



SKIMMING AND SCANNING THE POST COLONIAL ASPECTS OF ‘ANJUM’ IN THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS

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INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial literatures have been an important part of English literature since the time of decolonisation. It often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonisation of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people. It was different for different people considering whether it is a male, female or a hermaphrodite. Post colonialism means after colonialism but this meaning should not be taken by heart as the world is still not devoid of colonisation. Many parts of world still follow many practices, culture, fashion and views of the west. We also come across people whose voices have been silenced, the ones who are thirsty to be expressed. Post- colonial theorist also bought into their writings the importance of giving space for multiple voices. These series of issues and talks lead to the discussion of post colonialism which further lead to the development of post -colonial literature. Many post-colonial writings began to pop up some of the even acted as a mouthpiece for the oppressed. Theorist called those silenced voices as “the subalterns”. Some of the common issues these post -colonial literature and theorist talks about is racialism and the white mask which most of the people wish to wear. In Frantz Fanon’s work Black Skin, White Mask it shows how people each other define on the basis of colour and the white mask many try to wear by following the culture and way of living of the west. Through this kind of writing

the writers are trying to change the way people think as decolonisation should start from our mind.

“Decolonising the Mind” is a term made famous by the postcolonial Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo.

An interesting feature of the post-colonial writers is most of their writings are patriotic, they write books on behalf of their nation. Nationhood and nationalism are spread out in each page of their book. They try to enhance their nations cultural, social and political identity. These can be clearly seen through the works of some of the post-colonial writers such as Arundathi Roy, Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe and many more. Here I would bring into your notice a book of Arundathi Roy, her latest fiction which speaks about the post-colonial India a rather dashing book that might shock your conscience. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* a book that gets imprinted on your mind for its beautiful narration and each line that bring a picture about the characters making even the readers one among them. This is a novel which speaks through murmurs, ear piercing shouts, happy tears and painful cries.

Anjum as an Embodiment of Postcolonialism

The central characters of the book are Anjum, Tilottama, Musa, Saddam who come from different realms of the society. Throughout this novel Roy invites the readers to view different experiences of living in post-colonial India. The term post-colonialism has another aspect rather than its simple definition. It also refers to the ethnicity, cultural background, language, race and the identity of humans with the representation of all these in the present era after the decolonisation of many countries. The issue of identity and culture have always been a topic among the writers. Regarding the view put forward by Jones Brockimeier and Donal Carbaugh in their work *Narrative and Identity*, the term identity encompasses many different intellectual issues that have been analysed under different schools of thought and in context of different theories. Pieterse suggests that after the Second World War colonial powers started losing their grip over colonies and that the identities of the weak and of colonial subjects emerged as an important theme (Pieterse 22). Post-colonial novelist keeping their objective in mind change their methodologies because at the end they always think about how to recover from the impacts of colonialism. Homi Bhabha is one of the central figures in contemporary postcolonial studies. He has developed a number of postcolonial concepts like hybridity, mimicry, deference, and ambivalence. Hybridity is a term which we can see in almost every post-colonial discourse, it simply means ‘cross cultural exchange’. As Homi Bhabha notes in his work “*The Location of Culture*”:

“In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. He says that “the figure of mimicry is locatable within what Anderson describes as ‘inner compatibility of empire and nation’. It problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the ‘national’ is no longer naturalizable” (87).

IDENTITY CRISIS

The identity issues arise in the novel with the character Anjum who is a hermaphrodite. She is confused about her identity and is in a quest for finding her true self. The “in-between” identity of Anjum and her “patched together” body depicts the cultural conflict of the colonized countries after colonization. Anjum can be considered as an epitome of colonisation who stands as a tangible or visible form of the colonised India. Anjum was born with both sex organs of male and female but still her family accepted her only as a male and named her Aftab. In the novel we find the situation of Anjum’s mother who finds it shocking to find both the sex organs. The journey from Aftab to Anjum was not an easy one. This change in her is like the dispersion or spread of the colonised people after colonisation which is connected to the idea of diaspora in post-colonial theory. Her family tried their utmost to impose the identity of Aftab in her. During colonisation the colonisers also were similar trying to impose their culture over the colonised leading to the suppression their native culture. This transculturalism is one of the main reasons for confused identity. The colonisers always considered their culture to be superior similarly in a patriarchal society the male figure is considered

to be superior. So this could be one of the reasons why Anjum was forced to be identified as a man rather than as a female.

Roy through her text shows us the linguistic as well as the cultural hybridity that existed in the post-colonial society. Roy deconstructs and reconstitutes the western linguistic and cultural models to bring in the native hybrid lived experience in her novel. Roy's identified texts from her novel are: Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I am Amjuman. I'm mehfil, I'm gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone is invited. (4)

In the above cited text, we can see that Roy has used Urdu language words and phrases as a disruptive strategy to put forward the linguistic hybridity and cultural identity in the native settings. Through Anjum Roy actually portrays the transgender community as a whole. If the woman in the society faces double colonisation the transgender community faces tripartite oppression. Here the question which arises is that who are we colonised by... either the west or by our own community. Through Anjum Roy also presents a piece of the history, the Gujarat riot and a flyover story about India's first emergency declared by the then government. This was a time when atrocities were flooding one after the other in India. During the declaration of emergency fundamental emergencies were suspended, cruelties of police, newspapers lost their freedom. In the name of population control, people were forcefully sterilized. The Government's enactment of new law – Maintenance of Internal Security Act gave permission to arrest anybody on mere suspicion. The jail was crowded over by the opposition leaders without any trial. The Democracy and Indian Constitution became mere puppet in the hands of political leaders.

MIMICRY IN POST-COLONIALISM

“Mimicry is a sign of a double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 85). In post-colonialism it means the imitation of colonised to act or become as the coloniser. It is considered to be an endless effort from the part of the colonised. The fact that Anjum dressed and acted like a woman is a form of mimicry. This is evident from the novel itself as it is said that:

She dressed “in the clothes she longed to wear – the sequined, gossamer kurtas and pleated Patiala salwars, shararas, ghararas, silver anklets, grass bangles and dangling earrings. She had her nose pierced and wore an elaborate, stone studded nose-pin, outlined her eyes with khol and blue eye shadow and gave herself a luscious, bow-shaped Madhubala mouth of glossy-red lipstick. Her hair would not grow very long, but it was long enough to pull back and weave into a plait of false hair” (Roy 26).

This shows how Anjum tried to identify herself as she also “learned to exaggerate the swing in her hips when she walked” (Roy 27). Here, the word “learned” is something which needs to be pondered on as it reflects that what she does is not something which has been acquired naturally. It represents a form of imitation or mimicry as she is trying to imitate the gender female. So here her identity is actually made by her as she wishes herself to be identified as female. Mimicry in postcolonialism can also be considered as a form of power struggle as the so-called inferior ones try to imitate their superiors. Anjum, as an in-between individual, tries to fit into the socially constructed norm of being a woman by imitating the gestures of women in every way maybe because her own identity was unknown and because she was considered as indifferent. But we see in the novel that every time she tries to female her male part of the body intervened in it. This is similar in the case of colonised how much they try to imitate the part of their culture also gets mixed up. This creates a rather confused state much clearly a confused identity. When Bhabha quotes Naipaul as: “We pretend to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new” (Bhabha 88).

CONCLUSION

Anjum is neither man nor woman nor, exactly, a Hijra. She's a hermaphrodite and a mother. In many ways she's restricted in her happiness by her identity. Gender identities represented in this novel is mostly challenging and interesting. Anjum in one way or the other is distraught of the world she lives in.

Philosophically, identity is defined as the affiliation each thing carries only to itself. And the psychological meaning of identity includes the characteristics, individualities, beliefs, expressions, and views that construct a person or group. While the idea of identity in sociology is understood as one of social appearance, self-appreciation, and looks that express their uniqueness and differentiate from others, such as national, cultural and gender identities. And cultural studies have embraced the notion that identities are paradoxical and dislocate or intersect each other. The quest for one's identity has always been a major concern in the postcolonial world and the quest seem to be never-ending. In such a scenario the only thing we could do is to hold on and not let our cultural identity be drowned in all these conflicts.

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