



RESEARCH PAPER

Examining Cross-Ethnic Relationships Through Selective Novels of South Asian Writers

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the cross-ethnic relationships in the fictional works of South Asian writers. Hence, the main objective of this study is to get an insight into the proximal relations that the characters of these particular works seemed to share. The research paradigm employed for this study is qualitative, and the researchers utilized Bhaba's (1994) notion of *Unhomeliness* as a theoretical framework. The data sources comprise works done by South Asian writers, including Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Bapsi Sidwa. That said, a sample of four novels (Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalists*, Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man*) has been selected while employing purposive sampling. The collected data for the research is analyzed using the textual method. The findings revealed the cultural intersections and power dynamics and identified the struggles of the characters, reflecting how relationships across ethnic boundaries are often shaped by historical trauma, enduring legacies of colonialism, and geographical tensions.

KEYWORDS Colonial British Raj, Ethnicity Environment and surroundings, Interpersonal Relationship, Post – Independent, Proximity

Introduction

South Asian literature mainly refers to Pakistani and Indian diaspora literature, highlighting every aspect of life, like complexities of identity, migration, social injustice, and proximal relationships due to globalization and modernism. The writers have raised their voices against the issue of man-woman relationships in terms of marital disorders, sociocultural issues, and ethnic problems, especially those Asians who went abroad and faced different problems based on their culture, beliefs, and surroundings. Relationship bonding is common among males and females, but when these relationships exist in the context of some exotic land like America, they cannot be prolonged and can finally end. This idea is discussed in the works of the writers through different settings and scenarios, such as Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, Kamila Shamsie, Bapsi Sidhwa, Arundhati Roy, and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Being a social animal, man is tied to his society through different means in which interpersonal relations are the primary concern. A society is the collection of individual human beings tied mutually under certain relations. To enjoy life and live peacefully in this world, we need to have proximal relations with other human beings. A healthy relationship has a powerful influence on human mental and physical health. Relationship generally refers to the means through which people and things connect. It can be how people behave with each other; for example, it can be a loving, romantic, and sexual

association among them; in this way, human beings are associated with each other in terms of a meaningful relationship.

So, the association is a key component or a situation in which man needs to be in the company of other human beings.

“Proximity” generally means “closeness” or “nearness” either in terms of physical distance or personal relationship. Physical attachment in proximity needs attraction without considering the distance between them, like how far they live and how often they meet or very seldom they interact with each other; they can be friends or marry. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Proximity as: “The quality or state of being proximate: Closeness”. (Banerjee, 2011).

The history of proximity mainly depends upon the idea of closeness, both physical and metaphorical. Generally, we form interpersonal relationships with the people to whom we are socially closed. This principle is based on the cognitive tendency to look into this aspect of relationships (Waldron, 2011). Leon Festinger (1950) suggests that proximity generates the functions of groups and their interaction and that social links between groups are important for healthy and positive relationships (Festinger, 1950). Robert & Pistole (2009) believe that any type of interpersonal interaction needs an exchange of rewards like information, fondness, and social status. Strong feelings of sadness and happiness are experienced in a proximal relationship on behalf of the beloved; to be married is a free choice, but with time, it follows rules and regulations (Desdimona, 2018). Newcomb perceives the concept of proximity through relationship bondage. To explain the intimate bonding between people within society, he introduced this term.

A close bonding is essential for proximity. Through addressing the destinies of the key characters: Erica and Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hiroko and Sajjad in *Burnt Shadows*, Ashok and Madam Pinky in *The White Tiger*, Maxine and Gogol in *The Namesake*, Ayah and Dilnawaz in *Ice Candy Man* demonstrate a strong proximal relationship with one another.

Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Kamila Shamsi are prominent South Asian writers who tried to highlight not just relationships in different people belonging to different cultures, land, and environment. However, economic, political, cultural, and socio-ethnic motives are also used to highlight the proximal relationships with different people (Mehrotra, 2012).

Man cannot survive alone; being a social animal, he develops his association with his surroundings in terms of meaningful bondage, either personal or physical. When a foreigner comes to a new land, initially, it is difficult for him to adjust to the new place, culture, and overall environment. Over time, he became familiar with his surroundings and, through daily interactions, made strong proximal relationships. Sometimes, their relationships become queer due to the hindrance of societal norms, ethics, culture, and societal environment. The present study explores the aspects of proximity and interpersonal relationships, their effects, and the problems foreigners face in a new land. This issue is presented in many of the selected works of South Asian writers. Specifically in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through the characters of Erica and Changaz, Kamila Shamsi's *Burnt Shadows* through two main characters Hiroko and Sajjad, Arundhati Roy's *The White Tiger*, the characters of Ashok and Madam Pinky, In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Name Sake*, the characters of Maxine and Gogol and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* the characters of Ayah and Dilnawaz.

Literature Review

Kapoor (2023) held the view from student life having an interest in Indian culture as one of his teachers believed in human beings and their connections among cultures and times. The same observation was made in the novel *The White Tiger*. In this research, human connection and interpersonal relationships have been raised beyond ethnicity and cultural differences prevailing between couples.

Javed et al. (2021) said that Mohsin Hamid has thoroughly explored the issues of living and working in America, especially a Pakistani man who is building a life in America. When talking about the relationship between Pakistani men and American women it contains discrimination and ignorance. In our present article, the issue of relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds and their outcomes is shown through different ideas of South Asian writers.

Shamim (2021) has highlighted the issue concerning the identity and ethnic differences between Muslims and Americans, especially after the bombing attack of 9/11; how globalization raising ethnic and identity issues among people belonging to different communities and environments like Mohsin Hamid raise the same issue, especially between Pakistani Muslims and the Native Americans. Like how Muslims were suspected and marginalized after the 9/11 incidents. Many immigrants try to negate their past and culture; in return, they have to face much trouble because leaving one's ethnicity and belonging is a challenging task. The same issue we have been highlighting in this novel but through different aspects, as we focus on the physical and proximal relationships between Pakistani Muslims and Americans that could not persist too long due to these ethnic and identity issues.

Kharal (2021) mentioned the framing identities of Hiroko Tanaka, a Japanese teacher, because of her diaspora experience and how it changes the main character's identity. This research highlights the same issue but from a different angle: how Hiroko Tanaka makes a proximal relationship with Sajjad and lives in Pakistan after partitioning a new land with different environments and cultures.

Sathya (2020) remarked that *Ice Candy Man* not only focuses on the theme of partition between Pakistan and India but also highlights other themes like how Muslims, Indians, and Sikhs were killing each other, trouble faced by humans, especially females, like the tragic tale of Ayah, explained the scenes of how women suffered at that time. In a recent article, the proximal relationship between Ayah and Dil Nawaz has been discussed how once he was fascinated by her, and then, after partition, he forced her into prostitution.

Mansoor(2020) mentioned delving into the human cost of the partition event, and the novel sheds light on communal divides in the ethnic, cultural, and religious sectors of India and Pakistan after the partition. It focuses on the sexually enticing Ayah and a list of her admirers, whom its people later exploited. The present research deals with the interpersonal relationship between Ayah Shanta and his Muslim husband, the Ice Candy Man named Dil Nawaz.

Paudyal (2015) commented that Lahiri's *The Namesake* is above the conventional wisdom, especially for migrated South Asians, as how they participate in different changing connections shaping and giving the new notion of American identity in which these immigrants and American-born children adopt the American culture and also import some practices from their native homeland. The present search examines the

hindrances the American-born child faces in maintaining his proximal and marital life due to cross-ethnicity and cultures.

Maxey, in *Asian Diasporic* (2011), is concerned with and interrogates the four key themes: home and nation; travel and return; racial mixing; and, food and eating. She explores these issues widely prevailing in new ways in transatlantic studies, postcolonial literary studies, and Asian American cultural Studies, which is somehow related to this research article; the researchers converge on the proximal relationships between different people having different backgrounds through the lens of South Asian popular and well-read writers.

Caesar(2007) presents the ethnic conflict within the self of Gogol in *The Namesake*, who faces an identity crisis due to America's different background and culture. In contrast, this study examines his proximal relationship with his English friends and partners due to the different ethnicities and traditions of different lands and societies.

Material and Methods

The study is designed using a qualitative method. The qualitative method allows the researchers to get a deep insight into the data under this particular investigation (Kumar, 2013). Regarding the theoretical framework of this study, the researchers applied the notion of *Unhomeliness* propounded by Homi K Bhaba in 1994. The study is based on fictional works by South Asian writers, including Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, Jumpa Lahiri, and Bapsi Sidwa. While a particular sample of four novels (Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man*, and Lahiri's *The Namesake*) has been extracted as a sample by making use of a purposive sampling technique. However, the data is analyzed using textual analysis.

Analysis

"I did leave behind a love, and her name was Erica. We met the summer after we graduated, part of a group of Princeton who had decided to holiday together in Greece..." (Hamid 2013, P. 11).

Here, Changez was narrating his story to an American man in the local hotel of Lahore, telling him that he was a successful Pakistani in America, but the event of 9/11 shattered all his relations and bondage, and he came back to his native land, leaving his proximal relationship with Erica. It is obvious that his bondage and affiliation towards his hometown were powerful, so he left it all there. However, this is how he remembered his lover after a long time because of their association while living in America.

This is how he was attracted to Erica due to her appearance and womanly features. He wants to be in a proximal relationship with her, and this is how they start their journey to have an interpersonal relationship through greetings and meetings.

"When I first saw Erica, I could not prevent myself from offering to carry her backpack- So stunningly regal was she. Her hair was piled up like a tiara on her head, and her navel- ah, what a navel: made firm.

We were introduced, and she smiled as she shook my hand — ." (Hamid 2007, p.10)

Later, they cultivated their relationship through proximal development as they spent their spare time on holidays in Greece.

No sooner had we set sail on our ferry to the islandsShe asked me, leaning close enough for her breath to tickle my ear...

But I drew some consolation from the fact that throughout the dinner, she listened intently when I spoke, smiling from time to time and training her green eyes upon me. (Hamid 2007, p.11)

This shows how slowly and gradually they made their relationship strong and attractive. They met, shared their feelings, and discussed their past and childhood memories.

In the morning I was relieved to see that she came down to breakfast. We appeared to be the first two of our group to be awake. She spread jam on a croissant, gave half to me...[b]ut when I looked at Erica and she looked back at me, I felt we both understood that something had been exchanged between us, the first invitation to a friendship, perhaps, and I waited patiently for an opportunity...(Hamid 2007, p.12)

Similarities, likes, and dislikes play a significant role in interpersonal relationship building, and with time, this is how both main characters belonging to different ethnic backgrounds made a strong proximal intimacy bond this time when they both took swimming together and understood each other here in this paragraph Erica showed her fully likeness towards him.

She said, 'I'm going for a swim.' But then, as she walked away, she half-turned and added, 'You want to come?' I followed her, watching the muscles of her lower back tense delicately to stabilize her spine. We reached the water; it was warm and clear. We slipped inside, swam out, and then trod water until I had caught up with her. For a time we were both silent and I felt our slippery legs graze each other as we churned the sea. 'I don't think,' she said finally, 'I've ever met someone our age as polite as you. 'Polite?' I said, less than radiant with joy, she smiled. 'I don't mean it that way', she said. 'Not boring polite. Respectful polite. You give people their space. I like that. It's unusual. We continued bobbing face to face. (Hamid 2007, P.15)

Upon coming from the beach, they travel on a bus and sit side by side, where they can easily touch each other's body limbs. It is shown here that they were so close to each other: "as we sat side by side, I could not help but notice that her bare leg was less than an inch from where I was resting my hand on my thigh" (Hamid 2007, p.15).

This is how they show proximity to each other differently, such as by having a beer together. Erica wants to know about his country and its language, so Change wrote his name and hers together in Urdu handwriting; in other ways, to show that they are united and had affiliations. "...She said, 'Show me,' and so I did. 'It's beautiful,' she said, meeting my eyes. 'What's it mean?'" This is your name,' I replied, 'and this, underneath, is mine.' We stayed at our table, talking as the sun set...." (Hamid 2007 p.17).

Until now, in the narrative, they do not have physical relationships but tie a strong bond with intimate feelings, caring and sharing for each other like Erica helped her in his dinner. He offered a shawl on the cold evening.

...With her eyes often on me. She was sharing with me an intimacy, and this feeling grew stronger when, after observing me struggle, she helped me separate the flesh from the bones of my fish without my having to ask. (Hamid 2007, p.18)

Of now, they had come close to each other and had an amorous feeling for each other, which reads thus: "I had placed a shawl around her shoulders as she returned from a walk in the cold... and yet I felt our relationship was deepening" (Hamid 2007, p. 35).

When Changez had to leave New York to complete the task assigned to him by the company he worked for, he missed Erica and her company because they had developed a strong bond and relationship with each other.

...I found myself wishing during the evening that Erica was there. You wondered what had become of her. No, I had not forgotten; she was very much a part of my life in New York, and I shall return to her shortly. (Hamid 2007,p. 26)

Here is the first time after their return from a summer holiday trip to Greece, they make their relationship more personal, and she even takes him to her bedroom, which is a private niche. Physical attraction increases through closeness, so Erica invites him to meet with her family at her home; they both go together to a party. This party is also worth mentioning here, as it was the first time Erica kissed her; he showed his ethnicity by wearing a starched white kurta of delicately worked cotton over a pair of jeans.

Erica received me with a smile; her tanned skin seemed to glow with health. I had forgotten how stunning she was, and at that moment, pressed as we were into proximity by the confines of the entryway, 'Wow', she said, reaching out to graze the embroidery on my kurta with the tip of her finger, 'you look great.' She said she wanted to show me something, and I followed her to her bedroom.... And introduced me to her parents. Erica seemed happy that I was there, and her happiness infected me as well. Afterward, Erica and I shared a taxi down to Chelsea..... When she kissed me on the cheek hours later, I felt as though we had an intimate evening together. (Hamid 2007, pp.30-34)

The physical and natural environments enhanced their relationship to the extent that Erica invited him for lunch in Central Park.

It was one of those glorious late July afternoons in New York when a stiff wind off the Atlantic makes the trees swell and the clouds race across the sky. The humidity vanishes as the city fills its lungs with cooler, briny air. (Hamid, 2007, p. 35)

In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga highlights the proximal relationship between India and America and gives a notion until Mr.Ashok, an Indian man, lived in America with her English wife, Pinky Madam. They were happy, but when Ashok was called back to India by his father, he brought his wife there in India. Their relationship did not prolong, and after hitting a boy while she was driving in India, she decided to leave everything and went to America, even not letting his husband, Ashok, know. Here, Adiga has explored the results in more detail, stating that Mr. Ashok remained upset and sad once his proximal relationship was broken and ended in India.

Things did not always favor Ashok and Madam Pinky's marital relationship. The domestic brawls disturbed their proximal bonding, but suddenly, things got normal one

day. As they fought all the way to the mall; however, upon asking about the quarrel by Balram (their driver), they got normal again.

The next evening, Mr Ashok and Pinky Madam came down to the entrance way fighting, got into the car fighting, and kept fighting as I drove the Honda City from ...By the end, they were holding hands again. (Adiga,2008, p.145)

When Pinky Madam was driving, she hit a boy and was troubled by this act, wanted Ashok to save her, as is reflected in the novel: "Pinky Madam watched; her face changed. She ran into her room and slammed the door" (Adiga, 2008, p.180).

Upon such a harsh reaction in front of Ashok's father, he advised his son to behave like a responsible husband so that his wife might not contend next time. " You need to control that wife of yours better, son. The way we do in the village" (Adiga,2008,p.180).

When Pinky Madam left for America, her husband Ashok's condition worsened, and he became annoyed with his driver, Balram, who drove her to the airport.

Did you want to ruin my family's reputation?.....Then his madness was over. He covered his face in his hands and began to sob...

Mr.Ashok was much disturbed that how his marriage was over no more and he drank and ate nothing like lunch and dinner.

His eyes were red. I sniffed the bottle.Whisky.Almost all of it is gone. (Adiga,2008,pp.182-184)

The response of Ashok's father believes that cross-ethnic relationships cannot last for long, and he reminds his son of the past when he advised him not to marry her because she was different. As, after all, she was American. "My father said, "No, don't marry her, she's of another..." (Adiga, 2008,p. 186).

Ashok discussed this with his brother, and that she did not intend to come back, and upon this, his brother made him relax; this was how he said,

I spoke to her last night. She's not coming back to India. Her parents are happy with her decision. This can end only one way. Don't worry about it, Ashok. It's okay. And don't call her again. I'll handle it from Dhanbad. If she makes any noise about wanting money, I'll gently bring up that matter of the hit-and-run, see? (Adiga,2008,p. 188)

He also shared that after his marriage was spoiled, he was restless. "When you and Father tried to stop me from marrying Pinky because she wasn't a Hindu I was furious with you, I don't deny it. But without family, a man is nothing. Absolutely nothing" (Adiga, 2008, p.189).

Ashok shared his feelings for Pinky with his businessman, who responded that Ashok had so many local girls in America.

When you were in America you must have a lot of women. 'No "I was faithful to Pinky- my wife- the whole time.'

'My. You were faithful. What an idea. Faithfully married. No wonder it ended in divorce. (Adiga, 2008, p.216)

In "*Burnt Shadows*" by Kamila Shamsie, the two characters Hiroko and Sajjad have a proximal relationship and a deep connection as their intimacy bondage started in World War II and continued when she reached India and finally to Karachi with Sajjad after partition.

After the death of Hiroko's husband in a Bomb attack in Japan, she came to Delhi to Konrad's half-sister and friend of Hiroko. Ilse's husband has a Muslim clerk, Sajjad Ali Ashraf, who agreed to teach Urdu to Hiroko, and thus, proximity starts between them. There is a profound beauty in the human ability to heal, pick up the broken pieces, and create something new out of the ruins (Shamsie, 2009).

Hiroko's husband's death in a bomb attack symbolizes the destructive forces of war and violence, which shatter lives and displace individuals. While, the introduction of Ilse and Sajjad Ali Ashraf represents the role of human connections in facilitating healing. These relationships provide the protagonist a means to rebuild her life and identity. Sajjad's willingness to teach Urdu not only symbolizes cultural exchange but also serves as a bridge between their disparate worlds, fostering understanding and intimacy.

When Hiroko and Sajjad's intimate relationship was in trouble due to the politically upsetting situation in India, they were asked to leave for Istanbul; despite all the hurdles, they still had an enthusiastic attachment to each other. To them, love is a flame that withstands the fiercest storms, burning brighter with each adversity (Shamsie, 2009).

When Hiroko was all ruined came to India and made an intimate relationship with Sajjad; being Muslim and Japanese, both have feelings for each other as in proximity, feelings are in the foreground to make a relationship strong and healthy, as mentioned: in the world consumed by hatred, it is love that transcends borders and unites humanity. There is no mystery – that's the beauty of it. We are entirely explicable to each other, and yet we stay. What a miracle that is (Shamsie, 2009).

The lines suggest that love, in its purest form, is not rooted in mystery or the inexplicable; rather, it is the result of an intimate and deliberate choice. The acknowledgment that they are "entirely explicable" to one another emphasizes the grounding of their relationship in authenticity and transparency. The miracle lies in the deliberate act of staying together, even when external circumstances could easily pull them apart.

Man needs company, Newcomb suggested in his theory, and here in the relationship of Hiroko and Sajjad, Hiroko also needed someone with whom she could spend the rest of her life. In the aftermath of the devastation, amidst the ruins of Nagasaki, Hiroko found Sajjad. Their love blossomed like a fragile flower amidst the ashes, defying the ravages of war and the boundaries of culture (Shamsie, 2009).

The lines mentioned above, highlight the central theme of human connection and the innate need for companionship, as suggested by Newcomb's theory. The relationship between Hiroko and Sajjad's reflects the resilience of love in the face of adversity and the transformative power of shared experiences.

The particular theory emphasizes that humans seek relationships to fulfill emotional and psychological needs. So, in the context of Hiroko and Sajjad's relationship, Hiroko's search for companionship after the catastrophic events of Nagasaki signifies her need for emotional support and stability amidst chaos.

Meanwhile, the phrase "their love blossomed like a fragile flower amidst the ashes" symbolizes the fragility yet resilience of their bond. Despite the destruction and despair surrounding them, their relationship thrives, illustrating how love can provide hope and renewal even in the darkest times.

When Hiroko first met Sajjad with the intention that he would teach her Urdu language so she could better fit into a country like India, This was where their proximal relationship started, and they became successful despite belonging to a different ethnicity and had a son, named Raza. As Hiroko looked into Sajjad's eyes, she saw not just a man, but a refuge, a heaven in the world torn apart by war. In his embrace, she found solace from the horrors of the past (Shamshie, 2009).

Proximity strengthens when you feel satisfied in another's company; this was what Hiroko found in the company, meetings, and sittings with Sajjad so slowly and gradually, they made a strong proximal relationship with a deep understanding. Their bodies spoke a language of longing and desire, each touch a testament to the depth of their connection.

Hiroko and Sajjad's relationship was so profound that they enjoyed each other's company and desired each other; as Newcomb suggests, feelings and desires are the key factors to possessing a proximal relationship.

In Bapsi Sidhwa's *'Ice Candy Man'*, there is a proximal narrative of Ayah, a beautiful Hindu girl at the age of 20 serving a Parsi family as a Nany. Here, Sidhwa has portrayed the proximal relationship from different angles, where two people love each other without considering their cultures and religions, as in the case of Ayah and Dilnawaz in the backdrop of the Pak-India partition.

Dilnawaz, the Muslim character in *Ice Candy Man*, initially shared his sentimental feelings for Ayah. He expressed thus: Ayah would feed me with her own hands. She would cook for me, bathe me, dress me, and when I woke up in the night, frightened by my dreams, Ayah comforted me, holding me close until I fell back asleep (Sidhwa, 1988).

From the start through the end of the storyline, Dilnawaz has an intimate leaning towards Ayah that he once described as: I see Ayah moving around the Kitchen; her eyes, when she looks at me, hold a warmth that makes me feel safe and loved. I find myself drawn to her.

His intensity of emotions and possessiveness towards his beloved is triggered when he feels himself helpless due to the increasing communal tensions. He says: "I will not let anyone take you away from me, Ayah," says Dilnawaz, his voice trembling with both love and desperation (Sidhwa, 1988).

These lines shows Dilnawaz's possessiveness and emotional dependence on Ayah. His trembling voice signifies his vulnerability, showing that his love is not only passionate but also shaped by fear and insecurity.

After partition, Dilnawaz's propensity towards Ayah changed; these factors and circumstances separated them and affected their human relationships, as in the narrative presented in the novel. Dilnawaz's eyes once filled with warmth and affection for Ayah, now held a distant sadness. The partition had torn them apart. When Ayah is dragged away by her own people—her supposed protectors—Dilnawaz watches, helpless and enraged." (Sidhwa, 1988).

In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, an American child of a migrated family from India felt several social issues, especially his concern with the proximal relationship he made friends and a proximal bond with two English girls but could not continue the relationship, and later, he went to marry a Bengali girl living in America. Gogol's proximal relationship with her American friend, Maxine, is highlighted here.

Maxine, an American parent's daughter, has a proximal relationship with Gogol, a handsome boy from an Indian migrant family. They enjoyed each other's company, but Gogol remained upset due to her living style, which reminded Gogol of his class and status as stated thus: She had made him feel like a welcome guest in her life, offering him glimpses of another, more carefree existence, one he had never known (Lahiri, 2003).

The lines mentioned above shows a close bond between Maxine and Gogol suggesting an attempt to bridge cultural and class divides. Gogol enjoys her company and the freedom she represents, but this proximity also amplifies his awareness of the differences in their backgrounds.

Maxine's lifestyle symbolizes a "carefree existence" that contrasts with Gogol's more structured and culturally rooted upbringing. Her way of living appears liberal, open, and unencumbered, which seems appealing yet alien to Gogol, making him feel like an outsider.

Although Gogol felt completeness and satisfaction in Maxine's company, he had many other vibes related to his roots and his belongingness, such as feeling uncomfortable within the comforts of his proximal relationship with Maxine. As in the novel's story, it had been described thus: with Maxine, Gogol feels a sense of freedom and acceptance, yet he also experiences a subtle sense of displacement, realizing that he is still searching for a deeper connection to his roots and identity (Lahiri 2003).

Living in the company of Maxine, Gogol always found himself at some distance and could not mingle with her through every means only because of his different identity and belongings, and that was the reason Gogol did away with his feelings and intense emotions towards Maxine and moved forward as it is mentioned in the novel: their relationship reaches a breaking point as Gogol realizes that he cannot fully immerse himself in Maxine's world without sacrificing his own identity and cultural heritage.

Findings & Discussion

South Asian writers depicted the true picture of human conditions through every aspect of life, prevalent in different circumstances and time scenarios. Here, man is a social animal tied up to different relationships with his fellow beings. Here, the proximal relationship between two people from different ethnic groups is discussed in the selected novels of renowned South Asian writers. In every story, writers have depicted the proximal relationship through different perspectives through their characters. Not only

proximal relationship between two opposite genders has been extrapolated, but the consequences and after effects have also been highlighted based on ethnicity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Changez, who was living in America. Hence, his initial integration into the corporate culture of U.S represents a professional cross-ethnic relationship as he thrives as an employee of Underwood Samson evaluation firm in USA serving as a metaphor for western capitalist values. Later on, he seems to built a strong relationship with Erica, an American girl. Their relationship went smoothly, full of love and care, but after the event of 9/11, they became dismissive of each other, and eventually, Changez had to leave America for Pakistan after getting the experience of hostility, racial profiling and suspicion which throws light on the fragile nature of acceptance in cross-ethnic relationship when societal tensions arises. Here, it shows that Changez's proximity and bonding towards his ethnicity and religion was deepened when he left his relationship there and came back to Pakistan. In the novel, *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga seems to discuss the cross-relationship under the lens of regional class identities rather than traditional ethnic divides. Hence, these relationships highlight the deep cultural and social divides prevalent in Indian families such as she depicts the proximity between Ashok, an Indian who migrated to America and married an American girl, Madam Pinky; they lived a happy interpersonal life in America, but Ashok had to return to India for his family business. Pinky accompanied him; however, she could not adapt to the Indian culture, although Ashok provided her with all the comfort she needed, and she finally returned to America. This was how their proximal relationship ended due to their varied ethnicities. In Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, a different and positive effect of proximal relationship can be noticed through the characters of Sajjad (a Muslim man living in India) and Hiroko (a Japanese lady who came to India after the bombing at Nagasaki). A different perspective of proximity has been shown in two scenarios – before the partition of India and after the partition in the *Ice Candy Man*. A Muslim man named Dilnawaz had a passionate attraction and love for Hindu Ayah that turned into hatred after the partition of India (amid the political turmoil), which led to the separation of the two, letting the Ayah move back to Indian Punjab. Proximal relationships, too, became an issue for the central character named Gogol in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*; in the story, Gogol is the American-born child of an Indian family living in America. His relationship with his partners reflects the challenges of cross-ethnic union in respect of immigrants experiences. Here, Gogol made proximal friendships with two English girls but did not feel contented within the exotic ethnic landscape; so his relationships terminated, and finally, he married to a Bengali girl who also lived in America so they had a sort of bonding because of their identical ethnic roots. His marriage to a Bengali girl also highlights the fact that cultural similarities do not always bridge personal and emotional gaps. However, this sort of relationships seem to underscore tensions between assimilation and cultural preservation in diasporic communities. In a nutshell, South Asian authors delectably depicted the proximal relationships and their different faces, especially the corollaries based on the different ethnicities through the novels' main characters.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is to said that cross-ethnic relationships in literature can be perceived as a mirror to social, historical and cultural challenges. These relationships in terms of the selected novels of South Asian writers have been portrayed not only as a testament to love, human and human conditions but revealed certain conflicts in respect of displacement and identity. In other words, such relationships seem to reveal the intricate dynamics of human connections that have been shaped by the socio-cultural and political landscapes emphasizing the fact that such relationships are not only an outcome of physical proximity

but seem to be enriched and constrained by larger focus such as migration, power hierarchies and the lingering impact of colonial and post-colonial era.

Apart of this, these narratives seems to underscore the role of cultural hybridity and shared histories in bridging ethnic divides, offering a vision of unity amidst diversity. The stories emphasize that while differences in language, religion, and tradition persist, human emotions, aspirations, and struggles are universal. This universality provides a foundation for understanding and fostering connections across ethnic boundaries.

So, on the basis of above discussion, it can be asserted that the work done by South Asian writers does not only document the realities of cross-ethnic relationships but also envisions possibilities for coexistence and harmony. By giving voice to marginalized perspectives and challenging rigid categorizations of identity, these writers contribute to a broader discourse on inclusivity, tolerance, and the transformative power of intercultural understanding. As such, their works remain vital to exploring the nuances of ethnicity and their implications for contemporary multicultural societies.

Future Implications

1. The future researchers can do the comparative study of proximal relationships in the particular works of Pakistani and English writers.
2. Secondly, the study leaves the ground for them to explore the feministic perspectives in the context of the particular novels under this investigation.

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