

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Mimicry as the Survival Motive in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*

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Letter Recommendation

Mr. Madhusudan Sharma has prepared this thesis entitled “Mimicry as the Survival Motive in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*” under my supervision, he carried out his research from September 2019 to February 2021. I hereby recommended his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Asst. Prof. Khem Raj khalal

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Approval Sheet

This thesis entitled “Mimicry as the Survival Motive in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*” submitted to the Central Department of English Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Madhusudan Sharma has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Mimicry as Survival Motive in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*

Abstract

This research studies the postcolonial issues like ambivalence, cultural hybridity, mimicry and identity crisis in Mohsin Hamid's novel Moth Smoke. The novel presents the picture of Pakistani society surrounded by the presence of western values, cultural rifts and obsessions of materiality and weakening bond of community and moral codes. The wealthy characters of the novel, like Ozi and Mumtaz, are pursuing individualistic lifestyle affected by their touch with New York during their studies; while some Pakistani characters like the drug dealer, Murad, are pursuing English as basic language of communication only to hide their reality of low origin and stamp their authority and control over other. Ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry of these characters are analyzed in this research. The hybridized individualistic western values lead Mumtaz to become an infidel to his husband and have extramarital affair with Daru going against the cultural values of the Pakistani society with rigid patriarchal and sexual control over women. The space of cultural hybridity paves way for mimicry in most of the instances and also leads the downfall of Daru, the economically poor class friend of Ozi.

Key Words: Hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, diaspora, identity crisis, family, Third World

This research examines Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid's first novel *Moth Smoke* with the postcolonial perspective of hybridity and mimicry in the characters of the ex-colonies of the British rules. The central characters in the novel, Darashikoh Shehad (Daru) is an aggressive banker who is fired from the job and involves in the business of drug. He has some jealousy upon the wealth with his best friend Ozi. Since Daru is poor but luxurious by taste, he needed to sell drugs for money. Murad

Badsah is his drug dealer. Ozi's wife, Mumtaz, is beautiful and westernized woman who is in quest for an exciting sexual partner and falls for Daru. She leads a deceptive life to her husband writing for a newspaper in pseudonym of Zulfikar Manto as an investigative journalist. The dual identity and hybridity becomes the hallmark for the characters like Daru, Mumtaz and Murad.

The novel presents various problems generated by the cultural loss that is result of the cultural hybridity between Eastern and Western cultural values. As the novel progresses, one sees more problems compounding upon the characters. Mumtaz's husband Ozi finds out the truth of his wife's affair with Daru. Extramarital affair is not allowed in Eastern society and is the result of the Mumtaz's touch of Western sense of freedom as she studies in New York. Mumtaz has secretly enjoying the Western sense of free self but soon, she knows about her husband's knowledge of their affair. She knows it when Daru goes to jail in accusation of killing a child. The child was actually killed by Ozi's car but as revenge to Daru for the affair with his wife, Ozi succeeds to prove him guilty accusing him of the killing.

The novel begins with the court trial of Daru and the judge declares him guilty. Spending wretched life in a narrow cell of the prison becomes the fate of this aggressive protagonist. In terms of its form, the novel is a frame story, told by multiple narrators' point of view and deals with class problems, growing materiality, the problems of immigrants abroad, drug abuse, crime as well as family tensions.

The setting of the novel is summer of 1998 that marks the time Pakistan tested first nuclear weapon as a response to nuclear test of its arch-rival India. The novel is regarded as Hamid's take on the historic moment that planted the seed of destruction of the Pakistan. As the atoms are broken in the fission bomb in the nuclear weapons, Pakistani society is also broken into parts in terms of economic class, in terms of

cultural values as well as conservatism and liberalism. The widening rift among the social and cultural rift invited various crimes and escalated the drug abuse; the moral standard of the people weakened and deception became frequent. Pakistani society is not only testing the nuclear weapon and heading into new nuclear era, it is also planting the seed of its own destruction too. Hamid has thus, painted the grave picture of Pakistan in the novel.

This research raises various questions – What is the reason behind a Pakistani woman like Mumtaz, grown with rigid patriarchal and sexual control, to deceive her husband and have an extra-marital romance? Has colonial, Western presence in the characters affected the characters of the society? How does Mumtaz experience identity crisis and long for homeland, even when she has a pretty good and carefree life in New York? Why does Murad speak English and what are the impacts of speaking English in his personality? These are some of the basic questions this research attempts to analyze.

This research focuses on the postcolonial issues of ambivalence, cultural hybridity, mimicry and identity crisis of the characters that are in direct touch with colonial lifestyle in the west or their native land. Since Ozi and Mumtaz have spent long time in New York and the contact with western society develops individualistic character traits making them culturally hybrid and Murad is obsessed with speaking English in Hindi and Punjabi accent so as to be at better control and authority over the people around him, they are analyzed for these postcolonial issues in this research.

The main objective of this research is to explore the postcolonial issues like ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry and identity crisis of the characters of the Third World in Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Story*. The study of the postcolonial problems and their consequences the characters face is the objective of the study. Even though

this research primarily examines the ironic issues related to postcolonial the social condition and its impact to shape characters, the analysis is totally textual. Only the textual evidences are drawn into the discussion. Even though, this research uses the theoretical basis of postcolonial studies, it does not clarify all the aspects of postcolonialism due to limitation of time. Only the supportive theoretical premises are used. This research becomes a remarkable contribution for the study of postcolonial problems in the novels written by Third World writers. Further, the future researchers will be benefitted and encouraged to study postcolonial problems of modern people of the Third World in the texts on the framework of this research.

The present research examines the evils of colonial presence in *Moth Smoke* and comes to the conclusion that the characters display ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry of the colonial world that has still lingering impact in their lives. The big brother arrogance from the part of the colonizers always haunts the psyche of the colonized and formerly colonized individuals and the society. The superiority complex psychology of the Westerners is still ruling the relationship between and colonizers and colonized which is evident from the examination of the novel. Thus, the present research stresses on the necessity of the mimicry of the formerly colonized ones. The frame narrative of *Moth Smoke* presents three stories with the last story bearing the title of the fiction accounts the tale of different individuals suffering from the evils psychic colonialism owing to the hitherto physical and psychological domination from the part of the colonizers. Thus the research stresses on the fact how there is the necessity of Mimicry in order to establish the freedom and decolonization in the ex-colonies.

Since the publication of Mohsin Hamid's first novel, *Moth Smoke* in 2000, it has been discussed in various literary circles. It has received accolades and criticisms

both from various quarters. Critics Abdul Ghafoor Awan, Shaista Andleeb and Farhat Yasin discuss the novel from psychoanalytical vein and analyze the protagonist Daru's condition:

Despite his brilliance and all academic achievements, Daru could find no good placement in a society where money could bring better jobs than merit could warrant. It is so pathetic to know how merit stood helpless against money through the story. His classmates (with comparatively lower academic achievements) went to foreign universities but he had no means to study abroad despite better achievements and brighter intelligence. This made him first realize the unfair character of communal and material life and he starts feeling aggravated against the rich resourceful circles. (11)

Academic brilliance counts as nothing in the society where money determines the social status of a person. The protagonist suffers in the South Asian society because it is going materialistic. Lack of money affects the narrator as he cannot go to universities abroad and get better academic achievements and brighter intelligence. The unfair character of communal and material life and its impacts upon the narrator are focused in the reading.

Critic Muneeza Shamsie sees the novel as Hamid's way of looking back to Pakistan's nuclear test and impending economic disaster:

Mohsin Hamid (b. 1971) looks at Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests and the ensuing economic disaster in his first novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000), set in modern Lahore, which is framed by a notorious episode of fratricide from Mughal history and echoes the novel's central themes: power, powerlessness, social iniquity, and corruption. (152)

The novel, according to Shamsie, is episode of fratricide of the Mughal history and encompasses the themes like power, powerlessness, social iniquity and corruption.

Critic Frederick Luis Aldama discusses the structure of the novel and praises the novelist's handling of suspense mixed with lyrical description:

In *Moth Smoke* Hamid richly textures a world filled with invisible and not-so-in- visible boundaries that control and contain those who do not belong to the superelite. He also beautifully anchors his suspenseful and caustic novel in lyric description, even breathing life into everyday minutiae: Daru rolls a cigarette, "loosening the tobacco, coaxing it into a sweaty palm, rubbing the flake between thumb and forefinger until it's almost empty." Long after the last page has been turned, *Moth Smoke's* poetic turns of phrase and complexly imagined cast of characters resonate vividly. (812)

In the criticism, Aldama also provides the example of the poetic language Hamid uses to describe the protagonist's act of rolling cigarettes.

Critics Linda Null and Suellen Alfred point out the variation in perspectives used by Hamid to narrate the story. His use of multiple narrator touches them as this technique lets the writer give inconsistent description of a single character from different point of view:

An interesting aspect of Hamid's style is his use of multiple narrators. One effect of this technique is to show us inconsistent descriptions of a single character through different points of view. For example, Daru describes his drug dealer, Murad Badshah, who has an MA in English: "He speaks what he thinks is well-bred English in an effort to deny the lower-class origins that color the accent of his Urdu and Punjabi. But

like an overambitious toupee, his artificial diction draws attention to what it's meant to hide." Daru may denigrate Murad but, in a chapter told from Murad's point of view, we find Murad to be witty, charming, and articulate. (88)

Null and Alfred provide an example of this. As Daru differently describes his drug dealer Murad, Murad is also given chance to relate the story from his point of view. The use of multiple viewpoints becomes prominent technique of the novel.

Researcher Tajamul Islam Malik studies the novel from the perspective of social conducts and ethics and finds that the characters lack morality and they run their life with dual identity and double standards. Mumtaz, the wife of Ozi, is loyal to her husband only for four years of her marriage and then, she involves with Daru in extramarital affairs, at the same time cheating her husband that she is still loyal to him:

It is certain that Mumtaz remained loyal and honest to her husband only after four years of marriage, but at the same time she got intrigued of having sex with her husband's best friend Daru. This first lie and deception began when she started writing as an investigative journalist under pseudonym. Zulifikar Manto. Ozi on the other hand had faith and trust on her. Ozi had a bit suspense about her, as she lied so many times to her loyal husband, wandering all over the town, telling him she had been the place. (594)

Daru's involvement with the extramarital affair with Mumtaz is the result of his jealousy over the wealth of his best friend Ozi. Mumtaz fell for Daru as he is handsome, attractive and safe for the relation as he does not open the mouth before her husband Ozi as he is his best friend. Mumtaz's lie began as she started to write in

pseudonym of Zulfikar Manto, as an investigative journalist. The characters in the novel exhibit double standard and they do not obey the social codes. They live deceptive life.

Taking all these criticisms in mind, this research analyzes the hybridity and mimicry of the characters in the contact zones of number of cultures.

Mimicry is a trope devised by postcolonial writer Bhabha with the critical vein to counter colonial discourses and authority. He has discussed this notion of mimicry as promoted by colonial discourses as a psychological construction of the colonized subjects who is similar in habits with the colonizers so that be compliant to be ruled. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point, “The problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, ‘mimic’ the colonizer. But instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery” (13). Despite the attempt of colonial discourses promoting the mimic men as the basis for colonization, Bhabha sees the psychological process of the colonized mimic men and shows that it does not only confirm the colonial rule rather it also subverts the colonial rule because it turns closer to a mockery of their authority. In the analysis of the process of mimicry, Bhabha writes:

What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence. By ‘partial’ I mean both ‘incomplete’ and ‘virtual’. It is as if the very emergence of the ‘colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the

authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.

(123)

Mimicry or the appropriation of the colonized subjects is only the partial presence for Bhabha. This partial presence has got its own weaknesses and limits and they cannot remove all the inappropriate subjects with this appropriation. Mimicry thus becomes at once resemblance and menace for the colonial authority.

In Hamid's novel, cross-cultural contact zones of the South Asian societies as well as contact zones between Eastern and Western cultures are presented. The characters appear to be divided along with the contact zones among the numbers of cultures in Lahore, Pakistan, cultural hybridity of the characters in cross-cultural contact zones in diasporic condition. Further, there are sub-cultural groups of drug users and smugglers. The concept of hybridity is a famous post-colonial trope used by Homi K. Bhabha. Ashcroft et al. define hybridity as "One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (*Key Concepts* 118).

The first part of Mumtaz's narration recalls her stay at New York and getting married to Ozi when she meets him and sleeps with him in a party. She begins her recollection of New York that displays her cultural hybridity and ambivalent attitude to the cultural norms of America and Pakistan.

Let's start in New York City, my senior year in college. The scene is the East Village, a little before midnight, on the steps of a fourth-floor walk-up on Avenue A. The date is important: October 31. Halloween.

I'm dressed as Mother Earth (rather ironic, as you'll come to see). My roommate, Egyptian, English major, is improvising around the Cleopatra theme again. This year there's a sun motif. Ra, you know.

Last year it was more Leo. (147)

Mumtaz's narration begins with the recollection of her New York college life. Despite the fact that she is a Muslim girl from Pakistan, she does not only celebrate Christian festival Halloween but also dresses as the Mother Earth, the cultural deity of very different culture. Her cultural hybridity and mimicry for her survival in America is clearly seen in this instance.

In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha has discussed about the nature of mimicry in these terms:

The discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (122)

The ambivalence, love-hate relationship between two different cultural values paves way for mimicry according to Bhabha. The authority in the colonial discourses is formed on the very basis of mimicry and it has the nature of indeterminacy. Bhabha further clarifies:

Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant

strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (122-123)

The Muslim girl from Pakistan mimics the look of mother earth and her Egyptian mate is doing the role of Cleopatra. The American culture and its mimicry have become the norms for the college students who study in America. There is double articulation of identity and it is normalized for them. Mumtaz herself accepts that her mimicking of the role of mother earth itself is ironic.

The effect of cultural hybridity is great in the Third World characters living in America. They have made the parties and wine common things and find freedom to express them in such environment. The party culture and openness to sex is seen as being part of Mumtaz's lifestyle that is unthinkable in South Asian society, let alone a Muslim society.

The party is great. I down some excellent ex, low on zip but high on joy, if you know what I mean, and make out with one or two acquaintances. But at some point (you saw this coming) I find myself on the fire escape with the brown boy I'd seen before. We're dancing, just the two of us, and his name is Ozi and he's wickedly sexy, and what the hell, we spend the night together. So that's how it all began. Nine months later we were married. My fault, of course. Because I should have known better. I should have known I wasn't the marrying sort, even then. But I didn't. Besides, I was in love. (148)

Mumtaz narrates the events that unfolded in the Halloween party. In the narration, it becomes clear that Mumtaz has not only become open to the alcoholic drinks but also open to the drug use and sex. She uses ex, a kind of drug, and feels joyous in the

party. She sees a sexy brown-skinned boy in the party and develops a desire for his body and she spends a night with him. They marry after nine months of that physical union. Mumtaz soon repents about her decision to marry because she decided about it in the time when she had no knowledge what a marriage actually meant. We see that she expected the same freedom American culture taught her even after the marriage. The decision of marriage was affected by the views of her family and friends who always professed that a woman needs to marry a wealthy man and secure their future:

I shouldn't have married him. He proposed during a snowstorm in March, looking cold as only a Pakistani man in America can. And I said yes. Because I was in love with him, and I had no idea what marriage really meant, and I didn't know myself . . . every woman from home I'd ever known had always told me: that an unspeakable future awaits girls who don't wind up marrying, and marrying well (well being short for 'wealthy Pakistani bachelor'). All of that advice, which New York had laughed out my window and into the Hudson, came rushing back to me, sopping wet, in that instant, and stupid or not, I said yes. (148-149)

We clearly see that there are cultural differences in Mumtaz and other conventional women in her family and friends' regarding their view about marriage. Conventional women prioritize marriage with the fear that the future of a woman remains uncertain if they do not marry a good and wealthy man from their own culture. But as a free girl grown up with air of free lifestyle, Mumtaz does not understand what they actually mean. But at the same time, having no knowledge of marriage and being influenced by the conventional views, she decides to marry. She recalls how the people of her

circle praised the couple and depicted Ozi as a prince and her as a slut and gossiped that she was very lucky to get the husband like Ozi:

Before I knew it, I was showing him off at South Asian Student Association parties, enjoying the horrified jealousy on the faces of my prim and proper colleagues. Yes, Mumtaz, that slut, had bagged herself a prince, which meant there was one less out there for them. My friends adored him. My parents were thrilled. The summer after we graduated, he from law school and I from college, we were married in Karachi by the sea. (149)

Before Mumtaz knows what marriage actually means, she shows Ozi as her possible husband in a party of South Asian Student Association where everybody praises her luck. Her friends envied the couple as most of her friends adore Ozi and her parents become happy. They got married in Karachi as soon as both of them complete their study.

At the beginning phase of their marriage, they loved each other very much; their relation was passionate and she shares everything with him. She does not feel any apathy too the marriage:

It's not hard to remember what things were like then, in that first year of our marriage, when we were so good together, even if my memories are a little colored now by what happened later. We went out all the time. We danced like crazy, both of us sweating and stripped by the end of the night. We had insane sex. Once, we were caught on Ozi's desk by his officemate, who later swore he hadn't seen anything and always blushed when I spoke to him at the firm's cocktail parties. But

the best part of it was the talking. I was completely open with him.

(148)

Sharp contrast and cultural difference are presented in terms of marriage. The marriage of the Westernized couple, Mumtaz and Ozi is depicted as free and there is no control in anything. The sexual unions may also be open in such couple as Ozi even makes physical contact with Mumtaz at his office desk and makes his officemate blush with shame. There is passion everywhere in their marriage but in the couples in South Asia, the husbands control their wives. There is the instance of turbulent marriage in Mumtaz's family too; Mumtaz shares Ozi the story of the turbulent and violent relation between her father and mother. Her father controls and beats her mother. Sometimes so hard is the punishment that it might cause life-time damage:

I remember what it felt like to tell him how my father used to beat my mother, once so badly she lost her hearing in her left ear. How my brother never cried, not even when I almost died of pneumonia and he spent the entire night awake with me in the hospital. How upset I was when I finally got my period, at fifteen, because I'd accepted that it would never come. (148)

The gender roles and stereotypes of South Asian society, the image of submissive mother and dominating father is avoided by the young couples Ozi and Mumtaz. It is one of the instances of cultural hybridity, at the same time there is mimicry of the Western form of marriage. The reason behind their non-conformation to the stereotype of their native social codes is to avoid social othering from their open-minded Americans as their attitude to the Muslims is not without prejudices and orientalist views as Edward Said observes in *Orientalism*:

The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny...The nexus of knowledge and power creating 'the oriental' and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter.

Yet it is an *intellectual* matter of some very obvious importance. (27)

To avoid the cultural stereotype an American has formed about the Muslim people, both Ozi and Mumtaz mimic the Western ways even after the marriage. There is strong web of racism against the Arab people or the Muslims. So, they do not want to be caught in the web of racial orientalist stereotype in America is clear. This results in their mimicry of the Western lifestyle though they see how marriages go in the South Asian societies.

Mimicry of English language and lifestyle is not less in the characters living in Lahore too. Daru narrates about the personality of Murad, his drug-dealer:

Murad Badshah's my dealer: occasionally amusing, desperately insecure, and annoyingly fond of claiming that he's a dangerous outlaw. He speaks what he thinks is well-bred English in an effort to deny the lower-class origins that color the accent of his Urdu and Punjabi. But like an overambitious toupee, his artificial diction draws attention to what it's meant to hide. (39-40)

Murad is living a precarious life dealing with drugs but he speaks English that he calls well-bred English. The reason behind his speaking English is to conceal his lower-class origin and build the dominating air around him. His English becomes just mimicry of a colonial authority as it has clearly the Urdu and Punjabi overtones.

Bhabha points out, “The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in ‘normalizing’ the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms” (123). The effect of Murad’s use of English in expense of Hindi and Punjabi has thus, alienates him from his own language of liberty and molds him into another form of knowledge of its norms. Bhabha further clarifies:

The ambivalence which thus informs this strategy is discernible, for example, in Locke’s Second Treatise which *splits* to reveal the limitations of liberty in his double use of the word ‘slave’: first simply, descriptively as the locus of a legitimate form of ownership, then as the trope for an intolerable, illegitimate exercise of power. . . It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double that my instances of colonial imitation come. (123)

Ambivalence informs the process of mimicry according to Bhabha. To provide with an example, he brings Locke’s Second Treatise into discussion. In the treatise, Locke has used the word ‘slave’ for dual purpose. First, it legitimizes the legal ownership of the slave and legitimate exercise of power over them and second, it is used as the trope for intolerable, illegitimate exercise of power. The area left between these opposites, mimicry comes and challenges the colonial, civilizing authority. Murad’s mimicry, even then, is not the resistance to colonial authority but a means of survival.

Mumtaz continually displays the cultural hybridity and mimicry of Western, individualistic lifestyle. She does not want to be a mother even after the marriage when she knows she is pregnant. More ironic is the fact that a Muslim girl from South Asian Islamic culture, where Muslim women are not even allowed to use

contraceptives are compelled to give birth to the babies helplessly as far as their body permits, describes herself as a condom person and decides to abort the baby as soon as she finds she is pregnant:

I'd always been a condom person, but since I was regular and we'd both tested negative, Ozi and I switched to the rhythm method. Which can be almost as reliable as the pill. Almost. I told Ozi about it sadly, because I'd decided to have an abortion. But he was ecstatic. I'd never seen him so happy. He told me I had to think about it for a week. And he did something I still haven't forgiven him for: he told his mother. She flew out to New York immediately, bringing gifts and advice.

(150)

It is clear that Mumtaz is culturally westernized, and is very individualistic in contrast to the communal society of South Asia. She finds that she was pregnant as Ozi and she stopped using condom. She decides to have an abortion and tells it to her husband but she finds that her husband was very happy with her pregnancy. So, he suggests her to wait and think for a week before she carries out an abortion. She is angry with Ozi and never forgives him for he shares the news of her pregnancy with his mother and his mother flies to New York with gifts and suggestions. Ozi's happiness at her pregnancy, sharing the news of her pregnancy with his mother, her visits to them with gifts and suggestions are the features of communal culture of South Asia that Mumtaz is unable to understand. She is more western than her native, South Asian culture. This shows the cultural loss of an immigrant in Western countries.

It is no surprise that the loss of culture and sense of belonging culture or family leads a person to identity crisis. The idea of identity is the result of crisis of belonging as Zygmunt Bauman argues, "The idea of 'identity' was born out of the

crisis of belonging and out of the effort it triggered to bridge the gap between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ and to lift reality to the standards set by the idea—to remake the reality in the likeness of the idea ...” (20). The crisis of belonging, the feeling that she is nothing in the family starts to haunt Mumtaz after unwillingly bearing all the consequences of pregnancy and giving birth to a baby boy bearing a lot of pain. She recalls how she lacked any emotional attachment to her kid even after mothering him:

I started to get bored. And then I started to get frightened. Because when I looked at the little mass of flesh I’d produced, I didn’t feel anything. My son, my baby, my little janoo, my one and only: I felt nothing for him. No wonder, no joy, no happiness. Nothing. My head was full of a crazy silence, the kind that makes you think you’re hearing whispers and wonder whether you’re going insane. (152)

Mumtaz shows the boredom and fear in her marriage, and recalls that she felt no motherly attachment to the baby she had given birth. She has no affection for him; she has no wonder, no joy or happiness for the motherhood. She feels as if she will go insane with the mental void. Her lack of attachment to the kid she has given birth is one of the prominent aspect of American culture as Gary Althen and Janet Bennett point out:

Many Americans do not display the degree of respect for their parents that people in more traditional or family-oriented societies commonly do. From their point of view, being born to particular parents is a sort of historical or biological accident. The parents fulfill their responsibilities to their children while the children are young, but when the children reach “the age of independence,” the close child-parent tie is loosened, occasionally even broken. (8)

American parents only fulfill their responsibilities to their children unlike traditional or family-oriented society. They just think that giving birth or being born is just a historical or biological accident. There is not much bond between the kids and parents and they become free from the family when they reach the age of independence that means they are regarded as independent person when they turn twenty one. This American value is individualistic value. Mumtaz is seen displaying the individualistic American value rather than the glorified motherhood that is regarded as a matter of pride in South Asian societies:

I'd done everything I was supposed to. I'd played with Muazzam and read to him, even though he couldn't understand a word, and bought him clothes and fed him with my own body and cleaned his shit with my own hands. I felt so guilty. I knew there was something wrong with me. I was a monster. But I didn't want to be. Staying with my baby was the right thing to do, what everyone expected of me. My mother would agree with Ozi. Even my friends. So I gave in. I said I'd write freelance from home. (153)

It is clear that Mumtaz is clearly fulfilling her responsibility to her kid, Muazzam, like the American parents do to their kids. She played with him, read books to him, bought him clothes, breastfed him and cleaned his shit and dirt. She feels guilty at the lack of her attachment to her child and she is just fulfilling the duty her husband, mother and other members of the society expect from her. Out of her boredom, she wanted to do the fulltime job but with this guilt that she is unable to love her kid, or else what her husband and relative would consider is she does so, she gives up the idea of doing fulltime job and she turns to freelance writing for the print media. She is

clearly and American with her individualistic approach that contrasts to the social codes of the society she belongs to actually demand from her.

Due to the identity crisis and distraction from her usual free life due to the motherhood and family, she looks for interesting stuffs to write and make some money as well as identity as a writer:

But it wasn't the right season to lift off. Not yet. I sat in my apartment and looked out over the city, and I just didn't feel any passion to write about the place. I didn't give a damn about local politics, I wasn't moved by the issues. I missed home. And I was frustrated by people who actually thought the world had a center, and that center was here. (154-155)

Her loss of interest and passion for the place, local politics becomes evident. She just misses the home. She feels that people are wrong to think that the center of the world lies at the point they stand. Actually, she needs to find out another center to come out of this lack of interest and passion upon the city where she lives. She lacks emotion and feelings towards any issue around her, she misses her home and she lacks the center that suggests about her identity crisis:

Slowly, even though I thought it would never happen, New York lost its charm for me. I remember arriving in the city for the first time, passing with my parents through the First World Club's bouncers at Immigration, getting into a massive cab that didn't have a moment to waste, and falling in love as soon as we shot onto the bridge and I saw Manhattan rise up through the looks of parental terror reflected in the window. (155)

New York has lost the charm for her. After giving birth to a baby, the husband and wife did not have sufficient time to talk even though they both played with the baby. The family lacked the communication and failed to provide her some sense of belonging. She recollects the memories how she entered New York for the first time and fell into its charm. Now, to her greatest fear, it lost all the charms for her.

The critics of diaspora see the importance of family in such identity crises. More than the place, caring family with cultural awareness becomes important for her in diasporic condition. Olwig explores the connection among family, ethnicity and the place for a diaspora:

The family also provided a certain sense of community that involved, apart from periodic reunions at major family events, the extension of help and favors important to the livelihood of individuals. The similarities in the two groups of people become apparent when the 'ethnic' identities and practices of these people are interpreted in relation to the lives they have lived rather than in relation to their derivation from a particular place. Place is not in and of itself a given entity that can be used as a natural point of reference in ethnic, diasporic, or transnational identity. Rather it is constructed as people define and give meaning to a particular physical locale in the course of their lives. (68)

Olwig does not give much currency to place as place is constructed point of reference. More than the place of origin, family, ethnicity and sense of community is focused for the construction of identity in his study of diaspora. Though Ozi was a good husband, he started to go to gold and returned tired, there was no sexual union and passion left and they talked less in the family. He used to spend some time with the kid and sleep

when he returned home tired. The emotional distance created within family play important role to alienate Mumtaz and miss the home instead of renewing any interest with New York.

New York was the place where Mumtaz had a lot of memories. It gave her the freedom she never would be able to get in South Asian society. It westernized her and she became sexually independent in New York going against the Pakistani cultural values with rigid sexual codes for women:

I lost my virginity in New York, twice (the second one had wanted to believe he was the first so badly). I had my mind blown open by the combination of a liberal arts education and a drug-popping international crowd. I became tough. I had fun. I learned so much. But now New York was starting to feel empty, a great party that had gone on too long and was showing no sign of ending soon. I had a headache, and I was tired. I'd danced enough. I wanted a quiet conversation with someone who knew what load-shedding was. (155)

Mumtaz does not hesitate to share that she lost her virginity in New York. She learnt liberal lifestyle there; studied liberal arts education and came into the touch with drug-using international crowd. She mimics all the free, western lifestyles and cultural values in expense of her Pakistani cultural values and now, she is missing home and she has got a feeling of void in the western world. Mimicry leads Mumtaz to the disillusionment to the West. But her hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry are more for her survival in the western world rather than resistance to western, colonial mentality. She is one of the mimic women who pursue independent life even after she returns to Lahore with her husband. It is the loss of love and respect to her husband; she develops a passionate, physical attachment to her husband's best friend Daru.

To sum up, in the age of migration in postcolonial era, the characters of the former colonies are being culturally hybrid when they get touch with the western factors. That hybridity and their ambivalent attitude between the cultures, they are becoming the mimic men that has not only affected them and led them to identity crisis but also contributed to the weakening of their cultural values. Hamid novel has successfully shown this postcolonial impact in the backdrop of Pakistani society.

The novelist highlights that cultural hybridity and mimicry are the consequences of colonial, capitalist and materialistic empire that is well supported by the plot of the novel. The plot is framed inside the historical anecdote about the empire of Aurangzeb and his rise and fall as the imperialist. There was a great feud for the power and Aurangzeb took over his brothers in power politics and bloody tactics to get the rein of the empire of his father Emperor Shah Jahan. The consequences of empire upon the life children i.e. the people around the world is thus, a prominent issue of the novel *Moth Smoke*. The sons of Shah Jahan, namely Darashikoh, Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb, fight with each other and the youngest of them, Aurangzeb, takes the reign of his father. The writer has diversified those four sons of Shah Jahan among the characters of different traits, socio-economic condition and temperament in the novel and they are presented as somehow connected in their daily lives; they affect each other's life where the youngest one, Aurangzeb or Ozi becomes victorious because he has got the wealth. With this the writer symbolically presents the bitter truth that the youngest among the cultural values, namely the materialism or the capitalism is taking over the empire and ruining the life of the other economically hapless ones. The plot of the novel is bracketed within the historical anecdote where Emperor Shah Jahan asks a Sufi saint about the future of his sons and his great empire where the saint predicts that his youngest son, Aurangzeb will take

its charge after his death. At the end of the novel, there is the anecdote of the death of Darashikoh that shows the fate of otherwise legal heir of the empire:

But merciless Aurangzeb, who faced an elephant without fear as a child and ruled his empire as a land of one belief, failed at the task of fathering sons unlike himself. The war of succession was again bloody, and the empire left the victor by his father too frail and too rigid to contain its own people.

Fission of empire, a new fusion and then fission again as children parted ways.

It is perhaps between hope and memory, in the atomized, atomic lands once Aurangzeb's empire, that our poets tell us Darashikoh, the apostate, called out to God as he died. (247)

This anecdote of Darashikoh's death coincides with the plot, in which Aurangzeb or Ozi, sends his friend Darashikoh (Daru) to the prison. The war of succession of empire coincides with Ozi's attempt to win the love of Mumtaz back from her extra-marital love to Daru. The anecdote that ends the novel presents the fate of an empire that is continually fluctuating between the fission and fusion, the heir of the empire are responsible for this fate of the empire while the very empire and power have got number of consequences upon their lives. The clash between hope and memory is symbolically presented as the clash between the Western prosperity fueled by the colonial empire in past and the condition of the Third World subjects that are drawn back to their homeland due to its memory. Hope and memory are fluctuating consequences of the empire in the Third World characters that have long lasting cultural impacts. Hybridity and mimicry are thus, the result of hope upon empire and memory of their own culture.

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