

CAPITALISTIC INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY AND CULTURE OF IMMIGRANTS: A POSTMODERN STUDY OF MOHSIN HAMID'S EXIT WEST(2017)

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ABSTRACT

Identity and culture are core and fundamental elements of life in any living society in which the mental relief and the turbulence are inbuilt phenomenon. *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid is a true illustration of postmodernism in which the immigrants have to live under the foreign culture. The present study is qualitative in approach which has analyzed the elements of postmodernism in *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid under the theoretical framework of Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) to manipulate the elements of culture, identity and ethnicity. In current study textual analysis is made on the basis of proposed theory of Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) which respectively mentions the global spread of technology to change the minds of people and global capitalistic thoughts are being provoked in the west which have absorbed in all the cultures but dominate in the western culture only. The results of the study show that the immigrants have to live under mental turbulence. The immigrants suffer most for their culture and to some extent lost it but they become able to preserve their identity in most cases.

Key Terms: Cultural Diversity, Split Identity, Immigrant Experiences, Postmodernism.

Introduction:

Postmodernism appeared at the verge of complex policy situations globally after the end of World War II, particularly in the context of the Cold War and expansion of nuclear weapons, and a declaration of human rights and emergence of absurd theater; and irrational philosophies such as surrealism, existentialism, and nihilism. *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid begins with the first encounter of its two key protagonists, Saeed and Nadia, at a corporate branding class, narrated in the third-person omniscient perspective. Despite Nadia's initial rejection of Saeed's advances, the two eventually meet at coffee and spent pleasant time together. Saeed accepts Nadia's invitation to return her home, where they smoke weed and finally clasp hands.

The present study is also going to investigate the cultural and sociological aspects in *Exit West* (2017), which are considered significant issues in the society manipulated under the theoretical framework of Postmodernism proposed by Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) which describes the prominence of culture of the global fashion market and the loss of one's own identity.

Statement of the Purpose:

Adopting a foreign culture cannot hide the native identities and cultural perception. The diversity of culture and identity causes turbulence in the minds of the immigrants, digitalization and capitalism further cause provocation.

Objectives of the Study:

The fundamental objective of this study is to explore the issues of culture and identity among the eastern immigrants living in the western culture.

Research Questions:

1. How does capitalism manipulate culture and identity of Pakistani migrants in the western countries in the *Exit West*?

Significance of the Study:

The present study is significant in its nature and structure as it's going to explore the cultural and identity issues of Pakistani immigrants, living in western culture, soon after the 9/11 attack. The study will be able to understand the living experiences of eastern couples who have to face the identical issues in the age of modernization and digitalization.

Literature Review:

Kanwal (2015) claims that after 9/11 there is a huge transition in discourse that it is not much concerned about cultural distinctions, homogenizing the Muslims community in the world. Kanwal looks beyond 9/11 because the tumultuous Islam-West relationship has reshaped home and identity for Muslims Diasporas.

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She links post-9/11 rhetoric to stereotyping of Islam and Muslims, as well as Pakistan as a hotbed of terrorism. In place of blacks or the East, the west and the US have turned their attention to Muslims, a “shift from orientalist epistemology to terrorist ontology”. In the analysis of Mohsin Hamid's novel, Safdar & Ghani (2018) concluded that modern women are dissatisfied with the duties that have historically been assigned to them as mandatory; rather, they feel suffocated by them. Pakistani women, particularly urban women with international exposure, are not immune.

Sadiq et al. (2020) did a study on “*Subjectivity, Power Affairs, and Migration: A Foucauldian Analysis of Hamid's Exit West*”. The study looked at subjectivity, power dynamics, and how they affect migration and its negative consequences. The human world has been transformed into a dystopian society in which everyone is controlled by powerful authorities, such as Nadia and Saeed. The calm setting is destroyed, and the appearance of camera drones, robots, and helicopters denotes the ongoing surveillance of the inhabitants, leading to the subject formation. Through electronic media, Muslims are depicted as terrorists. 9/11 provided an opportunity for American political elites to launch a “war on the Muslims” under the pretext of a “war on terrorism”. The people were monopolized as subjects through discursive constructions, media assistance, and military attacks. Refugees are people who have been shaped by violent crimes, power struggles, and media scrutiny, and they are not allowed to settle anywhere in the globe. In the end, people absorb positive feelings as they move forward. Anyone can't imagine their nostalgic thoughts of hopelessness, patience, and humanistic perseverance. The geopolitical turmoil that has resulted from the post-9/11 scenario has created a slew of issues for migrants. In this enchanting tale, Hamid unearths global conflicts and political maneuverings lying beneath the world's flawless surface. Kiyani et al. (2021) conducted a study on the female stereotypes in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. The study examined the subversion of traditional feminine stereotypes. Pakistani writers have always emphasized the struggle and persecution of women in the patriarchal community, but their viewpoint has shifted recently. The study found westernization has had a significant impact on people's lives and minds, and it has also eroded our religious norms. Our media, too, is presenting liberalism with such glitz and glam that no one can avoid it. To some extent, socio-cultural development is improving, but it is increasingly breaching moral, social, and religious borders. *Exit West* is a symbol of modernism and culturalism as well. In the narrative, Nadia defies traditional gender and sexual norms to the point where she loses all of her relationships.

Research Methodology:

Present study is qualitative in its nature and textual analysis is applied. The adopted model is of Harvey (1990) which illustrates the certain aspects of cultural and identity issues. Jameson and Harvey recognize that cultural forces have been prominent in the transformations of societies in late capitalism. For instance, Jameson (1998) argues that machines of later capitalism are reproductive machines that have allowed "Capitalism's cultural logic" to infiltrate all aspects of human existence. As a result, culture has the same effects as purely economic processes. In addition, Harvey (1990) recognizes that (1) the reduction of time and space by new technologies in communication and transport and (2) the commercialization of images and symbols by the forces of the new market have turned people's efforts towards identifying themselves and finding their way into the search for cultural images that are circulated by the mass fashion market. Lash & Urry (1987) agree with Harvey's assessment but view extended formal training periods and the consequent uncertainty of the identity of adults to make cultural images and symbols markets particularly important for youths of the middle class and service professionals. From these and related approaches, transformations in the way culture organizes human experience are seen as the result of four fundamental forces. (1) the ever increasing commoditization and symbolization of virtually anything; (2) the dramatic escalation of credentials; (3) imagery proliferation; This theory lists general statements about the effects of those forces in postmodern societies, which emphasize that the importance and importance of cultural signals increases, and that the level and rates of commoditization, the level of credentials, the level of imaging technology and the distinction of time and space are a positive and additive function.

The analysis of the novel is taken under the proposed theoretical frameworks of the Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) which explores the effects of the fashioned and global aspects and the changing mind of the youth which lost their identity and are prey of the western culture.

Data Analysis:

“Every time a couple moves they begin, if their attention is still drawn to one another, to see each other differently, for personalities are not a single immutable color, like white or blue, but rather illuminated screens, and the shades we reflect depend much on what is around us.”

Analysis:

Cultural identity is concerned and liked in the age of modernization where every nation tends to adopt its own identity. *Exit West* (2017) is the tale of two immigrants who leave their country to be settled in the western country. The immigrants are from the eastern country yet they have to live under the western civilization. Harvey (1990) views that the emergence of the loss of the culture and identity is due to the emergence of digital technology and the media leads towards the emergence of the new global culture. The cultural forces lead towards the emergence of the identity and the cultural issues are always linked with identity and same had been observed in this regard. The lines depict that the one culture and mingle of the people is based on the one color and nation which seems as the culture is being most loved and preferred. The thinking of the people led towards the unification of the mind and made the denomination separate based on the color so the color is given most preference to make a single family.

"We are all children who lose our parents, all of us, every man and woman and boy and girl, and we too will all be lost by those who come after us and love us, and this loss unites humanity, unites every human being, the temporary nature of our beingness, and our shared sorrow, the heartache we each carry and yet too often refuse to acknowledge in one another,"

Analysis:

The loss of identity and the homeland led towards the self-turbulence and the mind of the person is not true here where the love for the past and homeland is seemed to be preferred here in which the issues had been there in case of turmoil too. The characters as Saeed and Nadia have to leave for Greece and have to live the life of the immigrants in the west. Harvey (1990) shows that the new global fashion industry and the emergence of new technologies has led towards the feelings of isolation and the feelings of no way other than of alienation. The loss of culture and the family loss are seen here in which the characters are missing the family and presenting that the family has to be part of their life. Jameson (1998) views that minds of the people are changed due the commercialization and the same has been also viewed by Harvey (1990) that the new generation is prey to the uncertainty in which the new elements of the work and manipulation has let them away from family life. The selection of the term "loss of parents" denotes that the offerings are not given so prestige and the family life is put into "no culture".

"All their doors remained simple doors, on/off switches in the flow between two adjacent places, binarily either open or closed, but each of their doors, regarded thus with a twinge of irrational possibility, became partially animate as well, an object with a subtle power to mock, to mock the desires of those who desired to go far away, whispering silently from its door frame that such dreams were the dreams of fools."

Analysis

The life in the camp is put to show the feelings of the migrants where the home and shelters are seemed abandoned in their lives. The selfless feelings are aroused which lead towards the loss of the culture and loss of the own identity. The life of the migrants as seemed that their homes are destroyed by the terrorist yet the life has not been seemed to be more prefects and conscious. Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) say that the emergence of technology has made people closer yet life seems to be abandoned from the standardization where the life standards are not true. The emergence of the technology has let human to be thought and prey of the fashion yet the emergence of the terrorism has let towards the destruction of the society where the lifeless feelings are there. The use of modern technologies, as in the novel, show that human life is fully disturbed and the actions of the humans are dependent on the technological situation being portrayed in the life of the humans as well.

"The fury of those nativists advocating wholesale slaughter was what struck Nadia most, and it struck her because it seemed so familiar, so much like the fury of the militants in her own city. She wondered whether she and Saeed had done anything by moving, whether the faces and buildings had changed but the basic reality of their predicament had not."

Analysis

Split identity and the loss of the home is there where Nadia has to leave her home to protect herself from the shocks of the terrorism. The technology is based on the welfare of humanity yet the emergence of the technology has let the people be deprived from their homes and shelters. It also forces them to adopt new cultures as well. Harvey (1990)

and Jameson (1998) discuss about the impact of the commercialization and the closeness of the people based on the new technology yet the new technology, is here to be more crucial where the new technologies has given birth to the isolation of the people and has make the people more deprived from their homes and shelters due the terrorism. These faces of crucial culture anarchy along with their own type of thoughts seem more important for her. The meeting in life with Saeed shows that the life of Nadia can only be presented and matched as the past and the culture of the characters is of the same level.

“All sorts of strange people were around, people who looked more at home than she was, even the homeless ones who spoke no English, more at home maybe because they were younger, and when she went out it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can't help it.”

Analysis

The immigrant experiences are presented in the lines when the immigrants are seemed to be prey of the split identity. The question of alienation and the cultural diversity is there when the scene of the camp is presented in the lines showing the alienation of the characters when the charterers are the part of the time and the time is seemed to be crucial. Postmodernism gives the answer of cultural identity and cultural diversity where things seem to be more crucial. Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) proposed the theory of modernism in which they believe in the reduction of the distances as well as the impact of the new fashion industrialization. The lines depict the crucial setting of the life in which the immigrants have to portray the running situation where they are prey of the alienation. The alienation is due to the spread of the technological aspects which let human close yet the hybrid wars with the accession of the new technologies has made diverse the direction of the people and time. The lines are showing the lifeless feelings when the impact of postmodernism is seen as abandoned while the alienated culture and situation is there showing that the own culture is abandoned in foreign culture as well.

“The old woman had become a rich woman on paper, the house now worth a fortune, and her children were always pestering her to sell it, saying she didn't need all that space. But she told them to be patient, it would be theirs when she died, which wouldn't be long now, and she said this kindly, to sharpen the bite of it, and to remind them how much they were motivated by money.”

Analysis

Harvey (1990) viewed that the emergence of postmodern thoughts led humans towards distinctive behavior while the emergence of new cultural aspects seemed to be very deep in other cultures as well. Culture based on the convenience of technology convenience and the culture based on the elements of westernization seems to be put in the eastern culture when the honor of the elder family members is not given as of the level as would be given rather than they are given the status of the old generation. Jameson (1998) believes that the postmodern elements are there when the new fashion and the commercialized ways of the thoughts are rooted in the people. The lines illustrate the selling of the house in the life of the old parents yet it is not given the status fair action in the east. This denotes that the emergence of postmodernism has led towards the diversity of the culture and had taken the new generation towards the polarized culture when the new fashion industry seems to be the part of the time and life.

“third layer of inactiveness was composed of those who others thought directly descended, even in the tiniest fraction of their genes, from the human beings who had been brought from Africa to this continent centuries ago as slaves. While this layer of inactiveness was not vast in proportion to the rest, it had vast importance, for society had been shaped in reaction to it, and unspeakable violence had occurred in relation to it, and yet it endured, fertile, a stratum of soil that perhaps made possible all future transplanted soils, and to which Saeed in particular was attracted, since at a place of worship where he had gone one Friday the communal prayer was led by a man who came from this tradition and spoke of this tradition, and Saeed had found, in the weeks he and Nadia had been in Marin, this man's words to be full of soul-soothing wisdom.”

Analysis

Split identity and cultural diversity are core subjects of study in the theory of postmodernism. The lines depict the cultural diversity when the slaves of the other countries are handed over to the native countries and native countries are forced to take serious legal actions to propelled them towards more subjugation and feelings of the complicity. Above given lines shows that the life of the Muslims and the Africans who seem to be the part of the country yet the country of the west is not at the state of accepting them or letting them towards the rights of the native citizen. The words "layers of natives" and "salves from other continents" are meant here in which the direction of the society as well as the voice of the significance of their own culture is presented in a way that denotes life's meanings. The emergence of the new technologies which is the core subject of postmodernism, as Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1998) has viewed that there is reeducation of the distances as well as the reduction of the diversity but the things seemed to be diverse as the layers of the nativity are there on the people and native people are not at the state to accept them at any cost.

Conclusion:

Global capitalism has influenced the thinking of the people and the people who leave their country for the sake of safety and freedom, have to adopt the foreign culture which is invading them as well. Identity is challenged and ethnicity cannot be changed even if global technology has tried to reduce the distances as well. The new fashion industry and the global technology invasion have nothing to do with the eastern culture while the modernization has led humans to the state of global fashion adoption, which is basically of the west. Though the name is labeled as postmodernism in which one's own culture is idealized yet the inner ideology is of westernization. The immigrants have to live under the global fashion and have to adopt the global capitalist thoughts. Own identity and the culture is challenged and the no restriction and the resistance can be produced in this regard. Love for the past and the adoption of the new-fashioned culture produce turbulence in the minds of the people.

Postmodernism is the other name of modernism in which the western culture is prominent and no influence of the eastern culture is recorded. Postmodernism does not stand for the hybridity of the culture yet it stands for the western culture adoption and the immigrants have to adopt it at any cost. Immigrants lost their colour yet identity remains labeled to them. No resistance can be observed in the behavior of the immigrants when they had to be part of western society.

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