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DIASPORA AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN EXIT WEST BY MOHSIN HAMID

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to highlight the issue of refugees' crisis which the Muslim immigrants face in foreign lands. Many people living in Pakistan flee abroad to avail themselves of better opportunities for better future. Foreign lands seem them very attractive and promising but the realities are quite opposite. Especially the Muslim refugees of Pakistan face many more problems in the non-Muslim countries as there is a clash of civilizations, cultures, ideologies and ways of living of the two. Mohsin Hamid's fourth novel Exit West explores the global issue of migration and its horrible outcomes and gives a transnational solution of magical doors which can take them anywhere in the world. Immigrant Saeed, the protagonist of the novel, flees away with his beloved from his country due to violence in which his mother is killed. The study is qualitative and based on Brah's Global Social Theory of Diaspora.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have been migrating since dawn of time when they lived in the caves or on the bank of the river. They had to migrate to different places when the sign of lava was seen or the signs of flood were appeared. They had no permanent piece of land. But in the modern time, all their movements cannot be

resulted in Diaspora. In the past, a large mass movement was started towards different parts of the world. Mostly Asians migrated towards European countries. Mohsin Hamid highlights the sufferings of those people who leave their own homelands and become 'Others' themselves. Hamid especially addresses Asian people who settle into European countries. He focuses on the painful Asian diaspora towards European countries.

This study explores the issue of violent elements of diaspora in the novel "Exit West" which was written in 2017 by Mohsin Hamid. Hamid elaborates the issue of Violence in diasporic Communities. Basically diaspora is based on a group of powerless people who cannot fight for their rights. That's why the British Empire treated the diasporic natives like the slaves. There are many reasons why self-defined Diasporas have proliferated in recent times. Mass movements of the people (it is a physical dispersion of the people whose end result may or may not be diasporizations) are more common aspects than the remote movements in the history of diaspora. In short, geopolitical and restructuring of the global economy, and pattern of warfare that create large refugees and exile populations have transformed all over the world.

The second half of the 20th century observed a great number of populations' migration from one country to another. The never-ending struggle to cope with the irreconcilable circumstances of the modern life, the exile is found in the long chain of worries and sufferings. The exile is caught by the complex sort of nature of the communal bonds and it may be observed in the restrictive conditions as well as the source of comforts. The further tensions created by the visa hindrances and national boundaries make clear that the modern globalization is not leading towards a power free, full of liberty and multi-cultural state of existence. So, the different aspects of exile in the form of physical displacement or crisis in detachment would be the part of this research. It is in fact very contradictory that the person, who struggles for change becomes afraid of it and meets the unnerved conditions when there is the chance of its approach. Being uprooted in one's own self is an inconsiderable aspect, it does not matter how the life is harsh. The uncertainty regarding the upcoming life in this strange world is always beyond the expectations. Exile in any form brings difficulty and crisis in the lives of people.

The reason is that the exile shows the forcible kick out the people from their homeland. In the immigrants the people leave their land and they move to another place. After the highlighting diaspora, we also come to know that there are some reasons for migration or diaspora. The facts is that violence creates diaspora because this violence pesters the people and then they think about only one source that is diaspora because they believe that moving from this place may change their situation in which they are choked by the violence. They intend to migrate only for avoiding from the unbearable conditions and to live in life.

Travelling from one place to another creates violence in the life of the people. After reading this term of diaspora, we can say that diaspora enhances the patience of the migrants. They become able to tolerate different kinds of violence in the host-land.

Nadia and Saeed, major characters in *Exit West*, live in the intrigue that death can come into the house through doors and windows so they could never sleep whole the night and their eyes stare at the doors and windows. Peace in their lives was removed and they seemed helpless and restless. People were being killed with bomb-shelling and firings. It is true that a native never wanted to leave his country because it was very difficult task but civil war in the city forced them to migration because without migration they never hope that they can survive on the earth.

“In recent years, urban violence has worsened the living conditions of people in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. The violence, fear and mistrust are shown by the gangs eventually erode the social fabric and the little commercial initiative that remains in these places. For many, migration is the only option.” (Medina, 2014)

War is the main reason for the people that they had to leave their country. People were seeing hundreds corpses around themselves and some people were killed into their houses and some who never wanted to leave their country. Hamid also explored his disappointment in which teenagers were playing football with the head of a human being. He not only shows the tragic scenario of one place but also many other countries of the world. The scarcity of humanism was sprung out after the wars. “Eliot’s poems “The Waste Land” and “The Hollow Men” express his idea that the whole of British society had become worse because of the war.” (Wilson, 2006)

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Minority discourse is a theoretical articulation of the political and cultural structures that connect difference minority cultures in their subjugation and opposition to the dominant culture. This critical statement proves that the minors live under the pressure of the dominants”. (Lloyd, 1990)

The minors are considered as savages that is why they are mistreated. This political based theory proves that the minors become dumb under the pressure of dominants that is why they have to face social, physical and cultural violence. According to this theory, the white believe that they are superior to Nigerian, Africans and Asians by Nature. Avtor Brah describes the divisions that the white are at the upper level, the Asians are at the middle stage and the Nigerians or Black Africans are on the below level. The inferiors cannot confront with the whites because the majority is authority and superiority. Moreover ‘others’ are strangers and homeless. The migration burns their feathers and makes them powerless. They face many problems cause of minority. It is mentioned in this theory. “The term ‘minority’ was applied primarily to British citizens of Africans, Caribbeans and Asian descent—a postcolonial code that operated as polite substitute for ‘coloured people’”. (Brah, 1996)

Hamid (2017) states that in the Colonial era, thousands of the Nigerian and Afro- Americans were brought to London and slaved there. They were homeless migrants. So, they were punished by the white militants.

Jhumpa Lahiri (2003) has presented the multicultural society of India. While living in the modern society of America, the boy begins to think that his name is not fit to this society and considers it as the source of degradation and awkwardness. In this regard, he leaves his parents and moves to another path that may cope with the new standards of the modern culture.” (Lahiri, 2003).

Toni Morrison (1987) also touches this issue into her work *Beloved* in which she proved practically and gave many subaltern voices that the black faced inferiority in Race, Colour, Place, Economic, and in Nationality. All the negative connotations were attached with the word “Black”. All the tyranny was applied on them because the word “Black” is a symbol of sadness and sorrow or happy-less that is why the white disliked the Blacks (Morrison, 1987).

Maya Angelou (1969) in her autobiography “*I Know Why the Caged Birds Sing*” also described the issue of violence into her life which was started by the white people. They were treated as a savage. She was beaten by the whites’ children. They laugh at them (Angelou, 1969).

Bapsi Sidhwa (1989) also took this issue at the peak in her novel “*Cracking India*” or “*Ice Candy Man*” in which she demonstrates a tyrannical war which was bloomed on a racial hate issue and the Muslims considered “*Ayah*” as another because she was a Hindu girl. On the other hand, the Hindus also slaughtered hundreds Muslims on the name of race and angry. (Sidhwa, 1989) Salvia Plath (2012) also described Germanic’s violence on the natives of Poland into her poem “*Daddy*”. There is state-eradication exile in this poem. The Germanic military overcame the Poland’s troops and they occupied Poland and they created violence in the Jews, they were killed by the troops. This poem not only shows the violence on the Jewish but also shows the exportation of the Jews. Hundreds and thousands Jews were killed by the Germanic military. The Nazi force brought violence in the life of violence. In this way, it can be stated that violence and diaspora are closed and diaspora always appeared after an unbearable violence (Plath, 2012).

Statement of the Problem:

This present research explores the major issue of disperse violence in the life of undocumented refugees and the violence of war in Nadia and Saeed’s city. The problem is that diaspora arises on the base of violence that forces the people for migration. This research shows the role of violence in the life of refugees and the migrants who move to two or more places. This point of view proves that migration is a global issue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative and descriptive in its nature. The original text of Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* serves the purpose of primary data. The data is analyzed by using textual analysis. Besides the analysis of the text the reviews and views of other writers and scholars are also utilized to clearly highlight the issue of diaspora. The study is based on Brah’s Global Social Theory of Diaspora. The notion of diaspora is not new; it was used in the classical period in relation to Jewish populations. Brah (1996) has brought our attention to the

study of 'diaspora space'. He has examined the political and cultural space where identities challenged. This ethno-political/spatial turn in the study of diaspora makes the translation of socio-political identity a central focus for the study of diasporas. "Diaspora space is the inter-sectionality of diaspora, border and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes." (Brah, 1996)

ANALYSIS OF DIASPORA IN EXIT WEST

Mohsin Hamid writes a catastrophic story in his novel "Exit West" in which he gives voice about the homeless refugees and violence on them. This story proves that different kinds of violence forced the people for diaspora and diaspora was the last step for the victim people because they had not other chance except diaspora. There are different kinds of violence in this novel "Exit West" which turn the people to migration. In this way, diaspora is a part of violence because people get tired of unlimited violence in their lives and then they migrate to other countries for peaceful lives and atmosphere. They want to save themselves from violence. The refugees live as strangers in the strange place. They are used only for the benefits by the western people. Hamid wants to show the effects of colonial era of "Imperialism". Colonialism is a symbol of violence because they with the help of force occupy the other countries. This act of dominancy brings violence and the citizens are crushed in this violence and they struggle to escape from violence. The colonizers not only bring violence but also make the natives their slaves and they migrate to the labour market. They do physical, psychological and residential violence. This violence was their mission because they wanted to make the colonized weak. This powerless condition forced the people for diaspora. Diaspora never appears simply rather violence becomes the cause of diaspora. Where there is violence: there is a diaspora. Both violence and diaspora seem to be two sides of a coin. The white wanted to erode violence ironically they created violence in neighbor countries. After the second half of 20th Century, migrated thousands of people into Europe and they wanted to make success in their labour market. Nadia and Saeed visit to every country in which Hamid highlights the British's violence on the poor and needy people. The blacks were not considered as the natives rather they were bought as the slaves and the slaves cannot speak against their masters. The masters had authority to beat their slaves.

Hamid starts the novel with the violent elements that they felt insecurity in the other place. They are innocent people and the violence snatches peace from their lives. All the migrants would leave this city also. Through his imaginations, Hamid has shown the scene of World War II in which the people faced much violence and they had to move away to other countries. They faced different kinds of violence on different places. They faced double violence. The first was that they were homeless refugees and secondly, they were struggling for seeking shelter into host-land but it was much difficult for them because they were not accepted as the natives. They had to face risk of their lives. Their place was made a hell for them because anything could happen to anyone at any time. They left their homelands only for peaceful life but this place also gave them restlessness. In their city, they had their own houses but here, they are homeless migrants. It is acceptable that the migrant is considered "Other" in the host-land and he is treated as savage by the natives. His struggle for nativism is vain

because birth place gives identity of the nativism to the people. There is binary opposition between other and self. All the good connotations are captured with the self because self is used for the original native of the country. While on the other side, refugees belonged to another country. So they were called others because all the negatives views were made for the others. Others were hated by the self. They and their females had not a roof for hiding their heads. They had to spend many nights under the open sky.

“In a city swollen by the refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, a young man met a young woman in the classroom and did not speak to her.” (Hamid M. , war in the city, 2017)

From the jumbling of the bomb blasting, the buildings were being fallen down and hundreds of people were dead under the roof of the building. The terror of child losing eroded the internal peace of the people. The emitting material from the weapons made infection of cancer and throat in the people. Saeed’s mother was killed in the road firing. His father saw some young boys who were playing football with the heads of human beings

“Saeed’s boss had tears in his eyes as he told his employees that he had to shutter his business, apologizing for letting them down, promising that there would be jobs for them all when things improved and the agency was able to reopen.” (Hamid M. , Violence in Economice, 2017)

The military was striking day and night. The houses were dirty with dust. There were cracks in the walls of the houses. Nadia’s neighbor house was destroyed completely. These destructions of the city brought physical violence in which everything was finishing and the birds also left their nests and they moved toward another places. If the birds wanted to save them then the human beings also can migrate to other countries. The birds and human beings were living in the city before violence but after the violence their living in the city was impossible. The decision of leaving this violent city was valid for the citizens.

“Nadia passed her family’s home once on purpose, not to speak with them, just to see from the outside if they were there and well, but the home she had forsaken looked deserted with no sign of inhabitants or life.” (Hamid M. , Extent , 2017)

The migrants were moving towards rich countries but they created bordering walls. This separation with the migrants proved that there is no place for the migrants. Nadia and Saeed migrated from different kinds of violence in their lives. They were empty handed from their works. They didn’t want to die like Saeed’s mother in the firing. They cannot make marriage in their city because Saeed’s family disliked marriage out of family. The air was dangerous for lungs. That was why, Saeed’s father was died with the lung’s infection. Their flat was hit many times with the bombs. They were living on their risk in the city. Saeed told Nadia that the end of the world can be cozy at times, all these kinds of violence forced the citizens for migration because the migration from the city, they had last step and this was their final decision to migrate to other countries but it was not easy for them because the borders were made by the rich countries

“It was going badly indeed, adding to an unprecedented flow of migrants that was the hitting the rich countries, who were building walls and fences and strengthening their borders, but seemingly unsatisfactory effect.” (Hamid M., Psychological Boarder, 2017)

The migrators wanted to make homes. The cruelty of the white militants was aggressive. They burnt the children in the house. The white occupied the poor countries and they brought them into London for jobs. The people could not go back into their houses. They felt that they had suffered here permanently. People never wanted to leave this city but the violence on them forced them to migration. They are homeless people and they can stay any place in which they will be able to get peace. People thought that they were trapped in the city forever. They came to get a home in the host land but they had to pass from very difficult places in their lives. Every time they lived in the fear that they would be killed by the militants. Nadia and Saeed came to save their lives from the civil war but they suffered again. Rather it should be said that they were lived in freedom in their own country because they had a house for sleeping and hiding their heads but they have not a home in London. They are not welcomed in the host-land rather they are misbehaved by the militants. Diaspora can be permanent or not. The migrants keep relations with their homeland. This shows that all the migrants desired to return to their birth-place. That is why, Nadia dreamed that she had reached her birth place but it was her dream. She wanted to avoid this violent environment.

They had no food for eating. They had three desires in host-land that they wanted to get peace in their lives. That is why they stood against the militants. They desired a home in the strange city. In the last they wished to get jobs for labour. All the Nigerians got the job of cotton picking. They worked for their hungry and children. They were ready to do work only for food three times. They seemed like animals and Hamid also called them with the cheap word “Monkey”. They were hated much than animals. They wanted to see a moment of relief in their lives. Nadia and Saeed got relief in their temporary separation. This shows that Saeed destroyed his life and family in escaping with Nadia. He never married Nadia and his father was died. This separation gave them relief. So, they were separated from each other.

“They began to wander separately during the day, and this separation came as a relief to them.” (Hamid M., relief, 2017)

Hamid also highlighted the British’s ideology of imperialism in America. The British made labour camps in the California. They beat the workers who went far from the labour camps. The white made marriages with the migrants virgin girls because they wanted to make them slave forever. After marriage, she would live and she would never return. The colonizers got work with the migrants and the white gave jobs to the non-western of fruits packing, road making, cleaning, and cotton picking so on. They were migrated and they accepted these jobs without thinking because they were hungry and they were ready to work on very low salary. They took extra shifts to the men, women and youngsters. If they do not work: they would lose their jobs. The colonialism had mission to join low cost workers in the labour market so that they would

get a huge material. The colonialists created violence in the poor countries and they used them for labour market. They wanted to make successful their imperialism and they had won into their mission. The colonialism is considered on the top in violence and migration. There is colonialism: there is violence and diaspora.

Hamid's third novel "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" described urban migration there is the second person narration and the hero had American dream that is why he took urban migration from the rural areas. Economy is a common and serious problem in the world. Everything needed economic and economic crisis forced the people for migrations. The hero was also become victimhood of the economic crisis. (Hamid, 2013)

CONCLUSION:

This research proves that Mohsin Hamid is one of the realist authors in Pakistan and he has depicted the reality in his novels especially in "Exit West" through utopian style. He provoked the Asians, Afro-Americans and subaltern Nigerians through his writing. The scene of dark London declared the hierarchy of "self" v/s "other". Hamid has also delineated the violence in this novel "Exit West" because the oppression is a part of colonialism. He has depicted the physical violence in Nadia's unnamed city that how physical violence made the people forlorn into their homes and why the people left their birth places. The novel of Hamid "Exit West" is a full of violent fiction in which physical violence played a great role in the society. The militants made curfew in the city and the effects of destructions uprooted the hopes of the people from the society. They wanted a paradise on the earth which would bless them peace. Saeed also prayed for peace in the society because the outing of the people was banned by the curfew. Thousands of people were died in this civil war. Some people were hung on the towers. Some were died in the bomb blasting. People were so affected to see bloodshed into their city that they tried to escape from the city. It was very interesting that the rich people got visas and the people who could not buy the visas had to deal with the agents. The houses were being destroyed in the air-strikes. "And the building was stormed with maximum force, and the militant were exterminated, and initial estimate put the number of dead workers at probably less than one hundred." (Hamid M., cruelty on the migrants, 2017)

When Nadia and Saeed reached Dark London the capital of the England, they couldn't imagine violence because the militants burnt the orphaned house in which hundreds of orphan children were died. They believed that the children and all the migrants were others and the others' presence in the city could bring catastrophe in the city. They never allowed them for potting huts on the roads because they believed that if they started to live in the camps: they would become the permanent shelters in the London. Their cruelty over the migrants showed that Britain was made only for the British.

The migrants left their homes in this hope that they would settle on the host land. Their priority desire in the host land was the desire of the home. The concept of home is a place for living but it also shows a family home in which the migrants wanted to as couples and they wanted to make a family. Saeed wanted Nadia to make couple with him to make his home. But the desire of

home was a part of diaspora because it gave them identity, power and peace. Without home, their life was uncertain and they were not considered the citizens but the military uprooted their temporary cottages and burnt their camps as they were considered “others” in the country and the others had no right for living in the host land. The natives thought themselves superior to the migrants. This difference shows the binary oppositions between natives and the migrants. The migrants faced another problem in the host land that they were undocumented people so they were to be expelled from the country.

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