

EXPLORING HYBRIDITY: AN ANALYSIS OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S AN AMERICAN BRAT AND MOHSIN HAMID'S THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST

1. Naseer Ahmad, 2. Dr. Tariq, 3. Saddam Hussain

*M.Phil Scholar, Department of English, University of Malakand

**Lecturer Department of English, University of Malakand

***Lecturer Department of English, University of Malakand

ABSTRACT

The current paper investigates hybridity in two Pakistani narratives The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) by Mohsin Hamid and An American Brat (1993) by Bapsi Sidhwa. The Pakistani diaspora has been depicted as exposed to a mental war with the Western culture. In a multi-cultural society, they left with few choices; they are either required to accept the hegemony of American culture and forget about their indigenous culture, religion and social customs etc, or they are supposed to adopt a medieval space which Bhabha termed as the "third space". Or they should get back to their home land as reactionary subjects. Changez who revolted against the hegemony of Euro-America and turned back to his indigenous rootedness. While, on the other hand, Feroza bowed down in front of American hegemony by deciding to live there and never return to her country. Bhabha's hybridity has been applied as a main theoretical framework for the analysis of text. The protagonists were seem to be assimilating with the American culture but at the end they decided their destiny. The current paper helps the readers to know about the major problems of Pakistani community residing in Euro-America.

1.1 Introduction

The Pakistanis reside all over the world, which makes almost seven million of its population. They are the residents of Europe, America, UK and the Middle East (Shehzad, 2016). When the different communities live together, having different background will ultimately lead to a change in their culture, custom, rituals, social practices, religion and language. According to Bhabha (1994) whenever there is multiculturalism in a society; in result there will be an amalgamation of their cultures. In the process of multiculturalism neither the native culture nor the foreigner culture can purely hold of their culture, language and social practices yet changes occur in these phenomena. The hybrid identity is constructed by the notions of homeliness, un-belonging, dislocation of culture and in-betweenness (Rehman & Awan, 2017). It is observed that in the selected novels the Pakistani diaspora is exposed to numerous problems such as un-homeliness, identity crises, dislocation of their native culture and language, social and ethnic issues and hybridity. In Mohsin Hamid's novel The Reluctant Fundamentalist he addressed such issues encountered by the Pakistani protagonist named Changez. In spite of his hard work, devotion and love for the America, he did not secure his life goal. He came to America to make a better life for himself. Therefore, he was very cautious for his carrier in America. He surpassed his religious, cultural and social norms in order to fully associate in the foreign culture. Although, he did not adopt fully hybrid character but hybridity can be seen in the first portion of the novel which is the pre 9/11 time. I will be focusing on the pre 9/11 era in the novel.

At the beginning of the novel Changez was greatly affected by the western culture. For the first time he was encountering a successful life in America. His job also gave him a

prestigious position in the American society. He was greatly enjoying the American culture as he said:

‘Yes, I was happy in that moment. I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet. How soon that would change! My world would be transformed, just as this market around us has been. See how quickly they have brought those tables into the street. Crowds have begun to stroll where only a few minutes ago there was the rumble of traffic. Coming upon this scene now, one might think that Old Anarkali looked always thus, regardless of the hour. But we, sir, who have been sitting here for some time, we know better, do we not? Yes, we have acquired a certain familiarity with the recent history of our surroundings, and that—in my humble opinion—allows us to put the present into much better perspective’ (Pp. 19). Changez considered himself as a young New Yorker and forgot his Pakistani identity. He thought the world under his feet because America accomplished his dream. He was influenced by the charm and beauty of America. He was ready to sacrifice his cultural, religious and social norms in order to become an absolute American. In the first portion of the novel; the pre 9/11 era he was given much space and confidence that he forgot who he is and where he came from? But in the later portion; in the post 9/11 era he realized his value and status in the American society. Then, it made all the differences. Changez came to America in search of a better life. He called America as his dream land. He had very high opinion about the Americans. He thought the Princeton University a dream institute. As he stated that:

“This is a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible. I have access to this beautiful campus, I thought, to professors who are titans in their fields and fellow students who are philosopher kings in the making.” (Pp.1-2). He was greatly motivated by the American culture that he not only surpassed his social but also his religious practices. He mixed his cultural and social practices with the American culture to prove his loyalty to be a true pro American. In order to prove his loyalty for the American culture he was openly participating in their social gathering, going to bars, drinking, dancing and having sexual relationships with Erica. Drinking and the other unlawful activities are strongly prohibited in his native religion (Islam) but he did not care for it. He wanted to be like them (American) not only in physical but also in behavioral context. As he had sexual relationship with Erica as he stated:

“When I tried to kiss her, she did not move her lips or shut her eyes. So I shut them for her and asked, “Are you missing Chris?” She nodded, and I saw tears begin to force themselves between her lashes. “Then pretend,” I said, “pretend I am him.” I do not know why I said it; I felt overcome and it seemed, suddenly, a possible way forward. “What?” she said, but she did not open her eyes. “Pretend I am him,” I said again. And slowly, in darkness and in silence, we did” (Pp. 44). He assumed himself to forget his Pakistani identity as he said “but not on that day. On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani but as an underwood Samson trainee, and my firm impressive offices made me proud” (Pp.34). He was greatly enjoying his achieved American status that compels him to forget his native Pakistani identity. Changez was caught between his native and foreign US culture. Hamid tried to prove that such a challenging situation had been encountered by the Pakistani immigrants residing in the America and other western countries. Similarly, in Bapsi Sidhwa novels *The American Brat* she has also disclosed such a twist of Pakistani diaspora living in America. She skillfully exposed the clash of cultural

amalgamation and hybrid identity, to which Feroza was subjected. As Bharucha, (1995) stated about the novel that “Sidhwa, in her novel *An American Brat*, examines the clash between Zoroastrian faith, the Pakistani identity and the magnetism of the liberal Western World”. The shy and conservative Feroza was greatly affected by the American culture. She got too much attachment with the western world that she forgot her Parsee culture and religion. The western world gave her confidence, freedom and new identity. Rehman and Awan (2017) have also argued that Feroza begins her journey with a strong feeling of dislocation but soon she begins to assimilate in the new society with the help of her uncle Manek, she gains self-confidence and self-independence in the free environment of America, and she initiates her going beyond the cultural boundaries when she starts smoking and flirting with boys. She gains the independence of mind and spirit and sturdy self-confidence offered by the New World, which is alien to her Third World experience and sheltered upbringing.

The brightness of western culture attracted her and compelled her to be thoroughly involved in it. She was caught in between her native Pakistani (Parsee) culture and the new American culture. In the beginning of the novel, Feroza was shown as a shy typical Pakistani girl but after going to America she was completely changed. She was compelled by the American culture to change her life style, dressing, speaking and even her eating style. She was influenced by her friend Jo. Jo helped her in becoming a modern American girl and taught her all the guts and removed her shyness and innocence. She was thoroughly influenced by the American culture. She was inspired by their ways of life and tried to adopt it in order to become a true pro American. As she started flirting the boys and going to the bars and drinking vines etc. She also decided to marry an American boy who had a different religion. Feroza was completely changed as she was shown in the beginning of the novel. She had adopted a hybrid personality. She was shown to be caught between the Pakistan (Parsee) and American culture.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current research study based on two Pakistani novels *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *An American Brat* which shares the same themes of hybrid identity crises. Both are settled in the America. The immigrants are caught between the native and foreign cultures. Although, they struggle a lot in order to maintain an equal position to the natives. But in spite of their love, devotion and hard work they have not been given an equal position in the society. The western society has not accepted their identity which had been questioned many times. In both of the novels the immigrants are experiencing the same issues of hybridity, identity crises, homeliness, in-betweenness, cultural and ethnicity issues but its notions are different.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The current research study seeks to explore the following:

- To explore the different notions of hybridity in the selected novels in connections with the Pakistani diaspora residing in the western societies.
- To analyze the factors which contribute to the immigrants hybrid co-existence.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current research study has drawn the following questions the reviewed literature.

1. How do the selected texts show the process of hybridity and its effects on immigrants' ideology and behavior?
2. Which factors are responsible for making the hybrid identity of Pakistani diaspora being raised in the selected novels?

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The present research study was proceeded with qualitative approach. As the aim of the qualitative study is to fulfil the knowledge gap left by the previous researchers. Similarly, the current research study provides a platform to fulfil the knowledge gap being present in the two novels "An American Brat" and "The Reluctant Fundamentalist". The analysis of the current study is based on the textual analysis of text as a primary source. Further, the texts of the novels were critically reviewed through close reading technique that is the in depth study of a text. Since the nature of the present research study is qualitative, hence the theory of Homi K Bhabha's "hybridity" was utilized as the main theoretical framework.

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of diaspora literature is an emerging field now a days because it recounts the problems of immigrants being living in the foreign cultures. According to Tololyan (1996) diaspora is a group of migrants living abroad who had being linked with their native land. It includes immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, overseas communities, ethnic communities as well as asylum seekers etc. When these Diasporas mix with other communities it creates a multicultural society. Hybridity is also having its deep roots in the process of colonization. Therefore, the study of hybrid identity has been a pivotal part of post-colonial studies. In the process of colonization neither the colonizer nor the colonized culture can purely take intact hold of their pre-colonial state. According to Bhabha, There must be the mixing of these two cultures. Further, he explained that when two cultures come in contact it spheres a place for a new identity. This new place or (new identity) which is neither the part of the colonized nor the colonizer's culture, which is labeled by Bhabha as a Hybrid identity. Khatar and Zarrinjooee (2016) have also explained the same twist of culture mixing and consequences of colonization in Chinua Achebe's novel No Longer at Ease. Achebe shows the mixing of Ibo (Obi's culture) and England culture and the consequences of the colonization when the British and Nigerian culture comes across to each other. For instance Achebe shows the character of Obi that before going to England he was a strong follower of his native culture and religion but after studying in England his perceptions was changed. He could not able to preserve his native culture in its pure form but unconsciously he was in fever of British culture. He was strongly influenced by their life style.

Furthermore, Obi's perception of religion and culture was also changes. He was influenced by the English language and culture. He turned against his culture's values and practices too. He wants to marry Clara; as she was an outsider girl, it means she was not from his Ibo tribe. In Ibo's culture no one was allowed to marry outside from his tribe but Obi wants to marry Clara. He does not care about his cultural values and practices. Likewise, Obi was dependent on English language and culture. He needs English language in order to understand his native culture for example when Obi translated his cultural folk tales to English language, then he got better understanding of it. In the process of hybridity the native culture adopt new meanings after

living in the western world. As Dehdare, Darabi and Sepehrmanesh (2013) have mentioned Bhabha's definition of hybridity in their article as: "doubling up of the sign, a splitting which is less than one and double, is that the same object or custom placed in a different context acquires quite new meanings, while echoing old ones (Pp. 138). They are of the view that in hybridity their social practices and culture phenomenon adopt a new meaning related to the western context. Similar notions can be also found in the *Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *An American Brat*. After living in the American culture Changez was very cautious about drinking and his affairs with Erica. Although they are socially and religious prohibited in his native culture but after living in America he does not care about it, rather he was enjoying it. Thus, these phenomenon have changed their meaning related to western American culture. Kiran, (2013) also stated about Changez's identity crises in the western world. She says that the western society did not accept his Pakistani identity. As she said in her article: 'After his arrival in Philippines also, he is respected by Filipinos only when he hides his 'Pakistaniness' under the cloak of American culture. His beard makes him more suspicious as if he has some link with Al Qaeda, again making his identity doubtful in the eyes of American society. He felt himself pushed from centre to periphery as a terrorist in a situation when "...FBI was raiding mosques, shops and even people's houses" (Pp. 37)

Bhabha also talked about the "third space" which is in between the two (the native and foreign) cultures. Gul, Noor, & Kaur, (2011) are stating that Bhabha's concept of third place can be also found in Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*. The protagonist of the novel Feroza was caught between her native Parsee culture and the American culture. Feroza was a shy typical Parsee girl but after going to America she was completely changed; her life style, dressing style, speaking style and even her eating style was changed. She was influenced by her friend Jo. Jo taught her all the guts and removed her shyness and innocence. She was thoroughly influenced by the American culture and she also started flirting the boys as well. Feroza was changed as she was shown in the beginning of the novel. That's why at the end of the novel she could not decide whether to get back to Pakistan or stay here in America. Rehman & Awan (2017) have suggested some reasons for hybrid identity. The far most reason which they have explained is their sense of inferiority. They have shared their findings that the London and American societies have greatly influenced the Pakistani immigrants that they view their culture superior than their own. Therefore, they are caught between their own and foreign culture. This sense of inferiority has divided their personality in two parts. This chaotic situation leads to hybrid existence of the migrants and initiates the creation of cultural identities that are unstable, unfixed, continuously transforming and never completed. Both of the novels focus on how physical dislocation and cultural displacement cause the development of new hybrid identities. Thus, there have been numerous notions involved in the creation of hybrid identity.

3.2 Results and Discussion

Pakistani diaspora residing in Euro-America are exposed to numerous problems such as un-homeliness, identity crises, dislocation of their native culture and language, social and ethnic issues and hybridity. In Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* he addressed such issues encountered by the Pakistani protagonist named Changez. In spite of his hard work, devotion and love for the America, he did not secure his life goal. He came to America to make a better life for himself. Therefore, he was very cautious for his carrier in America. He surpassed his religious, cultural and social norms in order to fully associate in the foreign culture.

Although, he did not adopt fully hybrid character but hybridity can be seen in the first portion of the novel which is the pre 9/11 time. I will be focusing on the pre 9/11 era in the novel.

At the beginning of the novel Changez was greatly affected by the western culture. For the first time he was encountering a successful life in America. His job also gave him a prestigious position in the American society. He was greatly enjoying the American culture as he said:

‘Yes, I was happy in that moment. I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet. How soon that would change! My world would be transformed, just as this market around us has been. See how quickly they have brought those tables into the street. Crowds have begun to stroll where only a few minutes ago there was the rumble of traffic. Coming upon this scene now, one might think that Old Anarkali looked always thus, regardless of the hour. But we, sir, who have been sitting here for some time, we know better, do we not? Yes, we have acquired a certain familiarity with the recent history of our surroundings, and that—in my humble opinion—allows us to put the present into much better perspective’ (Pp. 19).

Changez considered himself as a young New Yorker and forgot his Pakistani identity. He thought the world under his feet because America accomplished his dream. He was influenced by the charm and beauty of America. He was ready to sacrifice his cultural, religious and social norms in order to become an absolute American. In the first portion of the novel; the pre 9/11 era he was given much space and confidence that he forgot who he is and where he came from? But in the later portion; in the post 9/11 era he realized his value and status in the American society. Then, it made all the differences. He was greatly motivated by the American culture that he not only surpassed his social but also his religious practices. He mixed his cultural and social practices with the American culture to prove his loyalty to be a true pro American. In order to prove his loyalty for the American culture he was openly participating in their social gathering, going to bars, drinking, dancing and having sexual relationships with Erica. Drinking and the other unlawful activities are strongly prohibited in his native religion (Islam) but he did not care for it. He wanted to be like them (American) not only in physical but also in behavioral context. Similarly, in Bapsi Sidhwa novels *The American Brat* she has also disclosed such a twist of Pakistani diaspora living in America. She skillfully exposed the clash of cultural amalgamation and hybrid identity, to which Feroza was subjected. As Bharucha, (1995) stated about the novel that “Sidhwa, in her novel *An American Brat*, examines the clash between Zoroastrian faith, the Pakistani identity and the magnetism of the liberal Western World”. The shy and conservative Feroza was greatly affected by the American culture. She got too much attachment with the western world that she forgot her Parsee culture and religion. The western world gave her confidence, freedom and new identity. Rehman and Awan (2017) have also argued that Feroza begins her journey with a strong feeling of dislocation but soon she begins to assimilate in the new society with the help of her uncle Manek, she gains self-confidence and self-independence in the free environment of America, and she initiates her going beyond the cultural boundaries when she starts smoking and flirting with boys. She gains the independence of mind and spirit and sturdy self-confidence offered by the New World, which is alien to her Third World experience and sheltered upbringing.

The brightness of western culture attracted her and compelled her to be thoroughly involved in it. She was caught in between her native Pakistani (Parsee) culture and the new American culture. In the beginning of the novel, Feroza was shown as a shy typical Pakistani girl but after going to America she was completely changed. She was compelled by the American culture to change her life style, dressing, speaking and even her eating style. She was influenced by her friend Jo. Jo helped her in becoming a modern American girl and taught her all the guts and removed her shyness and innocence. She was thoroughly influenced by the American culture. She was inspired by their ways of life and tried to adopt it in order to become a true pro American. As she started flirting the boys and going to the bars and drinking vines etc. She also decided to marry an American boy who had a different religion. Feroza was completely changed as she was shown in the beginning of the novel. She had adopted a hybrid personality. She was shown to be caught between the Pakistan (Parsee) and American culture.

4.1 CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the Pakistan fiction in English provides an overview of the problems to which the immigrants are exposed to residing in the western developed societies. The researcher has selected the two novels named *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa. Both the novels shared some similarities such as both are written by the Pakistani authors. Both are expressing the same issue of hybridity, identity crises, cultural clashes of (western vs eastern) societies and the attitude of western nations after the 9/11 crises. And most importantly, both the novels are expressing the same issues of Pakistani diaspora residing in the America. The Pakistani diaspora living in America are exposed to a mental war. They are either required to accept the dominancy of American culture and forget about their native culture, religion and social customs etc. or they are supposed to adopt a medieval space which Bhabha termed as the “third space”. Or they should get back to their home land. As we have observed in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* that the protagonist Changez, although he was a pro-American adopted the American culture at the beginning of the novel. There was a mental war between Changez and American culture. The American culture was expecting to conquer his culture, religion and social practices. There were two ways for Changez either to accept the hegemony of the American culture or compromise on your religion and culture. But Changez could not compromise any more on his culture and religion that’s why he got back to his home country. While, in *An American Brat*, the protagonist Feroza thoroughly involved in the American culture and accepted the hegemony of American culture. She was bowed down before the American culture and compromised on her own culture, religion and social practices. She adopted Bhabha’s “third space” in the western society. The present research study seeks to give a new dimension to the study of Pakistani fiction in terms of hybridity and identity crises. The Pakistani immigrants residing in the western societies are exposed to numerous problems: gender, racial, religious, cultural and identity crises which are been pointed out in the selected novels would be critically analyzed. The current study is also an attempt to describe the internal war between the American culture and the Pakistani immigrants; which compelled them to adopt their culture, or create a third space or leave the western society (American society) and get back to their home country.

REFERENCES

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London, Routledge press.

- Bharucha, N. E. (1995). "Reflections in broken mirrors: Diverse diasporas in recent Parsi fiction. Journal Wasafiri. Vol. 10 (21). Pp (32-35).
- Dehdare, A, Darabi, B, & Sepehrmanesh, M,. (2013). A Study of the Notion of Bhabha's Hybridity in V.S. Naipaul's In a Free State. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 3 (3). Pp. (135-144).
- Gul, H. Noor, R & Kaur, H,. (2011). Hybridity in bapsi sidhwa's an american brat. The southeast asian journal of english language studies. Vol. 22 (1). Pp (141-152).
- Hamid, M,. (2007) The Reluctant Fundamentalist. England: Penguin press.
- Khatar, S & Zarrinjooee, B,. (2016). Hybridity in Culture and Identity: Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease. Journal of Novel Applied Sciences. Vol. 5 (6). Pp (224-232).
- Ondaatje, M,. (2015). Postcolonial cultural hybridity in the English patient. University of Tampere; Master's thesis.
- Rehman, T & Awan, A, G,. (2017). Notions of Hybrid identities: A postcolonial insight into diasporic features in "Brick Lane" and "An American Brat". Global Journal of Management and Social Sciences. ISSN 2519-7088. Vol 3 (1). Pp (19-39).
- Shehzad, A,. (2016). Towards Psycho-Ideological transformation: An analysis of Pakistani Diasporic fiction. Doctorate thesis at NUML.
- Sidhwa,. B. (1994). An American Brat. Penguin books. India Print.
- Tölölyan, K,. (1996). Rethinking diaspora (s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment." Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies Vol 5 (1) Pp (3-36).