



**VISUALIZING THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM IN ENGLISH
LITERATURE OF PAKISTAN THROUGH
POST COLONIALISM**

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Abstract

The idea of colonial discourse was founded on the opposite scenario of we against other where the other was put as the fixed and generalized picture of the other being the colonized. The methodology of postcolonialism was a manifestation of a fresh appearance that set out to demonstrate how culture was politically significant in the construction and representation of the aforementioned imperialist ideology and acted against the sustainability of the same. Through this, culture literature has not only been considered as aesthetic art, but also one of the most effective means of expressing socio-political ideology. Nevertheless, multiculturalism proposes more liberal strategy, without mutual reproach, and is supported by the awareness of cultural diversity. Only in this way, violence because of the indignation of the differences in culture can be stopped due to the political ambitions. Pakistani English Literature presents an example of a multicultural environment that not only hints at the potential of coexisting and living together despite our diversity but also acquiring hybrid identity, which provides us with a distinct opportunity to live beyond boundaries and shaping our personality that can reflect multiplicity in our cultural background.

Keywords: Culture, Literature, Multiculturalism, Postcolonialism, us, we,

1. Introduction

As a form of social philosophy, multiculturalism has manifested itself due to the necessity of resolving conflict in systems of cultural values. As a cultural form, literature possesses some distinctive characteristic to be viewed in a variety of perspectives and develop a feeling of living through the existence of various life situations and not being directly engaged in the debating matter. Multiculturalism has been reflected in the ideological level, in thematic base and in stylistic elements of literary composition. This paper seeks to elaborate on this view in the light of Pakistani English Literature.

This aspect of an experience of immigration that embraces not only a geographical displacement but a displacement of culture, history and ideas, a displacement of concepts, and brings great psychological crises and profound internal moral conflict is directly connected with the main theme in Pakistani English Literature. It is an experience of pain that is brilliantly captured in the efforts of Nadim Aslam, Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie. They address the ethical dilemma based on the confusion between nativity and alienation which not only exists in society but also within their homes between generation. Meanwhile, they embody the prospect of being a cultural hybrid, whose thought transcends any migration notion.

In the course of the history of modern Pakistani English literature, the novel taken on a kind of role as a dominant form that is persistently forming. Such elevation has no minor theoretical rationality: a specification by Georg Lukac: the novel is the exemplifying art-form of our time” (Lukac 1971: 93) is indicative of just how well defined the structures of the novel are to the sociocultural context of modernity. Specifically, Lukacs puts the power of the novel to express a collective sense of transcendental homelessness (93) at the forefront. Transnational,



Diasporic and postcolonial studies scholars would endorse that it is exactly the experience of loss and spatial displacement, situated in the processes of immigration and displacement, that marks the global condition in present times. Therefore, several Pakistani English novelists explore these issues in a specific manner, but they articulate them through techniques of narrative that pose them as being able to be understood by everyone.

Importantly, such transnational transferability is possible due to the flexibility of building the structure of the novel. Being a heteroglot and symbolic genre, it works with the application of the intertextual network and symbolic connotation of time and space. This intertextuality is represented at the structural level through its chronotope which is the combination of time and space. With references to the works of Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie, e.g., narrative strategies are deployed as the way to unsettle the time and space signifiers, contributing to the erasure of a localised chronotope in favour of the one universally recognisable. The conflict between the described milieu and interior worlds that the characters inhabit bring into existence the psychological and emotional dilemmas that continue to cause identity crises. The outcome is that he produces a dialogic chronotope with the author taking occupation both outside diegesis and at the same time being engaged in it.

2. Review of Literature

Social construction of the human life has always been mediated through historical transformations and even political ideology. Under such circumstances, a body of literature that is completely free of political ambition i.e. innocent cannot be imagined.

The Politics of Recognition by Charles Taylor begins with the assertion that our identity partly depends on recognition or non-recognition and often recognition in false images of ourselves imposed by others and thus a person or group of people can be significantly damaged or distorted by a perception of themselves not as it truly is. (1) The development of colonial ideology in literature of the same can be seen to effectuate this aspect of representation as a medium of control and repression. In such a scenario, literature functions as a mirror back to the community so that the ideological policy can be validated. The construction of the new stereotypical images in the literary texts of the colonial era enabled to put the social groups into the backward position of the subjugated opposite half of the dualism formulated as we versus they. Practically, the black body was used as the symbol of ugliness, evil, the subject on the east became irrational, deprived, childish, and Islam was having a relationship with terrorism. Nowadays, English serves as an international lingua franca, and the literature in English language should not be restricted to literature created by native speakers. The current academic practice highlights a significant body of work created by authors who question the very concept of the, so-called, standard Englishness, thus creating a so-called cultural topography where the positions and sentiments are impressed (Said 1983: 3952; Bux et al, 2019; Gopang et al; 2015). However, a deep understanding of one of the works in this area assumes not only linguistic training, but also an informed perception of the sociocultural environment in which the given text is created. Such continued cultural specificity bears witness to the inability to separate identity and its context of formation even when that context is presented in terms of a so-called universal language. Since literature is, by the way, an art of interlocution, it has a very special role in helping to establish communication across the cultures. This transformation manifests itself in the description of the “heart of darkness” by Conrad and by Achebe and in the comparison of the historical context of the partition of India in novel by Khushwant Singh and in by Bapsi Sidhwa.



Nevertheless, such writings are often interpreted by the critical discourse as being no more than a refutation of western universalism and of the discourse of colonialism which it presupposes. An example provided by Hellen Tiffin is that authors like Jean Rhys, Samuel Selvon and J. M. Coetzee write against their precedent canonical texts, Rhys already responds to Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Selvon writes back to Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*, within the same colonial ideology (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989: 98). Although these analyses obviously enlighten about the resistant strategies that these pieces apply, they favorably threaten to render the texts monolithic commentaries instead of acknowledging the multiplicity of the cultural discourses that they also question. Interpretation based on the concept of literary production as a locus of the binary opposition of we against them is, we opine, reductive. Instead, multicultural standpoints indicate that these writings are transgressions of different opinions of the same historical incidents that inspire a dialogue of artistic forms amongst cultural settings inspired by political ideologies of the time. Literature must therefore not be seen as a clash zone but an avenue that can assert pluralistic perspectives on a shared experience in history. In this context, the works that used to be deployed by imperial systems to broadcast rather fixed racialized images, stereotypes in particular, find their most desirable potential in promoting liberal, democratic milieu in multicultural communities. Pakistani English literature is an example of this ability because it promotes creative ideologies based on multiculturalism ideals.

3. Pakistani English writing in a multi-ethnic environment

The texts that have been created by authors living in the geographical boundaries of Pakistan, and by the Pakistani diaspora writers, all of them are crossing ethno-linguistic, historical, religious, and geographical boundaries. Fellow companions, it is clear that the identity dilemma is one of the most pertinent sociopolitical problems that are facing the current society. Historically, the concept of belonging had taken on a specific importance to Pakistan as the notion has been a part of the foundational narrative of the country for a long time. Cara N. Cilano notes in her work, that the Pakistani experience revolves around the triad concept, nation, and state. The borders are permeable and at other times, they literally fail” (Cilano 2). This observation is anchored by the well-regarded theory of the two nations where an individual Muslim state was envisaged in the subcontinent. In the process of its expression, the Muslim community moved both on a continuum of communal sense of belonging to a collective national identity and eventually to the constitutionalization of the national sovereign state that has a defined political national identity.

Nationhood is a concept that is based on an idea and as we have pointed out nationhood, in the view of the Pakistani nationhood, this same idea was driven in the course of seeking an independent nation. The literature has played a central role in this struggle as a cultural process. Asma Mansoor reminds us that prior to the firm establishment of the British rule in India, the Muslims were the masters of the sub-continent, and although after colonization, they were inevitably perceived as a suspicious and undesirable group. She continues with the claim that to divert this scepticism and mistrust evident in the hearts and minds of the British, this scepticism and mistrust which had to be diluted, they had to change and alter styles of writing so as to create a niche in the newly established system (Mansoor 15). Munezza Shamsie also states the definition that, the idea of Pakistani identity is transgeographical and was originated as a discourse in line of Muslim demand of political rights over an undivided India (Shamsie xv). Thus, it can be said that an urge to self-assertion by the Muslims gave birth to Pakistani English literature as an institution and served as a major scheme through which national



belonging became reflected. But here, we must consider that the Islamic philosophy was not used to encapsulate the literature into bounded mythical thoughts but that it brought broader ideological foundation than that of colonialism, without space and time that were very much enunciated in the works of Muhammad Iqbal. He views Islam as a culture movement and observes how denying the old traditional image of the universe Islam offers a dynamic picture. According to him, it excludes bloodrelationship as ground of human unity since, blood-relationship is earth-rootedness.

Consequently, this notion would create new allegiances without any ritual to sustain them and would enable man to liberate himself to the earth (63). Pakistani English Literature therefore might have been constituted as an enact of self esteem of a national identity that was closely linked to a sense of religious identity but this cannot be used to restrict its theme and form.

The thoughts of Iqbal also bring a fresh understanding of notion against identity saying that this could be many things, and not that it is related by blood or of belonging to this land. This supports the investigation of another issue that has been widely argued when discussing Pakistani identity, particularly the identity problem formulated to direct Pakistani expatriate and diaspora writers- the discourse of national belonging without putting into account that belonging is also comprised of cultural identity that need not be in tandem with the political national identity presented in identity card. According to this perspective the Pakistani English fiction offers a fascinating perspective on such a discussion. To illustrate, the creative work by Zulfikar Ghose should be considered very carefully. It brings out a fact that the critical culture, at least among some quarters is still tribal and ethnographic than the national- cosmopolitan- and does not have enough apparatus to handle more sensitive matters of expatriation and exile (Hashimi 269).

His creative world hence can be understood as a setting where diverse cultural values are intermingled, which makes up a deranged cultural belonging, instead of being revisited as an entity of problematic national belonging. These values are reflected throughout Pakistani English writings, in Ahmad Ali as a hybrid of eastern and western influences, Suhrawardy as his English- Persian-Bengal experience, in Bapsi Sidhwa as study of the most perfect hybrid of the Panjabi-urdugujrati-english dishes and in Mohsin Hamid as an appealing Pakistan-American world view. When Alamgir Hashimi writes, the issue, “The matter should therefore cause one to be probing, not just whether there breathes a Pakistani idiom in English, but also against the bloody minded “Pakistaniness”, what and what and what is, this and that and the other? And perhaps who are best-fit to illustrate these? It is because the person of color considers it as his or her responsibility to protect Latin America (Hashimi 269). He attempts to explain the aspect that we are talking about, what can be considered as a decisive matter of belonging or identify?

According to Frantz Fanon, the land is the most important value that can offer nothing but the bread and, above all, give dignity to colonized people, since as of this moment the land is the most concrete value (Fanon 44). The fact is that, the land can be considered as a primary designation of identity and, that is why Zulfikar Ghose in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, Nadim Aslam in *The Season of the Rainbird* or Moni Mohsin in *The End of Innocence* do so. However, what occurs when there comes the day when one begins to feel he or she is an alien in the land of his birth as we do see in *The Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa? What makes his national identity when he turns into a foreigner in the aftermath of the social political situation? That in itself is the primary cause of the sense of alienation that we see so much in postcolonial literature. Hence, when the loss of land denies an identity pivot we are forced to seek some



other meaning of belongingness. Therefore, in modern Pakistani English literature such as in the characters of the novel of Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie, who as I said are the site that holds the attributes of the identity belonging to a particular land through land of birth, despite belonging to the land they live in, they experience the identity crises brought in by the presumed difference in social classes and cultural values, and manifest the notion that identity is not defined by single factor but is an aggregate of various attributes and continuously developing. It is good that we can say, the fashion, in which we are met by others, determines the development of our sense of belonging. In a philosophical perspective, it is actually, the attitude of the surrounding that provides meaning to geographical location and makes it a term that is a modifier of national belongingness. Specifically, this grandiose or natural pattern of other people worsens the centralized character of Mohsin Hamid novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Chengiz as the internal struggle that occurs due to binary cultural values and constitutes his sensation of being culturally bound. Describing the experience of cultural hybrid, which does not cause any difficulty to the author himself, Mohsin Hamid shows a new attitude to that notion of belonging as a relative one, the only multicultural option to the problem.

This is the kind of belonging that has been through a process of formation as characterized by Frantz Fanon as, “[...] the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense of which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant, I wanted to know why. Nothing happened. I went to pieces. Another self has now reassembled the pieces together again (Fanon 109).

Another very interesting point of view using her character Hiroko, Kamila Shamsie has put forward is that belonging is not a contradiction as it has always been considered. The manner in which we value such a manner, the observation of intricate nature of understanding the local and global belonging without making it antipodes to one another contributes to the characters of the story finding themselves in the world or on the other side, in case of them failing to attain such a manner they are doomed to suffer through fanaticism, extremism and psychological catastrophe. It is looked at with a new perspective by Kamila Shamsie in her novel *Burnt Shadow* character Hiroko Tanaka and this is identity crisis that has befallen Chengiz.

Through this she illustrates that violence brings the same suffering to the human personality, the incidents that seem to be unrelated become intertwined as a result of their impact on personalities of people belonging to other nations and the idea of belonging becomes secondary in the competition to survive. Hiroko demonstrates the relative state of such categories as national belonging and this is what allows her to survive through all the traumas she experiences in her life, the only possible survival method that Chengiz was not able to afford in the novel by Mohsin Hamid.

In this regard, we see how the land ceased to be the determinant of national identity and national belonging or hybridness due to different cultural heritage and influences take the center stage. It can be accepted as the most appropriate response to the identity crises that may be perceived in postcolonial approach. With this in mind we might state that, the era of returning to the past in search of roots or the geographical location viewed as the definitional factor of belongingness is already passed, the process of formation of the belongingness to the certain nation and identity is too complex and therefore the contemporary Pakistani English literature illustrates all of these it displays the attitude of the writers, using the exclusive possibility of the literary technique invites the reader to participate in narrating the process and consider his/her own way of approaching the issue.



The fact that cultural diversity in the society cannot be discussed as a reason of contradictions until they are exploited politically is obviously shown in Pakistani English literature. The multi-ethnic society with its diversity of cultural heritage can experience only the violence because of the impact of some stated intents or given bad political intentions. Ahmad Ali in *Twilight in Delhi*, Bapsi Sidhwa in *Cracking India*, Sorayya Khan in *Noor*, and Nadim Aslam in *Season of the Rainbirds* articulate the same point through realistic style whereas Mohsin Hamid decides to convey such a message through allegory. His novel *Moth Smoke* begins with an entertaining introduction that suggests that the traumas predicted by the sufi saint come true and, when confined to his castle at Agra gazing at the Taj he had restored, an old Shah Jahan is presented by his youngest son with the head of his eldest son as a gift. Or perhaps he disbelieved, now, the recollection of his boys having played once together, out of his hearing and many years before, in Lahore. ...As the future turns to present, the state of the present then turns out to be uncertain (Hamid 5). Such an epilogue is attached to the novel and it states that emperor Aurangzeb dictated a last letter to his favorite daughter. He wrote, were then “reflecting upon my life with sadness. And tell my boys not to fight like we did. I will leave him a part of my lands, that he need not carry on war with his brothers”. But cruel Aurangzeb, not a coward against the elephant in his boyhood, or despot over his empire as a land of one faith, had failed at the work of fathering sons in his likeness. ...Splitting of stronghold/imperial, and a new combination that would split once more, as children separated. (Hamid 246).

The author attempts to capture the interest of the readers with such details as the names of his heroes (Ozi-Aurangzeb and Daru-Dara Shikoh) who were once princes of the Moghol Empire and have become negative to one another and placing the action of his story in Lahore in 1990 as the backdrop to the Moghol history trying to make the readers look at the common past of two nuclear armed nations of the Subcontinent, and by that inviting us to discern the political reasons of ethnic, religious, ideological misunderstanding and conflict. The ways in which such conflicts lead to violence can be easily observed as it is presented in *Ice-Candy Man* created by Bapsi Sidhwa. As one reads the novel he or she not only traverses the multicultural world of the pre-partition and the new Pakistan, but also gets an opportunity of observing how smoothly pluralist society can be transmuted into ethnic war zone because of political games that the world powers mostly dominate. The novel is an account of the trauma where violence has its lively expression. Nonetheless, the decision to make nine years old child Polio as a narrator provides the writer with a chance to soften the tone and the reader does not dwell on such scenes because of the narration of an innocent child who is confused between literal and metaphorical meaning of things many times and on its part helps the reader relate to absurdity of human beings. The reflection of multiculturalism in literature is the result of the agency selection. In this respect the characters created by Bapsi Sidhwa are in her usual tendency to come of the dissimilar cultural background, she herself attempts to clarify the role of women in the multicultural societies who are subjected to the double pressure neither being considered as part and parcel of events rather as objects upon who violence is performed but her status as multicultural writer herself helps her explore this topic on a more neutral and more objective basis.

What a shame that we do not readily study history because it is clear that the violence in 1947 was repeated in 1971 as Sorayya Khan attempts to remind us in her novel *Noor*. Capturing the past, these authors do not attempt to remind who should be blamed in the untold misfortunes that settle on societies in the past we ought to consider them as a wakeup call not to consider each other as emblems that represent the different belief systems instead of seeing each other



as human beings so that we may avoid the chance of being overtaken by anger similar to the one that the previous generation experienced, the other failed to restrain, unleashed and continuously experienced in history. Progress of a society at peace does not move on forgetfulness but remembrance and forgiveness. It is through literature that we get this rare opportunity to review the past. Literature can help to develop ideology through visualizing events and witnessing the outcome to help arrive at a decision regarding the selection of a specific policy to maintain balance in the multicultural society.

Being a multicultural environment, the Pakistani English literature evolves through the Pakistani Diaspora writers who reside outside the geographical boundaries of this country. Speaking about Diaspora literature the prime questions under consideration are associated with the national identity and the distinction between the immigrant and Diaspora literature. Political geographical factor is what shapes up personality and is expressed on official national identity. Our cultural identity which cannot rely on our geographical location belongs to our cultural heritage and may or may not find its reflexes on our official identity. Individuals who immigrated Pakistan to other nations modified their geographical locations, and hence, it modified their national identity, but their cultural identity was not modified; instead, it proceeded to curve in the new situation. The new generation, born in immigration, did not immigrate and therefore received some sort of hybrid identity influenced by the cultural context of the family and the country in which it was born but still was treated as foreigners because of their cultural identity and hence were in a state between the local and the outside world or two different cultural heritages that give them the special privilege of observing both worlds and the worlds with equal intimacy with each other. That is why, they ought to be referred to as Diaspora instead of immigrants. This aspect allows the authors such as Nadeem Aslam, Sorayya Khan, Sehba Sarwar and so on, to observe a point of convergence between the past and nostalgia and present, visual concept of homeland and the land of their birth or the community they belong to. It is through their personality and works that we get to see how personality can grow and be made up of diverse cultural heritage and they first move through inner conflict and identity crisis searching to find a true self, true identity and then go through learning to find a balance and achieve inner peace and finally learn to live comfortably as a multicultural personality.

4. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss Pakistani English Literature in the light of multiculturalism. The recognition of the deference is the premise of basic value system of multiculturalism. This concept is conveyed in Pakistani English Literature by describing two themes-racial/gender equality and immigrants assimilation; in the ideological aspect regarding a peculiarity in becoming a cultural hybrid; in the stylistic components depicted through usage of innovative aspects, symbolism and dialog chronotope. Through this manner, literature is empowered with elements of heteroglot and polyphonic and Pakistani English Literature obtains transgeographical orientation and universal nature.



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