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A Diasporic Study of Cultural Identity in Ayad Akhtar's Disgraced and American Dervish

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Abstract

This research studies Ayad Akhtar's Disgraced and American Dervish to scrutinize Pak-Muslim-American hyphenated ambivalent assimilationist diaspora identity in the complicated sociopolitical institutionalized mechanism functioning behind the distorted version of global Pak-Muslim identity, which is struggling against scripted stereotypes in prejudiced American society, a place which gives no space to diaspora existence to hold on native cultural values and to retain ethno-religious profile. Western hegemonic politics of identity is not just limited to misrepresentation of Pak-Muslim identity. The present research also examines how it regulates a disfigured social profile of Pak-Muslim diaspora by managing a reflexive autonomy which entails a problematized social recognition of Pak-Muslim diaspora identity and a loathing expression of self-recognition and resultantly ensures denouncement of native identity and pushes diaspora towards the maintenance of an assimilationist Americanized identity to escape the tragedy specific to Pak-Muslim diaspora most specifically in post-9/11 scenario. But maintenance of an essentialist or monolithic identity cannot be simplified to apparent Americanized identity as the in-between state of diaspora existence by no means let it develop an essentialist Americanized identity and not even hardliner Pak-Muslim tendency works to retain its originality but it ends in a fractured and fragmented identity that keeps oscillating between two extremes to make sense of its essence or existence. Both texts hit deep into the core of the Pak-Muslim diaspora's fragmented psyche to narrate the diasporic state of being struck between dual cultural affiliation and plurality of identity by depicting the inconsistencies it possesses. This study manages to approach the Pak-Muslim diaspora identity contextualized in the background of 9/11 and the pre-9/11 Western notion of Islamophobia in terms of fundamentalism and explores it on the dual grounds of self and social recognition. The analysis, far from any notion of fixity, manifests it, as a spectrum between extreme eastern and western divides.

Keywords: Diaspora, cultural, identity, Ayad Akhtar, Post 9/ 11

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Introduction

Views of American society change towards Pakistani immigrants in every wave of immigration, and so did the way Pakistani immigrants were being treated in American society and consequently, their experiences. View changed from considering these immigrants as yellow danger, a racist tag, to the stereotype of a "model minority" (Verma, 2008, p.19). Since 9/11 consideration has been that all Asians most specifically Pak-Muslims are illiterate and wild creatures, similar to the first racist consideration. In the first wave, immigrants were seen as primitives and were marginalized and victimized on religious and ethnic grounds (Rehman & Paik, 2017, p.37). In the second wave, mostly educated individuals immigrated so they received somewhat better treatment. Immigrants who immigrated in the third wave were perceived as primitive, "inassimilable" outsiders for retaining their native ethnic identity (Verma, 2008, p.6). Any attempt to cling to native ethnic identity on the part of immigrants is considered a kind of enmity towards the state (Verma, 2008, p.6). So, the bond among ethnic and religious diaspora communities and their attempt to stick hard to their cultural traditions further inflamed American reaction towards diaspora community. In that scenario assimilation into dominant American culture was not a choice but a compulsion. That was the context that made immigrants say goodbye to their culture and assimilate into the dominant host culture.

Literature Review

Acculturation, the process of blending two or more cultures, resulting from the collision of cultures in a cosmopolitan world, is one of the most recurrent themes Indian diaspora literature deals with. There are a number of Indian diaspora writers who deal with the notion of acculturation, assimilation and cultural collision having a firsthand experience of cultural clash. While discussing cultural collision in the context of Indian diasporic writings the relationship between East and West requires strong consideration (Kuortti, 2007, p.207). According to Mary Conde, the confrontation of Indian discourse of nineteens with the theme of acculturation reflects the cultural correlation between traditional Indian and dominant American culture (qtd. in Kuortti, 2007, p.207). It is in the above-mentioned backdrop that Indian diaspora writers contextualize their works and portray the process of acculturation with all of its complexities. Bharati Mukherjee being an Indian-American, herself experienced the process of acculturation and assimilation and found it necessary to deal with the dilemma of dual cultural affiliation and plurality

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of identity. Her writings are the biographical representation of her existence and her characters are representatives of her inner self and her diasporic psyche (Shukla & Banarji, 2014, pp.20-21). In her novel Tiger's Daughter, protagonist Tara Benerjee, being the embodiment of the author's own existence, represents the sufferings of an emigrant who though quite willing to assimilate still suffers "cultural dichotomy" and pain of leaving one's native culture (Shukla & Benerji, 2014, p.21). Though her response towards the notion of acculturation appears somewhat positive because of Tara's willingness for acculturation it may appear as a possibility of negotiation between two cultures but she never fails to depict the politics of acculturation. Tara's marriage to a Western and tendency towards nationalize American culture leaves a question mark. Here acculturation could also be seen as a compulsion and key to survival in an alien place. Mukherjee's writings possess a wide concept of acculturation on account of her dual immigration experience in Canada and American where the former place provide a space to maintain one's native cultural identity but the second place leaves no option for immigrant but to assimilate (Shukla & Benerji, 2014, p.22).

Ambivalent assimilationist diaspora identities are like entities hanging between two poles, having a conflicting war within and unable to pose as a monolithic identity. Diaspora identity is just like a pendulum, one which keeps oscillating. It is not possible for an individual to retain an essentialist native identity or stick to native cultural baggage in an alien land (Saha, 2009, p.194). A diaspora entity bears claims from two worlds but belongs to none. Diaspora identity is shaped somewhere between the plurality of conflicting desires to cling to roots and to assimilate into the host society and culture (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p.688). Quest for identity, ambivalent hyphenated identity and guarding cultural identity in a foreign land against compelled assimilation are some of the most recurrent themes and issues Indian diaspora literature deals with. Conflicting cultural identity is the pivot around which not only the existing but also the new diasporic literary writing whirl about as Joel Kuortti writes, "cultural identity", hybridity and conflict that its triggers are central to the concerns of the new emerging diaspora literary production (Kuortti, 2007, p.207). In the Namesake (2003) Jhumpa Lahiri spotlighted two Indian characters Ashok and Ashima who though retain a sense of nativity in their private life but maintain an assimilated American identity in terms of their social life (Kaur, 2015, p.1053). It is the demand of their survival to adopt the social and cultural code of the host country but of course, it complicates their lives as Ashima reflects this complexity as "previous life has been vanished, replaced by something more

complicated and demanding" (qtd.in Kaur, 2015, p.1054). Lahiri also highlighted the trauma of belonging second the generation diaspora bears, through the character of Gogol. Who bewildered and puzzled stuck between pluralities of cultural identity, and the state is no less than a war, a war which is specific to diaspora entity, being "genetically" inherited with a distinctive self and "racially" an isolated "second class American" (Bhatt, 2008, p.43). The artistic and literary depiction of ambivalence by Lahiri is apt enough to reflect the inner conflict of diaspora identity that appears as a "translation" rather than a simple description (Kuortti, 2007, p.207). Where Lahiri presents a troublesome aspect of diaspora identity, Anita Desai in Fasting Feasting (1999) presents the other aspect of the picture through the character of Arun who gets settled in the host land and is satisfied to have a plural identity and "double perspectives" of self and life (Kaur, 2015, p.1054). But of course, praising and owning the plurality of identity is not that much easy of a task as the ambivalence it triggers not only agonizes and hits the psyche of an individual but also complicates the world around (Saha, 2009, p.194). Baharati Mukherjee in The Tiger's Daughter also deals with the ambivalence of identity through the character of Tara Benerjee, a young Indian emigrant, who quite willingly attempt to assimilate into American culture but the more she attempts to Americanize the more she feels detached and the urge to cling her native identity. Tara finds herself "sandwiched "between two extremes (Shukla & Banarji, 2014, p.21). Then the character of Jyoti in Mukherjee's Jasmine (1989) is another representative of ambivalent assimilation identity who apparently wore on American identity but somewhere deeper inside still holds onto her native essence which she reflects through acknowledging that she only trusts Indian (Saha, 2012, p.4). Ambivalence is indeed the core feature to define diaspora identity.

Methodology

Present research attempts to scrutinize diaspora cultural identity, which is central to both contemporary literature and critical theoretical discourse, because of the controversial complexities it surrounds and the politics of identity it entangled with. Ambivalent hybrid existence of diaspora identity being subjected to the dominant culture of the host land while having inside a sense of attachment with native roots shaped by certain sort of instabilities. Hall maintains that identity is always contextualized, as context is one of the determining factors that shape an identity (Hall, 1994, p.222). For him, identity is not a natural existence but rather a matter of positioning, so that way identity is the reflection of the "ways" one is "positioned by, and position" himself (Hall, 1994, p.225). It is quite obvious that self-positioning is always referential to the way how outside world positions and recognizes an

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identity. Hall claims that identities are the resulting products of the discursive interplay of "history, culture and power" (Hall, 1994, p.225). By calling identities a product of discourse Hall employs Foucault's concept of power and knowledge to show how the projection of a subject by power in a certain way shapes a particular identity (Procter, 2004, p.60).

For Hall identities are all about positioning and representation for him "representation always implicates the positions" as the one "who speaks" his description cannot be identical to the subject which "is spoken of" (Hall, 1994, p.222). Like Foucault Hall throws light on the complicity of representation with power and position. Hall says "Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed" (Hall, 1994, pp.225-226). Power is the determining force. The whole mechanism of representation, identification and recognition of identity is governed by power. Hall criticizes power-driven representation for posing as natural (Procter, 2004, p.45). Appiah also rejects this so-called power-driven natural representation, through a systematic discursive web, of a group of people under a well-positioned notion of race. His rejection of racism and racial unity, for which he is tagged by Paul Charles Taylor as a racial eliminativist, is a response to this politics of representation. Hall also critically scrutinized the medium of representation, language, to unveil its exploitation by power in the constitution of the world around and representation by unjustified binaries (Procter, 2004, p.46). Language and its meaning both are socially constructed and have nothing to do with existing reality rather construct the version of reality it wants to. According to Hall identities constituted "within discourses of history and culture" by a politics of identity (Hall, 1994, p.226). And this politics of identity is no less than the politics of compulsion as it makes its subject a conformist to the norms it wants to, the way Western discourse did to the colonized subject, the politics of turning "the site of resistance" into a "site of incorporation" (Procter, 2004, p.26). Hall's intellectual thoughts are greatly influenced by Gramsci, while talking about identity politics Hall appears to be pursuing Gramsci's concept of hegemony, the politics of changing resistance into consent. Dominant discourse first makes the marginalized realize a sense of otherness and then makes them willingly follow the host culture to somehow overcome this degrading sense of otherness. The above-mentioned negation of the fixity of identity can be considered as Hall's criticism of the other aspect of identity by means of which Hall calls identity a positioned and produced phenomenon which is the construction of identity by power through politics of representation.

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Analysis

❖ Politics of Identity

Representation is a slippery concept, which in the most common sense of the word poses as simply referential to reality but is actually a condensed web of forces like social prejudice and politicized historical discourse with a cultural conformist attitude, indulged in the construction of reality that suits its project. Hall characterized the slippery nature of the concept of representation as something "mimetic", and constitutive (Hall, 1996, p.444). The subject of identity in the post-colonial scenario is as slippery as that of the medium of representation that projects it. For Hall, it is a reluctantly unfixed existence that is at the same time positioned and contextually fixed. When Hall presents identity as an unfixed and unusable entity he actually hits on the ambivalent existence of identity in a multicultural world. By calling it a contextual and well-positioned fixity he is reflecting upon the politics of representation which sets the basis for the politics of recognition that is how a subject is being approached by others as a social entity and how the subject approach itself after getting internalized the social version of its recognition. Both politics of representation and politics of recognition which together constitute politics of identity are what we may call the determining force behind identity. Hall's argument regarding the politics of representation is that what power "regimes" represent through "machineries" of representation is "constitutive" rather than "referential" (Hall, 1996, p.444). Pak-Muslim ambivalent assimilationist diaspora cultural identity, the subject under scrutiny in the present study, is really what we can call a product of Western politics of identity. It is recognized in very much the same way as the Western power regime intended it to be, by being contextualized in the 9/11 context through politics of representation. It is contesting for a mode of identification that would consider its essence apart from stereotyping labels of terrorist and fundamentalist. This Western politics of representation is a point worth noticing while approaching Pak-Muslim-American perplexed identity like the one Ayad Akhtar described in his play Disgraced (2013) through the troubled central character, Amir, an Americanized individual of South Asian specifically Pakistani origin, living in post-9/11 America. Western politics of representation is the determining factor of Pak-Muslim-American identity. So, the analysis of Pak-Muslim-American identity projected by Ayad Akhtar must begin by going to the roots of the constituting mechanism through its context the way Hall approaches the concept of identity.

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❖ Post-9/11 Pak-Muslim-American Identity

In the post-9/11 scenario, it is the above-mentioned politics that attached Islam with the label of fundamentalism and Pak-Muslim-American identity with terrorism as a binary other and something oppositional to the so-called civilized West. Before analyzing the post-9/11 Pak-Muslim-American identity of Amir under Hall's theoretical notion of representation, decoding and encoding, there is a need to consider the event of 9/11 under discursive construction which according to Hall presented and made to receive through a relative autonomy (Procter, 2004, p.62). A video showing the Twin Towers hit by planes how projected the concept of Islamic terrorism which is immediately perceived by the audience as a Muslim terrorist attack on America. The point to note here is how the meaning of a projection and consumption is controlled by the above-mentioned discursive power and how a simple representation is a highly political and ideological production. The interplay of political, ideological, social and cultural forces in making the 9/11 event a specific product could be exposed under the concepts of decoding and encoding.

In terms of encoding the 9/11 event which is projected in a live transmission is not a transparent image of the event but is shaped by what Hall calls a "complex structure of dominance" (Hall, 1999, p.507). This shaping dominant structure counts not only the visual representation of the event by American media but also the explaining oral discourse which includes journalists' comments while covering the event. The event was not projected to the worldwide audience in its realistic version but by subjection to "complex formal rules" which rather projected its formative version. So, it would not be wrong to say that the event "becomes a 'story' before it becomes a communicative event" (Hall, 1999, p.508). It is quite obvious that the event of 9/11 first underwent a formative process under the constituting nature of oral discourse as the formative power always in "dominance" without being subordinate to the real existence of the event (Hall, 1999, p.508). The moment when the event was given live coverage is not a "random moment" of representation but a highly "determined moment" that was determined through a collaboration between the channelizing medium and the state (Hall, 1999, p.509). In that sense, there is no relation between the 9/11 event, Islam, violence, Muslim identity and terrorist attacks. Islam and Pak Muslims are rather framed in this scenario by American discursive politics of representation. This hegemonic discursive politics is not limited to the process of representation of an event but also expanded to the meaning received, so it would not be wrong to say that, like encoding or representation, decoding or recognition is too socially, politically and ideologically determined. Though we cannot think of

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a plane similarity between the meaning produced and the one that is perceived even then dominant sociopolitical and ideological structures manage to maintain a hold over the process of recognition and production of meaning (Hall, 1999, p.509).So, 9/11 attacks in case of decoding perceived by the audience through culturally "preferred meaning" one that poses as a naturalized version of recognition and perception which power structure managed under the term of common sense meaning and appears "not to be constructed" but a "natural recognition" (Hall,1999, p.511). Like Islam identical to extremism, Muslims as terrorists and the West as civilized is a matter of common sense and natural expression in dominant political and cultural Western discourse. 9/11 attacks marked a never-ending hostile antagonism between Islam and the West (Considine, 2018, p.2). So, it is part of this politics of representation that the politics of identity follows in the case of Pak-Muslim-American identity which the present research going to highlight.

Amir, the central character of the play, is a Pak-Muslim-American, living in New York, and moving successfully in American society. He is a well-reputed lawyer whose well-established life sets on destruction just by going to the court hearing of a masjid imam's case. The successful and happy life of a Pak-Muslim in America post-9/11 is another mystery that will be disclosed later, as Muslims in post-9/11 America were discriminated to the level of alienation (Arif, 2007, p.316). In the beginning of the play, the very first case of identity politics which we find is that of a masjid imam, Fareed, who was arrested and accused as a terrorist just for collecting money for running a masjid. When it is part of common practices as all churches collect money for their functioning then why Muslims are not allowed to do so. Why if a priest collects money for church, it is okay but when an imam collects money gets tagged as a terrorist and suspected of collecting money for the funding of another terrorist attack. These are the questions that Ayad Akhtar raises through another Pak-Muslim character, Hussain. Amir's nephew Hussain criticizes this discriminating politics of so-called America by saying that "every church in the country collects money" so "we are entitled too" and "collecting money doesn't mean it's for Hamas" (Akhtar, 2013, p.12). The answer to the questions is the stereotypical representation of Pak-Muslim identity. Amir's nephew forces Amir to be the lawyer of Imam Fareed or at least come to his hearing for moral support. Amir keeps refusing to go to the hearing as he is aware of the intensity of the matter. He does not want to be a part of it in any way as this may cause him the same problem that Imam faces by being subjected to an identity threat with the tag of terrorist. The problem with troubled Pak-Muslim identity is that it is presented by means of

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contextualization and positioned in a 9/11 context. In the case of contextualization, which seems to determine connotative meaning, politics of representation even become more involved as in that case "ideological dimension" can more actively exploit the fixity of context to distort an identity (Hall, 1999, p.512).

And the above-mentioned exploitation of context in the hands of politics of identity is what happens next when Amir attends the case hearing of a person who is accused of being involved in terrorist activity. The moment Amir linked to Imam's Case is the moment when the Pak-Muslim tragedy began. And the game begins with the intervention of media discourse. Amir is in no way supportive of Imam masjid but it is media discourse that represents him as a supporter. Amir is not part of the legal team dealing with Imam's Case it is media discourse that represents him as part of it as the newspaper after the day of the hearing reads as "Amir Kapoor of Leibowitz, Bernstein, Harris supported the Imam, the man's basically an alleged terrorist" (Akhtar, 2013, pp.22-23). The above-mentioned lines of the text which are part of media discourse show how the politics of representation work. Both the perception of Freed's identity as a terrorist and Amir's identity as something doubtful just because of supporting Fareed determined by what Hall calls preferred meaning and seems involved in stereotyping of identity. Here we find Hall's theorization of the practice of representation as "mimetic", apt to Amir and Fareed's situation. Which radically replaces or should say displaces the real existence of the subject being represented. The political nature of the act of representation makes identity a "formative" and "constitutive" rather than "expressive (Hall, 1996, p.444). The way the identities of Imam and Amir are represented is constitutive as it constructs a story to frame them within the context of terrorism. The overshadowing manifestation of representation displaced the reality of Amir and Imam's identity. Hall believes that the subject of identity does have an existence outside "discursive" construction but it is only "within the discursive" sphere that the meaning of identity is constructed (Hall, 1996, p.444). Muslim identity is overgeneralized here Amir does have a lifestyle that has nothing to do with Islam as he himself claims that "I'm not Muslim. I'm an apostate" (Akhtar, 2013, p.58). But when it comes to discursive representation and contextualization the only recognition which Amir's identity has is being a Muslim of Pakistani origin because this is what defining discursive force intended to represent him to be. The real essence of identity exists nowhere but only its positioned, produced and represented ethnic version, as Hall defines diaspora identity.

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Hall is right that identities are positioned and subjective to ethnic politics. After that media coverage which presents his identity with a question mark, Amir was interrogated by his law firm "Your birth name is not Kapoor, Steven says. Its Abdullah" which instantly managed to have a background check of Amir's family and discovered that Amir is a Muslim and his parents are from Pakistan (Akhtar, 2013, p.34). Disclosure of this truth further intensifies the situation and marks a double question mark on Amir's identity. Everyone finds Amir dubious after his recognition of being a Pak-Muslim. Amir's name change is also a consequence of the politics of representation. It appears as an escape mechanism through which Amir tries to manage an escape from the complexity attached to Pak-Muslim identity. The complexity that makes the survival of Pak-Muslim-Americans impossible in American society, one which internalized a discriminating behavior against Pak-Muslim identity. Anthony Appiah is right to say that some identities are made to hide themselves under artificial identities as they are either misrecognized or simply ignored as if they don't exist (Appiah, 1994, p.149). And a respectable recognition is not only the demand but the basic need of every person. Though Appiah said so with reference to the Jew identity in the present scenario it is applicable to Pak-Muslim identity too as Muslim identity is in the same devastating situation in post-9/11 time as that of Jewish.

Another instance of politics of representation that we find within the text is the representation of Pak-Muslim ethnic identity as something frightening with reference to the 9/11 attacks. Amir reflects well on the resulting consequences of such representation by describing how people find their ethnic identity. Amir says "people being more and more afraid of folks who look like me, we end up being resented" (Akhtar, 2013, p.50). Reflection of humiliating behavior towards Pak-Muslim identity in airports and the resulting anxiety that Pak-Muslim identity suffers is clear enough in the conversation between Isaac and Amir about security checks.

"Isaac: What's that like for you?

Amir: What?

Isaac: Security at airports?

(Awkward beat)

Amir: It's a nightmare at the airports" (Akhtar, 2013, p.50)

The above-mentioned lines are significant to note the level to which Pak-Muslim identity is distorted and the level of anxiety that the Pak-Muslim-American is suffering from because of the anti-Muslim behavior of America. Like Amir, all Muslims encounter humiliating "racial profiling" at airports under special security checks which are shaped by the Western war on terror (Considine, 2018, p.5). This humiliating behavior against Pakistanis is really threatening and identical to the racial discrimination that the Muslim identity faces in post-9/11 America.

In another instance of representation, we find a counterargument from the side of Amir, about the misrepresentation of Islam.

"You haven't read Quran, but you've read a couple of sanctimonious British bullies and you think you know something about Islam"

"Paintings don't matter. Only the Quran matters" (Akhtar, 2013, p.56)

Here Amir contests against Western misrepresentation of Islam and makes it clear that to get a real understanding of Islam one must rely solely on Quran rather than on the discourse that shapes a formative reality about Islam. The word of "paintings" can be seen as a formative discursive interpretation of Quran and Islam. At another point Emily, a white American character makes a different point between Islam and the West regarding the Renaissance in terms of the focus on Individualism by considering that Islam lacks a revivalist spirit as from the beginning up till now it never focuses on individuality but always privileges collectivity over individuality. Emily in other words makes the point that Islam is a backward and rigid set of rules. Ayad Akhtar also counters the misinterpretation of Quran verse that the husband is allowed to beat his wife by declaring that the true interpretation is "to leave her. Not to beat her" (Akhtar, 2013, p.61). Representation of Islam is far away from the true essence of Islam. Pak-Muslim-American diaspora community is twice a victim of Western politics of representation specifically as a Pak-Muslim and generally as an immigrant being a racial other or non-western to which all diaspora communities are equally subjected.

The very first act that takes place in Disgraced is that of representation of the South-Asian subject, Amir, by a White American painter Emily. We find Amir unwillingly and reluctantly posing as a moor slave before her wife, whose attempt at painting is motivated by a racist incident that Amir encounters and a painting of a moor slave Juan de Pareja by his master Velazquez. She later named it "study after Velazquez's Moor" (Akhtar, 2013, p.46). This act of painting which is identical to representation reflects important facts about Western politics of representation. One of which is

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conflict in view of Pareja's painting where Amir is reluctant to be at the place of slave and finds it disgusting that his wife wants to paint him like a moor after his humiliating racist experience "It's a little weird" "that you want to paint me after seeing a painting of a slave" (Akhtar, 2013, p.4). Emily seems to hide her racist mentality by repeatedly calling Juan de Pareja assistant of Velazquez, the painter. Here we find representation of Amir driven by racism internalized deep into the politics of representation. Hall describes it as a force that "operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories" a typical "binary system of representation" which "constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness" (Hall, 1996, p.446). It is the reflection of racist mentality that after all the success as a lawyer and well-established profile as an American Emily the representative of American mentality still finds Amir a subject suitable enough to be painted as a moor slave. In the case of not being a conscious act even then somewhere in her unconscious Emily has this sense of difference with Amir and a notion of belonging between Amir and black identity as both are cultural others and members of the marginalized community. Emily's tendency to represent Amir as a slave identical to the American mentality which after all efforts of the diaspora identity to Americanize will always count as cultural other and inferior.

Another argument between Amir and Emily regarding representation in terms of what is sellable and what is not is another instance that we can consider to reveal the politics of representation where Amir says he likes her early paintings, projecting landscapes more than that of his portrait being a moor and her paintings regarding Islam. But Emily's reply is worthy of notice, "it didn't sell" to which Amir answers "selling's not everything" which Emily criticizes with a rhetorical question "you really believe that?" (Akhtar, 2013, p.6). It is clear enough that power-driven representation becomes the most acknowledgeable and the most sellable.

❖ Collective Identities as Determined Script

Categorization of ethnic and racial identities by certain arbitrary tags does not just shape how an entity would be perceived by society but it also determines the very feel that the tagged identity feels about itself, which we can call self-perception. That self-perception determines the way labeled or scripted identity thinks and acts. This power-determined notion of self-recognition or self-perception is quite evident in American Dervish. Ayad Akhtar reflects this aspect of identity through the character of Naveed who hates everything that relates to Islam. For him, all the members of the Pak-Muslim community who maintain a religious identity are hypocrites

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"Praying all the day", and "they are hypocrites" (Akhtar, 2012, p.62). For him being Muslim is something disgusting such self-recognition is reflexive of social recognition of the Pak-Muslim identity in American society. The only reason that can be spotted for his hatred of Islam and Muslim identity is extremism which is attached to Islam. And it is clear enough that who attached Islam with violation and fundamentalism. He hates Islam for its being a rigid and strict code of life. And this is how Islam and Muslims are recognized in America, as rigid and orthodox. His hatred can also be seen as a reaction to the humiliating treatment of Americans towards Muslims because of their religious identity. This loathsome feeling about Islam and Muslim identity is not just limited to the character of Naveed. It is further transmitted to Muneer, his wife which Hayat describes as "deep down mother was a believer, but" living with a man like father for a long period of time who considers religion a business of idiots "trained her" (Akhtar, 2012, p.35). Naveed's contempt and disgust are not just limited to abusive comments but also set the modes of his actions as he scolds Hayat for reciting Quran and warns him not to touch this book again "If I ever see you with" Quran "I will fix you" (Akhtar, 2012, p.171). Another reason for Naveed anguish about Islamic values is the hostile experiences that a migrant from a third-world village faces after immigrating to America. Naveed being a migrant from a backward village reflects what it is to be like in America where life is all about "competition" (Akhtar, 2012, p.59). Naveed's hatred of Islam and the Pak-Muslim identity is the internalization of the notion of how Pak-Muslim identity is recognized and perceived by American society. Social recognition of Pak-Muslim identity as we have spotted in Disgraced not only changes the way Naveed approaches his own religious identity but also the way he thinks and acts. And of course, it is not easy for an individual to stick to his norms in America, the place knows how to make one follow its rules by disgracing those norms one is born with. Pak-Muslims face this disgrace because of the rigid ethnic, racial and religious politicized script of collective identity imposed on their faces. Naveed's attitude towards Islam, Quran and Muslim Identity is a hysterical response to the above-mentioned stereotyping abuse. Self-recognition of identity is not limited to the character of Naveed. Muneer also internalizes the stereotypes about Pak-Muslim society and culture. The Western belief that patriarchal Pak-Muslim society is abusive towards women she quite clearly reflected in her comments about Mina's devastated life how her parents were not supportive of letting her get higher education and how they because of their backward thinking considered that Mina's divorce the result of her education as according to them all her education given to her is a "fast mouth" (Akhtar, 2012, p.15). Another evidence of such internalization

is her belief that Muslim men are dishonest lusty fellows who always run after white women and do not respect their women, which she keeps repeating as "Give a Muslim man a drink and watch him run after white women like a crazy fool" (Akhtar, 2012, p.18). For Muneer patriarchal Pak-Muslim society is not sensible enough to acknowledge and praise feminine intelligence as according to her it tends to snub it. She tells Hayat that how talented and intelligent Pak-Muslim woman like Mina "pays the price not in money but in abuse" (Akhtar, 2012, p.15) And her continuous comparison between Muslim and White women makes her recognize herself as someone inferior to whom her husband gives preference to his white girlfriends. All the generalizations of Muneer are in collaboration with those American society makes about Pak-Muslim society. This is no coincidence but evidence that social recognition of an identity sets the basis for its self-recognition. Stereotypical labels do have psychological implications as they manage to maintain a grip over the psyches of the subject being stereotyped, and the above-mentioned attitude of Naveed and Muneer is the manifestation of this psychological confinement. In that case, scripted collective identities appear to be the force that shapes the future of the diaspora community. And that way assimilation is not a willing act but a compelled one.

❖ Assimilation the Mode of Survival

Assimilation is the integration of diaspora identity into host society and culture. Assimilation is the way through which diaspora identity ensures its survival in a new place. In the present text, Pak-Muslim-American characters assimilate into American culture to escape Western opposition which they face because of their religious identity. And in that case, assimilation sounds mandatory in the case of Muslim identity not just in post-9/11 time but also before it as the novel is about the pre-9/11 situation. Though Naveed assimilates into the host culture to get success it appears more as a matter of getting rid of what relates him to Islam as his assimilation appears more a rejection of his religious identity, which can be seen as the successful manifestation of American politics of identity. Naveed's drinking habits and illegitimate relations with white women show the level of his assimilation and withdrawal from Pak-Muslim identity. Then there are other characters that undergo the process of assimilation. Mina who migrated from Pakistan soon underwent the process of assimilation and totally transformed "Pakistani garb" or the traditional eastern code of dressing which consists of a shalwar kameez and scarf turned into tight-fitting western wear, skirts, and jeans (Akhtar, 2012, p.49). It is not just the way of dressing that she changes when she gets assimilated but also her way

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of thinking and mode of behavior. Earlier a devout Muslim now does not mind having an affair with a Jew and does not mind having meetings with him holding hands and even hugging. Muneer also possesses an assimilationist identity and lives a life totally detached from Islam and is not interested in transmitting her cultural and religious values and traditions to her only son Hayat. She does not even consider it important to teach her son about basic religious values. Hayat being a second-generation immigrant already possesses an American identity that is undoubtedly assimilationist as his parents made no effort to make him familiar with his religious and ethnic roots. The whole novel revolves around the identity development of Hayat who is stuck between American and Pak-Muslim culture. At the beginning of the novel Hayat is living like a second-generation diaspora who knows nothing about his native culture and religion but then a friend of her mother, Mina, comes from Pakistan. It is in the character of Mina that Hayat finds a source to explore his native ethnic and religious identity. Throughout the novel, Hayat seems on an identity quest and keeps exploring his identity to make sense of his existence. Earlier he possesses an Americanized identity later discovers his native identity and then ends up with a reluctant Americanized assimilationist identity. Like his parents, Hayat too proves himself true to the definition of hybrid assimilationist ambivalent diaspora identity. There are many instances that authenticate Hayat's ambivalent identity.

Hayat keeps struggling for the meaning and authenticity of his existence. Prior to Mina's arrival, Hayat's life may be absurd and boring but it used to be stable. Hayat's assimilationist identity is shaken by Mina's arrival in America. It is the exploration of the other aspects of his identity that sets the basis for the conflict which is essential to diaspora identity. When Mina started teaching him Islamic values Hayat seemed to see the world from a totally different perspective and for him getting an Islamic education and memorizing Quran became the holiest thing. Hayat describes the feeling of exploring religious identity as "lively" one which makes his "heart softened" and "lightened" his inner self (Akhtar, 2012, p.42). After exploring his native identity, he undergoes a journey back to Americanization by giving up his Islamic identity and tries hard to have it in full essence but gets stuck between the two. At a point, he convinces himself that he has totally denounced his Pak-Muslim identity. But even after making this realization, he is careful about not having prohibited food stuff. When his beef burger gets replaced by his American friend's pork stuffed burger his hidden essence of religiousness makes him think for a while. Hayat rejects his hesitation by thinking "What reason did I have anymore not to eat

it? And then considers that there is no reason left for not having it (Akhtar, 2012, p.2). Hayat takes the act of eating pork as something heroic and "feel brave" (Akhtar, 2012, p.2). Hayat considers it a brave act because by doing so he actually manages to be on one side. After doing so he feels like he is finally getting rid of his ties with religion and feels "unburdened" (Akhtar, 2012, p.2). But this proves to be a timely feeling as on the very next day he again feels desperate to go to Islamic history class which he said he never likes to miss. But in class again his assimilationist tendency becomes more prevalent when he just shows no opposition to Professor Edelstein's claim that Quran which Muslims consider the "eternal word of God was a Fiction" and for calling Quran, Bible of Muslims (Akhtar, 2012, p.4). Calling Quran Bible raises a question on the authenticity of Quran which is not acceptable for a Muslim who believes Quran to be the most authentic source of knowledge. So, other Muslim students present in class oppose the Professor's claim and challenge the professor to prove his point with evidence. While Hayat sits silent and on asking says that he is a broad-minded Muslim who believes in discussing think rather than getting aggressive. But after class he says to his friend who praises his open mindedness that "you don't know what it's like to lose faith" so here he is with the guilt for not opposing the professor and considers it a sign of loss of faith which is painful (Akhtar, 2012, p.6). Hayat seems confused about everything. He pretends that it's okay to eat pork it is okay to leave your real identity but it is just an illusion. He may not oppose the professor's claim that Quran is a human construction but somewhere deep inside he feels a sense of guilt.

Conclusion

The present research is conducted to analyze the Pak-Muslim diaspora identity. The discussion begins with the analysis of the factors that push diaspora identity towards assimilation by setting forth a stereotypical discursive mechanism, one which sets the mode of social and self-recognition of the subject under discussion, which we can call identity politics. American hegemonic politics of identity is actually a sort of politics of compulsion, one which only leaves space for relative autonomy. Relative autonomy is the politicized version of autonomy, which is determined by power, in the present case it is determined by American hegemony. The above-mentioned complex structure of identity politics makes immigrants realize that they have to transform if they want to survive. Ayad Akhtar describes this fact through the character of Amir that if you want to survive in America, you must follow its rules and must cut off your ties with your roots as the place is all "about moving forward. And not looking back" and the one who attempts to cling to the roots will

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not survive (Akhtar, 2013, p.20). Here we see how the power structure makes the diaspora realize and internalize the fact that one must leave one's nativity to successfully move forward. And then there is another aspect of this politics which exploits the same religious and ethnic roots and contextualizes identity to find a justification for discrimination and marginalization which further pushes the diaspora towards assimilation. This is how the West attached Pak-Muslim identity to terrorism. In post-9/11, West finds justification for discrimination by putting the Pak-Muslim diaspora in the context of the 9/11 incident. This racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination of Pak-Muslim-Americans makes members of the diaspora community develop disgust against their own religion and ethnicity as they start recognizing themselves with the same stereotypes with which American society stigmatizes them. And resultantly they start hiding themselves under artificial masks of Americanized identity which they think would let them escape the hate crimes which they face on account of their ethnic profile and from marginalization and may let them have an equal position as that of their American counterparts. But the thought of having an equal place is just an illusion. Amir hides his Pak-Muslim identity to escape discrimination in the workplace, but after all the transformation got recognized as a jihadi. To assimilate is not a choice but a compulsion as the individual does not have many options to choose, but only those which the host country determines. This is also evident in the case of Hayat who wanted to be a Hafiz about whom Mina's expectation is that he would either become a Hafiz or a dervish but he ends up as an American dervish the one which Ayad Akhtar describes as harmless like the dust "the dust which no one knows is even there" (Akhtar, 2012, p.15). Ayad further reflects upon this politics of compulsion as that what life has done to us is, it "grinds us to the dust", and makes us realize that this is our fate, and it is acceptance of this fate that the diaspora identity willingly ends up with assimilation identity (Akhtar, 2012, p.15). Central characters of American Dervish and Disgraced Amir and Hayat both end up with an Americanized identity. But they always feel a prick from inside which can be interpreted as a pullback to roots, or a sense of guilt for losing faith and losing contact with native culture, land, and people of the same ethnicity. As Hall says the complex existence of diaspora identity transcends simplified categorization (Hall, 1994, p.228). This is the complexity because of which diaspora identity just cannot be divided into native identity or essentialist assimilationist identity.

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