



## RESEARCH PAPER

### A Postcolonial Study of Hybrid Identity through 'Varieties of Object' in Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone*

<sup>1</sup>Rabia Faiz\* and <sup>2</sup>Prof. Dr. Ijaz Asghar

1. PhD Scholar, Department of English, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Chairperson, Department of Linguistics and Language Studies, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author** | [rabia.faiz@uos.edu.pk](mailto:rabia.faiz@uos.edu.pk)

## ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore hybrid identity through 'varieties of object' in Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* from a postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial studies break free from the stereotypical portrayal of the East and the West by emphasizing a fluid version of identity shaped through history as well as contemporary geopolitical realities. A qualitative textual analysis is carried out through Burke's category of hybrid objects including artefacts, people, practices and hybrid text. The analysis is done through the application of postcolonial theoretical postulates of third space and fluid identity by Bhabha and Hall. The study concludes that nations or groups of people exist on a cultural continuum and the boundaries between them remain fluid. The study is significant as it approaches the postcolonial issue of hybrid identity in an all-encompassing manner by suggesting to go beyond mere character analysis toward the study of infrastructure and textual formation of the novel.

**KEYWORDS** | Artefacts, Hybrid Identity, Hybrid Text, Postcolonial Study

## Introduction

In the contemporary global scenario, the identities of nations and individuals are continuously shaping and reshaping themselves through diaspora and cultural contact. The questions of belonging and alienation assume a cardinal value in the sociocultural sphere igniting discourses in the paradigms of migration and displacement (Kurvet-Käosaar et al., 2019). The postcolonial paradigm is a significant development as it helps uncover the emerging global and cultural realities through their correlation with the colonial and imperial legacy (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Postcolonial theory centres on a conceptual reorientation towards the knowledge developing outside the traditionally powerful West (Young, 2003). Its field of inquiry goes beyond the knowledge structures to deal with wider approaches concerning the contestation of colonial legacy (Loomba, 1998).

Identity is an intrinsic topic in postcolonial exploration. The notion of a fixed identity with its defining traits is challenged in the contemporary realities of war, exile, migration and decolonization (Rutherford, 1998). According to Hall (1990), colonial legacy creates an unsettling space where identity keeps positioning and repositioning itself in the social context, memory and power. For Bhabha, these spaces are conducive to the interplay of dynamic identities. Since culture is strongly related to identity, it also retains the feature of dynamism and fluidity and on its journey, it may land in spaces to which it does not belong (Spivak, 2006).

Postcolonial identity approaches to literature shift away from the theoretical or linguistic models to account for the characters' lived experiences. They are also concerned with the questions of home and belonging in diaspora conditions. During recent years,

discourses from the periphery have concerned themselves with the issues of identity, belonging, culture, power and gender through literary language. The portrayal of these experiences in postcolonial literature contributes to raising awareness about cultural citizenship, cosmopolitan justice, and global inequality in addition to the themes of nostalgia, and imaginative reconstruction of the home and identity (Nayar, 2008). For instance, Shamsie displays politics of identity in cultural and cross-cultural settings raising many questions in the postcolonial debate of power relations (Kiran, 2017). The writers from South Asia and Africa are striving to write back to the empire by projecting their own identity and voice which were previously defined by Western norms and episteme. Their unique and innovative styles are instrumental in giving vent to their ideas and experiences and presenting their worldview about the formerly colonized people and their cultures by referring to the colonial history, the global scenario of displacement, and the cosmopolitanism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Nouri, 2012).

The present research aims to explore the issue of hybrid identity in *A God in Every Stone* from a postcolonial perspective. The selected novel is explored in the light of theoretical concepts of hybridity and fluid identity by Bhabha and Hall. The textual analysis is carried out by identifying the hybridization of varieties of object propounded by Burke (2009) including artefacts, people and places and the formation of a postcolonial hybrid text.

## Literature Review

Postcolonial literary writings engage with the historical and cultural contact between geographically and ethnically distinct groups of people who are connected through power relations and hierarchies (Hogan, 2000). Postcolonialism is not merely the time after decolonization but it encompasses the set of discursive and social practices that have strong colonial foundations and they continue to take influence from the historical process of oppression and slavery (Thieme, 2003). Postcolonialism challenges and interrogates knowledge production as a Western right and advocates the inclusion of voices from the formerly subjugated regions.

The authors from the periphery delineate the issues of identity emerging amidst this newfound contact between the former colonizers and the colonized. Stereotypes and fixities do not define the identities today but they shape themselves amidst the changing geopolitical realities due to diaspora and multiculturalism. Bhabha (1994) proposes including the cultural history of identity formation and social temporality to account for the emergent cultural identities. A reinterpretation of English colonialist works from a postcolonial lens help to uncover the ideological implications of the portrayal of colonized people (Chakraborty, 2003). Vidhya (2013) studies the productive side of assimilation through the analysis of Mukherjee's female characters. Gasztold (2015) analyses Changez's character in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to see how his hybrid identity and dual belonging are influenced by racial and ethnic prejudices, especially in the wake of 9/11. Malik et al. (2021) also explore hybrid identity in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* using the theoretical framework of Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (2013). Ajeesh and Rukmini (2022) carried out a textual analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to study hybridity. All these studies conclude that assimilation is insufficient to account for the multifaceted influences on the identity of characters in the third space. *A God in Every Stone* is analysed by Ayaz et al. (2023) to assess colonial oppression and its influence on national identity. Bowers (2015) researches the selected works of Ondaatje and Shamsie within a subaltern theoretical framework and concludes that postcolonial fiction challenges European ideologies through decolonial and neocolonial accounts signifying peripheral voices. Hybrid identity is not only a symbolic representation in literature from the periphery but the geographical and infrastructural realities of former colonies show syncretism and cultural mixing. Jazeel (2012) studies the infrastructure of Mumbai, New

Delhi, Calcutta, Colombo and London and concludes that London and these formerly colonized cities took on a hybrid character due to the exchange of cultures, goods, ideas, materials and persons. In this way, postcolonialism as a potential approach presents a critical perspective with geographical imagination. An empirically grounded model of investigation proposed by Ackermann (2012) is Burke's cultural hybridity elements including varieties of objects, situations and responses. The present research adds to the existing studies on hybridity by exploring hybrid objects including artefacts, and hybrid text, people and practices portrayed in *A God in Every Stone* by Shamsie. An empirical strength is accorded to the current analysis of Shamsie's fiction on postcolonial worldview represented through material and human conditions reflecting hybrid identity.

## Material and Methods

To explore hybrid identity in *A God in Every Stone* by Shamsie, the postcolonial theoretical framework is derived from the notions of hybridity and identity by Bhabha and Hall.

**Hall's Concept of Identity.** Hall (1990) expresses his scholarship on cultural identity by asserting that it is neither fixed nor complete but always positioned and throws light on his idea of cultural identity whose practices of representation are "enunciated" (Hall, 1990, p.222). Cultural identity has two forms. The first is a shared and unified identity rooted in the past that an individual desires to reproduce through a retelling of the past. is desired The subjects who live across different times and spaces desire an imaginary reunification with the mother civilization. The second form of identity results from the intervention of history and the changes that take place make identity a matter of being and becoming. This identity is not essential but keeps on shaping and reshaping itself under the influence of history, politics and power.

**Bhabha's Concept of Hybridity.** The concept of hybridity by Bhabha relates to Hall's stance on identity formation as a journey from being to becoming. Cultural identity, according to Bhabha, shapes itself in a third space that is enunciated; it is neither home nor abroad. It is a productive space which can look at the positions of the colonizer and the colonized from a position that carries the meaning and burden of culture adding significance to the concept of hybridity. This space of neither 'this' nor 'that' implies a negation of binaries and unequal distribution of power validates that identity and culture have a transformative feature. Hybridity has an assimilationist tendency to mask cultural differences and develop tolerance and progress instead of hegemony and superiority (Mambrol, 2016).

**Burke's Cultural Hybridity.** To supplement the current research with analytical and empirical evidence, the present paper employs Burke's category of 'varieties of object' to identify the fictional rendering of artefact, people and their practices and the creation of hybrid text by Shamsie to showcase the significance of cross-cultural contact and role of hybridity and third space as productive sites of fluid and sustainable identities outside the binary stereotypes. Ackermann (2012) proposes a more empirically grounded research in the growing area of hybridity suggesting Burke's cultural hybridity categories for the analysis in literature and other disciplines dealing with diaspora and transcultural issues.

It is a qualitative research designed to gain insight and understanding of the hybrid identity presented by Shamsie in her novel *A God in Every Stone* (2014). A close reading of the selected novel is carried out to collect evidence in the following categories suggested by Burke (2009): *Varieties of objects: artefacts, hybrid text, people, and practices*. Textual analysis throws light on how the varieties of objects are carefully crafted by the author to demonstrate cross cultural impact on both sides; neither the colonizer not the colonized can live in isolation

without getting affected by the cultures and norms of one another. Shamsie shows how their contact breaks the stereotypes about the colonizer and the colonized and helps them to negotiate their identities in productive spaces. The varieties of object are discussed in the light of hybridity and fluid identity notions of Bhabha and Hall. The analysis demonstrates the blurring of the boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. This empirically grounded analysis enhances the scope of the postcolonial positioning of Shamsie allowing for an all-encompassing analysis of hybridity.

## Results and Discussion

Kamila Shamsie, a Pakistani-British writer, is widely read due to her creative genius and postcolonial imaginings. Shamsie's narratives blend the political and the personal in her historically rich fiction. In a case study of her fictional works in comparison with those of Aslam, Rasool (2021) concludes that both these authors explore people's perspectives while projecting the historical-political realities of Pakistan. Lehan (1998) observes the relationship between urban infrastructure and literary representations concluding that men are the products of their environment.

*A God in Every Stone* demonstrates that identities are constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth (Hall, 1990). A continuum of cultural identity is established through Shamsie's engagement with the historical events of the ancient empires of Persia and the Greeks and their parallels to modern Ottoman and English empires, the text commingles the legendary tale of Scylax and Darius with contemporary realities.

## Artefacts

The study of artefacts and architecture opens space for the analysis of hybridity. The eye, the brain, and the culture work in proximity to one another necessitating the process of structuring human perceptions to interpret the world created through images, artefacts, and other modes of identity manifestation including hybrid texts (Burke, 2009). The following sections look at the hybrid identity manifested in the delineation of artefacts in the novel.

The city of Peshawar as portrayed in the novel by Shamsie represents hybrid identities of the characters. To investigate cultural identity, one has to study the cultural traits deeply and the multifaceted influence of various cultures to dig out the hybrid traits among characters (Hall, 1990). The text draws a parallel between the ancient city of Caspatyrus and the modern city of Peshawar, a comparison that leads to the application of the principle of unification of civilizations. Vivian visits Peshawar in search of a mythical artefact in the East. She gets familiar with the customs and the people of Peshawar, a city that serves as a centre where various cultures dive into an assortment resulting in making Peshawar a third space.

Scylax, a man from ancient Caria, is on a mission of the Persian King Darius. He introduces his city as an abode of the barbarians and the land of sweet fruit. Kalam Khan another character who belongs to Peshawar boasts of the fruit harvested in Peshawar and speaks low of the fruit of France. Later, Qayyum and Kalam both speak highly of the French culture, particularly the beauty of the French women, and at the same time, they cherish the memories of Peshawar. Their identities reshape themselves in a third space where they are neither complete Pashtuns, nor complete English or French but a combination of the two making their identity hybrid and fluid. The chapter *April 1915*, reveals that during World War I, the Pashtuns from Peshawar, like Scylax, find escape in the memories of Peshawar. On the war front, horrified by the war situation, the Indians find relief when they see people from their homeland.

Peshawar is an ancient city with diverse historical and cultural layers. As a crossroad of empires, Peshawar reflects the influence of Persians, Mauryans, the Indo-Greeks, the Kushans, Buddhism and Islam. The fusion of language and architecture gives a hybrid character to the identity of this city. The archaeological sites surrounding Peshawar alluded to in the novel included the Kanishka Stupa, the Sacred Casket of Kanishka and Shaji-ki-Dheri. These artefacts connect the characters of Najeeb, Vivian and Tehsin Bey who hail from various ethnicities but exhibit their identity in a third space. Peshawar is a contact zone for people from various cultures. The mention of the two rivers, the Indus and the Kabul, represents the same phenomenon. The merger of Kabul into the Indus reflects the dominance of the colonizers but the events of the novel create fissures in the binary division by portraying the accommodation and adjustment of characters despite the difference in their geographies, histories and ideologies. Peshawar becomes an interstitial zone of cultural fusion, where people practice and reflect hybrid identity in a third space which reconstructs the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The city of Peshawar becomes a third space where “journeys begin and end” (p.46). On the one hand, Qayyum Gul comes to terms with his identity as a Pashtun while on the other hand, his contact with the English makes him more open and tolerant toward other cultures. In Peshawar, he lives in between these two realities shaped by history, heritage and politics. Viv’s experiences in the third space of Peshawar allow her to materialize her dream of excavating ancient artefact of Circlet. She comes close to native Indians instead of sticking to her colonizer identity and demonstrates responses of accommodation and affiliation. Shamsie’s Peshawar is a productive space and deviates from the conventional portrayal of Pashtuns marked by a lack of tolerance and suffering marginalization.

Peshawar’s architecture and archaeology serve as sites where the dominant and the subaltern meet and create innovative hybrid identities. Peshawar is an abode of different people in the historical timeline, and it is a site of cultural mixing and hybridity. The desire of Vivian to go to Peshawar is a way Shamsie has tried to achieve unification of characters in a third space which melts their differences and takes them back to one shared common culture (Hall, 1990). The identities of Najeeb, Qayyum, and Vivian are not fixed but they are reconstructed in the third space of Peshawar and its historically rich archaeological sites making hybridity a productive space breaking the binary divisions.

The circlet of Scylax symbolically connects two cultures. Its excavation from Peshawar underscores the historical significance of Peshawar. Tehsin, Viv, Najeeb and Diwa despite differences in background and gender are united through this ancient artefact. Its preservation in Diwa’s graves draws attention to Burke’s notion of the way objects and artefacts contribute to exploring the hybridity of a culture or its people. It also resounds with Bhabha’s notion of hybridity where multiple cultural and historical forces intersect to form fluid and ever-evolving identities. The textual rendering of the displacement of circlet from Caria to Peshawar links with contemporary issues of diaspora and home. Just like Scylax who struggled with his sense of affiliation and faithfulness, the characters in the novel face displacement due to war, colonization and their struggles and grapple with changing identities in changing contexts. Therefore, Circlet becomes a symbolic backdrop for textual engagement with the ongoing debate on hybrid identity.

Peshawar Museum serves as a third space in the text. Founded in 1907 and named after Queen Victoria, it is characterized by a syncretic style reflecting British, Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist architecture. Its walls exhibit a cultural continuum through diversity. The amalgamation of historical civilizations is evident in the textual structuring of Najeeb’s interaction with Vivian Rose. He is called “Young Pactyike” and “Herodotus of Peshawar” by Vivian Rose. Peshawar Museum unites the destinies of these characters and redefines the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized serving as a third space.

## Hybrid Text

According to Burke (2009), postcolonial texts are hybrids combining the local culture with foreign techniques. They are products of the fusion of individual creativity, local traditions and European norms. In a study, Sahar (2017) concludes that syncretism, linguistic permutation and syntactic relexification are combined with strategies of appropriation and abrogation allowing her to construct the hybrid identity of her characters and the material setting of the text. *A God in Every Stone* is a postcolonial text where Shamsie incorporates Urdu and Pashto expressions as a part of her English narrative marking the text a third space of enunciation. The fusion of languages creates openness for other cultures. The linguistic fusion allows Shamsie to delve into the postcolonial concept of hybrid identity in third space and her text becomes a site of accommodation and tolerance.

## People

According to Hall (1990), identities become unique through continuous transformation resulting from ruptures and discontinuities. *A God in Every Stone* positions hybrid people in a third space by allowing them to negotiate their identities within this flux of history, culture, and power dynamics. The mono-logical Western worldview is challenged in the novel through the creation of characters like Vivian, Najeeb, Tehsin and Diwa who are residing in a third space that becomes a productive zone of new cultural norms, different from the ones characterizing the colonizer and the colonized in their binary roles. Nyman (2003) analyses Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and ascribes Mowgli's position as a bridge or a third space between the animals and the humans. Similarly, Shamsie's characters occupy interstitial spaces where the differences are entertained outside the bondage of an imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994).

Vivian's identity is defined as metamorphosis in the text. As a young English woman, she breaks the stereotypes about English and embodies a complex intersection of various cultural and national affiliations. The narrative defines her as:

a young Englishwoman whose physical appearance was a cluster of contradictions: the blue eyes beneath long lashes were entirely feminine, but the hair was cut short like a boy's; the sun-darkened skin suggested she worked in the fields, but everything about her manner indicated affluence. (Shamsie, 2014, p.83)

Viv exemplifies a transition from a fixed to a complex hybrid identity. A comprehensive analysis of Viv's archaeological affiliations and cross-cultural contacts uncovers problematics of ambivalence and assimilation in an in-between space. Being a British woman, working as a VAD nurse during World War I, connecting herself in a bond of love with Tehsin Bey of Istanbul and a thread of trust with Najeeb Gul of Peshawar, Viv is a prime example of Bhabha's third space and hybrid identity. She breaks the norm and creates binary fissures in traditional colonial roles through the emotion of empathy, accommodation, and adjustment in liminal spaces. Born and raised in a family as an only daughter of Dr Spenser and his somewhat more conventional wife, Viv was trained that she "would be son and daughter both – female in manners but male in intellect" (p.13). Her father took pleasure in reading her Homer in childhood and to see her interest in history and archaeology. She is neither a complete local nor a complete colonizer like her fellow British in India. This ambivalence allows for the problematics and complexity of hybrid identity exploration in a postcolonial perspective. Her liminality is accentuated through the metaphor of excavation. Her passion for the ancient artefacts and the associated myths and narratives echo her journey to unleash the layers of her true identity mirroring Hall's notion of finding one true

self amidst the many imposed selves. Viv “saw the Peshawar Valley- this stretch of earth on which she now stood. The word ‘Ours’ made its way to her lips” (p.92).

Although appearing only in the initial phase of the text, the creation of Tehsin Bey’s character is crucial to the notion of postcolonial hybrid identity. A Turk and an Armenian, his love for excavation becomes a binding thread between him and Viv. Throughout his romantic journey with Viv to Labraunda and the memories of London, his own identity dwindles between his roots and his affiliation with the Ottoman Empire. He is admired by Viv, and their passion for archaeology, in this sense becomes the third space against which their fixed identities are transformed and negotiated. Viv’s impression of Tehsin Bey is that of an occidental’s awe and admiration of the oriental. However, the two underwent catastrophic severing due to the mistrust prevalent between the East and the West under the influence of the colonial context. Since, according to Hall’s postulation of identity, it is the way one positions oneself within the narratives of the past, Tehsin Bey grapples with his identity in connection with his maternal Armenians who stand apart from the Empire. The role of Tehsin Bey is that of a shadow and memory, the recurrent motives of the text. He is a “ghost, a brittleness of her bones and the loneliness forever in her heart” (p.27). Their relationship is a tale of trust and betrayal, imparting in-betweenness to their identities as the Eastern and Western representatives.

Qayyum Gul comes across the question of his identity in the third space through his encounters with men of various ethnicities from India, German, French, and English colonizers and his Pashtun fraternity when he fought for the English masters during World War I. He says, “We take from the Empire what it has to give- but in the end, our loyalties are with the people we loved first, love most deeply” (p.30). In this hybrid cultural space, he comes to terms with his identity across and beyond the traditional binary categorization. His identity transforms through an interplay of his history, mythical notions, and new cultural expressions during multicultural encounters. Born in a Pashtun family, with a Yusufzai blood, Qayyum Gul was raised in the traditional Peshawar culture. In the narrator’s first description of Qayyum Gul in the chapter titled *April 1915* (p.54), he is shown to praise the French buttered bread instead of his culinary traditional bread at Peshawar. His words “the brilliance of the English was to understand all the races of the world” speak of accommodation in a foreign culture (p.55). Such an expression juxtaposed with Kalam’s dislike for French oranges creates an ambivalent space of approval and disapproval of a foreign culture in the contact zone. Kalam says to Qayyum: “Watch out brother, you are too much in love with these people already” (p.55). Unlike Viv, Qayyum’s hybrid identity constantly refers back to its Pashtun and Yusufzai blood. Even amidst the war, his memory keeps him close to his home, i.e. Peshawar. The memory of Peshawar and his decision to choose a destiny to recognize his roots make him a postcolonial subject in a flux of identity. Qayyum’s hybrid identity can be gauged on the scale of fluidity, in-betweenness, and in a constant state of transformation, transcending time and space. It is constructed through memory, fantasy, and narratives of the past and the present. His character can be framed on the axis of difference and rupture where he distances himself from the colonizers and on the axis of similarity where he seems to show his awe and attraction for the colonizers (Hall, 1990). Thus, his hybrid identity gives a characteristic ambivalence to his representation in the postcolonial world of Shamsie.

Shamsie’s fictional arena typifies Bhabha’s conception of hybridity through the submergence of her characters in liminal spaces to establish dynamism under the influence of colonization, globalization, and national experiences. Najeeb Gul, the young brother of Qayyum Gul, a Pashtun of Peshawar is a microcosm of historical and cultural forces working simultaneously in the production of hybrid identity:

Of all the astonishing things in the Peshawar Museum, the most astonishing of all was the Pashtun man in an English suit who walked through the Hall of Statues with an air of ownership and knew more about each artefact than even Miss Spenser. (Shamsie, 2014, p.156)

Najeeb Gul is introduced in the novel in his encounter with Vivian at the train station in Peshawar. Seen from Viv's eye, Najeeb Gul reveals himself "to be a Pathan boy, his hair crinkled like the one-eyed man's and the Greek-influenced early Gandhara Buddhas, his almond-shaped eyes open wide in bewilderment at the spinning Englishwoman" (p.93). As a young boy of eleven, he is still receptive to socio-political and cultural input that shapes his formative years contributing towards his fluid identity. His encounter with Viv leaves lasting influences on his future years because he becomes a young Pactyike through cultural contact with Viv and also with the ancient world of Caria and Caspatyrus opened to him by her.

Diwa is a bold young lady, the sister-in-law of Zarina, and the carpet seller's sister living in the Street of Story Tellers. She was daring and bold to pick up Najeeb's white turban containing the ancient artefact of the Circlet amidst the violence and massacre of Qissa Khwani Bazar in 1930. She loses her life as a martyr as she had more of a man's fire in her than all the Pashtuns and the Khudai Khidmatgaars. Her daring actions not only reveal her as a model of bravery which is not stereotypical of women in the context of Peshawar before partition. Diwa has close parallels with Maya of Najeeb's imaginative story of Circlet (p.230). As the name Maya has Buddhist, Greek, Hindu, and Muslim origins, Diwa, the Maya of the Peshawar Valley engulfs all the identities into one single identity as she carries the Circlet in the white turban. She becomes the means to transfer and preserve history as a unification of all cultures despite differences. Her character is an embodiment of a quest for identity in the colonial context. She conforms to Bhabha's debate on identity undergoing a journey of transformation by redefining her gender through performativity of resilience. She transforms herself from an ordinary *Burka* woman into an activist fighting a solitary battle to save Scylax's Circlet while the rest are brutal to one another in the name of power and imperialism.

### Practices

Like people, practices are manifestations of hybrid identity. Practices in culture, religion, music, languages, festivals, and other cultural domains are a testament to the syncretic nature of the globalized postcolonial world. Shamsie brings forth several instances of hybridity in practice in her novels. Textual analysis of these practices reveals how the colonizer and the colonized imitate mutual cultural practices as a means to create proximity to reduce traditional barriers.

Hybrid practices may be observed in Najeeb's actions: "Najeeb...right hand raised, palm outwards; a formal gesture...from outside Qayyum's world" (p.136). He takes Ms. Spenser to Shaji-ki-Dheri to show her the great Stupa and a god in every stone. In one of the trenches, he practices Buddha's cross-legged pose while stroking another stony Buddha. On another occasion, he sits on the shoulder of one of the Museum guards to show his regard for the ancient artefacts. Without bothering much about his Muslim roots, his syncretic vision manifests itself through his practices. He practices speaking English learned from the English books, Greek learned from Ms. Spenser, and creates stories of the Circlet through a fusion of history told by Viv and recreated through the power of his imagination. A striking example of hybrid practice is his silence while eating the food which is a traditional habit, his silence meant more than reverence for food and appetite it was his means of meditation on ancient artefacts and carving his imaginative tales about the missing links in history.

Viv's practices also reflect the blending of cultures and histories to help shape her hybrid identity and also a generalized version of identity formation from a postcolonial



perspective. In her excavation trip to Labraunda, and later Peshawar, she turns in a circle on her heels and stretches her arms up and out in the air as if she were ready to conquer the world of mystery and beauty. This was not her act of expressing awe but she imitates the manner of Tehsin Bey. In another episode, she places a bowl of figs at her bedside every night while she is at Labraunda. She practices Eastern myth to fall asleep peacefully placing her hands on the plump fruit. When she found the Temple of Zeus, all the men, the Turks, the Germans, and the English raised their glasses to her as a token of appreciation, a Western act. The mention of English *kulfi*, the fusion of culinary practices of the British and the local Peshawar, Peshawari men in English suits, Peshawari women imitating English dance privately, and English women wearing Burka and travelling on donkey carts are some of the instances of how the text creates hybrid identity through cultural exchange and practices. Such occurrences illustrate the implication of cultural practices and the ways they may be adapted and modified through blending and negotiation to enrich hybrid spaces as more productive cultural sites.

## Conclusion

Shamsie's fictional world is an incarnation of hybridity when analysed from the postcolonial perspective of Bhabha and Hall. The textual analysis was carried out in the light of the narrative structuring of hybrid objects including the artefacts, the characters and their identity performance through practices defined by their dual belonging and enactment in a third space. Their hybrid identities were shaped by their dual belonging and positioned by the narratives of the past as well as the suffering of the colonial experiences. The identities of the characters undergo transformation yielding new cultural forms as a result of fusion in the third space of enunciation.

The selected novel of Shamsie deals with the complexity of cultural contact and the struggle of the characters to break free from the stereotypical binary identities towards more dynamic and fluid aspects of their existence in the global world. The hybrid identity in the text is defined not merely through characters and their experiences but a close reading of Shamsie's novel revealed that her postcolonial writing engages critically with hybridity through a narrative rendition of hybrid objects, including artefacts, people, practices and the creation of their narratives in the form of hybrid texts which robs English of its purity through the incorporation of vocabulary items from the local languages of the author. Such an attempt by Shamsie gives her eminence among the postcolonial scholars because she contributes to imparting agency to the suppressed languages through their inclusion in the language of the imperialists. Young (2003) opines that postcolonial literature redefines the relationship between the West and the non-West, most importantly, in terms of their worldviews. Shamsie being a postcolonial author achieves this goal through the subject matter and linguistic rendering of the narratives of the colonized people defining them and projecting their worldview in the postcolonial global scenario.

Shamsie's text challenges colonial supremacy through the creation of a hybrid text with the blending of local vocabulary and cultural expression in her English narrative. Moreover, the portrayal of hybridity through people and their practices in *A God in Every Stone* shows that Shamsie is a promising postcolonial author who advocates openness and tolerance among nations and societies urging for an enactment of individual and collective identity that embraces differences without letting hierarchies suppress one group of people over the others. In doing so, her novel presents Bhabha's view that cultural production in the third space is favourable for the peaceful coexistence of the local and the global. Her text creates a world where identities are not fossilized but freely negotiate themselves in new cultural formations. The textual analysis concludes that the fictional world correlates with

the political, historical, social and cultural realities. There is a relation of dependence between these realities and their representation in narratives.

### **Recommendations**

It is evident from the findings of the textual analysis that hybrid identity is a promising area to be explored in postcolonial fiction. It can be analytically studied through the author's creation of a world through imagination giving infrastructural and historical material foundations to the concept of liminality. Burke's rubric of cultural identity was an apt analytical cast to identify hybrid objects, people and practices. Burke's model adapted for the hybrid identity exploration in fiction serves as a methodological approach to analyse transcultural phenomena (Ackermann, 2012).

Pedagogically, the present research helps in teaching postcolonial fiction across the continents giving a comprehensive view of Asian colonial experiences and diaspora issues. Such studies may be incorporated into the curriculum of literature to inculcate inclusiveness and welcome diversity in the communities. It can also help to encourage students to critically analyse postcolonial texts to deconstruct narratives and explore intersectionality to align issues of race, gender, economics and globalization with the shaping of individual and national identities. Such studies also foster empathy and tolerance through the acceptance of differences and diversity of cultures which is the ultimate goal of all humanities subjects.

## References

- Ackermann, A. (2012). Cultural hybridity: Between metaphor and empiricism. In P. Stockhammer (Ed.), *Conceptualizing cultural hybridization. Transcultural research – Heidelberg studies on Asia and Europe in a global context* (pp. 5-25). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-21846-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-21846-0_2)
- Ajeesh, A. K., & Rukmini, S. (2022). Transnational voices in contemporary Pakistani literature: An exploration of fragmented self and hybrid identity in Mohsin Hamid's 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'. *Angles*, 14, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.5099>.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2000). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Routledge.
- Ayaz, S., Khan, S., & Ahmed, Q. (2023). Analyzing Kamila Shamsie's 'A God in Every Stone': Colonialism and resistance. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 05, 247-253. <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v5i01.1000>.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Bowers, M. A. (2015) Asia's Europes: Anti-colonial attitudes in the novels of Ondaatje and Shamsie. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 51(2), 184-195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2015.1012815>
- Burke, P. (2009). *Cultural hybridity*. Polity Press.
- Chakraborty, C. (2003). Interrupting the canon: Samuel Selvon's postcolonial revision of 'Robinson Crusoe'. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 34(4), 51-72.
- Gasztold, B. (2015). Of promises delivered and failed: Post 9/11 America through the eyes of 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' by Mohsin Hamid. *Ad Americam. Journal of American Studies*, 16, 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.12797/AdAmericam.16.2014.16.02>.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hogan, P. C. (2000). *Colonialism and cultural identity: Crises of tradition in the Anglophone literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean*. State University of New York Press.
- Jazeel, T. (2012). Postcolonial spaces and identities. *Geography*, 97(2), 60-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00167487.2012.12094340>
- Kiran, S. (2017). Politics of identity in Kamila Shamsie's novels. *Indian Scholar: An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal*, 3(IV), 220-229.
- Kurvet-Käosaar, L, Ojamaa, T., & Sakova. A. (2009). Situating narratives of migration and diaspora: An introduction. *TRAMES: A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences*, 23(2), 125-143. <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2019.2.01>
- Lehan, R. (1998). *The city in literature: An intellectual and cultural history*. University of California Press.
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. Routledge.

- Malik, M. A., Ahmed, S., & Ehtsham, M. (2021). The narrative of hybrid identity in the third space: A postcolonial critique of 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' by Mohsin Hamid. *Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 8(1), 51-56. [https://doi.org/10.46662/jass-vol8-iss1-2021\(51-56\)](https://doi.org/10.46662/jass-vol8-iss1-2021(51-56)).
- Mambrol, N. (2016, April 8). *Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity*. Literary Theory and Criticism. <https://literariness.org/2016/04/08/homi-bhabhas-concept-of-hybridity/>
- Nayar, P. K. (2008). *Postcolonial literature: An introduction*. New Delhi.
- Nouri, N. (2012). Floating world: Re-imagining rhizomatic identities in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Namesake'. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 483-489. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2012.02.01.249>
- Nyman, J. (2003). *Postcolonial animal tale from Kipling to Coetzee*. Atlantic.
- Rasool, S. H. (2021). Fictional rewriting of Pakistan's national narrative: A case study of the novel of Kamila Shamsie and Nadeem Aslam. [Doctoral thesis, Islamia College Peshawar]. Pakistan Research Repository. <https://pr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/handle/123456789/21811>
- Rutherford, J. (1998). *Identity: Community, culture, difference*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Sahar, N. (2017). Language: An archive of history and experience in Kamila Shamsie's Novels. *Journal of Research (Humanities)*, 31-46. <https://jrh.com.pk/index.php/Journal/article/view/101/71>
- Shamsie, K. (2014). *A God in Every Stone*. Bloomsbury.
- Spivak, G. (2013). The Spivak reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In D. Landry, & G. MacLean (Eds.), *The Spivak reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Taylor & Francis.
- Spivak, G. C. (2006). Culture alive. *Theory Culture & Society*, SAGE, 23 (2-3), 359-360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640602300>
- Thieme, J. (2003). *Post-colonial studies: The essential glossary*. Arnold.
- Vidhya, R. A. (2013). At a slight angle to reality: Identity crisis in the novels of Bharati Mukhaerjee. *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations*, 1(III), 1-4. <https://researchscholar.co.in/downloads/65-garima-rajput-2.pdf>
- Young, R. J. C. (2003). *Postcolonialism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.