

Fatherhood - Rendered by the Theme of Hybridity and Identity in the Short Story *My Son the Fanatic*

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Abstract: *In this paper, Hanif Kureishi's short story "My Son the Fanatic" is reviewed from a critical literary perspective. The text illustrates the complex idea of hybridity and identity in a neo-colonial context through close examination. The erroneous concept of "purity" shapes and underpins identities. The tensions faced by immigrants are discussed in the text, as well as their attempts to create and preserve an identity that lies somewhere between total assimilation and rejecting their own culture. Through the use of fictitious characters, the story offers insights into the ways in which social conflicts have a profound impact on father-son relationships. The text appropriately highlights the conflicts faced by immigrants and their efforts to preserve a hybrid identity. The complex burden of hybridity is achieving and maintaining that balance. It is increasingly difficult to do so when the characters need to find a sense of belonging in a society where racial ideologies are pervasive. The conclusions of this paper show how issues arise when the post-colonial self internalizes and is indoctrinated with an ideology that elevates the West above the East.*

Key Words: *Diaspora, hybridity, ambivalence, Post-colonial self, displacement, inner conflict, mimicry.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The term diaspora is derived from the Greek language. This term has a direct connection to colonialism from ancient times. Eventually, the word came to refer to people who migrate, taking on a broader meaning. The term even later took on a more sinister connotation, particularly in relation to people's lives that were preoccupied with two opposing options. Individuals were scattered between staying in their original "centre" and preserving their identity in "peripheral" locations. The immigrants' struggles with society stem from their lack of complete acceptance in their new nation. More significantly, it affects the bond that binds a family together. One such short story that supports the previous assertion is "My Son the Fanatic" written by Hanif Kureishi. According to Nicholas Van Hear, "there is some kind of exchange between the diasporic population—socially, economically, or culturally." Here, "exchange" refers to both their limited opportunities in the host country and the factors that have contributed to the breakdown of their stable life. The character in this story who is most impacted by these limited opportunities is Parvez, the first generation immigrant. He works tirelessly in order to provide for his son Ali, a second generation immigrant, and bring him up to experience western mobility which complicates the relationship between a father and a son. Unconsciously, the immigrants' stability in life is impacted by pressures from both the outside and the inside. Homi K. Bhabha coined the term "Hybridity" to describe the conflicts between internal and external pressures and the issues they cause in the host nation. The post-colonial concept of hybridity simply refers to cross-cultural interaction. This study highlights the conflict that influences the dynamics within an Islamic Post-colonial family.

2. HYBRIDITY AND IDENTITY:

In ordinary course of things this concept enfold negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it refers.

“...descend into the alien territory...may open up the way to conceptualization an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s Hybridity.”(Bhabha 1994:34).

It is the ‘in-between’ space that carries the burden and the identity crisis which leads to the shakiness in the stable relationships as well as an instability in the minds of the immigrant. In the places that have cultural differences, the recognition of this third space helps overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity, according to Bhabha. Eventually the cultural authority results in inferior and superior cultural construction. The superior culture tries to inject certain assumptions that put down the immigrants. Among the immigrants there are people who tend to believe the hierarchies set by the superior culture and try to imitate them at times. They try to imitate in order to elevate their life style, appearance etc. This action of imitation is called mimicry. This imitation of action is caused due to the Hybridity. In scientific terms, hybridity is the mingling of two species. In a similar vein, individuals struggle to maintain cultural continuity between two groups. This hybridity is embodied by the father and first-generation immigrant Parvez in the chosen short story. To have a decent life, he tries to combine his fate with England. He tries to get his son to follow suit because he thinks it will elevate the family's status. He actually gives in to his son's wishes, knowing that one day he will mature into a proper citizen of England. Unfortunately, Parvez Western mindset did not help him land a good job. Furthermore, he disregarded his religion because he believed it to be outside the purview of westernized culture. He identifies more with the West and takes on a more materialistic view of its culture. This conflict between Parvez and his son Ali is summed up in this altered identity.

3. FATHER - SON RELATIONSHIP :

“My Son the Fanatic” begins with a genuine worry of the father. Parvez, a first generation Pakistani immigrant to England notices that his son Ali’s behaviors are changing. From the story plot we could understand that Ali has always followed his father’s words but now he has changed a lot. Later Parvez find out that his son is more fundamental and religious. For the rest of the plot he tries to convince Ali to abandon all his beliefs on their own religion and follow Western culture. But his son thinks that the western culture is opposed to Islamic religion, shallow and materialistic and concerned only with the pursuit of pleasure. The story lines shows us that the father is satisfied with the western culture but his son grows apart from it acquiring their homeland cultures and their religion. Ali’s transformation is exposed through every little change. The room that is considered to be his privacy has transformed, every little thing he loved was unloved, he quit his favourite sport Cricket, he was no more playing guitar etc. The son represent the realities of superior and inferior culture. But his father is well acquainted with the western culture. The grapple between them is this clash of customs, lifestyle and culture.

The life of immigrants is shown as how they try to live in ways which would land them as the member of the same community in host country. Ali is a victim of colonial and racial ideologies.

“My people have taken enough. If the precautions does not stop there will be *jihad*”(Kureishi 126).

Ali is caught between being Pakistani and living in England. He suffers from this blend of two cultures. He is confused about what to choose as his identity. He tries to choose one pure identity, follow one doctrine and one way of living, but he cannot stand at one point. All these can be inferred from, Ali throwing away all his stuffs especially the ones that he like a lot like his guitar.

“juxtaposing experiences with each other, in letting them play off each other. To make concur-rent those views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other and that attempt to distances or suppress others views and experiences”(Said 28).

He was unable to beat his inner struggle which is called ‘contrapuntal’ as put by Edward Said. Ali could not see from his father’s perspective that is also similar to his own but accuse his father as “groveling to the whites”(Kureishi 128). Both father and son struggles to overcome their instability in establishing ‘one true self’ and following ‘one pure culture’. Ali categorizes himself as a Muslim and accuses his father and Bettina as an indecent by saying “let a women like you touch him”(Kureishi 130). Both father and son separate themselves from each other by placing them among certain groups or position on the social ladder elevating themselves and condemning others.

4. CONCLUSION:

Hanif Kureishi offers to view the readers the problematic issue of hybridity and finding one’s identity by posing a problem. The problem come into being when one’s identity becomes the only identity one can accept, when one does not take into account other people’s identities. Ali embarks on a search for a static self-identity, a “pure identity” which consequently confine him within bounds from developing a dynamic understanding of society and leads to racism and

essential-ism. A “pure” identity does not exist; however Ali is destitute of that reality. In conclusion it is clear that establishing a perfect identity is not possible. It is even extremely difficult in a hybrid society.

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