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**POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE STORY MY SON THE
FANATIC BY HANIF KUREISHI**



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Abstract

This study aims to examine the short story *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi from the perspective of postcolonial study. The story portrays the struggles for an immigrant in the new country. This story reflects the conflict between a father (Parvez) and his son (Ali) due to their different approach towards hybridity. A father migrated to Britain and embraced their traditions and beliefs while his son on the other hand rejected it. These two relationships reflect the idea that hybridity does not solely lead to harmony every time. The research study uses qualitative data techniques to analyze the story while the insight has been taken from the theory of hybridity by Homie K Bhabha. While applying the concept of hybridity to the story the research examined how Kureishi represents the migration process as a complex and unsettled process. Thus, the father-son conflict identifies the broader tensions and conflicts faced by the immigrant families in the postcolonial societies. The study determines that the short story *My Son the Fanatic* isn't just the portrayal of a simple family conflict but also demonstrates the larger historical and political problems for the immigrants to settle themselves in the colonial societies. The research also determines several problems as the result of hybridity that can cause tensions, misunderstandings and painful divisions

Keywords: Hybridity, postcolonial analysis, Homie K Bhabha, generational gap, conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial literature comes from the colonies which were once under controlled by Britain rulers. Post-colonialism is the study of colonial power and its effects on cultural, political and economic consequences on formerly colonized societies. Postcolonial theory is coined in 1970s and hence many people do agree that Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a founding work in postcolonial theory. He defined it as Western discourse often provided biased and stereotypical view portraying East as an inferior and themselves as superior ones. Postcolonial theory aims to encounter the colonialism and its effects and that of cultural side of colonized. Ratna (2008) indicated that postcolonialism is a way which are used to analyze various cultural phenomena, such as: politics, literature, economics and history. On the other hand, Bhabha (1994) criticized this suggested model proposed by Edward Said and other orientalist concepts as binary oppositions model of colonial relations. They both considered the unified and stable position between invaders and colonized. But Bhabha proposed that colonizer and colonized both are dependent on each other.

This short story is about a Pakistani immigrant named as Parvez who was migrated to England to make a better life for himself and his family. He worked as a taxi driver there and adopted Western culture. His early traumatic childhood was the reflection of his wrong education system and cultural beliefs which didn't allow him to exercise his freedom. He worked as a Taxi driver for 40 years in England and is now completely dumb in Western culture. On the other hand, Ali his son for whom he hoped that he would continue that Western traditions and beliefs but, abruptly Ali has transformed to pure Islamic beliefs and started criticizing his father and the Western

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concepts. This conflict between two characters perception is what finds a way to postcolonial analysis in the story. By using the theory of postcolonialism, the researcher will aim to express hybridity of the characters in the story.

Aims and Objectives of The Study

This study has the following objectives:

To critically examine the concept of hybridity and its narrative role throughout the story

To analyze how hybridity contributes to emotional and generational tensions, particularly in shaping the father–son conflict within an immigrant family.

Research Questions

What role does hybridity play in *My Son the Fanatic*, particularly in shaping emotional and generational tensions within an immigrant family?

How does hybridity contribute to the conflict between Parvez and Ali, reflecting broader issues faced by immigrants?

Literature Review

Postcolonial theory is the study deals with the literature produced by the countries that once remained colonized or are now under colonization. Postcolonial theory started in 1960s. This theory gained its prominence in the 1980s, which is the analysis of different social, cultural, political as well as economic problems came as a result of colonialism and imperialism. Major people consider Orientalism written by Edward said as a starting point of postcolonial theory. The theory is mainly based on the false image of Orient or the East which was developed by the Westerns. They consider the Eastern people as others and occupy their lands and other resources to utilize in their favor. Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) defines colonialism as a hidden kind of force that reacts strongly whenever it is resisted. Similarly, Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) defines postcolonial ruler as “They weren’t like us, and for that reason deserve to be ruled”. Thus, Said defines colonizers the ones who shall be superior and to be rule over others (Gul et al., 2023 (a) &(b)).

The term hybridity has deeply in association with the works of Bhabha which analyzes the relationship between colonizers and colonized. The exact word of “hybridity” had its roots in Biology and the Botany as well. Where it is known as the crossing between two species because of Cross-Pollination which gives birth to a third “hybrid” specie. Here, Hybridity is defined as the mixture of two different cultures ends in the form of a new culture. Bhabha defines hybridity as process of colonial governing authority which undertakes the identity of the colonized people. Bakhtin introduced the process of hybridization states that the ongoing process is known as “hybridization” while the final outcome of the process is known as hybridity. Bakhtin (1981, p.358) declares the hybridization as “one of the most important modes in the history and evolution of all languages”. On the other hand, he called the hybrids who are emerging from the process of hybridization as double-voiced, not monolingual nor bilingual. (Rutherford 1990: p.211; Khan et al.,2025) stated that “For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third space’ which enables other positions to emerge”. Here, Rutherford not just relate the processes of hybridization to language but also with the practices of colonization, which he considers as reciprocal process which involves in giving rise to a hybrid identity called as “Third space”.

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Belonging to neither the colonizer nor the colonized culture

Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* questions the idea of multiculturalism, which means that different cultural people can live together in the same social context. Parvez believes in this idea as he is trying to act like a British person. As well as he tries to keep some Pakistani values, a process, which Bhabha calls "mimicry" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). But scholars argue that Kureishi shows that multiculturalism does not always work because immigrants like Parvez are still treated as outsiders (Ahmad, 1995). Ali's rejection of his father's British lifestyle shows how multiculturalism fail when cultural differences face with each other. The third space becomes a place of argument. Parvez's job as a taxi driver also shows how hybridity involves survival. His work is tough and unstable. This work of his shows that immigrants face hard choices to fit in (Rajan & Mohanram, 1995) Ali's turn to fundamentalism is seen as a reaction to feeling left out. Apart from the fact that he was born in Britain Bhabha's ideas explain how Ali's identity is formed which makes his actions more confused than just hating the West (Stein, 2004).

In Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*, Parvez's friendship with Bettina shows a hybrid masculinity. It mixes the Pakistani and British ideas of being a man, like providing for his family (Moore-Gilbert, 2001). Ali's fundamentalism rejects this. He chooses a religious view of manhood instead (Buchanan, 2006). The way in which Kureishi tells the story also shows hybridity. The story switches between Parvez and Ali's views. This create a textual third space where neither side is fully right or wrong (Young, 1995). The ending leaves things unresolved, which shows the complex nature of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). This makes readers think about the challenges of postcolonial identity without picking a side. But some scholars worry that Ali's portrayal as a fundamentalist can be feed into negative stereotypes about Muslims, which could weaken the story's challenge to Western views (Prakash, 1992). Others say Kureishi focuses too much on personal conflicts and ignores bigger issues like racism or Islamophobia (Ahmad, 1995).

Research Methodology

The research uses qualitative data conducting techniques. Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong (2001) defines qualitative data method as a descriptive form of written words. Qualitative data focuses on values, ideas, and meaning rather than exact statistic figures and numbers. The research aims to identify the cultural conflicts and hybrid identities explored in the story. Therefore, a qualitative kind of research is the best option for this research because it is based on theoretical ideas. Qualitative research allows reader to take deep insights of the story and examine themes, characters and their dialogues in the story. The researcher has conducted textual analysis of the story *My Son the Fanatic*. According to (Alan McKee, 2003) "Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world". The analysis uncovers the ideas portrayed in the text and will see how hybridity is portrayed throughout the story and how this hybridity misleads to the conflict between two characters Parvez (father) and Ali(son)(see Ishtiaq et al.,2021).

The primary data of for study paper is the textual reading of the story "My Son the Fanatic" multiple times to gather relevant information from it. The Secondary data includes other sources that are related to the specific topic of the researcher. The secondary sources would include books, existing research and articles, interviews and

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so on. Therefore, this study will reveal the existing studies on Postcolonial theory as well as Homie k Bhabha's theory of hybridity, and previous studies conducted by different researchers about the story "My Son the Fanatic" by Hanif Kureishi.

Discussion

Parvez is a Pakistani immigrant migrated from Pakistan and living in England for so many years. Parvez has completely changed his way of life. He enjoys his life spending in Western values and traditions and wearing the Western costumes. The hybridity in Parvez character has been examined as although he has fully adopted the British culture but still, he has roots of Pakistani traditions and beliefs. Western community has the free exposure towards drinking alcohols and many other Non-Muslim activities but Parvez hides these activities from Muslim people. This is why because at some stage he was the part of that community and he still carries some part of that traditions. Hybridity can also be seen in Parvez's personality because from appearances with the Muslims he portrays himself as a Muslim but in private he follows the pure Western traditions and beliefs. He was drinking alcohols and likes to spend his time with prostitutes. This mix values and customs makes him and his identity a hybrid one that not fully remained Pakistani one nor he fully considers as the British one.

Ali is also one of the purest examples of a hybrid character. The hybridity of Ali is the contradiction to the hybridity of his father Parvez. He brought up in the British community and their traditions. At the start he fully enjoys his life inside the British people and their traditions. Dramatically, he has shifted to Muslim beliefs. He trashed up all the things given by his father in order to enjoy his life like cricket bats, balls and guitar as well. "but one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books, and fashionable clothes, the boy had bought just a few months before" (Kureishi, 1994). This quote reflects Ali's hybrid identity of being enjoying all the adventures of Western traditions and now shifting into Islamic beliefs. He also left his girlfriend whom he mostly used to be with. Critics examined this Ali's transformation from Western ideology into Muslim one as hybridity. Although, he had pure Islamic ideologies and beliefs now but still he was the product of the West. Even the way he was practicing the Islamic ideologies was still influenced by the Western context of Britain, where the religion can be used as a form of identical protest.

Hybridity has played a major role in shaping the story because the father Parvez and his son Ali has been caught in between two cultures. The Pakistani Muslim roots and the Western, the British environmental influence These cultural clashes led to the conflict between the father and the son. The story shows these hybrid identities and portrays the difficulties in living between two worlds. Ali sees his father western lifestyle as surrendering to their power and wealth. He considers drinking alcohols, eating pork, and spending time with prostitutes a sign of losing dignity and power. The story highlights his frustration in living between two cultures. This quote "He has bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And now the boy was throwing his possession out" (Kureishi 1994) reflects his state of being fed up in between two cultures. He thought his father as a slave to Western ways of living. But on the other side Parvez resists his son Ali's criticism and attacked him physically which shows his inability to deal with his son's rejection.

Hybridity also causes identity crises in the story. Both the major characters were

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searching for a stable identity of oneself. Not the Parvez completely belongs to a single identity nor the Ali so. Although Parvez feels proud of his Western identity but deep down he knows that he has betrayed his original identity and faith. On the other side Ali is feeling proud of his religious identity but still he is confused with his original belongings. He said that "I love England," Parvez said, watching his boy in the mirror. 'They let you do almost anything here.' 'That is the problem,' he replied" (Kureishi, 1994). This reply by Ali to his father is the reflection of his frustration upon their hybrid identities. He considers himself as being alienated in England and the Muslims has been disrespected in England. Both of the characters had faced identity crisis because hybridity doesn't make them able to develop their pure identity. They are always parted away from each other because of their hybrid identities.

Hybridity in the story also affected the relationship between father and son. Despite of being grateful to his father sacrifices and hardships he has made for his son Ali rejects all the ideologies and developed an opposed ideology to his father. These opposite ideologies created tensions and disappointment, anger and violence. Thus, hybridity in the story is the reflection of not only personal tension and struggles but also a family issue. When the two family members decides to follow different paths from each other then, sharing bond, love and understanding would be broken down.

This hybridity has caused the conflict between father Parvez and Ali his son. Parvez identifies his hybridity as a way towards absorption, while Ali sees this hybridity as a kind of corruption. "I can't understand it!" he burst out. 'Everything is going from his room. And I can't talk to him anymore. We were not father and son - we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me?" (Kureishi, 1994). This reflects the gap and also the conflict caused by hybridity between father and son. Parvez adopted this hybridity; while Ali rejects it. These gaps created by hybridity cause conflict between Parvez and Ali. Let's examine how these hybrids identities caused the conflict between Parvez and his son Ali.

The major conflict caused by hybridity is the Ali's starting criticizing upon his father. His father called the Western traditions and beliefs as a successful one and a gateway towards a bright future. The quote "for Ali, he had worked long hours and spent a lot of money paying for his education as an accountant." identifies the ideology of Parvez. He stated that he has worked hard to earn money and provide best education to his son. While on the other hand Ali rejects all these beliefs and values. He calls these Western cultures and their beliefs immoral. He started criticizing his father getups, his meetups with his girlfriend named as Bettina. Ali calls all these activities as unethical and sinful ones. The quote "You're too implicated in the Western civilisation" (Kureishi, 1994) highlights the Ali's rejection of Western values and their beliefs. This quote by Ali has a direct charge upon his father that he is living in a way that is morally a wrong one. Here he uses the word "implicated" which identifies Ali's rejection of hybrid identity in his father and sees this hybridity as corruption not a way towards success.

These hybrid identities also led towards misunderstanding between father Parvez and his son Ali. Father considering his son as brainwashed by religious extremists while his son considering his father as spiritually empty person. At the end of the story, the conflict between father and his son has shifted from verbal to a physical one. Parvez tries to convince his son Ali to transform to Western lifestyle again but he fails to do so. He physically attacks his son and slapped him right on his face. Even after this Ali calmly asks his father "So who's the fanatic now?" (Kureishi,

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1994). This final line of the story identifies the story that Parvez's Western beliefs have failed to connect with Ali's Islamic return ideologies, and Ali's rejection of the Western concepts have insulted Parvez's life choices.

Thus, the conflict between father and son arises because they both have different kind of hybridity, not similar ones. Each one of them consider their culture superior and rejects the culture of one another. This difference of cultures and misunderstanding of each one tradition makes them unable to attach to each other and make their relationships parted away emotionally and physically as

Finding, Recommendations and Conclusion

This research has explained the theory of hybridity that lies in the heart of the story. The research has shown that the hybridity isn't just about the mixing of two different cultures, but it also contributes to tensions and several other problems. The key findings of this research will be as follows:

The research shows that hybridity is the source of division among the people in the story. The opposite reactions by Parvez and Ali towards hybridity caused division between father and son.

The story also portrays the struggle between father and his son. Their conflict doesn't solely represent personal clashes but also it is a kind of symbol of clashes between living in two different worlds.

Future Recommendations

Future researchers can examine the story in different ways. They can apply other aspects of postcolonial analysis to the story like Ambivalence and mimicry. The researchers can also conduct comparative study of the story. They can compare the story *My Son the Fanatic* with other works of Hanif Kureishi or other writers as well. The future researchers can also examine the story from other angles and can apply different theories like "Psychoanalysis theory", Orientalism and so on.

All the insights had been brought onto the single frame in the conclusion chapter. The short story *My Son the Fanatic* doesn't just simply portrays the father and a son relationship. It portrays the immigrants struggles and problems which they had to face while living in two very different worlds. The research has portrayed the idea of hybridity proposed by Homie k Bhabha in the postcolonial theory. This research also indicates identity, culture, and belonging, of the father (Parvez) and his son (Ali). The research has used qualitative data method to examine the tensions, and problems faced by immigrants while fitting into the new culture.

Conclusion

Homie k Bhabha's theory of hybridity portrays the idea that the meeting of two cultures doesn't only causes the smooth blending. Instead, it creates a "third space" where the identities negotiated, and reshaped. Thus, the story is the portrayal of this idea of "third space" visible in the characters of Parvez and Ali. The clash between Parvez and Ali is not just a private one but it is a kind of symbol indicates the struggles faced by the many immigrant people in the Europe. The findings of the research also indicated that hybridity can't only portray positive aspects. While looking at the other side of the story we can understand that it also has caused violence, alienation, and resistance. Kureishi in the story shows us the idea that unbalanced hybridity can lead to broken families and social tensions as well.

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