakistani' (p.5). For the Diaspora, it is complicated to adopt the culture of the alien country. After all the opposition, Aliya adhered to the culture of America, but she still faced issues in her adjustment. She finds it difficult and impossible to shun her cultural identity and feels nostalgic. Aliya adopts the culture of the host country to live in Western society, but she feels culturally dislocated, and soon, she becomes marginalized and alienated. When confronted with Khalil for the first time, she felt he was like a family member. She starts gossiping because he belongs to her city, Karachi. As an immigrant, Aliya experiences pangs of cultural discrimination and social isolation. She shifts to America as a 'third space,' which Bhabha claims raises questions of identity and the original culture. Bhabha focuses on the importance of hybridity in his interview with J. Rutherford: It cannot identify the two original situations from which the third develops; instead, in my opinion, the third space is hybridity, which makes it possible for additional positions to emerge. (Bhabha, 1990, p.211). So, being Diaspora, Shamsie's protagonist feels that she is being distanced and isolated from her native country. Exposure to other cultures and languages leads to identity issues and conflicts for hybrid communities, and these diasporic individuals reclaim their originality (p.24). Isolation affects the lives of the Diaspora in both positive and negative ways. Aliya's story shows identity clash, cultural discrimination, and longing for belonging within a diasporic context. In the selected novel, Aliya uses her native language and gives a local touch to her conversation. The use of local diction represents her love for her language. She uses Urdu diction in English conversations like "Imli, Aloo Bukhara, Nihari, and Nikama" (p.19). As a member of the Pakistani Diaspora, her cultural identity is shaped by her experiences in America. She negotiates between two opposing cultures and countries. Aliya feels nostalgic when discussing her culture and food with her cousin Samia. Both adopt the culture of America, but after all their efforts, they realize that they are considered as others and marginalized. As a diaspora, they felt marginalization and racial discrimination in the host country; thus, they reclaimed their home country. Diasporas are intricately connected to their culture and roots. As in Aliya's case, she is proud of her cultural belongings. Due to her bicultural upbringing, her personality is hybrid. She is still attracted to her culture even though she never feels thoroughly American or Pakistani. She truly represents the migrant experience, having a strong bond with her native country and culture. This experience makes her proud of her originality. Aliya's character portrays the second-generation Diaspora experiences that easily adjust to the host country compared to the first generation. She easily adopts the host culture, norms, and language. She does not experience tensions, difficulties, or challenges like the first generation. However, her hybrid identity develops when she realizes she is unacceptable in the host country. She felt unhomeliness, and ultimately, she reclaims her own country. Bhabha presents concepts like transformation, otherness, unhomeliness, mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and third space. He illustrates that the concept of transformation in that culture is not fixed to a specific location but is in flux and negotiation. According to him, culture is not fixed on a single entity, and multiple factors like globalization, glocalization, migration, and advancements drive transformations. Identity emerges from the intersection and interaction of multiple cultures (Bhabha, 1994), so due to these traits, Aliya follows the modern culture of the host land. As a Pakistani diaspora, Aliya negotiates with two opposite cultures, languages, social ranking, belonging, and identities. She occupies space between two different cultures. Her identity became hybrid, due to which she created a new form of cultural expression and belongings. Bhabha's concept of transformation emphasizes that hybridity is not only the assimilation and integration of opposite cultures but also the transformation of people to follow new contexts and social connections. When Pakistanis and other individuals from third-world countries migrated to Western countries, they were not welcomed there due to their social status and colonial background. Westerners considered these migrated Diaspora as other, ignorant, and Orient.

Similarly, the Diaspora also believes in the superiority of foreigners. They consider themselves inferior and foreigners superior. Diasporas are not welcomed in the host land, so they feel alienated and unhomely (Said, 1979). Shamsie illustrates immigrants' multiple experiences and their adjustment problems in other countries. She connects the sense of alienation to Aliya's longing for Karachi, evoking the city's night as a reminder of her dislocation. She describes the members of Dard-e-Dil as "walking wounded" (Shamsie, 2000, p.33) even fifty years after partition. The concept of "walking wounded" refers to the partition as the emotional scars of Aliya's family members. The fact that the entire family, across generations, has retained this bitterness and resentment highlights the impact of historical events on personal and collective memory. For the Diaspora, the space between host culture and home culture creates differences, so the Diaspora became marginalized and alienated like Aliya. Diaspora thinks that memories cripple and damage their lives instead of bringing comfort and peace (Shamsie, 2000, p.32). Diaspora mingled in opposite contexts but always missed their rooted land while living in a host country. Aliya reveals the tensions that arise from her different social backgrounds and experiences. Similarly, Aliya, a Pakistani Diaspora, is stuck between her home and host countries. She is trying to maintain both cultures. She is physically distant from her country and culture but emotionally attached to her roots. Aliya meets Dadi's sister during her visit to England. She was staring at the photograph of the Dard-e-Dil palace. *Salt and Saffron* speaks about Dard-e-Dil as a Diaspora. Shamsie portrays Mehr Dadi as an exemplary character of the Diaspora. Mehr Dadi, widowed, migrated to England with her daughter after marriage. She expresses her feelings to Aliya —I miss my family. You all drive me mad, but returning to Karachi is like stepping into the sea again after months on land. How easily you float, how peaceful is the sense of being born alone, and how familiar the sound of the water lapping against your limbs (p.220). Through these diasporic characters, Shamsie explores the connection of the Diaspora with their homeland. Shamsie states that England is 'neutral soil' (p.91), which means England as a host country is an indifferent land. England provides space to individuals from multiple backgrounds, but after that, the Diaspora did not embrace the host culture. By understanding this situation and rejecting Western culture, Aliya resolves her inner conflict and reclaims her rooted culture. Aliya, the protagonist, has a deep affection for her city. Karachi's nights remind you that you can love a place; for me, that has always been a reason to rejoice (Shamsie, 2000, p.172). This moment of reminding Karachi nights is a turning point for Aliya. She begins to understand the sacrifices of her family members after the partition of the sub-continent. Aliya, as a diaspora, is in a constant state of ambivalence. She expresses her dissatisfaction while living in the US. She has always loved the brashness of that city (ibid., p.85). Her diasporic experience represents her love and desire for her homeland. Karachi was full of corners, and I had grown up turning every corner, hoping she would be there. How could I continue to live my life between such corners? How could I not? (p.189). These lines represent her dilemma, which echoes Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be, or not to be." Aliya's inner conflict is created when confronted by two opposing cultures. She felt her originality was ambiguous in the host country, so she confronted her inner isolation. She wants to preserve her originality. Her inner isolation initiates her search for her own culture and identity. She reclaims her rooted culture and country in search of her original identity. Aliya's reclamation of originality represents Bhabha's concept of Diaspora. Being Diaspora, she leaves her own country and moves beyond the border —home is no longer just a place. It is location (Bhabha, 1994, p.57). Aliya's experiences show diasporic consciousness; she became nostalgic. She represents an autobiographical element, reflecting Shamsie's nostalgic experiences about her home country. Aliya cannot escape from the emotional attachment to her home country. She missed the luxuries of her homeland. She misses the human connections that make a place feel like home. She departs her homeland for a bright future, but the non-acceptance of native people isolates her. Her reclamation of her homeland shows her profound love for her native culture and country. The tension that she faces is the conflict

between Pakistani and American cultures. Aliya failed to be a member of American society but did not want to fail in Pakistan. She claimed herself as a 'Pakistani American' in the US because her roots are Pakistani. Aliya is an immigrant who decides that after completing higher education, she will return to her homeland. As a member of the Pakistani Diaspora, Western culture affects her love for Karachi and her reclamation of Pakistani identity, but ultimately, her attachment to her homeland leads her to reclaim her identity. Aliya's story indicates that her desire to return to her homeland is not just about physical return but about being among her people emotionally. This desire for the homeland is a natural impulse for the diasporic community. Through Aliya's character, Shamsie represents the importance of human relationships. As diaspora Aliya claims, people are our world, and it is the relatives we miss most when we are away from home. It highlights her longing for her home (Karachi) and intimate human connections. She experiences nostalgia for the minor details of her life in Karachi, which shows her attachment to and love for Karachi. She is constantly in search of her original identity. Western culture affected her identity, but in the end, Aliya wanted to regain her identity and self-value, which was the turning point in reclaiming her homeland. Her love for her homeland makes her final step toward returning to Karachi. Returning to the country in the process of self-identification leaves the Diaspora empty-handed. Aliya, as a Pakistani diaspora, is caught between two contrasting cultures. According to Bhabha, another world becomes its social and historical counterpart in stirring the unhomely. The unhomely is a shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world (Bhabha, 1994, p.141). Unhomely refers to the state of residing in one place and belonging to another place. Aliya's unhomeliness creates a clash and in-betweenness. She is suffering from double consciousness. This double consciousness and displacement lead her to reclaim her native country. The novel emphasizes that exploring diasporic consciousness leads to an identity crisis. Aliya struggles with her sense of self, caught between the strong family traditions. This novel portrays the post-colonial diaspora experience, where characters are caught between two countries and cultures, embodying the concept of "unhomeliness." This liminal state sparks a yearning for belonging, prompting the Diaspora to reconnect with their homeland.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article highlights the significant impact of cultural Diaspora on individuals' identities, particularly those living outside their homeland. Through the lens of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron*, the challenges faced by Pakistani diaspora communities are explored, including racial discrimination, language barriers, and cultural differences. Aliya and Mehr Dadi exemplify the struggles of navigating two cultures, leading to a hybrid identity and a sense of being "in-between" worlds. The selected novel emphasizes the importance of homeland and cultural belonging, driving diasporic individuals to reclaim their original roots. Aliya and Mehr Dadi face difficulties adjusting to Western culture, experiencing cultural and racial clashes that lead to psychological distress and marginalization. The analysis reveals that diasporic individuals maintain strong connections to their homeland and culture, ultimately leading them to reconnect with their roots. The study also highlights the differences between first-generation and second-generation diaspora experiences. Mehr Dadi, a first-generation diaspora, struggles with double colonization and marginalization in England. In contrast, Aliya, a second-generation diaspora, navigates the complexities of cultural adaptation and identity crisis in the United States. Ultimately, Aliya's journey reflects a desire to reclaim her homeland and cultural heritage, finding peace and satisfaction in her connections with her Pakistani roots and community.

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