



Article

# Indigenous Culture Fall Apart: The Study of Cultural Glue in Inaam Kachachi's *The Dispersal*

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**Abstract:** Iraqi culture is a rich ingredient for the scope of the study. It is characterised by its multiplicity of people who inhabit the land of Mesopotamia. Meanwhile, the land is under constant occupation throughout history. The culture witnesses modification and fragmentation. Therefore, it is worth studying the Iraqi context under the scope of cultural glue to remedy long-term wounds. Cultural glue is the kind of shared elements, values, practices and beliefs that tie certain groups together. It serves to unite those groups into one nation and establishes a set of collective norms within a specific society. In *Tashari*, it can be noticeable that there's a heavy role of culture and its influence on people's lives. Inaam Kachachi is determined to show the world the real culture of Iraq and how they're deeply connected to it. The study aims to show and clarify the cultural aspects that have been discussed in *Tashari* and the significance behind each one of them. It aims to encounter some interesting quotes from the novel and analyze them according to the author's perspective to show how the author recurs the cultural fragmentations.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Culture, History of Iraq, Migration, War

## 1. Introduction

Inaam Kachachi is one of the best writers in contemporary Iraqi literature. She had to move out of her homeland at an early stage in 1979. She believes that Iraqi people were not meant to leave their land, and they never left in quest for livelihood. They left because of the political situation at the end of the 1970's. Then war broke out and their lives became increasingly miserable. Therefore, Iraqis migrated to any other place that can provide safety for them. *Tashari* delves into the massive destruction of Iraq after war, was shortlisted for The International Prize for Arabic Fiction (2014).

*Tashari*, as in most of Kachachi's works, deals with the Iraqi suffering from war and religious conflicts in the past decades. It is a short novel that has been considered as one of Kachachi's best works ever. The novel explores the daily life of Iraqis during and after the war and colonialism that tried to strip away all their traditional and cultural heritage. Kachachi wants to show that war and colonial oppression have left nothing but a fragile cultural legacy, so she tries to rebuild it with emphasizing its importance and power inside people. She yearned for the palm trees, the Tigris, the Euphrates and everything else related to her homeland.

*Tashari* jumps back and forth between different dimensions. It explores many themes. One of them is the cultural integrity, which can be seen through the past life of Dr. Wardia, the protagonist of *Tashari*. She remembers the details of the cultural aspects in her

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homeland. Her real struggles start from losing her beloved ones because of war, and ending with the struggle of integrating herself with a new country, with strange people and different cultural values. Which is the case of all the people who had to migrate from their homelands. The story also follows the lives of Wardia's children who had to be scattered around the world and separated from their homeland. It also follows the story of Wardia's niece and her son Iskandar who lives in France, and his identity crisis that arises from his interaction with the people around him who come from different cultures. Thus, the novel delves into the reality of Iraq, which the colonial powers and wars try to destroy and demolish its cultural, traditional, and historical foundation. It also counts who were displaced and separated from the place that they spent their childhood in, and who had to face the unknown in living in a place that they do not belong to its traditions or cultures. Therefore, the details of the novel bids for strengthening and recalling the cultural integrity that is essential for the nation prosperity.

Cultural glue refers to the shared beliefs, values, and practices that bind and tie society together and create a sense of unity and harmony among them. It helps to maintain cohesion in a certain community by providing a common foundation for interaction and living side by side. It can be manifested through several aspects, such as language, history, traditions and customs, which are transmitted from generation to another and help shaping individuals identity.

The paper aims to show how culture can be seen as a dominant force for social, historical and civilizational development and progress. It also encounters many aspects of Iraqi culture as a means to emphasize its importance and value for the people who are separated from their land and culture and were dispossessed of their rights to protect and preserve those cultural aspects. Moreover, it aims to show the reason behind targeting the indigenous culture by colonial powers and their quest to erase it.

### **Iraqi History of War, Sanction, and Migration**

The Iraq - US War was a long conflict started from 2003 to 2011. When the US coalition decided to invade Iraq in order to remove Saddam Hussein's government. The fighting continued for years as groups opposed the coalition forces and the new Iraqi government. US troops left in 2011 but returned in 2014 with a new coalition. The war was as the US response to the September 11 attacks. The Congress gave President Bush the whole authority to lead the military force against Iraq, so the war against Iraq began on March 20, 2003, with a bombing campaign, and the latter has been followed by a ground invasion.

Moreover, the invasion and occupation of Iraq sparked sectarian violence, resulting in widespread displacement of Iraqi civilians. The first parliamentary elections in 2005 provided greater representation and autonomy to Iraqi Kurds. By 2007, the Red Crescent estimated that 2.3 million Iraqis were internally displaced, with around 2 million leaving to neighboring countries like Syria and Jordan. Sectarian violence persisted in the first half of 2013, with tragic events including a government-supported helicopter raid during a Sunni protest in Hawija that claimed 56 lives in April. May saw a series of violent incidents, including a wave of car bomb attacks on May 20 that killed at least 95 people, following earlier bombings that caused significant casualties. The situation raised concerns among experts about a potential return to the brutal sectarian conflict of 2006.

Additionally, the disturbing attacks targeted the cultural heritage in Iraq as well, and it has been there for decades. When US military took control of Baghdad in 2003, they caused a lot of damage by stealing and destroying important cultural places like museums and libraries. Many valuable items were taken, and some were sneaked out of Iraq. The Iraqi Museum lost about 15,000 exhibits, and only few have been found. The Iraq National Library and Archive suffered its greatest tragedy when it was not only looted but deliberately destroyed. Some stolen documents were later held for ransom, but the new government refused to negotiate with the blackmailers. Following a visit by American

soldiers, the library and archives were left unguarded, leading to looting by local residents. Fortunately, the staff managed to secure the library by welding the steel door shut, resulting in less damage to the books compared to the archival documents. In total, around 25 percent of the books, including rare volumes, and 60 percent of archival documents, including significant records from the Ottoman and Hashemite periods, as well as all library holdings from the Republican era, were irreparably lost.

Correspondingly, migration rates became very high in Iraq after the 2003 era, due to the disturbing attacks and the cruelty of war. An article named "The effect of War and Migration on Cultural Identity," has suggested that the globalization process has become faster than ever. People's traditions are being lost and reshaped, which in turn had a great impact on their lives and made a huge gap between their own generations. Wars would only bring destruction and death, and fragment families. Due to that, people are forced to migrate to other places, to ensure their safety. Having to move to another country has several elements, like when you have to interact with the people of the country you moved to means that you will end up being a multicultural person. It can be noticed that in so many countries there is some kind of reinforcement of culture on migrants or newcomers.

Moreover, it seems that cultural imperialism has become one of the most powerful tools of colonization. A research entitled "Cultural Imperialism" discusses that colonization is the forced expansion of a specific country among another to control their economic and political power over their land. Colonization has shown effective domination of their cultural imperialism for the fact that they believe in the superiority of their own beliefs and traditions. The whole world is wrong and they are the only ones right. It is as if they knew that the best way to take down the resistance of the people of those lands, is by erasing and demolishing every single cultural value, tradition and belief (Tobin 537).

Thus, one of the most important examples of the forced cultural changes is represented by the Spanish influence on the Latins in America. They also imposed their dominance on the Mesoamerican culture, by preventing Indians from learning and passing their culture to the next generations. Instead, they forced them to read and write in Spanish and even to change their religious beliefs and convert to Christianity. The cultural imperialism wasn't limited to Spanish people. Others tried to use the exact same strategy like the British influence and dominance on India, and the French influence on the Caribbean (537).

Powerful people in authority made their best to strip people from their culture and identities in order to build stronger roots for their culture. One of the things that those countries are trying to erase first is language. Language and culture are related to each other, because language is what brings people back to their real identity and roots. Therefore, people in authority try to take down those elements that remind them of their true selves.

Clearly, everything about culture seems to cover major aspects in society. It provides a sense of belonging and identity to the people. It also provides a shared language, symbols, customs which enhances communication. It also seems to have economic values such as tourism, heritage and cultural industries. Moreover, it creates a kind of social cohesion by gathering groups under shared values and beliefs, so it is fundamental for shaping a healthy and thriving community.

The story of *Tashari* follows Dr. Wardia, a Christian woman who had to work in Al-Diwaniya, Southern Iraq back in the 1950's. Eventually she found herself falling for the kindness and generosity of the people in Al-Diwaniya. She was very much indulged in their everyday life and practices even though they had a totally different religion, lifestyle, and beliefs. Her life turns upside down after the war, because she had to be deprived from her children, her homeland, and move into a new country.

Since *Tashari* deals mostly with a lot of cultural aspects in Iraq and its significance to Iraqi people, considering the idea of bringing back a little background information about culture in general is important for a better understanding. The word culture itself is a powerful tool to describe every little shared practice, belief, history, clothing, norm, religion and tradition among people of a certain society. Those cultural components are what signify those societies and distinguish them from one another, but wars and colonialism play an integral role in depriving those societies from their cultural heritage in order to maintain and preserve their power over them.

### The Body of Existing Studies

The novel with the most extraordinary name, *Tashari* or *The Dispersal* is considered as one of Inaam Kachachis' most notable works in Arabic literature. It has been recognised for its many remarkable literary features such as, its innovative narrative style, vivid descriptions and insightful commentaries. *Tashari* has been shortlisted for The International Prize for Arabic Fiction (2014), because of its outstanding writing, and the deep illustration of some very sensitive topics and social cases. Inaam Kachachi's two best novels *The American Granddaughter* and *Tashari* had gained her a high position among Iraqi writers and raised her name as one of the most creative and inspiring female novelists. In her novels, Kachachi succeeded to convey the harsh reality of Iraq during and after wars. Therefore, her novels are seen to be used as a platform to discuss many popular cases including, women's role back in the fifties, the identity crisis derived from being scattered around the world, and cultural violence.

In her article "Narrating the feminine self-affection in the contemporary Iraqi novel," Wafaa Amer Ramedh AL-Hamdani has commented on the promoted women's role back in the fifties. Unlike what has been propagated about them, women had a great impact on society in the fifties. Apparently, women's role was not only limited to housekeeping. They managed to occupy many fields in society and are considered as a great deal which balances society's need of working hands in many fields. Wardia, the protagonist of *Tashari*, who's been forced by her family to join medical school, had to practice her occupation in another city away from hers. Waffaa argued that all of these details was a clear example of what women had to face back then even when it came to the idea of choosing a field of interest. However, Wardia's inability to choose the field she likes didn't deprive her of her willingness to help and treat others even in the darkest times. She established great friendships with all her patients. Moreover, Wardia represents women's lack of choice making. She fell into an awful dilemma of whether to stick to her brother's strict rules not to join any kind of a group after she's been offered to join one, or to step forward and be a part of a communist party. She eventually had to accept being the headmaster of an organization, by request of some bigger political heads. The feminine struggle is conveyed to Wardia's two daughter's Hinda and Yasmeen, who had to face a miserable destination in being shattered around the world, due to the terrible fate of women in their own homeland.

The diaspora in migrants' identity has been discussed by Mozghan Tawakli in his article under the title "the Identity Crisis in the Novel" from different aspects. Starting with depression and contradiction that follows the diaspora, which in turn is caused by the change of land, culture and society. Such kind of change has a great impact in creating a sense of isolation, despair and loneliness. Wardia had to move on in her life when she moved to France, but the past was not easy to overcome, so she was surrounded by old memories, names, songs and even smells. Another aspect of the diaspora was presented in the new generation of families. Moving to a different country that is with totally different principles, culture and traditions has created a huge gap between generations, because now the new generation will be sculpted by the new land's culture, language and lifestyle. The language itself became a standard of a normal life for migrants. It was another sign of confusion and frustration, because language plays an essential part of a human being's life.

A study by another scholar Dr. Mahmood Kareem Slubi, where he explains the violence that Iraqi people had to face in their everyday life. Violence was present in different ways and images. Wardia was forced to be involved in a feminist organization and to be the headmaster of it, because apparently rejection was never an option. However, things have changed after Saddam's regime. His baath party targeted every little peaceful corner of the Iraqi sects. Wars had stolen lots of her beloved ones. Yasmeen, Dr. Wardia's daughter, had to face a terrible fate by marrying someone she hadn't met before and moved to Dubai, in order to avoid worse consequences. The death party continues for several years which lead Dr. Wardia to move to another country after burying most of the people she cared for.

Dr. Rana Faraman Mohammed Al-Rabi has discussed a new aspect of human nature that was affected by many contemporary factors in her study about the human cyborg. The industrial world has brought new technologies into our lives, which in turn made a huge impact on the life of individuals, and finally helped to sculpt a hyper human being. Such change has reframed humans with different principles, traditions and values. It created a new dawn of humanity that is influenced by technology. In *Tashari*, Dr. Rana believes that Iskandar is a vivid example of a human cyborg. He lived in a technologically advanced country, which shaped him into an isolated and an indoors person. He spends most of his time as any other teenager fronting his computer as if it is his best friend. Human cyborg is a case where humans are separated from any kind of relation with their past memories and history in general. It is all about the current time. Iskandar for example, tried to find any kind of an excuse to avoid Dr. Wardia's continued attempts to teach him Arabic. Iskandar was sheltered with his own technology world.

A research by Hijran Jasim Mahmood madlom, tried to show the image of love that is present in *Tashari*. The image was not an ordinary one. It does not give much attention to the relationship between men and women, but rather it focuses on what's beyond. The author however, didn't hesitate to include a two people's love story, which was shown in Wardia's and Jirjis's love story, but even such kind of love was governed by a strict society, so Wardia and Jirjis kept avoiding each other until he finally asked for her hand from her boss. Another aspect of love was illustrated by Iskandar and his friend Kolthom whom he tries to attract and spend most of his time with. Such kind of love, as Wardia says, can't be kept due to hormones, so it's a kind of young love. There was another kind of love presented in *Tashari*. Two women's lives were saved by Dr. Wardia when she hid the truth of an illegal born child who was the result of a physical love.

Dr. Sarwa Sabah Rajab has written in her research under the title "Self-alienation and the search for identity in *Tashari*," about the significance of the title *Tashari* which clearly is the first step of understanding the dominant theme of the whole story. *Tashari* refers to the shattered Iraqi Christians after the war. They had to be separated from their families and friends in order to find peace. However, peace was never found inside the souls of who were deprived of the right of homeland. There was a constant request for identity. A deep desire to hold on to the memories and old days, for it might be the only answer of keeping your real self. A new place, new streets and new people had altered Wardia's mind. It's not the same anymore. The change in all aspects of her life had alienated her, and left her in despair and false hope in returning back to her original home. Wardia was not only deprived of her homeland, but she also had to face the fact of being deprived of her own family. All of her children are scattered around the world. Even the time difference between her own country and her dispersed children makes her feel alienated and shattered. It was not only Wardia who's alienated, but most of the people mentioned in the story had to face the same destiny, and live with the challenges of living in a land they do not belong to.

Keh yalan Mohammed states the features used in *Tashari* in his article about exile and the fading dream of returning. He starts from the title of the novel and ends with the



virtual gathering. The title of the novel draws the reader's attention and keeps them hoping for a connection between it and the story. *Tashari*, which means the scattered pieces of gun bullets, is actually a reference to the Iraqis or Christian Iraqis, in particular, around the world. The story was narrated by Wardia's niece who will finally break the readers' waiting. She adapted the title *Tashari* as headline for her collection of poems. She has a son who will soon befriend Dr. Wardia as she arrives. They both work on what is called an electronic or virtual cemetery.

From another work by Inaam Kachachi that is called *The American Granddaughter*, Ali Shaker Kazem discussed "The Cultural Pluralism in the Novels of Inaam Kachachi: the Cultural Hybrid as a Model." In the *American Granddaughter*, Zena, the protagonist of the novel is a good example of a hybrid culture person. She migrated from Iraq to America with her own family and became a part of the American community. She has been raised by a muslim babysitter. Zena decided to go on a mission to Iraq as an interpreter with a patriotic spirit. She wanted to support her non original country. She also has mixed feelings towards Iraqis and Iraq in general. She seems willing to indulge in any place and accepts any kind of a new identity. A culture hybrid is someone with mixed up feelings towards his country of origin and his country of residence. Zena, with her American identity, still managed to defend her homeland's beliefs when she was provoked by her fellow soldiers who were giggling about a play performed by Shia. She felt as if she belonged to those people even though she was from a totally different religion.

In an article to Al-Arab Newspaper by Marwan Yassin Al-dwlaymy he describes the different types of women presented in *Tashari*. One can encounter different types of women from different classes. Starting from Wardia, the locally well-known doctor who helped so many people in her entire career. There is also Bestana, Hinda's babysitter, who seems like a very strong lady. Moreover, Al- Elwia Shazra, the woman who had a great power among her fellow ladies in their town. The other kind of women were presented by the patient with an illegal pregnancy, who rebelled upon her tradition and her principles and somehow refused to admit her mistake. There was also the woman who was on a suicidal mission to blow up Wardia's clinic, but she was too scared and didn't want to sacrifice herself, so she ended up failing her mission.

Taking all of the above in consideration, these studies have identified and analyzed some crucial themes and aspects in *Tashari* in a fascinating way. However, Kachachi highly and strongly emphasises another important aspect concerning the Iraqi culture. The novel beautifully paints a vivid picture of Iraq, highlighting its significant historical landmarks and ancient origins and culture that imbue the country with a sense of resilience and authenticity.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### The Theoretical Basis of Literature and Art as a Cultural Glue

Culture in general is the bond that ties a certain community together. Being a part of a community means that you share the same cultural values and beliefs with them. Iraq was a multicultural and multi-religious country, which was the reason behind creating a kind of a fragmented society. Dr. Jawdat Hassan Khalaf, arguing about the past and current situation of Iraq, said that Iraq had witnessed some ethnic and sectarian divisions, until it actually got through a real crisis. A social, economic, cultural and historical crisis that had a dangerous impact on Iraqi society. However, he claimed that with a creative cultural diversity, people can maintain human freedom and show respect for others and their cultures (Khalaf 202).

He also argued that there were waves of globalization to set the whole world to specific principles and beliefs, and these were forced upon societies and breaking the barriers of their cultures. However, culture sources will remain forever as an acknowledgment of their existence. Especially those countries that have a culture

extension like Iraqi, Egyptian and Chinese cultures. (Khalaf 199). There was a clear conflict among Iraqi people, because the colonial powers and wars tried to reshape and destroy the foundations of their culture, because it creates a kind of power and influence in how people view themselves and their own lives.

Throughout the novel of Inaam Kachachi, one can notice the heavy emphasis on cultural diversity and bonds among Iraqi people who come from multiple cultures, religions and sects. It was Kachachi's way of showing the world how people maintain their relationship with each other despite their differences.

Ferial J. Ghazoul shows some interest in the way Iraqi writers reflect the reality of Iraq in their own works. She discussed that; Artists and writers are the forces that can hold and maintain the great concept and spirit of Iraq. Political regimes come and go but literature remains and is read and re-read. Artistic monuments impact one's view of the world and of one's country (Ghazoul 234). Iraqi writers such as Inaam Kachachi tried to shed light on what people often ignore. The strong foundation of Iraq culture, and despite the diverse society, people found their own way to live in peace together as one nation.

In contemporary Iraq, literature and art have been sidelined and never given as much attention as politics and economics in recent years. However, they continue to hold significance in Iraqi society despite the many difficulties the country has experienced. While media often focuses on sensational stories, literature and the arts offer a deeper and more intricate view of Iraqi culture. They provide a nuanced understanding of the country's complexities and serve as a valuable form of expression that reflects the diverse aspects of Iraqi life (233).

Ghazoul also states that her journal article does not cover all Iraqi arts and literature but gives a peek into how they help in tough times. It looks at how Iraqi thinkers and writers, both in and out of Iraq, work together to keep their cultural glue alive. They face hard truths but also show ways to deal with pain. Writing, performing, and painting show a strong desire to keep going and rise above challenges. These creative efforts acknowledge the problems caused by falling apart but also show a strong will to keep moving forward. In the middle of tough times, today's cultural figures give hope, shining light in the darkness. They don't ignore harsh truths or give in to divisive stories; instead, they offer something deep and inspiring. These amazing cultural contributions should be noticed among the sad scenes of decay and sadness (234).

Additionally, Ghazoul attempted to discuss what Wachtel's popular book *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (1998). Wachtel argues that the story of Yugoslavia can be seen through how its culture held it together or fell apart. He thinks that the country stayed united because of a "cultural glue" that connected people, but when this glue disappeared, the country split up. Wachtel shows how important cultural unity is for a diverse nation like Yugoslavia and how this lesson can be applied to other places facing similar issues (qtd. Ghazoul).

Moreover, Andrew Baruch Wachtel, a Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures argues that the existence of a common culture allows promoters of national ideology to discover the nation's foundations deep in the mysterious past, pre-dating any present political arrangements that may hinder contemporary national unification (Wachtel 31). The Yugoslavian need for empowering their common culture and connecting it to their past is similar to Iraq's needs for empowering their own and sticking to it, in order to prevent any kind of political hindrance of national unification.

Wachtel also claims that in a pre-war period there was a need for unifying Yugoslavia. He says; the Slo-venes were somewhat late to embrace the idea of Yugoslav unity, but by the immediate pre-war period all parties, including the Social Democrats, who were already on record (at Tivoli) as standing for a Yugoslav culture, promoted a program for the cultural and linguistic union of Southern Slavs (Wachtel 61). Standing up

for culture values and enlightening people of its importance is what societies need to thrive and flourish.

It has been discussed by Andrew Baruch, that artists with the emphasis on culture can create an influence that would actually change and reshape the political views of the country. In his book he mentions that; This group, whose members were Yugoslav-inclined South Slavs from the Habsburg lands, dedicated itself to influencing public opinion and convincing policy makers in England of the desirability of a postwar Yugoslav state. One way they did so was through the sponsorship of a major exhibition of Mestrovic's sculpture at London's Victoria and Albert Museum (Wachtel 63).

Writers and artists play an integral part in showing the culture of a country to the rest of the world. They can change the negative associations or stereotyping of those countries, and of the third world countries in particular. In her novel, Inaam Kachachi showed mostly a positive picture about the culture in Iraq and their unity in spite of the harsh reality of people they kept living side by side and holding on to their beliefs, traditions and culture if it wasn't for the war that deprived them from unionizing and shattered them across the world reluctantly.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### The Manifestation of Cultural Glue in Inaam Kachachi's *The Dispersal*

*Tashari* deeply delves into the daily lives of Iraqis before and after war. Kachachi skillfully weaves together various cultural elements in quest of strengthening and enhancing the social and cultural foundation of Iraq. Through rich descriptions of traditional Iraqi customs, language, and history, Kachachi creates a vivid and immersive portrayal of Iraqi society. By incorporating elements such as food, music, and religious practices, she highlights the deep-rooted cultural heritage that binds the people of Iraq together. The culture of Iraq can be interpreted through certain aspects in the novel:

Despite the colonizers' and wars' attempts to destroy Iraq cultural heritage, Inaam Kachachi claims that Iraqis are still deeply attached to their culture and that it is impossible to strip them from their own cultural bonds and history. Besides, war and the influence of colonial powers have created a kind of fragmented society and the fact that Iraq was a multicultural and multireligious country have always given an impression that it was not a pleasant place to live in. However, Kachachi, as in all of her works, wanted to rebuild a strong foundation of Iraqi culture and folklore, because a strong connection to that culture is what nations must crave in order to flourish.

In a book that is called *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, Robert Fisk argues about the reason that makes humans have a tendency to destroy historical artifacts, and erase the memory of past languages through the destruction of graven images. The videotape of the explosions which turned the Bamian Buddhas to dust are images of cultural genocide, of cultural rape, which is exactly the fate which befell Iraq. Some forces are destroying art because they do not want others to possess it. Or they steal history because they wish to possess it so that others cannot take it from them" (xiii). Fisk is questioning the reason behind the tendency to destroy history and culture, so he mentions the destruction of the Bamian Buddha in Afghanistan, and the cultural genocide that took place in Iraq. Cultural destruction is held by their willingness to possess it. It is something that can be seen in cases like stealing historical artifacts. The extract gives a clear indication of the importance of history and heritage as a cultural aspect and any other cultural component. Kachachi in turn, is trying to highlight that idea throughout the actions of her novel.

From the very beginning of the novel one can notice something from what Wardia's niece says, "I remember how frightened I felt, and the nightmares I had years ago, because I was terrified I might lose it. Any one of us would rather lose our fortune than absent-



mindedly lose that little booklet which was full of mistakes" (*Tashari* 21). She unfolds how strongly people can be affected by their culture and how deeply they are connected to their land, by showing how much Wardia and her niece are afraid of losing their passport as if that piece of paper is the end of the rope that they hold on to in order to keep them connected to their past and history, which in turn saves their true identity, and that not even the safety of the land they traveled to would strip them away from their own history and culture. Kachachi casts light on the deep-rooted connection of Iraqis to their homeland, glorifying and celebrating their love for their homeland is a huge cultural cornerstone for Iraqis. Highlighting that, is Kachachi's way of enlightening the world of the profound connection that binds Iraqis to their rich heritage, culture and history.

It can also be noticed that Iskandar's father was described as someone who's fully attached to his history. When the narrator states that, "He (Iskandar) didn't like history and felt afraid of it because his father often quoted from history. He would get excited, hit the table, and shout until his arteries swelled and his heart ailed him" (41). Kachachi wanted to illustrate that the fathers' undoubtedly glueyness to his history despite the years he spent being alienated from his homeland and people, is a part of their culture, because people tend to be very close and affected by their own history. History and culture is what creates and shapes people's personalities and helps individuals understand their roots. Besides, it is the thing that makes them value themselves and feel proud with a sense of belonging. History also plays a vital role in maintaining Iraqis cultural continuity, through the transmission of knowledge, stories and traditions.

Jean-Louis Hout stated, "every region and every nation knows or recognises its heritage. Every community seeks to keep its history alive, to maintain or rediscover their roots: the guarantor of the community's future" (19). Enlightening the world with the necessity of protecting and keeping the heritage, which is part of culture. In this extract by Hout, he focuses on the importance of heritage and history in shaping the identity and future of nations. He claims that people can hold a sense of connection to their roots and keep the continuity of their culture and traditions. By acknowledging and glorifying their history, it can be seen as a guide for our future, helping communities overcome challenges and make informed decisions that are together with their values and traditions. Kachachi shows great concerns about how serious people should be in protecting and maintaining their regions and heritage, especially with the great influence it has on their lives. She illuminates how valuable and how much it means for Iraqis to have something that relates them to their land.

In *Tashari*, Kachachi refers to Al-Mosul city. Since it was considered as an Ottoman territory before World War I, the situation has changed after the war, because the English and French people drew the borders and decided to relocate Mosul as part of Iraq's map. The narrator says, "when the allies won the war, the town swung between the whims of superpowers. English and French sat down to draw up maps of the region. They drew up borders and determined the fate of Mosul" (60). Kachachi is pointing out such incident to emphasize the vital role of land and its significance to the native inhabitants who lived there for generations, establishing and building their own traditions and culture on the basis of the land. The reference to the reassignment of Mosul as part of Iraq's map shows the impact of colonial powers even on the regions and boundaries of the country. The drawing of borders and structures of the land of Mosul has altered the inhabitants who were subject to a whole new system. This kind of manipulation of borders and regions may create a kind of fragmentation and loss of their cultural identity that emerges from this region.

At the same time, it seems that George Roux, a French author of popular history and ancient city books states in a book entitled *Ancient Iraq*, "the region forms a large, coherent, well-defined, geographical, historical and cultural unit" (Roux xvii). It is what Inaam Kachachi tries to show in *Tashari* when she gives credit to ancient Iraqi cities and regions,

and shows a strong connection between these lands and its people. The powerful bond to the land culture is precisely illustrated by Sulayman, Wardia's older brother who neglected the idea of adopting the colonizers language or what's left of it, and he demonstrated a deep and strong affection and connection to the Arabic language, "his relatives in the nearby villages spoke the Syriac language, and his friends used a lot of Turkish words now and then, but he preferred pure Arabic" (60).

Kachachi also focuses on an ancient Iraqi city known as Ur, currently known as Al-Nassiriya. When the narrator says, "the historical name of the town was Ur of the Chaldeans, the sacred town of Nana, the Goddess of the Moon. It is an oval shaped town near the mouth of Euphrates. Then, the name faded and mummified, becoming ashes of the past" (31). The focus on an old, historical city reveals that the past, its culture and history is a part of who people are, and she stresses the importance of striving not to erase such cultural, civilizational, and historical monument.

The perception of honour in the eyes of others regulates much of Iraqi behaviour. The honour culture is based on the idea that people should protect their personal and family honour at all costs. It requires individuals to give a public impression of dignity and integrity by stressing their family's achievements and positive qualities. One's personal integrity and dignity is still seen as an important virtue throughout Iraq. People tend to take great pride in helping others. It seems that the concept of honour has a great significance in building Iraqis behaviour and interaction with others. The idea of honour is celebrated as if it is part of their social fabric. It means that every person is supposed in a way or another to show dignity, respect and integrity. One way to to maintain this honour and enhance one's reputation within Iraqi society is by emphasising the family honour and virtues. The personal qualities of honour and dignity are highly appreciated and valued in Iraqi society, because people take pride in helping those in need and to support their community.

Correspondingly, hospitality and many other community values are shown as an essential element of Iraqi culture. It is what Iraqis are mostly famous for. Kachachi draws many images of their hospitality and sense of honour. Therefore, Dr. Wardia, the protagonist who was required to complete her first service period in Al-Diwaniyah, was completely fond of the people's nature there, "the family of the baby would send a car to pick up Dr. Wardia and her daughter Yassmeen and bring them from Baghdad to Diwaniya. There they would be welcomed with iced cold water Pepsi, and baklava. Welcomed as warm as royalty" (*Tashari* 18). That can show the very generous and gracious nature of the Iraq community, and that not even wars can dispossess them of their open-handedness, and that they support each other whether through financial assistance, emotional support or just being there for each other. Kachachi exemplifies the importance of gathering and sharing in Iraqi society. The idea of having a shared meal is very much desirable and an essential part of their culture. Kachachi wanted such details to serve as a reminder of the connectedness of Iraq society, and how much they value each other.

Another aspect of the kindness and value of community is shown in Al-Diwaniya, such as the following extract, "She was bound to be trusted and respected, even though she was the first woman to walk the streets without the aba'a on her head... salesman stood up out of respect for her, boys and coachmen yielded passage to her..." (73). The most significant feature of people in Iraq, or what they're known for is their chivalrous behaviour towards others, particularly women. Dr. Wardia experiences a sense of admiration and respect in every footstep she takes. Kachachi draws such an image in order to convey her message to the world about the Iraqis' erased, beautiful cultural values.

Thus, the chivalrous attitude was still present in Iraqi culture and blood. When the narrator introduces the story of Jirjis, Dr. Wardia's husband, saying, "He had taken part in the first Palestine war as soon as he completed his study of medicine. He put on an army uniform and went enthusiastically to oust the Zionists ..." (104). The urge to help others,

chivalry and heroism were and still are an integral part of Iraqi culture. Kachachi claims through those quotes that the urge of helping others and putting oneself in danger is because Iraqi culture places great importance on standing up against the occupier and defending the land that is occupied. The sense of duty and standing against the oppressor is integrated in the collective consciousness of Iraqi people. Many Iraqi individuals like Jirjis put themselves in harm to defend their land and rights. Kachachi did not only focus on the spirit of resistance and defiance as a part of Iraqi culture, but she also wanted to highlight Iraqis attachment and support to The Palestinian Case as a part of their history and culture. The story of Jirjis serves as an example and inspiration of the values of patriotism, selflessness and chivalry.

An article that discusses the reality of Iraqi culture "Hospitality & Sharing in Iraq", states that the unsurpassable hospitality of Iraq was born out of the days when Arab Bedouins depend on each other's generosity during travels through the harsh desert. Even today extending hospitality is understood to bring honour to one's family and it is considered a privilege to host others (Svetlik). It seems that the concept of hospitality in Iraq culture is not a shallow one. It goes beyond providing shelter and food; it has a sense of warmth and genuine care for guests. Things like that would maintain the sense of unity and belonging among society members. Accordingly, Kachachi praises the generosity and hospitality of Iraqis. She illustrates how warmly they welcome their guests no matter where they come from or who they are. When the pope declares that he's visiting Al - Nasseryia, the narrator states "They would not have been late to receive him warmly, and with due hospitality, even though the country was under sanctions and the people were suffering from austerity. They would have surrendered him with the walls of the shrines of their holy men, and with their good prayers..." (32). Kachachi reminds us of another good aspect of Iraqi culture, that despite being under horrible circumstances, they still managed to keep their kindness and generosity. Taking good care of guests and making sure to serve them with the best the one can is something unquestionable in Iraqi culture.

The first word you encounter while reading the novel is *Tashari*, a name that has a beautiful ring. A person might immediately start questioning the meaning of it, or the reason behind choosing such word as a title for the novel. The answer is simply told by Wardia's niece when she was asked what does *Tashari* mean by her own son Iskanadar, and then she answered with, "it's my family who are dispersed all over the world like scattered bullets — *Tashari* — dispersed without a leader to hold them" (*Tashari* 87). The sense of sadness can be seen through those lines, because family was something huge in the eyes of Iraqi people. Living in one house, on the same land, and with strong, tight relationships was not only a part of their culture, it was part of their souls. Iskandar noticed that even though this was a long time ago and that his mother is living in a totally different country now, she is still missing something deep down inside of her.

In a book under the title "*Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals*." It unfolds that at the beginning of the twentieth century, reformers saw in thanksgiving the means to enlist recent immigrants in the national enterprise. Their attempts to Americanize the newcomers were both a gesture of welcome and an exercise of cultural power.. (H. Pleck 27). Therefore, one can conclude from what Kachachi has included in her novel that being an immigrant in a foreign country means that you are to be rerooted to integrate into their culture and be part of it. For instance, Iskandar, who grew up in a foreign country, is finding it so difficult to cope with two different cultural poles. His parents who are still very attached to their cultural habits and his foreign friends who have totally different lifestyles. When he asked his father why they wouldn't go on a holiday like his foreign friends, his father responded aggressively by saying; You live in Paris and you still want to travel!.. That if he had been in Baghdad he would have been conscripted into the army, and he would have had his long curly hair cut, and his silver earrings taken off (40). The extract can show the conservative and strict values nature of

Iraqi families. The fact that they resent how their child is being shaped according to the culture of the new country.

Additionally, Kachachi focuses on the way wars have shattered the family's union and how much they are suffering for being unable to gather with those who they love. Family bond is something sacred in Iraqi culture. However, war played a major role in dispersing them away from each other. Hinda, Dr. Wardia's first daughter who lives in Canada, keeps sending letters to her beloved mother every once in a while. She resents the idea of being forced to leave and be apart from her own mother. "Canada is a beautiful and safe country, but it is cold and far away, too far away from you. How helpful can it be to see loved ones without touching, hugging, kissing, or smelling them?" (50). The extract expressed by Hinda highlights the importance of physical closeness of family in Iraqi culture, where hugging, kissing, or even smelling your loved ones has a significant value. The portrayal of the impact of war by Inaam Kachachi underlines the conflict that displacement cause for those who were forced to be apart from their beloved ones.

Kachachi sheds light on another crucial cultural aspect, which is language. Language plays an integral part in people's lives, because it is what makes a community unique and special in its own way. Moreover, language means heritage which is something that is rooted within them. Therefore, Kachachi rejects the colonial attempts of erasing this heritage and rooting another. In the following extract, "Sulyman adored Arabic from when he was young. He believed that being good at it asserted his belonging (although he was Syriac) to the national identity of a state that was established when he was less than ten" (59). It can be noticed that Sulyman represents a perfect example of a person's need for belonging and sticking to his culture and heritage.

Similarly, it is clear that Kachachi wants to show that the connection that relates them to their language is particularly rooted in a way that it cannot be erased or taken away. When Hinda sent a letter to her mother saying, "you might say that alienation taught me to write in this way and improved my composition. Do you remember how keen you were that my score in Arabic should not be less than in Sciences and English? You boasted to Uncle Sulyman about me being so excellent in Arabic grammar" (51). The heavy influence of Arabic language on Hinda can be seen as it is part of her culture, and that she didn't just keep her language, but she even improved it. Sticking to your own language is a part of Iraqi culture, and it is very unpleasant and undesirable for anyone to adapt to any other language. It is Kachachi's way of illuminating that the upholding of language can maintain your true self and identity and save our roots and culture from being lost and forgotten.

On another hand, Kachachi paid a great deal of attention to the smallest details of Iraqi culture. She highlighted each cultural aspect precisely, due to the importance of those cultural details in creating a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in national identity. In the extract, "the female students got up on the trucks dressed in bright Arab, Kurdish and Assyrian costumes, as a demonstration of national brotherhood" (103), the picture that Kachachi is trying to portray is that people try to show their national brotherhood and the deep-rooted patriotism even in the tiniest cultural details, like the way they dress their costumes on special occasions to celebrate their national unity.

Dr. Wardia, who spent most of her life in Iraq. However, she was still determined not to leave, even under the worst conditions, but eventually she had to leave, because the place that made her feel most familiar and welcomed is now nothing but a strange, empty road that is foul-smelling with death. It seems that having glimpses of her past in every situation and every little accident had left her in a kind of crisis. It is the way her soul and brain are still attached to her culture and everything that reminds her of her past. Kachachi navigated a good picture of the ugliness of war and the ones who caused the war. She tried to take advantage of her role as an author to strengthen the cultural roots, to promote the

reality of what Iraqis have been through and to rebuild a connection between people and their culture that is being eliminated and erased by outsiders.

The same crisis goes on with Wardia's niece, who kept writing poetry in her native language. Additionally, Hinda, who had to work in the countryside of Canada, found herself deeply sympathizing with the local native people, or the red Indians, because something about them made her feel familiar, and it might have been the way they are attached to their own traditions and culture, despite everything they went through. Kachachi explicitly describes how those marginalized people are still holding on to their cultural traditions, as if she was trying to show a common ground between them and Iraqi people. Moreover, Iskandar's virtual cemetery that gathers the people who passed away in their family in one place after being shattered, is neglected by the same people who were astonished by it, because there was still that part in their hearts that rejects having a virtual cemetery, as if such thing would insult their cultural beliefs of how dead people should be treated. Kachachi wants to clarify that culture is deeply rooted within them, leading them back to their origins and true essence, and is so powerful that nothing can completely erase it. It is constantly targeted, which is why at the end of the novel, the genius idea of the electronic or virtual cemetery that is introduced to illustrate how their cultural traditions are being erased under the guise of it, is being neglected and abandoned, because it was pulling them away from everything they believe.

The whole story indicates that culture in general; is the shared elements people have with a certain community. History, religion, what they wear, what language they use, what they believe in, what are the values that they appreciate, and many other collective elements. Since those cultural elements are seen as a great force and a strong foundation of nations, it's targeted by colonial powers and wars. A strong cultural background country is seen as a threat to the occupiers. Therefore, it is the first thing to be taken down by them in order to demolish the foundation of the country. It discusses a great deal of the cultural elements of Iraq. It is the author's way of fostering a deeper connection to the culture and celebrating its importance to enhance nation's prosperity, to show the world a real image of the reality of Iraqi culture, and to reshape the ugly picture that the colonial powers tried to convey to the world and convince it of such a horrible, false image about Iraqi culture.

#### 4. Conclusion

Authors and artists have great impact on shaping the way communities think, and what they believe in. Throughout her novel, Inaam Kachachi shows great passion and sincerity towards her own culture and history that is rooted inside her. Therefore, it can be noticed that Kachachi drew a semi-biographical characters that share the same characteristics of her. Dr. Wardia remained internally attached to everything related to her culture, even though she tried to integrate with her new environment, her past was still present in her mind. It seems that Kachachi builds an interpretation that no one has the power of uprooting what has been rooted within people's minds and hearts, but rather people are forced to reconcile with their destiny. Kachachi's cultural glue is meant to be the signal that brings us back into our real self and identity. It is targeted by colonial powers and wars, because it is the thing makes a nation unified and powerful. Thus, she brings back a lot of details about Iraq's past, the way they used to live, and the things they believed in before war kicked in, and tried to destroy the great bond that gathers those people in one place. By illuminating those cultural aspects, authors can increase people's awareness of its importance and significance for the prosperity of the nation.



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