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EXPLORING EPIDERMALIZATION OF INFERIORITY IN SHAMSIE'S JUNGLE JIM: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This research delved into Muneeza Shamsie's short story "Jungle Jimi," analyzing it through the lens of Fanon's (1967) concept of the epidermalization of inferiority. The idea is that constant reiteration of the colonized subject's inferior status creates a deep-rooted feeling of inferiority in the subject's psyche which festers and grows till the subject is unable to see himself as anything other than what the colonizer's perspective paints him to be. The research methodology is qualitative content analysis and explored how the colonized subject depicts the epidermalization of inferiority in *Jungle Jim*. It has been found that the colonized subject still considers the colonizer as superior, even though colonialism has long ended. Moreover, the colonized subject suffers from mixed identities and is thus unable to create a compact sense of 'self', which leads to a shattered identity and a troubled psyche.

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism is the practice of a nation seeking to establish its authority over other people or territories. It justified the racial and cultural superiority of the Western world over the non-Western world. The aim of colonialism was developing or exploiting the colonized to the benefit of the colonizing country. Loomba (1998) writes that aggression, primitiveness, violence, irrationality, laziness, and greed are the traits attributed by the colonists to Turks, Indians, Africans, and others. Colonial writing aimed to present how that world system could represent the degradation of other human beings as a natural part of their uncivilized state. As a reaction to colonialism, the colonized started writing to give voice to the colonized experience. Hence, Postcolonialism challenges the colonizers and colonial ways of knowing by 'writing back' in opposition to such views (John, 2000). Postcolonial literature on the other hand scrutinizes the colonial relationship and resists colonial perspective. These writings give voice to the colonized experience and discuss the experiences of cultural

exclusion and division under the empire. The Postcolonial theorists use the term other or the colonized other for the colonized (Suwondo, Tirto, et al).

Edward said, GayatriSpivak, Homi k. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon are the major postcolonial theorists. Connotations of the term Orientalism were developed by Edward Said. Homi K. Bhabha is one of the leading voices in post-colonialism since the early 1980s. In his essay 'Of Mimicry and Man' he introduced the term mimicry. According to Bhabha (1984) in colonized nations such as India, the British authorities had to English to teach the native people as they needed native people to work for them. Bhabha calls these anglicized men as mimic men who learn to act English but don't look English. Frantz Fanon's concept of epidermalization of inferiority to some extent is similar to Bhabha's concept of mimic men. Radak, S.L. (2015) writes that the basic background of this term can be summed up as the method and aggregation of reactions, conduct, and dialogue that a colonizer uses to communicate and approach the colonized. Fanon in his publications, notes, and public speeches has pointed out some of the extreme examples of colonial violence. He wants to gain knowledge, the white man's authority, and his identity to regain control of himself and his old society. All the elements of knowledge, power, and expertise cause a sense of inferiority among the natives thus they unconsciously tend to change themselves like their occupants. The anger shown by the colonized before the departure of the colonizer creates multiple rifts among themselves. These feelings remain permanent among the population even after the colonizer leaves. Postcolonial theory is used to critically analyze literature written by authors from countries that have been former colonies. The concept of mimicry is present in many literary texts written by post-colonial writers and it can be traced in the instances where the writer intends to portray the particular idea of imitating the powerful to make themselves feel known and justified (Fuss, 1994).

This study will apply Fanon's concept of epidermalization of inferiority to Muneeza Shamsi's story Jungle Jim. The story is taken from the book: *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*. The story presents Shamsie's view that the colonial construct and its mimicry by the anglicized elite are patriarchal. The elite shown in the story connects English to power and control. Arts for them is linked to freedom of expression and being subversive. This conflict is apparent in the character of Uncle Jim. The plot revolves around 3 generations, notion of otherness can also be traced in the story Muneeza Shamsie is a short story writer, critic the editor of three anthologies: *A Dragon in the Sun*, *An Anthology of Pakistani Writing in English*, a collection of English prose by Pakistani writer, and this volume and *the world changed: contemporary stories by Pakistani women*. Muneeza Shamsie in *Jungle Jim* describes the characters who are coping with life during and after colonization. Epidermalization of inferiority is described in the text of the story *Jungle Jim* and divulges the various facets of this topic.

Research Questions:

1. How does Muneeza Shamsie's "Jungle Jim" challenge the mimicry of colonial construction practiced by the Anglicized elite of South Asia?

2. What factors underlie the sense of inferiority in the natives, influencing them to unconsciously adopt the cultural traits of the colonizers?
3. How are the notions of otherness and imperial stereotypes within British society portrayed in the text?

Research Objectives:

1. Investigate Muneeza Shamsi's critique of the anglicized elite in South Asia and their adoption of colonial constructs in the story "Jungle Jim".
2. Identify the underlying factors contributing to the natives' sense of inferiority and their unconscious emulation of the colonizers in "Jungle Jim".
3. Examine the depiction of notions of otherness and imperial stereotypes within British society as portrayed in Muneeza Shamsi's story "Jungle Jim".

Statement of the problem

Colonialism is a practice during which the colonized people are transformed into degraded, alienated, and victims of schizophrenia. Resultantly, the culture and traditions of the colonized are subdued and it becomes an amalgamation of multiple effecting forces (Radak, S. L, 2015).

Fanon used the term epidermalization of inferiority, which postcolonial critiques later appointed by the term "mimicry". Colonized man is always placed and meant to feel inferior and below the colonizer (Fanon, 2008). Epidermalization of inferiority/mimicry still exists in South Asian society and it is significantly important to define the current situation of the colonized nation. This research aims at exploring the imperial stereotypes of the West and how epidermalization of inferiority occurs within a Pakistani context.

Significance of the study

The significance of the study is that this inferior complex still exists in our society even after the colonizers have left the sub-continent and mimicry of colonizers is still done in our society hence this is an important issue to be discussed. This research aims at exploring how epidermalization of inferiority still exists in our society through Muneeza Shamsie's story Jungle Jim.

Delimitation of the Project

Postcolonial theory is a theory that theorists utilized to give voice to the experiences of the colonized. Post-colonialism is a vast theory so this study is delimited to Fanon's concept of epidermalization of inferiority. This study will only focus on Shamsie's story Jungle Jim from the anthology: *And the World Changed* as the story reflects the author's critique on the nature of colonial construct and its mimicry by the elite of South Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colonialism affected the geographical and economic settings of the colonized lands, it also had a lasting effect on its culture; the effect being negative instead of positive, as the colonized lands lost their cultural values and

heritage in the face of the oppressive and imposing outside forces practiced upon them by the colonizers (Suwondo, Waluyo, Sayuti&Satoto, 2015). This forced cultural change and the forced condition of living with the colonizers and being under their thumb led to the creation of a deep-rooted inferiority complex in the colonized people's psyche. As a direct consequence of this, their own culture was subdued, pushed down, and considered inferior, not only by the colonizers but by the colonized people themselves as well (Suwondo et al., 2015). Fanon (1967) has termed this inherent feeling of inferiority as "epidermalization of inferiority" (p. 11). What Fanon (1967) sees is a deeply seated feeling of inferiority and negative self-image in the face of the colonizers' forced cultural change in the colonized people's lives. In an environment where one is reminded at every turn that they are inferior, that they are primitive, they are savage, they need to be modernized, they need to be civilized, and so on, it creates a permanent feeling of inferiority in the hearer's mind. No matter how much they resist, their efforts are futile in the face of the relentless verbal putting-down that is done by the colonizers (Fanon, 1967).

Closely linked to the notion of internalized inferiority is the concept of identity formation, as identity is directly linked to the self-image that a person has. When a person has little to no self-esteem, and is being constantly put down and verbally abused, their identity is bound to get fragmented and shattered, painted on top with a much more grim version of inferiority, barbarism, primitivism, and savageness (Mirmasoomi&Roshnavand, 2014). As a result of this, the colonized subject will always look at himself from the perspective of the white gaze (Fanon, 1967). There will be constant comparisons and judgments passed on him – not from the colonizers but from his mind, and thus any shred of 'self' that he had will slowly be lost until there is nothing *but* the colonized subject as seen by the white perspective (Geertsema, 2004).

Frantz Fanon's concept of epidermalization of inferiority to some extent is similar to Bhaba's concept of mimic men. Radak (2015) writes that the basic background of this term can be summed up as the method and aggregation of reactions, conduct, and dialogue that a colonizer uses to communicate and approach the colonized. Fanon (1967) wants to gain knowledge, the white man's authority, and his identity to regain control of himself and his old society. All the elements of knowledge, power, and expertise cause a sense of inferiority among the natives thus they unconsciously tend to change themselves like their occupants. The anger shown by the colonized before the departure of the colonizer creates multiple rifts among themselves. These feelings remain permanent among the population even after the colonizer leaves.

Though originally intended for the troubled and damaged psyche that the blacks have developed as a result of the constant abuse – physical, mental, verbal, and sexual – Fanon's notion (1967) of the epidermalization of inferiority can be applied to any other race or any other culture which has undergone the vicious abuse of a domineering agency. For instance, White (2007) has applied this theory to the war rhetoric, investigating the way the attackers put down and shun the land they occupy, and delegate the native

people to the status of 'slaves', so to speak. There has been a study on how Latino students are alienated and shunned in American schools (Izzary, 2014). Lacchin (2015) has investigated the shunning of the Aboriginal Canadian people. Fernandes and Arsi (2017) have used Fanon's theory (1967) to critically analyze the consequences of the discrimination and hatred faced by people who conform to a wider spectrum of sexualities containing items other than the 'acceptable' heterosexuality.

Therefore, it is possible to apply this theoretical framework to analyze the situation in Pakistan, as Pakistan is a country that has undergone colonialism, and has suffered through constant abuse and humiliation at the hands of the British. Sandhu (2014) has traced the issues born as a result of colonialism in India and has highlighted the fact that the cultural values, systems, and the web of norms and codes that governed the population of India were all disturbed and thrown into chaos with the start of British raj in India. This indicates that although not at the level of violence and brutality practiced in Africa, the British oppression in Pakistan is not something that can be ignored. Shamsie herself is a writer with mixed and hybrid identities. Her writings echo the issues of identity and identity construction and thus it is apt to try to look at Shamsie's short story *Jungle Gym* (2005) from the perspective of Fanon's notion of epidermalization of inferiority (1967). The story masterfully weaves the ideas of the dominant class' power and control with the notion of mimicry and the patriarchal setup. It shows the effect of living in the illusion of the grandeur of the British and how the idea of the British as grand and superior is a construct and not a natural phenomenon.

In Muneeza Shamsie's "Jungle Jim" the colonial subject is shown in a no-man's-land of identity, Jo's family is an example of a colonial subject who does not belong either in London or in the colony. Several studies have been conducted on Fanon's notion of epidermalization of inferiority in the context of different nations which were colonized. However, when it comes to the short stories of Muneeza Shamsie who also writes from a colonial perspective, no work has been done from the perspective of Fanon's Epidermalization of inferiority in the Pakistani context. The present study which is post-colonial, will analyze Shamsie's story *Jungle Jim* from the perspective of epidermalization of inferiority. It will also analyze how Shamsie criticizes the mimicry of colonial construction by the anglicized elite of South Asia in the story.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

The theoretical framework selected for this study is based on Frantz Fanon's concepts of psychoanalysis of colonization. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* studies the psychology of colonialism in detail. Although centered on the psyche of the assimilated or assimilating colonized, the book also highlights the manipulation of the colonizers and the process of racial stereotyping. Through this Fanon addresses the issues which eventually create an inferiority complex among the colonized subjects and the repercussions this complexity forms in the self-conception of the colonized. (Sardar, 2003).

Fanon discussed how the colonized subjects are forced into enslavement by the West and their way of ensuring that this subjugation continues is through psychological manipulation. This manipulation by the West is done through socially constructed racial differences practiced by the colonizers to ensure their place of superiority in the global hierarchal structures. The acceptance and internalization of this colonial control over the social structure by the colonized was termed the “epidermalization of inferiority” by Fanon. (Fanon, 1952) It is this theory of epidermalization in postcolonial studies that forms the theoretical structure of this study.

The epidermalization of inferiority is when the colonized (the othered) subject, internalizes the belief laid down by the West, the belief that the East is naturally inferior to the West based on color, culture, mindset, and every social aspect. The theory of ‘epidermalization of inferiority’ shows the hegemonic control that forces the colonized subjects to follow the colonizer’s culture at the cost of their personal and national identities. Since Pakistan was also part of a British colony, this theory has been chosen to analyze Shamsi’s *Jungle Jim* which is written in a colonial context.

In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon repeats that it is difficult, or impossible, for a black (i.e. colonized) subject to be just himself (Fanon, 1952). The colonized subjects of the Subcontinent are still suffering from displaced identities and a sense of inferiority even after the departure of the colonizers; this has been depicted in Shamsi’s *Jungle Jim*.

The sense of Western superiority and the mimicry of Western culture can be traced in natives of the colonized countries and the Pakistani context is no exception to this hegemonic control. The conflict occurs when two cultures mix and results in mimicry of different forms. Identity construction is a complicated process and Fanon also talks about the displaced identity and inferiority complex of the colonized in his book *Black Skin, White Mask* and writes: Colonialism, he contends, can produce all manner of problems—including an inferiority complex that can lead to a desire to be white, a desire to marry a white person, passivity in the face of whites, extreme self-hatred, and a host of other debilitating mental states. The black man is in fact “phobogenic”—inheriting phobias from generation to generation (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 154).

Thus, as the ultimate agents of power and supremacy, the Westerners push the colonized into a state where they internalize the negative stereotypes of their culture. According to Fanon, this results in self-hatred and efforts to imitate and act like colonial masters. As a result, the colonized subjects find themselves stuck in a state where they are othered by the West and self-other their social norms. This creates a complex mental state of ambivalence which is evident in Shamsi’s *Jungle Jim*. The research aims to investigate this psyche of the colonized keeping Fanon’s concept of epidermalization of inferiority in view.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is applying a post-colonial approach to the story *Jungle Jim*. It is qualitative. This research paper is limited to the study of Fanon's mimicry or epidermalization of inferiority. Fanon's concept of mimicry states that colonizers cause an inferiority complex in the colonized and force the colonized subjects to adopt the colonizer's culture at the cost of their personal and national identity.

The study will explore the issues of emulation of colonial construct by the South Asian elite, and inferiority complex within a Pakistani context specifically concerning Shamsie's short story *Jungle Jim*.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study will conduct a postcolonial analysis of the story *Jungle Jim* from the perspective of Fanon's epidermalization of inferiority.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The story *Jungle Jim* is set shortly after the partition in India. The story highlights the relationship between the colonizers and colonized, the story explores the themes of colonialism, division, and displaced identity and links three events, the two world wars and the partition which changed the social structure. The story revolves around Jo, Raynard Woods School, and Amarkot. The characters of the story are Jo, her sister Lalla, Uncles Jim (Zulfikar Ali), Jo's father commander Syed Mohsin Ali Baig, her mother Begum Bitara Ali Baig, and her Nani. The narrator of the story is Jo who lives in London. Jo's father who spoke fluent English, and had adopted English ways decided to remain British at the time of partition. Throughout the story, Jo compares and contrasts her life in London with her experience of visiting her Nani who lives in Amarkot, India. During her visit to India, she stayed with her Nani and her uncle Jim. Uncle Jim impinged in her consciousness. Her uncle died during that visit and the major portion of the story revolves around Jo's impressions of her uncle and her relationship with him.

Fanon, (1963) in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* studies mimicry from the psychoanalytic point of view and says that as a result of mimicry inferiority complex gives rise to anger in the colonized. The colonized man directs this anger to his group and suffers from depression, withdrawal from daily activities, and alcoholism. In the story, *Jungle Jim* Jo's uncle Jim who spent a large portion of his life in Britain is also seen mimicking the culture of the colonizer. He after his return to Pakistan becomes alcoholic and depressed.

The characters in Shamsie's story are seen in no man's land this is evident in Jo's dialogue:

“What are we?” I asked her. ‘We are British,’ she said. But whenever I said this to people, the British looked blank and Indians and Pakistanis laughed” (98).

The above dialogue indicates the dilemma of the colonized man whose identity was divided because of colonialization who because of inferiority internalized the culture of the colonizer but was not accepted by them.

Jo and her sister joined Reynard Wood in the autumn of 1956. Jo became disturbed when at her school she heard the racist interpretation given of the story of Uncle Jim and Frances by the British society.

The next thing everyone knew was that the native and Fanny wanted to marry!
(P. 82)

Here the schoolgirl is referring to Uncle Jim as the native although he had been brought up and educated in London. The father of Fanny (the girl Uncle Jim loved) refused the proposal OF Jim for his daughter because he was not a white man. This indicates the imperial stereotypes and notion of otherness in British society.

Jo during her stay at Amarkot spent a lot of time with her uncle and describes Uncle Jim in these words:

He nearly always spoke in English or an awkward Anglicized Urdu. To me, he looked quite the English gentleman in his *sola topi*, tweeds, and pipe (p. 84).

The above dialogue shows that Uncle Jim had adopted the British ways of living and even after his return to England, he is unable to speak his native language Urdu with the correct accent. Epidermalization of inferiority can be seen in the character of Uncle Jim. As Fanon (1952) in his book *black skin, white mask* says Colonialism creates a range of problems including an inferiority complex which can lead to a desire to be white, a desire to marry a white person, and other debilitating mental states.

Jo's Nani forced Uncle Jim to marry an Indian lady, it was an incompatible marriage and can be seen as an attempt to subvert modernity from the natives after the departure of colonizers in the wider context.

Uncle Jim's dialogue below about his British wife Fanny reveals a contrast between the thinking of the stereotyped British society and the natives of a former colony. He considers her an Indian, one of us, even though she was not brought up in India, unlike the father of Fanny who called Uncle Jim a native even though he was brought up and educated in Britain.

In any case, she was my wife so she was one of us (p. 86)

Jo's Nani while telling her about the scandalous marriage of Uncle Jim and aunt fanny say:

"No one would receive him in England no English official would receive him in India"

The above dialogue shows epidermalization of inferiority or mimicry causes the problem of displaced identity in the colonized man. Uncle Jim is neither

accepted in the colonizers' country nor in his native land. Which can be linked to the cause of his disturbed mental state.

The father of Uncle Jim is described in these words by her Nani Jan she also told Jo that Uncle Jim was sent to England for education when he was nine.

“The way he carried on, you would have thought anything Indian was a sin. He had to have English governess, food, furniture” (p. 87)

A post-colonial analysis of These lines represents before us the kind of colonized native to whom Fanon (1952) referred in his book *Black Skin, White Mask* and writes All the elements of knowledge, power, and expertise causes a sense of inferiority among the natives thus they unconsciously tend to change. Because of the inferiority, the colonized wants to look, dress, and feel like a white man. He wants to gain knowledge, the white man's authority, and his identity to regain control of himself and his old society.

Art in the story is linked to freedom of expression. Uncle Jim's paintings on world war I victims are one such example and Jo in the story experience disturbing dreams related to Uncle Jim and her own displaced identity, she uses art to get rid of these disturbing notions as she says about her paintings:

“As for my 3 dominant colors, why do people ask? Isn't it obvious? Red for blood, white for blindness, blue for sorrow” (P. 96)

These lines when viewed from a post-colonial perspective throw light on the problems which the colonized people suffer from even after the independence, anger and sorrow become part of their life. Fanon (1963) talks about the effects of mimicry and the plight of colonized in his book *Wretched of the Earth* and says, the anger of the colonized is accumulated and turns to his group or in some cases into depression.

CONCLUSION

With the help of a post-colonial critical approach and from the perspective of Fanon's epidermalization inferiority/mimicry this study has focused on how the characters react to change and the social pressure after the colonized have left. Uncle Jim's father, Jo's father, and Uncle Jim adopted the ways of the British and internalized the culture of the colonizer in an attempt to maintain their position in society. In *Uncle Jim*, we see a rebel who rebelled against his as well as the traditions of the colonized when he married Fanny, as a result, he was rejected by both cultures. This made him dejected in the end he commits suicide. Jo's mother and father depict the mindset of a colonized man and how even after getting rid of their oppressor they consider him the superior and detest their own culture. The analysis also showed that the regeneration of the colonized societies is a slow process and meanwhile, the colonized suffer in several ways. The racist and stereotypical attitude of the colonizer creates an inferiority complex in the natives of colonized lands. Fanon's ideas are an essential part of post-colonialism and can be used to understand deeply the effects of mimicry. This study also revealed that Mimicking or internalization of a foreign culture to gain power, education,

social status and approval of the colonizer leads to individual tragedies. This is what Fanon refers to epidermalization of inferiority.

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