



TRANSNATIONAL BELONGING AND CULTURAL IN-BETWEENNESS: A BHABHAIAN READING OF MONICA ALI'S *LOVE MARRIAGE* (2022)

Ammara Fatima
ammarafatima412@gmail.com

Visiting Lecturer, Department of English, University of Jhang, Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan.

Saleem Akhtar Dhera
dherasaleemakhtar@gmail.com

Lecturer in English, Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

Diaspora literature focuses on the issue of identity formation through migration, sense of belonging, and the process of negotiation between the cultures of the homeland and the host country. Therefore, this study examines transnational belonging and cultural in-betweenness in Monica Ali's *Love Marriage* employing Bhabha's perspective of identity. It examines how second-generation diasporic subjects negotiate identity between inherited cultural traditions, family expectations, and the socio-cultural norms in the host society. The novel sheds light on the generational conflicts in the Bangladeshi-British Ghorami family, showing how first-generation parents and their children react differently to the migration, cultural transformation, and social assimilation. It deals with the interaction of race, class, and power in the formation of belonging experience, demonstrating how interracial relations and exposure to seemingly liberal social structures reproduce minor exclusion. The findings of the study demonstrate that *Love Marriage* does not represent identity as something fixed and unique but rather a negotiation process that occurs in the hybrid spaces, which implies that diasporic belonging is formed through dialogue, compromise, and constant re-definition of self in the context of transnational and multicultural spaces.

Keywords: *Ambivalence, Cultural Hybridity, Diaspora, Postcolonial Identity, Third Space, Transnational Belonging*

Corresponding Author: Ammara Fatima (Visiting Lecturer, Department of English, University of Jhang, Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan.)
Email: ammarafatima412@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Postcolonial studies analyze the cultural, political and social legacies of colonialism, and the way in which societies that were once colonized negotiate identity, power and representation in the wake of the imperial rule (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). This discipline prefigures how ideologies of colonialism persistently govern the social orders, cultural practices, and institutions, which shape individual and group experiences well beyond the official political independence. Diasporic communities, especially, are in between worlds of cultural, national, and familial identities, and they form hybrid identities that cannot be defined by essentialism and do not adhere to fixed ideas of belonging (Bhabha, 1994). “Diaspora offers a complex dilemma, leading to the formation of a hyphenated identity. Immigrants face challenges on multiple levels--physically, mentally, and psychologically” (Qasim et al., 2024, p. 596). In transnational or diasporic settings, people always have to negotiate between inherited tradition, expectations of the host-society and global cultural flows, leading to dynamic processes of identity formation that are performative, contingent and relational simultaneously. Literature and culturally rooted texts are essential locations of examining these processes because they tend to represent characters that negotiate tensions between continuity and change, belonging and alienation, and stability and flux. In this respect, diasporic narratives do not only mirror the lived experiences of postcolonial subjects but also give a critical understanding of how cultural in-betweenness and hybridization operate as a form of resilience, adaptation and self-articulation in a globally interconnected world.

Love Marriage anticipates such dynamics through the experiences of a second-generation Bangladeshi-British woman, Yasmin, whose identity emerges in the space between the family tradition and the British socio-cultural standards. Yasmin bargains her hybrid identity within the context of the generational conflicts within her family: her father, Shaokat, is a more conservative follower of the traditional Bangladeshi values, focusing on cultural continuity and family honor, whereas her mother, Anisah, is more adaptive and balances between the traditional values and the realities of the life in the foreign country, raising children. The brother of Yasmin, Imran, to a great extent adheres to the British standards, which can be seen as a manifestation of the independence of younger generations at the price of losing their connection to the traditions. These intergenerational processes enable Ali (2022) to construct the immigrant family as a place of support and place of regulation, with identity formation in the diasporic conditions being relational, performative, and negotiated.

Marriage in *Love Marriage* becomes one of the symbolic locations of the most acute expression of cultural, generational, and ideological contradictions. The fact that Yasmin goes after a love marriage with Joe Sangster, a white British man, is a challenge to the authority of parents, communal norms and expectations of gender and cultural

continuity. Ali (2022) criticizes arranged and love marriage: on the one hand, the arranged marriage can oppress personal agency, and on the other hand, love marriage, especially when it is interracial and interclass, can conceal existing power disparities. The communication with the family of Joe and his mother, Harriet, in particular, shows some racial prejudices and microaggression, which underlines the existence of inequality even in liberal multicultural societies. At the same time, Ali (2022) focuses on gendered pressures within the immigrant family, showing that women, rather than men, are the ones who have to maintain the family honor and cultural tradition. The conflict that Yasmin goes through is a representation of the second-generation experience in general: freedom is not sought at the cost of denying the heritage but rather through constant bargaining, concession, and conversation.

This paper uses the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha to discuss transnational belonging and cultural in-betweenness in *Love Marriage* using the theories of hybridity, the Third Space, ambivalence and mimicry. Hybridity sheds some light on the way Yasmin and her family negotiate between conflicting cultural constructs and create identities that are neither absolute nor unique. The Third Space offers a conceptual location where these negotiations take place, and cultural in-betweenness is presented as productive as opposed to marginal. Ambivalence describes the swings between tradition and host-society interaction and mimicry is the way that the diasporic subjects live in and alter the predominant cultural codes. In this perspective, *Love Marriage* shows that transnational belonging is a continuous performative negotiation, as identity is fluidly created in hybrid spaces that are defined by family, gender, race, and sociocultural situations.

2. Literature Review

Postcolonial scholarship has long examined the legacies of colonialism and their impact on identity, culture, and social hierarchies in formerly colonized societies (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). The main focus of postcolonialism is the discussion of the negotiation of cultural belonging by individuals and communities that are influenced by the historical displacement, migration, and world interconnectedness. Specifically, diaspora studies revolve around the life of transnational communities, the conflict between traditional heritage and the needs of the host societies (Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996). Researchers have suggested that diasporic identities are hybrid in nature and this is the result of ongoing negotiation between cultural retention and adaptation (Clifford, 1994). Diasporic identities are not fixed, but are created in the daily interactions, memory and social positioning; they tend to be both a result of inclusion and exclusion as they are simultaneously experienced in the host societies (Hall, 1990). Furthermore, postcolonial theorists highlight that the relations of power, race, class, and gender are the core of the understanding of these processes since the historical colonial hierarchies still influence the formation of the modern social relations and the sense of belonging (Mbembe, 2001;

Mahmood, 2019). Literature has become one of the most effective ways of expressing these complexities and as such it has been used to give an idea of the lived experiences of the diasporic people, particularly in the context of intergenerational conflict, cultural negotiation, and identity formation within the hybrid spaces (Rushdie, 1981). When placing narratives into these theoretical frameworks, scholars have the ability to address how the diasporic communities creatively negotiate tensions in between tradition, modernity, and individual agency, and it demonstrates that identity is produced socially and performed across time and space (Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996).

Love Marriage is an engaging tale on love, family and cultural complexity, and it follows Yasmin Ghorami, as she deals with secrets, personal assumptions and the definition of a love marriage within and between two families. It is a complex, intelligent analysis of race, class, identity, and interpersonal relationships. In general, the novel is an engaging, mind-bending study of cross cultural relations that will stick with the reader (Better Reading, 2022). To Aw (2022), *Love Marriage* is a sensitive and gloriously entertaining novel that is full of extremely funny moments of agonizing social comedy, and it is a credit to its delicate depiction of cultural diversity and modern British family life. The reviewer also points out that Ali is capable of mixing humour with sharp social commentary, and thus her portrayal of inter and intra cultural conflicts is interesting and insightful. Powell (2023) commends Ali's *Love Marriage* for its captivating plot and the development of characters. The reviewer admires Ali, who managed to portray subtle family dynamics and real cultural specifics, but criticizes some moralizing and the inclusion of a therapist character. *Love Marriage* is a valuable and timely read, as readers can be interested in the future of the characters (Powell, 2023). According to Logan (2023), *Love Marriage* is a complex story about family, identity, and relationships, in which a British Indian family is trying to overcome cultural demands and personal secrets. The reviewer emphasizes the attention of the novel to the inner changes in characters and the complexity of their emotions, especially, through the lens of Yasmin and the development of family relationships.

Although there has been increased scholarship on the topic of diasporic literature and postcolonial identity, there has been a paucity of studies that explicitly utilize the ideas of hybridity, Third Space, ambivalence, and mimicry by Bhabha to the work of Monica Ali, *Love Marriage*. The current literature tends to focus on the migration or family conflict theme separately, without delving into the intersection of transnational belonging and cultural in-betweenness in the experiences of the second generation British South Asians. This paper fills that gap by examining how Ali's fiction can demonstrate how hybrid identities, as negotiated and performative, can be fluid in intergenerational and multicultural settings.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework.

This study employs a qualitative interpretive methodology grounded in the theoretical framework of Homi K. Bhabha to examine transnational belonging and cultural in-betweenness in *Love Marriage* by Monica Ali. Using a textual and thematic analysis approach within the field of Postcolonial Studies, the research interprets selected narrative episodes, characters, and dialogues to explore how cultural identities are negotiated in diasporic contexts. The textual analysis is guided by key Bhabhaian concepts such as the Hybridity, the Third Space, and cultural ambivalence to investigate how characters construct transnational identities between competing cultural traditions.

Postcolonialism is the study of the cultures and societies that have been historically shaped and influenced by the colonial rule, including the era of the colonization and its long-term impact on the modern social, political and cultural frameworks. Postcolonialism covers “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Walder, 1998, p. 35). Postcolonialism is a critical theoretical approach that questions the cultural, political, and epistemological implications of colonial domination and its legacies in the societies that have been colonized in the past (Sajed, 2022). Postcolonial theory, which began to gain prominence in the late twentieth century, is a challenge to Eurocentric histories, identities, and modernity, revealing the way the discourse of colonialism created the colonized as inferior, peripheral, and other (Alenezi, 2019). *Orientalism* by Edward Said provides insight into how the knowledge systems in the West created a system of ideological representations that legitimized imperial governance (Iftikhar & Sadia 2025). In this larger intellectual tradition, Homi K. Bhabha expands the postcolonial question by not focusing on binary oppositions, such as colonizer and colonized, but on the ambivalent and hybrid forms in which colonial power is being negotiated and destabilized (Bhandari, 2022). Bhabha (1994) redefines the postcolonial identity as a space of enunciation that can be described as a Third Space where cultural meanings are translated, rearticulated and changed. His focus on hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence re-defines postcolonialism not as a critique of imperial power but as a discussion of the creative, albeit conflictual spaces that arise out of colonial encounters. In this way, postcolonialism predicts the fluid, constructed, and negotiated identity in the context of colonial history and transnational movement (Bhandari, 2022).

Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most influential postcolonial theorists whose writings deal with cultural hybridity, the ambivalence of the colonial power and identity formation through negotiations within the liminal spaces. The main idea of Bhabha is the notion of hybridity, which breaks the binary oppositions like colonizer/colonized, self/other, tradition/modernity. Hybridity does not imply the confusion of two pure cultural identities, but the birth of new cultural meanings that are created in the process of interaction and translation. For Bhabha (1994), hybridity exposes the instability of authority and reveals cultural identity as a site of continuous negotiation. He notes,

“Hybridity...emerges in the interstitial passages of power” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). This hybrid state becomes central in transnational situations that result in the establishment of diasporic subjectivities. Al-Qassab (2025) observes, “Hybridity, for Bhabha, signifies the cultural mingling and interaction that happens in colonial and postcolonial settings, bringing about the rise of new, hybrid identities that cannot be deftly classified” (p. 313). The concept of hybridity is closely connected with Bhabha’s conception of Third Space, a transitional area where cultural meaning and representation is created. The Third Space dislodges the purity of cultures by showing that every cultural utterance is created in articulation and difference processes. Identity is thus not original but is formed in the process of interaction in this interstitial space. In this view, cultural in-betweenness is not marginal but an active place where new modes of belonging and subjectivity are formed (Bhabha, 1994). In Third Space, identity becomes hybrid and creates disturbances to hegemonic authority by exposing it to internal contradictions and instabilities. “[Thied Space] deconstructs the binary of the self and the other, the colonizer and the colonized, or the East and the West” (Bhandri, 2022, p. 171).

Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence sheds light on the instability of cultural authority, whereby the colonial discourse, according to him, is ambivalent in nature; it depends both on the acknowledgment of difference and the denial of the same; this ambivalence makes the hegemonic discourse unstable and creates the space of re-interpretation and resistance, which in the context of transnational space is the oscillation between attachment to traditions inherited and interaction with new socio-cultural surroundings (Bhabha, 1994). Complementing this, Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, described as “almost the same, but not quite” (1994, p. 86), demonstrates how subjects negotiate power through partial imitation of dominant cultural codes, a process that simultaneously reinforces and subverts authority, producing slippages that destabilize structures of dominance, and within transnational frameworks, mimicry functions as a strategic means through which individuals inhabit dominant discourses while subtly transforming them. Through mobilizing the interrelated concepts of hybridity, Third Space, ambivalence and mimicry, transnational belonging can be conceptualized as a continuous performative negotiation, in which cultural in-betweenness is not conceptualized as a crisis of identity, but rather as a constitutive and creative state of postcolonial modernity, with identity being fluid, contingent and discursively constructed in the hybrid spaces of the historical and cultural encounters (Bhabha, 1994).

In sum, the application of the postcolonial theory by Bhabha helps to interpret *Love Marriage* as the representation of transnational belonging and cultural in-betweenness, where characters are negotiating the hybrid identities between the traditions inherited and the norms of the host society. Through hybridity and the Third Space, the novel shows how cultural meanings are articulated in liminal spaces, while ambivalence and mimicry

highlight the tension between adaptation and resistance. Bhabha's framework thus frames cultural in-betweenness as a productive site where identity is continuously performed and transnational belonging is redefined.

3.1. Textual Analysis

"Identity is the most significant concept in postcolonial theory due to colonization and globalization" (Jabeen et al., 2024, p. 1026). The issues of cultural identity and hybridity form the major focus of *Love Marriage* which take into account the complex experiences of immigrants residing in multicultural communities. In postcolonial theory, hybridity refers to the process whereby different cultural identities intersect, interact and are re-negotiated, especially in the wake of colonial experiences. "To be an immigrant is to live a tragedy... When you expect to be so-called integrated. But you will never get the same treatment. Never" (Ali, 2003, p. 247). In *Love Marriage*, Yasmin, the main character, is a perfect example of such a hybrid identity, who is bargaining between the background of her Bangladeshi roots and the background of her British education. The main conflict in the characterization of Yasmin is the conflict between her British and Bangladeshi identity. Despite the fact that she has been exposed to the British culture all her life, the firm commitment of her parents to the traditional Bangladeshi standards has a strong impact on her life. This duality brings about an internal struggle that continues when Yasmin attempts to strike a compromise between these two opposing cultural requirements. The way of dealing with cultural identity exhibited by her relationships with her family particularly with her mother shows a generation gap. Even though her parents remain adamant to uphold old fashioned forms of doing things such as arranged marriage, Yasmin is dreaming of being independent and having the right to choose who she marries basing on love. This tension is employed to show the clash of Yasmin to establish herself and the family and cultural demands that are too rooted. This inner conflict is representative of the broader experiences of the majority of the children of immigrants, who are forced to balance between the conservative ideals of their families and the individualistic culture of the host nation.

The concept of cultural hybridity has been severely criticized in cultural and postcolonial studies and the majority of current methodologies are correct in asserting that no culture or people can claim purity in terms of identity (Acheraiou, 2011). "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne" (Ali, 2003, p. 36). The issue of cultural hybridity in *Love Marriage* is far more than the personal conflict of Yasmin and is expressed through the opposition of the reactions of her relatives to migration, displacement, and cultural transformation. In this intergenerational relationship, Ali (2022) introduces the concept of hybridity as a continuum of negotiations, which is determined by age, memory, gender, and social positioning. The father of Yasmin is a first-generation immigrant, and he is still firmly

rooted in the cultural norms and values of his native land. His identity is maintained by nostalgia, memory and continuity which is a need to maintain a stable sense of self in the presence of cultural dislocation. “Your father has pride and also shame ... two sides of the same penny” (Ali, 2022, p. 400). Rather than engaging the British society at a transformative level, Yasmin’s father views cultural preservation as a tool of fighting against assimilation. The fact that he follows tradition is an emotional defense mechanism and a moral compass, demonstrating how to many first-generation immigrants, cultural identity is a byword that is maintained by following the old traditions rigidly. On the contrary, the mother of Yasmin is in a more negotiated and adaptive position. Although she is equally devoted to her cultural traditions, she is also highly conscious of the realities of bringing up children in a different sociocultural setting. It is a pragmatic hybridity that is selective in accommodating elements of the British culture and tries to preserve the familial and cultural unity. This act of balancing depicts the gendered aspect of hybridity because women are usually tasked with the role of balancing between tradition and change in the immigrant families. Her position highlights hybridity as a continuous process of trade-off and not identity.

The issue of generational differences tends to influence the process of negotiation of the immigrant families concerning the question of preserving the cultural heritage and adapting to the new society. Immigrant families negotiate the balance between cultural heritage and adaptation to a new society. “Wherever you go... what you seek to leave behind is inside you” (Ali, 2022, p. 260). The brother of Yasmin, Imran, is a completely different reaction to cultural negotiation. Being a part of the younger generation, he has greatly assimilated the British cultural standards, and he has forgotten the traditional Bangladeshi customs and values. “Imran moved through the corridors of his school like someone carrying two worlds on his shoulders.” (Ali, 2022, p. 42). Imran manifests cultural hybridity. “[Imran] spoke English with ease at school, yet at home every word had a ritual rhythm” (Ali, 2022, p. 47). Imran’s denial of inherited practices can be interpreted as a declaration of independence and membership in the British society. Nevertheless, this rejection also leads to an increase in the tension between the family and the generations and reveals the ruptures that arise when the continuity of culture is tested. The position of Imran underscores the fact that hybridity is, at times, a selective disavowal whereby integration in the host culture is done at the expense of the loss of cultural affiliation.

The family in *Love Marriage* is introduced as a strong place where cultural identity is constructed, re-negotiated, and disputed, which is at the core of the personal and cultural growth of Yasmin. The immigrant family is not a single emotional being as portrayed in the novel, but rather a social organization transmitting values, setting norms and continuing sense of collective identity within a diasporic environment. The case of Yasmin illustrates a great sense of belongingness and rootedness in that the parents provide her

with a sense of belonging to a common set of traditions, religious practices and communal values. This continuity is particularly important in the sense of migration when the family is a replacement of the lost homeland. But it is this continuity that is also a control mechanism. The demands of her parents on love, marriage, and gender roles provide definite boundaries on what is acceptable in behavior and there is not much choice. In turn, Yasmin believes that family is not only supportive but also a restrictive force that does not allow her freedom. Yasmin is further stressed by the fact that she is not the person whose actions carry a symbolic meaning to the entire family. The decisions of people, particularly women are regarded as the expression of family dignity and righteousness in this cultural system. The struggle of self-determination Yasmin has is, therefore, not only a personal struggle but one that is tied with the communal judgment and social norms. The fact that she wants to choose her partner refutes the notion that marriage is a group decision, and not an individual one. Yasmin is in search of the love marriage which is a powerful representation of rebellion against these cultural restrictions. It is an attempt to create personal agency when she attempts to bargain emotional and ethical commitments she undergoes with her family. Yasmin attempts to re-negotiate her cultural background instead of rejecting it; this fact indicates the complexity of the formation of hybrid identities. The nature of her opposition is indecisiveness, conscience, and internal conflict; this demonstrates that even in a traditional family, autonomy cannot be absolute but must be negotiated.

Diasporic fiction examines the intricate mediation of the individual and the cultural structures that are inherited (Upadhyay, 2024). According to Ali (2022), the conflict between personal agency and communal anticipation is the key theme of *Love Marriage*. Yasmin's identity emerges not solely from her personal desires but from her ongoing engagement with familial authority and cultural norms. Her mother, specifically, is a representation of the continuation of the old-world values, serving as a guardian of the tradition and moral order in the home. The father of Yasmin, however, is a symbol of a more conservative clinging to traditional power, as he himself has to adapt to the life of a new cultural setting and the social environment of British multiculturalism. Yasmin Ghorami's struggle centers on her attempt to reconcile personal aspirations for romantic autonomy with the collective expectations of family and community, a tension that reflects broader cultural and ideological divides. Yasmin demonstrates hybridity, where identity is produced in negotiation between inherited and adopted cultural values. "She knew her parents wanted her to succeed, yet she wondered if success meant her own happiness" (Ali, 2022, p. 103). In South Asian societies, marriage has been a long-standing concept, which is interpreted as a family and social institution, in which the parental control, social acceptance, and the family honor of the family are the priorities rather than the desire of the individual. Western conception of love marriage, on the contrary, focuses on personal

choice, emotional congruence, and fulfillment. The fact that Yasmin is in between these two paradigms puts her in a position of constant negotiation because none of the two models is fully accommodating of her complex cultural reality. These tensions are brought to the fore by her engagement to Joe Sangster, a white British man of wealthy background. The association reveals not only the cultural disparities in the attitude on marriage and family but also the power relations based on race, class, and social privilege. Yasmin has to balance the anxiety of her family about the erosion of their culture and the disapproval of the society, and at the same time, she has to deal with the little knowledge that Joe has on the cultural significance of a marriage to her. The novel does not idealize either of the two models of marriages, but rather criticizes both arranged and love marriages by exposing the limitations inherent in each. Arranged marriage may kill individual agency and love marriage, especially intercultural and interracial, may mask unequal power dynamics under the banners of choice and freedom.

The modern-day literature is focused on the intersection of race, gender and class to define individual experience in multicultural societies. (Pope Davis, & Coleman, 2001). Ali (2022) extends the theme of marriage to provide a subtle discussion of the concept of race and intersectionality in *Love Marriage*, foreshadowing how identity is constructed by superimposing culture, ethnicity, gender, and class in multicultural Britain. The fact that Yasmin is a British-Bangladeshi woman places her in the crossroads of two cultural worlds. This thing creates a kind of dual consciousness that guides her personal, professional, and social relations. Despite her birth and upbringing as a British individual, Yasmin is constantly labeled as other because of her racial and ethnic background, which shows the boundaries of national belonging in a racially stratified society. These racial tensions are further escalated when Yasmin is involved with Joe. The attitude of non-white exoticism or simplification is reflected in the subtle patronizing attitudes towards Joe, as he considers himself a liberal and open-minded person. His suppositions on culture, progress, and modernity reveal the unconscious prejudices that are usually a part of white liberalism, implying that good intentions do not always lead to real insight and equality. These dynamics highlight the role of interracial relationships. This observation is furthered by the character of Harriet Sangster, mother of Joe, who is the personification of white liberal ideology contradictions. Although she poses as a progressive and socially enlightened person, her communication with Yasmin shows that she harbors some latent racial prejudices and microaggressions. The actions of Harriet show that racism in modern Britain is frequently not carried out in the form of open aggression but rather in the form of indirect exclusion, disdain, and cultural misconception. Her personality reveals the disjunction between the claimed liberal ideals and the actual social life, showing how racialized people have to work emotionally to survive in these areas.

Migration stories challenge the multicultural modernity promises and paradoxes, revealing the conflicts between belonging and exclusion (Erdal, 2021). Ali (2022) describes the immigrant experience in a rather nuanced manner, showing that racism, cultural alienation, and social exclusion influence the lives of both first- and second-generation immigrants differently but in a certain way. Instead of introducing migration as a linear account of advancement or acculturation, the novel preempts the emotional and psychological price of migration, specifically the continued feeling of otherness that the racialized subjects feel in the whiteness-organized society. The story of Shaokat Ghorami is a typical example of an immigrant story of sacrifice, struggle, and social mobility. “[Shaokat Ghorami] carried pride like a shield and shame like a whisper” (Ali, 2022, p. 400). Being a self-made doctor, he represents the ideology of how hard work and professional achievement can gain acceptance and respect in British society. However, despite his success, Shaokat is constantly reminded of his marginal position by both subtle and overt means. These experiences reveal the weakness of meritocracy in a racially stratified society, in which professional success does not entirely eliminate racial difference. His powerful attachment to the cultural traditions may be interpreted as the defensive reaction to this alienation a means of maintaining dignity, stability, and identity within the social space that still identifies him as an outsider. Similar to most immigrant parents, Shaokat sees cultural continuity as a way of preserving family honor and fighting against the loss of heritage.

“Migration is a one-way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to” (Ali, 2003, p; 5). The second generation immigrants have to find their way through the complicated world where cultural background and social norms collide and shape their identity and belonging. The experience of Yasmin is indicative of a major change in the immigrant status across generations. She does not need validation in terms of professional respectability or cultural insulation as her father does, but rather she wants to integrate, feel emotionally and have freedom of her own. Nevertheless, her quest to gain independence is carried out in an environment that is informed by racial stratifications and social exclusions. Yasmin is born British, but her racial identity makes her belonging complicated as she has to live in a state of a hybrid identity neither accepted nor rejected. “Her English sounded perfectly normal to Yasmin... hearing her mother speak made her cringe” (Ali, 2022, p. 55). Ali (2022) is sensitive to this generational conflict, and she shows how the immigrant experience is developing over time, depending on the social conditions, expectations, and forms of resistance.

“In the postcolonial world, cultural hybridity is an ever-present phenomenon, characterized by the constant blending of cultures” (Mortaza, 2024, p. 4177). In *Love Marriage*, Ali (2022) describes family relationships and intergenerational conflict as the main drivers of identity formation and human relationships. The immigrant family is a

place where the conflicting needs, such as cultural maintenance, individual ambition, and social assimilation, clash. Through the interactions between Yasmin, her parents, and her brother, Ali (2022) examines the long-standing conflicts between tradition and modernity, duty and desire, and community and personal identity. These contradictions assist in exposing the complex and incomplete process of negotiation of hybrid identities as each generation responds to the need of continuity and adjustment differently. The core of this conflict is the problem of Yasmin trying to balance her personal wishes and the demands of her parents. Shaokat is very concerned with the family social status and ethical reputation; hence he wants Yasmin to adapt to the traditional norms especially in marriage. The family pressure and emotional stress are aggravated by his strictness in her relationship with Joe, who is not within the framework of arranged marriage and cultural endogamy. In the case of Shaokat, the decisions of Yasmin do not only endanger cultural values but they are also the symbolic of integrity of the family. The mother of Yasmin, Anisah, holds a more contradictory and complicated role in this family set-up. Although she believes in traditional values, she is also very conscious of the emotional and practical issues of marriage and motherhood in the shifting cultural environment. Her relations with Yasmin are both supportive and supervisory, as the role of immigrant mothers is hard, both as mothers and as cultural gatekeepers. Notably, the fact that Anisah is not happy in her marriage and has not resolved her identity issues is an indication that generational conflict is not merely a child-parent issue. Rather, it reveals more underlying conflicts in the very structure of parental marriages, influenced by gender expectations, unmet dreams, and the pressures of the long-term migration.

Marriage in *Love Marriage* is a metaphorical battlefield where the conflicts between generations, cultures, and ideologies are expressed in the most vivid way. The conflict between love marriage and arranged marriage is not put forward as an easy dichotomy of modernity versus traditionalism, but it represents a more profound conflict between agency and responsibility on the part of the individual and the collective. Marriage is not a personal emotional affair as it is to Shaokat and Anisah. It is a social institution, which is embedded in the cultural norms, kinship, and community reputation. Their idea of marriage is a worldview that has been informed by migration in which continuity of culture is a means of preserving identity in a foreign and largely discriminatory society. The very fact that Yasmin proceeds to marry Joe out of love is an outright rebellion of these long held assumptions. Her choice interferes with the cultural logic within which her parents have organized the family life, leading to anxiety and opposition. The decision made by Yasmin is a danger to the tradition and the moral and social standing that Shaokat has been trying to maintain. Although Anisah is more emotionally sensitive to the wishes of Yasmin, she is also bound by her as a cultural mediator and protector of family values. In this struggle, Ali (2022) reveals the ways in

which marriage is a place where gender, power, and cultural survival come into conflict, especially in immigrant families. Another, no less complicated, model of marriage that complicates any unambiguous privileging of Western ideals is presented by the family of Joe. His mother, the liberal upper-class British woman Harriet Sangster, is an outward manifestation of the progressive ideals, including freedom of choice and tolerance. Nevertheless, her communication with Yasmin shows that there are certain assumptions and unconscious prejudices, which demonstrate the weaknesses of liberal multiculturalism. The subtle patronization and cultural misunderstandings of Harriet indicate that privilege may blind the structural inequalities, and love marriage is no exception to this rule, as it is also based on the frameworks of power that are influenced by race and class. The experiences of the two families of Yasmin and Joe, therefore, shed some light on the fact that cultural difference and racialized perception is still persistent, even among the people who view themselves as enlightened. “The cultural differences between Yasmin Ghorami’s Bengali Muslim family and Joe Sangster’s English, liberal family form a significant part of the narrative, creating a fertile ground for dramatic tension and conflict” (Bookey).

In spite of these tensions, *Love Marriage* also focuses on the negotiation, adaptation, and intergenerational transformation. Yasmin is a person who rejects her culture. She is in a continuous process of identity formation, insisting on her independence, and slowly gaining a more sympathetic insight into the fears, sacrifices, and vulnerabilities of her parents. Her fight is symbolic of a second generation experience, as the independence is not pursued through severance but through re-negotiation. Similarly, Shaokat and Anisah initially being against change are forced to cope with the evolving cultural reality of the British society and the lives of their children who live in the society. Their gradual re-consideration of stringent norms suggests that tradition as it is cannot be considered something unchangeable but may be redefined. Their slow re-evaluation of strict norms implies that tradition as such is not something fixed but can be reinterpreted. Ali (2022) demonstrates how dialogue, compromise, and changing views can bring cultural change that is dynamic and not fixed.

By centering a female protagonist, Ali (2022) prefigures gender as a significant and unavoidable component in the bargaining of cultural identity and family duty. Migration and hybridity pressures do not equally affect all genders as the experiences of Yasmin demonstrate; in most instances, women are forced to bear the unequal burden of being cultural value carriers, family reputation, and respectable moral values. As a daughter of an immigrant family, the decisions of Yasmin, especially when it comes to love, sexuality and marriage, are under a much more critical examination when compared with the actions of her male peers, which is how patriarchy works in tandem with culture to control the lives of women. Yasmin is not only refusing tradition and adopting Western

individualism; neither is she a total child to the family. She does not entirely abandon family or cultural duties as she interacts with British culture and tries out personal autonomy. “Even in the mosque, [Yasmin] felt an outsider, yet outside it she felt the pull of her faith” (Ali, 2022, p. 180). She continues to re-negotiate her position as well, attempting to reconcile her desire to be independent and the emotional connection she has to the family and community. The fluidity of identity highlighted by this continuing process helps to place the novel in line with postcolonial conceptualizations of the self as a dynamic, relational system as opposed to a fixed, unitary one. Ali (2022) demonstrates how the forces of gender, culture, and society are overlapping and define the life of modern immigrants through the prism of Yasmin. The pressures of the culture Yasmin has to endure are not the only forces that contribute to her dilemma; however, racial disparities and social dominance are also the forces that restrict her membership in the British society. Her identity construction is, thus, a product of both domestic and social forces- family relations at home and inequality in the system outside. Combining these dimensions, *Love Marriage* gives a multidimensional image of the immigrant experiences. It is obvious that the process of identity negotiation can not be discussed without references to gender, power and social circumstances.

4. Conclusion

Love Marriage offers a rich study of identity construction in the complicated landscape of migration, cultural hybridity and generational transformation; and identity is not a given or inherited essence but a continual negotiation process that is influenced by family, gender, race, and class. Ali (2022) breaks down the simplistic binaries of tradition and modernity, arranged and love marriages, and Eastern and Western values through the struggles of Yasmin, who tries to find her way in love, marriage, and independence, and through the opposing views of first- and second-generation immigrants. The novel prefigures the immigrant family as a disputed territory where cultural continuity is co-existing with change and the criticism of liberal multiculturalism reveals the continuation of racial inequalities and discordant exclusion in modern Britain. Ali (2022) puts emphasis on the gendered aspect of cultural expectation and the disparate pressure on women as bearers of family honor and tradition by centering a female, second-generation protagonist. Finally, *Love Marriage* contributes greatly to the postcolonial and diasporic literary discourse by confirming that hybridity is not fixed, but is contested, relational and fluid, that belonging is not achieved through assimilation or strict traditionalism, but through constant dialogue, compromise and re-definition in multicultural societies.

References

Alenezi, M. S. (2019). *Shifting paradigms of postcolonial theory: Internal concerns of post-2000 Anglophone Arab fiction* (Doctoral Dissertation). Middle Tennessee State University.

- Ali, M. (2003). *Brick lane*. Doubleday: London, UK.
- Ali, M. (2022). *Love marriage: A novel*. London, United Kingdom: Virago Press.
- Al-Qassab, H. L. K. (2025). Multiculturalism and diaspora of identity in *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. *International Journal of Humanities and Educational Research*, 7(1), 309-320.
- Aw, T. (2022). *Review of Love Marriage by Monica Ali* [Review excerpt]. *Times Literary Supplement*, as quoted in Publishers Weekly and Apple Books: <https://www.apple.com/itunes> ([turn0search2])
- Better Reading. (2022, February 14). *A sensational read: Review of Monica Ali's Love Marriage*. <https://www.betterreading.com.au/review/a-sensational-read-review-of-monica-alis-love-marriage/>
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Bhandari, N. B. (2022). Homi K. Bhabha's third space theory and cultural identity today: A critical review. *Prithvi Academic Journal*, 5, 171-181.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.
- Clifford, J. (1994). *Diasporas: Cultural anthropology*, 9(3), 302-338.
- Erdal, M. B. (2021). Migrants' multifocal sedentarism: Ambivalent belonging and desired recognition in transnational social fields connecting Pakistan and Norway. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 42(5), 643-659.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Iftikhar, L., & Sadia, S. (2025). Edward Said and *Orientalism*: A critical analysis of Western scholars and writers. *JIHĀT-UL-ISLĀM*, 18(2). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393121478_Edward_Said_and_Orientalism_A_Critical_Analysis_of_Western_Scholars_and_Writers
- Jabeen, F., Qasim, Z., & Afzal, M. (2024). Negotiating fractured identity in Hamid's *The Last White Man*: A Postcolonial critique. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 7(2), 1026-1037.
- Logan, A. (2023, February 28). *Book review: Love Marriage by Monica Ali*. I've Read This. <https://ivereadthis.com/2023/02/28/book-review-love-marriage-by-monica-ali/>
- Mahmood, S. (2019). *Gender and migration in contemporary Diasporic literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mortaza, A., Iqbal, J., Rehman, J., Qureshi, M. N., & Afzal, M. (2024). Hybrid identity in Pak-Bangladeshi Anglophone literature: A comparative study of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. *Remittances Review*, 9(2), 4177-4194.

- Powell, K. (2023, May 21). *Book review: Love Marriage by Monica Ali*. Write Out Loud. <https://writeoutloudblog.com/2023/05/21/book-review-love-marriage-by-monica-ali/>
- Qasim, Z., Yasmin, S., Butt, B. R., & Afzal, M. (2024). Politics of belonging: Postcolonial perspectives on diasporic experiences of immigrants in Dur e Aziz Amna's *American Fever*. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, 7(4), 596-607.
- Rushdie, S. (1981). *Midnight's children*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Sajed, A. (2022). *Postcolonialism*. In R. Devetak & J. True (Eds.), *Theories of International Relations* (6th ed., pp. 60-76). Bloomsbury.
- Upadhyay, S. (2024). Diaspora, migration, and identity in contemporary Anglophone fiction. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 13(11), 116-120.
- Walder, D. (1998). *Post-colonial literatures in English: History, language, theory*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.