



## Borderless Worlds: Cosmopolitanism and Hybrid/Transnational Identity in Aamer Hussein's The Cloud Messenger

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### ABSTRACT

The article's objective is to elucidate the concept of hybrid/transnational identity within a cosmopolitan backdrop, depicted in Aamer Hussein's novel, *The Cloud Messenger*. The study underscores the pivotal role of literature and art in shaping individuals' lives and minds. It scrutinizes the characters' endeavors to navigate cultural boundaries, engage with diverse perspectives, and construct their own sense of belonging. This research explores the intricacies of these individuals' struggles, negotiations, and transformations as they grapple with their memories and aspirations. By drawing upon Appiah's theory of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' in the realm of Pakistani English literature, this qualitative and descriptive study offers a nuanced examination of the rootedness of first and second-generation diaspora streams within their native culture. It promotes 'respect' and 'acceptance' among 'citizens of the world'. The study highlights the importance of literature and art in transforming individual's life and mind. It illuminates the characters' encounters with poetry, love, and work, all of which significantly shape their adult lives. Despite their extensive travels to various countries, they grapple with a persistent sense of displacement and the quest for a genuine sense of belonging.

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## 1. Introduction

The term 'Pakistani English literature' encompasses the collection of literary works composed in the English language by authors from Pakistan or those belonging to the Pakistani diaspora. This body of literature holds notable importance, primarily stemming from the historical influence of British colonial rule in the Indian Sub-continent, which was previously known as the 'British Raj.' English, in conjunction with Urdu, has achieved the status of one of Pakistan's official languages. Pakistani English literature serves as a reflection of the linguistic and cultural diversity inherent to Pakistan, while also capturing the unique features of English spoken within the nation, recognized as Pakistani English. This linguistic variant of English has evolved distinctive characteristics, heavily influenced by local languages, dialects, and cultural subtleties. Rahman (2015) asserts that English literature has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of Pakistani literary expression, subsequently gaining international acclaim. It has become an integral and significant element of contemporary Pakistani literary discourse. When examining Pakistani English literature, whether produced by writers residing within the geographical borders of Pakistan or by Pakistani Diaspora authors, discern a multicultural environment. This multiculturalism isn't solely attributable to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the writers or the necessity of reflecting Pakistan's pluralistic society. Rather, it's because these writers, in their literary works, transcend the constraints of ethnicity, language, history, religion, and geography.

Postcolonial literature originating from Pakistan has been instrumental in nurturing the diverse spectrum of artistic forms within the country. Authors, as ambassadors representing Pakistan to the global literary stage, have bestowed upon Pakistani literature a distinct national

and international identity. "Literature is a form of art transcends boundaries, both geographical and ideological" (Rahman, 2015). Pakistani diaspora authors hold a substantial influence, especially those who dwell in Western countries or maintain a dual presence in both Pakistan and Western hubs of influence. These authors serve as a platform for voices advocating resistance, thereby enabling a broader range of perspectives to be acknowledged and considered. Authors from the Pakistani diaspora engage proactively in the intricate process of defining their cultural affiliations. They celebrate the concept of diversity by embracing cosmopolitanism, which embodies a worldview that accentuates the interdependence, variety, and common humanity shared among cultures. Hashmi (1987) is of the view that Pakistan has "outstripped its colonial origin" while creating postcolonial literature. (p. 50). It is evident that the contemporary societal challenge predominantly revolves around the issue of identity. Broadly speaking, the concept of belonging holds particular historical significance for Pakistan, as this country has defined this notion through its struggle for independence.

Diversity takes center stage in the exploration of multi-lingual literary traditions. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) have argued that Simon Gikandi posits globalization as a fundamental factor in the realms of anthropology and culture. Gikandi expounds on the intricate connection between globalization and postcolonialism, emphasizing their common emphasis on unraveling the intricacies of social and cultural milieus. Both these disciplines share a common goal: transcending the limitations imposed by nationalism and Eurocentrism. In doing so, they open doors to novel perspectives that shed light on the dynamics of cultural exchange. Stuart Hall insists that we cannot continue to speak about "one experience, one identity, without acknowledging its other side... cultural identity ... is a matter of becoming as well as of being" (Ashcroft et al., 1995). The ascent of cosmopolitanism can be attributed to factors such as migration, globalization, nationalism, multiculturalism, as well as the resurgence of narrow religious and ethnic identities. These elements have collectively contributed to the emergence of cosmopolitanism, notwithstanding political and theoretical differences. This article advocates for a holistic approach that recognizes the intricate nature of constructing hybrid/transnational identities. In this process, individuals place significance on their cultural and social bonds while also embracing other values and perspectives.

Hybrid individuals of diaspora frequently possess multifaceted personal, cultural, and social connections that extend beyond the borders of their home country. Their life experiences might entail residence in multiple nations, the blending of diverse cultural heritages, or the maintenance of relationships with communities spanning across different countries. Cosmopolitanism serves as a guiding framework for diaspora authors, aiding them in navigating their intricate identities and embracing various cultural influences. It fosters a sense of belonging while also celebrating diversity and plurality. Fine (2007) contends that cosmopolitanism, as a social theory, aims to create a society founded on the principles of universalism. It offers a critique and connection to place "human rights, international law, global governance and peaceful relations between states at the center of its vision of the world". (p. 1). This research article asserts that diaspora authors, through their literary works, challenge the concept of rigid or exclusive cultural identities by exploring and portraying the interconnections between cultures. They embrace the fluid and hybrid nature of their experiences, recognizing that their sense of belonging transcends a singular cultural framework. Cosmopolitanism has become a common means through which individuals negotiate their relationship with the global community in the contemporary world. Additionally, the notion of 'home' has undergone a transformation in the modern era. Our present-day world is marked by the ongoing blending of cultures, as local lifestyles are influenced by both regional and global factors.

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

The problems of identification and cultural variety in a globalized society are regularly explored in modern literature. *The Cloud Messenger* (2011), by Amer Hussein, offers a tale replete with issues of hybrid/transnational identity and cosmopolitanism, this work is still largely unexplored in academic discourse (Hussein, 2011). By analyzing how the novel depicts the ideas of identity and cosmopolitanism, and explores the significance of literature and art in shaping one's life, this study seeks to fill this research gap.

### **1.2. Research questions**

1. How does Amer Hussein present the notion of hybridity in the formation of transnational identities?

2. In what ways the novel explores the concept of cosmopolitanism, especially in contact with diverse cultures and individuals?
3. How do literary and artistic connections transform cosmopolitan identity?

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

1. The research portrays the notion of hybrid/transnational identity in the backdrop of cosmopolitanism.
2. The article examines the idea of cosmopolitanism, particularly as it relates to encounters with people from various cultures.
3. The research explores the fundamental influence of literature and art in molding the thoughts and experiences of individuals.

### **1.4. Significance of the study**

This paper presents that a hybrid/transnational identity marked by the nature of globalization can maintain its distinctiveness in a cosmopolitan world. An individual's interactions with different cultures left an indelible mark on its identity, which underscores the importance of maintaining a connection to one's cultural heritage. Aligning with Appiah's concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism", the study emphasizes the value of preserving one's cultural roots while concurrently embracing a global, cosmopolitan perspective. By exploring and analyzing aspects of the novel that haven't been extensively studied before, this research contributes significantly to the body of knowledge in the field. This study presents an interdisciplinary viewpoint on the topics of the novel by looking at the junction of literature, cultural, and identity.

## **2. Literature Review**

Starting in the 1980s, Pakistani English Literature began to gain recognition on both national and official fronts. Hashmi (1987) claimed that this recognition came when the Pakistan Academy of Letters began to include literary works originally written in English. Over the past three decades, several Pakistani English writers, such as Mohsin Hamid, Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohammad Hanif, Daniyal Mueenuddin, Uzma Aslam Khan, Nadeem, Aslam, Hanif Kureishi, Sara Suleri, Aamer Hussein and Kamila Shamsie, have achieved international acclaim. Additionally, fiction from the Pakistani diaspora started to garner international attention during the latter part of the 20th century. The emerging generation of authors from Pakistan is actively working to address and influence the sociopolitical challenges facing the country. Consequently, their works boldly tackle pressing political issues that surround them. Pakistani Anglophone texts not only creatively revisit the past but also provide insights into the present and offer projections for the future. These writings foster a sense of collective belonging among their readers. These authors are particularly concerned with themes related to Muslim fundamentalism, socio-political turmoil, terrorism, and gender inequality. Their narratives often revolve around the concept of being "away" from their homeland, evoking nostalgia and reminiscences of their roots. In this context, they find themselves navigating a space that exists between the local and the global. This research aims to explore how these writers effectively handle cultural influences and maintain their sense of "Pakistani-ness" within the context of a globalized world.

Pakistani English Literature has consistently engaged with contemporary themes and challenges. As per Rahman (2015), it has evolved from the period of decolonization to the tumultuous era of partition and subsequently delved into pressing political and societal issues. Throughout this journey, it has displayed a complex and sometimes contradictory attitude towards internal conflicts and the formation of identity. These authors recognize that their personal experiences and political realities cannot be separated, and their narratives reflect this intricate interplay. Cilano (2013) observed, "being Pakistani" sense, "a 'human' identity that takes shape through the recognition of historical experiences as an equalizing force, suggesting along the way that historical narratives can bear meaning outside of national confines." (p. 1). These authors grapple with the multifaceted issues as they strive to establish meaningful connections with their past, navigate their present circumstances, and chart a course for their future. Cilano (2013) stated, Pakistani diaspora authors often explore the intricate dilemmas they face, including a sense of displacement, lost homeland, fading memories, blurred identities, the impact of globalization, the embrace of cosmopolitanism, and a pervasive feeling of directionlessness. Their refuge lies in the realm of literature, where they seek solace and inspiration to carve out a distinctive place for themselves in a world marked by fragmented

identities and diverse origins. In the realm of Pakistani fiction, the personal and the political are intimately intertwined.

Aamer Hussein stands out among Pakistani authors writing in English by embracing a distinct approach. He refrains from relying on overused, readily understandable Western concepts. His character is characterized by a balanced combination of liberal values and strong moral principles. Rather than engaging in angry diatribes against the state and religion, his writing is characterized by considerate and courteous commentary. Sourced through the official website of British Council, the widely acclaimed author Aamer Hussein, born in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1955, relocated to London during his teenage years. He has been a fiction writer since the mid-1980s, and his work has been extensively featured in anthologies translated into various languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, and Urdu. Hussein's bibliography includes several collections of short stories: *Mirror to the Sun* (1993), *This Other Salt* (1999), *Turquoise* (2002), *Cactus Town and other stories* (2002), *Insomnia* (2007), *Another Gulmohar Tree* (2009), a novella that was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book), and *The Cloud Messenger* (2011). The rationale for selecting this particular text, *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) is its ability to provide valuable insights into the cosmopolitan diaspora community of Pakistan. It centers around Mehran, a wanderer who, despite spending the majority of his life in London after moving away from his homeland of Karachi when he was a teenager, continues to look for a place he can call his own. His journey includes both physical and emotional as he meets different people and develops deep connections with them.

Given the limited research and reviews available on this specific topic and novel, it appears that there are only a few relevant reviews that discuss the beauty and qualities of the book. This suggests that more research and critical analysis may be needed to explore the themes and aspects of the novel in greater depth. It also highlights the potential for further scholarly work on the novel to uncover its nuances and significance. Several reviews have been posted on the book's paperback, where Nadeem Aslam says, "It's beautiful, and you should read it". Hussein's novel has a lyrical aspect, and the use of love poetry passages inside the narrative resonates with Mehran's spiritual development and literary growth. It is observant and melancholy in an excellent way. As stated by Ingrid O'Faolain, it created a cascade of pleasurable experiences by introducing me to both early 19th-century French literature and poetic spheres that I had never before encountered. André Naffis-Sahely characterizes *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) as a compelling picture of Mehran's love for these two women in the *Times Literary Supplement*, generating alternate sentiments of sorrow and humor. The work offers refinement, cosmopolitanism, and charm while engaging the mind and the senses. The romanticism in the novel is said to be influenced by both classical Persian poetry and the canon of European literature, according to Alison Fell. It is described as a very mature story that addresses the themes of love, change, friendship, and sorrow by the critic.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Cosmopolitanism as articulated by Kwame Anthony Appiah, proposes that individuals have the capacity to transcend narrow cultural boundaries and adopt a global perspective that values diversity and interconnectedness. It places emphasis on the notion of shared humanity and advocates for open dialogue, mutual understanding, and acceptance across different cultures. Craig Calhoun highlights the distinction between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, challenging common assumptions. The term is most often applied in the realms of culture and politics and is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where the concept of "home" undergoes a transformation. According to Mitsis, Robbins, and Horta (2017), cosmopolitanism, even in its earlier forms, was inherently pluralistic. In contemporary interpretations, cosmopolitanism is viewed as one of the various modes of thought and sensibility that arise when loyalties and commitments overlap and coexist. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1997), introduces the concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism," which is employed in the analysis of *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) by Aamer Hussein. This concept suggests that individuals can maintain a strong sense of identity and connection to their cultural heritage while also embracing a cosmopolitan worldview. Being cosmopolitan does not necessitate abandoning one's specific traditions and customs but involves engaging with others and recognizing their shared humanity. Appiah also underscores the significance of ethical universalism within the framework of cosmopolitanism.

"The cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" (Kwame Anthony Appiah, 1997). K Anthony Appiah (2006) recognizes and accepts the responsibilities associated with being a citizen, engaging in cultural practices, and participating in the politics of their home communities. This commitment to their cultural heritage plays a role in preserving and passing on local customs and traditions. Nevertheless, their experiences are also influenced and transformed by the places they encounter and inhabit. According to Vertovec and Cohen (2002), true cosmopolitans demonstrate a disposition that is culturally open and inclined toward continuous engagement with other cosmopolitan individuals. They actively seek out these interactions. In contrast, some individuals may only desire a taste of home and exoticism when they travel abroad. Cohen (2022), observes that diasporic groups and nations in exile often adopt survival strategies that incorporate both nationalistic and cosmopolitan elements. This can lead to the development of unique cultures that arise from the blending of two or more parent cultures. It's worth noting that cosmopolitanism has re-emerged as a concept that navigates a middle path between ethnocentric nationalism and pluralistic multiculturalism. For contemporary writers, it can represent a vision of global democracy and world citizenship, or it can offer the potential for transnational frameworks for social movements. At times, it advocates for a post-identity politics that celebrates heterogeneity or hybridity as a means to challenge conventional notions of belonging, identity, and citizenship.

This study delves into the idea of a global citizenship that goes beyond national and cultural boundaries. It underscores the importance of embracing diverse cultures, fostering mutual respect, and acknowledging that individuals can be part of a broader, more interconnected world while still preserving their cultural origins. Hybridity arises from factors like migration, globalization, and cultural interaction. The novel examines how characters' grapple with their blended identities within this established framework. This article investigates and addresses the issues and cultural dynamics present in the book. It observes characters employing various narrative approaches and storytelling techniques to construct their identities.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

*The Cloud Messenger* (2011) by Aamer Hussein is a novel that intricately explores the themes of hybridity, identity, culture, belonging, and dynamics of human relationships. The narrative unfolds across various settings, including London, Karachi, Italy, Spain and India, as it follows the journey of Mehran, a young Pakistani man on a quest for self-discovery and personal growth. Mehran, a poet and translator, grapples with the convoluted interplay of different cultures and worlds. Being a part of the second generation of the Pakistani diaspora living in London, he confronts the profound questions surrounding identity, culture and a pervasive sense of displacement. The novel masterfully weaves together multiple narrative threads, entwining Mehran's personal odyssey with tales drawn from ancient Indian and Persian mythology. As Mehran delves deeper into the recesses of his ancestral heritage and unravels the concealed layers of his family's history, the novel delves into the themes of cultural hybridity and the potent influence of storytelling. Through its lyrical prose and vivid imagery, *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) probes into profound themes such as love, loss, and the ceaseless pursuit of meaning. The narrative adeptly captures the tensions and complexities that characterize multicultural existence. Moreover, it underscores the profound impact of language and literature in shaping our perception of the world.

The narrative of *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) commences with a poignant family gathering, wherein Mehran and his parents, accompanied by his two sisters, Sabah and Sara, engage in a reflective conversation, reminiscing about the various places they have called home. Mehran's father, belonging to the initial wave of the diaspora, is a seasoned traveler. His origin traces back to Karachi, but his educational journey led him to England. Over the years, he has traversed multiple geographical landscapes, accumulating a rich tapestry of experiences. Presently, he manages a thriving business, a testament to his adaptability and resilience in the face of change. There is a famous joke about his routine, "Monday was Beirut, and Sunday – the day of rest – was, of course, reserved for London". (p.23). Mehran's mother embodies a unique type of expatriation; she migrated from Indore, India, to Karachi, Pakistan, following her marriage to Mehran's father. Subsequently, she accompanied her husband on his journey to London. Mehran, the central character of the narrative, embarked on a similar path when he

was thirteen, pursuing his education in Europe. His sisters also mirrored this trajectory. Their upbringing was marked by the need to adapt to different languages in accordance with their family's movements and the specific country of residence. Nearly all the characters possess a remarkable ability to transcend national, cultural, linguistic and territorial boundaries, infusing their global versatility with artistic flair. Periodically, they return to their respective places of origin and familial roots, a practice that allows them to rekindle their sense of "rootedness", as "home, is the with the people who love him". (p.122).

Kwame Anthony Appiah (1997) elaborates that rooted cosmopolitans are individuals who maintain a profound and enduring connection to their place of origin and while simultaneously deriving immense pleasure from engaging with diverse cultures, identities, and countries, offered by different locales, languages, and traditions. It's essential to recognize that in contemporary times, the movement of people, whether through migration, seeking refuge, or becoming part of diasporic communities, is no longer viewed solely as a form of forced exile. Instead, it is celebrated as a vibrant expression of multiculturalism and a testament to the resilience of human connections across geographical and cultural boundaries. recognizing the shared humanity and interconnectedness that transcend national boundaries. "everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities". (p. 618). Appiah's approach encourages a nuanced understanding of cosmopolitanism, where obligations towards others and the recognition of diverse cultures coexist, fostering a global sense of shared humanity while respecting individual identities. The cosmopolitanism advocated by Appiah encourages people to accept their regional and global affiliations, have respectful conversations, and coexist peacefully. "all they need to be is what these particular people have in common". (p. 97).

Aamer Hussein presents the tale of Mehran, who narrates in both the first and third person, contributing to the novel's dreamy ambiance. It's as if the character is reminiscing about his life experiences in the various places he has lived. The title of the novel draws inspiration from a legend in which clouds serve as messengers of love, carrying messages between distant lovers around the world. The narrator imagines himself as the lover who send messages to his lover in distant land, later on he wanted to be a cloud himself. Mehran's early exposure to translations of Indian classics "The Ramayana and Kalidasa's plays and poems, 'Shakuntala' and 'Meghaduta' (the story of the cloud messenger)" occurred when he was just nine years old. (p. 35). Mehran's mother used to sing and interpret the verses of Meghaduta when he was a child. "Abr o baran o man o yar satadah ba vida, Man juda girya konam abr juda yar juda". (p. 26). She herself feel the lyrics and meanings of the specific poem because of her nostalgia for her parents 'home'. Hussein has remarkably translated some of the experts narrating, "The cloud and the rain and my friend and I about to say goodbye, I weep apart, my friend apart, the cloud apart". (p. 25). The novel includes several poetic excerpts and references from this titled poem, as mentioned in the exposition of the book, "I am a passionate lover, eager to reach my beloved". (p. 18). Hussein's narrative in no way perfectly aligns with Kalidasa's poem, it diverges significantly. The rhythmic, dreamlike quality often found in Persian and Urdu literature, particularly poetry, is interwoven into the novel's narrative framework, resulting in a notably more surreal overall tone. The precise poem qualifies the yearning of exiled which rightly resonates with the emotions and feelings of diasporas, no matter wherever they go there is a longing and nostalgia for the land and people behind.

Hussein's portrayal of Mehran's early childhood is remarkably precise, almost like a vivid photograph. It was uncommon for their mother to travel outside of Karachi without her kids. "she took to places they could share with her: unlike London" (Hussein, 2011). Because of this, Mehran and his sisters had a variety of experiences in many cities and nations. The best of Mehran's early childhood memories are from his mother's birthplace Indore, "In Indore, life's pace was tranquil, and for a city child, restorative". (p. 34). It was rightly than he developed his keen interest and taste in Urdu and Persian classic literature, but he realized it later in his late thirties. Visit to Indore captures the extraordinary, in his grandparents' house, such as "In her teens, Mehran's mother shot a crocodile; and her older sister bagged a tiger", juxtaposed with the everyday experiences of children longing for rain. (p. 32). This blending of the magical and the mundane is a central element of the book. Hussein is a master at capturing significant moments, and while the narrative may progress slowly, it meticulously describes day-to-day events. The novel provides further insights into the lives of individuals who have resided in multiple nations and culturally diverse locations for various reasons. The novel possesses a

distinct surrealistic quality, characterized by a rhythmic and dreamlike essence reminiscent of Persian and Urdu literature, especially poetry. This quality is interwoven into the novel's narrative structure, highlighting the deep-rooted connections to indigenous cultural ties.

Hussein's exploration of cultural belonging is in harmony with the core principles of cosmopolitanism. It challenges rigid and fixed concepts of identity and instead celebrates the rich tapestry of diversity. The novel achieves this by portraying characters who skillfully navigate the complexities of transnational identities. Throughout the narrative, the characters engage in relationships and friendships that extend beyond traditional boundaries. "He and his sisters were scattered; Sara and he went to India, ... Sabah followed their father in England; Their mother stayed behind, alone". (p. 40). Mehran grapples with a sense of estrangement while living in London and other locations, even though his cultural affiliations are of a mixed nature. This is reflected in his lifestyle choices, such as going clubbing and drinking, which may appear contradictory to his Muslim heritage, where such activities are typically prohibited. While back than in his childhood, "there was, in Mehran's mind at least, a connection between the sky and the seasons and God, who remained an exterior and primordial being". (p. 42). The novel underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of identity in a cosmopolitan context, where individuals have the freedom to shape their own identities and engage with diverse cultural influences while maintaining a deep-rooted connection to their heritage. "From time to time he is possessed with a longing for something he's never known; though he might call it nostalgia or homesickness". (p. 146). The protagonist, Mehran, forms profound connections with individuals hailing from various national and cultural backgrounds throughout the narrative. Notable among these are Marco, Ricarda and Marvi.

Mehran's relationships play a pivotal role in fostering his deep appreciation and respect for diversity and contribute to the overarching theme of challenging ethnocentrism from the perspective of cosmopolitanism. It highlights how diasporas, like Mehran, can engage with people from different parts of the world, sharing experiences and insights, and ultimately, growing as cosmopolitans who respect the interconnectedness of humanity and celebrate the beauty of diversity. "I had acquaintances with whom I'd drink coffee, and other warmer friends to dine at home with once in a while". (p. 70). Mehran and Marco strike up a mutually beneficial friendship based on an exchange of Italian and Urdu lessons in London university. Marco "travelled all over Asia in his teens", while working in South India and Thailand. (p. 49). This language exchange ultimately blossoms into one of the most profound and enduring friendships in their lives. Ricarda, who identifies herself as half Italian and half Roman, forms a connection with Mehran while attending a Persian grammar class. Their shared interest in this linguistic pursuit becomes the foundation for their relationship, during the time "when Europeans were drawn to oriental studies, and London was the center for eastern languages". (p. 52). She has extensive experience in the Middle East and Africa, and when her husband was transferred to Kuwait and her son began attending a boarding school in Switzerland, she relocated to London.

Mehran crossed paths with Marvi when she made the move from Karachi to London to pursue her Ph.D. in economics. Each of these four individuals, including Mehran himself, is in search of something that has eluded them in their lives until their paths cross or converge with Mehran's. As per the narrator, Mehran, "I wanted to travel light: too much affection was burdensome, it led to dependency". (p. 71). In the confined space where their lives intersect, their collective pursuit takes on nuances that differ from their individual quests. Mehran delves into the concept of shared humanity as a means of navigating cultural belonging. Later in the story, Mehran's father relocated to England and purchased the apartment where he previously resided with them. The elder sister of Mehran Sabah, married when she was in her mid-20s and moved to Delhi after meeting her husband in Bombay. Sara became engaged to an Englishman while she was a student in Kent. "The children of estranged parents and emigrants have much in common. They learn early to elide most details, and to embroider a significant few". (p. 56).

This portrayal exemplifies the cosmopolitan ideal of transcending narrow national and cultural boundaries, thereby embracing multiple affiliations and transforming into transnationals, a concept akin to K Anthony Appiah (2006) notion of "the cosmopolitans." The interactions among Mehran and the various characters in the novel serve as illustrations of intercultural dialogue. Through these dialogues, the characters have the opportunity to challenge their preconceived notions and broaden their perspectives, aligning with Appiah's

emphasis on dialogue as a means of negotiating cultural belonging. K Anthony Appiah (2006) advocates for a vision of cosmopolitanism that upholds the values of diversity, encourages meaningful dialogue, and nurtures a sense of global responsibility and solidarity. His concept of cosmopolitanism intertwines two essential aspects: the first revolves around our moral obligations to others. "to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kin, or even the more formal ties of shared citizenship". (p. 10). The second aspect of K Anthony Appiah (2006) cosmopolitanism is the appreciation of human life, encompassing the customs and beliefs that give it meaning on our planet. "We need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association". (p. 14). Cosmopolitanism is driven by the aspiration for self-expression and self-actualization. Calhoun (1994) has elucidated that cosmopolitanism extends beyond being a mere individual perspective, political decision, or subjective cultural inclination; it is profoundly interconnected with institutional mechanisms. "Cosmopolitanism signals a direct connection between the individual and the world as a whole". (p. 433). Complex and diverse identities are increasingly common in today's contemporary world. It's important to recognize that, contrary to certain ideologies, historical identities were never entirely uniform or singular in nature.

*The Cloud Messenger* (2011) is rich with intertextual references, although newcomers to Urdu and Persian literature may find them challenging to identify and understand. These references, however, serve to symbolize Mehran's reconnection with his cultural roots and his sense of identity. Mehran's education in Urdu and Persian literature significantly influences the trajectory of his career, as his writings draw inspiration from the literature of the country he left behind when he moved to London during his adolescence. Although for him, "Memory is a bad story teller: it erases all the real twists in a tale". (p. 88). Mehran's acquisition of Persian linguistic knowledge, especially Rumi's poems, Khusrau's verses from his grandmother, and an Urdu translation of Firdausi from his grandfather, showcases his remarkable ability to comprehend and engage with the depths of poetry and fiction in various languages. "Poetry was, after all, what I had come in search of". (p. 68).

He is proficient in Urdu, Persian, English, Spanish, and Italian. This multilingual proficiency reflects a key characteristic of cosmopolitan diasporas in our interconnected world. Chambers (2011) wrote about Pakistani writings, "I think that diaspora, in the rapidly changing world we now inhabit, speaks to diverse groups of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe". (p. 127). The novel underscores the vital role of language and translation in bridging cultural divides. Mehran, who is a translator himself, serves as a conduit between languages and cultures, facilitating comprehension and communication among diverse communities. "Persian had taught me the discipline of grammar and translation, and Urdu the joy of lyricism, I was also acquiring new vocabularies of emotion". (p. 68). For him in connection to his indigenous Pakistani culture, "Urdu poets were artisans, who practiced their crafts like jewelers or potters". (p. 61).

He critically examined many poets through meticulous reading and engaged in discussions about "classical lyrics of Wali and Quli and Sauda and Ghalib," as well as works like *Bagh-o-bahar* and *Umerao Jan Ada* in Mr. Dick's class (p. 61). His exploration encompassed a wide range of literary figures, from Rumi, Mir, and Ghalib to Keats and Tennyson, and from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to Firdousi and Zehr-e-Ishq. He delved into the works of authors like Hawthorne and Plutarch, as well as thinkers like Edward Said, Faiz, and Iqbal. This extensive exploration underscores the potency of literature, poetry, and art in nurturing cosmopolitan perspectives. Through these intellectual exchanges, Hussein highlights the significance of building connections and fostering empathy across cultural borders. "He would have to be a messenger himself, carrying stories from the places of his past, to his present place, and back again from present to past". (p. 139). Furthermore, Hussein imbues the narrative with cosmopolitan values by underscoring the transformative influence of literature and art. Through the characters' immersion in literature, poetry, and storytelling from diverse cultures, Hussein portrays cultural belonging as an evolving process that involves an appreciation of various artistic expressions and narratives.

The novel incorporates references to renowned works of fiction such as *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* and *The Lady of the Lotus*, as well as folk tales recounted by Mehran's grandmother's sister, including *The Prince with the Needles in his Eyes*, *The Patient Princess*, and *Prince Benazir*. Mehran's uncle was a historian, possessed a collection of novels by authors



like Nabokov, Murdoch, and Barth in his bedroom. These references highlight the novel's emphasis on the enriching and cosmopolitan influence of literature and art on individuals' cultural identities and senses of belonging. Marco and Mehran used to enjoy "art exhibitions, restaurants where they could eat traditional Muslim food, *Kathak* dance performances, concerts by renowned Indian classical singers", while their visit to India. (p. 94). This emphasis on the arts as a medium for cultural interaction is consistent with cosmopolitan ideals, which promote dialogue, empathy, and mutual comprehension.

Cosmopolitanism, as a philosophy, champions the notion that every individual shares a fundamental humanity, regardless of their cultural origins. Building upon Calhoun (1994) insights, Hussein scrutinizes the interplay between the aspirations of cosmopolitanism, which involve transcending international and cultural boundaries, and the complex dynamics within multicultural communities where various hybrid/transnational identities intersect and sometimes clash. "Identities are often personal and political projects in which we participate". (p. 28). These research studies underscore the importance of diasporic communities and the valuable cultural contributions they bring, a topic that has garnered growing attention in public discourse and academic realms, particularly within the field of postcolonial studies. The migrations and movements of these diasporic communities have given rise to novel forms of cultural exchange, effectively challenging established notions of national identity and the concept of belonging. As eloquently put, "culture is a dialogue between aspirations and the accumulated traditions" (p. 84). Cohen (2022) finds "in diaspora the potential for showing how historically disenfranchised peoples have developed tactics to challenge their subordinate status". (p. 40). While they establish global networks in terms of economic and intellectual exchange, diaspora communities simultaneously endeavor to construct their own communities and identities, reinforcing their distinctive character. Cosmopolitanism, in this context, upholds the value of diversity in cultures and identities, with diasporas exemplifying their ingenious cultural and national affiliations.

## 5. Conclusion

Appiah's cosmopolitanism underscores the interconnection of identities, cultures and the significance of engaging with diverse perspectives. The linguistic diversity depicted in the novel reflects the multicultural context in which the hybrid/transnational characters exist. The novel delves into universal human experiences and ethical quandaries that transcend regional boundaries. This narrative approach embodies cosmopolitan principles by highlighting the capacity of storytelling to bridge cultural gaps, encourage intercultural understanding and promote comprehension and empathy. *The Cloud Messenger* (2011) by Amer Hussein invites readers to ponder the intersections of hybrid and transnational identities, the significance of heritage and tradition. It stands as a contemplative and exquisitely composed novel, offering a profound exploration of the human experience. Through the portrayal of hybrid/transnational identities, intercultural encounters, shared humanity, and the transformative influence of art, Hussein encourages readers to embrace cosmopolitan viewpoints that celebrate diversity and interconnectedness and 'respect' the 'difference'. The characters in the novel grapple with universal human experiences and dilemmas, highlighting commonalities that transcend cultural and regional differences. By emphasizing shared values and ethical considerations, Hussein suggests that cultural belonging can find its 'roots' in shared humanity.

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