

Postmodernism: Crisis versus Construction of Identity

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that, all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct.

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Abstract

The question of identity in literature is quite common. The trend of identity formation differs from pre-modern to modern stage and from modern stage to postmodern stage. Sometimes it seems very problematic and sometimes quite convenient. The identity debate becomes more prominent from modern to current age with the beginning of social hierarchy. The social status of the individual is endangered due to the introduction of different social phenomenon like the formation of multicultural society, post war depression etc. The most interesting part of studying the identity in literature is that, what we call identity crisis from modernist point of view seems the process of identity formation from a postmodernist point of view. This study suggests that while the identity is endangered, the project of rejecting identity oriented society and adopting an “alternative identity” is the ultimate solution of the progressive postmodern politics.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. A Short Preface to the Paper:

Postmodern literature is concerned with the social, cultural and historical development of the human being. In this field of postmodern study, the individual becomes the central issue. The crisis of identity and the struggle for survival are the major themes in this regard. These two themes are interwoven in literary fiction while observing the individual who has a troubling history. In the name of identity, a line is drawn between a person who is the king of himself and one who is enslaved. Social hierarchies and oppression have been rationalized by the ideology of identity and difference. Embracing racial, ethnic, gender identities and the accepting roles that have been defined by oppression, repeat the exclusionary and divisive practices of the dominant culture. People who are marginalized from the mainstream of society seek their own way of forming their identity that can be termed as "alternative identity". Postmodern literature shows great interest in this type of identity formation. It brings this set of people in the limelight and opens a large scope of debate. While the identity is endangered, the project of rejecting identity oriented society and adopting an "alternative identity" is the ultimate solution of the progressive postmodern politics.

1.2. The Identity Debate in Postmodern Study:

By observing a set of previous literary pieces related to my topic, I will distinguish my point of interest with the possibility of writing this paper. In this paper, 'literature' refers to any relevant research, publication, textbooks and academic writing. This section of my paper is relevant to the development of the rest of my paper as it will show how the current research fits with some of the previous ones on the same topic by presenting alternative points of view.

In *The Buddha of Suburbia: Cultural Identity in a Multicultural Society*¹, Andersen, Hansen, Hellstrom, Hiltunen, Hobbs, Jackson and Munch explore the problems associated with the formation of identity in the context of immigrant society. In the paper they have shown how the characters reveal themselves with the colour of postmodern traits of fragmentation and rootlessness, which are then focused with the theatrical study of multiculturalism, identity, alienation, belonging and the immigrant experience. They conclude with the claim that, the lack of the sense of belonging is a universal problem with the immigrant society. Here, in my paper I will also observe the condition of immigrant society that plays a vital role in the creation of postmodern identity.

Identity Formation in the Postmodern World by Alastair Crook is another work that is closely related to my paper. Here the writer explores the idea of identity formation in the postmodern world. Firstly, he defines postmodernism and identity formation, later he describes the process of identity formation. He brings Giddens' sense of the 'reflexive self' and Hall's theory of the 'crisis

¹ It was a group project under the supervision of Lars Axel Petersen, Roskilde University.

of the self' side by side to exemplify recreational drug use and multiple narrative representations of self based on consumption and globalization. In relation to this paper, I will address both the crisis of identity and the formation of identity side by side where drug addiction and commodification as well as consumption play an influential role.

In the essay *Do you Choose your Identity or is it Chosen for you?*² Dana claims that "In today's world the choosing of one's identity is a multi-layered experience, consciously and unconsciously influenced by countless factors.". Although we may like to think that, we have our own authority over the formation of identity, but in real, the degree to which we are able to act on this authority is dependent on opportunity, awareness and taking responsibility for one's self. We also have to accept that, no matter how much we live by our own authority, we will always carry pieces of identities which have in some way been influenced by others. The saying 'No man is an island' accurately describes the inter-connectedness we share, not only with other people, but with the media we digest, the social structures we reside within, and the family we have descended from. Genuine choice in our identity creation can exist when rather than viewing these influences as something imposed on us, or being imposed to them, we embrace them as rich parts of our personal embodiment and decide in each moment how to use them, and even whether to use them or not. My paper doesn't completely agree with this idea of identity formation. In most of the cases, the postmodern characters don't have that much option to choose their own identity or they are not that much conscious of the formation of their own identity,

² An essay by Dana Mrkich, Published in her personal website:

<http://www.danamrkich.com/writings/essays/06/dycyi.html>

rather the identity depends of on the surroundings that don't allow that much option to form an identity consciously. They are either to accept what is imposed on them or to reject the imposed identity completely.

Identity, Formation, Agency, and Culture by James E. Cote, Charles G. Levine is a theory based book that forms the basis of understanding the identities from different perspectives. The author introduces its readers with several theories and studies of self and identity by concentrating on pragmatic issues of identity formation. It intends in search for behavioral and social sciences, as well as clinicians, counsellors, and social workers dealing with identity-related disorders. In recent decades identity has been a problematic issue that inspires the author to portray this book. Day by day the concept of identity is getting changed as if the construction of identity is getting liquefied from any prior material substance. In the preface of the book the author claims "identity formation has changed in many ways for many young people attempting to make their way into adulthood, so much so that we are witnessing a proliferation of identity related problems even the pathologies" (Cote xi). The book concludes with recommendations of how to develop and understand the untapped potential of human identity formation. This text will come in great use for the development of my paper as a secondary resource.

These are the main secondary resources that I have adopted from postmodern writing in identity issue. Though I am not directly expanding any of these writings, rather I partially agree with the idea of the postmodern condition of identity shown here and trying to establish my own point of view.

1.3. Some Elements of Postmodernism

A text written in the postmodern age is not simply postmodern rather it will be a piece of postmodern literature with the inclusion of exclusive postmodern characteristics. Here, I will discuss some important traits of postmodern literature that makes the selected texts (*The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Howl*) postmodern as well.

Pastiche is one of the common elements of postmodern literature. It means to combine or "paste together" multiple elements. Different types of genres are combined altogether to produce postmodern literature. The multiplicity of elements can be synonymous to the plural, disordered aspect of postmodern society. Both of my primary texts, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Howl* are highly affected with this postmodern characteristic. We find pastiche in the plot construction, thematic approach and the characterization of the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* and the in the portrayal of the major characters.

Temporal distortion is another common element of postmodern literature. Fragmentation and nonlinear are the main characteristics of temporal distortion. In postmodern literature, it is used in wide range of ways. Distortion of time and plot is the most influential aspect of temporal distortion. Here time gets stuck, time gets rocket and even sometimes time becomes time machine that make the plot cryptic, twisted and fragmented. In the novel we see spontaneous overlapping of the present and past time. In *Howl* we see the narrative that is completely unconscious of time and surroundings.

Technoculture and hyperreality is also very much popular to the postmodern authors. Frederic Jameson defines postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism". In postmodern age society is moving beyond the capitalism with the touch of information technology. Every day we are becoming constant target of hundreds of advertisements, images, and videos that create our

appetite for newer consumption. In some literature products are explored in such way that it represents the mirror view of the original one and we can't get out of it. In this case simulation is taking place of the original and the use of advanced technology makes it possible.

Fragmentation is an important aspect of Postmodern literature. According to writer James Morley, postmodernism seeks to maintain elements of modern utility while returning to classical forms of the past. He describes it as an "ironic brick-a-brack or collage approach to construction that combines several tradition styles into one structure. In literature it means breaking the structure rather than building the structure that conveys a hidden meaning rather than a surface meaning. In both primary texts *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Howl* it plays a vital role. We see the use of fragmentation in both the plot construction and characterization.

1.4. Development of Thought:

The underline structure of the paper is formed with five interconnected chapters. The main body will start from the second chapter with the definition of postmodernism and identity crisis. Then I will attempt to contextualizing the critical situation of identity in a multicultural society like London in the light of the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*³. The crisis of identity ultimately leads to the formation of an alternative identity that is postmodern identity. The fourth chapter of this paper will define the formation of identity from the aspect of postmodernism. Certainly, I will refer to several postmodern theorists while defining any theoretical term like postmodernism,

³ A novel based on multicultural society of London that we published in the year of 1990.

identity crisis, identity formation etc. In the fifth chapter, the paper will be concluded with a clear description of the main point of interest of this paper.

CHAPTER 2

POSTMODERNISM & IDENTITY

2.1. Postmodernism at a Glance:

In a single phrase Postmodernism can be considered as a 'reaction to modernism'. It is a capitalist state of complexity, contradiction, ambiguity and interconnectedness that doesn't offer any clear organizing principle. In general, it is the embodiment of dissatisfaction towards long held modernity. However, postmodernism has been defined differently in terms of different research areas. According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

Postmodernism is indefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.

Steve Mizrach defines postmodernism as "a new organizing principle in thought, action, and reflection, connected to many changing factors in modern society"(Talking pomo: An analysis of the postmodern movement). Later he suggests, that it is not 'antimodernism' since it's an attempt of combining the best of the modern world with the best of the traditional world in an "organic way" that that gets rid of the worst of both.

Some critics completely refuse the existence of postmodernism. Kirby argues that, following the rise of pseudo-modernism, postmodernism is dead, while other authors argue that postmodernism was never a movement, instead only "...the rough outline of a set of self-referential ideals than a genuine cultural movement"(Willis 44). Many have defined postmodernism as meaningless by claiming that, it adds nothing to our collective sphere of knowledge⁴. The theory of postmodernism is developed by collective attempts of distinguished thinkers who deal separately with different perspectives of postmodernism. In *Teach Yourself* Glenn Ward argues that:

Postmodernism is not, strictly speaking, a school of thought. It is not a unified intellectual movement with a definite goal or perspective, and does not have a single dominant theoretician or spokesperson. (05)

So it's quite tough to define postmodernism by a single phrase or sentence, rather, it's a set of idea that gives a concept of a new trend of thought that neither agrees to modernism nor

⁴ The overall development of human civilization

disagrees with it. Even the ideology of postmodernism differs from discipline to discipline. What we find in postmodern literature can't be similar to postmodern architecture or what postmodern architecture claims may be different to the ideology of postmodern geography or cultural studies.

2.2. Identity in Postmodern Literature:

The question of identity in postmodern literature is as important as it was in previous schools of literary thought. The idea of identity formation in this changing "postmodern" atmosphere is not similar to that of preexisting concept of identity. This is a big question; how the individuals form their identity in this fractured, multi-narrative society. It must be a topic with sociological significance, as the conditions behind the construction of identity have changed in this postmodern world. In general, identity formation is the process of developing a personality that is distinct from that of other people. The process defines the individuals not only to other rather to themselves. It is actuated through a process of the development of uniqueness, reinforced through continuity and affiliation. It leads the notion of personal identity to a distinct place, where identity is formed through the practice of individualism. In Berzonsky's opinion, "the quest to achieve a sense of identity is important because we live in a relativistic, postmodern age of continual social, political, economic and technological change, which requires continually shifting expression of one's self "(Berzonsky127).

For many postmodern critics identity is now a fluid concept, an open question, a construct that is built as one moves along, according to one's environment and interest. In this regard, the self is shifting, fluid, dynamic, multiplicity, relativistic, context-specific and fragmented. If we consider

this condition of identity beyond post-modernity, then it is nothing more than a complete identity crisis.

Consumerism plays as a driving force in forming identity in postmodern age. Identity formation depends on and develops out of consumerism in this regard as Kellner and Featherstone argue, identity, in the post-modern world, is closely identified with the active consumption of products that are offered to individuals by the media and leisure industries. However, several scholars disagree with the mechanism for this, and point out socio-cultural factors and forces, that structure difference and subsequently create the boundaries essential to construct identity.

As Ott states, "...a post-modern society is emerging which nurtures forms of identity different from, or even opposite to, those of modernity"(Ott 58). As Kellner argues, "...one is a mother, a son, a Texan, a Scot, a professor, a socialist, a Catholic, a lesbian - or rather a combination of these social roles and possibilities. Identities are thus still relatively fixed and limited, though the boundaries of possible identities, of new identities, are continually expanding" (Kellner 263).

With the change of world economy; from product based to service based, from centralization to globalization, the individuals' identity formation process changes from pre-given categories, such as "...class, gender and ethnicity decline in social significance" (Crook 84), to the idea of active consumption. Therefore, the identity is now defined and affirmed through consumer choice, and, ultimately, through consumption as Ott states, in his analysis of *The Simpson's* as an observation of postmodern identity formation:

Homer eats, Homer drinks, Homer belches, but, in reality, there is nothing called 'Homer' beyond the eating, drinking and belching. There is no being behind the doing. Homer is

just the sum of his actions and no more....In this mode, the subject evaporates and all social and political action becomes futile and absurd. (74)

The desire for consumption is not fixed; now I need it, then I want something else. The demand is changing in each and every moment that makes the nature of postmodern identity fluid that is constructed out of consumerism.

2.3. Notion of Identity

The mode of identity is quite different in modern and pre-modern stage. According to Glenn Ward "In pre-modern community's identity is social, but it is not beset by doubt or conflict. Personal identity is stable, because it is defined and maintained by long-standing myths and pre-defined systems of roles"(118). At that time, the people were the part of age old kingship, employed in certain roles and destined to continue with the role as long as they were alive. There was no need to shift from one form of identity to another and nobody was willing to question your social stand since it's almost pre-defined. The son of a warrior was to be a warrior and the son of a farmer was to be a farmer. Thus, the characters were very flat and the identity was tangible in pre-modern age.

What modernists and pre-modernists claim to be a state of identity crisis, is ultimately considered as construction of identity by the postmodern thinkers. Here comes the point of my interest. Individuality is getting commodity by the cultural logic of late capitalism, while it's extracting the essence from the individuals and throwing the person into a stage of Yeats' "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"(635). This stage gives the completeness of Yeats'

imaginary chaos and disorder that splits the self into fragments. This splitting self is the ultimate solution for the postmodern character to cope up with the changing world.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY CRISIS IN CONTEXT

3.1. Immigrant's Identity:

The first sentence of the novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, expresses a vivid view of the inner identity crisis portrayed in the novel "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost (Kureishi 3)" and the circumstances around him shows the real scenario of the immigrants in England as he belongs to nowhere; neither to India nor to England. He is not a good English man because of his Indian origin. On the other hand, he is not a good Indian since he lives in England. He is just in between that creates a horrible emptiness in him. He can't feel any belonging to where he is in. His position is no better than that of a diasporas'.

To be born into an immigrant family in England is to be in a third space that offers no space to form an individual identity. In Andrei Gurevich's own words: "This in-betweenness mirrors the reality of individuals' lives in diaspora, where they are often found inhabiting"(Vol. X, no. 2). The issue gets expressed seriously when Karim utters "perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored" (Kureishi 3). He is in a state of limbo⁵ that allows him a very limited space to grow and flourish. He is a hybrid man out of an English mother and an Indian father. If we look comparatively both younger and older generation of the immigrants, we can see the transition of identity crisis from the older to the younger. Sometimes the crisis gets too much severe and sometimes they find a way out.

England is the land of fortune and opportunities. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, we find a set of people migrates to England in search of their fortune. Karim's father, Haroon comes to England for being educated to fulfill the wish of his family, but it is proved to be a vain attempt. Haroon's father was a doctor and their family background was high enough in India, but in England everything turns downwards and he becomes a clerk in the Civil Service for 3 Pound a week. This amount of income is too poor to maintain his family. Similarly, Jeeta becomes a suburban shopkeeper in England, who was an Indian princess. Haroon gets shocked by the discrepancy between the real England and the England in his mind. He thought, every English man to be able to read Shakespeare or Byron and not get engaged in any odd job like dustman but his

⁵ A concept of double consciousness or afrofuturism's exploration of hybridity, that unstable feeling of in-betweenness. See Edward Brthwaite "Limbo" in *The arrivants: a new world trilogy*.

imagination is proved to be completely wrong when seen England and the English people in real life as he exclaims, "not that every Englishman could read Byron"(Kureishi 26).

3.2. Racism versus Identity:

His another contradiction with his imaginary English people is that they are racist. Racism and discrimination play a dominant role in both the first and the second generation of the immigrants in London. Karim is half-English and half-Indian that becomes the target point of the racist English. The issue becomes very clear when one of his friend's father expresses his disliking for his dark skin, though his friend Helen likes blacks and Indians. She says "[b]ut this is your home... We like you being here. You benefit our country with your traditions"(Kureishi 55). However, most of the English people are fond of finding out the difference between the black and white to idealize their racist view. Karim says:

The area in which Jamila lived was closer to London than our suburbs, and far poorer. It was full of neo-fascist groups, thugs who had their own pubs and clubs and shops. On Saturdays they'd be out in the High Street selling their newspapers and pamphlets. They also operated outside the schools and colleges and football grounds, like Millwall and Crystall Palace. At night they roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter-boxes. Frequently the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings and the Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police. There was no evidence that these people would go away – no evidence that their power would diminish rather than increase. The lives of Anwar and Jeeta and Jamila were pervaded by fear of violence. I'm sure it was something they thought about everyday. Jeeta kept buckets of water around her bed in case the shop was fire-bombed in

the night. Many of Jamila's attitudes were inspired by the possibility that a white group might kill one of us one day.(Kureishi 56)

The paragraph illustrates the problem of the ethnic people in the suburb. They suffer terrible from racism. The authority of the suburb remains silent when the English people harass the ethnic people. The racist groups are united to victimize the minority people; even the police stands on the side the racist group.

Even the racial discrimination reaches inside the yard of the school from the streets. It is the consequence of the treatment of education by the ethnic people. They emphasize their children on productive work rather than education and the children have to work for supporting their families financially. This fact convinces the teachers to perceive that, the Children of minorities are incapable of learning education. The racist view as well as the psychological violation of the English education system is expressed by Karim's statement, "all my Dad thought about was me becoming a doctor. What world was he living in? Everyday I considered myself lucky to get home from school without serious injury"(Kureishi 63).

3.3. Depression:

Being a failure in education Karim starts having drug that leads him in a state of severe depression. He attempts to escape from the depression of being an ethnic boy in England by having drug. However, later on, he moves to London in search of better opportunities and gets a good job there. He gets a chance to play a part in the play, *The Jungle Book* by Kipling. *The Jungle Book* should be a starting point for Karim, but his friends and family criticize him for

playing a role of an Indian. His father, Haroon says, "That bloody fucker Mr. Kipling pretending to whitty he knew something about India! And an awful performance by my boy looking like a Black and White minstrel!"(Kureishi 157). Similarly, the play becomes disgusting to Jamila as well. She thinks it expresses "cliches about Indians" and it is "completely neo-fascist". Parallel to this, in *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie suggests that English writers provide "fake portraits" of India, in order to "provide moral, cultural and artistic justification for imperialism"(89). Here, in the novel, Haroon and Jamila have the consciousness to perceive these imperialistic racial policies in *The Jungle Book*.

Later, Karim is called to take part in another play, whose subject is the minorities and it "shows black people... as being irrational, ridiculous, as being hysterical and being fanatical" (Kureishi 180). Once again, he becomes the subject of criticism by his friends. The reference to the misrepresentations of the minorities in stage performance epitomizes the racist attitude towards the minorities of the novel.

Sometimes the racist attitude becomes so severe that it costs the lives of the victims. Gene, the ex-boyfriend of Eleanor commits suicide as a consequence of extreme racism. The racial discrimination in London becomes unendurable to him:

Sweet Gene, London's best mime, who had emptied bed-pans in hospital soaps, killed himself because everyday, by a look, a remark, an attitude, the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being. And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness

and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard-into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too.(Kureishi 227)

This is one of the key passages about the situation of the ethnic minorities in England. This is, no doubt, the shame of humanity. The situation reminds me the words of Shakespeare from "If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (Act III, Scene I)". The situation is getting cherished in the civilization from its birth. The so called development as well as modernity can't bring any good for the victim of racism. Now, it's the turn for the victims to take the issue in serious consideration for doing any good since no worse is possible than the situation they are in that even cost the lives of the victims like Gene. This type of attitude towards the minority people leads them towards severe identity crisis.

3.4. Rebelious Protest:

The frustration that grows out of such identity oriented modern society, leads a set of people to live beyond the society. They simply ignore the norms and condition of the society. They find it fruitful to be out of the society instead of suffering from the crisis of identity within the society. This is the way of their protest against the existing social system. *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg can be a good example in this regard. The poem starts with the following striking lines:

I saw the best minds of my generations destroyed by madness, starving / hysterical
naked, / dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry / fix

Here, Ginsberg talks about the outcast people who have rejected or have been rejected by the society because of their attitude towards the existing rules and regulation of the society. Perhaps these are the most striking lines of his poetry. He defines these people as the "best minds" of the society because of their protest against the capitalist society in which they are simply considered as mad people. It is the madness of not being a part of the so called civilized society.

The setting of the poem is very harsh and rude. The "Negro streets" represents the harsh reality of the New York City where these "best minds" get lost. The setting offer them nothing except "angry fix" that ends up with drug addiction or anything that nullify anger against the system of the society. The individuals attempt to purify their souls by getting apart from modernity, thus bestowing a holy nature to their acts of anarchy and depravity.

They get apart due to their rejection of the values of the preexisting modern world and the acceptance of the natural order. The "machinery of night," refers to something that exists in the darkness of the industrial progress of America. The so called industrial progress offers them nothing except materialistic greed and the destruction of natural resources as well as the indigenous value of the country. The phrase "starry dynamo" reminds us the greatness of the nature as well as the possibility of the divinity in the world and these are the "best minds" who can only apprehend the blessing of nature.

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Chil- / dren
screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!

The most repeating word "Moloch" in the poem characterizes all the sacrifices that America makes all the citizen to do in the name of so called modernity. This sacrifice throws the man into a state of complete solitude, not just from each other, but from the natural world. People sacrifice their passion and time for an unattainable dream that will never come in real. The "best minds" of the generation understand the politics and reject being a part of it.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTEX OF IDENTITY FORMATION

4.1. Background of Identity Formation:

The struggle against identity crisis to form an identity is the most influential aspect of the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*. In the previous section we have observed how racist surroundings of the immigrates leads them towards to a severe condition of identity crisis, but most of them manage to seek a way of their own to get rid of this condition. Karim, the protagonist of the

novel, struggles against multiple forces while forming his identity. For Karim, race and class are two of several forces that play crucial role in constructing his identity. Going to London, pursuing the theatre, and determining who he is and how he shall live are the major factors that make the pedestal of his own identity.

4.2. Hybrid Identity:

The second generation of the immigrant develops a distinct identity that is neither Indian nor British; we can call it British Asian identity. If we concentrate on the main character of the novel, Karim, it will be clear. He was born in England and got closer to the English people with lax morals as Kureishi claims regarding "becoming a decadent person with lax morals as the rest of the society" (Kureishi211). His British Asian identity is something not acceptable to the Indians as well. The grown-up immigrants don't try to become a part of mainstream English society. They preferred living within their own circle. In contrast, the second-generation immigrants begin to mingle with the English society. Karim's father, Haroon, the representative of the first generation immigrants, begins to show "an interest in some concepts of the Eastern cultures such as Ying and Yang, cosmic consciousness and Chinese philosophy" (Kureishi27).

The racist groups in the novel are well organized to carry on their oppression on the immigrants with the help of local authorities. Therefore, ethnic minorities become the victim of violence at any time. In consequence, Jamila, Karim's cousin and girlfriend starts to learn karate and judo for her own security.

One day one of these racist groups throws a pig's head into Anwar's shop. Here, the choice of the animal is significant as the Muslims are strongly prohibited to have pig's meat. Regarding the

incident Changez says to Karim indicating the English people, "You are little English with a yellowish face like the devil. The number of morals you have equals none! (Kureishi 184). Here we see the "othering" process to form an identity. The situation is same to the English people's "othering" process like the English people call Karimas a "Black Paki devil". Both parties have a tendency to praise their own and to look down upon another.

4.3. Naming and Identity:

Moreover, in the novel, name plays an important role. Karim's brother Amar calls himself "Allie" to avoid discrimination. On the other hand, Ted and Jean call Haroon Amir as "Harry". This is certainly an attempt to gain or impose English identity that becomes clear when Karim's mother tells him: "You're an Englishman, I'm glad to say" (Kureishi 232). In real, his appearance places him in the middle; in other words, his blood is not pure enough to be accepted, neither as a pure English man nor as a pure Indian.

4.4. Consumerism and Identity:

Later, Karim and Haroon start to make use of their exotic origin. Haroon who has "spent years to be more of an Englishman, now was putting it back spade loads" (Kureishi 23) by exaggerating his Indian accent. It gives them a sort of relief from their existing identity crisis and adds a new layer of identity. Even the English people get attracted to their culture and identity as Eva, a white character begins to learn Urdu and as Haroon begins to teach yoga and Eastern philosophy to the English. This is, no doubt, the commodification of eastern culture and the English people are showing their interest of testing new cultural traits to satisfy their exotic taste.

According to David Christopher, Britain has been experiencing rapid socio-cultural change since 1950s. Individualism and pleasure-seeking ethic is taking the prevailing position of collectivism. The condition of post-world war people was frustration due to the shortages and queues: "they wanted fun and consumerism"(Christopher 2). In the novel, there is one passage that echoes with the statement of Christopher:

They were fanatical shoppers in our suburbs. Shopping was to them what the rumba and singing is to Brazilians. Saturday afternoons, when the streets were solid with white faces, was a carnival of consumerism as goods were ripped from shelves. And every year after Christmas, when the sales were about to begin, there'd be a queue of at least twenty idiots sleeping in the winter cold outside the big stores for two days before they opened, wrapped in blankets and lying in deckchairs (Kureishi 65).

It is not only goods that can satisfy their desire; holidays and cars, are now also available to ordinary British citizens. The quote above suggests that it is "white faces" who are heightening their limit of pleasure and consumption seeking mind. There are, however, other groups in the society, who are also playing great contribution in the changing Britain. As perfectly portrayed character Charlie, a young musician, becomes a leader of cultural exploration. He influences young people to copy their style; hence 'pop' culture was created.

Christopher explains that some young people rejected both the lifestyle of consumerism and that of politics. Yes, some young people reject the idea of consumerism literally, but they are actually entering into a new layer of consumerism. Exotic spirituality and enlightenment become the main attraction for them. Eva's friends Carl and Marianne, who have just returned from the adventure in India, are hosting Haroon's yoga sessions. Their house, in which the yoga session

takes place, has been decorated with various Indian ornaments and materials. According to Carl: "there are two sorts of people in the world – those who have been to India and those who haven't"(Kureishi 30). It is certainly a new trend of consumerism. The interest of their consumption only shifts from western product to mystic products, from western philosophy to exotic philosophy.

Most of the characters found in the novel are changing frequently to suit with the existing surroundings. Both the main characters Karim Amir and Haroon are not similar at the end of the novel to what they were at the beginning. In course of time they experience up and down that splits their existing identity and leads towards the formation of a new identity. This is the postmodern identity that is actuated by the influence of every aspect of lives to cope up with the society.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to explore the universal problem of identity that makes certain number of people outcast, who choose their own way of forming their own identity, that is postmodern identity. The analytical approach to both *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Howl* represented my point of view on the condition of postmodern identity

I believe that the concept of identity raised by the postmodern discourse can't combine any well

structured idea of identity that can be called as universal. Even any postmodern theorist hardly suggest such a structure. Most of the pre-existing structured elements like sameness, continuity, and individuation are infused that blended different elements to make a pastiche individual.

We found that the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* strongly dealing with the issue of identity. Here, the identity was changing its position spontaneously that split the self and creates a complete identity crisis by throwing the character into the position of an outcast. The central characters Haroon and Karim became the main concern in this regard who represented the condition of the first and second generation of the immigrants in London.

The analysis of the characters from postmodern perspective shows that a person's identity was created at the moment the person accepted the crisis of his or her identity willingly. The setting of the novel was a society in transition to postmodernism, which along with other traits, generates a state of general meaninglessness, doubt and fragmentation in the characters. The consequence of this was to destabilize the identity which was terribly suffering from rootlessness and alienation. This condition inspired them to reject the existing norm and condition and the rejection led them to choose their own way of living that became a new identity in the society and we call it postmodern identity.

Howl creates another strong context for the development of the paper. In the poem the poet portrayed the tradition of the beat generation who rejected the social norms and order completely. It was their protest against existing cultural exploitation in the post world war situation. They used to do anything they wished. The free exercise of their will constructed a different kind of identity which was neither modern nor pre-modern and, therefore, we call it postmodern identity.

It is postmodernism that changes the idea of preexisting identity. The view that an identity has a stable core has been replaced by the notion that a person has multiple identities which are constantly changing. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the cultural logic of late capitalism like massive production and consumption should not be underestimated as it influences and limits a person's ability to freely shape and recreate an identity.

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