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RACE AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN TAHIR'S *ALL MY RAGE*

Rahab Afzaal
M.Phil. Scholar, Ripha International University, Faisalabad
rahabfayyaz1405@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to explore the themes of racism and identity crisis in Tahir's All My Rage through the theoretical lenses of Fanon and Crenshaw. Through alternating perspectives and shifting timelines, this study will explore the enduring impact of racism across generations. It delves into how racism, generational conflict, and economic hardships shape the lives of immigrant families and their children. In a postcolonial context, it grapples with themes of identity crisis, the legacy of imperialism, and the challenges of assimilation, offering a poignant look at how individuals navigate life between cultures while searching for belonging. All My Rage is set in post-9/11 and portrays the struggling lives of Noor and Salahudin as they navigate personal struggles shaped by racial and cultural discrimination in America. The analysis of the text will provide insight about the characters' societal oppression by reflecting on a broader critique of racialized identity. Crenshaw's intersectionality theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class and is used to examine the layered forms of discrimination characters have to face as a Muslim and an immigrant. This study has explored how All My Rage reflects the continuing impact of racism and Islamophobia on marginalized communities, offering a poignant commentary on both the personal and collective experiences of being "othered" in contemporary society. The intersection of these two critical frameworks highlights the novel's contribution to understanding how race, culture, and identity converge to shape the lives of individuals in the face of systemic oppression.

Keywords: *Frantz Fanon, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Intersectionality, Muslim Identity, Islamophobia, Diasporic Identity Crisis*

INTRODUCTION

The Pakistani diaspora culture is a rich blend of traditional Pakistani values, and the influence of host countries reflect the diverse experiences of Pakistanis living abroad. Through this lens, the characters' struggles with identity crisis can be understood as a manifestation of the broader conflicts faced by individuals from formerly colonized nations. Their experiences reflect the duality of belonging to both their cultural roots and the society in which they reside, highlighting the tensions between assimilation and cultural

preservation. The theoretical framework for analyzing *All My Rage* by Sabaa Tahir examines the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies and explores themes of identity, power, and resistance. Postcolonial theory is particularly relevant in the context of the novel, as it addresses the experiences of immigrants and the complexities of cultural identity shaped by historical legacies of imperialism and colonization. Saba Tahir is an award-winning novelist known for her ability to weave powerful stories that explore themes of identity, trauma, and resilience. Raised in California's Mojave Desert, she draws on her own experiences as the daughter of Pakistani immigrants to shape the emotional and cultural depth of her characters in *All My Rage*. Tahir's writing in this novel reflects her deep understanding of the complexities faced by immigrant families, particularly around themes of racism, generational trauma, and the struggles of assimilation in a postcolonial world. It showcases her skill in crafting emotionally charged narratives that resonate with both young adult and adult readers alike. She is well-known for her contributions to modern young adult literature. Tahir was born in London, England, in 1983, and grew up in the Mojave Desert of California. Her childhood in the family's modest motel would later become the basis for her book All My Rage. Her worldview, particularly her comprehension of isolation, cultural conflict, and systemic marginalization themes that are central to her literary work was profoundly shaped by her upbringing in a racially homogeneous, economically struggling American town. Perhaps Tahir's most intimate and politically charged piece to date is All My Rage. Her own life, especially her upbringing as a brown Muslim girl in America after 9/11, is a major source of inspiration for the book. She gives voice to the internal conflicts and external aggressions that many first- and second-generation Muslim immigrants encounter through the characters of Salahudin and Noor. Both her personal experience and more general diasporic narratives are reflected in her examination of Islamophobia, generational trauma, class conflict, and identity crisis. Tahir creates stories that captivate readers from all walks of life by fusing poetic prose with unadulterated emotional intensity, particularly for those who have experienced exclusion, misunderstanding, or erasure. Additionally, Tahir supports inclusion and diversity in literature. She has often discussed how important it is to have realistic and empowering books that represent marginalized communities, especially Muslim youth. She frequently challenges the stereotypical representations of Muslim identities in Western media and decolonizes young adult fiction in her work. The intersections of gender, race, religion, and mental health are topics that Sabaa Tahir continues to write about and advocate for. Her goal as a writer is to give voice to those who have been silenced and to tell stories that are important not only because they are represented but also because they shed light on the psychological and structural aspects of oppression and resistance.

All My Rage is set in the small desert town of Juniper, California, and the novel follows the lives of two Pakistani-American teenagers, Salahudin and Noor who are bound by their shared experiences of loss, hardship, and cultural displacement. As they each grapple with personal struggles Salahudin with his mother's death and the burden of running his family's motel, and Noor with her abusive home life and her dream of escaping to college, they both confront the harsh realities of racism, generational trauma, and identity crisis. Through alternating narratives and timelines, the novel also explores the past Salahudin's mother, Misbah, an immigrant who left Pakistan to build a new life in America.

It powerfully captures the complex emotional landscapes of its characters, offering a deeply resonant exploration of how love, pain, and forgiveness shape their paths forward. Tahir's evocative storytelling brings to light the challenges faced by immigrant families in the diaspora, while offering a poignant reflection on resilience and hope. It further explores how Salahudin and Noor navigate their Pakistani heritage while confronting the realities of racism and discrimination in contemporary America. Additionally, it incorporates elements of critical race theory, which focuses on the ways race and racism intersect with social structures and individual experiences. This approach is instrumental in analyzing how systemic racism shapes the characters' lives and influences their perceptions of self-worth and belonging. By examining the societal prejudices that Noor and Salahudin encounter, it emphasizes the impact of racial identity on their personal narratives and relationships.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze how the immigrant experience shapes the identity of the Noor.
2. To analyze how characters in *All My Rage* navigate cultural displacement, societal prejudices, and personal struggles amid the legacies of colonialism and assimilation.
3. To examine how Tahir portrays friendship, love, and resilience coping mechanisms against racism and cultural marginalization.

Research Questions

i. How does Tahir depict the impact of racism on the identities of Pakistani-American characters in *All My Rage*?
ii. In what ways do the experiences of Salahudin and Noor reflect broader themes of cultural displacement and identity crisis among immigrants?
iii. How does *All My Rage* illustrate the complexities of assimilation and belonging in a postcolonial context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Racism is a kind of a philosophy of history. It makes the invisible origins of destiny visible. It is a form of classifying human beings by developing criteria according to which one can decide if they are human beings and, if so, what kind of human beings. Classification has to precede hierarchisation. Such classifications are forms of 'naturalisation'. Social and historical differences are transformed into natural differences deriving from a natural origin. As we have seen above, it is quite common to define racism as a form of naturalisation of the social. However, in the face of new developments within the natural sciences, this definition may be outdated. The concept of nature has changed. It is seen and treated as a field of constant intervention, especially if we consider genetics. One could argue that science does more to change the nature than it does to change social relations. One might say that today, in neoliberal times, it is the market that has acquired the status of nature as something unchangeable and even uncontrollable.

Butler (1990), in *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* promoted the idea that identity is performative, created through repeated social performances rather than existing as an innate truth in her book Gender Trouble. Beyond gender, this concept can be

expanded to examine the similar performance and police of racial, religious, and cultural identities. Butler's theory of performativity and the regulating powers of prevailing ideologies are reflected in her Muslim identity. Butler's theory shows how the pressure to fit in with dominant, frequently white, and secular norms. Her journey through social services, education, and interpersonal relationships is not just a personal one; rather, it is a performance shaped by power structures that penalize difference and reward assimilation. The conflict she faces between being true to herself and putting on a more acceptable front to stay out of the spotlight is a prime example of how normative identity scripts are coercive. Thus, Butler's framework reveals how identity is both limited by and defies the prevailing discourse, emphasizing how profoundly political everyday self-presentation

Gilroy (1993), in *The Black Atlantic* challenges the idea that national identity is fixed by examining how diasporic consciousness arises through transnational cultural flows. Although the Black diaspora is the main focus of Gilroy's work, his theories regarding cultural hybridity and mobility The characters' identities are influenced by ongoing discrimination, familial stories, and historical migration rather than being limited to a single location. Bhabha (1994), in *The Location of Culture* offers important insights into hybridity and the "third space" where new identities are formed, despite being more commonly linked to postcolonial theory. Cultural translation turns into a survival tactic in the transitional areas where diasporic characters live. Noor exemplifies the ambivalence and inventiveness that define hybrid identities through her dual identities as a Pakistani Muslim and an aspirant American student. Bhabha highlights that identity is dialogic and performative, created via interaction as opposed to being inherited in rigid terms..

Brah (1996), in *Cartographies of Diaspora Contesting Identities* first proposed the idea of a diaspora space a location where various cultures converge, clash, and merge. This space is demonstrated in All My Rage by the characters' attempts to both embrace American culture and assert their heritage. A nuanced understanding of how diasporic people balance conflicting allegiances and expectations is made possible by Brah's framework. Furthermore, Brah highlights that historical power relations, such as colonial legacies, global capitalism, and immigration policies, have shaped diaspora space, making it anything but a neutral meeting place. The way that institutions and prevailing discourses label them as "other"—Muslim, immigrant, foreign, dangerous also shapes their identities. Brah also presents the idea that diaspora is experienced through routines, including food, clothing, rituals, language use, and even silence

Hall (1996), in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* identity is a production that is never finished and is constantly evolving rather than being fixed or essentialist. Hall contends that relational meaning and difference are the building blocks of identities. A useful lens through which to examine characters navigating their heritage while living in an American sociopolitical context is Hall's emphasis on cultural identity being situated within the interaction of past and present. Hall also emphasizes how positioning, how people are positioned within meaning systems and how they navigate those placements plays a part in identity construction. Both of the protagonists in the book have to balance conflicting identities: being Muslim in a society that is largely non-Muslim, being immigrant children

in America after 9/11, and juggling cultural and familial responsibilities while attempting to establish their independence. Readers can view these identity negotiations as continuous, contingent, and frequently contentious processes that mirror larger sociopolitical tensions, thanks to Hall's theory. This method emphasizes the significance of context, memory, and cultural hybridity in forming the self in addition to dismantling fixed ideas of identity.

Collins (1990), in *The Politics of Empowerment* presented the matrix of domination highlighting the ways in which racial, class, gender, and religious power structures interact and shape people's individual experiences. Her research emphasizes how identity categories function in parallel, overlapping ways rather than independently. She expands this thought in Black Feminist by introducing the idea of the matrix of domination, which describes the interconnected oppressive systems such as those based on race, class, gender, and religion that shape people's lives and power dynamics. Instead of considering these identity categories separately, also emphasizes how they interact in intricate ways to produce unique social positions, also emphasizes the importance of standpoint theory in understanding the matrix of domination, arguing that those who occupy marginalized positions often develop unique perspectives on power and oppression. These perspectives, born from lived experiences of multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination, provide critical insights into the workings of social hierarchies. Further, it highlights that marginalized groups are not merely passive victims but active agents who resist and challenge oppressive systems, creating alternative forms of knowledge and social organization. This recognition of marginalized voices is central to Black feminist thought, as it seeks to disrupt dominant narratives and expose the complex, often hidden power dynamics that shape social reality. By centering these diverse perspectives, she challenges mainstream approaches to social theory, emphasizing the need for a more nuanced, intersectional understanding of power and resistance.

Ahmed (2000), in *Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* examines the idea of the "stranger" and how marginalized people are framed as outsiders in dominant discourses in Strange Encounters. This is especially true for Muslim youth, who in the wake of 9/11 are often depicted as cultural and political threats. Ahmed's concept of "stranger fetishism" explains why Noor and Salahudin are always seen as foreign even though they are Americans. Ahmed emphasizes that these sensations of oddness are embodied; they occur through accents, skin, clothing, names, and gestures. Their bodies are perceived as threats or anomalies through a racialized lens. They never truly belong, and must constantly navigate suspicion, which has an impact on how they behave in public, at school, and with friends Ahmed's work emphasizes how encounters with strangeness are more structural rather than accidental, shaped by empire histories and maintained by current racial governance practices. A sense of cultural belonging that is frequently accompanied by feelings of fragmentation and alienation is what defines diasporic identities. Goldberg (2002), in *The Racial State*, provides a comprehensive analysis of how race is fundamentally intertwined with the formation and functioning of modern nation-states. Contrary to the perception that race is merely a residual aspect of state policies, Goldberg positions race as an essential and intrinsic component of state formation. He critically examines how modern nation-states have systematically employed racial categorization

and exclusion as tools of governance, thereby embedding racial hierarchies within their very structures. His critique is particularly significant as it challenges the liberal notion of state neutrality and universality. He argues that while liberalism ostensibly promotes equality and individual rights, it paradoxically functions to justify and perpetuate racial inequalities. This contradiction arises because liberal frameworks often fail to account for the historical and institutionalized racial biases inherent in state policies. As a result, liberal states inadvertently sustain and reproduce racial hierarchies rather than dismantle them. One of the most striking aspects of Goldberg's argument is his exploration of how racial thinking permeates the legal and social frameworks of nation-states. He examines how states not only recognize but actively construct racial differences to maintain control marginalized populations. This construction of race is not merely a passive reflection of social reality but an active process where racial categories are shaped and enforced by state mechanisms, such as law, education, and public policy. Goldberg also critically addresses the historical evolution of racial states, tracing how colonialism and imperialism have shaped modern racial ideologies. He demonstrates how colonial powers used race to justify domination and control, and how these colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary state practices. This historical perspective allows Goldberg to highlight the continuity between past and present racial formations, emphasizing that modern states have inherited and perpetuated the racial logic established during the colonial era. Furthermore, Goldberg's analysis goes beyond merely identifying racialization within the state; he interrogates how racial states actively produce and sustain racial identities. By constructing racial differences as natural and inherent, states effectively depoliticize racial discrimination, rendering it an issue of social difference rather than systemic inequality. This insight is crucial for understanding how state-sanctioned racial biases persist despite legal frameworks ostensibly advocating equality. Overall, *The Racial State* offers a critical rethinking of the relationship between race and state power. By deconstructing the liberal claim of neutrality, Goldberg reveals how modern nation-states are inherently racialized structures that maintain power through racial categorization and exclusion. His work challenges scholars and policymakers to rethink the role of the state in perpetuating racial inequalities and calls for a more nuanced understanding of how liberalism can, paradoxically, entrench the very hierarchies it claims to oppose.

Braidotti (2013), in *The Posthuman* challenges rigid ideas of identity and promotes a fluid understanding of the self as continuously changing across boundaries with her theory of nomadic subjectivity. Particularly pertinent to diasporic or displaced people who inhabit various cultural, emotional, and political spheres is her post humanist approach to subjectivity. This type of fractured, nomadic identity is exemplified by Salahudin's struggle to balance his personal desires with his familial responsibilities. His identity is unstable; it is constantly being redefined by his changing circumstances and relationships, shattered by trauma, and molded by resistance. Salahudin, for example, has to deal with the social realities of Islamophobia, the moral demands of his faith, the demands of financial survival, and his strong emotional ties all of which don't fit together perfectly. As a result, his identity is constantly evolving, which is in line with Braidotti's theory that the self is non-linear, transgressive, and able to cross both material and symbolic boundaries. When examining diasporic experiences, Braidotti's framework is especially effective because it emphasizes

how displacement and hybridity are not only causes of loss but also of innovative identity formation.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach, designed to explore how postcolonial trauma and intersectional marginalization are represented in Muslim diaspora literature. The purpose of this methodology is to identify how racial, religious, gendered, and economic oppressions intersect and manifest within the characters' psychological landscapes and social environments. By using Frantz Fanon's theory of racism and Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality as the guiding theoretical frameworks, this study aims to uncover the complex structures of dehumanization, alienation, and resistance embedded in the text. The methodology encompasses textual analysis, and critical theoretical interpretation, all situated within a socio-literary context that foregrounds race, trauma, and diaspora.

Research Framework

The analysis is based on a dual-theoretical framework that integrates postcolonial psychology and intersectionality. This fusion allows for a layered examination of how individual identity is affected not just by race, but also by the convergence of other categories such as religion, immigration status, gender, and class.

Results And Discussion

Drawing from Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, the analysis investigates how systemic racism, Islamophobia, gendered oppression, and socio-economic marginalization intersect to shape the emotional and existential struggles of Muslim diasporic youth. Through close reading and thematic coding, this chapter highlights the key moments in the novel where identity, resistance, and trauma are most deeply expressed. The book follows Salahudin and Noor, two Pakistani-American teenagers, as they deal with intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination, and cultural alienation in a post-9/11 sociopolitical setting. The story illustrates how racial profiling, Islamophobia, and cultural displacement affect their evolving sense of self via their individual hardships. Despite their American upbringing, the characters in the book struggle with being seen as constant outsiders, reflecting the complexity of diasporic identity. Tahir's writing offers an analytical literary framework for analyzing how systemic and pervasive racism mold the identities of marginalized young people, making it a noteworthy addition to current debates in young adult literature about race, identity crisis, and belonging. This chapter aims to critically examine how racism and identity crisis, two interrelated themes, are portrayed in *All My Rage*, (2022), especially as they appear in the lives of Muslim youth living abroad. The chapter investigates how systemic racism, Islamophobia, and cultural marginalization contribute to the disintegration of identity and the creation of resistance narratives by looking at the individual experiences of the protagonists, Salahudin and Noor. The frameworks of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and Frantz Fanon's postcolonial psychoanalytic theory are used in this analysis. Together, they shed light on the internal psychological struggles as well as the external socio-political powers that form marginalized individualities. The chapter seeks to demonstrate how Tahir's story offers a potent commentary on survival, agency,

and self-reclamation within oppressive structures in addition to exposing the trauma brought on by racial and religious discrimination. In order to comprehend the complex experiences of the characters in All My Rage, this chapter uses two crucial theoretical frameworks: Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality and Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic post colonialism, Fanon's writings, especially Black Skin, White Masks shed light on the psychological repercussions of colonialism and racism, including internalized inferiority, identity alienation, and the fight for acceptance in a racially divided society. This framework is particularly useful for examining the inner conflict that characters like Salahudin and Noor go through as they racialized and postcolonial realisms. In support of this, Crenshaw's intersectionality theory emphasizes how people's identities and lived experiences are shaped by overlapping systems of oppression, including race, religion, gender, immigration status, and class. Her framework helps us better understand how the protagonists' struggles arise at the intersections of several marginalized identities rather than being unique. When taken as a whole, these theoretical stances enable a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the novel's depiction of racial injustice and identity crisis in the lives of Muslim American youth.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of Noor and Salahudin reveals how characters navigate the effects of generational trauma, Islamophobia, and socio-economic marginalization. Fanon’s theory illuminated the psychological impact of internalized racism, while Crenshaw’s intersectionality framework provided tools to dissect the overlapping oppressions based on race, religion, gender, immigration status, and class. The novel's use of dual narrative, memory, and symbolic imagery further emphasized the processes of identity fragmentation and healing. Overall, this study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that centers marginalized voices in young adult literature and challenges monolithic portrayals of Muslim identities. Furthermore, the novel's portrayal of Noor's fight for educational empowerment is consistent with more general feminist criticisms of the systemic obstacles that restrict the potential of underprivileged women. Her transition from silence to self-assertion serves as a potent illustration of what Rosi Braidotti refers to as the "nomadic subject"—a dynamic identity that defies simple, fixed definitions. By highlighting how gender, along with race and class, significantly influences the characters' lived realities, this viewpoint enhances the intersectional analysis.

The study concludes by emphasizing how crucial it is to broaden literary analysis to incorporate non-Western viewpoints, especially those from the Global South, in order to better capture the complexity of diasporic experiences. Understanding how faith, culture, and gender interact in the lives of characters like Noor and Salahudin can be further enhanced by hearing from academics like Leila Ahmed, Sara Ahmed, and Amina Wadud. By opposing the prevailing Western narratives that frequently obscure these viewpoints, such methods can enhance the scholarly conversation surrounding Muslim identity. All things considered, this study advances a more sophisticated comprehension of the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of identity formation in modern diaspora literature.

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