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ANALYZING THE RE-ORIENTALIST PERSPECTIVES IN SELECTED PAKISTANI DIASPORIC ANGLOPHONE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the concept of re-orientalism, which corresponds to the approach used by the Pakistani diasporic writers as a mechanism to create an oversimplified and imperial representation of their homeland. This research is qualitative in nature. In contrast to Orientalism, re-orientalism is interested in how the East has been commodified into a consumption spectacle for Western audiences by writers from the East. The process of appropriating and imitating their native culture and areas by the culturally appropriating and imitating groups is provoking a simulated truth over Pakistani diasporic writers, portraying a holistic picture of Pakistan in the 21st century. In this research, the question is how the West promotes such authors as insiders, but in the actual sense, they are outsiders since they have lost their roots. The critical analysis of the chosen text highlights that the modern Pakistani narrative must be radically epistemically detached from the colonial grid of power and aims at underlining the formation of plurality of knowledge systems and the dismantling of knowledge-based and cultural domination among different epistemologies.

Keywords: Cultural Appropriation, Plurality, Essentialism, Misrepresentation, Re-orientalism.

INTRODUCTION

The post-colonial impacts of English written Pakistani literature are not quite liberated. The English Pakistani authors are also trying their best to appeal the British audiences and also reach the wider global readers. These authors are also believed to be projecting the cultural distinctiveness of their novels into the global market. The culture of difference refers to the fact that it romanticizes and sensationalizes cultural and regional differences, assigning them fixed and stereotypical values and practices, particularly in relation to the Orient, and contributes to alienation and distance between nations. The other major issue of these writings is linked to nationalist discourse since the unfavorable depiction of the Oriental nations by the native writers aggravates the nationalistic image in the global arena. The query would be whether it is a political maneuver or the publishing industry dictates so that the Oriental writers can live. The problems of the representation on the international level resulted in the rise of a re-orientalist perspective. It brings in such a question as the authenticity of representation. Another concept of the paper is the idea of cultural exploitation and the way in which the writers of Eastern background are used by the west to solidify their dominance and hegemony. It also investigates the reductionist cultural portrayal, which is traced in the work of a migrant author. "Literary writing has become a revenue-generating activity by the Anglophone diasporic writers as it has since become their occupation" (Ahmad, 1995). They are defaming the Pakistan image in the international scene by narrating the incidents that they have childhood memories of and are having a vague recollection of the same. They are blind to what is happening with the socio-political realities of Pakistan, but are writing about it as though it is

facts and reality. “The works in English are further appreciated as it is a language of the colonisers, and it is likely that the elite group will fully reap the rewards of producing in English-language fiction” (Akhtar, 2014). This results in the development of a fame-driven culture, and they become better known in the West and gain literary recognition. Their works lack artistic and intellectual value compared to the local authors which are less known. They adopt their culture and at the same time employ their characteristics and behaviors. The West shows this by urging the native writers to behave in a manner they do not wish to be seen as cultural exploiters. They bring the outsiders to dispossess them. These authors are usually liberal elites who are biased, as they are merely producing this type of stereotyped fiction that is what is demanded within Western publishing circuits. By so doing, they too remain marginalized, who are trying to assimilate into Western culture. Secondly, they are also being rewarded financially and appreciated by Western readers that make them famous globally. The following research question addresses the research article. Is it that the West is culturally exploiting the Orient through Pakistani diasporic writer as an interim to exploit them? The topic of this reorientalism study is chosen due to the reason that it is an emerging phenomenon that has been traced by the works of the diasporic post-colonial writers who write in English. The reorientalist and essentialised image that the diasporic writers put across is not only constructing the way the rest of the world perceives us, but it also carries some adverse connotations on our own perceptions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Antoniak develops the theme of internal displacement of the South Asian women; one of them is language alienation, as stated above. It is their lack of linguistic proficiency that silences her expression to freely communicate with the members of the dominant social group. “The other type of exile is the social marginalization, in which the members of the minority groups encounter” (Dwivedi, 2014). They struggle to assimilate into the new culture, and neither are they as social as Kaukab shows. This is, however, not the same as her daughter Mah-Jabin, who was born in Britain. She saw her native land not as Pakistan but as Britain. This is because self-isolation in the Kaukab case brings her mental comfort, and it is a response to internal displacement. It helps her in the pain of separation of her motherland and enables her to be sufficiently strong to live in the mainstream culture. The other article is called Existential Strain in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Muhammad Nawaz and Muhammad MehboobUl Hassan. The theme of nothingness and existential anxiety is raised according to the article and the characters who are unwilling to comply with the local cultural norms. Jugnu and Chanda had been cohabiting without marriage, and they had been killed in honor-based violence. “It sets a clash between individuals and society to the level that every chapter recounts the narratives of a similar setup involving various households” (Matthes, 2016). Similar to the example of Jugnu and Chanda is that of a Sikh girl who was restricted from leaving in order to meet the person she liked because he was a Muslim. The other narration is that of a woman who had been separated by her spouse, who was a drunk man, and it was not her fault. She actually needed another man who got married to her and later would end the marriage so that she could get married to her ex-husband. The other one belongs to a woman who ran out of her marriage because he was beating her, but she cannot reveal it to anyone, as society would believe that it is she who ruined their marriage. The other is that of a child who tries to enter medical college a few times but fails in all his efforts, and was suggested by his white girlfriend to study arts. He could not study fine arts as he was predetermined with the ideas of value and respect accorded to the medical profession in Pakistan, and not to the arts sector. “Existentialism lays emphasis in the quest for purpose in this existential emptiness” (Mignolo, 2006).

The article by Ahmad Ullah and others called Concept of Islam in Nadeem Aslam *Maps of Lost Lovers* (2004) reveals how the life of immigrant Muslims and the West, in general, evolved in the post-

9/11 consequences. The overall situation was favoring Muslims as expounded in *Maps of Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam. It created a bad impression of the Muslims, and they were believed to be extremists in the world. The USA even implemented the post 9/11 security legislation that included the compulsory deportation of Muslim migrants in certain states of the country on the grounds of suspected terrorists. Aslam does not believe that Islam is an aggressive faith and provides the characters of extremists with a satirical portrayal of extremists in his work. This paper, however, goes further to elaborate on how the Muslims themselves are contradicting the Islamic teachings. “Being in a foreign land, Muslims’ urge to escape limitations of their faith and achieve personal liberty” (Muazzam, 2021). They are following the Western way of life and have totally distanced themselves from Islam. The characters, Shamas and Jugnu, were also seculars, who did not stand by their religion. The wife of Shamas was the extreme opposite, who accused her father of marrying her to a secular person. She even wished that her children would not come close to their father because he had secular beliefs and thoughts.

Research Questions

1. How the west does promotes such authors as insiders, but in the actual sense, they are outsiders since they have lost their roots?
2. How has Mohsin Hamid’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* conceded and projected the re-orientalist ideas?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper makes an attempt to highlight the asymmetry and bias of artistic merit of the Pakistani diasporic writer who is compromising his social and cultural identity under the guise of exposing the genuine and realistic representation of his indigenous community. “The East audience indigenous community and unjustified when done by an expatriate writer who erodes cultural values and customs of the Orient, and secondly, much has transformed after colonial rule, which is not reflective in his persona” (Hassan, 2018). The history had been the tales of the trivial things about honor and denying women and girls their rights. “It is difficult to refute the idea that, even nowadays, it can be common in some of the most underdeveloped regions of the global south, but this is not the complete narrative; the conditions in urban centers have altered significantly” (Hoffmann, 2017). The author does bear the obligation of showing what is prevalent in contemporary times without appearing to ignore the voices of his fellow citizens and romanticising them. However, he is, in fact, reversing the course and reinstating the inferiority of the Pakistani nation, which is already predisposed by reorientalism (Ramzan& Khan, 2024 a,b). Reorientalism came into existence following orientalism and neo- orientalism. It became popular due to Lisa Lau’s scholarly essay, *Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals* in 2009. Reorientalism was a swell of the change in the writing viewpoint. Before its ascendancy, Orientalism featured in literary texts, which addressed portrayals of the East by the dominant Western society.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Pakistani diasporic writers have been making contributions to English literature for a long time. Nevertheless, following the 9/11 attacks, the reading tendency was changed, and the Western audience became more interested in comprehending Pakistan. “The increasing pop cultural and ideological framework ularity of the diaspora literature contributed to the commercialization of literary material that resulted in a compromise of artistic and ideological integrity of the content. (Akhtar, 2014). The other change that was noticed was in the pattern of literary production and popularized by the Eastern writers, in particular, Pakistani writers living abroad. Their literature specified the image of the Orient, and they were also accused of providing a simplified and uniform portrayal of their native land. This trend of portraying resulted in the birth of the idea of neo-

orientalism. Reorientalist theory, therefore, addresses the issue of how the East is represented as the object of Western consumption (Nawaz et al., 2022)

Maps for Lost Lovers is a well-known writer of many publications throughout the world, but he is not an exception in selling his work as a marketable cultural product. One of such studies can be traced to the article A Female viewpoint on displacement in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps to Lost Lovers* by Joanna Antoniak, according to which the women have examined the difficulty of settling and studying English in the host nation. It leaves a sense of loss in them as they are compelled to depart from their native land and migrate to an unfamiliar place that alienates them from their relatives. Aslam too was displaced as his family moved to Pakistan at the age of 14 years as a result of the political ideology of his dad. Aslam brings out more of the trauma of exile among women than among men. He has shown such female characters in the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*. The female Kaukab had the issue of studying the English language in Britain, and she was socially marginalized due to her inability to interact with others using their language. "Women even need to safeguard themselves and their households against the bad morals and religious discrimination in Western societies." (Lindner, 2010) It thus shows that the psychological impact of displacement is crippling, especially to the female gender who manage to stay alive to even speak a foreign language. "The females belonging to minority groups are not receptive to the thought of leaving their dominant culture, and they are also unprepared to assimilate into the host culture" (Knobloch, 2020). "The diasporic women are confined to their native spaces and seclude themselves from the foreign culture. Further, they fear that they will not be able to return to their home country, not to mention that they can be expelled from the new world" (Mendes, 2014).

In contemporary South Asian writing, the authority is appropriated by South Asian authors, mostly by the diasporic writers. This is what it is called, Reorientalism. "Reorientalism in the contemporary society has brought out the role of the outsider and the insider" (Buescher, 2001). Even the Orientals themselves are the agents of inducing self-alienation to their indigenous cultural, social, and religious practices across the world. They have distorted the portrayal of the Orient and Orientals and positioned them as outsiders, and the issue of commodifying their stereotypical and homogenized portrayal. The reorientalism theory deals with the issue of the Oriental texts of representation. This framework is relevant in the modern postcolonial context since it examines the issues of textual portrayal at the global level. (Parveen, 2014). It engages with multiple domains, which relate to Education, literature, and representation. Nevertheless, the most dominant of these is the aspiration for recognition, which is not only evident among the expatriate and local authors.

"Through the culture of otherness or difference, the writers sensationalize and idealize the cultural distinctions and highlight the dark and somber dimension of the oriental culture that forms a sympathetic portrayal in the reader's perception" (Rahman, 2015). The irony is that it is a similar ideological narrative, but it is relayed in a different way. The works of well-known authors are being sold very well in comparison to the works of home writers because of the marketing surrounding the writings. "The western publishers and agents who also have colossal profits to make celebrated literary works that release stereotypes and tales of miserable life of the Orient. (Chamber, 2011). It is also productive not only to the publisher but also to the writer. This does not mean that the works of famous authors are of high aesthetic merit or that the author has employed exceptional artistic skill. Everything is a strategic maneuver by Western institutions that significantly supports to Western capitalism. The author, therefore, functions as a commodity producer rather than a creative artist and would have re-packaged Eastern ways to create an identity that can be easily recognized by its primary audience.

Cultural appropriation will be addressed in the text chosen in this study as well. Cultural appropriation may be understood as appropriation and exchange, and even getting influence drawn from foreign cultures. It is

a social process happening during the period when the various cultures were first becoming acquainted with each other. "There is no culture that can be said to be purely authentic, as all cultures have an influence on each other. One can define appropriation as taking something to oneself or taking something unauthorized. (Aslam, 2008). However, cultural appropriation in fact is the process of borrowing the elements of historically oppressed or minor cultures by the representatives of the dominant one to personal advantage, irrespective of the impact it would have on the former. In this paper, the authors explore the fact that cultural appropriation is a continuous process of oppression whereby the culture that prohibits certain customs applies similar actions to the advantage of dominant groups.

"The Pakistani expatriate authors in the US are also perpetrating literary exploitation of culture. Their culture is cherished and encouraged by the American society because cultural appropriation is preoccupied with the dilemma of belonging and exclusion" (Brace, 2004). Question of authority, legitimacy, and consequence of one person to another? Whom does he speak on behalf of? In any given case where foreign authors are writing about another culture, they cannot avoid the charges of misrepresenting it. But how is he to be an insider who has lived his life in a host nation, whose soils are entirely alien to him? Why should someone who had been absorbed into hegemonic culture possess a different culture? Their similarity lies in the fact that they are both Pakistani, and they destroy and rob our culture as it was theirs. "Cultural exploitation may be described as exploitation by a dominant culture of the elements of a subordinated culture in a manner that lacks significant reciprocity, authorization, as well as payment" (Smith, 1991). "Exploitation arises when a cultural object is stolen unfairly at the expense of cultural members to the favor of the person who is doing it" (Rogers, 2006). The idea of appropriation disguises a power relationship, as it allows one to imagine that the society has adopted the culture, commodifying symbols and identities, yet in a real sense, the cultural materials fail to reflect on the culture appropriately, and in the majority of occasions, they fail to enrich a culture. "The theoretical framework of exploitation theory is addressed within the framework of re-orientalism because it can be used to demonstrate that, despite the initial appearance of fair action like appropriation, this situation can be deleterious." (Huggan, 1994)

CONCLUSION

The selected novel illustrates that the writer has abused his role as a cultural informer to become a celebrity and earn his fortune in the West. Nadeem Aslam cannot be seen as an insider since he has utilized his status in the developed west along with translating the cultural otherness in terms of focusing on those dimensions that the Western audience sought information about the Pakistani society, culture including faith. By doing this, he idealized and orientalized the evils. He has shown the ugly and negative face of Pakistan that cannot be generalized and culturalised as the mirror of the real Pakistan. To this day, the East is assessing the significance of its literary works using the Eurocentric standard. Such presented authors are celebrities who are awarded Western literary awards and recognition. By this, such authors are driven to compose oversimplified and manipulative conditions of Pakistan to survive the competitive marketplace in the capitalist world. It demonstrates that these authors have adopted the stance of their former rulers to preserve their status of service in the international scene. It is the colonialism of the modern world that deprives the minorities of their identity and the real manifestation of their originality. The solution to this sort of style is to challenge and weaken it, which is made possible by means of epistemic disengagement. It involves the annihilation of intellectual power structures that have seen Western knowledge as dominant over the indigenous epistemologies. Expatriate authors must contribute to undermining this globalized outlook, as it fails to provide the opportunity to fairly and justly represent the minority groups. Aslam is generalizing and stereotyping such cases, which are common in certain of the rural areas or minor regions of Pakistan, and are barely experienced by a few

uneducated individuals everything that existed many years ago is introduced by him as being a feature of contemporary society. The majority of the ladies in Pakistan currently are receiving good schooling, yet it is not an area that is reported or is transformed in the Pakistani Anglophone fiction. It is a weakening part in that the Western audiences who do not possess the authentic culture, religion, norms, and traditions of the Orient are unlikely to be fully aware by such narratives. They have access to the diasporic texts where they interpret the fabricated version of reality about the South Asian culture and communities.

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