

**POLITICS OF BELONGING: POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON
DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANTS IN DUR E AZIZ AMNA'S
AMERICAN FEVER**

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Abstract

Diaspora offers a complex dilemma, leading to the formation of a hyphenated identity. Immigrants face challenges on multiple levels—physically, mentally, and psychologically. This research examines the diasporic experiences of immigrants as depicted in Dur e Aziz Amna's American Fever. The novel serves as a significant literary portrayal of the diasporic experiences of immigrants, illustrating how diaspora fosters the creation of fragmented identities, leaving individuals feeling displaced in both body and mind. It offers a critical examination of the diasporic experiences of the immigrants in America, portraying the complexities of cultural displacement and identity through Hira, a 16-year-old Pakistani girl navigating life in Oregon. Hira's journey illustrates the evolution of her identity into a hybrid form, as she strives to reconcile her Pakistani heritage with American cultural norms. Rendered through a qualitative approach, the research findings suggest that diaspora significantly influences the formation of hyphenated identities and contributes to immigrants' sense of alienation. This research aims to make a valuable contribution to the field of postcolonial studies.

Keywords: Diaspora, hyphenated identity, Immigrants, Postcolonialism, Alienation, *American Fever*

Introduction

Diaspora is used to refer to any ethnic group or community that is forced or induced to leave their original homeland for another place in the world, thus living dispersed and dissociated from their nation. Diaspora also refers to the traditions and culture that these people develop throughout time away from their original countries. (Dapke, 2022, p.1)

Diaspora refers to the migration of communities from one region to another, often from the East to the West. This movement, particularly from the non-white global periphery to Western nations, challenges traditional notions of Western identity and raises critical questions about multiculturalism. Such migrations can be viewed as a post-Second World War or postcolonial phenomenon, highlighting the complex intersections between identity, culture, and power in a globalized world (Hall & Morley, 2019). As of 2019, the Pakistani population in the United States has grown to 554,000 (Budiman, 2021). A bulk of Pakistani population is Muslim and Muslims place significant emphasis on maintaining their religious and traditional values (Ghani, 2016). Diasporic communities often encounter identity-related challenges in their host countries. Migrants frequently navigate a liminal space between their homeland and exile, becoming enmeshed in the complexities of living between two worlds. Mukherjee (2021) argues

that diasporic writers touch upon themes of individual identity, multiculturalism, and spatial marginalization. Their writings convey a sense of rootlessness intertwined with nostalgia for their homelands. They tend to depict a profound sense of apathy, portraying characters who feel estranged from their origins and compelled to navigate the challenging dynamics of belonging between two nations. This imposed exile leads to a rather complex discussion of the ‘compartmentalization’ of insiders and outsiders. A clear and continuous string uniting these literary writings includes issues like loneliness, the duality of selves, marginalization, racism, and multiculturalism, all of which portray the protagonists’ failures to integrate within new societies.

Dur e Aziz Amna was born and raised in Rawalpindi, Pakistan in 1992. She currently resides in Michigan, USA. Amna pursued her education at Yale College and the Helen Zell Writers’ Program at the University of Michigan. Her literary writings have appeared in esteemed outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, and *Al Jazeera*. She has garnered significant recognition, including the *Financial Times/Bodley Head Essay Prize* and the *APALA Award for Literature*. *American Fever* the debut novel by Dur e Aziz Amna, deals with the cross-cultural experiences of a Pakistani immigrant girl, navigating life in the United States. Notably, the novel earned the prestigious *Hopwood* and *Busch Prizes* while still in draft form. As a newly published work that has already garnered critical acclaim, it presents a valuable opportunity for examining contemporary perspectives on the diasporic experiences of the immigrants in America. It provides insights into the complexities of cultural displacement and identity formation in the modern immigrant experience. A pivotal moment in *American Fever* occurs when Hira, a 16-year-old Pakistan, moves to Oregon. With such a life as she was used to in her homeland, she is often put under pressure to survive a new environment. This shift locates Hira as a diasporic subject out of place despite the fact that some people in Oregon have a reception that recognizes her as an alien. In the course of a year spent in America, Hira employs several techniques to conform to that environment as she embraces Pakistani culture. However, these cultural negotiations cause a change in the subject’s identity, which becomes hybrid due to the attempts to accommodate native ethno poetic culture with demands of the America culture.

This research aims to analyse how the experiences of immigrants are constructed in the context of the diaspora in Amna Dur e Aziz’s *American Fever*. Amna (2022) describes the difficulties of Pakistani immigrants in efforts to integrate themselves into new countries, through living and working in the United States and Europe and living cultural dualisms. She also places emphasis on conflicts that come with time and birthplace as the immigrants’ young people try to find themselves in America.

Research Questions:

1. How does Dur e Aziz Amna’s *American Fever* depict the challenges faced by immigrants in the process of forming a hyphenated identity?
2. In what ways do the diasporic experiences portrayed in *American Fever* reflect broader themes of alienation and belonging within postcolonial discourse?

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the representation of diasporic experiences in *American Fever* and how these experiences contribute to the formation of a hyphenated identity for immigrants.
2. To explore the impact of diaspora on immigrants’ sense of belonging and identity through postcolonial lens, as illustrated in *American Fever*.

Review of Literature

The term “diaspora” originates from the Greek word “diaspeirein,” with “dia” meaning “through” and “speirein” meaning “to scatter”. Historically, the term was first applied in 586 BCE, referring to the exile of Jews from Judea by the Babylonians (Encyclopaedia Britannica). Over time, the concept of diaspora has expanded beyond its initial association with Jewish exile to encompass a variety of ethnic, religious, and national groups who reside outside their ancestral homelands. Therefore, the notion of diaspora inherently carries the connotations of displacement and dislocation. According to Longley (2021), the concept of diaspora encompasses various forms, each defined by distinct factors. Some diasporas are rooted in the legacy of colonialism, while others arise from individuals being forcibly removed from their homelands due to political circumstances. Additionally, there are diasporas formed by those who migrate for reasons such as education or employment. In contrast to diasporas formed through forced displacement, voluntary immigrant communities, while preserving strong cultural and spiritual connections to their homelands, are generally less inclined to permanently return. These groups often take pride in their collective identity and derive a sense of social and political “strength-in-numbers.” In contemporary contexts, the needs and aspirations of large diaspora communities frequently shape government policies, impacting areas such as foreign relations, economic development, and immigration (Longley, 2021).

Diasporic movements carry profound historical significance, often reflecting the core of a nation’s heritage and collective memory. Diaspora is frequently seen as a transformative journey, marked by self-discovery and the intertwined processes of self-recognition, self-knowledge, and self-definition. In postcolonial contexts, quest for identity becomes a central theme of scholarly investigation, as individuals and communities seek to reconstruct their sense of self amidst the legacies of displacement and cultural hybridity. The process of identity formation, or individuation, entails the evolution of a distinct personality that maintains continuity over time—what is often referred to as personal continuity. This development encompasses the integration of personal traits and attributes that distinguish individuals and contribute to their social recognition and reputation. Identity construction, therefore, involves both internal self-definition and external perception by others. Central components of identity include a sense of continuity, a recognition of one’s uniqueness, and a feeling of belonging or affiliation. The ongoing process of identity formation addresses multiple dimensions of personal identity, allowing individuals to understand themselves as unique and autonomous beings.

Jare (2021) argues that diaspora facilitates an interaction between languages, cultures, and ideologies, leading to what Homi Bhabha conceptualized as “hybridity”. Hybrid identity as theme is well evident in the works of diasporic authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, and Kiran Desai. Initially, diasporic individuals often strive to preserve their cultural identity within their own communities. However, outside of these spaces, their social identity may be challenged due to their migration from their homeland to a new country, raising questions about both social and personal identity. They are compelled to form new identities based on their intellectual, physical, and political capabilities and are often categorized as expatriates, immigrants, or transnationals. Though these terms denote distinct experiences, they are frequently used interchangeably to describe individuals living outside their place of origin. Diasporic literature captures the dual experience of navigating between expatriation and a connection to the homeland, serving as an exploration of these two opposing realities.

Begum (2019) points out that Bharati Mukherjee deals with the complex responses to postcolonial displacement, advocating for cultural reconciliation and presenting a nuanced perspective on diasporic literature. “Bharati Mukherjee is one of the main novelists of Indian diaspora, writing about her experiences in India, Canada and America with an acute diasporic sensibility” (Begum, 2019, p. 2054). She highlights the importance of cultural hybridity as a means for immigrants to navigate their connections to their native lands. Her characters confront the multifaceted challenges of human existence with resilience and optimism. They embody a spirited determination to forge meaningful lives from the fragments of their experiences, asserting their agency in the process. Mukherjee posits that the cultural transformations prompted by immigration can result in the creation of new identities that challenge prevailing national definitions. Throughout Mukherjee’s writings, the migrant characters grapple with fundamental questions pertaining to diaspora experiences. They face the dilemma of whether to preserve or abandon their identities tied to specific places, or how to reconstruct their sense of self. The tension between asserting their identity, becoming outlaws, assimilating, or confronting their own struggles for social acceptance and belonging becomes a central theme. Ultimately, the migrant characters navigate the complexities of operating within, or in opposition to, established cultural systems and norms.

Ahmad and Sanam (2020) point out that Kanza Javed in her novel, *Ashes, Wine and Dust* focuses on the challenges faced by diaspora individuals in foreign lands during periods of migration, displacement, and banishment. “As a Pakistani writer, she gives voice to the crucial issues such as home, exile, disorientation, socio-economic problems faced by the diasporic communities and the identity crisis of immigrants” (Ahmad and Sanam, 2020, p. 205). The novel deals with the concept of home as a metaphor for diasporic identity, highlighting the feelings of alienation experienced by characters in their host countries. The story follows Mariam, who challenges traditional gender roles within her middle-class Pakistani background. The story focuses on Mariam’s nostalgic memories of her grandfather in Lahore. When she gets there she has the feeling of an unfamiliar territory and the loss of her brother, Abdullah, further isolating her. Essentially, Mariam’s search is for an identity based on her individuality in the face of both the prevailing social norms and her feelings. The novel deals with the issues of loss, isolation, and the challenges of becoming an adult in a world that is not all that safe and wonderful. Its symbolic title reflects different stages of Mariam’s life: *Ashes* shows her life back in Lahore, *Wine* shows her loneliness in America and *Dust* depicts her desire to be in Lahore once again.

This research focuses on the portrayal of diasporic experience of immigrants in the latest published novel by Dur e Aziz Amna, *American Fever*. Amna (2022) explains the struggles faced by Pakistani immigrants in the course of trying to embrace new environments, more so in the United States and Europe, and the cultural conflict experienced by the immigrants in those strange lands. In addition, the novel raises the question of conflict that appears when the second generation of immigrants tries to build its own place in the American context. This analysis highlights an important gap in the literature and focuses on representation of belonging and processes of identity formation of immigrant communities.

Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology centered on close textual analysis of Dur e Aziz Amna’s *American Fever*, focusing on themes of cultural identity, integration, and generational tensions among Pakistani immigrants. It is guided by diaspora studies and

postcolonial theory to examine the complexities of diasporic life. Insights from interviews and secondary sources may further enrich the analysis of this research.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory is defined by its critique of colonialism and its acknowledgment of the challenges encountered by marginalized communities subjected to poverty and cultural upheaval due to colonial domination. According to Ashcroft et al. (2007), the term “postcolonial” refers to all cultures influenced by colonization from the historical period of colonial rule to the present day. Ashcroft (2001) summarizes postcolonial theory, pointing out that it arose in response to the inadequacies of Western theories in capturing the complexities and diverse cultural dimensions present in postcolonial literature. Bhabha (1994) contends that postcolonial critique investigates the unequal and uneven dynamics of cultural representation within the contemporary global landscape, emphasizing the struggle for political and social power. “Cultural hybridity has received a great deal of critical attention in both cultural and postcolonial studies and most contemporary approaches maintain, rightly so, that no culture or people can lay claim to purity” (Acheraiou, 2011), p. 17). Hybridity, in its traditional sense, refers to a blend or fusion. Cultural hybridity, as a modern transcultural phenomenon, arises within the contact zones formed through colonization, aiming to showcase a balance among the values, customs, and beliefs of diverse cultures. However, cultural hybridity is not a recent occurrence. A significant example of this can be seen in the Eurasian culture that developed during the British Raj in India, resulting from the merging of Asian and European cultural influences.

When we say that all cultures are hybrid, we mean that whenever cultures come into contact with each other, whether through trade, marriage alliances, or war, they are inevitably transformed by their proximity with cultural and racial otherness. The transformations and mutual influences occurring during these exchanges are usually uneven and differently perceived by the actors involved in the cultural encounters. It is commonly recognized that powerful and dominant cultures, especially in colonial contexts, are more likely to impact significantly on the less powerful and subjugated cultures. (Acheraiou, 2011, p. 17)

The transformative shifts in culture and identity have consistently captivated scholars within the domain of Postcolonial Studies. “Diasporic Identity in Postcolonial theory is the central issue that causes other problems, such as identity crises, otherness, stereotypes, mimicry, class, religion, ambivalence, geography, ethnicity, and hybridity” (Saqib, et al., 2022, p. 525). Bhabha’s concepts of cultural and identity hybridity have been instrumental in shaping research within this field of inquiry. Bhabha’s use of the term “hybridity” effectively draws researchers to explore contemporary issues related to polarity, hierarchy, binaries, and symmetry. (Saqib, et al., 2022). Bhabha (1994) conceptualizes hybridity as a framework for understanding the formation of culture and identity in the context of colonial antagonism and inequality. This hybridity emerges from the culturally internalized interactions between colonizers and the colonized. He posits that both groups are mutually dependent in the construction of a shared culture, suggesting that hybridity results from their interdependence and the co-construction of subjectivities. Bhabha (1994) contends that this hybridity embraces the multiplicities and pluralities of identity, fundamentally challenging essentialist notions of identity. Hybridity, in this context, should not be misconstrued as a mere blending of two cultures and practices. It does not simply represent an

essential dialectic between colonizer and colonized. Such a reductionist view overlooks the power inequalities and the foundational dynamics of human interaction. Instead, Bhabha (1994) asserts that all social collectives, including nation-states, cultures, and smaller ethnic groups, are engaged in an ongoing process of hybridity. These collectives have evolved in relation to broader contexts and, consequently, comprise elements of diverse origins that they share to varying degrees. For Bhabha (1994), hybridity transcends binary oppositions and the direct dynamics of cultural domination and oppression. Hybridity transcends national or cultural polarization, highlighting the advantages of occupying an in-between space. This in-between space or liminal position possesses the power to challenge the authenticity and authority of dominant discourses. Bhabha asserts (1994) that hybridity represents the reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity, which manifests the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. In this regard, hybridity serves as a form of resistance against colonial oppression.

Bhabha (1994) articulates the concepts of coloniality and postcoloniality through the political discourse of hybridity, mimicry, liminality, in-betweenness, and the notion of a 'third space'. These ideas move beyond the traditional binaries of self and other, or East and West, envisioning a liminal, interstitial space where diverse cultures intersect, producing a sense of ambivalence. Bhabha (1994) emphasizes that culture does not exist in isolation; instead, it interacts and overlaps within this hybrid realm, which he refers to as the 'third space of enunciation'. Bhabha (1994) characterizes contemporary existence as being situated on the borderlines of the present, where conditions are constantly shifting. This fluidity is often denoted by the prefix "post" as in terms such as 'postmodernism', 'postcolonialism', and 'postfeminism'. According to Bhabha (1994), the 'post' does not imply a simple chronological order but rather reflects a "restless and revisionary energy" (p. 4) that transforms the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment. This transformative process moves us toward what Bhabha (1994) refers to as the "beyond" which is not about reaching a new horizon or discarding the past. Instead, it represents a transitional space where space and time intersect, producing complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. The concept of the beyond thus signifies spatial distance, marks progress, and holds the promise of the future, opening up new possibilities and potentials. The concept of the "beyond" is characterized by its unknowability and unrepresentability, resisting a simple return to the present, which would merely be an act of repetition. Consequently, it becomes disjointed and displaced, leading to a sense of "disorientation, disturbance of direction, in the beyond (Bhabha, 1994). Yet, occupying the beyond means inhabiting an intermediary space that facilitates a return to the present, allowing for the redefinition of cultural practices, the rearticulation of historical commonalities, and a connection to the future. In this regard, the "beyond" functions as a space of intervention, acting upon cultural differences and reshaping human subjectivities.

Textual Analysis

American Fever deals with the diasporic experiences of immigrants through the character of a young Pakistani immigrant girl, Hira, who relocates to the United States. Immigrants leave their home countries for various reasons, such as escaping conflict, poverty, or oppressive regimes, often seeking improved living conditions abroad. Historically, America has been perceived as a land of opportunity, attracting individuals from across the globe in pursuit of a

better life (Taus-Bolstad, 2006). In Hira's case, her migration is motivated by academic aspirations; she participates in a student exchange program that allows her to study in the U.S. for one year. Hira is highly enthusiastic about the prospect of moving to America, viewing it as a significant opportunity to attain the freedom she has been deprived of in Pakistan. In her home country, Hira attends a girls-only Islamic school, where the students' freedoms are notably restricted. Prior to her move to America, Hira perceived her host mother, Kelly, and Kelly's daughter, Amy, as fundamentally different from her. She acknowledges these differences, stating, "... but I knew enough about them to know all the ways they were different from me. White. Christian. American" (Amna, 2022, p. 25). However, upon her arrival in America, Hira encounters new challenges pertaining to identity and belonging. While she had initially regarded her host family as strangers in her hometown, once in the host country, it is Hira who is perceived as the outsider. The challenges associated with Hira's relocation to America become apparent upon her arrival. In her homeland, she perceives her host mother and daughter as unfamiliar and distant; however, in the new country, Hira herself is viewed as an outsider. When she greets a local, she is met with hostility: "'Hello,' I said. 'How are you today?' His eyes met mine briefly before he yelled, 'Don't touch me, stranger!'" (Amna, 2022, p. 61). This interaction highlights the theme of alienation, as Hira's status as a foreigner is reinforced in both her homeland and the host nation. Hira's initial experiences in America are marked by discomfort and alienation when she attempts to engage with the local population. Her distinctive appearance, including her style of dress, race, body language, and accent, differentiates her from others, immediately identifying her as an immigrant or, more specifically, a "stranger" in the eyes of the host community.

Upon arriving in Oregon, Hira begins to experience profound sense of homesickness, largely due to her lifelong closeness to her family. On her first night, the realization of being so far from home overwhelms her, and she recalls the emotional farewell at the airport when her family accompanied her. In the following days, Hira faces frustration and culture shock, grappling with the stark differences between her homeland and the host country. These experiences lead her to constantly reflect on her home environment, and she becomes consumed by nostalgia, unable to escape the memories of her homeland despite her physical presence in America. Her disappointment in Oregon, where the reality falls short of her expectations, intensifies her longing for her home country. Consequently, Hira frequently compares the two environments, ultimately concluding that her homeland is superior to the host country. This sense of displacement and dissatisfaction further highlights the emotional challenges she faces as a diasporic subject. Hira continually longs for her homeland, unable to detach herself from the memories of everything that once defined her life there. For her, home is irreplaceable, a place where she truly belongs and where everything is familiar and hers. As a result, when she moves to America, she feels like a stranger in an unfamiliar environment—one where the culture, friends, and everyday routines starkly contrast with those of her home in Pakistan. She reflects on their concerns regarding memory retention, expressing anxiety about potentially forgetting important details. However, it becomes apparent that the process of forgetting often precedes the re-emergence of these memories. Reflecting on this deep sense of loss, Hira expresses: "I was at that stage of missing home" (Amna, 2022, p. 124). This reflection highlights the cyclical nature of memory, where the act of forgetting only strengthens the significance of what is remembered, further complicating Hira's emotional struggle with nostalgia and belonging. The sentiments of nostalgia and culture shock are not exclusive to Hira; they resonate with other immigrant

students as well. Initially, lacking a social circle, these students attempt to interact with their American peers in the cafeteria, sharing stories about their first days at the American school. However, they often encounter unkind treatment from their American counterparts. In response to this alienation, they ultimately decide to form a support group of immigrant students, which includes Hira, Hamid (an Omani boy), and Nicole (a French girl).

During break times, the three of them regularly convene at the canteen, gradually reducing their interactions with other American students. As Hira reflects, “I’ve since learned to recognize the specific closeness that comes from being outsiders together” (Amna, 2022, p. 83). This acknowledgment highlights the deep bonds forged through shared experiences of displacement and otherness, illustrating how such connections can provide solace and solidarity amidst the challenges of adapting to a new environment. The formation of social groups among immigrant students in the host country is a common phenomenon. Hira forms a group exclusively composed of immigrant students who share similar discomfort with the new culture, customs, and social dynamics in America. This group provides a safe space where they can discuss their experiences and reflect on the disparities between their home country and the host country. Their conversations often center around the challenges of adaptation and the emotional distance they feel from both their homeland and their current environment. Hira’s homesickness significantly hampers her ability to adapt to her new environment. The sensation of being a stranger persists in her consciousness, leading to a state of discontent where she finds it difficult to enjoy her surroundings, which are filled with unfamiliar habits, cultures, and people. For Hira, America remains an alien landscape, and she struggles to replace the memories of her home country with new experiences. She acknowledges the challenges of being a newcomer, identifying this phase as one of unhomeliness. Bhabha (1994) articulates this concept, describing unhomeliness as a condition marked by “extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (p. 13). He asserts that to be unhomed is not synonymous with being homeless.

Hira’s sense of unhomeliness manifests through experiences of alienation, homesickness, and culture shock, which pose significant challenges during her year-long student exchange program. To navigate these difficulties and integrate into the new society, Hira recognizes the necessity of altering her mindset. Employing cultural strategies becomes essential for her survival and acceptance in her host community, enabling her to bridge the gap between her past and present experiences. In the case of Hira, being an immigrant student gives one the following hard time. The urgency of the cultural transformation that has to take place to fit into an American society is a major reason why she has to use a technique called mimicry—a term often used to refer to diasporic individuals. Even though she is not inclined to learn more about the American culture and become an active part of that community, Hira understands that change is the key to both her security and appreciation in the new country. As it was mentioned before, Hira had some background in speaking and writing English by the time she moved to Oregon, which was because of her parents. Her mother graduated in Anglophone Literature, and worked as an assistant to her professor while her father who was not an English major started learning English at university level at the age of 20, will also be able to understand English comfortably. So they always considered English to be a significant factor in the life of their children and that is why Hira and Faisal, along with other children of the family, started attending English medium school from very young age. Therefore, Hira has a good academic English background which is expected from her parents with good educational background. But even for this, Hira has had a considerable training in English, yet she complains of lack of preparation to speak English in

everyday events. Here, she sees English mainly as an academic language, while in Oregon the language is needed for communication. This separation increases pressure that makes her encounter English as a foreign language in the first two weeks in Oregon as a strain due to the real-life interactions. Therefore, she has problems with interaction with other people, showing the multiple prospects of the shift between the academic language usage and the fluent speaking.

Hira is in fairly high economic status because her both parents are educated and working individuals. Speaking English is mandatory in the society she grew up in, her parents expect her to be fluent in the language. Since when she was young, she uses English in her daily school life to fulfill the requirement of globalization. The time and energy that she has spent in whilst learning English can help explain why she feels offended whenever she comes across with a poor English speaker like Kelly. When Hira starts working in a new environment, she faces clashes resulting from the practice of individualism. One observation is associated with chore tasks, and it is notable. While people of American culture often cook for themselves, Hira was never trained to cook food for herself. In Hira's family, cooking is assigned low status job and this is done by the elder sister or the mother, or even servants. In a way, Hira's imitation of cooking consequently expresses her ambivalence towards the need to cook for herself. This feeling of apprehension is what makes her avoid taking her meals, as she gets back from school most of the time so exhausted that cooking is the last thing on her mind. Hence, Hira's conflict of independence is reflected in physical outcomes; she eats less, hence she has lost weight, this illustrates the hardships set by her new life against the oriental traditional practices and beliefs for food preparation.

In school, Hira employs another cultural strategy to navigate her adaptation: joining a sports team. It is due to the absence of physical activities experience in her previous education in Pakistan that makes her encounter a culture shock when it comes to dealing with the part played by schools in ensuring the children engage in sporting activities. As much as sports have the ability to offer social objective, Hira views the chances of being a member of volleyball team as welfare of enhancing contact with other kids. When enlisting in this team alongside Amy, she will hope to embrace her new institution culture apart from building friendship relations. This process of mimicry is not without some problems that create echoes of some of the postcolonial problems such as disavowal, mockery rejection and disagreement.

Despite these difficulties, Hira's experiences will ultimately result in the formation of a hybrid identity, allowing her to embrace elements from both her Pakistani heritage and her American surroundings. Hira's adaptation to American culture leads to the formation of a hybrid identity. This hybrid identity includes her efforts to practice new cultural norms while retaining her mother culture and her Islamic faith. For Hira, her identity as a Muslim is a foundational aspect of her cultural background, shaping her ideology and daily activities. Hira attempts to maintain her Islamic values in her diasporic life. However, adapting to a predominantly non-Muslim environment necessitates negotiation of her religious practices. As she strives to survive and integrate into American society, she must find a balance between her faith and the cultural realities of her new home. Initially, Hira makes efforts to preserve her dietary restrictions by seeking halal food, adhering to the Quranic directive against consuming non-halal meat. In America, where halal options are scarce, she often relies on vegetarian meals, which leads to significant changes in her diet. The limited availability of halal meat forces her to consume less protein, resulting in weight loss and nutritional deficiencies. This dietary shift results in her weakened physical state, ultimately bringing health issues such as tuberculosis. Hira's host

mother, Kelly, expresses concern for her health and suggests she reconsider her dietary restrictions.

What Hira does on Thanksgiving when she cooks the Pakistani dish *Bhindi* is a precious act of cultural encounter. Through consulting her mother for help she not only aims at experiencing some of the flavors that she grew up with, but also brings the flavors of her culture to the rest consumers. While she understands that her dish does not mimic the flavors that she had in Pakistan, the enlightened satisfaction of her American friends underscores the ability she has successfully built a bridge between two worlds through food. This act of cooking represents her in-between status; she is not completely assimilated into the new culture. Hira's experience illustrates how food can serve as a medium for cultural negotiation, allowing diasporic individuals to assert their identity in a new context while also embracing elements of the host culture. Hira as a Muslim never drinks alcohol in Pakistan, yet, she starts drinking alcohol when she moves to America. In Pakistan, Hira has abstained from consuming alcohol, as it is classified as haram within Islamic teachings. Upon moving to the United States, Hira experiences her first encounter with alcohol, influenced by her friend Amy. Despite her initial reservations, Hira is curious about the taste of alcohol. Amy, who often drinks Kelly's alcohol in her absence, offers Hira a drink while they are watching a film together. Although Hira does not enjoy the taste of wine initially, she finds that drinking enhances her rapport with Amy. Consequently, she begins to accept offers of alcohol from her peers, believing that it fosters a deeper connection with her American friends.

The theme of hybrid identity is also evident during *Ramadan*, the sacred month for Muslims, characterized by fasting from dawn until sunset. In Islam, fasting is required for any person that reached puberty and has no chronic disease. While in this stage, it is prohibited for one to eat, drink and perform deeds or duties that would deviate one from his/her spiritual obligation. Nonetheless, a variety of approaches to the interpretation of Islamic teachings is often the subject of debate over the keeping of fasting rules for each subject. As a Muslim who resides in the United States, Hira tries to fast during the holy month of *Ramadan*. In *Ramadan* she wakes up early enough to prepare her own *Suhur* and also takes her *Iftar*, the meal to break the fast, with her host family during dinner. However, when she decides to fast, her action is defeated by those close to her. Kelly's host mother warns her that it is no good for a young person to fast alone. The friends of Hira also find fasting difficult especially bearing in mind that she carries on with volleyball exercises. Also, her parents tell her not to fast as she is travelling and a traveller is not supposed to fast during *Ramadan*. Yet she sticks to her decision to fast and gets the respect of her parents for that. After breaking the fast for the holy month of *Ramadan*, Muslims celebrate *Eid al-Fitr*. On *Eid* day, it has been the practice for people to wear new clothes. Hira follows this tradition by wearing traditional dress code which her mother bought her even to school. At school she is expecting greetings on *Eid* only from Hamid, her only diasporic friend since the other American students are oblivious of the celebration. Finally, *Eid al-Fitr* is also a feast that unites families, and people gather for dinner, to converse with those nearest and dearest. Hira is alienated from her family and even though she speaks with them on the phone she thinks of how they celebrated *Eid* the previous year. This year, however, she feels a sense of loneliness, as the experience in her host country contrasts sharply with her memories from home. To create a semblance of that atmosphere, she prepares *pulao* a traditional Pakistani dish, reflecting her commitment to her cultural heritage despite her geographical displacement.

Living in America, Hira navigates differing religious values and strives to cultivate a positive image as a Muslim. To this end, she adopts an open-minded approach, exemplified by her decision to accompany her host mother Kelly to church. Kelly encourages Hira to learn about Christianity, and Hira respects this invitation by attending services. Initially, she grapples with the prevailing Christian perspectives, particularly the notion that America is a safer environment for Muslims, especially young women, in light of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2011. Hira receives a warm and sincere welcome from the congregation at the church, where the pastor acknowledges her identity as a Muslim. During *Ramadan* period, Hira takes the opportunity to present on *Eid*, an initiative that the pastor supports. Although her parents are initially accepting of Hira's decision to attend church for the first time, they express disapproval upon learning about her intention to give a presentation on *Eid*. This reflects the complexities Hira faces as she navigates her cultural and religious identity in a new environment. Hira's determination to present on *Eid* at the church is resolute; she is unwilling to heed her parents' objections. She believes that by sharing her Islamic perspective, she can foster greater understanding of Islam among her peers and strengthen her connections with Americans. Prior to her presentation, Hira collaborates with four American friends to showcase 'a fashion show' highlighting Muslim figures. Following this, she explains the worth of *Eid*, the practice of fasting, and the lunar calendar. The reception of her presentation is positive, with the pastor even inquiring about traditional Pakistani recipes. Subsequently, Hira continues to attend church regularly with Kelly and Amy.

Islam imposes strict regulations on interactions between men and women. The only permissible relationship between genders in Islam is within the confines of marriage. Any actions that may lead to intimacy or sexual relations outside of marriage are considered sinful in the eyes of God. In Pakistan, these religious laws are generally enforced rigorously, and Hira's family adheres to these beliefs as well. Since Hira was a child, Abbu has mentioned that "Boys are not friends, he had said. Classmates, yes. Husbands, yes. But not friends" (Amna, 2022, p. 28). This makes Hira not get used to having the relationship with boys before. In the United States, Hira begins to form friendships with boys. Her first friendship is with an Omani student named Hamid, with whom she connects as fellow Muslim diasporic students. Their relationship remains platonic and is characterized by a genuine friendship. Hira's second significant relationship develops with Ali Zaidi, the son of her mother's Pakistani friend studying at New York University. Ammi encourages Hira to connect with Ali for support during her studies abroad. Initially, Hira reaches out to him through Facebook, and after establishing a friendship on social media, they transition to regular phone conversations. Their exchanges become more personal as they share their life stories, fostering a sense of comfort between them. While Hira can allow herself to even touch Ali and become physical with him, she still does not go as far as having sex with him to keep loyalty to her no sex before marriage rule. This case illuminates that Hira works in between two cultures; the tradition of her Pakistani origin and the relatively liberal culture of the host country.

Conclusion

The findings of this research manifest that diaspora is a significant factor in the formation of hyphenated identities, contributing to immigrants' sense of alienation. Dur-e-Aziz Amna (2022) skillfully captures the complexities and challenges faced by individuals with multiple cultural and national identities in her literary work, *American Fever*. The novel serves as a narrative of diasporic experiences faced by immigrants, particularly through the character of

Hira. Hira's journey from Pakistan to Oregon encapsulates the complexities of cultural displacement and identity formation within the modern immigrant experience. As Hira navigates her new environment, she embodies the tensions of maintaining her Pakistani roots while adapting to American cultural norms, ultimately evolving into a hybrid identity. By examining Hira's struggles and adaptations, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how diasporic identities are shaped by both historical legacies and contemporary global dynamics, offering critical insights into the challenges and resilience of immigrant communities.

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