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## NEGOTIATING IDENTITY: A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF ALI ETERAZ'S CHILDREN OF DUST

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## ABSTRACT

*The present study is an endeavor to analyze Ali Eteraz' memoir Children of Dust, having a post-colonial and diasporic setting. Children of Dust is an autobiographical writing with the story of the quest for religion and identity of the early immigrants. After the birth of Eteraz, his family moved to U.S where Eteraz has experience of quest for logic and yearning for religion. The study employs a mixed theoretical framework of Homi K Bhabha and Stuart Hall's ideas on post colonialism and diaspora, and the analysis provides a nuanced insight to the impacts of multiculturalism on a person's identity who is surrounded by fluidity and ambivalence. The study concludes that the culture and religion of the origin are always there to have a strong influence over an individual's true identity. The research significantly adds valuable insights to the academia on post-colonialism and diaspora.*

### **Keywords**

*Ambivalence, Cultural Identity, Diasporic Identity, Hybridity, Mimicry, Politics of representation, Third Space*

### **Introduction**

The countries that have been through the colonialism and imperialism present the clear picture of Post-colonialism. The subjugation of weak and less-powerful country by the powerful ones fall in the category of colonialism. Post-colonialism or Post-colonial literature provides the depiction of those countries and characters who are under the influence of colonialism. The writers from the oppressed countries i.e. Africa, Somalia, Australia, India, Pakistan, Ireland and Trinidad write back to the writers who support oppressors. These writers, through fiction and poetry, have projected the colonial ideologies and violence perpetrated by the colonizers (Dar, 2019).

The concept of identity is central to the understanding the human experience, especially for those living in diaspora. *Children of Dust* by Ali Eteraz is a memoir that vividly depicts the complex process of identity recognition as experienced by a young man caught between his Pakistani roots and his life in the United States. This study aims to explore how the protagonist navigates the challenges of forming a coherent sense of Post-colonial and diasporic realities.

1. How do post-colonial concepts like hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence manifest in the protagonist's journey?
2. How does Hall's Cultural Identity framework illuminate the protagonist's negotiation of belonging and displacement?

The study is based on the following research objectives:

- To apply Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and third space to analyze the protagonist's identity construction
- To investigate how the protagonist navigates the challenges of forming a coherent sense of identity in the face of post-colonial and diasporic realities

*Children of Dust* is a majestic novel by Ali Eteraz. It is a memoir of Eteraz's life where the memories of the East and the experiences of the West are recalled. He belonged to a Muslim family. Before his birth his father was having a Muslim ritual (Mannat), in which he decides that he will make his son a true follower and scholar of Islam. Eteraz gets his education at Madrassa in Pakistan. Later on, he moves to West for further studies where he changes his name due to his classmates who tease him by his name. After studying post-modernism in the West he feels somehow different

about the religion but due to his duties and status quo he remains strict to his religious duties. Afterwards, it is seen that he helps the young generation to be good Muslims and also raises funds for Palestine. Then he returns to homeland to marry a pious woman. This lyrical, penetrating saga from a brilliant new literary voice captures the heart of our universal quest for identity and the temptations of religious extremism that he remained in America and studied there under the American Biblical Belt, yet attached to his own culture and religion (Goodreads, 2009).

### **Literature Review**

Mertania & Amelia's (2020) study presents an in-depth analysis of Rabindranath Tagore's novel, *The Home and the World*, exploring the author's internal conflict regarding Western culture and India's colonial experience under British rule. Through the protagonist Nikhil, Tagore embodies his own struggle, portrayed a hybrid identity caught between British and Indian culture. The study aims to examine Nikhil's hybrid identity within the context of colonialism and the Swadeshi movement, utilizing Bhabha's post-colonial theory and hybrid identity concept. The study is qualitative in nature based on the dialogues and narration from the novel to investigate Nikhil's hybrid identity. The finding reveals that British colonialism significantly influenced Indian society, leading to a complex hybrid identity formation. Nikhil's hybrid manifests in many key aspects. Due to the experience of hybrid cultures he becomes the victim of identity crisis. It seems impossible for him to remain separate from the spell of colonialism in his daily routine. The education he gets is set on the terms of colonialism. His lifestyle also reflects the blending of both the cultures. His cultural affiliation and social interactions also depict the hybridity of British and Indian cultural influence. Meanwhile, Nikhil's involvement in the Nationalist movement exemplifies the tension between embracing Western ideals and asserting Indian identity. The study contributes to the understanding of hybrid identity in colonial and post-colonial contexts, shedding light on the complexities of cultural exchange, resistance, and self-definition. By applying Bhabh's theoretical framework, the study demonstrates how literary works like *The Home and the World* offer valuable insights into the human experience of navigating multiple cultural identities.

In the views of Sherstha (2022), *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai is vivid depiction of loss of identity in the post-colonial era. Kiran Desai is a diasporic Indian novelist who has written fiction to show the post effect of colonialism. A study has been conducted to analyze the presentation of post-colonial effects on the diasporic characters of South East and India. The qualitative study is based on the framework of Homi K. Bhaba's Hybridity and Mimicry. It is also based on Stuart Hall's concept of Diaspora and Identity. The research shows that Desai has portrayed the character in such a manner that they present the real picture of effect of post-colonialism. The characters are portrayed as Western immigrants who suffer the consequences of diaspora. On one hand they get better basic needs but in return they face identity crisis. While living in the West for many years they still feel identity crisis. Their experience depicts that the diaspora has brought them a sense of alienation. They are experiencing an entire new culture there. Although they get the best basic necessities there yet there remains an urge of their own culture and tradition. That hybridity of culture is not acceptable for them. They still feel more inclined towards their own culture. So, the research reveals that the post-colonial effects can clearly be seen in the selected text.

Mastoi, et al. (2024) has studied a renowned Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid's work under the light of post-colonialism. The work selected for analysis is *The Last White*

Man. The story opens up where the characters are facing identity crisis. They seem to be a victim of diaspora with less awareness of their own cultures. As the story moves on they are presented as the less privileged individuals. They feel themselves adopting the new culture where they are living. The story forwards with the characters who are facing hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence. They are also facing multi cultures as a result they are lacking the sense of their own culture. Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry and Ambivalence has been applied on the text and the result depict deep impact of post-colonialism on the characters. The characters feel loss of identity due to living in multiple cultures. The story moves with the notion of changing and developing new cultural structures. It comes to surface that a few characters in the story suggest to develop such a cultural model that should be easy for everyone to adopt. So, a sense of non-cultural adoption is developed. While suffering from the identity crisis, caused by the diaspora the characters are forced to adopt new culture for the survival. In the end it is shown that those who did not try to adopt a new culture while living in an alien society have become the victim of loss of identity. In addition, those who tried to follow the new cultural model they also felt the loss of identity in the end of the story. Therefore, the story is all about the characters who come across multiple cultures but become confused about adopting the new one or holding the new one. This depicts the true colors of post-colonialism in the text *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid. So, the researcher concludes that the text comes up with the true colors of effects of post-colonialism. The characters in the novel come up with the idea of adopting new culture but they hung somewhere in between. They face loss of identity, mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. But being in hybridity keeps them away from the purity of adoption of their own culture. Meanwhile, they could not adopt the new culture due to the identity crisis. At times they feel less privileged due to their identity and roots from a colonized country. In the light of the concept "Third space" there emerges a need for the characters to be a part of it. This space emerges when a person leaves his own culture but resists to adopt a new one. The space in between the cultures is termed as the Third Space by Bhabha. The characters are forced either to forget their indigenous culture and accept the dominance of Western culture or accept the third space for culture in their lives. They feel like they get less chance of employment due to their identity. Their skills are simply ignored due to their identity. So, their diaspora leads them to the identity crisis.

All of the above discussion and review of the relevant literature on this area of research, a number of similar researches on other literary works have been found and the relevant themes, key concepts and terms have been extracted. The literature on the selected text have been found in a limited range, which paves the way for the execution of this research on *Children of Dust*, proving to be a fruitful addition in the research on post colonialism. This research entitling: **The Struggle for Identity: A Post-colonial Reading of Eteraz's *Children of Dust***, opens new doors for the further researches in this specific domain.

### **Research Methodology and Framework**

Hybridity is considered a state of mind which has three various forms. The first form of hybridity according to Bhabha, is identity, the second form is hybridity as power and the third one is hybridity as blasphemy. The theory of Bhabha focuses on the colonizers and colonized, the oppressor and oppressed which always remain intertwined. The concept of hybridity revolves around the colonizer and colonized including the master versus slave relationship. However, this relationship is evolving

with time and there is seen no hurdle in its continuity as the colonization has left deep imprints on the human psyche (Tomarken, 2020). Bhabha's concept of hybridity is of great significance in the cultural studies. It is influential not only in the critical theory and application of literature but it is of great significance in other human sciences like arts, criticism anthropology and history. Bhabha has paved a totally new way for the analysis of the texts through his unique concepts (Mizutani, 2013).

Bhabha's concept of the third space refers to the liminal space where different cultures intersect and create new meanings. The selected memoir carry a number of textual evidences, showing the inculcation of third space. The concept of 'ambivalence' by Homi K Bhabha refers to the situation where colonial and postcolonial subjects are caught between diverse ethnic and ideological patterns, and an ambiguous condition of negotiation and translation dwells there.

The concept of identity crisis, introduced by Erik Erikson, denotes the introspective process by which individuals examine their self perception and how others perceive them. This theme has been extensively explored in world literature, including Indian English literature where authors like R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao have delved into identity crisis through the lens of social, economic and cultural contexts.

In the post-globalization era, South Asian diasporic writers (especially from Pakistan and India) such as Mohsin Hamid, Aamir Hussain, Ali Eteraz, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh and Anita Desai have offered unique perspectives on identity crisis, further enriching the literary discourse on this theme.

In the views of Stuart Hall, identity is an ever-changing and evolving process. It's not a fixed entity or essential category, rather it's dynamic. It can be multi-faceted and hybrid, formed in result of intersection of race, class, gender, nation, culture, religion or origin, which always remain in negotiation to one another. Identity is formed through the ways of expression and tools of representation such as language, culture and media. Power relations are also a source of shaping and molding identities like colonialism, imperialism and other forms of socio-cultural and economic domination. Similarly, this memoir is a true manifestation of dynamic cultural identity.

Stuart Hall's views about "diasporic identity" are as identity is not pure, fixed or homogeneous, rather it is a product of experiences in a diasporic space. Stuart Hall's concept of the politics of representation emphasizes the importance of understanding how representations of identity are constructed and negotiated. In *Children of Dust*, the protagonist's struggles to represent himself and his cultural identity, are the evidences of the politics of representation.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This study is an endeavor to look into the complex ideas of identity formation, its fluid nature and conciliation in Ali Eteraz's memoir *Children of Dust*, by implying a post-colonial theoretical framework. By applying Homi K Bhabha's famous ideas of mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity and Third Space, along with theoretical postulates by Stuart Hall as cultural identity, diasporic identity and the politics of representation. As the history of the Sub-Continent carry the rich marks of colonial mindset and still that strain runs through the bloods of its inhabitants, still the colonial fears lurk into their minds, the Pakistani landscape is no exception in this regard. Eteraz's *Children of Dust* is a touching depiction of identity within the post-colonial landscape, where there is an intersection of conservative Islamic practices, Western affecting powers, and an individual's ambitions, is at work. That intersection leads to the creation of spaces of opposition, immunity, transmutation and equivocality. This chapter presents

a critique of Eteraz's journey, encapsulating the dichotomies and tensors, integral to the identity formation processes, leading to a subtle and refined insight to post-colonial subjectivity and the intricacy of cultural belonging in an overwhelming globalization. This study, based on the close reading of the text and its analysis, uncovers the Carrefour of individualistic and corporate personas and their construction within the wider paradigm of post-colonial narrative.

The most prominent feature of post-colonialism, prevailing in the novel *Children of Dust*, is hybridity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity refers to the creation of new cultural forms and identities through the interaction of different cultures. In *Children of Dust*, the protagonist's experiences in Pakistan and the United States illustrate the hybridity of cultural identities. As there is a passage in the prologue, which can be taken as the outline of the narrative and a track record of the narrator's hybrid identities, which he adopts during course of the text. As Eteraz states:

. . . *mannat*, made before my birth, singularly and exclusively guided my life for three decades . . . I studied at madrassas. I rejected the companionship of non-Muslims. I rose up against secularism. I struggled on behalf of oppressed Muslims. And, in the age of terrorism, I sought to become a reformer of Islam. (p. 1)

The narrator's acts as a crusader of Islam implies an involvement in a hybrid ID, creating an amalgam of conventional Islamic ideology and modern radical thoughts. This polarization signals the formation of "hybrid space" where conventional and modern values share space and carry an influence over one another.

The title and description of the first book "*The Promised-Abir ul Islam*" the description underneath about the writer's experiences of childhood till adolescence phase in the homeland where he attends a conservative madrasa is pretty much suggestive of a blend of diversified ethnic, spiritual and individualistic personas. The blending of two linguistic patterns in the title as "*Abir ul Islam* (Fragrance of Islam)-an Arabic phrase" and "*The Promised*" an English one is a sort of another implication of hybridization of language and cultural references. This hybridity runs through the whole text on a number of places.

An evidence of cultural and religious assimilation is there at the end of section 4, Book 1 where the speaker is forced and frightened to adopt expected behaviors and practices for being a good Muslim boy, what his Muslim family and society defines for its followers, but likely to lose his own liberty and authority over his actions and intentions. As, "As I finished my hundredth petition, I began loathing girls. Being nice to them upset Allah, and upsetting Allah's rules was not something becoming of Abir ul Islam." (p. 29) Here the writer is repeating the postulations for seeking forgiveness to Almighty as assigned by his aunt, shows his adherence to Islamic rules. But doing so, he's also personalizing a bad image for the girls. This act of mimicry is a form of ethnic and spiritual absorption, erasing his own liberty and agency over his life.

The idea of mimicry can be seen in another character in the memoir, the protagonist's mother who on reaching America turns to be a Salafi. Ammi's inclination towards Salafism can be taken as form of mimicry, where she tries to practice the ideals of a conservative sect of Islam. She purchases a number of books on Hadith, reads bulks of books written by famous Salafi scholars, and signs up for Salafi magazines. As in Eteraz puts it in the text, "By the time we settled in Alabama, in a town in the heart of the Bible Belt, Ammi considered herself a Salafi" (p. 154) This mimicry may not be a complete transformation, but rather a strategic tool to navigate her Muslim identity in a non-Muslim country, a trick for survival and adaptation in a new and stranger cultural setting. In simple words, Abir's mother masks a new identity of a practicing

Muslim lady, a Salafi in a new community.

The very first line of the Prologue, is a clue of narrative's alignment with post-colonial themes, especially with those of Bhabha and Hall. As "In Mecca fathers become inclined to give up their sons." (p. 1) reflects a confliction between emotions and dualities dwelling in the acts of devotion and sacrifice associated with the Holy Land of Mecca, supporting the idea of ambivalence. Fathers devoting their beloved ones (their sons) can be taken as symbol of that tension between love bonding and spiritual duty, indicating the ambivalence of identity where cultural or ethnic inclinations clash with the pull for blood relations. In this case, the city of Mecca (the House of Allah) serves as a symbolic space (Third Space) where belief and emotions intersect, giving an air to an intricate manifold identity for an individual entangled between two powers. The passage after this line, affirms all these assumptions where there is a reference to the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) and to the Prophet Ibrahim (عليه السلام).

During a scene where the writer is caught by his family while roleplaying with Sina, and the remarks from his mother and aunt about his being a Shaytan, lead to the idea of ambivalence as he is stuck between religious expectations and personal desires. As it has been quoted:

"Good boys don't play games with girls," Ammi said. "It is gunah to play games with girls. Do you understand?" I nodded.

"Have you become Shaytan?"

"No. I am Abir ul Islam." (p. 27)

The writer, Abir ul Islam, is caught between two opposite values which clash on different levels; spiritual side (claiming to avoid interaction with the opposite gender) and individual side (personal desire and pull towards the girls). The speaker's reply "I am Abir ul Islam," to his mother in return to being called a devil, is a reference to his struggles for asserting his identity as a good Muslim, while the presence of a pull towards forbidden play with girls. This ambivalent behavior suggests the swaying condition of his mind between conventionalism and individualism.

The narrator's description of the four old brothers and their evening rituals creates a sense of a third space, where different cultural, religious and temporal references converge. This space is characterized by a sense of timelessness, where past, present and future blend together. The brothers' conversations about the Prophets, the hookah-smoking, and the prayer rituals all contribute to this sense of a third space, where the narrator feels a sense of continuity and immortality.

In this third space, the narrator experiences a sense of transcendence where identities, ethnicities and historical spans become boundless of time and space. The speaker's statement, "They were above and beyond history, beyond Shia and Sunni, beyond India and Pakistan, beyond Muslim and not." (p. 49). These lines suggest the dwelling of a third space that is transcending and beyond the binaries.

A passage in Book II (Chapter 1) carries the idea of Third Space where the boiler room in the basement of their house in America, serves as *masjid* and the speaker inwardly dislikes to be there. The passage illustrates the writer's experience of having a space which is neither there nor here, but rather in-between. This is central to the Third Space, where an individual is caught in the state of ambiguity and uncertainty. The protagonist is confused between two ethnicities and religions, and is trying to look for his true identity and culture amid a novel and stranger environment. In Third Space, individuals are pushed to decode diverse ethnic and linguistic patterns. The sense of hybridity and mimicry among the protagonist's character also strengthen the idea of Third Space as both are also cardinal to it. This framework provides a more

complex understanding of narrator's identity, navigating the ways in which he is entangled between cultural diversity and multiple language systems.

In the views of Stuart Hall, identity is an ever-changing and evolving process. It's not a fixed entity or essential category, rather it's dynamic. It can be multi-faceted and hybrid, formed in result of intersection of race, class, gender, nation, culture, religion or origin, which always remain in negotiation to one another. Identity is formed through the ways of expression and tools of representation such as language, culture and media. Power relations are also a source of shaping and molding identities like colonialism, imperialism and other forms of socio-cultural and economic domination. Similarly, this memoir is a true manifestation of dynamic cultural identity.

From the start of the memoir, there are a number of textual evidences and episodes where the religious and cultural rituals are being performed or about which the narrator is being guided and instructed, like the gossips about Prophets, the associations with the pious personalities from the Islamic history, all of that adds up to shape up speaker's first identity as the promised one to serve the Islam and to be a practicing Muslim. Some of the significant references are: *mannat* (the accord taken up by his parents in the Holy Land of Mecca and rubbing his body against the *Ka'aba*), the woman thrusting him *Surah Yasin* and instructing him to read for the calmness of his younger brother's soul, the incidents from the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), his mother telling him the story of *Dajjal* and his faithful presence to the mosque with regular prayers, his finding of mosque as the place to comfort his sorrow after his younger brother's death, the incident from the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) about the prayer increasing sick old goat's milk, his father sending him to madrasa relieving him from school and his wish to make his son a *hafiz* because it also aligns with that covenant with Allah about the service of Islam, arranging Qari Adil for teaching him Quran and Islam, presence of books (*Baang-e-Dra*, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, *Lives of the Prophets*) centering the subjects of Islam, wearing *shalwar kameez* and *topi* (a proper outfit of a Muslim kid, studying Islam), learning the pronunciation of Islamic language (Arabic) and the Islamic way (the Arab way), mastering the act of urination in an Islamic way, bearing the pain (stemming from a wound caused by a shattered cola bottle) in an Islamic way as Hazrat Ali did, the episode of angels, and bearing the brutal punishments given at *madrasa* as the preparations for the service of Islam.

Stuart Hall's views about "diasporic identity" are as identity is not pure, fixed or homogeneous, rather it is a product of experiences in a diasporic space. In Book II (Chapter 5), the protagonist is facing the same situation of diasporic identity, as he is caught between two different cultures: one is his Muslim heritage, his roots (his real identity) and the other is his desired to adopt an American identity. The agents involved in shaping narrator's diasporic identity are migration, socio-cultural displacement, and performance of diversified cultural norms. There is a tension running in his mind and he's torn between his desire to be a part of dominant American culture, and his real cultural and religious identity (a Pakistani Muslim), which leads him to be looked as "other" by the natives. As Eteraz says:

...I used non-religious justifications for avoiding girls when I had to explain myself, because I was too embarrassed to admit to non-Muslims that it was Islam—archaic, anachronistic, exotic Islam—that controlled me. Admitting that would lead me to be viewed as an outsider—and I wanted nothing more than to be American. (p. 185)

According to Stuart Hall, the diasporic identity involves a process of adjustment and translation between different cultural norms. Abir ul Islam, in his struggle to be an



American, is seen constantly adjusting himself between his Muslim identity (the real) and his American dream. This situation is constructing his identity in a more complex way.

In a study, Mertania and Amelia (2020) examine Tagore's *The Home and the World* through the lens of post-colonialism and concludes with the traces of hybridity and multi-culturalism. The central character in the novel, Nikhil experiences hybridism and fall prey to identity crisis. Similarly, Mahnoor (2023) has applied Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry, Identity Crisis and Diaspora on Sara's *Meatless Days*. The story revolves around socio-political condition of Pakistan after the partition. Suleri has depicted that after the partition Zia has guised himself as an ambassador of Islam and applies the Islamization. It is evident through the incidents of novel that Islamization is just a technique to subjugate the rights of Pakistani people. So, Zia has used religion to subjugate the rights of individuals in the society. The women in the novel are shown more alienated and less privileged. Thus the researcher concludes that migration, cultural hybridity and diaspora are clearly present in the novel. Identity crisis is also present in the novel where Suleri quotes her mother who distinctly feels lost while not living in Lahore. As Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" refers to the creation of new cultural forms and identities through the interaction of different cultures. In *Children of Dust*, the protagonist's experiences in Pakistan and the United States illustrate the hybridity of cultural identities. As there is a passage in the prologue, which can be taken as the outline of the narrative and a track record of the narrator's hybrid identities, which he adopts during course of the text. The narrator's acts as a crusader of Islam implies an involvement in a hybrid ID, creating an amalgam of conventional Islamic ideology and modern radical thoughts. This polarization signals the formation of "hybrid space" where conventional and modern values share space and carry an influence over one another.

My work aligns perfectly with that of Sherstha (2022), and others mentioned above, in terms of mimicry and hybridity. The protagonist from *Children of Dust* goes through the same conditions throughout his journey towards knowing his real self, his true identity. An evidence of cultural and religious assimilation is there at the end of section 4, Book 1 where the speaker is forced and frightened to adopt expected behaviors and practices for being a good Muslim boy, what his Muslim family and society defines for its followers, but likely to lose his own liberty and authority over his actions and intentions. The writer repeats the postulations for seeking forgiveness to Almighty as assigned by his aunt, shows his adherence to Islamic rules. But doing so, he's also personalizing a bad image for the girls. This act of mimicry is a form of ethnic and spiritual absorption, erasing his own liberty and agency over his life.

Chapagae (2024) intends to find out the effects of colonialism and imperialism on African society depicted in *Things Fall Apart*. The researcher studies the hegemony created by the judicial, education, medical and church missionary institutions. There occur many incidents in the novel that depict the effects of colonialism. When the son of the protagonist leaves his religion and accepts Christianity, there emerges a mimicry in the novel. The acceptance of Christianity and mocking their own former religion by the brothers of the protagonist also depict the effects of hegemony created by the colonizers. There occurs a situation of anarchy due to the loss of identity. Similarly in my work on *Children of Dust*, the idea of mimicry can be seen in another character in the memoir, the protagonist's mother who on reaching America turns to be a Salafi. Ammi's inclination towards Salafism can be taken as form of mimicry, where she tries to practice the ideals of a conservative sect of Islam. She purchases a number of books on Hadith, reads bulks of books written by famous Salafi scholars,

and signs up for Salafi magazines. That miming is also an effect of diasporic space where the protagonist's parents think it safe to be attached with their religion of origin. So, my study finds support from Chapagae's work as both deals with the same ideas of mimicry, adding to the existing body of knowledge on post colonialism.

In the light of the concepts of "Ambivalence & Third space", a study has been conducted by Mastoi et al., (2024). They are of the view that there emerges a need for the characters to be a part of third space. The third space emerges when a person leaves his own culture but resists to adopt a new one. The space in between the cultures is termed as the Third Space by Bhabha. The characters are forced either to forget their indigenous culture and accept the dominance of Western culture or accept the third space for culture in their lives. They feel like they get less chance of employment due to their identity. Their skills are simply ignored due to their identity. So, their diaspora leads them to the identity crisis.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the text indicates the traces of endeavors made to look for agency and identity via miming. The characters in the memoir, especially Abir ul Islam and his mother, seems struggling in navigating their cultural and religious identities within a totally strange and unfamiliar spatial context. The narrator of the story is, at several times, pushed to wear an apparel of a true conservative Muslim boy, by his family, friends and other social agents. But in attempt to follow a path, chosen for him by others, he loses his own liberty and autonomy. Along with that, the memoir highlights the notion of hybrid identities, through looking deeply into the speaker's experiences in his homeland (Pakistan) and in a diasporic setting (the United States of America). The main character, Abir ul Islam is seen torn in between the conventional religious beliefs (from the religion of his forefathers, Islam) and the influences posed by the modern Western life in USA, which leads him to a state of hybrid identities. That sense of hybridity integrates fluid and dynamic identities. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that the protagonist is caught between diverse ethnic identities; as his religious identity as a Muslim (by faith), as a Pakistani (by nationality) and as part of modern community (an American). But the narrator, despite of his struggles to be the part of American culture, feels excluded from it. The intersection of multiple identities leads to a condition of segmented self. Each time, the narrator reaches to a point where he once again determines to adopt another identity, a new one which would be aligned to his desired life. In the memoir, the characters (especially the protagonist) are confused between two ethnicities and religions, and try to look for their true identity and culture amid a novel and stranger environment. In Third Space, individuals are pushed to decode diverse ethnic and linguistic patterns. The sense of hybridity and mimicry among the protagonist's character also strengthen the idea of Third Space as both are also cardinal to it.

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