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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Reimagining Pakistani Muslim Identity in Pre-9/11 America in Selected Pakistani Diasporic Fiction

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study is to examine how pre-9/11 America is portrayed in Pakistani diasporic fiction, and how it shapes Pakistani Muslim identity influencing the interplay between religious and cultural identities. This study applies Aroosa Kanwal's theory of *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11* and Samuel P. Huntington's theory of *Clash of Civilizations and the Making of a New World Order* to analyze both novels to contextualize Pakistan's cultural and religious representation in the pre-9/11 American cities. A qualitative approach has been adopted using interpretation as a research method. The study reveals that both novels emphasize the complex relationship between religious and diasporic identities and challenges experienced by the Pakistani diaspora in pre-9/11 contexts. The study suggests that future research should explore the evolution of Pakistani diasporic fiction post-9/11 to compare how shifting global attitudes have influenced representations of religious and cultural identities.

**KEYWORDS**      9/11, America, Diaspora, Identity, Religion

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**Introduction**

The study investigates the core issues of Pakistani-Muslim diasporic communities pertaining to identity in general and religion in particular by two renowned Pakistani Diasporic Fiction writers. The study focuses on the relationship between religious identity and diasporic identity in *American Dervish* (2013) by Ayad Akhtar and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) by Mohsin Hamid. *American Dervish* has been selected as it was set in pre-9/11 America and it represents characters confronting conflicting identities. The study analyzes both novels in pre-9/11 settings in order to conceptualize Pakistan in pre-9/11 America. America is represented by two of its major cities, New York in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Milwaukee in *American Dervish*. Though *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is essentially considered as a post-9/11 fiction yet its first half, set in pre 9/11 hints at the issues come across by people with multiple identities. Both novels will be analyzed in the light of Aroosa Kanwal's theory of *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11* (2015), and Samuel P. Huntington's theory of *Clash of Civilization and the Making of a New World Order* (1996). The study also employs the ideas of Justin Beaumont and Christopher Baker regarding "*Postcolonialism and Religion*" (2011) in an attempt to identify the spaces of 'Belonging' and 'Becoming'. The study deals with the prospects of a global culture and various problems it may come across.

The study explores the differences and similarities between people of the Pakistani diaspora living in America. It also investigates the postcolonial spaces where people live in a complicated spaces with regard to their conflicting loyalties The diasporic

communities encounter a great cultural shock when it comes to their hybrid identity. They come across a mixed sense of curse and blessing and they become part of a mixed identity that is suspended between the American identity offering them spaces for opportunities and their diminishing cultural and religious identities in the name of modernization, globalization, and secular America where people from across the globe work together for the progress of America. It leads to an ambiguous situation where people of the diaspora are suspended between calling America the centre of all sins, and the land of dreams and hopes for a better future both as corrupt and enviable.

The study also addresses the issues in the pre-9/11 world of America. 9/11 became a deciding factor between 'them' versus 'us'. It drew a line between the American identity and the Muslim identity. The study also explores the place of pre 9/11 religious and cultural identity in post-colonial space with special reference to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *American Dervish* by Ayad Akhtar. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is essentially discussed as 9/11 fiction. It was published after 9/11. However, in this study, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is discussed as pre 9/11 fiction just before 9/11 takes place when Changez was watching it on TV. It will discuss the religious and essentially cultural spaces in pre 9/11 America. *American Dervish*, though written after 11 years since 9/11 took place, has been selected because the novel was set in pre 9/11 America. The discussion deals with New York and Manila with reference to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* whereas *American Dervish* will essentially discuss Milwaukee.

The study is based on the hypothesis that Pakistani diaspora is facing an identity crisis due to their dual identities like the characters of *American Dervish* by Ayad Akhtar and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid.

### Literature Review

An exploration of Pakistani diasporic fiction implies that Pakistani Muslim identity has been explored in post-9/11 America whereas, it hasn't been much explored in pre-9/11 America. There is a dire need to comprehend the social and cultural dynamics experienced by Pakistani immigrants. The existing body of literature often contrasts the post- and pre-9/11 experiences of Pakistani Muslims, conveying a shift in perception and perception. According to Aroosa Kanwal (2015), Shamsie's novels challenge changing global attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, reflecting the dilemmas experienced by Pakistani migrant characters with regard to their hyphenated identities and xenophobic white populations abroad. Sadaf, (2018) noted that the Anglophone fiction of contemporary Pakistani authors is a valuable counter-narrative to dominant 9/11 fiction, reflecting the need for historical context and humanizing tribal populations perceived as 'enemies' in the war on terror. However, Mehta (2020) views Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* as a text that is immune to post-9/11 Islamophobia and geopolitical asymmetries. According to Azeem (2016), contemporary Pakistani diasporic fiction presents a double narrative that resists imperial realism and sovereign violence faced by protagonists as terrorist suspects, challenging both US and British colonization. However, Liao (2013) views *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a post-9/11 novel reflecting the disillusionment and anger of Pakistani diaspora in the US which focus on the impact of 9/11 on their lives and how it has changed their attitude towards their living in the US and emphasizes the need for action against the US. The selected Pakistani diasporic fiction provides a renewed interest in the identities of Pakistani Muslims in pre-9/11 America highlighting the competing cultural identity, and the ever-changing perceptions of Pakistani immigrants, presenting a counter-narrative to the reductive post-9/11 representations of Muslims.

## Material and Methods

The study is qualitative in nature and uses interpretation as a research method. The primary resources for the conduct of the study include *American Dervish* by Ayad Akhtar and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid.

The research article will explore the commonalities and differences between the people with diasporic identities and multiple-religious identities in the characters of the selected texts. However, the focus of the study will be to identify the place of religion and identity in a diasporic American society in pre-9/11 America. The criticism and relevant research articles will be used as secondary resources. Qualitative research will be used to have a better understanding of the complex situation.

## Results and Discussion

The identity of Pakistanis is more complex and intangible in a post-9/11 situation. However, it is noticeable that these complexities emerged, years before 9/11 took place. To have a single identity was equally impossible in pre-9/11 America as it is in post-9/11 America. Nevertheless, there were people in pre-9/11 with diverse backgrounds who had differences strengthening the dividing line between their sense of 'belonging' and their sense of 'becoming'. Moreover, in pre-9/11 America, people were comfortable with their sense of 'being' as a determining force in their sense of 'becoming' and developing as an American. The people living in a diasporic world find themselves torn and caught between two cultures, torn between the Muslim world and the secular world in America. It is pertinent to mention that Pre 9/11 America seems to be welcoming to outsiders. However, it is more welcoming to those individuals for whom religious identity is of secondary importance in comparison with their American or for that matter secular identity.

Identity is not fixed, it is in flux and it is a process that undergoes changes, and transformation. It is in the process of transforming into a changed entity. Identity is, "a production which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Identity involves a process of being and becoming. Being is what one is, and becoming is what one can be. It is also connected to the sense of belonging (to the religious and cultural roots) related to past identity and sense of becoming. "Cultural identity ... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as past" (Hall, 1990, p. 225). People living in diasporic communities are undergoing a constant process of change in terms of their identities. "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, 1990, p. 235). Beaumont and Baker (2011), are of the view that "religion influences an individual both in private life and public life" (p. 33).

Changez feels uncomfortable seeing Erica when she strips off her clothes, and perhaps because of his religious inclination back in his head he was trying to avoid seeing her as he says "I was uncomfortable with her nudity" (Hamid, 2008, p. 127). According to Kanwal (2015), "Competing definitions of Islam and ancestral home serve as the basis for inter- and intra-cultural conflicts in diasporic contexts" (p. 10). In response to a question asked by the interviewer, about his city of birth, Changez responds in excitement "I was from Lahore... home to nearly as many people as New York" (Hamid, 2008, p. 8). It shows his sense of pride upon his place of belonging. Changez also discusses Lahore "with the accreted history of invaders from the Aryans to the Mongols to the British" (Hamid, 2008, p. 8). It shows his sense of awareness regarding his own identity and the place of the colonizer in the history of his sense of belonging. However, during his introduction to his interview, Jim has posed an insulting question that upsets Changez and he feels

uncomfortable. Changez is asked, “And are you on financial aid?” (Hamid, 2008, p. 8). It tortures and injures his cultural identity. Changez is given the impression that he belongs to a poor country and he wants to become a prosperous individual after assuming the American identity. As Changez himself says “his question made me feel uncomfortable” (Hamid, 2008, p. 8). Changez is continuously insulted upon his cultural identity. They make him realize that it was hard to manage for him and his family to send him to America for education. That’s why he came here on scholarship and financial aid. As it is stated in the novel “your family couldn’t afford to send you to Princeton without a scholarship?” (Hamid, 2008, p. 9).

The interview makes him upset and he feels annoyed. It forces him to be louder as he says in the novel “Excuse me, Jim...It came out more aggressively than I intended, my voice rising and taking on an edge” (Hamid, 2008, p. 9). Jim responds to the altered tone of Changez that he has “a temper” (Hamid, 2008, p. 9). Changez emphasizes his hunger for being an American which seems metaphorical. Either this is the hunger for his American identity or it focuses on the hunger of his place of birth, Pakistan. As Jim says “I get where you’re coming from, Changez. You’re hungry, and that’s a good thing in my book” (Hamid, 2008, p. 10). During his stay in Philippines, Changez finds a taxi driver who was showing a strong feeling of dislike towards him which is revealed through the narrator’s remarks, “There was an undisguised hostility in his expression... his dislike was so obvious, so intimate, that it got under my skin. I started back at him, getting angry myself...glaring is something we men of Lahore take seriously” (Hamid, 2008, p. 76). Staring back is part of his cultural practice back in Lahore. He is connected to his past through his habits and cultural practices while adapting and wearing a new identity.

People living in the diasporic community find it hard to be accepted and acknowledged for what they were instead of what they are. Changez tries to guess his staring and suspicious look as he feels that he was a person who “does not like Americans...that he and I shared a sort of Third World sensibility” (Hamid, 2008, p. 77). As Changez better knows him as compared to other Americans. It reflects the feelings of dislike for Americans and at the same time feelings of admiration for them. It shows an ambivalent attitude towards them. Along with all Americans in his crew, he felt himself “the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and –most of all–by my companions” (Hamid, 2008, p. 82). It shows him as an incomplete American and his ‘sense of becoming’ seems incomplete. Changez was never an American, and he will never be an American, and his non-American identity haunts him throughout the story. Changez, as Kanwal (2015) puts it, “happily embraces the American dream and faces no significant problems in being part of mainstream pre-9/11 American society – becomes a victim of “war on terror” after 9/11” (p. 142).

This also shows the desire of people of diasporic communities to assimilate into American society to be part of them and shed off their religious, cultural, and national identity to be part of a symbolic American secular identity. In *American Dervish*, Hayat shares his experience of eating pork and says “...took a bite. My heart raced as I chewed...long forbidden. I felt at once brave” (Akhtar, 2012, p. 4). He also finds himself a complete American after eating pork as he says “I felt like I was complete” (Akhtar, 2012, p. 5). We also find examples of sustaining and keeping their local identities as Hayat talks about becoming Hafiz in the Muslim Community and the practice they call it, “You memorize the Quran...They call it being a *hafiz*” (Akhtar, 2012, p. 6). In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez feels that his transformation into an American culture will pave the way for his assimilation as Changez talks about Underwood Samson that it has “the potential to transform my life as surely as it had transformed his, making my concerns

about money and status things of the distant past" (Hamid, 2008, p. 6). Moreover, with his American identity, he finds himself complete and empowered as Changez says "I felt empowered, and besides, all manners of new possibilities were opening up to me" (Hamid, 2008, p. 42). Even he learnt that he was from New York as he says "I learned to answer when asked where I was from, that I was from New York" (Hamid, 2008, p. 74). This shows the hunger for American identity in Changez where his sense of belonging has no role to play.

Jim insults Changez that being Pakistani, as a poor citizen of a poor country "your family couldn't afford to send you to Princeton without a scholarship?" ...but I was getting annoyed" (Hamid, 2008, p. 10). It is annoying for him and his sense of belonging has not lost its connection. His response was shocking to Americans when he says, "I hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability; the others appeared shocked, and I was forced to explain that I had been joking" (Hamid, 2008, p. 33). It leaves them shocked and makes them upset.

In his meeting with Erica's father, Changez has mixed feelings about his home in Pakistan and America. It makes him uncomfortable when his place of belonging is misrepresented and misrecognized by the American media. As influenced by the media, Erica's father says "Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers" (Hamid, 2008, p. 62). Changez gets annoyed but doesn't utter a single word. Even Erica's father goes to an extreme when he says "And fundamentalism. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism" (Hamid, 2008, p. 63). Though Erica feels the unbecoming situation and in courtesy asks Changez afterwards "I hope you're not still upset about what my dad said" (Hamid, 2008, p. 64). Changez politely responds "Of course not. Not in the least" (Hamid, 2008, p. 64). However, Erica predicts his feelings of discomfort and says laughingly, "You're a terrible liar... You're touchy about where you come from" (Hamid, 2008, p. 64). Erica also says that one's place of belonging to be touchy and sensitive is natural. It gives the impression that one cares about one's sense of belonging. This shows his concern for his sense of belonging in his attempt to find a place in his place of becoming. After this episode, he feels proud and happy that he was wearing his eastern dress as he says "I was glad I had worn my kurta" (Hamid, 2008, p. 65). Changez feels degraded for being Pakistani and it connects him strongly to his roots. According to Huntington (1996), "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and obsessed with the inferiority of their power" (p. 217).

Ahmad's response in *American Dervish* shows aggression towards Professor's remarks regarding scholars who make the claim that the Quran is not the final version. Ahmad expresses anger when he says "Scholars! What scholars make claims without documented findings?" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 8). His voice is raised and he continues to protest as it is a matter of his Muslim identity. "Why has your friend not published his findings yet?" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 8). Sahar also protests and leaves the room.

Prof. Edelstein also expresses his suspicion regarding the Quran as a standard holy book. Hayat asks for the source that "there were aberrations and deviations from the standard Quran that Muslims had been using for more than a thousand years" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 7). American Professor, also claims that Muslims' belief in the Quran as a standard book as received from "God was a fiction" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 7). People of the Pakistani diasporic community are suspicious of Jews who are responsible for the unhealthy relationships between Americans and Pakistanis as it is claimed in the novel, "Pakistan is

going to fall to pieces if the Americans don't help us. But those goddamn Jews don't want them to help us!" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 127).

Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* talks about American procedures of scrutiny and innumerable interviews involved in the selection and this process is used for selection, "In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining" (Hamid, 2008, p. 4). It shows that Pakistani diaspora was willingly assimilating in American culture and ready to share the symbolic space to share a common American experience. America is a symbolic place where dreams are accomplished and desires are fulfilled. As Beaumont and Baker (2011) maintain "The sense of belonging to a global community is compared to that of a family, who come together in one symbolically significant space on a regular basis to share a common experience" (Baker & Beaumont, 2011, p. 42).

For Pakistanis, America is the land of dreams, and people who are aspirant to succeed in their lives look to America. Changez proudly refers to his stay at America, "This is a dream come true. Princeton inspired... I was the star and everything was possible" (Hamid, 2008, p. 3). Even pre-9/11 America was welcoming and ready to incorporate and accept people from diverse religious and cultural groups. As Changez refers to in the novel, "It was a testament to the open-mindedness and...cosmopolitan nature of New York in those days" (Hamid, 2008, p. 55). Beaumont and Baker (2011) establish that "... 'cities of difference' in which narratives of fluid, hybridized and multiple identities ...disrupt colonial, modernist narratives based on static, stratified and essentialized hierarchies of value" (p. 33). Religious differences are sometimes emphasized in America where you have to decide about religious identity as it is stated regarding Nathan referring to the novel, *American Dervish* "you couldn't be Muslim and Jewish at the same time" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 120). Even Nathan's father tries to point out these differences between Muslims and Jews which is later realized by Nathan who says that "I'm such an idiot. My father warned ...no matter who we become, we're always Jews" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 206). It shows that one can be American nationally, but one remains either Jew or Muslim throughout one's life. One's religious identity hardly changes even in the diaspora. These religious differences prevent a meaningful dialogue between people of multiple religious groups. As Hayat during his Quranic lessons tells Imran, "A Jew is the kind of person Allah hates the most in the world" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 216). It reflects lifelong hatred and animosity toward Jews in the minds of Muslims. Sonny Buledi who claims to be an atheist becomes a risk to Muslims' identity and "he'd been mostly shunned by the local Pakistani community" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 86). Beaumont and Baker (2011) continue that "an educational space ... reveal (s) the benefits of membership that such a group can offer...but also a framework for a partially successful integration of religious, ethnic, gendered and political identities on a personal level" (pp. 136-137). Changez feels that he had become part of America successfully and his sense of becoming (an American) seems complete in pre-9/11 America as he claims that "my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and –most of all–by my companions" (Hamid, 2008, p. 82). In *American Dervish*, we are told that "Ghaleb Chatha was holding a fund-raiser for the South Side Islamic Center that very same Saturday" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 86). It demonstrates the desire to keep both identities preserving Muslimness and Americanness. Changez at another place says that he attempted to behave, act, and speak more like an American than a Pakistani. As Akbar S. Ahmed (2003) says that "a person can, and does, possess overlapping identities" (Ahmed, 2003, p. 263).

Pakistani diaspora seems confused between two identities. Their sense of being is hung between their sense of belonging (Pakistani) and the sense of becoming (an American). Their present state is suspended between their past (Pakistani identity) and

their future (a promising future identity that is linked to America). Religion is part of a bigger reality in their life that connects them to their past and hinders them to be part of a secular America. Religious identity is part of their identity in the private sphere whereas in the public sphere they are secular citizens of America. As Beaumont and Baker (2011) define that "Religious identity...is primarily an integrating totality that influences and informs both private and public behavior" (Baker & Beaumont, 2011, p. 33). Changez introduces himself as an American in Philippine and he also feels ashamed sometimes as he seems to relinquish his place of identity in order to embrace his place of becoming. A Pakistani Muslim seems to shed off his Pakistaniness to embrace Americanness as he says in the novel, "I was from New York... I was often ashamed" (Hamid, 2008, p. 74).

Muslims are concerned about their religious identity. As about becoming Hafiz, Hayat talks about Muslims that they "memorize the Quran...They call it being a *hafiz*" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 6). Kanwal (2015) claims that it is important "not to homogenize the complexities of faith-based identities in the diaspora" (p. 9). According to Huntington (1996), "people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms" (p.29). Mina is found to tell children stories about djinns. It shows that the diaspora is concerned about their religious identity and is involved in telling eastern tales. As Hayat talks about ins that in presence of Imran "Mina would begin with a story about *djinns*. *Djinns* were creatures described in the Quran" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 48). Chatha is also found to talk about Americans as infidels and what will happen to them on Doomsday. He used to talk about "what God was going to do to American unbelievers on Judgment Day: "Allah will...fry them just like one of their fishes at their church Friday fish fries!" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 80). Chatha puts his wife, Najat wearing "the full *burqa* in public" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 80). Even Naveed (a complete American) would feel wearisome of Chatha and the rest of the community talking "about the godlessness of American life... He couldn't understand what they were still doing here if they thought it was all so evil" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 80).

According to Bill Ashcroft et. al (2007), the colonial discourse encourages and forces "the colonial subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits...the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer..."(pp. 124-125). They follow and imitate them to assimilate and become part of them. As Changez says about his stay in America that he was "For four and a half years, never an American... I did not think of myself as a Pakistani" (Hamid, 2007, pp. 37-38). In *American Dervish*, during a talk with Mina's father, Naveed says that "Unlike us Pakistanis...Americans know how to make the world a better place" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 282). American domination is the "only domination from which one never recovers... recovers unscarred" (Césaire, 2001, p. 77).

According to Huntington (1996), "the processes of economic modernization...are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity" (Huntington, 1996, 26). While talking to Chatha and other Muslim communities when they were talking about the godlessness of American identity and their economic supremacy, Naveed interrupts them "Your family is taken care of. We're talking about prosperity. That's what you're after" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 126).

The people with diasporic identity are after economic prosperity and progress. It signals growth and advancement. They find resources to live their dreams. It weakens their connection with their sense of belonging and they join hands with the American culture and nationality. They intend to be part of America. As Mina says to Hayat, "With everything in life, Hayat, it's the *intention* that matters" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 53). However, it is like losing one's religious identity. As Rachel says to Hayat, "So you don't know what it's like to lose your faith" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 10).

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez talks of Jim discussing American society in these words: "We're a meritocracy...We believe in being the best... call it professionalism" (Hamid, 2008, p. 41). As Muneer in *American Dervish* explains that "For Punjabis, Sikhs are like what Polish people are here. Everybody makes fun of them" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 142). It opens the possibility of dialogue between people of multiple identities. As Hayat's mother says that "Muhammad met Christian and Jewish holy men from whom he'd learned about Abraham and his teachings about the one and only true God" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 50). She continues that "It was from these elder Christians and Jews, Mina claimed, that Muhammad learned to pray" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 51). Muneer talks about the similarities between Muslims and Jews. She says that Jews "slaughtered their animals as we Muslims did, by bleeding them to death as an imam or rabbi stood over the animal and spoke God's name" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 119). She was also impressed by the Jewish Day of Atonement as she says that it was "as fine an idea as there had ever been about a holiday, and that everyone, Jewish or not, should also be celebrating it" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 120). We find differences at its peak when about Jews Chatha talks about Jews and it is said "Pakistan is not the issue. The real problem is Israel. We will never have peace in this world as long as they're living on that land" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 127). It becomes an alarming situation for Naveed when he hears them talking that Jews must be killed as it is said "Killing them all...: "Like Hitler" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 128). In Huntington's words (1996) "conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic" (Huntington, 1996, p. 22). In *American Dervish*, most of the Muslim characters think that Christians and Jews are responsible for creating capitalism and introducing it to the world and inventing an interest to repress the third-world countries. As it is said that "Weber shows how Christians created capitalism! He shows you that capitalism is their *real* religion!" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 123) and "Everyone knows...that interest is a *Jewish* invention" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 125). We find glimpses of the extremist approach in Naqvis as they say that "churches should be destroyed because Christians are *kuffar*" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 125). According to Huntington (1996) "People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations change". (Huntington, 1996, p. 24) In interaction with Jews, Muslims seem to be impressed by Jews and their ways and manners to lead a life as Muneer talks about her father and relates her with Jews. She says "he wasn't really even a Muslim man. He was more like a Jew" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 28). She likes comparing and relating all good and positive things with Jews. Even the identity of Jews in the diaspora undergoes change as Rachel talks of her religious leanings because of her father but her mother was hardly interested in religion. As she says that her mother was an atheist and it was her father who led them to go to the temple but her mother was never happy about it and she always saw her complaining.

Mina also talks of the father's duty to teach his son to pray. As she says "In Islam, it was a father's duty to teach his son to pray" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 63). Hayat says that it gives him the freedom to discuss religion openly quite contrary to other Muslims. As he says that discussing religion like any other religion is "freeing. So freeing. It's the most freeing thing that's ever happened to me" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 11). Even while hearing professor Edelstein talking about the Quran just as a book "makes me feel like going out to celebrate" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 11). *American Dervish* talks about Jewish ways and talks with a sense of admiration as it has been discussed in the novel that "Jewish respect for *real* learning, not the rote memorization and mindless regurgitation of tradition he saw as common to Muslims" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 118). Even Muslims are found talking of *Ijtihad* as Mina and Muneer during their talk say "what we Muslims called *ijtihad*, or personal interpretation. The only problem was, the so-called Gates of *Ijtihad* had been famously "closed" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 66).



Hayat also tells that his parents belong more to America than the place of their birth as he says "Most Muslim kids... have already known the stories of Muhammad's life... But neither of my parents was particularly religious" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 49). their sense of becoming overshadows their sense of belonging and they want their kid to think more like an American than a Pakistani. However, the sense of belonging always chases them. "A person can be ... a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim" (Huntington, 1996, p. 27).

Hayat's mother was to some extent concerned about her Muslim identity as Hayat puts here that "if pork was being served the following day...I'd be needing a bag lunch" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 18). There is also a reference to a Muslim girl eloping with an American. It shows that the dream to be an American was equally found in men and women of Pakistani origin. As it is said about such a woman "The one whose wife ran away with the American?" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 81). According to Huntington (1996) "the people...of non-Western civilizations...join the West as movers and shapers of history" (p. 27). In *American Dervish*, we find the Pakistani diaspora ambivalent regarding their Americanness and Muslimness. As Naveed gets confused when Muneer always complains about Muslim men but still hates them as Naveed says "All your complaining about Muslim men, and... criticizing me for not being Muslim" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 63). Even he is not feeling happy upon his son's Islamic lessons as he says "I don't want to see you end up as a *maulvi*, Hayat" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 64). Muneer talks of Muslim men being biased and prejudiced against women as she says "Muslim men are terrified of women...all of them" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 117). Muneer was very much impressed by Jews as she told Hayat that "I'm bringing you up like a little Jew" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 117). Naveed tells Mina about those Muslims in America who are obsessed with their Islamic identity as he says in a derogatory sense "There are idiots enough here for someone to lead. You just haven't met them yet" (Akhtar, 2012, p. 64).

## Conclusion

So, it is visible in both selected texts that there are issues of the Pakistani-Muslim diasporic community pertaining to their cultural and religious identity. Hence, it demonstrates that religious and cultural identities are shaped, influenced, and even transformed by the interaction between people of multiple identities. In pre-9/11 America, identity was itself an issue and people were hung between multiple identities and which gave birth to more complex and psychological issues in post-9/11 America. Muslim diaspora was comfortable with their sense of becoming (American) and their sense of belonging (Pakistani and Islamic identities) was losing its predominant role in a diasporic community living in America. Cultural assimilation was chosen deliberately in the name of modernization, globalization, and professionalism.

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