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## **Fluid identities and Ambivalence of Connection: A postcolonial reading in Kamila Shamsie's *Best of Friends***

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### **Abstract**

This study explores fluid identities and ambivalence of connection in Kamila Shamsie's *Best of Friends* through the lens of Postcolonial theory. The objective of this study is to identify the complexities of identities and duality of attachment to eastern culture. The study also explored how Shamsie's writing, rooted in British-Pakistani legacy, explores cultural hybridity and conflicting loyalties in a postcolonial city characterized as Karachi. This study applies postcolonial reading to analyse how people of the East mimic the western culture to adapt to different cultures. The study also aims at exploring the ambivalence of belonging and intercultural synthesis to draw optimistic anticipation for empowerment of women. The article examines representation of Karachi as a place of cultural intermingling. This research will contribute to the investigation of gender norms and fluid identities in the postcolonial context.

Keywords: Gender norms, Intercultural synthesis, Optimistic anticipation

### **Introduction**

In contemporary South Asian literature, through a postcolonial reading, dynamic identities are anchoring points in social framework. Writers of this era have double nationalities; this navigates towards fluid identities and cross-cultural writing. Identities are fluctuated and this happens in the name of colonization where two nations interact and their cultures and identities get amalgamated. Shamsie is one of those writers who writes about mixed identities because she also has dual identity. Shamsie, British-Pakistani writer and novelist, was born in 1973 in Karachi, Pakistan and currently living in London. She has done her BA in Creative Writing from Hamilton College and Masters in Fine Arts from University of Massachusetts. She also wrote other impactful works which include *In the City by The Sea* (shortlisted for John Llewelyn Rhys Awards), *Salt and Saffron* (winner of the Orange's list of '21 Century Writers for 21 Century'. She also writes for Guardian, The New Statesman, Index on Censorship and Prospect magazine, and broadcasts on radio.

In 2022, Shamsie's book *Best of Friends* was published. It has two volumes: the first



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one takes place in Karachi in 1988. It is the first part where Maryam and Zahra confront cultural fusion, societal expectations, unbearable political conditions and the devastating image of Karachi. In contrast, the second part is in London where they rehabilitated their identities. Thus, Shamsie explores the transnational migrant under societal oppression and mixed with two different cultural norms.

In the first part of the novel, Shamsie discloses to readers the Karachi of the 80s, a city in bleak and devastated conditions. “Best of Friends begins at this volatile time — and in a volatile location, too: Karachi, 1988” (Young, M., (2022). A city characterized through a postcolonial reading and manifests deep in its cultural conflicts where eastern and western cultural blending. Karachi is mixed in culture; for instance, dating, parties, and a positive outlook towards female liberation is shaped by the west. Shamsie portrays Maryam as a real exploration of Homi K Bhabha’s cultural hybridity and ambivalence. She investigates how Maryam and Zahra are compelled by society to live according to eastern culture but she is forced towards western culture. This creates intensity and cultural hybridity in Karachi.

Her recent novel *Best of Friends*, is the study of female friendship, cultural coalescence, multifaceted identities, power dynamics, political control, violence and social structures. Shamsie portrays adolescent feminine friendship in Maryam and Zahra, long lasting for 40 years, surrounded by societal stereotypes and geo-political conditions that negotiate the main plot of the novel within the subplot. This novel highlights the impact of power structures on social structures to hold control over an entire nation to access their private data, regulating their lives corresponding to political tactics.

This research aims to create a correspondence between Homi K Bhabha’s cultural hybridity and ambivalence and *Best of Friends*. This paper develops a sense of the author's diasporic consciousness to the novel. Through the lens of Homi K Bhabha’s postcolonial reading, this paper analyses how characters navigate towards multiple expectations, rituals and values to have a fluctuating sense. By focusing on Maryam and Zahra’s exposure, how their identities transform from one culture to another. To highlight the upcoming role of women in society is captured in the novel and that negotiates the feminine characters towards the new path of their life. “A girl is running this country, she said” (Shamsie, 2022, p. 123). Female protagonists traverse their identities into interwoven identities and head toward women’s liberation and equality.

This novel delves into the tension between eastern and western cultures and how their characters are revolving around amalgamating identities and cultural synthesis. This study emphasises coalescing culture and navigates the liberation of women in postcolonial cities.

### Research Questions

1. How does Shamsie portray the cultural hybridity that negotiates characters' fluid identities?
2. How is the city of Karachi represented as a space of cultural ambivalence?

### Literature Review

By applying the theories of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s homosociality and Judith Butler’s gender performativity scholars have explored one of the most significant themes of female homosociality in Kamla Shamsie’s novel *Best of Friends*. The research is aimed to highlight the platonic relationship of Maryam and Zahra, the protagonists, in a heteronormative and patriarchal society. Homosociality as being the key point of the



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study argues that female homosociality evokes emotional bonds, solidarity and empowerment among women resisting traditional gender roles and the male-dominated social order. By implying the strategy of misidentification, the protagonist is determined to reject all man-made social norms in order to form new identities that transcend heteronormative constraints. The study examines the various forms of resistance against heteronormative society. “Female homosocial relations is considered as the subversive approach to explore the exclusion of female gender from social and public discourses” (Ahsan & Raza, 2024, p.98). Maryam and Zahra’s move from Pakistan to the UK also more clearly illustrates their defiance of cultural expectations, since their friendship fosters a sense of belonging. The study also looks into any homoerotic overtones in the relationships, placing the story in a queer theoretical framework that questions conventional relationships and societal binary thinking. It underscores how Shamsie in her novel *Best of Friends* voted for a non-heteronormative and egalitarian society by portraying the enduring power of female friendships as an ultimate source of empowerment, solidarity and resistance to unacceptable and unbearable societal standards.

The complex friendship between Maryam and Zahra highlights struggles with trust, shared histories, a moment of conflict as it gets nourished and evolved over decades. Characters had to deal with cultural pressures from Pakistan that restricted their ability to express their emotions and personal wants. For example, Zahra was suppressed by her family because of societal expectation and Maryam’s family doubted her. “Maryam’s family mistrusted her, while Zahra’s family suppressed her personality due to excessive family norms. Family rules must be flexible and family ownership is essential for a healthy and supportive environment.” (Tabassum et al., 2023, p.207). Familial boundaries should be adaptable and flexible for the members of family to build strong family structure. This book exposes the ways in which patriarchal culture limits women’s responsibilities and prospects. Additionally, the characters of Maryam and Zahra negotiate social norms, highlighting the fundamental themes of gender bias, empowerment, and familial obligations. “Shamsie’s writings often explore cross-cultural interactions, highlighting the burden of cultural history and familial expectations” (Tabassum et al., 2023, pp.189-190). In examining the developing friendship between Maryam and Zahra, Shamsie presents their relationship as a source of understanding, empowerment, and emotional support, in contrast to the betrayals and misunderstandings that surface as the narrative goes on. Shamsie’s depiction of the complex nature of female relationships where their “relationship becomes a haven where they may freely discuss their hopes, anxieties, and weaknesses. This portrayal shows the possibility of real, empowering bonds among women, providing a solid contrast to storylines that frequently set women against one another” (Naqvi et al., 2023, p.100). This is relationship stands the test of time while going through secrets, misunderstandings, and personal ambitions, revealing the fragility of trust and the complexities lying deep in female connections. For instance, Zahra and Maryam’s interaction is a perfect picture of how loyalty can sustain friendship, in the midst of all the betrayals rooted in personal aspirations or external pressures which are an absolute threat to break them. Therefore, Maryam and Zahra’s adoption of various tactics to express their autonomy demonstrates how Shamsie has tried to illustrate how women negotiate patriarchal restraints. Different forms of resistance are seen in Zahra’s attempts to strike a balance between her personal objectives and societal expectations and Maryam’s disobedience of established gender norms. “The characters ‘ autonomy and uniqueness strongly influence *Best of Friends*’



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depiction of female friendship. Leila, Maryam, and Zahra have a close relationship but are still unique people with their own goals and difficulties. By enabling each character to have her own storyline and character development” (Naqvi et al., 2023, p.100). So, Shamsie has set against the backdrop of Pakistan’s transition from dictatorship to democracy, novel not only examines the impact of political upheaval on personal relationships but also introduces the themes of displacement, identity and alienation, picturing how the protagonist adapts to new cultural landscapes.

While implying the theoretical framework of feminist literary theory, scholars have attempted to convey another approach regarding this novel. This approach explores the dynamics of gender roles, women’s agency and societal constraints faced by the female protagonists in *Best of Friends*. By emphasising the intricacies, empowerment, and difficulties in Zahra and Maryam, researchers have also looked into the test of trust and faithfulness in female partnerships as well as individual goals and outside influences. The protagonist is shown negotiating patriarchal norms and claiming their independence in various cultural settings. Toril Moi is another key feminist thinker who has differentiated between concepts like “feminist”, “female”, “feminine”. “The underlying concern surrounding the concepts of ‘conditioning’ and ‘socialization’ forms the basis for an important set of distinctions, namely those between the label’s ‘feminist’, ‘female’, and ‘feminine’. According to Toril Moi, the initial concept can be seen as a political stance, the second as a biological aspect, and the third as a collection of culturally determined attributes” (Naqvi et al., 2023, p.101). Elaine Showalter, another significant feminist thinker, has given the concept of “gynocriticism” and the historical recovery of women’s literary voices. In the concept of “gynocriticism” she has explained how women are considered inferior because they are supposed to write with emotions as compared to men who are claimed to use a practical approach in their writings. Moreover, it also discusses the fact that women's writings are ignored because they do not have a good enough grip on language and men's writings are prioritized because they are adept at the use of language. Focused on fluid identities and ambivalence of connections: a post-colonial reading of Homi K. Bhabha in Shamsie’s *Best of Friends*, this research is aimed to analyse female homosociality, women’s agency and female friendships. As existing scholarships based on this work are more concentrated on the intricacies of interpersonal relationships and thematic dynamics of gendered interactions. Studies have pictured a Shamsie’s construction of female solidarity and agency within patriarchal constraints focusing more adherently on socio-cultural framework. Despite all this there still remains one underexplored dimension: the intersection of these dynamics with post colonial frameworks of fluid identities and cultural ambivalence as explained by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha’s ideas about ambivalence and third space may offer a fresh perspective on these ideas. For example, ambivalence is not used to openly explore the cultural and intellectual differences between Maryam and Zahra. This raises concerns about how their relationship represents the cyclical nature of cultural attachment and disavowal. The sophisticated application of Bhabha’s postcolonial theories to Shamsie’s depiction of female friendships, cultural ambivalence, and identity negotiation, therefore, represents the research gap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Tracing the theory of Homi K Bhabha’s cultural hybridity and ambivalence, this framework will investigate how the novel addresses fluid identities and ambivalence of connection in an eastern social fabric. Cultural Hybridity refers to the interchange of



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ideas and practices of multiple nations and innovating a new place of multiple identities and ideas. Bhabha argues that cultural blending of colonizers and colonisers is known as the third space of enunciation. This space subverts the binary identities of self and others. Ambiguous and uncertain space of colonial authorities equivocate the cultural identities of colonized. Bhabha conceptualizes that the cultural contact of colonizers and colonized result in the fusion of eastern and western practices. “The psychic and cultural fault-lines which are generated around and constantly threaten, any simple ‘black-and- white’ distinction between two conventional parties to the colonial relationship” (as cited in Boehmer, 2005, p. 355). It proposes that multifaceted identities and cultural convergence is the result of echoes of colonialism that defy transparent restrictions.

The first setting of this novel is in Karachi and Karachi is a postcolonial city where colonizers leave footprints of their values, traditions and culture. Shamsie describes Karachi of 1980s and at the same time feminist movements were raised in west that infused a new wave into east. It was first ever in the history of all the Muslim countries of world that a country is governed by a woman. “Benazir was Prime Minister; she had taken the oath of office in a bright green shalwar with white dupatta, the colours of the Pakistan flag, and made the men around her look like pygmies” (Shamsie, 2022, p.89). “this woman of only thirty-five, because millions upon millions of people went to the ballot box and said they must” (Shamsie, 2022, p.89). This example of Benazir has significant impact on the lives of Maryam and Zahra that they considered themselves strong independent woman like her.

By drawing the theoretical framework, this article highlights the revolution of identities and personal ambiguous belonging via the Homi K Bhabha’s perspective of cultural hybridity and ambivalence of connection. Personal fluctuation of identity and cultural ambiguity is the fundamental concept of globalization. Hybridity negates the idea of stasis attached with the notion of culture. Shamsie as a diasporic writer, uncovers the obscurity of diverse cultures, presenting in one space, Karachi.

The term “*ambivalence*” was first induced by Eugen Bleuler who was a Swiss psychiatrist in his article *Vortrag uber Ambivalenz* in 1910. Later, it was adapted by Homi K Bhabha to describe the contradictory feelings in colonizers and colonized. Ambivalence is a concept that indicates mixed feelings and conflicting attitudes towards any object. Colonized people resisted the oppression of colonizers while often practicing their culture. For Bhabha ambivalence “describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized” (Ashcroft et al. 2007, p. 10). Shamsie developed her characters in an ambivalent state that they seem developing contrasting feelings towards an object. For instance, the character of Maryam’s grandfather demands her to behave western and eastern simultaneously. He is making her think herself as a majesty power of nature but also encapsulating her in the fence of patriarchal implications. He bestowed her with wings to fly but also constrained the horizons of sky. “You’re not a girl, you’re a force of nature” (Shamsie, 2022, p.73). The novels out at another place that “I thought I could make you what you need to be. But you’re just a girl, aren’t you? You’ll always be a girl. And there’ll always be Jimmys out there who’ll see through everything else and know that. Perhaps I should be grateful to him for making that so clear” (Shamsie, 2022, p.123). Maryam’s grandfather is actually confused of being a Maryam as a force of nature or she should have lived in the societal hindrance of Pakistan’s culture.

This study used the ideas of Homi K Bhabha to unleash the cultural synthesis in Karachi and investigates how different characters are lingering between two cultures. The



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postcolonial view of this framework, justifies the transnational identities and vagueness of cross cultures. It is a universal and static phenomena of intermingling of cultures that identities are dynamic and fluid. Colonizers compel the colonized nation to embrace their culture and this leads towards ambiguity.

### Discussion and Analysis

Karachi is defined as a postcolonial city. In the colonial time period, British Raj transformed Karachi into a port, military headquarters and constructed infrastructure, transportation via railway and ocean and communication established through telegraph between Karachi and London. The British developed Karachi into a far-fetched society that everyone would love to come there for the uplift of their financial status. This has happened in the aftermath of the distribution of the sub-continent that the people of different cities migrated there for their economic growth. Karachi is a metropolis teeming with life and bustling population which offers home to millions. Crime statistics emerged into Karachi as a populated metropolis which is captured in Shamsie's *Best of Friends*. "Zahra only felt vulnerable, her mind going to the stories of kidnappings that circulated in the schoolyard" (Shamsie, 2022, p.34). Lawlessness in Karachi, rated in the 80s as Shamsie depicted in the novel that Karachi is a hub of barbarism because humanity had less importance in Karachi. There was no security for girls, life was constrained in daylight due to this offensive rate of criminal activities. Zahra was not allowed to move outside at the beach without a mature individual. "When they moved here, her parents had been clear that she wasn't ever to go across to the beach without an adult" (Shamsie, 2022, p.34). Zahra's parents forbade her to go to the beach alone because of the devastating conditions of Karachi but they let her live solely in London. Shamsie portrayed the bleak aspect of Karachi through the critical lens. It is transparent in the novel that the city is mismatched for girls to night outs. "Karachi's nights were not for girls or women" (Shamsie, 2022, p.98). This shows the Pakistani culture from the distribution till now that how people are exploited by others and powers.

Through the application of Homi k Bhabha's cultural hybridity and ambivalence, Bhabha scrutinizes that a hybrid culture appears from colonial dominance or imbalance of society. Colonizers colonized the people and transformed their culture into them within a global framework. The reconciliation of cultural differences between the colonizers and colonized creates a restructured cultural identity. Bhabha argues that this identity bridges and surpasses past and present elements, consequences in a reforming cultural hybridity. "Such act does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7). Bhabha stresses on the historical role of colonizers and colonisation and their interaction. Bhabha emphasizes that there is always a space between colonizers and colonized and this space is known as 'third space'. Likewise, space between sign and signifier, arbitrary space, no connection at all but strongly connected to each other. Colonizers and colonized contact and this interaction results in a cultural hybridity without any belonging. There exists a malleable third space, allowing infinite possibilities without logical reasoning.

This novel is a timeless representation of cultural hybridity and duality of attachment with colonizers as being a Pakistani on account of historical context between east and west how west ruled us and transformed our identities in the resulting. Shamsie defines Karachi as a cross-cultural community where people who belong with eastern culture are



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similarly linked with western culture. Like somehow, they are not sure of the path they are choosing for their living. For instance, the character for Maryam's grandfather is a hybrid character of east and west. He is compelling Maryam to be a girl who is not like other girls of that time and also forcing her to be an eastern girl. There is a contradiction between his own dialogues, sometimes he is linking with east and sometimes he is showing connection with west. He is feeding feminist perspective in her that she should be the same as other silly girls of her age but in another event, he is feeling low and not welcoming nature to what she has done. "I want you to be fearless, not like every other soft, silly girl. But instead you're turning out spoilt and reckless" (Shamsie, 2022, pp. 63-64). This underscores the occidental culture is shaping the oriental culture. In consequence, he is setting her free from the ambition he has fed in her from her birth. "That has always been my thought, my dream. But Allah gave me one useless son, and no grandsons" (Shamsie, 2022, p.125). Maryam's grandfather has a conflicting personality throughout this part. Like, we illustrate from these textual evidences, he has contradictory opinions and shifting perspectives from his family. We observe how people in Pakistan have layered identities; they can relate to eastern or western culture concurrently.

This research paper preserves dimensions of postcolonial discourse. A significant factor of postcolonialism is mimicry, colonized imitates colonizers. Shamsie elegantly paints a picture of diverse but correlated aspects of postcolonialism in the novel, *Best of Friends*. "This difference of the natives from the superior colonial masters forced them to imitate, and the phenomenon of imitating the West, in terms of Homi Bhabha is called 'mimicry'" (Gupta, 2012, p.4). Bhabha asserted about the psychic of colonized how they were instructed to imitate the colonial master. Bhabha stated that 'mimicry' is a powerful tactic of colonizers when colonized have resilient thoughts about echoing the colonial master's language, literature and culture. There emerges a concept that the West is literate and East is illiterate. "It automatically establishes the belief that the West is always 'educated', 'civilized', 'reformed', 'disciplined', and 'knowledgeable', while the east is illiterate, barbaric, primitive and ignorant" (Gupta, 2012, p.5). The West considered themselves as educated and the East as uneducated and they desired to make the East as educated beings, known as "White man's burden". White people take it as their duty to civilise the eastern societies. In the novel, Maryam's mother has the same belief that London has more opportunities than Karachi. "Many opportunities and no bomb alarms in school and guards at the gate" (Shamsie, 2022, p.55). Shamsie describes violence of Karachi that human life is inferior to anything, their standards, attitudes are primary. "Last summer, car bombs had killed more than seventy people in Saddar" (Shamsie, 2022, p.9). Shamsie affirmed the horrifying culture of Karachi of that time. "Guns everywhere in Karachi, the phrase 'Kalashnikov culture' part of their everyday lives" (Shamsie, 2022, p.101). Bhabha claims mimicry is a flexible method of imitating the masters, it represses colonized people's cultural identity and leaves a person in a conflicting and ambivalent state. "Bhabha says that "... the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence" (Gupta, 2012, p.5). Mimicry is the relationship between orient and occident that orient longings the occident to copy them.

Shamsie's characters in novel are in ambivalent state and mirroring the west. Youth of the novel seem enthusiastic about echoing the west, their attitudes, gestures are the imitation of colonial masters. We are adopting the culture and dressing of west and it's been being the formula of life to show the reflection of western dressing and criticize those who do not do. "Mr. Razzaq, it's best you sit at your desk and don't parade trousers



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from a bygone era, don't you think?" (Shamsie, 2022, p.11). Youth is always concerned about the upcoming fashion and their best exercise is to catch up at first and they understand their ultimate duty is to criticize and literate the others as the west do. Maryam's grandfather asserted the quote of Courtney Love in their own way to emerge zeal in Maryam. "You're not a girl, you're a force of nature" (Shamsie, 2022, p.73). Courtney Love is an American singer, songwriter and actress who is quoted by a Pakistani dada. This shows the connection and alliance to the west how we admire them and take inspiration from them. Converting our conversation towards youth, youth is engaging, acquires new words of foreign languages and implements them in our life. Maryam during the summer visits to London, she learns the new word of Italian language. "I learnt a new Italian word this summer," Maryam said, ... 'Zia. It means 'aunt''. Also slang for - she lowered her voice, as she should have done before making light of the name of the dictator '-homosexual. Can you imagine, every time the Italian ambassador meets General Zia, he must be thinking" (Shamsie, 2022, pp.10-11). This event indicates the adulthood of Maryam and Zahra and their interest in indecent material. Shamsie portrays the youth's fascination as for adult entertainment and even she stated in the novel, "Adulthood is so complicated" (Shamsie, 2022, p.7). However, the new generation finds their curiosity in explicit material. "Hammad asked if there was anything new in WWF for him. He'd told her one evening on the phone that this was code for porn movies" (Shamsie, 2022, pp. 66-67). Shamsie demonstrates the west culture to the east how adults are accepting their culture contentedly and mimicking their traditions. "Zahra had once looked up from a dictionary to inform Maryam that what the two of them had with each other was friendship, and what they had with the other six girls and twenty-two boys in class was merely 'propinquity' - a relationship based on physical proximity" (Shamsie, 2022, p.7). Dating culture of the west now somehow is embraced by the east although the time depicted in the novel is far-fetched from the reality yet the elite class of that time who pays a visit to London every summer maybe have the tradition of dating or welcoming that. "Our first date," Hammad said" (Shamsie, 2022, p.65). The Eurocentric dating culture which is endorsed by the east, mirrors the layered identities where transnational influence moulds local traditions. This cultural synthesis highlights the resilience of the west and the east to retain their tradition and fused in colonial legacies.

Younger generations of the East were fascinated by iconic Western figures that are exhibited in novels. George Michael and Tom Cruise were the emerging figures of 1988, the east is captivated by the artistry of the west and not even the entire world. Shamsie describes youth's ascending attention towards Hollywood. "Maryam and Zahra to choose the music, and got on her knees on her double bed to plant a kiss on the mouth of George Michael, who was hanging on her wall in his 'Last Christmas' incarnation" (Shamsie, 2022, p.22). This is how our leading and influencing figures have been changed due to this postcolonial imprint. "Here, Tom Cruise in a white vest and blue jeans looking the kind of sad that only needed a girl's smile to make him happy; there, the women of Bananarama staring straight into the camera as if to say, 'Impress us if you can'" (Shamsie, 2022, pp.16-17). Colonial societies dictate the colonized societies to follow their culture, structure and values which leads to a hybrid and layered identity.

Duality of attachment and ambivalent state of characters are exemplified in Shamsie's *Best of Friends*. The East is confused and mixed-minded after the colonial legacies; how western practices affect their psychic defence mechanism. Maryam's grandfather on the one hand persisted with her granddaughter to hold the company in the future and constantly advised her to be a force of nature, not be like other silly girls "this was the





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twentieth century, his daughters would inherit the company” (Shamsie, 2022, p.24). But when she came into his office in sweaty shirt, he yelled at her “If you want me to introduce you to people who’ll one day have to take you seriously, don’t walk into my office looking like you’ve been in one of those Indian movies where rain drenches the woman in a white sari” (Shamsie, 2022, p.44). She was raised by her grandfather on women empowerment, her grandfather did not make any discrimination between her and her brother at the start of the novel. She used to play cricket at the office building every Saturday. “Most Saturday mornings, Maryam could be found on the cricket pitch laid behind the office block of Khan Leather, bowling her off-spin or opening the batting” (Shamsie, 2022, p.39). Maryam follows the echo of feminism which was growing in orientations at that time. “Her grandfather had never said that the cricket pitch was where she would undercut the disadvantage of her femaleness and teach the men to see her as a leader” (Shamsie, 2022, p.40). Her grandfather is raising her on the grounds of women empowerment and how a girl can lead the men and rule the world.

Author breathed life into characters facing forced assimilation and restrictive residency. This study explored the labyrinthine relationship among national allegiance and gender stereotypes. Viewed through the prism of post-colonialism, this work lends intuitive credibility to identity navigation and transnational cultural surfing. Incorporating subjects of Homi K Babba’s postcolonial theory, this research paper gives a view of interconnected threads of colonialism. It hypothesizes that power dynamics of colonialism leads to cultural imitation and cultural adoption by colonial subjects. This study addresses a contemporary relevance that the younger generation of the East is in awe of western innovation and liberation.

Enormous reason behind Maryam and Zahra’s empowerment is Benazir, new wave begun in Pakistan that Zia’s plane crashed and everyone concerned about forthcoming elections. ‘*Her mother said the unimaginable words: “Elections. Benazir”*’ (Shamsie, 2022, p.59). “How can that girl hope to rule?” which they’d heard from their father. Maryam understood that the word ‘girl’ had nothing to do with Benazir’s age, which, at thirty-five, was only five years short of her father’s” (Shamsie, 2022, p.73). This incident of 1988 was the remarkable event of Pakistan because the table did not turn and stream of changing followed in Pakistan. It was the first time in history that a woman Prime Minister took oath for Islamic Republic Pakistan and this scenario arose in the flooded blood of youth. “At the dawn the two girls stepped out on to the balcony to watch the sun rise on a democratic Pakistan which would soon have Benazir as its Prime Minister... ‘This is where we belong.’ The world had new role models now, rendering those of a few months ago irrelevant: Benazir herself” (Shamsie, 2022, p.74). Benazir is the foremost inspiration for Maryam that she believes Zahra should not have moved abroad because Pakistan is now wavering into the new wave of revolution which holds the upcoming bright future of this country. “She’s so...like she could rule the world one day and it wouldn’t even surprise her. Do you think Benazir was like that when she was fourteen?” (Shamsie, 2022, p.86) Everyone knows Maryam is impressed by Benazir and their friends are resonating their lives with each other, Maryam is compared to Benazir’s present and past because this is how youth draw parallels between the beloved one and lover.

The study unfolds how the east has multifaceted and layered identities in the modern era through postcolonial ideas of Homi K Bhabha’s cultural hybridity and ambivalence. This highlights how beautifully we Pakistanis imposed our problems on others and let our shoulders be clean. Western values are now blended in the east and how we are



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constantly resisting their culture. Shamsie stated in the novel, “The beauty of Pakistan is that there’s always someone else to blame for a problem” (Shamsie, 2022, p.33). We are intended to practice their traditions although blaming them for their previous colonial rule which compel us to exercise their culture. Hovering effects of colonial problems are the main snags, Pakistan is confronting today. In postcolonial perspective, this accountability could be shown as colonial aftermaths where cultural, political and economic conflicts are imputed to outer systematic forces.

### Conclusion

The study explores views of dynamic identities, intercultural synthesis and paradox of belongings in Karachi along with highlighting societal standards of gender, syncretic cultures, and women's autonomy. Shifting of identities in evolving societies are focal areas in South Asian literature. Post colonial writers possessing hybrid identities scribble aspects of cultural coexistence. In Shamsie’s novel, *Best of Friends*, the author painted a vintage view of Karachi where the eastern spirituality fuses western innovation. Protagonists were embodiments of Homi K Bhabha’s cultural interests. The feminist movements of the West weaved their tapestry of resistance and equality in the East. This study scrutinizes the duality of identities in Karachi, where the exploitative imperial regime planted its cultural roots in the field of area. Colonization driven by personal fluctuation of identities and cultural ambiguity lead to globalization. Later Homi K Bhabha presented the psychological dichotomy of colonizer and colonized. This conflicting cognitive paradox was labelled as “Ambivalence”. This study revealed that protagonists of the novel are the incarnations of this internal contradiction, grappling with moral dilemmas. The exploration of characters having contradictory inner motivations, souls divided, hearts as under, minds caught in the hyphen, spirits yearning for belongings and living lives suspended between two worlds is the golden thread that runs through the study. The linchpin of the study is to chart the territory of pastoral Karachi giving it a postcolonial sensibility. This research offers a philosophical rationale, and a moral imperative that the influx of millions into Karachi created a fertile ground for crime and corruption. This study also lends credence to identity flux and transnational cultural evolution and its far-reaching consequences. The echoes of Western culture on cords of Pakistani youth are given a pessimistic criticism

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