

Sense Of Loss And Desire For Homeland: A Postcolonial Perspective Of Salt And Saffron



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Abstract: *This research aims to examine the concept of unhomeliness, emphasizing the yearning for a rooted homeland and the sustained attachment with familial roots. The study applies Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness" as discussed in "Unhomely Lives," to explore the complexity of diaspora identities where migrants often grapple with issue of identity and find themselves sandwiched between two borders. This notion of sense of loss and desire for native home resonates deeply with the characters in Salt and Saffron. Aliya and other characters grapple with their colonial pasts while yearning for a homeland which is often perceived as an idealized and unattainable construct. By referencing Bhabha's exploration of the diasporic condition and the ambivalence of belonging, this theoretical framework elucidates how the characters' desires for homeland are shaped by a longing for recognition and a return to a place of authentic belonging. The study is qualitative and method of textual analysis is utilized to reveal the characters' connection to their rooted culture and its deviation from the typical emphasis on the host culture in diaspora literature which makes it unique. The results show that despite the challenges of diasporic existence, the characters consistently and fervently maintain their desire for familial roots, contributing to the broader discourse on post-colonial literature and identity.*

Keywords: Postcolonial identities, Unhomeliness, Homeland, Diaspora, Rooted and routed home

1. Introduction

The Postcolonial literature often deals with the themes related to the complexities of cultural identity, displacement, and the aftermath of colonialism. Over the past three decades, the diaspora field has undergone theoretical exploration, encompassing significant dimensions. Since its inception as a subject of study in sociology, anthropology, and political science, diaspora has been thoroughly analyzed by numerous theorists, authors, and researchers, delving into various facets—social, cultural, and psychological—of migration. Displacement, homesickness, and experiences of

discrimination, whether based on race, gender, or religion, along with the imperative of assimilation for survival, constitute universal characteristics faced by virtually all contemporary diasporic communities. Pakistani diaspora writers respond to these aspects in diverse ways, shaped by their individual experiences, personal perspectives, and understanding of the diasporic phenomenon (Shiraz, 2018). While exploring the stability of identity and identity crisis, numerous diaspora writers have brought attention to these challenges in their literary works. Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) vividly portrays the ideological and

identity crises faced by Pakistani expatriates, particularly in the pre and post-9/11 context. Changez experiences the strange situation where he feels himself being caught between two different cultures and a hybrid identity, his Pakistani and diaspora identities where he successfully assimilated into American culture and disguised his Pakistani identity under the American one and adapts its lifestyle and values.

Likewise, in *The Black Album*, Kureishi provides a genuine portrayal of identity assimilation in cross-cultural Britain, capturing its inherent complexities. The character of Shahid serves as a focal point, undergoing a profound process of transformation, mental development, and ultimately transitioning from his Pakistani identity to embracing a British identity by adopting Western values. While the majority of writers depict the conditions in the host land where individuals adopt new identities, it is important to note that the connection with the native homeland remains a prevalent theme. Migration often involves forging a new identity and life in a different environment, but the acknowledgment of one's past and the persistence of differences ties the individuals with native homeland even in the face of assimilation in the host land ("On diaspora lit," 2012). Diaspora literature revolves around the idea of a homeland and the narratives of challenging journeys due to various compulsions (Brown, 2005). This emphasis on the concept of homeland suggests that, despite the process of adopting new identities in the host land, individuals maintain a deep and meaningful connection with their place of origin. The homeland continues to play a significant role in shaping the narratives and experiences of those who undergo migration. Set against the backdrop of Pakistani society, *Salt and Saffron* provides a lens through which to explore the multifaceted dimensions of the desire for homeland. The novel stands as a poignant example of diaspora literature that encapsulates the themes of loss and homeland. The story of the novel centers on the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and recollection which is driven by her desire to reconnect with her familial roots. Kamila

Shamsie's characters often do not experience the profound sense of loss typical in the works of other exilic writers. In contrast, their journeys tend to lead them back to their homeland. Shamsie's characters maintain their connection to their homeland despite the challenges posed by migration. In this context, this research aims to undertake a comprehensive exploration of *Salt and Saffron* from a postcolonial perspective, to explore characters' experiences of loss, their nostalgic attachment to the homeland.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The central problem addressed by this study is the complex portrayal of homecoming in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Salt and Saffron* within the context of diasporic experiences. While diaspora are often characterized by a detachment from their places of origin, the characters in the novel exhibit a unique and compelling yearning to return home. It seems that the novelists such as Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam and Hanif Kureishi admire the new (host) culture which has an inspiring effect on the protagonists. However, in the novels of Kamila Shamsie, the protagonists sustain their attachment with their home which has a deeper impact on them. This contradiction prompts the need to investigate and understand the motivation, tension, and implications surrounding their desires for homecoming.

1.2 Research Objectives

Following are the research objectives:

1. To analyze Kamila Shamsie's portrayal of the concept of the sense of loss and the desire for homecoming within the context of diaspora in *Salt and Saffron*.
2. To examine the ways in which the idea of homecoming, especially as experienced by Aliya, challenges or conforms to conventional portrayals of diaspora experiences in literature.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does Kamila Shamsie portray the concept of the sense of loss and the desire for homecoming within the context of diaspora in *Salt and Saffron*?

2. How does the idea of homecoming especially as experienced by Aliya, challenge or conform to conventional portrayals of diaspora experiences in literature?

2. Literature Review

Salt and Saffron explores themes of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage within the context of the South Asian diaspora. Scholars have analyzed the various aspects of the novel like narrative structure, character development, and use of language to explore the deeper insight about the experiences of diasporic individuals. They have examined how the novel engages with postcolonial theory, particularly in its portrayal of cultural hybridity and the complexities of diasporic identity. But, the study aims to fill a significant gap in existing literature by focusing on the theme of the sense of loss and desire for homeland to provide a deeper understanding of the characters' experiences.

2.1 Concept of Rooted and Routed Home

Diaspora often feel a sense of detachment and estrangement as they move between two different geographic locations, one's native or ancestral land and a foreign land that are totally different from one another. This fluctuation between two different places results in confusion for migrants to identify themselves with a place that they truly call their home. Therefore, the concept of "home" is fundamental to individuals, providing them with a sense of belonging and their place in the world (Rezazade et al., 2015). The concepts of "rooted" and "routed" homes are of paramount importance in this context to explain the complex relationships that individuals have with their homelands. A "rooted" home refers to a feeling of connection and attachment that diasporic individuals maintain with their place of origin, culture and heritage. This feeling and the sense of belonging and identity tied to their ancestral homeland is often characterized by tradition, language, customs and familial ties. Likewise Avtar Brah (1996) discusses the concept of home as:

Home encompasses the lived experiences of a particular place. It involves the unique sounds

and smells, the warmth and dust, the tranquil summer nights, or the thrill of the first snowfall, the cold winter nights, and the melancholy grey skies at midday ... all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations (p. 192).

So in this way, "home" is experienced as a lived reality, characterized by the sensory experiences of a specific locality. This includes the sounds, smells, and sensations unique to that place, such as the warmth of balmy summer evenings or the chill of winter nights. In contrast, the term a "routed" home stands for a more fragmented and displaced sense of belonging. According to Rezazade et al. (2015) the feeling of "unhomeliness" arises when a person feels disconnected with a place he is living in and does not feel it as their true home. It is characterized by the experience of migration, displacement, and the loss of a physical or emotional connection to one's homeland. In this association, Bhabha's concept of "homeliness" is also a term that he uses to describe a sense of belonging that is neither fully comfortable nor entirely alienating. In his work, Bhabha explains the idea that the concept of home is not fixed or static but is instead it is fluid shaped by various cultural, social and historic factors.

2.2 Desire for Homeland in Postcolonial Literature

Diaspora Literature includes themes of homeland, the origin of displacement, and narratives detailing difficult journeys driven by social, political, or economic factors (Brown, 2005). In the diasporic context, everyone is dislocated, physically or psychologically, irrespective of location, and culture. Diasporic sensibilities create a link between the homeland and the host land, where individuals who are displaced and scattered establish a profound connection with their homeland. While exploring the theme of homeland, majority of diaspora writers idealize and glorify the new home where individuals get inspired by host culture (new home). Novelists like Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam and Hanif Kureishi depict the admiration of the major characters for the new (host) culture which has an inspiring effect on them. For instance, in the novel *The*

Reluctant Fundamentalist, the protagonist Changez is deeply influenced by American culture, his new homeland. He aspires to emulate Americans in his behavior, speech, and mannerisms, wishing to assimilate into their identity. He wants to behave by acting and speaking like an American (Hamid, 2007, p. 38). Changez goes to great lengths to adopt an American identity, even hiding his Pakistani heritage under American attire and demeanor. "I was the sole non-American in our group, but I had a feeling that my Pakistani identity was hidden, concealed by my attire, my expense account, and—above all—by the presence of my companions" (p. 42). This desire for assimilation illustrates the concept of hybridization, where migrants blend their culture with the new dominant culture, as discussed by Aijaz Ahmad, as cited by Khan et al. (2020). This clearly reflects love of host land more than homeland.

Similarly, Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) is about a young Pakistani named Karim Amir, who is tired of living in the suburbs and wants to experience vibrant life of London. Ahmad et al. (2020), says that Karim feels bored and frustrated with the dull, limited life in Bromley, which doesn't allow his talents to flourish, and where family obligations prevent him from pursuing his true desires and creating a new identity, he decides to leave his family home for good. He idealizes the London for liberty and freedom; "Karim's morbid obsession with London keeps him restless, fantasizes about it in a dreamy possessive mood and consoles himself with thousands of blacks everywhere (Kureishi, 1990, p.127). So, he views London solely through an idealized lens, considering it only from imaginative and romantic perspectives. In contrast, Salman Rushdie's masterpiece *Midnight's Children* explores the complex interplay of identity, history, and the desire for a homeland. The protagonist, Saleem Sinai, embodies the challenges and contradictions inherent in the quest for a sense of belonging. *Homeland Elegies* (2020) by Ayad Akhtar, is a story of an immigrant father and son who despite the unhealed wounds are in search of a sense of belonging in a nation that they call

home. Fatima et al (2021), take *Homeland Elegies* as a novel that addresses the challenges faced by Muslims living in the United States following the events of September 11. The story is about an immigrant father and his American son, who are struggling to remove the boundaries between themselves and their homeland. Similarly, another important work Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* explores the protagonist's journey from the Caribbean to the United States. The novel provides a good example of how desires for the homeland are shaped by migration, displacement, and the impact of colonial legacies. Youssef (2017) also places *Lucy* in the category of diaspora literature because it primarily focuses on the protagonist's search for identity in a new and unfamiliar culture, specifically the United States. The protagonist, Lucy experiences intense homesickness and nostalgia when she arrives in America. She resists the new cultural values and influences of this new culture and environment.

All these works clearly highlights the recurring theme of the issue of homeland in diaspora literature where writers depict contradictory feelings of individuals for their homelands. These individuals are caught up between two different culture and therefore facing the problem of genuine identity.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be employed in this analysis of *Salt and Saffron* is grounded in Homi K. Bhabha's seminal work *The Location of Culture*, particularly drawing insights from the chapter *Unhomely Lives: The Literature Of Recognition*. A prominent concern in the current post-colonial era is the sense of unhomeliness. Central to Bhabha's theory of hybridity, lies the concept of unhomeliness, which is the primary focus of this study. Bhabha introduces new perspectives on identity, with "unhomeliness" standing out as a pivotal concept. As discussed by Bhabha (1994) that 'although unhomely is a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition, its resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites' (p.9). Bhabha's notion of "unhomeliness" as discussed in *Unhomely Lives*

unveils the complexity of postcolonial identities, where individuals experience a sense of estrangement from both their cultural origins and the cultures they inhabit. He suggests that the absence of identity presents itself in various manifestations, with unhomeliness being one of them. This sentiment encompasses not only the displacement experienced by migrants due to diaspora but also the sense of unfamiliarity that arises from recognizing oneself in such moments of dislocation (Omidvar, 2020). As Bhabha says:

Being unhomed is distinct from being homeless, and the 'unhomely' cannot be neatly categorized within the conventional separation of private and public life. The unhomely moment emerges quietly, much like your own shadow, and before you know it, you are gripped by a sense of 'incredulous terror.' It's at this moment that the world initially contracts and then unexpectedly broadens' (p.9).

This suggests that being "unhomely" is distinct from being homeless in the traditional sense. It is not just about lacking physical shelter; it is about feeling a deeper sense of disconnection or displacement that cannot be categorized into the usual social distinctions between private and public life. Hence, unhomeliness does not signify a lack of home but rather a distinct sensation that oscillates between the self and the other. It emphasizes the blurred boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the self and the other, leading to a state of constant negotiation and redefinition of one's sense of home and belonging. Home represents one's sense of self and identity, serving as a bridge between past and present cultures. By referring to Bhabha's exploration of the diasporic condition and the ambivalence of belonging, this framework will elucidate how the characters' desires for the homeland are shaped by a longing for recognition and a return to a place of authentic belonging.

4. Sense of Loss and Reclaiming Homeland

Salt and Saffron, penned by Kamila Shamsie, is a narrative that centers on Aliya, a British-Pakistani woman who resides in London. While living abroad she minutely observes the

differences that exist between the culture (her native home) she belongs to, and the culture (host culture) she is migrated to. These differences prompt a desire in her to reconnect with her native roots. During her stay in London, she seems to be disconnected with her surroundings and does not get much inspired with the new environment. As she explores her family's rich storytelling tradition, Aliya grapples with the desire to forge her own individual identity while honoring her cultural heritage. Her interactions with various family members, including her aunts, uncles, and cousins, shed light on the different ways in which they have negotiated their cultural identities in the fast changing world. During her stay in abroad she develops a strong love for her place of origin. Instead of admiring the new host culture with all its freedom she still has a desire to reconnect with her familial roots. The novel explores Aliya's struggle to reconcile her British upbringing with her Pakistani heritage, particularly as she grapples with questions of identity, belonging, and the weight of family traditions.

In diasporic literature, the concept of home emerges as a complex and multifaceted notion, often associated with ambiguity and fluidity. As migrants struggle between their native and adopted homelands, their sense of belonging and attachment undergoes a transformation, reflecting a dynamic relationship with the idea of home. This status of home in diaspora is ambiguous in the sense that migrants move far away from their own rooted (native) home and get closer to routed (new) home. But influence of rooted home never disappears nor do they get completely absorbed in the routed home. In majority cases, the influence or grip of rooted home is less as it gets weaker with the passage of time. But in this case of *Salt and Saffron*, the grip of rooted home is much stronger. It is very much with the protagonist, Aliya who most of the time shows this strong connection with her native land and home throughout the novel. While moving to a new culture migrants often get inspired by the new land in many different ways. They try to imitate the new values, trends and popular customs to recognize themselves

with this new land. However, the main character of the novel, Aliya seems to be less inspired by this new land. After spending a good part of her life in abroad she still talks about her life in Karachi. She mentions Karachi with all minute details showing appreciation and a sense of attachment with homeland. However, she mentions her life in America highlighting sense of estrangement. After meeting Baji and Rehana Apa in London she talks about her college days in America in this way:

I suppose she thought I was thinking of that star beside my name. But actually I was thinking of America. My college days, so recently finished, were days of empty spaces in my head. Spaces without chatter, spaces without textured silences. I was so utterly foreign there, so disconnected from everything that went on that I could afford to be passionate about the tiniest injustice in the domestic news (Shamsie, 2000, pp. 48-49).

Aliya's reflection on her recent college days in America reveals her sense of alienation and strangeness to America. She describes her college days as characterized by "empty spaces in my head" and "spaces without textured silences," suggesting a sense of disconnection and alienation from her surroundings. Despite being physically present, she feels emotionally and intellectually distant from the events around her. This detachment allows her to be deeply affected by even small injustices in the news from her home country, as she can afford to invest her emotions in these issues due to her overall sense of disconnect from her American environment. These lines highlight the theme of cultural and personal displacement, as well as the complex interplay between one's sense of belonging and experiences of foreignness. This sense of alienation aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concept of unhomeliness, which he distinguishes from traditional homelessness. Unhomeliness is not merely a lack of physical shelter but a deeper disconnection or displacement that defies categorization into the usual social distinctions between private and public.

Similarly in one of the passages she desires to be a child again to enjoy the carefree life in her

native land. She opts for the emotional connection that she had with her home and people around her and feels disconnected in London when she says:

I want to be five again, ready to lie down in the middle of a London street to announce my exhaustion; ready to cry out that I want to go home to Mariam Apa; and eager to chat with anyone who seems friendly, no matter where they're from or where their families live (Shamsie, 2000, p. 31).

These lines reflect the protagonist's nostalgic longing for the simplicity and innocence of childhood. The desire to be "five again" symbolizes a time of carefree joy and a strong emotional connection to her childhood caregiver, Mariam Apa, whom she wishes to return to for comfort and security and provide warmth of homeliness. She expresses her tiredness of being in London streets that seem to her strange and lonely devoid of warmth. She opts for familiar voices like Dadi and Mariam Apa's which are source of comfort for her. Similarly, the wish to talk to someone who seems nice, regardless of their background, reflects a childlike innocence and openness to the world, unburdened by the complexities of adult life and the divisions of nationality or ethnicity. These lines highlight the protagonist's yearning for a sense of home and belonging, rooted in her memories of childhood and the people who shaped her early experiences in her homeland. Even when she meets Samia in her flat in London, she tries to comfort her and shows her cousinly affection and Aliya expresses this by saying:

Such gratitude! Samia lay down and rested her head against my back. More than anything else, more than mangoes, *gol guppas*, *nihari* and *naans*, more than cricket mania, more than monsoon rains, more than crabbing beneath a star-clustered sky, what I missed about Karachi was the intimacy of bodies (p.14).

Aliya's mention of Karachi as her homeland and various cultural and sensory experiences such as mangoes, *gol guppas*, *nihari*, *naans*, cricket, monsoon rains, and crabbing under a starry sky evoke a strong sense of place and nostalgia for

the comfort and familiarities of home. However, what the protagonist misses most is not just these experiences themselves but the deeper sense of intimacy and connection they represent. The line “what I missed about Karachi was the intimacy of bodies” suggests a longing for the closeness and connection she felt with her family members (Mariam Apa, Dadi etc) in Karachi, which is lacking in her current environment. This clearly highlights the theme of loss, particularly the loss of the sense of belonging and connection that comes from being part of a community and a place where one feels intimately connected to others. It is not just about missing the physical place but also the emotional and relational aspects that define her sense of home. Aliya fondly remembers the day she was preparing for abroad four years ago, reflecting on the warm celebration prepared by Masood and Mariam Apa. The atmosphere was filled with joy and festivity, highlighted by a spread of delicious food synonymous with Ramzan. The memory is vivid, invoking a sense of nostalgia for that special moment in her past related to her homeland. She describes it as:

In our home, the meals during Ramadan were always special but there is no comparison with the food that Masood and Mariam Apa prepared for me on the day of my admission in a college in America. Midway through the meal I started crying and said, ‘But who will cook for me when I’m there? Masood assured me by touching my shoulder, ‘Don’t worry, Aliya Bibi. When you come home for the holidays I’ll feed you so much they’ll have to roll you back on the plane. This was the first time that ever called me ‘Bibi’ and respect in that address only made me more melancholic.’(p.76)

Aliya recalls a memorable meal prepared by Masood and Mariam Apa to celebrate her acceptance into a college in America. The meal holds special significance, surpassing even the cherished Ramadan feasts of her childhood. However, the joy of the occasion is mixed with sadness as she expresses concern about who will cook for her in America. This shows how she relates her happiness in the company of people around her in the home with delicious meals. She does not show any sign of excitement

for her acceptance in renowned institution in America that migrants normally do, which highlights her strong connection with native home. Likewise, Masood’s reassurance that he will feed her abundantly when she returns home for the holidays is both comforting and bittersweet, highlighting the theme of longing for home and the sense of loss that accompanies the prospect of leaving familiar comforts behind. The use of the term “Bibi,” a term of respect and deference, further underscores the emotional complexity of the moment, as the protagonist grapples with the impending separation from her family and homeland.

Even she reflects on their enjoyment of summer holidays abroad which is mitigated due to the absence of affectionate company of Mariam Apa and delicious food prepared by Masood. “My enjoyment of summer holidays abroad, in London or Paris, was always tempered by two factors: the absence of Mariam Apa and the absence of Masood’s food” (p.133). It reflects Aliya’s longing for the familiarity and comfort of home. The absence of Mariam Apa suggests a longing for familial relationships and the support and companionship of loved ones. Similarly, the absence of Masood’s food highlights the importance of culinary traditions and the sensory experiences associated with home, which evokes feelings of nostalgia and longing for one’s homeland. It speaks to the enduring connections that individuals maintain with their homeland, even when physically distant, and highlights the role of these connections in shaping one’s sense of identity and belonging.

This feeling of loss is not associated with Aliya only. She feels empathy with Akbar when she reflects on the experience of Akbar, presumably a historical figure or ancestor, flying into Karachi for the first time:

That night, I reflected on Akbar's first arrival in Karachi. It must have felt so foreign to him, so disorienting in that initial moment when he stepped off the plane and thought; My children will consider this place home. They will experience sunsets over the ocean, taste crab so fresh it's barely dead, and hear blessings carried on the sea breeze. But they will never know

Sulaiman, and they will never know Taimur. And in not knowing them, they will never truly know me. (p.172)

This explores Akbar's feelings of alienation and loss as he disembarks and contemplates his children growing up in this new land. Akbar's thoughts about his children calling Karachi home highlight the theme of the desire for a homeland. Despite the beauty and opportunities offered by Karachi, Akbar feels a sense of loss for the places and people he left behind, such as Sulaiman and Taimur. This loss is not just about physical places or individuals but also about the cultural and familial connections that are integral to one's sense of identity and belonging. This is what Bhabha says that "unhomeliness" goes beyond traditional homelessness. It is not solely about lacking physical shelter but also involves a deeper sense of disconnection or displacement that cannot be neatly categorized within the usual social distinctions between private and public life.

Likewise, the mention of sunsets over the ocean, the taste of fresh crab, and blessings in the sea breeze evoke a sense of the beauty and richness of Karachi, but Akbar's realization that his children will not know Sulaiman and Taimur (his brothers), and by extension, will not know him, accentuates the deeper loss of heritage and roots that comes with migration and displacement. It highlights the complexities of the immigrant experience, where the excitement of new opportunities is often accompanied by a sense of longing for the familiar and a feeling of being disconnected from one's past.

Even Meher Dadi expressed her feelings of loss. While living in Greece, she likely feels nostalgic for Karachi, her homeland, due to the memories and experiences that are deeply rooted in here. She expresses a deep longing for her family and also acknowledges the comforting and familiar nature of returning to Karachi, her homeland. When she visits Abida Dadi in hospital, she shows great affection and gratitude for her sister and insists to stay with her in the hospital as a token of sisterly love. While she sits with Aliya in the hospital she expresses her feelings for family and Karachi like:

'I miss my family. You all drive me crazy, but returning to Karachi feels like wading back into the sea after months on land. You float effortlessly, there's a calming sense of being carried along, and the sound of the water gently lapping against you is so familiar. (p.220)

This shows that she finds solace and comfort in returning to Karachi, where she feels a deep connection and a sense of peace that is reminiscent of being in the sea. Here, the metaphor of stepping into the sea again after months on land conveys a sense of relief and renewal, suggesting that returning to Karachi brings a sense of peace and belonging, much like being in the sea where one feels buoyant and at ease. Karachi evokes a sense of comfort and security that is deeply rooted in her sense of home and identity.

This universal nature of homesickness and the longing for one's homeland is even highlighted through historical figures like Babur. Shamsie refers to Babur's memoirs to illustrate the concept of homesickness and the desire for one's ancestral homeland. Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, is described as viewing India as an "unpleasant and unharmonious" place, a second-best territory he settled for after losing his ancestral home and kingdom, Samarkand. Babur's homesickness is primarily manifested in his yearning for the honey-sweet melons of Central Asia, indicating a deep longing for the familiar tastes and comforts of his homeland. The mention of fruit, particularly melons, in Babur's memoirs underscores the significance of sensory experiences in evoking feelings of nostalgia and longing for one's homeland. This feeling of unhomeliness, according to Bhabha leads to a state of profound disbelief or terror, challenging one's understanding of their place in the world. All these references show Aliya and other major characters' love for rooted home is evident in these passages where they admire and glorify everything that is linked with their native home.

In the conventional portrayal of diaspora, the inspiration for new home is great. Migrants mostly appreciate the new home. However, in *Salt and Saffron* the portrayal is unconventional in the sense that Aliya glorifies her own native

land through history, culture, familial ties and societal practices. With her native home, she has emotional attachment whether it is related to religious practices, cultural festivities and social gatherings. Even the rich tapestry of stories related to her family shows her admiration of native history. She does not talk about American history, her description centers around her place of origin. Whether these are stories of the Mughal dynasty or her family tree, there is a sense of belongingness and likeness to this history. She is in love with stories of her land, the past of this land, food items and cultural values. While returning back home she describes her arrival to her homeland in an epic way:

To step once again on the land of one's birthplace. Modern airports deprive us this symbolic act. There is no soil, not even tarmac. Instead we enter step an elevated corridor that guides us through to passport control, luggage claim and customs clearance. Denied the poignant moments of Richard II ('so weeping-smiling greet I thee, my earth') I have learned to lean forward, or to the side, towards a window, anticipating the dip of the plane's wing, the descent from the clouds and – nearly there now – the vast expanse of Karachi sparkling under the darkened sky. (p.85)

In this passage, the protagonist reflects on the experience of returning to her homeland and the symbolic significance of setting foot on its soil. She laments the modern airport experience, which lacks the tactile connection to the land, with travelers instead moving through sterile corridors devoid of soil or even tarmac. The protagonist expresses a desire for a more tangible connection to their homeland, referencing a passage from Shakespeare's "Richard II" where the king expresses his emotional connection to the earth. Despite the modern airport's limitations, Aliya finds a way to connect by looking out the window of the plane, eagerly anticipating the moment when Karachi comes into view, glittering under the darkened sky. She shows great inspiration for her homeland which clearly highlights the theme of longing for home and the ways in which individuals seek to maintain a connection to their homeland despite the barriers of modernity.

However, in contrast in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez's deep connection to New York is evident in his intimate feelings towards the city, to the extent that he refers to it as his own country. This demonstrates the significant influence America has had on him. Despite being of Pakistani origin, Changez identifies less with his Pakistani heritage and more with the identity of a New Yorker. He shows attachment to US than his native land Pakistan.

Furthermore, Aliya expresses admiration for the city of Karachi, noting its boldness and resilience. Her love for Karachi is expressed in the following lines:

I've always admired the bold spirit of that city, the determination that lights it up night after night, not to outshine the stars, but simply for the sake of the challenge. In comparison, skyscraper-filled skylines, despite their boastfulness, seem much less ambitious; the buildings, each trying to outdo the others by saying, 'I'm taller, I'm brighter, notice me!' compete only among themselves for attention. (Shamsie, 2000, p.85)

Aliya glorifies her homeland by describing the city's practice of keeping its lights on at night and sees it as a symbol of its determination and spirit, not to overshadow the natural sky but to assert its own presence and identity. The protagonist contrasts this with skyscrapered skylines in other cities, which, despite their height and brightness, seem less ambitious in their competition for attention. The buildings in Karachi, in their individualistic and assertive way, convey a sense of pride and determination that resonates with the protagonist, highlighting the city's unique character and the pride its residents take in it. If we contrast this with the character of Feroza in *American Brat*, she is quite inspired by the new land. Upon landing at Kennedy Airport, she immediately senses a newfound freedom. The orderly traffic, vibrant lights, and modern architecture captivate her. For her, this experience is akin to being released from a 16-year imprisonment, experiencing a taste of freedom she had never known. "She knew no one, and no one knew her! It was a heady feeling to be suddenly so free – for the

moment, at least – of the thousand constraints that governed her life” (Sidhwa, 1994, p.58). This is clearly a conventional portrayal of diaspora where Feroza as migrant seems to be inspired by new land.

This sense of displacement, estrangement, or unease experienced by individuals is common to colonial and postcolonial experiences. The feeling of belonging or being uprooted is often central to diaspora experiences indicating its universal and enduring relevance. The difference of cultures, values, and systems on migrants represent it in different ways shaping their identity and sense of belonging. Aliya manifests her sense of belonging and identity with her native culture and homeland while Feroza feels freedom and aspiration for the new culture. The cultural dissonance, loss of traditional practices, and struggles for belonging are common observance among migrants who struggle between two different borders as discussed by Bhabha.

Aliya even fantasizes Karachi with its social problems and issues. She never gets frustrated with such daily issues. When she observed the power failure during her flight to Karachi, she discusses it as:

As I watched the land below, an area of lights winked once, twice, and disappeared. A sigh, half exasperated, half amused, went round the cabin. ‘Bijli failure,’ someone behind me said needlessly, and we all waited to see how many lights would flicker on, signifying back-up generator power. Only a handful did, and the voice behind me said in Urdu, ‘Well, looks like it isn’t Clifton or Defence.’ The passengers around me started laughing at this mention of the elite neighbourhoods (p.85)

This observance of power failure indicates a common occurrence in Karachi with which she is used to and does not get frustrated. The reaction of the passengers also suggests a sense of familiarity with such events, as indicated by the half-exasperated, half-amused sigh and the casual mention of “Bijli failure” (power failure). The reference to Clifton and Defence, which are elite neighborhoods in Karachi, adds a layer of irony, highlighting the contrast between the

privileged residents of these areas and the everyday challenges faced by the city as a whole. This is a commentary on the socio-economic disparities within Karachi, where power failures are more common in less affluent areas while elite neighborhoods like Clifton and Defence are often insulated from such issues. The passengers’ reaction, including the laughter at the mention of these neighborhoods, reflects a sense of resignation and humor in the face of these disparities, suggesting a level of acceptance of the city’s challenges as a part of daily life.

Aliya also discusses foods using vivid sensory imagery to convey the richness and complexity of the experiences. The description of food emphasizes the cultural significance and its ability to evoke memories, emotions, and a sense of identity. It conveys the idea that food is more than just sustenance; it is a reflection of heritage, history, and shared experiences across generations. She describes the food that was brought by Khaleel from restaurant which is famous for desi meals:

A smell that was not so much a smell as a miracle. Different strands of smells coming together like an orchestral symphony. Aba moved to one side, and my eyes helped my nose to pick up each nuance of detail. There on the table: *biryani*, *timatar* cut, *bihari* kebabs, *aloo panjabi*, *raita*. (p.240)

The description of the various dishes, such as *biryani*, *timatar* cut (tomato salad), *bihari* kebabs, *aloo panjabi* (Potato dish), and *raita* (yogurt dish), highlights the diversity and richness of Pakistani cuisine. Further the description of the smell as a “miracle” and the comparison to an orchestral symphony suggest a deep admiration and appreciation for the food from her homeland. She is so overwhelmed by the taste and smell of the food that she has no words to describe it, “That words reveal their inadequacy every time I try to describe it” (p.241). She expresses the difficulty of capturing a certain experience or feeling in words. To elaborate on the richness of native food she says:

To eat that meal was to eat centuries of artistry, refined in kitchens across the subcontinent. The

flavours we tasted were not just the flavours in the food, but also the flavours the food reminded us of and the flavours the food remembered. (p.241)

She describes the act of eating a meal as an experience that connects them to centuries of culinary artistry from the subcontinent. The flavors of the food are not just the physical tastes but also evoke memories and cultural heritage. The use of the word “artistry” suggests a deep appreciation for the culinary traditions of the subcontinent, highlighting the skill and craftsmanship involved in creating the dishes. The mention of flavors reminding them of past experiences and memories adds a layer of nostalgia and personal connection to the meal. This very imminently highlights Aliya’s appreciation of traditional foods that are usually spiced up with the love and affection of Masood and Mariam Apa. And through this, her likeness for her native land and everything related to her place of origin is reflected. To conclude, despite living abroad Aliya’s experiences and her reflections show her deep emotional attachment to Karachi, her homeland.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the themes related to the sense of loss, desire for a homeland and glorification of native culture are frequently explored through various examples in the novel. The novel also reveals that the migrant do grapple with identity issues particularly regarding their attachment to their rooted homeland. Aliya’s experience of alienation and detachment from America and her feelings of being emotionally and intellectually disconnected from her surroundings actually highlight this theme of unhomeliness. It shows the challenges that migrants face in reconciling with their true identity and sense of belonging in a new homeland. It is also evident that Aliya’s experiences of alienation are aligned with Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness. Her displacement is not just about physical homelessness but also it is about a deeper disconnection that transcends traditional social distinctions. She also feels emotionally and intellectually disconnected from her new surroundings which urges her strong desire to

reunite with her native palace of origin. Aliya serves as example of multifaceted nature of migrant experiences and the ongoing negotiation of identity in a globalized world. Furthermore, Aliya’s character challenges the conventional portrayal of diaspora individuals that suggests that migrants gradually become more integrated into their new culture and less attached to their rooted home, Aliya contradicts this conventional notion with her unwavering connection to Karachi, her rooted home. Even after years of living abroad, her bond with native homeland remains deeply rooted and enduring which shows that for some individual their connection with native home is much stronger as compared to her new home. Similarly it also shows that the relationship with homeland can vary significantly among migrants and they are not always inspired by the host culture as typically portrayed in diaspora studies on issues of hybrid identity.

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