NEGOTIATING IDENTITY THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES IN THE DOMESTIC SPACE OF WAJAHAT ALI'S THE DOMESTIC CRUSADERS

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ABSTRACT
The paper intends to focus on intergenerational multiple diasporic experiences and perspectives within an American-Pakistani family in post-9/11 America in Wajahat Ali's play The Domestic Crusaders. The audience witnesses the complexity of Muslim American identity through the eyes of an American-Pakistani family. The objective of the paper is to focus on the diverse compositions of Muslim American identities embedded within a family in the domestic space countering the societal normative. Divided into two acts, the first act introduces the characters and their idiosyncrasies while the second act delves deep to bring to the surface the complex veins of traditional beliefs, desire for assimilation, preservation of cultural identity, gendered experiences, struggle for identity, ideological and cultural confrontation. The domestic space evolves into a dialogue on race, religion, gender, and identity that spark critical thinking on the part of the audience to come to the negotiation that a monolithic Muslim American identity and homogeneous diasporic experiences are mythical constructions. The paper aims to locate the play's urge to consider the multiple narratives shaping the Muslim American experiences and identity by examining intergenerational conflicts, cultural confrontations, and the search for identity.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, intergenerational experiences, post-9/11, identity, domestic space

Negotiating Identity through Intergenerational Diasporic Experiences in the Domestic Space of Wajahat Ali's The Domestic Crusaders

First premiered at Off-Broadway on September 11, 2009 at Nuyorican Poets Café, Wajahat Ali's play The Domestic Crusaders opens giving the audience a view of the "large, light-filled, contemporary suburban home, with the kitchen area (stage left) opening into the family room (stage right)" (Ali 2). Divided into two acts, the play has been thematically segregated into various contemporary issues that underlie or affect the formation of identity and hence, individual in a multigenerational diasporic family. Embedded within the domestic space, the Pakistani-American family consists of three tiers of diasporic generation, each removed from the former, with different attitudes toward the American society, gendered roles and performance, religion, purpose of life and identity. Wajahat Ali first gives an introduction to the six principal characters – Hakim, Salman, Khulsoom, Sal or Salahuddin, Fatima and Ghafur – and the significance of their names in the history of Islam. The playwright's contribution to the detailing of each character bears significance to the plot.

Hakim, the grandfather or 'daada' has been described as "[b]alding, with gray hair and gray beard… a man with discipline but beaten down by age. Wears a Jinnah cap and traditional white shalwar khameez" (Ali vi-vii). His name is derived from the essences or attributes of Allah mentioned in the Quran. Salman, the man of the house, has "[g]raying hair, gradually thinning… Wearing black khaki pants, white business shirt, gray socks, and desi sandals… Looks slightly haggard/tired" (Ali vii). The name is a South Asian version of Sulayman derived from Sulayman "the Magnificent" of Turkey, the celebrated Sultan of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. Khulsoom, Salman's wife, has been described as "[y]oung-looking, with wrinkles around her eyes…[s]carf around her neck. Wearing traditional female shalwar khameez" (Ali v). She bears the name of Umm Khulsoom, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. Salahuddin, or as commonly referred to as Sal, is "twenty-seven years old". Dressed in "[d]ark black designer pants, shoes, and jacket. White collared Banana Republic business-type shirt. Noticeable silver belt" the playwright describes him as "[k]ind of like a suave pitbull". Sal bears the name of Salahuddin Ayubbid, "a Kurd, [who] united Egyptian and Syrian forces to reclaim Jerusalem" (Ali vi). Fatima is twenty-four years old. She wears white hijab, contrary to her non-hijabi mother. Apart from her hijab, she wears typical western clothes – "stylish red designer sweater and designer blue jeans. Green armband" (Ali vi). Fatima shares her name with Prophet Muhammad's most beloved daughter. And finally, Ghafur has been described as "[w]earing average Western clothing, green shirt, but also a black kufi" (Ali vii). Like Hakim, Ghafur is another name or attribute of Allah. Wajahat Ali describes the name of Ghafur as a very powerful name, invoking "the One who Covers" or "the One who Forgives" (Ali vii). From the physical appearance of every character on stage, the audience is made to be aware of the motley

collection of members within a single-family unit. In diasporic literature, the term 'generation' has a significant meaning. Generational conflicts are prominent and very much expected in diasporic situations. Issues of filiation and affiliation appear when the issue of belonging to the nation-state arises. Members of the first generation, less affiliated to the host country, usually feel a filiation pull toward the ancestral country. Informed by sociocultural codes of the country left behind, they find it difficult to acculturate to the new space. However, for their children it is otherwise. Sine their descendants are mostly born and brought up in the new space, they acquire sociocultural codes from their immediate environment, thereby distancing themselves from their parents' traditions. They tend to embrace traditions of the new nation.

Set in post-9/11 America, the play spans an entire day. The playwright has ironically mentioned the time "12:25 p.m., twenty-first century" (Ali 2) to take a dig at the prevalent contemporary issues haunting the lives of the people in this age of technological revolution, globalization and confusion. Every character has been skillfully drawn to bring the flaws and strengths of the protagonists who are the representatives of the Pakistani Muslim diasporic community. Wajahat Ali has painstakingly described the stage directions as such:

> As the curtain opens, the Arabic call to prayer, the adhan, is heard for about sixty seconds… Finished with her supplications, [Khulsoom] goes over to the clock radio that has been playing the adhan, turns it off, and switches on the radio… She finally settles on an oldies station, which is broadcasting a classic by Tom Jones. (Ali 2).

Khulsoom takes "off her hijab so that it hangs like a scarf around her neck, she sings the lyrics in accented English". If it is analyzed closely, Khulsoom mouths only those words and phrases that make sense to her such as "to be loved by anyone", "It's not unusual to be", "happens every day" while the rest is lost in unuttered musical humming. The utterances set a prelude as to what the play has in store for the audience. The story that unfolds is not an unusual phenomenon. Rather, it happens every day in every Muslim diasporic family settled in post-9/11 America. Ali employs the humour and wit in demonstrating the light-hearted banter between the mother and daughter – Khulsoom and Fatima. While Khulsoom is a non-hijabi middle-aged mother who tries to conform to the host land's culture while retaining her ancestral tradition and conventional values in practice, her daughter Fatima is a hijabi, who studies law and is an active member of sisterhood known as "muhajjabahs" who protest against discrimination of Muslims in America – caring for "people [who] are being senselessly massacred" (Ali 10). Being born and brought up in America, Fatima is naturally more American (my own emphasis) than her parents as is evident from her American English, described as "something like a Valley Girl accent", her taste in music, her views about gender roles (learning a life skill such as cooking is inferior to studying and making an attempt for the betterment and promotion of an inclusive society) (Ali 3). The idea of citizenship in a multicultural setting revolves around "discourses and symbols of belonging, ways of imagining and remaking ourselves as a country and expressing our sense of commonalities, as well as differences" (Modood 53). Citizens are of course individuals and have individual rights, but they are not uniform and their citizenship contours itself around them. Fatima has found a new sense of vigour in her religious identity as Muslim and tries to assert it through her sartorial choice and the protests she becomes part of that voices against selective racial and ethnic discrimination. However, Fatima serves as a flawed character, often confused between what she projects and how she is in reality. She identifies herself as American and is protesting for her right to distinct individual Muslim identity while terming her mother and grandmother as "desi FOBs" looking down upon them for wearing "shalwar khameez and dupatta". It is quite surprising to notice that Fatima is protesting against the racial and religious discrimination that Muslims, like her, have to face in post-9/11 America but at the same time she reduces the Muslim men to "all boorish, sexually frustrated, horny juveniles" as if Muslim men do not form an integral part of the community (Ali 6). Again, Fatima reminds her mother not to discriminate against anyone based on skin colour, "the 'Blackys' are people, too – they're Muslim! Remember, no color barrier in the religion?" (Ali 7) but she is the one who discriminates against her own gender based on colour, branding the white women as "cheap, ho-ey white girls" (Ali 10). Her portrayal gives the audience the understanding how culturally conflicted the third-generation diasporic community is. Torn between conformity and distinctiveness, Fatima is plunged into confusion.

Despite conforming to the liberal nature of the host land, Khulsoom cannot let go off her traditional perspective toward society and gender roles. Even though she has conformed and moulded herself to fit into the American society, her perspective toward gender role, marriage and family is rooted in her ancestral roots. For her, "the way to please a man – and a family – is through gentleness and good food" (Ali 6). She moans at the deterioration of Fatima's lifestyle, "My only beti, twenty-four years old. Still single!... Once such a nice girl, now wearing hijab, giving controversial speeches, getting arrested at the university protest, going out on the town with blacks –" (Ali 7). She is a typical South Asian mother whose life revolves around the well-being of her family and children, without showing much concern for the outside political situation in the society. All that matters to her is her children get

financially stable and settled in life as per the norms, traditions and expectations of a diasporic Muslim family settled in America.

Sprinkling wit, humour and laughter to the mother-daughter relationship is Sal or Salahuddin, the eldest child of the family. Sal has come back home after a long time to celebrate his brother Ghafur's birthday. With the gradual unweaving of the plot threads, it is easily discernible by the audience that the relation between Sal and his father, Salman is strained. Sal identifies himself as a typical American – focused on self, money and women. For him, his religious identity has dissipated in the course of creating an identity and establishing himself in a highly capitalistic society like America. He has imbibed in himself the fundamental American traits of flaunting his affluence as his sister points out "his gaudy new Versace belt" (Ali 10), driven toward money-making and indulging in relation with white women who his sister condemns as "those greasy gorees and European girls you always try to befriend" (Ali 9). Sal has no interest in Fatima's cause. Instead, he looks down upon Fatima and the women sharing shared interests, and calls them as "insane, jihadi penguin squad" (Ali 10). While his sister, Fatima is passionate in voicing out injustice, indiscrimination and exploitation of the people of her community, Sal does not share the same passion for the cause. He is baffled when Fatima states, "I can't believe you don't even care your people are being senselessly massacred" (Ali 10). Sal "raises [his] eyebrows" at the comment for he does not identify with "your people". He identifies himself as a typical American practical man who instead condescendingly comments, "Typical Muslims – blame America for everything" (Ali 10). He indulges in hedonism and refuses to see America's political role in creating asymmetry in world as well as internal politics. He bears apathy to his own community's grievances and suffering. He also has a misogynistic outlook on women. He ridicules and reduces his sister's passion to help bring an inclusive and judicial American society to a "newfound Muslim Justice League crusader fad-phase" (Ali 10). He considers Fatima and other women sharing same interests as wasting their time. Instead, Sal comments that they should be spending their time behind something useful such as "learning how to cook? Or going to the gym? Maybe, maybe then they might trick some poor, blind FOB into proposing so he can get his visa – that's of course before they swell up like a naan after the marriage" (Ali 11). Sal has imbibed in himself the ideology popularized by the West - Islamophobia or anti-Islamism as a set of attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes that are being developed into an ideology of neo-orientalism in the context of a neo-conservative geopolitical strategy to dominate Muslims. In the discourse of 'clash of civilizations', Islam is projected as deeply opposed to the ethos of democracy and gender equality, of the presence of too many Muslims among migrants and new citizens as a problem for democracy (Modood 166). Therefore, he consciously tries to distance himself from his Islamic identity and is in the process of carving out his own identity that is assimilated within the American society. He has been conditioned to look down upon the people of his own community and be a vessel that encourages demonization of Islam and Muslims.

Sal/Salahuddin has deviated a lot from what is expected of him by his family. His priority lies in business, he is critical of the upbringing of a Muslim Pakistani family like his own. Also, as indicated by the stage directions, Sal may have been having relations with a Jewish girl. The relation between a Muslim and a Jew is frowned upon for the religious clash dates back centuries ago. The historical clash between the two religions still persists today and is very much an integral part of present Muslim world. Sal's relationship with a Jewish person is definitely not going to be a happy news for the family. Sal knows it and it is the very reason he refuses to come back home if he ever got married because of "Clash of Civilizations. Can't move back to the house due to conflict of interests" (Ali 8).

The next scene acts as an eye-opener for the audience of the act of stereotyping Muslims that often irks them. The very fact that Muslims all over the world come from different ethnical, racial and cultural backgrounds is often dismissed. The act of categorizing all Muslims under a single banner is a harsh way of stereotyping them without giving attention to the differences that underlie the history of Muslims and Islam. Khulsoom takes it as an insult when she is informed that her house has been called 'Little Kabul' by her neighbours. The association between Afghani and the 'terrorist' Osama bin Laden is a strong premise that Khulsoom and the others in her family consciously and unconsciously want to avoid in post-9/11 America. When Daada was asked by a white kid if he was related to bin Laden, Daada drew a line between a real Mussalman and a "terrorist who doesn't know the first thing about the religion of Islam" (Ali 17). He consciously makes a statement of his origin from Hyderabad Deccan, India which can be interpreted that his Indian origin sort of distances and diffuses the animosity that emerges when being called an Afghani Muslim. Khulsoom, on the other hand, bears a grudge against the Afghanis for failing to protect their own nation from Taliban and doing nothing when the US bombed the nation killing innocent women and children. She looks down at them for leaving behind their nation and the mujahideen while the rest came to the US "on asylum, taking the government's money, sitting cozy" (Ali 17). Her attitude toward Afghans is not of hatred but of betrayal at their unpatriotic selves. For her identity being associated with Afghanistan is like associating her with being unpatriotic.

The play proceeds with the unfolding of the next scene where the patriarch of the family – Salman - enters the stage "obviously perturbed about something" (Ali 22). Salman enters ranting about the media propaganda that

besmirches Islam, Muslims and immigrants. He is tired and angry at the constant media tussle between the representation of America as an innocent victim and the Muslim world that apparently hates America. But in the midst of this existential angst Salman never forgets to take blessings from his father in the traditional South-Asian fashion. This scene gives an intriguing critique through the stage directions. While Salman still retains the South-Asian tradition of respecting elders as evident from the way he takes blessings from his father, Sal/Salahuddin bears a more nonchalant attitude toward the traditional customs. Sal unwittingly sits on the chair that "belongs" to his father Salman. His oblivion about his father's presence while he is sitting on the chair can be interpreted as a conscious motive of ignoring Salman's presence in the house. The chair here is symbolic of the person's positionality within the family. Salman, being the patriarch, sits on the particular chair that defines his importance and the role he plays to keep the family growing. Daada's sharp rebuke warns Sal of his waywardness and he immediately vacates it. The exchange of 'salaam' between the father and the eldest child is almost forced, awkward and cold which again reminds the audience of the strained relation between Salman and Sal. This scene is also inching close to the climax. Varying opinions are found among the family members regarding inter-religious marriage, Anti-Semitism, gender, race and satisfaction in life. While Hakim, Salman, Khulsoom are not happy about a marriage between a Muslim and a Jew, Sal and Fatima being of the third generation, share different opinion. While Sal terms their dislike as practicing of antisemitism, Fatima is more politically conscious about the Muslim-Jew rift and understands why her parents are not in favour of the match. However, she prioritizes the couple's happiness over religious altercation. The first and the second generation are still rooted in their beliefs. The third generation of diaspora, here represented by Sal and Fatima, have internalized the so-called American liberalism and refuse to understand the cultural, historical and political rift between the Muslims and the Jews. They have imbibed the American spirit of individualism and fail or refuse to be a part of their own community because of the condescendence constructed by the American society.

In the next scene, all the family members come together. Ghafur finally enters the stage. His physical appearance is the first thing noticed by Sal and the audience for he dons a beard and a kufi. Apparently, the setting and the interaction among family members appear normal. However, Daada's "agonizing yelp" while trying to hold on to the birthday boy Ghafur reveals the first fissure of past trying to tear its way into the present. One of the significant episodes narrated in this scene is Ghafur's experience flying back home. As Ghafur recalls his experience of standard security check procedure at the airport, the lights go out and only Ghafur is under spotlight addressing the audience directly. Ghafur is "wearing sandals, with a grizzly beard, with [his] prayer cap on, a Sports Illustrated in [his] back pocket and a new paperback of Jihad and Terrorism under [his] left arm" (Ali 40). He recollects an episode he read about in a newspaper of a Punjabi Sikh man who was forced to leave his flight for "the psychological and mental comfort of the airline passengers" (Ali 39). Ghafur realizes he has to go through extra security checks for being a Muslim. Along with him only two more people – a young black man and a middle-aged white guy with Eastern European name – had to go through the process. While his family members felt outraged at the racial profiling, Ghafur was quite accustomed to it and felt "no big of a deal". Multiculturalism refers to the struggle, the political mobilization but also the policy and institutional outcomes, and forms of accommodation in which 'differences' are not eliminated or washed away but to some extent 'recognized'. The character of 'difference' is addressed through both group assertiveness and mobilization, and through institutional and policy reforms to address the claims of the newly settled, marginalized groups. Charles Taylor in Multiculturalism and "The politics of recognition" (1994) argues that when we talk about equality in the context of race and ethnicity, we are appealing to two different albeit related concepts, which slightly altering Taylor's nomenclature, can be called equal dignity and equal respect. Equal dignity appeals to people's humanity or to some specific membership such as citizenship and applies to all members in a relatively uniform way. It is an appeal to this universalist idea in relation to anti-discrimination policies which depend on the principle that everybody should be treated the same. Taylor and other theorists in differing ways also posit the idea of equal respect. If equal dignity focuses on what people have in common and so is gender-blind, colour-blind, equal respect is based on an understanding that difference is also important in conceptualizing and institutionalizing equal relations between individuals. However, in post-9/11 America, the difference in race, ethnicity, religious identity is a premise enough for invitation of different treatment, in most cases negative. The phenomenon of racial profiling has become so normal in post-9/11 America, the Muslims have become accustomed to being suspected, searched, racially discriminated. It has become the normative that nobody sees it as a problem. The normalizing of such racially-motivated acts of condescension and exclusion begins a heated discussion among the family members.

Conflicting attitudes toward this incident are shown by Salman, Khulsoom, Sal and Fatima. While Fatima is outraged at the blatant racial profiling, Khulsoom is angry with Ghafur for not shaving and wearing "the topi". For Khulsoom those physical markers are almost a declaration of an 'extremist' that would inevitably lead one to Abu Ghraib. She rebukes her son for being careless about his appearance in America where physical markers such as beard, skullcap and names of Arab descent are seen with suspicion. Salman is outraged at the authority for discriminating against fellow citizens despite America being a nation of immigrants. Sal, on the other hand, believes Ghafur is

immune to any further mistreatment since he is an American and also a college student. Sal is of the opinion that "They only deport those damn fundamentalist Arabs and illegal aliens that come into this country. Rightfully so, if you ask me" (Ali 41). Ghafur opines that the behaviour of the people of America, particularly the whites, is not to be blamed. He empathizes with them and tries to imagine himself in their position ("Who knows, maybe I'd be the same way if I was Average Joe American"). In the medley of contrasting opinions, the audience is made aware of the varying perspectives and priorities of each member in the same unit of a family. Every family member's outlook toward racial profiling is the result of the experiences and knowledge accumulated in the course of historical process: pressures of imperial ventures, colonial economies, postcolonial situations, neo-imperialism and globalization. Every character occupies a different social, historical, political and economic praxis. It is because of these varieties of origins, types and sociopolitical backgrounds that the audience and the readers are made conscious that though the term family conventionally refers to a group of people staying together and having similar values, beliefs and cultural practices, in reality it is not so. The domestic space of home serves as micro heterogeneous unit affected by diverse social factors that bursts the illusion of homogeneity of a family. Also, the positionality of this diasporic family within post-9/11 America can be regarded as 'assimilable' but not worthy to 'belong' to the American nation. As David Leiwei Li explains in his book Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent (1998), the immigrants are 'measured' by their 'proximity' to the centre, which welcomes copies, imitations and mimicries of the dominant culture of the host land while insisting on their inauthenticity and their illegitimacy.

Another episode that reveals the contrasting opinion of every family member is attitude toward life and its purpose. Daada, being old, wants Ghafur to do what he himself could not do in his youth, "Just don't chase the world, Beta. Muslims were never meant to limit themselves – gain knowledge and do righteous works for the sake of Allah while you still have your youth" (Ali 43). He wants Ghafur to be more spiritual and find purpose in life by serving humanity in the name of Allah. Salman and Khulsoom, on the contrary, share a very South-Asian materialistic perspective toward life. They would love their children changing the world for the better but the order of priority lies thus: "… first get the degree, get a job, then do whatever you want" (Ali 43). Coming from the first-generation diasporic community, Salman and Khulsoom are understandably aware of the necessity of the material means to establish oneself in a foreign land. Even though they live in America, they are conscious of their inherent difference and the difficulty of being accepted in post-9/11 America. The only means, according to them, that would help them and their children stay firmly rooted in the host land are stable job, respect, and enough money. They believe that these would blur the stark differences and increase the chances of their acceptance in the post-9/11 American society. Sal, being the eldest child of the family, gives priority to American way of life. He believes technology and globalization are going to change the world for the better that would foster unity and peace. Fatima scoffs at her brother's naïveté. She is aware that the systematic oppression and discrimination is state-sponsored and it is a compulsion on the part of the privileged to reveal and spread the awareness of state-sponsored violent persecution of religious and ethnic minorities. Ghafur, as it appears in this scene, is sensitive to the political and religious reverberation in post-9/11 America. His understanding of the current political climate is inclined to Sal's belief. He believes that "usually people with food and homes don't go around blowing themselves up" (Ali 42). Ghafur has an idealistic understanding of the world. To him, a sound faith in religion, stable and modest home, sufficient food keep one grounded and away from fanaticism. However, those who are unfortunate are easily swayed into fanaticism to implement extremist maneuvers and cause discord in the society. This further deteriorates the perspective of the majority causing breach of harmony and faith in the goodness of one another. Ghafur believes "there's more in this life than just – than a nice 401(k) plan, job stability, and medical degree" (Ali 43). The tension tends to soar when food arrives on the plate and serves as a brief caesura in the rising intensity of the action. Despite the cool off, the television continuously reminds the audience and Ghafur of the incessant tension in the society triggered by the political narrative propagated by the media among the common people: "The president urged the nation today not to fear or doubt, even though the battle against extremism and evil will be long and painstaking, with unfortunate but inevitable sacrifices. According to the president, these sacrifices are necessary to ensure our freedom, and to help protect the liberties and values of all freedom-loving people against those dedicated to tyranny and hatred –" (Ali 44). Shutting off the TV by Ghafur is an act of momentary escape from the harsh reality and the realization that "liberties and values of all" will not be protected.

The final scene in Act 1 is the climax where the confrontation between the diasporic generations takes place. Ghafur finally reveals to his family that he wants to pursue teaching over medicine. Ghafur is of the opinion that the discord in the society is caused by misinformation and ignorance of each other's difference and, the politicians and fundamentalists are banking on the same to evoke disharmony in the social fabric.

> These extremists using those millions to teach their perverted version of Islam. The Taliban thinking it's halal and Islamic to beat and lock up women. Thinking they're doing God's work. Americans, and these Christians here, thinking each

> and every Muslim is a Jew-hater, about to go berserker-rage and blow himself and everyone else up. No one knows anything. And look at this media – that's the same garbage they get day in, day out. And no Muslim does anything – we just sit and complain (Ali 49).

Hence, he feels that the profession of a teacher is the most suitable for him for "at least [he will] get the opportunity to make people unlearn all the misinformation they've been force-fed their whole lives about Muslims, Islam, Arabs, and the Middle East" (Ali 55). While Sal tries to extract humour from the debacle unfolding, the audience witnesses the chasm between parents' expectations and children's will to live their life on their own terms, specific to South-Asian community which is vastly different from typical white American community. Salman reminds Ghafur of the parental responsibility that he performs to give his children a better and more secure life in a hostile host land while Ghafur is more intent to live his life on his own terms. However, the audience empathizes with both the children and the parents. The siblings have been brought up in an American atmosphere where they have learnt to value themselves and their choice. It is essential for individuals to follow their call of their heart to live peacefully. But the parents' expectation and hope cannot be disregarded as well. Salman understands how difficult it is to establish oneself in a foreign land that doesn't allow you the agency to settle. Salman has learnt the hard way that American Dream has to be achieved the hard way. Amidst racial and ethnic prejudice, Salman and Khulsoom apparently had difficulty to settle in a foreign land and make it their own space. They don't want their children to go through the same lived reality. Hence, they worked hard to make their children reach the height of their career "so they can never cut you down, or humiliate you, or take away your hard-earned rewards" (Ali 53). Salman is angry at Ghafur's deception because he believed he worked hard to fund Ghafur's education and instead, Ghafur spent it otherwise. Salman bursts out at Ghafur having his life easy, "Didn't have to work, earn his keep, sweat his way to the top like his parents" (Ali 57). This single line underscores the mountainous journey Salman and Khulsoom had to go through to make it in America but still the sense of placelessness and uprootedness persist. And that makes Salman burst out with rage to the point where he "suddenly and loudly slaps Ghafur" (Ali 57).

The slap serves as a pause to the entire action. Everything comes to a standstill. While Sal runs to save his brother, Daada tries to calm down his son Salman. There is clear indication that physical violence had occurred before between Salman and Sal that led to their cold relationship. While Sal realizes he has crossed the line and storms away, Salman regrets of hitting Ghafur. The day's events had drained him of energy, rational thinking and bitterness. All the characters retire to their spaces to reflect on the day's course of action. Daada, being the wise, old patriarch, coaxes Ghafur to understand his parents' perspective, "Your father, he … planned everything, Beta. He had such dreams of you" (Ali 58). Ghafur sees parents' expectations as a burden. The coldness has started to set in between Salman and Ghafur. Ghafur is apparently under the impression that his parents won't be able to understand him and the gradual distancing begins. Daada still advises to let the matter rest so that rationalism surfaces and reigns over sudden emotional bursts. But the question arises who between Salman and Ghafur thought for himself? While Salman plans to firmly establish the family in post-9/11 America, Ghafur plans to spread knowledge and correct information in a paranoid post-9/11 America so that difference is celebrated and not feared.

Act II opens with a candid conversation among the siblings. Wajahat Ali now allows the audience to focus on different generations of diasporic communities within the domestic space. He intends to show the intricacies of identity formation within the same domestic space but years apart. The illusion of homogeneous identity within the diasporic community tends to overlook the lived reality being affected by the historical process: immigrant/ natural citizen born of immigrant parents, hostland/homeland, tradition and culture of the homeland/ tradition and culture of the hostland, space and time, periphery/centre. Scene i of Act II throws light on the third generation of diasporic lived experience where they are far removed from the historical and political circumstances that shaped their parents. The description of the siblings' bedroom is a reminder of the lack of maturity and enough experience to see the larger world. Wajahat Ali describes the bedroom as "decorated like a high-school kid's room" (Ali 62). Sal is entertained by the partially broken Starscream Transformers toy - "a relic of his childhood". But he is also frustrated by the inability to return to those carefree days of his childhood that abounded with parental love and affection symbolized by the phrase "frustrated by his inability to change it back to what it was". The period of his adulthood is fraught with discord with his father. The light then shifts on to Ghafur. The light-hearted banter between the two brothers ensues which eventually moves on to the burden of parental expectations on diasporic children. Sal vents out his anger on his parents when he detestfully says, "Immigrants to the new motherland, have the Amreekan baby, and the Amreekan dream" (Ali 64). Sal is upset with his parents putting the weight of their unachieved success on their children, rather than letting them make their way in the world. Sal is angry at the thought that establishing himself in the world is contrary to his parents' expectations that culminated in a rift between the father and the son. Sal, being the eldest among the siblings, advises Ghafur to "[j]ust do it because you want to. Don't do it for anyone else" (Ali 65). He reminds Ghafur

that in order to survive one has to be a bull. To think of a world where "[t]here will be no jihad, no selfless poverty, no feeding the homeless, no noble sacrifice" is unrealistic in today's world.

"Do I dare disturb the universe?" - a famous line of T.S. Eliot's poem 'Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is used as a refrain to incessantly question the social conventions. Sal poses this question to Ghafur to push him in the direction he aspires to travel in - whether of being a rebel or conforming to it. The conversation between the two brothers is interrupted with Fatima's arrival in the scene. The roles reverse with Ghafur acting as the "soothing psychologist". Fatima is distraught with her parents' disapproval of Aziz, a black Muslim convert. She critiques her parents' sense of racial identity which they themselves have been fighting their life in post-9/11 America. Ghafur here consoles his sister. He tries to assure her that people change and there will come a time when their parents will change as well. Fatima is not optimistic. She opines:

> People don't change, Ghafur. No one changes. In their head they think they've changed. In my head, I think I changed - evolved into a better Muslima, a stronger woman, more liberated, more fearless, ready to fight and take on the world - but it's all pointless delusions in the head. You just take temporary vacations from yourself, from time to time.
>
> But you always come back. Everyone - always, in the end, comes back home. Sometimes people just don't want to learn. Or unlearn. Their perspective - lifestyle, whatever you want to call it … It's their only reality - even if it is narrow and ignorant and racist and an endless pile of denials and lies upon lies. For them - for us, for me, - it only matters if it works … as long as it's safe and reliable (Ali 68-69).

Ghafur has an optimistic outlook toward the gradual lifting of the 'veil'. He is of the opinion that Allah is preparing the world for a rebirth where there won't be fear among people. Fatima is amused at her brother's optimism but she withdraws into her lived reality. As both Sal and Fatima recede from the stage, only Ghafur is left behind facing the audience "immersed in thought". Finally, he takes the decision that somebody has to disturb the universe and he is willing to take the first step.

In the next scene of Act II, the audience gets a glimpse into Salman and Khulsoom's room. The inertia of Act I is passed on to this scene where Salman and Khulsoom engage in a conjugal fight. Khulsoom soon realizes the reason for Salman's anger and disappointment, "They didn't give you the position, did they?" (Ali 78). Salman's affirmative nod unleashes the angst that has taken its roots long back within him. Despite being experienced, hard-working, educated and faithful, Salman was passed over for Abdullah, a twenty-eight years old graduate student, because according to the company, his "'authentic' image we're gonna sell them needs a certain kind of representation that only Ab-doolah, God bless 'im, has in spades" (Ali 80-81). He vents out the concessions he had made to fit in. His origin is confused by the white masters in his office for "India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, what's the difference?" (Ali 79). His name (Salman) was tampered with or Americanized for the benefit of the whites because his "name was too hard for [them] to pronounce". His name, a unique marker of his identity, was distorted to "Sally" by Hunter, "Sal" by Brian the CFO, and "the Sal Man from Pak-is-tan" by all the interns and assistants. He rants against the discrimination that he had to face all his life just to fit in America. In contrary to Salman, Abdullah "wears a daarhi, his beard down to here - looks like Osama bin Laden's younger brother!" (Ali 80). Denigration of a group identity, its distortion or its denial, the pretense, often unconscious, because part of a cultural rather than a personal way of thinking that a group does not exist, and the withholding of recognition or misrecognition, is a form of oppression (Taylor). It is a form of inequality in its own right, but also threatens the other form of equality, i.e. equal dignity, the fulfilment of which can be made impossible by stereotyping or the failure to recognize the self-definitional strivings of marginal groups. Despite all these, the company chose Abdullah over Salman "because here's a young A-rab man who is absolutely serious about his Middle Eastern Ar-a-bic roots, and dedicated to his religion and culture, and it's exactly that image we need to drive home to our foreign investors and current business partners - that we, as Americans, respect their exotic culture and A-rab-esque heritage, and to prove it, we're gonna send 'em one of their own - Abdoolah!" (Ali 80). In the words of David Leiwei Li, Salman is reduced to 'assimilable' member but not worthy to 'belong' to the American nation. Li explains that diasporic subjects like Salman are 'measured' by their 'proximity' to the centre that encourages and welcomes copies, imitations and mimicries for the security of its own value while insisting on their inauthenticity and their illegitimacy. Salman is angry at the discrimination he is subjected to. He is angsty that he doesn't act or play the part of a religious Muslim. He feels regretful and guilty of trying to blend into the host land so much so that his ancestral identity had faded long ago and he is now pushed to that liminal space where he cannot escape in to his ancestral land. Khulsoom coaxes her husband to quit the company that does not or refuses to recognize his worth, and instead return to Pakistan - their homeland - just like they had planned years ago. Salman realizes that he is caught in a vicious cycle of exploitation and discrimination from which he cannot escape,

"I'm tired… I'm old. They knew I wouldn't quit. I could never fit the part… I'll continue to occupy my position, faithfully, as the sepoy who never dared to rebel" (Ali 81). Salman realizes at the core of his existence that return to the geographical Pakistan is possible but claiming it as home is no more possible. The years of living in the US has unconsciously initiated a process in the family to make their current location home despite "everyday experience of life marked by racism and oppression" (Lahiri 49). As Avtar Brah points out that one may 'feel at home' in a specific location, like Salman does here, but one may not stake claim to it as home. Salman and his family have stayed away from their homeland far too long so that it becomes a 'mythic place of desire' in the diasporic imagination but not a place of return (Lahiri 48). Salman is conscious of the fact that he has accomplished his 'homing desire' which can be described as "…constructing [of] such a space, not necessarily in the mythic past or mythic land of the past which has in the meantime changed irrevocably… home is a psychic place, the question of actual return does not arise" (Lahiri 50).

Salman finally explains his anger at Ghafur and the slap he gave to him. He is regretful of his action but simultaneously he got riled up by the way Ghafur looked at him. The look of pity in Ghafur's eyes for his father angered him where he wished his children to go through the same lived reality as Salman in order to appreciate his journey in a non-Muslim country, trying "to build a community with their bare hands with a few other young students. That's what we were, just students, driving across two states to find Halal meat back in those days. Raising money to rent an abandoned liquor store for our simple mosque so we could pray as a community!" (Ali 82). Salman tried to retain the traditions and culture of his homeland by creating a 'locative' space that becomes a site of preservation of cultural and religious codes of the home country. While the process of familiarization with the new environment and acculturation continues, these activities are undertaken by diasporic subjects to address their own spiritual and cultural needs. He realizes that Islam and Muslims fell down with the collapse of the World Trade Center. Post-9/11, Muslims in America faced discrimination and marginalization politically, socially, culturally and in religious terms. Salman understands the harsh reality that Muslims have to face in a hostile foreign land like America. He wanted his children to establish themselves but at the same time, he is aware of the difficulty in the process of establishment in post-9/11 America. Despite him wishing for his children to go through the same struggle like him, Salman doesn't want to tell his kids of the systematic racialization and discrimination he has been subjected to over the years for he wants to 'protect' them from the reality.

The final scene is the culmination point where histories are revealed, characters come face to face with the bitter truth. The scene opens at Isha time indicating the end of the day. After Daada performs namaaz (symbolic of trying to retain the tradition), Khulsoom enters to make tea for the entire family. Amidst the daily banter of the family members, the audience witnesses the change in Khulsoom's wishes regarding her children, contrary to what Fatima believes:

> I just want to see the three of them married off to Muslims. I don't even care if they're Pakistani, anymore. That is asking too much from this country – and from them. And inshallah, even if I'm not alive to see it, that they are on their two feet – with solid degrees and jobs and families. And that they are content. (Ali 87).

Khulsoom realizes that the parental attempt at keeping purity of one's children's identity and race is futile in this present post-9/11 multicultural America since her children have all formed hybrid essences that refutes purity in every sense of the term. She has finally accepted the resulting hybridized identity of her children. Salman enters the scene "wearing a white shalwar and an American T-shirt", symbolic of his hybridity of identity (Ali 88). He soon switches on the TV to hear of the clichéd news of American fight against extremism. It disgusts Salman to hear of the fabrications against the Muslim community and the American portrayal of Islam and Muslims as fundamentalists. The constant media propagation of portraying Islam and Muslims in a negative light is a political tool to constantly marginalize them, thereby leading to reductive Islamic identities.

> This war will end only when these monsters and terrorists and Al-ka-eeda and fundamentalist regimes renounce their hatred and extremism and learn to love and embrace democracy and freedom and American values, such as tolerance and separation of church and state and, God willing, good hygiene… (Ali 92).

The representation of America as the democratic and free land that is established on peace, tolerance and love, and America performing "the white man's burden" to instill justice, values and democracy in an apparently savage and unhygienic Islamic world conditions the minds of not only the self-declared white supremacists but also the youth of the diasporic community living in America. The incessant media reproduction of polarized representation of the West and the East, the civilized and the barbaric, of the good and the bad influence the mind of the viewers to form the same perception. The government spurs the same notion among its own people as well as the world to inveigle and justify the military measures and invasions they carry out in Muslim countries. The creation of the American way of life as the normative and dismiss the regional, cultural and ethnic differences and branding them as deviant are some of the

major factors in making the people throughout the world as well as the American-born diasporic generation ignorant and ironically intolerant of anything that doesn't conform to the values and culture of the West. The Americans are under the assumption that their act of invading, as seen by the Muslims, is an act of liberation intended for the Muslims.

In the midst of heated political conversation, Sal laughs out loud at the state of his family. He remarks:

> Here one second Ghafur gets slapped around like a little girl, Fatima is yelling and complaining, you and Ami are huffing and puffing. And instead of doing anything about it, what do we do? Instead of, God forbid, acknowledging that we're completely messed up and have a thousand problems, we just let it go and drink chai. And then tomorrow will come and it'll repeat (Ali 94).

This Beckettian repetition of the same absurdity in daily life is what every intergenerational diasporic family goes through. Wajahat Ali wanted the audience to witness a single day of such intergenerational conflict to make sense that layers of identity formation take place within the same domestic space contrary to the popular belief of families and communities possessing homogeneous identity. Wajahat Ali dissects the domestic space of the family in the play to make his point that time, space, gender, historical process, lived reality and positionality in the sphere of political, cultural, racial and gender matrix affect the formation of character and identity separately. No two individuals perceive the same incident in the same fashion. Perspectives vary and hence, responses vary as well.

The final stroke of brilliance is when Wajahat Ali revives Daada's memory of partition of India and Pakistan, and metaphorically compares the inhuman bloodshed of the Partition to that of post-9/11 phenomenon against the Muslim and Arab community. The splash of tea on Daada sensorily evokes that long-suppressed memory of the mindless bloodshed that he had witnessed and also had been a part of after the subcontinental partition, catalyzed by British colonial governance. "Did I ever tell you what I used to do in India?" – this dialogue of Daada lets out a floodgate of bitter truth that the present diasporic generation of youth fail to empathize. The recollection of incidents by Daada from seeing his friends and people of his own community getting butchered, slaughtered, raped and slain to being complicit in the same act against the 'other' religious community regarded as enemy, when re-narrated to the present-day third generation diasporic youth, untouched by the history and the experience, register as a shock, disbelief and betrayal to Fatima and Ghafur particularly. The domestic space acts as a platform where both post/colonial and diasporic situations entail a contact zone. Cultures and ancestral memories come together for a dialogue, and out of this dialogue emerges linguistic, social and cultural hybridity that sometimes involves conflict. The hybrid entity defies the norms of 'purity' and establishes itself as a process of continuous self-discovery. For Fatima and Ghafur, this is not their history. However, the same history has already shaped their identity and being, unbeknown to them. They fail to realize that the course of action is oftentimes unpredictable and incomprehensible "until [one has] to face that reality" (Ali 101). Only Sal is able to comprehend and empathize that situations demand reaction and response at times that may be deemed as 'wrong': "A person can never really know until he faces that situation. You have to trust yourself at that moment and do whatever it takes. Even if that means making the wrong decision" (Ali 104). Wajahat Ali tries to draw a parallelism between the two significant historical turns in the 20th century and 21st century. In both the cases, the resulting bloodshed, hatred for the other, religious supremacy instigated the innocent people to resort to violence for the sake of survival of oneself and one's own community. The stage direction "Hakim looks at Sal. Sal looks back, as if he has understood something" evokes a sense of momentary comradeship between Daada and Sal, generations apart. For the first time, Sal may have been able to comprehend the accumulation of injustice, discrimination and cultural intrusion by the West that led to the turning point in the American history – 9/11.

The detachment of Sal, Fatima and Ghafur from their grandparents and parents' history later on became an integral part of their life and identity. Also, the willful non-sharing of personal, familial and macro history of the subcontinental history to refrain from burdening the youth of the trauma and the pain associated with it, disrupt the organic and connected formation of identity. The creation of this post-memorial moment at the end of the play jars the siblings of their constrained historical capsules to comprehend their positionality and the impact of history, that they had never been a part of, on their identity. They have been pushed into that interstitial space where they occupy the position of marginalized section both in terms of their homeland – America - and ancestral homeland – Pakistan. Sal, Fatima and Ghafur are in a ceaseless process of 'becoming'. There are resistances to the process of hybrid formations from the quarters of the self, social, political, geographical and historical, and that is reason enough for the pace of the process of not being uniform. However, it is inevitable that hybrid identity and cultural formation are formed. Wajahat Ali takes a slice of life on stage to urge the audience to ponder on the nuances of action, behaviour and language to decipher the gradual distancing of the present diasporic youth from their inherited identity and the ancestral history. Ali wants the audience to witness the everyday practice of the clash of opinion among the family members. It gives us a glimpse into the complexity of formation and performance of identity. He consciously does not bring in any resolution. On the contrary, he leaves it to the audience to ponder on the crisis in the formation of identity

within intergenerational Muslim diasporic community on account of the phenomenon of neo-orientalism that was birthed post-9/11.

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