

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF IMMIGRANTS IN SAMIRA AHMED'S INTERNMENT

Ayesha Rabbi¹ and Farkhanda Shahid Khan²

ABSTRACT

*The post-9/11 has inspired a great deal of scholarship in the discipline of ethnic and cultural studies, and young adult fiction is no exception to this. Exploring the problems of identity, this article seeks to explain the interplay between an old ethnic and the newly acquired national identity in Internment, a political fiction by Indian American writer Samira Ahmed. Combining Homi K. Bhabha's model of national identity with Stuart Hall's model of cultural identity, this article argues that national identity is also shaped and affected by one's ethnic identity, but prominent nation-states like the limitations of the US to nationality are germane to its racist policies, which in turn cause identity conflicts, especially in second-generation migrants who take themselves as both US nationals and Indian Muslims. In this way, the paper discusses the thematization of oppression of an ethnic minority by national politics questioning their social and political efficacy and their rejection into the mainstream culture. The nuanced understanding of the novel about identities allows us to conclude that the failure to integrate minor ethnicities into the mainstream is also expressed in real-world political decisions and has become a pertinent issue in Young Adult fiction. The study aimed to inspect the role of self-compassion and psychological safety on burnout among healthcare professionals. This cross-sectional study was conducted on 300 medical workers (N= 150 men, N= 150 women) of different public and private sector hospitals. The data was collected through a purposive sampling technique. Self-Compassion Scale Short-Form (Raes et al., 2011), Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Nachreiner, 1998) and Neuroception of Psychological Safety Scale (Morton et al., 2022) along with a self-developed demographic sheet were administered to participants for measuring study variables. For data analysis, Descriptive Statistics, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was applied using SPSS (V-25). The results showed a significant ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$) relationship among all study variables i.e., self-compassion, burnout, and psychological safety. Findings also revealed that burnout has a significant and negative correlation with self-compassion and psychological safety. ($r = -1.83$, $**p < 0.01$). Whereas self-compassion and psychological safety were significantly and positively correlated with each other. ($r = .425^{**}$, $**p < 0.01$). T-test analysis*

¹Lecturer, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad. Email: arabbi@numl.edu.pk

²Lecturer, Government College University, Faisalabad. Email: farkhandashahidkhan@gcuf.edu.pk

revealed that there was no significant difference exists in burnout rate between males and females. As per study findings, it is concluded that having high self-compassion and psychological safety reduce the risk of burnout among medical professionals.

Keywords: *Political fiction, ethnic identity, Internment, national identity, young adult.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term young adult fiction is not very old. Some sixty years ago, there were no bookshelves either in libraries or bookstores full of titles such as *The Hunger Games* or the *Twilight* series. The term Young Adult and Young Adult fiction caught on during the 1970s and the 1980s. (Seifert, 2023; Strickland 2015) Since its inception as a category in fiction, it has explored topics like racism, drug addiction, sex, and topics like LGBT. Young adults are normally blamed for their political indifference and questions concerning the environment, scientific invention, globalization, and growing ethnic issues; however, recent trends prove this notion to be wrong. (Blakemore, 2023) The evolution of young adult fiction shows its close relevance to social, political, and cultural concerns that exhibit people's changing needs and responses to them. The young adult literature of the 70s and 80s exhibits trends towards social issues, such as race, economics, and mental health. The trends in the 90s shows more inclusiveness towards multiple ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This context of diverse ethnicities and cultures opens more space for the representation of political issues in the creative and scholarly literature on young adults. The popularity of young adult literature in the 2000s created a market for young adult fiction with titles such as *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* catching the attention of readers. Titles like these included themes of power, resistance, corruption, and politics addressing the needs of young adults and promoting awareness of them. (Strickland, 2015)

The changing reception of these trends shows that the above-mentioned young adults feel an imperative need for critical discussions, such as national and global usurping of human rights leading to terrorism and civil unrest, consequently affecting the young adult population globally. The September 11 attacks, also known as the 9/11 attacks, were a series of airline hijacking and terrorist attacks launched by Al-Qaeda, resulting in mass destruction and killings in the United States. The London bombings of 2005 (popularly known as 7/7) on the London transit system killed 39 and left 700 injured (Ray, 2023). The two events have had a considerable impact on the representation of political issues in young adult literature, specifically in

Muslim young adult literature. The involvement of Muslim terrorists in these attacks led to a distrust of Muslims in the West. This led to the creation of an environment in which Muslims faced distrust, physical assault, emotional abuse, and discrimination. (Pandith, 2021) Muslim young adult literature has served as a platform to discuss these conflicting issues by negotiating their identities. This type of literature compels readers to confront preconceived notions and biases, encouraging them to view the world through diverse perspectives. Muslim young adult literature specifically tackles the identity struggles faced by young Muslim Americans torn between conflicting notions of being both Asian or African Muslims and Americans. (Ali, 2018) *Internment* (2019), a novel by Samira Ahmed, is one such novel that explores the delicate issue of conflicting identities between the inherent ethnic identity and the adopted national identity.

With the exploration of the issue of identity, this research considers the interplay between ethnic and national identity under the scholarship of Stuart Hall and Homi K Bhabha. This article explores how in the growing political world, national identity conflicts with one's ethnic identity. The article further probes the question of growing ethnic intolerance shown towards Muslims specifically in the US by utilizing Bhabha's concept of national identity combined with Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity. This is done through a nuanced understanding of Samira Ahmed's novel *Internment* to know how identities in a growing political world are becoming impure, and there is a possible urge to acquire a pure identity. In this way, it argues that prominent nation-states like the US restrictions on citizenship are directly relevant to their racist policies, which in turn generate identity conflicts and marginalization, especially in second-generation immigrants who take themselves as both US nationals and Indian Muslims.

Keeping in mind the contemporary complex scenario, *Internment* as a fictional work bridges the gap between fictional and real-world issues. My discussion also includes how the fictional world created by the writer interpolates from the real world. *Internment* serves as a potential text in providing the YA audience with an alternative view of encountering problems and developing a sense of figuring out a solution for them. It gives voice to the growing concerns raised against Republican President Donald Trump's political campaign against immigrants and Muslims. (The Muslim American experience in the Trump era) As a commentary on the contemporary political situation, the novel under discussion raises the voice of defiance not only by challenging it but also by overcoming it. Further, as a political Young Adult novel, *Internment* serves as a warning against hostile ethnic policies and legislation prevalent in America.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Muslims in the US after 9/11

Muslims have a long history in the US, which can be traced back to pre-Columbian times. Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons gives us a complete overview of Muslim settlement from its pre-Columbian origin to the present-day settlement of the three Muslim groups in America. The present-day Muslim population in the US is divided into African American, Arab, and South Asian countries based on their origin, their inherent ideological rifts, and their potential impact on US policies both at home and abroad. Simmons highlights a pertinent discussion in the article about Muslim identity in the US by raising the question "Are they "Muslims in America" or are they "American Muslims?" (Simmons, 2008, P. 254) African American Muslims with a long history of oppression have failed to adopt American Culture and identity. First-generation Arabs and South Asian immigrants, on the other hand, with their strong bondage to their mother culture, find it difficult to reconcile with US foreign policies against Muslims. 9/11 has further aggravated these feelings, as stringent US laws against Muslims have pushed the already marginalized group with no hope in US politics. (Dwight & Jennifer, 2021)

The Pew Research Centre's report shows the number of Muslims 3.45 million in 2017 with a projected number increasing to 3.85 million by 2020. The number of Muslim worship houses has also been shown to increase with 2769 mosques in the 2020 version of the report, which shows quite an impressive standing of Muslims in America, but Islam as a religion remained unnoticed by the common Americans before the 1973 Arab oil embargo or the 1979 Iranian revolution (David, Tarik, & Altaf, 2017). This negative image was further highlighted by the 9/11 attacks. Muslims who remained unnoticed suddenly became a topic of discussion everywhere.

The hostility against Muslims was not something new but rather was considered a potential danger after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Arab-Israeli War presented them as extremists and religious fanatics (Charles, 2023). Black Americans fighting for their basic civil rights until the 1960s already faced problems of integration and assimilation. Such an environment fosters the idea that it is difficult to be Muslim and American at the same time. These suspicions were heightened by the laws passed in the wake of 9/11, which were seemingly aimed at Muslims. However, the writer sees the possibility of reconciliation, giving an example of Black American Muslim clerics' efforts to bring their group into a mainstream nation, which can be followed by other Muslims of different ethnicities (Simmons, 2008, P. 280).

A similar study discusses the discrimination that Muslims faced after 9/11, especially during job applications, as compared to secular applicants or

with no mention of religion. A similar prejudice is also observed in content analyses of textbooks and professional literature. Either the Muslims have not been given proper representation or have been represented in a way that they would not like to be described.

2.2 (Post 9/11) Trends in the Young Adult Fiction

Edward Said, the famous American post-colonial author of *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* was detained at the New York airport in 2003 as his name stirred certain security concerns. Although the investigation did not last long, it did bring disrespect to the famous author. This is one of the many humiliating incidents that Muslims had to face in the name of travel restrictions and are also reflected in fiction. Many books hit the racks soon after 9/11, discussing the causes and repercussions of the cataclysmic event in both fiction and nonfiction.

Terrorist (2006) by John Updike, *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006), a short story by Martin Amis, and *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie among many works—all have Muslim protagonists facing alienation and identity issues spurring from ambivalence, and insecurity and doubt. One of the effects of 9/11 on literature is that it opened space for marginalized voices. The novels published in the past few years by Muslim Authors in the Young Adult category shows very promising results. *The Secret Sky: A Novel of Forbidden Love in Afghanistan* (2014) by Atia Abawi, *The Lines We Cross* (2016) by Randa Abdel-Fattah, *A Very Large Expanse of Sea* (2018) by Tahereh Mafi, *The Sky at Our Feet* (2018) by Nadia Hashimi, *Homeland Elegies* (2020) by Ayad Akhtar, *Only This Beautiful Moment* (2023) by Abdi Nazemian—all cover a wide range of issues of assimilation, identity, and discriminations faced by their young Muslim protagonists in the wake of post 9/11 and 7/7. All these novels have Muslim characters as their protagonist confronting real-life challenges of family, love, identity, wearing hijab, and high school bullying fall in the category of young adults discussing their place and identity in American society.

If we look at the trends in young adult fiction, one would observe that political themes are on the rise. The reasons for the booming popularity of such fiction can be multifarious but there are two main reasons: first, one can owe its growing acceptance to the publishers who are interested in having more works published under the young adult banner because of its high market value. Second, young adult audiences are easy to influence and so can catalyze to bring change. The growing trend of young adult fiction has naturally brought attention both from media and academic circles to critically evaluate the effects from the micro to the macro level of society (Cart, 2020).

This is one of the reasons that young adult fiction has not been considered destination literature but rather a gateway to more sophisticated and mature literature. With the mounting political issues in the global world, contemporary Young Adult novels are making the issues of ethnic conflicts, racism, and cultural identity more debatable.

Along with the hormonal changes during the adolescent phase, the social setup in surroundings, the socioeconomic background of the family they are part of, and community behaviors (including racial, ethnic, and religious groups) also contribute to molding the personalities. The communities' influence may be positive or negative; positive in a sense, bringing in them the developmental reading habits, or in the form of a bond with likewise people which is not conflicting to the families, and negative impact collides with the personality and reading habit both. With these impacts, young adults read sometimes to escape their homes, while some others may not read due to friends' pressure. On the other hand, some young adults favor reading that realistically addresses their issues while living in politically conflicting worlds.

Freedom being an important theme of young adult fiction has changed its meaning from individual freedom and space in a community to a collective sense of freedom of a group based on its shared ethnic or racial identity. The contemporary platform of young adult fiction gives full support to the growing complex political issues in which the adolescent audience not only sees them as responsible for bringing a change in their self but for the extended community as a whole. Literature serves as an appropriate tool in not only orienting them about pertinent issues but equipping them with a perspective to evaluate the notions of freedom and democracy as a wholesome unit.

It is important to note here the importance of such fiction in addressing and giving voice to the anxieties of the real world. Kerry Mallan notes Moyall's observation regarding the ability of YA political fiction in addressing real societal issues which are twofold: one that it enables the reader to see the differences between the real and the fictional world, and two it makes the YA audience equipped themselves to encounter the issues and averting dire consequences. Mallan further quotes Bradford's trust in YA fiction's ability to have a positive influence in empowering them by encouraging them to take responsibility. Bradford brings into light one more feature of the YA texts that these texts allow an optimistic belief in children regarding making right decisions, to be self-righteous, to accept the duties and responsibilities open-heartedly, and not to surrender to oppression (qt. in Mallan, 2017, P. 16). Most of the novels mentioned above seem to be quite

promising and empowering by addressing the issues at hand at a metaphoric level.

Wars waged in the post-9/11 scenario have led to increasing debates on geopolitics and have made critics revisit the definition of freedom and democracy. In such intensifying political climate and conflicts amidst terrorism, the rise of political YA fiction is imperative. These political fictions ask critical questions of identity in the light of 'us' and 'them' and try to figure out new boundaries and markers set to differentiate 'us' from 'them'. Within the literary perimeters, a new kind of novel emerges bringing to light the issue of ethnicity and race. This new ethnic novel confronts the hegemonic powers speaking against the oppression of minority cultures. Following the literary trend arose writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Louise Erdrich, and Scott Momaday who fought for the damage caused to the black and Native American ideals and values respectively. Ethnic diversity is woven deeply into American history and culture from the first settlement in the New World to modern America. Post 9/11 has added a political dimension to these ethnic novels as the world got more politicized and the reverberations of 'us' and 'them' can be heard loud. The American character is unique in the sense that it is defined by the mass migration and multiplicity of cultures. Sam B Girgus traces the evolution of the ethnic novel in America that it has always been ethnic in character as he quotes "identity in America is inevitably ethnic" (Girgus, 1993, P. 59) and that the American character is defined by blending one's ethnic origin and contemporary American identity. Furthermore, all Americans possess a unique diasporic identity as almost the majority of the population comprises immigrants; however, minorities like South Asians cannot cherish this blend. According to Thomas Paine and George Washington, "the American people are a new people and a new race composed of all people and races." (Girgus, 1993, P. 60)

Internment presents the struggle of an Indian American Muslim girl Layla, who puts up a strong resistance against the oppression caused by the whole Muslim community in the United States who are forced to live in the special internment camps (Ahmad, 2019, P. 60). It is a story of resilience and acquiring freedom. She sparks a revolution among her internment fellows and launched an organized rebellion by breaking the complicit silence they all were living in. According to the writer, she started writing the novel in 2016 and so, it was hard to ignore the political facts and oppression against Muslims. The timely appearance of the novel makes it appear a viable possibility shortly as the internment-style camps already exist in Texas where undocumented immigrants are said to be detained. Though YA fiction is blamed for not being enriched with sophisticated content and style, contemporary novels prove it to

be wrong; as what the novel focuses to be happening in the United States is already a reality for Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and Uighur Muslims in China on a scale as greater as was done to Japanese Americans after the second world war and during Holocaust. In her notes to the novel, she makes it clear that "The events in Internment are profoundly fixed in our past. You are witnessing them now, in our present." (Ahmed. 2019, P. 260)

An article by Paul Thomas and Pete Sanderson explores the problem of Muslim youth alienation in Britain after the 7/7 attacks and their possible cohesion with British national identity. He focuses on more cross-cultural communication and dialogue to develop the ground for common identities (Sanderson & Thomas, 2011, P. 09). The same is true in the contemporary politics of the United States where the previous presidential campaigns were fought on highlighting the differences among the ethnicities that collectively determine American character. Recent addition like "Young Muslim America: Faith, Community, and Belonging (2018) explores the problems faced by Muslims specifically in the US. The book highlights the experiences of young Muslims in America and their sense of belonging within their faith and community. The book highlights the challenges faced by young Muslims in navigating tensions between different generational, ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds within the Muslim community, as well as dealing with Islamophobia and suspicion from mainstream American society. The book provides rich ethnographic data that sheds light on the complex and contradictory cultural landscapes that young Muslims navigate in their daily lives. Through her interviews with over 200 young Muslim Americans, Ali explores the struggles for identity, community, and culture that this group faces. Her book contributes to the conversation on Muslim identity in America by providing a nuanced understanding of the experiences of young Muslims and highlighting their agency in shaping their own identities and communities. Despite these challenges, Ali argues that young Muslims are finding ways to create meaningful identities and engage with their faith both within Muslim contexts and beyond. (Ali, 2018, P. 50) The book review of Muslims in Story: Expanding Multicultural Understanding through Children's and Young Adult Literature (2018) shows the central theme of the book revolves around the representation of Muslim children in literature, with a specific emphasis on the portrayal of authentic and uplifting narratives. Its primary objective is to combat anti-Muslim bias and dispel misinformation by facilitating positive engagement through literary works. By shedding light on the significance of genuine and diverse depictions of Muslim children in literature, "Muslims in Story" contributes to the broader discourse on diversity and representation in youth literature. The authors contend that fostering positive engagement

through books can effectively counteract prejudices and misinformation targeting the Muslim community. Moreover, the book offers practical resources for educators and librarians to evaluate the authenticity and quality of newly published books for potential inclusion in educational settings. Overall, "Muslims in Story" constitutes a substantial contribution to the ongoing dialogue on diversity and representation in youth literature. (Khachab, 2019)

Yet, the growing political oppression of minority groups at the hands of more powerful ones calls for more explicit commentary on such issues. *Internment* (2019) by Samira Ahmed is a new addition to this category set in the future with a political yet despotic implication of the ignored issues of liberty and ethnicity. Moreover, contemporary YA fiction draws on real-life situations. *Internment* also came up at a time when it was needed the most with critical commentary on the contemporary political climate burning with Islamophobia and the immigrant ban in America after Donald Trump's elected President.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social identity takes ethnic and national identity as its facets, which refer to one's association with a particular national or ethnic group (Umaña-Taylor, Adriana J., et al., 2020). Ethnic identity is self-constructed and an individual internalizes based on his/her membership in a particular group; he is inclined due to her cultural background, racial phenotype, and ethnic heritage. On the contrary, national identity conveys one's belongingness to a particular nation (Umaña-Taylor, Adriana J., et al., 2014). Ethnicity plays a significant role in the construction of identity, although it is not a fixed identity, as the term ethnicity also has a slippery nature and inherent ambiguity. It is this elasticity and uncertainty of the term ethnicity that allows for deep confusion and political misuse (Siniša, 2004). Moreover, ethnicity and race have a complex relationship. Though they intersect, they are discrete notions, as Pierre van den Berghe defines that "race is a distinct pointer of ethnicity", because it uses biological features as an ethnic symbol (in Ellis, 2020).

The etymological root of the word ethnicity comes from the Greek word 'ethnos' which stands for 'nation'. The earliest use of the word ethnicity referred to culturally different 'heathen nations'. The sense of a national group was attached to the word ethnicity during the heavy migration from Europe to America in the early twentieth century, As defined by Robin Cohen, diasporic communities are the ones who realize that "the old country" is an idea deeply rooted in religion, language, traditions, or folklore- always puts in question their emotion and attached loyalty... a member's connection to the diasporic

people is manifested by the reception of an inevitable link with their migration history and the logic of co-ethnicity with the people of parallel background (Ellis, 2020).

Understanding the underlying complexity of texts, models, and theories of ethnicity serves as an appropriate background. Similarly, this selected novel is analyzed in the background of the idea of national identity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha with a blend of Stuart Hall's concept of diasporic identity. This qualitative study uses textual analysis as a research method to scrutinize the concept of diasporic identity in the novel. Before explaining Bhabha's concept of national identity, I would connect it with Bhabha's concept of hybridity. Hybridity focuses on the peaceful mixing of the two cultures as resistance to the dominant prevalent discourse (Bhabha, 1994). The question arises whether it is a peaceful way of mixing two cultures or races, or if the two different colors never mix to make one homogenized entity with a homogenized identity. Is negotiation between the two cultures a reality? The post-9/11 and 7/7 situations violated this assumption. The situation has challenged the negotiation between one's ethnic and national identity, and hybridity has shown itself to result in a split cultural identity and has led nationalism to be fractured by ideological tenants of race, gender, and culture.

Bhabha's concept of nationalistic representations finds its expression in his essay "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation". According to Bhabha, nationalistic representations are unstable and fragile. The nationalistic discourses work towards finding commonalities among differences as they try to transform "many as one" (Bhabha, 1994, P. 222). These nationalistic discourses are guided by twofold representations: pedagogic and performative (Bhabha, 1994). The pedagogic aspect of the nationalistic discourse demands a sense of continuation in history for a group of people to be brought together and warrant them social and political entities. The performative aspect of nationalistic discourse must be continuously rehearsed to forge unity. It encompasses performing a range of signs and symbols as Bhabha mentions in his essay: "The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture" (Bhabha, 1994, P. 209). According to him, discursivity arises from the oppositional aspects of nationalistic discourse, which leads to fragmentation in a homogeneous group. Pedagogic representation demands an idealized form of unity that is difficult to realize because the performative aspect fragments this idealized form of coherence, as people from different races and ethnicities (becoming one nation) bring in their norms and narratives. As Bhabha says, the diversity of people in a nation brings about a 'nation split.' This split allows for a liminal signifying space in which minorities mark their

discourses, which have diverse histories of competing peoples, incompatible and unfriendly authorities, and hassled points of diverse cultures. The perpetual necessity of performative signs exposes a nation's existence to fragmentation.

Stuart Hall defines cultural identity in two ways. In his first definition, it is a kind of one "shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall, 1989, P. 69). This identity is then a stable source to support their identity, which needs to be unearthed over time. According to Hall, there is a second kind of identity that interferes with the first one and is a source of difference in not 'what we are; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become" (Hall, 1989, P. 70). This identity is not fixed, but is subject to various cultural and historical interferences and is constantly changing. In Hall's words, cultural identities are the titles of the positioning of oneself in different environments and cultures, while putting the past in context. They are never final but change as the position changes.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The temporal setting of the novel is set fifteen minutes in future America—a terrifying picture of future America with "two and half years since the election" resulting in the 'Muslim ban' in practice for eighteen months because of the enactment of 'the Exclusion Laws' implemented by the US government. This is the beginning of the story; the worst is yet to come. The newly elected president with his elected Islamophobic cabinet driven by their fundamentalism deprive all the Muslims of their job, burn all the books by Muslims as described as book burning by the writer, impose a curfew in Muslim areas, and relocate them to a model internment camp Mobius. This camp was constructed near the infamous Manzanar War Relocation Center, an internment camp used to imprison Japanese Americans during World War II. As Ahmed fictionalizes the political fact in her novel by referring to that it was all done under the 'High Command'. The camp was the first one and the second one to be followed soon: "They want internment to go wide scale." It is all under the sponsorship of the war secretary, but it is administered by the local Security guards, CIA and FBI, too. The president has no power as he operates like the Constitution without any written proof (Ahmed, 2019, P. 133). The plot of the novel echoes the political tension exhibited against Muslims by Republicans during and after the 2106 presidential election in America. Brian Klaas in an article for the Washington Post traces the history of Donald Trump's anti-Muslim bigotry. Klaas quotes many quotes from Trump's speeches in

various instances that expose his intentions for a future America. According to him, during the presidential campaign in 2105, he affirmed a supporter's view by nodding when he expressed his anti-Muslim views by saying that the problem with our country is that we have Muslims. Later in November of the same year in a television program, Trump showed his hostility against Muslims by saying that they need to "watch and study mosques" (Klaas, 2019, P. 1). Klaas quotes further instances when Trump openly expressed his prejudice against Muslims. For example, he also stressed the need to have a database of Muslims to be easily tracked. On one occasion he also accused Muslims of cheering against the 9/11 incident. The Republican prejudice reaches its height when Trump calls for a total ban on all Muslims. After swearing in as president most of the members of his cabinet have a history of Islamophobia: Michael Flynn, Mike Pompeo, and John Bolton are few among many (Klaas, 2019, P.2). It is what the writer observes and anticipates a dark future for Muslims through her YA writing *Internment*.

It brings under discussion the debate that how American Muslims under the new Republican leadership fear persecution. Layla Amin, the central character in the novel, is a high school goer but suspended for kissing her boyfriend, David publicly. Her boyfriend is a Yemeni brown Jew but it is not a confrontation between White and the brown, but the Muslim other who is punished as Layla knows that "it's my religion in the crosshairs" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 16). Her father, a former college literature professor was fired in an accusation by police of writing rebellious papers (Ahmed, 2019 P. 15). His books authored by Muslims were burned at the beginning of the narrative (Ahmed, 2019, P 13, 19). They like objects are stuffed into trains and taken to those internment camps, where identity numbers are tattooed on their bodies. This treatment was very much similar to the Jewish people in Nazi Germany and the internment camps of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. On their way to the Muslim internment camp, they pass through Manzanar, those desolate camps once populated by Japanese American people during wartime (Ahmed, 2019, P. 51).

In the author's notes at the end of the novel, the writer mentions her intentions by referring to the government's "zero tolerance" border policy" providing readers with statistical figures. "In September 2108, 1600 migrant children were taken from those shelters and relocated to a tent city in Tornillo, Texas" She further reiterates that more detention camps are planned to be erected in "California, Arizona, and Alabama to hold nearly 120,000 migrants" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 259). Ahmed's narrative further informs that Americans monitor detained families with the help of drones, security cameras, and searchlights. The surrounding of those internment camps has a razor-wired

fence in a FEMA-styled trailer. The person who is capable to implement the divide-and-rule policy to control the internees is appointed the director. He uses a "classic colonial conquest strategy" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 74). According to this strategy, Gora (English) separated the Muslims by nationality, race, and ethnicity in such a way that they always remained busy in their skirmishes. This was done intentionally to avert an organized revolt against British Gora.

However, Ethnic literature retains the consciousness of communal identity by calling them Asian American, and African American with one part showing adherence to ethnic identity and the second part to national identity. But this hybrid consciousness is not always stable and results in the disability of their relationship with the State. It is not a fixed mixing of the two cultures but constantly changing and can be troubling. The problem arises when the State fails to see the marginalization of the displaced culture where the host culture is always a dominant one; the displaced individual is bound to go back to his indigenous identity. In the novel too, the conflict arises when on their way to the internment camp at a checkpoint instead of instructions written in "multiple languages" it is written in English only which is against the norm in old America (Ahmed, 2019, P. 42). The irony is that at the checkpoint, the protagonist Layla sees "an American flag patch on each soldier's sleeve, and below that, a black rectangle with EXCLUSION AUTHORITY embroidered in white" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 42). This political non-acceptance is the reason behind cultural and ethnic fundamentalism. America is unique in this sense that the majority of the population has hyphenated identities as African-American, Japanese-American, or, Asian-American; along with several ethnicities, there are several identities.

The novel presents a good case for the two facets of cultural identities that Muslims in America have forged. As mentioned in the novel, Muslims in America reposition themselves by continuously asserting and reiterating themselves as Americans. As in the words of the protagonist at the beginning of the novel when the mob is shown politically charged against fellow American Muslims: if we know about our home it is America. It is the only home we have ever known, while people in anger are shown on television chanting "Go home" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 56). This shows their helplessness and the ethnic conflict that is easily volatile. Their past and present mingle as Layla describes the internment camp "It's like a United Nations of internees... Some in hijab and kufis and the traditional dress of their ancestral countries, many in T-shirts and jeans and shorts. But we're all citizens of the United States, forced on a dead-end journey into the desert" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 56). Their ancestral ethnic identity interferes with their national identity which they had to reiterate.

Along with this concept of cultural identity, the term ethnicity is also in use since 1960 to talk about the similarities in culture, language, social patterns, and ancestry rather than determining race only in biological terms. Race is often determined in terms of genetic similarity while an ethnic group is recognized by showing adherence to certain norms, sets of behaviors, shared beliefs and memories, and loyalties. Delineating the history of the word 'ethnicity' Bill Ashcroft and other writers quote some 27 definitions of ethnicity. The modest definition of ethnicity turns out as a group of certain people who are different from others primarily based on national or cultural characteristics (Ahmed, 2019, P. 76). The embedded home in the first-generation migrant is strong but for the second generation, it is an imaginary land with which they feel connected through language, religious rituals, and customs, or in Stuart Hall's sense of identity, it is unearthed. The recurring examples of reciting Muslim prayers by Layla's parents (Ahmed, 2019, P. 34), and the importance of Ayatul kursi as stressed by her Nani (maternal grandmother) (Ahmed, 2019, P. 35), are examples of how the unique ethnic identity is never lost in acquiring a national identity and is continuously unearthed. In their household being Indian American, the use of words from the Urdu language like Qurbani (Sacrifice as a religious practice), adrak, lehsan (ginger, garlic), beta (Urdu word for child), and Nani (maternal grandmother) (Ahmed, 2019, P. 20-29) is inevitable as they have not lost ties with their ancestral land and hence, continuously question the interplay between ethnic and national identity.

Bhabha's concept of national identity is divided into pedagogic and performative deeds is visible in the actions of Muslims depicted in the novel. The pedagogic aspect of the nationalistic discourse demands a sense of continuation in history to be brought together as a social and political entity. In the case of America, the unique multi-ethnic character is marked by the variety of colors and races, and the slogan of the American Revolution is shared by everyone which is now replaced by new fundamentalism. As in Layla's words: "Again, I'm struck by the Americanness of the throngs of people. There are diverse ethnicities, multiple races, various ways of getting dressed up, and in the same way subjective opinions on politics, Islam, and life.

But I guess that's the old America. Now we all have one thing in common—a religion that makes us enemies of the State. State all of us are citizens of, the one most of us were born into" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 70). The effort is carried out to make a separate community within America. The performative aspect of the nationalistic discourse must be continuously rehearsed to be forged into unity. It encompasses performing a range of signs and symbols as Bhabha mentions in his essay that the patches, scraps, and rags of usual life must be recurrently twisted into the symbols of an intelligible national culture

(Ahmed, 2019, P. 209). They are robbed of those signs that they hold dear as Americans. They are divided into groups based on their culture and language despite all being American Muslims. The American flag and the English language are performative signs that they are not allowed to use. As each sub-culture of the Muslim community is assigned minders who speak their language and not English which is a sign of solidarity being Americans (Ahmed, 2019). Their new identity is "interned Muslims" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 51).

According to Bhabha discursivity arises from the oppositional aspects of the nationalistic discourses which would lead to fragmentation in a homogeneous group. The pedagogic representation demands an idealized form of unity which is hard to be realized because the performative aspect fragments this idealized form of coherence as people from different races and ethnicities (becoming one nation) bring in their norms and values. Muslims in the internment camp have to continuously reiterate their allegiance to America and remind others that they are Americans and human beings either by expressing it loudly in words or by wearing the American flag hijab (Ahmed, 2019, P. 118, 184).

At the compound, Layla is caught getting in connection with her Jewish boyfriend David. The Director of the camp frowns and questions the religion of her boyfriend as "interreligious mingling" is not allowed (Ahmed, 2019, P. 135). Layla writes an article and secretly gets it published to let people know that they are not 'other', as Bhabha also writes that minorities find their liminal space to continue their practices. The perpetual necessity of the performative signs makes the existence of a nation always exposed to fragmentation. As mentioned earlier, the unique multi-ethnic American character has always made it susceptible to violence. The author's note to the novel at the end is important as she adds, "When fascism comes to America, it will come dressed in the flag. You don't need to be a student of history to see how nationalism, disguised as patriotism, can take hold of a country, justifying terrible and cruel acts" (Ahmed, 2019, P. 259). She further emphasizes this by saying that the concepts of nationalism and fascism are not contemporary issues rather they are the inherent fragment of American land (Ahmed, 2019, P. 259). The political and social concept of a nation is always easy to destabilize in case of a heterogeneous character of a nation.

5. CONCLUSION

It has been concluded through close analysis of *Internment* that it is a classified young adult political fiction and that such fiction set in the background of political conflicts, terrorism, and war can serve to be a greater source to question the interplay between the old ethnic and the newly attained

national identity. It has proved that the thematic expression of oppression of minority groups undermines their political and social efficacy and they are rejected in the larger picture of society. The nuanced thoughts of the novel allow us to settle that the failure to join minor ethnicities into the conventional is also expressed in real-world political decisions and has become a pertinent issue in Young Adult fiction. It has also been observed that in the current politicized global world, such debates are necessary as it is the youth who change in the wake of such events, and the purpose, in the present research, has been achieved by the postcolonial theoretical lens given by Bhabha and Stuart Hall on national and ethnic identities. Hence, the potential of such young adult political fiction provides adolescents with the right orientation of their political identity and helps them put resistance against the challenges they are likely to face in the real world. Moreover, the work has implications for future researchers to work on the same text to explore and understand the concept of racism in the US under the framework of cultural racism, as racism and white supremacy are not only enhancing political extremism, radicalism, and white nationalism in America but also propagating racist ideologies and leaving people with civil rights struggles. Similarly, the novel can also be read under fascism as a political movement in America/fascist propaganda, since racism has propelled America towards fascism, and *Internment* can be taken as a force to eliminate fascism and a wake-up call for critical neutrality in the US under fascist ideologies.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2019). *Internment*. New York: Little, Brown and Company Hachette Book Group, electronic.
- Ali, M. (2018). "The Identity Crisis" of Younger Muslims. Ali, Muna. *Young Muslim America Faith, Community, and Belonging*. New York: Oxford University Press. 49-92.
- Ali, M. (2018). *Young Muslim America Faith, Community, and Belonging*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bacigalupi, P. (14 April 2020). "Craving Truth-telling." 17 December 2012. The New York Times. <<https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/12/26/the-dark-side-of-young-adult-fiction/craving-truth-telling>>.
- Bergen, P. L. (26 May 2023). "September 11 Attacks." 05 2023. Britannica. 26 05 2023. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks>>.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Bill A, Gareth G, Helen T. (2007). *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Oxon: Routledge, 2nd Edition.

- Blakemore, E. (2023) "A Brief History of Young Adult Fiction." 10 4 2015. Jstor Daily.
- Charles, R. (15 Feb 2023). "How 9/11 altered the fiction landscape in 13 novels." 7 September 2021. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/sept-11-novels/2021/09/05/c6b3e5ba-0ce5-11ec-a6dd-296ba7fb2dce_story.html>.
- Cart, M. (2022). Young adult literature: From romance to realism (4th ed.). American Library Association.
- David R. H, Tarek Z & .Altaf H. (2017). "The Islamic community in post-9/11 America: Which Muslims are likely to report being called offensive names." Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought 36.1-2 : 117-132. online. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2017.1302392>>.
- Dwight G, Jennifer S. (2021). "Dread, War and Ambivalence: Literature Since the Towers Fell." 3 September 2021. The New York Times. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/books/911-anniversary-fiction-literature.html>>.
- Ellis, E. (2020). The race conversation: An essential guide to creating life-changing dialogue. Confer Books.
- Girgus, S. B. (1993). "The New Ethnic Novel and the American Idea." College Literature 20.3 (1993): 57-72, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25112058>>.
- Hall, S. (1989). "CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION." Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media 36 (1989): 68-81. <<http://www.jstor.com/stable/44111666>>.
- Khachab, N. (2019). "Manglik, Gauri and Sadaf Siddique. Muslims in Story: Expanding Multicultural Understanding through Children." Research on Diversity in Youth Literature 2.1 . <<https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1072&context=rdyl>>.
- Klaas, B. (2019). "A short history of President Trump's anti-Muslim Bigotry." 16 March 2019. The Washington Post. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/15/short-history-president-trumps-anti-muslim-bigotry/>>.
- Mallan, K. (2017). "Dystopian Fiction for Young People: Instructive Tales of Resilience." Psychoanalytic Inquiry A Topical Journal for Mental Health Professionals 37.1: 16-24. 11 May 2020. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2017.1250586>>.
- Pandith, F. (2021) "The U.S., Muslims, and a Turbulent Post-9/11 World." 01 09 2021. Council on Foreign Relations. <<https://www.cfr.org/article/us-muslims-and-turbulent-post-911-world>>.

- Ray, M. (2023). "London Bombings of 2005." 23 05 2023. Britannica. 26 05 2023. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/London-bombings-of-2005>>.
- Sanderson, T. and Thomas, P. (2011). "Unwilling Citizens? Muslim Young People and National Identity." *Sociology* 45.6 (2011): 1028-1044. 20 April 2020. < <http://www.jstor.com/stable/42857597>>.
- Seifert (2023). "The Evolution of Young Adult Literature." *Eagle's Scream*. 21 May 2023.
- Simmons, G. Z. (2008). "From Muslims in America to American Muslims." *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 10.3. PP. 254-280.
- Strickland, A. (2015). "A brief history of young adult literature.". *CNN*. 21 5 2023.
- Siniša M. (2004). *The Sociology of Ethnicity*. London: Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications. P.160.
- Umaña-T. J., et al. (2014). "Ethnic and Racial Identity During Adolescence and into Young Adulthood: An Integrated Conceptualization". *Child Development*, 85.1. P.21-39.
- Umaña-T, Adriana J., et al. (2020). "National Identity Development and Friendship network Dynamics among Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Youth". *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 49.3. P. 706-723.