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Homesickness in Dur E Aziz Amna's *American Fever*

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Abstract

This study discusses the main sources of homesickness among the characters as the loss of family and culture, the unattainable dream of returning home, and the challenges of adapting to a new environment. The research reveals factors causing homesickness experienced by diaspora characters, as seen in the protagonist of Dur e Aziz Amna's *American Fever*. The researchers analyze the issues of homesickness with diaspora literary perspectives. This study engages with diaspora studies, especially Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity and diaspora. The result shows that diaspora individuals typically have expectations and admiration of their cherished homeland to overcome their homesickness. The cultural differences, the expectation for home, and the unfamiliarity with the home create a longing for the homeland's homesickness. The more the characters spend time in the United States, the more they realize how distant it is from what they had expected about the beauty of their homeland. Thus, they keep admiring their homelands and accept the differences and unfamiliarity to overcome their homesickness.

Keywords: *American Fever, Diaspora, Homesickness.*

Introduction

People from South Asia who live in the United States must deal with globalized ideas, which is what the word "diaspora" tends to mean (Puwar and Raghuram 118). This interpretation of the term "diaspora" does not gloss over the multiple ways in which ethnicity and society are produced through language, nor its distinct historical roots (Ganguly; Clifford; Brah, as cited in Puwar and Raghuram 118). According to Alghaberi, diasporas can construct their own imagined homes in homelessness as well as diverse social relationships and networks far from home. Their conception of a homeland is illusory; hence, the term "home" is used symbolically or metaphorically. Further, one of the many issues that can occur due to diaspora is homesickness towards the homeland (15).

Homesickness is defined as missing one's family and loved ones, peers and other familiar people, familiar surroundings and home pleasures, and feeling extremely insecure (Stroebe et al. 148). Fisher (1989) stated that university students are particularly at risk for homesickness (Kelly et al. 1). A significant percentage of students migrate from their hometowns to pursue higher education. Studies have indicated that

a substantial percentage of students, up to 94%, encounter feelings of homesickness at least once during their first semester at university (Burt 333; English et al. 3). In the context of individuals who have spent their entire lives far outside their homeland, the idea of experiencing homesickness has managed to garner a lot of attention. It is a complex emotional experience that can be classified as a longing for one's homeland, culture, and family, and it can be particularly intense when faced with a lack of physical and emotional connections to the homeland. Regarding student homesickness, some aspects include a "dislike for the university" and an "attachment to the home." These dimensions are a reflection of the various descriptions that can be found, which range from depression as a consequence of absence from home" to "longing for home and loved ones while missing from them." These descriptions are included in the existing facts (Stroebe et al. 148).

Exploring the diaspora in the West holds significant importance for Asians for several reasons. To begin with, a study of the experiences and contributions of Asian diaspora communities offers a feeling of connectivity, representation, and encouragement ((P. Williams 98; Puwar and Raghuram 44)). It allows Asians to see themselves reflected in the narratives of diaspora members who have navigated similar cultural, social, and identity challenges. Understanding the dynamics of diaspora communities also improves cross-cultural competence, encouraging inclusivity, empathy, and cultural understanding among Asians (McCoy-Torres 59; Hack-Polay et al. 6). Bolsajian explained that for diaspora communities, this dual identity can frequently present difficulties in adaptation as well as in defining what "identity" even is. In the modern era, when identities are more fluid than ever, it is essential to comprehend the diasporan's sense of not belonging and its impact on how various diaspora communities operate in their host countries (29). Overall, researching the diaspora in the West is valuable for Asians as it offers a sense of identity, inspiration, cultural understanding, and guidance, empowering them to navigate their own journeys with pride and resilience.

Christopher and Edward state that the study of homesickness improves comprehension and oversight of the emotional distress experienced by individuals when they migrate away from their familiar environment (Kelly et al. 1). The exploration of homesickness generates a community that is more caring and thoughtful, thereby facilitating individuals in managing the emotional distress associated with separation from their homeland. In recent years, the study of homesickness has been extended to the literary realm, as authors have begun exploring diaspora individuals' emotional landscapes in novels. This study aims to examine how homesickness is portrayed and experienced by the protagonists in the novel *American Fever*. The research focuses on homesickness within the context of a specific *American Fever* novel. This study seeks to understand the complexities of homesickness in the diasporic context, to examine the impact of homesickness on the protagonist's life, and to analyze how the themes explored in the novel can inform our understanding of diasporic literature.

Dur e Aziz Amna is a Pakistani diaspora graduate of Yale University and the University of Michigan Helen Zell Writers' Program. Her debut novel, *American Fever* is one of the literary works whose main character is diasporic. Hira, the protagonist of



American Fever, is a smart, passionate 16-year-old girl living in Pakistan in 2010 with her parents and younger brother. Hira was selected to participate in a high school exchange program in the United States. She is placed with an Oregon countryside family. The American family consists of a single mother, Kelly, and her daughter, Amy, who equals Hira's age. With the opportunity to participate in a student exchange in a country with a different culture, Hira is often treated differently. Many situations made Hira regret her choice to move to the United States, as the reality was the exact opposite of what she had imagined. This is aligned with Van Horne et al., that stated students from other countries have reported experiencing lower levels of social satisfaction, a weakened sense of belonging, and a substantially decreased impression of respect on campus. Due to the disparity between her expectations and reality, Hira frequently experiences homesickness (351).

Although homesickness in a diasporic context has been researched for some time, recent studies in the past several years have brought new insights into the understanding of the phenomenon. For instance, Khanal and Gaulee mentioned that researchers have identified a variety of academic and non-academic difficulties for international students studying in the United States (566). Van Horne, Lin, Anson, and Jacobson revealed that students in the United States consistently report lower social satisfaction and feelings of belonging than students in other advanced countries (367). Their new surroundings make them feel detached or alienated from people and things around them (Perry 713).

Akinsulure-Smith and O'Hara in Singh et al. emphasized how moving to the United States causes extra pressure because these individuals may get long-term anxiety due to their migration decision and the separation from their friends and family (382). These life changes can be driven by various circumstances, such as environmental alterations, nutritional possibilities, or lifestyle choices (McLachlan et al. in Pendse and Inman 1). Foreign students frequently miss their home community and, as a result, seek ways to form a new community which might alleviate the stress that moving to a different country creates (Singh et al. 382).

Although Hira has a place to stay in the United States and has friends in school who have the same condition as her, she may nevertheless feel lonely and occasionally miss her homeland, Pakistan. This is also mentioned by Brunsting et al. that a student could have high intercultural communication skills, interact well with natives, and also have excellent cross-cultural adaptation (e.g., feeling accepted by the host culture), but yet experiencing loneliness and homesickness (9).

Ting et al. discovered that some young adults were able to easily adapt to their new surroundings and did not have any issues during the period of adjustment. There is a possibility that some adolescents and young adults are different from one another. There are some young adults who are unable to adapt to the change since it may cause them stress and be too much for them to bear. Consequently, young adults who have difficulties adjusting to a new environment may struggle from homesickness that lasts for a prolonged period of time. Homesickness was similarly prevalent among male and female students (42).

In *American Fever*, Hira's homesickness is caused mostly by the different way she was treated in the US, which made her miss the way she was treated in her homeland,



Pakistan. Hira's homesickness got worse after she was diagnosed with (TB) Tuberculosis and was unable to return to her hometown since doctors informed her that her illness was highly contagious, and she had to be confined. Throughout her illness and when the host family took care of her, when she tried to contact her family on the phone, and then after her grandfather passed away and she was unable to go due to her illness.

A number of researchers have conducted studies on various topics relating to diasporas. The first one is entitled *The Concepts of Home and Statelessness in Palestinian Diaspora Fiction: Reflections in Randa Jarrar's A Map of Home* by Jameel Alghaberi in 2018. He examines the conceptualization of home and statelessness in Palestinian diasporic narratives. His research seeks to explore the relationship between "historic Palestine" and the fiction works of the modern Palestinian diaspora that continue to develop new concepts about home (Alghaberi). Another study on this issue is entitled *The Portrayal of Amal's Diasporic Identity in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* by Aimatul Ayu Maghfiroh in 2020. She analyzes how Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* shows the protagonist dealing with her diasporic identity. The character's diasporic identity is demonstrated by her discovering the distinctions between her own and the American identity (Maghfiroh).

The researchers identified the main sources of homesickness among the characters as the loss of family and culture, the unattainable dream of returning home, and the challenges of adapting to a new environment. Khanal and Gaulee explained that studying abroad is a challenging experience for students of all nationalities and backgrounds, and the transition is not easy. Non-Academic obstacles, according to researchers, included homesickness, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression, cultural issues, and nutritional issues (568). This study reveals factors causing homesickness experienced by a diaspora character, as seen in the protagonist of Dur e Aziz Amna's *American Fever*. The researchers analyze the issue of homesickness from diaspora literature perspectives.

This study applied Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity and diaspora. Cultural identity is an individual's representation. By following the phrase across national cultures, which is a transnational approach implying diaspora, with between diasporas, he suggests that there is more than one black diaspora or that a black diaspora may potentially intersect with others. This is because he follows the phrase between diasporas. Refining and restating statements originally made at an earlier point in time is an important part of the anti-essentialist approach that Hall takes to understanding diasporic cultures (Sharpe 24). However, when people simultaneously encounter cultures that are distinct from one another, they have identity issues. It suggests that identity is not as straightforward or real as most people believe (Mongia 110; Mongia 119–20). It connects 'becoming' and 'being' (Hall in Mongia 112). It belongs to both the present and the history. It is not something that transcends place, time, history, and culture that already exists. Cultural identity has origins and history, but along the lines of all historical phenomena, it undergoes ongoing change (Fitria 62).

Through transformation and distinction, diaspora identities are continually produced and reproduced. Hall intends for the diaspora experience to be defined not by essence or purity but by recognizing necessary heterogeneity and diversity, a



conception of 'identity' that lives with and through difference and hybridity rather than despite it (Hall in Mongia). The complexities of "hybrid" diaspora identities that emerged in the aftermath of global migration revealed a great deal about the dynamics of this new method of identity formation. The diaspora concept is erasing not nations and nationhood but the nation-state, the moment of nationalism. Identity becomes multifaceted in the context of diaspora. Along with an associative attachment to a specific island "home," there are other centrifugal forces at work: there is the West-Indianness that they share with other West-Indian migrants (Hall et al. 315).

It is common for individuals who have moved to a new place to experience homesickness and a burning desire for the people and places they have left behind. Not only are people who uproot themselves from their own land and move to a new country considered members of this diaspora but also people who value diversity are members of this diaspora. This actively means coming to terms, within the framework of the diaspora, with the idea that variety and diversity are essential components of any society that is to operate normally (Hall in Mongia 119–20).

Method

This study applies a qualitative method as the research method. Instead of providing a practical research guide, qualitative methods have focused on making sense of the activity. It serves as an exploratory tool, suggesting potential mechanisms that can then be tested quantitatively. Qualitative data are more likely to be helpful when a study's focus centers on a single case or a limited number of cases (Gerring 20). Researchers then use the method for analyzing the diaspora character in the novel *American Fever* by Dur E Aziz Amna. This study uses critical close textual analysis to investigate the homesickness that the characters feel. Stuart Hall's theory of Diaspora will analyze the homesickness concept in the novel *American Fever* by Dur E Aziz Amna. His theory centered on the geographical formations of black cultural identities throughout the diaspora. He cautions against drawing broad conclusions from national or regional biographies of racism or observing the rest of the world through the lens of the West. During a period of increased migration, particularly from the global South to the global North, the term diaspora refers to migrants who persist emotionally attached to their homelands. As improved travel and communication technologies enable migrants to maintain stronger ties with their homelands, they form global diasporas that are not cut off from their homelands (Sharpe 27).

Results and Discussions

This part describes the homesickness toward homeland, which diaspora characters experience in Dur E Aziz Amna's novel, *American Fever*. Besides, it shows differences between her expectations of the United States of America (home), which she has long adored. Cultural differences between her homeland and home as shown in; physical contact in Hira's interaction with strangers' kids, culture shock by the loss of ethnic traditions during social interaction, Asian student stereotype, the different ideology of virginity, rarely hearing Adzan, language barriers, consuming behavior, gap between collectivism and individualism in social culture, cuisine, landscape differences, and



ambiance. The result of the cultural differences caused homesickness experienced by the diaspora character that will be the focus of this research.

Homesickness is a complex feeling. It is an emotional experience of longing and sadness, usually caused by displacement and unfamiliarity with the new culture, that is usually felt by someone who leaves their homeland. Additionally, she finds it difficult to adjust to the new customs and values of the United States. As a result, the diaspora character feels disconnected from the new home and longs for the familiarity of her homeland.

Amna demonstrates that homesickness is frequent among diaspora individuals as they are not only uprooting their homeland and migrating to a new one, but they also value diversity. In her novel, Amna depicts these diaspora characters through a Pakistani family that allows their daughter to participate in a student exchange program in the United States. Even though this student exchange is a fully-funded program that allows her to focus on her studies, her involvement in cultural interaction causes her to experience homesickness. In fact, diaspora individuals typically have their expectations of a cherished homeland crushed. The homesickness is not explicitly mentioned. It occurs as time goes by, the more she spent time in the United States, the more she realized how distant it was to what she had expected, leading to a feeling of homesickness.

“I stepped back, apologizing profusely. She ignored me, calling out instead to her husband to proudly recount how their son had just protected himself against a stranger. I felt heat on my face and saw Amy staring at me with pity and confusion. I opened my mouth to explain to her how innocuous my gesture would have been back home, how I had spent an entire childhood getting my cheeks pulled by enamored aunts in markets.” (Aziz Amna 65)

Hira came across cultural differences in physical contact between her homeland and home. This difference might lead her to culture shock. Akkiliñç explained that individuals from other countries are sometimes misunderstood since their cultures are so different from their own. Several research studies have been conducted throughout the years with the goal of providing further understanding regarding 'Culture Shock' and trying to raise awareness that each and every culture is unique and ought to be respected to prevent offending others. Individuals who experience culture shock often go through times of emotional turmoil and discouragement. Syawaludin et al. explained that culture shock or anxiety caused by the loss of ethnic traditions during social interaction is commonly experienced by an individual who lives in a different environment than one's own (67). With this explanation, it is possible that the occurred cultural differences caused Hira to think how physical contact with stranger's kids was considered normal back in her homeland.

“I had never been the most popular girl in school, but I was sufficiently liked; back home, there was considerable cachet to being a good student, and that I would always been. Things seemed to work differently in Lakeview, where students spent much of their energy vying to appear disinterested in class, in a race for the most authentic brand of ennui.” (Aziz Amna 81)



In the United States, Asian students have a strong reputation for being high achievers and role models among their peers. For example, the term model minority is labeled among Asian-American students. Caliendo and McIlwain stated that the term refers to racial groups of color that have ostensibly achieved high success in contemporary U.S. society (199). Interestingly, some people show resistance towards this label and stereotypes surrounding Asian students. Although the model minority image is widely regarded as a positive phenomenon and stereotypical experiences have indeed been linked to beneficial outcomes, the subjective experience of being stereotyped can be restricting, incorrect, and destructive to social connections. According to research findings including both teenagers and university students, some individuals perceive the stereotypical image with honor because it showcases the great achievements of their community and ancestors; moreover, lots of other people perceive that the stereotypical view pressures them toward a social identity and report that almost all stereotypes regardless of their connotation, were indeed troubling (Kiang et al. 2). In the quotation above, Hira felt the difference between homeland and home students' reaction to being active in class. She for once, felt alienated for raising her hands and wanting to read in class. With this treatment, Hira might feel homesick because she preferred what is considered as a good student like how it was in her homeland.

“In the background, I heard the Maghrib azan. Has there ever been a sadder sound? Abbu cleared his throat.” (Aziz Amna 105)

Hearing Adzan (the call to prayer) may not be unusual for Hira in her homeland, as she grew up hearing it daily. In this context, Adzan is one of Hira's Muslim identities, and it has the potential to be a component that reminds Hira of her country. Despite the number of mosques established in America has increased significantly, this is partly due to conversion, with the majority of converts, and also to the influence of settlement patterns resulting from immigration (Kahera 369). However, according to Kettani, the overall Muslim population of the United States of America climbed from less than 0.1% in 1950 to 1% by 2020. With research data indicating that Muslim religion adherents in America are just at 1%, there is minimal possibility that the Azan can be heard in general public settings (129). This causes Hira to feel melancholy when she hears Azan. The feeling then aroused a sense of longing for the atmosphere of her hometown. This condition then leads to a sense of homesickness because of the memory of what is in the homeland.

“How long have you been here?” he asked.
“Two months.”
“Miss home?”
“A lot, sometimes.”
“And a little bit, all the time?”
“Yes.” (Aziz Amna 111)

Hira had grown frustrated with the limited opportunities given to her in her homeland, resulting in her desire to participate in a student exchange in the United States in order to experience the freedom of pursuing her passion. The form of Hira's admiration derives from the nature of the United States as a liberal country. Ironically, it is evident



that Hira's admiration for freedom in the United States is inadequate to erase the memory of her homeland. Hira still feels homesick every day even when she has just lived in the United States for two months. In a study conducted by Mozafarinia & Tavafian, they discovered that cultural differences between nations were the most significant cause of homesickness (60).

Hira's struggle with homesickness can be attributed to the differences in culture between Pakistan and America. In Pakistan, she was surrounded by people who spoke her native language and shared her values and traditions. In America, she may feel isolated and out of place as unfamiliar customs and language surround her. The cultural differences between the two countries can be difficult to reconcile, and this can lead to feelings of homesickness.

"Because there is not anything else to do in this town," I wanted to snap back. "Because I am in the middle of nowhere, chopping onions so I do not eat vacuum-sealed chana masala on Eid." (Aziz Amna 117)

The quotation clearly demonstrates the insufficient understanding of what to do for a newcomer in a new place. Hira, who had just arrived and settled in America for several months, felt she could not do much, even though she could not feel the full atmosphere of Eid as she did in her hometown. America is known as a country that often produces instant foods and consumes them on a daily basis. Hira, coming from a country that mainly prepares their food fresh (especially cultural foods), began to feel differences in the consuming behavior of both countries. Food is also used as a way to establish a connection between family members and friends since everyone is invited to the table. On the other hand, in America, food is mainly considered as fuel to keep the body running. Fast food, take-outs, and pre-made food are very common. People often eat out or buy ready-made food to save time. While Pakistani cuisine includes a lot of fresh ingredients and spices, American cuisine is less spicy and often uses more processed ingredients. Food may be one of the most important aspects of one's idea of their homeland. Hira's character wanted to maintain the identity of her homeland by consuming hand-made fresh food on Eid. The existing consuming behavior affects Hira's adjustment to her new environment and causes feelings of homesickness.

"Whenever Faisal and I got sick back home, our parents roamed about us like moths drawn to the heat of our bodies. They forced us into bedrest, plied us with boiled eggs and doodh patti, massaged our aching limbs. Aunts and uncles visited, honey and broth in tow. Being sick in America appeared like a social misstep—you had to stay away from people, sparing them embarrassment, contagion, any unseemly reminder of physical vulnerability." (Aziz Amna 142)

The cultural differences between the West and the East will undoubtedly be felt, particularly in how individuals interact with one another. This quotation illustrates the significant gap between collectivism and individualism in social culture. Hofstede explained that Individualism speaks for a society in which the relationships between individuals are looser; that everybody is expected to take care of themselves or their direct relatives solely, whereas collectivism represents a community in which people become incorporated into strong, cohesive ingroups from birth onwards, which



continue to protect them in return for unquestioned allegiance (Lansford et al. 2). Hira describes how she handled being sick in her hometown of Pakistan, rather than in America, in the quote. Hira feels warmth when she is at home but not when she is in America. Hira will always be cared for by her family if she is home; even relatives will pay her visits. When Hira was in America, things were very different. She is lonely, so she keeps her distance from others. Thus, it can be seen that cultural differences between the West and the East can influence how individuals interact with each other. Because of these cultural differences, there is a sense of comparing the atmospheres of homeland and home, which creates a sense of longing for homeland.

"Doesn't it remind you of home?" Zahra asked, taking a deep breath as we walked through the produce section. Back home, Abbu sometimes took me along on his weekly trips to the vegetable market, where he asked every stall keeper to hand him a plastic bag that he whipped with air before filling it with tomatoes the size of small eggs, cucumbers that Aliya peeled for salads, wounded aubergines and turnips. He would insist on picking each tomato and checking for scars or rot before bagging it. The market was uncovered and smelled like the world around it: in the summer, like rain, in the winter, like dust. This store, with its perfect baseball tomatoes, smelled nothing like it. (Aziz Amna 145)

In the quotation above, Hira and Zahra go to a market around Hira homestay. Zahra then asked if the market's atmosphere there reminded her of the atmosphere in her hometown. From there, Hira then tried to contemplate or feel the market atmosphere and compare it with her hometown in Pakistan. However, the atmosphere in the American market cannot replace the memory of the market atmosphere in Pakistan. Additionally, Hira came from a country with a distinct smell and taste of spices, presumably she did not find in the American market. As food is most likely to become an important aspect of the identity of diaspora individuals, the different cultures of spice usage in food might awaken Hira's sense of longing for the atmosphere of her homeland. Furthermore, Pakistani markets have greater cultural diversity, with people from all religious backgrounds and walks of life coming together to shop. All of these elements contribute to the unique atmosphere and culture of Pakistani markets, which Hira could not find in the American market.

*"I told you, you ended up in the wrong part of the country."
I described to him the America I had seen in the past few days-clipped suburbia, three cars to a house, biryani and chai, mehndi parlors.
"Well, hopefully it was a taste of home."
"Not really. It made me uncomfortable." (Aziz Amna 174)*

From this quotation, it is clear that what Hira assumes to be real about the United States is inaccurate. She has believed that the United States is a successful country, with metropolitan areas and skyscraper buildings similar to those in New York. Meanwhile, her home region of Oregon is a green territory with many lakes, forests, and mountains (McNamee et al.). Although 'home' is supposed to be where everyone can feel at ease, this does not always happen for people living abroad, such as the diaspora. Hira is one of them.



Hira's experience highlights the cultural differences between different countries and how these differences can cause feelings of alienation and distress. It also serves as a reminder that the image of a country that one holds in their mind is often not the same as reality. This can be especially true for those who have lived in a different country and are now living in a new one. The United States of America did not live up to Hira's expectations of being a prosperous and thriving metropolis when she first arrived there. Instead, it was a place that felt foreign and unfamiliar and that she found hard to settle into. Even though the scenery around her house was quite pleasant, it was not enough to make her feel at ease because the people there did not treat her well like they did in Pakistan at the time, which caused her to have feelings of homesickness from time to time.

"It is odd to read in Urdu again, my eyes roaming back and forth over characters that hug one another, twisting and shapeshifting to remain in embrace. Back home, Rabia and I would often complain about Urdu literature, how it was stilted, formal and over-embellished. We never realized that our discomfort reflected how low the bar was, how little we were expected to know of the language that its beauty sounded overwrought." (Aziz Amna 192)

This happened as a result of Hira's reaction to getting a letter from Ali. Due to the length of time that had passed since Hira's last interaction towards the Urdu language, the fact that the letter was written in that language was a pleasant and unexpected surprise to her. According to "Urdu Definition & Meaning", Urdu is an Indo-Aryan language that is the official language of Pakistan and is also spoken often by Muslims living in metropolitan areas of India. Some of its words (verbs and nouns) might have more than 40 different forms, making it challenging to comprehend correctly (Naseer and Husein as cited in Saeed et al. 2). Hira's memories of her school days with her friends, who thought Urdu was too long and complicated, start rushing back to her as she reads the letter. It indicates that she longs for the time she spent in Pakistan because she is starting to realize that Urdu is not as stiff as it formerly was.

"In the background, I hear women mourning. Their soft, constant moan is that of peacocks wandering a garden on a dewy morning. Every now and then, a loud wail punctuates the lull. The incessant prayer, the low humming, the stacks of Quran chapters to be read and blessed upon the deceased-all to give people something to do, a way to count losses. My mother, aunts, uncles, grandmother, that intimate circle of people, are gathered in Multan. The congregation of grief is there, and I am here. "Ammi," I say, "I want to come home." (Aziz Amna 202)

This passage has a significant impact on the longing that Hira has for her homeland. Nana Ji, Hira's grandfather, passed away on the day that she was committed to quarantine as a consequence of (TB) Tuberculosis. Diaspora individuals only have the opportunity to keep in touch with family in their homelands by using social media platforms such as the telephone and Skype (Hossain and Veenstra 11). Hira was only able to speak on the phone and visualize her family gathered around, along with the sound of everyone reciting the prayer and stacks of the Al-Qur'an. Hira was only able to think about her homeland since she was living in a country with a remarkably low percentage of Muslims. This image of her homeland might have caused her to long for



the familiar surroundings of stacked Al-Qurans. Hira's homeland was mainly a collective society where people would gather to recite the Al-Quran when someone from the community passed. Due to the differences in both cultures, it is possible that Hira will become detached, and she has already started to feel homesick.

At that moment, Hira was strongly urged to board a flight and head back home. The doctor warned her that she could not board an international flight since she was severely ill and could infect others. Even though Nana Ji initially did not allow Hira to go to the United States because he thought she was still young, it was her time to be near her own family while her elders were still sitting. Hira suffered great pain when she could not be by the side of her grandfather in his dying days.

“The air will be changing character, growing heavy with the promise of summer. Uncle Shafiq must be rolling open the car windows each morning. Faisal will have to take off his sleeveless uniform sweater during recess. Ammi will start drinking chai in the backyard again. The next time I talk to her though, she tells me they're getting the jamun tree felled. It is too unruly. I start weeping.” (Aziz Amna 211)

During the time that Hira was waiting for the results of the laboratory test, she kept picturing herself returning to Pakistan. Hira burst into tears as she recalled she could not see the tree that had been growing near her house since she was a child. The most prominent evidence of Hira's homesickness for Pakistan while she was in the United States, was the fact that she was sick and was away from her family, that she was losing memories from her childhood, and that she wished to fly back to see her family in Pakistan.

The feeling of homesickness is experienced differently by different people and can manifest itself in various ways. For some, it is an overwhelming feeling of longing, while for others, it is a more subtle feeling of nostalgia. Many diaspora individuals experience homesickness as a physical ache, a longing for their home country's familiar sights and smells. Additionally, some diaspora individuals may experience homesickness as a sense of loss, a feeling of being disconnected from their cultural and familial roots. Hira's homesickness is a result of the sudden change in a usual tradition that her family does back in her homeland.

Conclusion

To summarize what has been stated thus far, homesickness as a diaspora issue has been thoroughly studied. It is a complex emotional experience characterized by a longing for one's home country, culture, and family. It can be particularly intense when faced with a lack of physical and emotional connections to the homeland. In recent years, the study of homesickness has been extended to the literary realm, as authors have begun exploring diaspora individuals' emotional landscapes in novels.

Lack of physical and emotional ties to the homeland can worsen it. Hira is one of the diaspora characters from a Pakistani family that allows their daughter to participate in a student exchange program in the United States. Even though this student exchange is a fully-funded program that allows her to focus on her studies, her involvement in cultural interaction causes her to experience homesickness. Diaspora individuals typically have their expectations of a cherished homeland crushed. The



researchers found that cultural differences, food-consuming behaviors, the expectation for home, and the unfamiliarity with the home create a longing for the atmosphere of the place where she came from or her homeland. However, the characters use these differences and unfamiliarity to overcome their homesickness. The homesickness is not explicitly mentioned, but it occurs as time goes by; the more they spend time in the United States, the more they realize how distant it is from what they had expected about their homeland. Thus, they keep admiring their homeland accepting the differences, and being foreigners to overcome their homesickness.

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