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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Hybridity Leading towards Identity Crisis: A Study of Daniyal Moeenuddin's Stories "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily" as Cultural Rai**

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Hybridity, in Postcolonial context, refers to dismantling cultures from their totalizing specificities of cultural situations. This cultural decolonization leads towards the emergence of an identity in a contradictory and an ambivalent space called the "Third Space of Enunciation". Like Hybridity, Rai offers a space for articulation in order to voice multiple and diverse narratives. In this context, the present study deals with the issue of identity crisis as the colonizer not only intends to bring civilization to the colonial subjects but also makes the colonized being an Other to itself. Hence, the colonial identity is always in a state of anxiety and flux as a result of mind/body disfigurement and dismemberment of the Colonized. The colonial subjects maintain the position of both master and slave, which, in turn, shatters the binaristic representations of Colonialist Self/Colonized Other. In this context, this study deals with Moeenuddin's (2009) engagement with the colonized double consciousness in his short stories "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily". His stories bring to the fore a feeling of being divided between two antagonistic cultures and also experiencing multiple cultural identities as a privilege in the Postcolonial context.

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**Introduction**

In "Other Rooms, Other Wonders" (2009) is a collection of eight interconnected short stories by Daniyal Moeenuddin, a Pakistani-American author. The stories mainly reflect Pakistani society with class system and poverty at its center. Amongst these eight stories, "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily" are emblematic of contemporary Pakistani Youth whose identities are no more pure and fixed, but

rather the amalgamation of both East and West. The study explores the traces of hybridity and identity crisis of Pakistani young generation where their consciousness is caught between two opposite cultures. Moreover, the study calls on the need to provide a space for articulation in order to voice multiple and diverse narratives regarding identity and culture.

This research has two central points: First, it takes as departure point Moeenuddin's stories as representative of the absence of unified construct of Pakistani identity; to pinpoint the ambivalence within the binaristic representations of the colonizer and the colonized respectively; second, our focal point is to link our reading of Moeenuddin's stories—with its focus on hybridity as a Postcolonial epistemology—to multiplicity and double consciousness of the colonized where Third Space for Enunciation (Bhabha, 1994) provides a site to voice plural identities in a Postcolonial context.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the study of Pakistani literature from the perspective of Postcolonial identity crisis and hybridity in a diasporic context. Therefore, significant works have been done on Daniyal Moeenuddin's short stories from the perspective of hybridity and Postcolonial context particularly the representation of Pakistani masculinity (Sadaf, 2014), feudal system of Pakistan (Tariq, 2018) and Marxist critique (Ishtiaq et al., 2019). This study is unique, as it tends to address Pakistani identity from the perspective of Bhabha's hybridity and Postcolonial identity not in a diasporic context but within the location and culture of Pakistan. Moreover, the issue of hybridity and Postcolonial identity crisis have not been yet explored in Moeenuddin's stories "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily".

We first give a brief sketch of methodology used in this research followed by research questions and theoretical framework on which textual analysis with instances from the selected stories is premised. Finally, we tend to maintain a stance that unified and fixed notion of identity and culture is an illusion in a Postcolonial context.

### **Material and Methods**

The present research is non-empirical as the researchers intend to apply Bhabha's theory of hybridity on Daniyal Moeenuddin stories. The research employs interpretative paradigm with its focus on socio-historical context of the given text. Moreover, the technique used for contextual analysis is close reading of the selected text as the paper intends to address what the text signifies with logical inferences, citing significant references from the text in order to support conclusion and findings drawn from the text (Lapp et al., 2015). Hence, the paper tries to juxtapose Postcolonial notion of hybridity with the text to problematize the notion of fixed identities in a Pakistani context. The selected stories "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily" have been chosen for their hybrid and Postcolonial stances towards Pakistani culture and identity.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Postcolonialism, in recent years, provides a diverse field to engage with the unified representations in order to challenge or subvert the monolithic and Eurocentric image of East v/s West. Ashcroft et al. (1989) problematizes the term Postcolonial to voice multiple dimensions of colonial encounters, which in a way, shatters the binaristic representations of colonizer/colonized, West/Third World. According to him, it is important to consider the notion of location as it determines the various facets of 'colonial encounter' (Ashcroft et al., 2006) in the Postcolonial context. In this regard, Postcolonialism can be seen from the perspective of 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference' in order to pinpoint the fabricated patterns of power relations operating within the Postcolonial discourse.

Young (2003) significantly talks about common grounds between the concept of Rai and Postcolonialism. The meaning of the term 'rai', which conflates with Postcolonialism, is its capacity to subvert the established values and norms. It is a narrative style, embedded within Algerian history of orality, which tends to voice the ambivalent and contradictory issues surrounding the society within non-flexible social structures. According to Young, it addresses multiple issues regarding social problems and hence, it is political not only in its articulations but rather it is political in its "articulations of inarticulate states of being" (Young, 2003, p. 74). It provides novel spaces to get new meanings created and voiced in 'dialogic encounters'. It is a narrative which does not give straightforward answers to the search or formation of a cultural identity but rather it provides a creative space for articulation which Bhabha (1994) calls "Third Space for Enunciation" to give way to multiple social transformations.

Bhabha (1994) takes hybridity as cultural mixture and hence, challenges the notion of purity. For him, all cultural statements and systems must be voiced in an ambivalent space called "Third Space for Enunciation". For Bhabha, this Third Space is multiple as it voices multiple narratives pertaining to colonial and postcolonial realities. Bhabha talks about cultural hybridity in terms of 'international culture' which negates the possibility of purified cultures and hence, shatters the notion of unified and purist identities.

Bhabha (1985) takes Fanon's concept of colonial identity to make an interstitial space of 'in-between' in order to demystify the myth of 'Colonialist Self' and 'Colonized Other' as colonial otherness is addressed through an ambivalent space between them. Thus, the image of totality is impossible and the only way to voice identity is through taking it in a metonymic fashion as a sign of 'absence and loss'. Identity, according to Bhabha, is in a continuous state of transformation in the form of negation of unified identity as "hybridity is better conceived of as a process rather than a description" (Kalra et al., 2005, p.71). Moreover, Bhabha's notion of mimicry refers to double consciousness, which signifies the individuals in a space torn between two antagonistic cultures. Mimicry gives way to 'double articulation',

which dismantles the representational politics of unified identity as mimicry is the making of “almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994).

Fanon (1967), in this context, talks about the hegemony of West where the colonized sense of Self is fragmentary and oppressed. For this, Fanon takes Lacanian notion of Other who is black man for the white man as ‘the not-self’. On the other hand, the white man is ‘not only the Other but also the master, real or imaginary’. According to Fanon, the black man is continuously under domination and subjection of white man because the hegemonic power, which the white man exerts over black man, is not only physical but also intellectual, and, consequently, more oppressive in nature. Hence, Postcolonial identities are always in a state of crisis because they can never attain the taught desire of whiteness and can never shed blackness, which they have learnt to devalue.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Daniyal Moeenuddin’s “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” (2009) is a collection of short stories, which tends to voice multiple narratives of Pakistani culture. Despite the depiction of the rural Pakistan, feudalism, economical segregation and gender asymmetries, the stories signify the transformation of Pakistani society in the backdrop of the 1970s and particularly during the period just after 9/11. The stories revolve around a landowner named K.K. Harouni though he is not the protagonist of the story. The writer through this character explores the hybrid or multi-faceted nature of Pakistani society. On one hand, the character of K.K. Harouni depicts the exploitation of the under privileged class of Pakistan at the hands of the capitalist landowners and feudals in stories like “Saleema”, “Provide Provide” and “About a Burning Girl.” On the other hand, Moeenuddin significantly portrays the young elitist class of Pakistani society in stories like “Our Lady of Paris” and “Lily,” which signify cultural hybridity negating the absolutistic notions of Pakistani society.

The writer, in order to voice multiple narratives embedded within Pakistani society, takes a fragmentary stance as the whole narration is divided into several stories. This fragmentation is a Postmodernist narrative technique termed as Pastiche, which according to Frederick Jameson, is a ‘blank parody’ in order to mock the concept of a unified reason through narrative fragmentation and chaos (Bertens, 1995).

The writer through this narrative fragmentation tends to dismantle the unified image of Pakistani society in the wake of 9/11 where there is only conservatism and religious fundamentalism. Every story signifies a different image, which gives way to the negation of purist notions regarding Pakistani culture and society. “Nawabdin Electrician” is a story of a hardworking but a crafty man who earns his living free from social and moral scruples. The story also throws light on the intricate and manipulative master-slave relation between K. K. Harouni and Nawabdin and, hence, gives a dichotomous picture of Pakistani society divided into

rich and poor. The Marxist feminist stance runs through the next three stories of the collection "Saleema," "Provide Provide" and "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" as the female protagonists are shown to be manipulated and dominated at the hands of men, who are the by-products of male-chauvinism and ultimate patriarchal authority. The story "About a Burning Girl" entails the corruption of law existing in Pakistani society, which ultimately puts the poor on the scaffold for the crimes he/she never commits.

Moeenuddin (2009) in "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily" not only portrays class segregation of contemporary Pakistani society but also significantly depicts the secularized, westernized and liberal Pakistani elitist class, which gives a glimpse of cultural hybridity and diversity within Pakistani society. The two stories offer a cultural Rai in the form of narration regarding young generation caught between two opposing cultures East v/s West in the midst of non-flexible social structures of Pakistan. The characters in the aforementioned stories create a dialogic narrative in order to create new epistemological space regarding Pakistani culture and identity.

The writer portrays the young generation of Pakistan who are very much indulgent in drinking, partying and dating. They have access to almost every part of the world. Their ever-flinching nature cannot let them settle in one place contentedly. In this regard, the writer tends to dismantle the purist notions of culture in terms of voicing an "international culture" (Bhabha, 1994) as cultures remain in a continuous flux and, hence, location becomes hyper-real in the globalized world. The two stories give a vivid portrayal of a certain class of Pakistani society inspired from West, which shatters the binaristic representation of West v/s Third World.

Sohail Harouni, in "Our Lady of Paris," borrows a flat from his childhood friend in Paris who, according to the narrator, "spent much of the last two years in Paris being a writer—though not actually writing" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 141). The mother of Sohail is shown to be a partygoer and attends "fashionable weddings", visits various parts of Pakistan, wears Western clothes in Paris and "summered in London" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 140). Sohail also tells Helen about the inadequacy of the parenting of Rafia and Harouni during his childhood days. Whenever Sohail visits his parents in the evening to say goodnight, he always finds them in the midst of guests and party. When Sohail asks his father to dry his hair after bath, Harouni gives the task to his servant and Sohail feels irritation because the servant fails to show tenderness and, hence, Sohail says about servant, "he didn't know how to touch me" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 149). Moreover, in "Our Lady of Paris", the family structure is not stereotypical and values are not conservative as typically associated with Pakistani society. When the mother of Sohail expresses her desire to spend some time with her son and Helen, Sohail puts his reservations before his mother in a very straightforward manner. For Sohail, it would be like "taking your mother on honeymoon?" In response to Sohail's comment, Rafia decides on giving proper space to the couple, which is not considered to be typical of Pakistani society grounded in strong moral cum religious values.

“Oh, we wouldn’t be in your way. And I’d like see her. You’ll hardly know we’re there. I’ve found an apartment” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 141).

The cultural diversity is also depicted in “Lily,” where a young Pakistani girl and the protagonist of the story loves to party and drink throughout the year. “Lily” is the story of a strong-willed girl, who marries a man out of her disgust with her life as a party person. Lily like Rafia in “Our Lady of Paris” drifts from one place to another like a restless soul who never finds solace in one place contentedly. In the beginning of the story, Lily is found to be with her male friend Mino, “flicking the stub of a cigarette far out into the water” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 168) staring at a couple, a sixteen years girl and a film producer. The writer in Lily presents the plurality and multiplicity of Pakistani culture in the form of cultural contrast between rural and urban Pakistan. If Lily is the spokesperson of urban elitist class in Pakistan, Murad Talwan presents the rural side of Pakistan in an emblematic way. Murad Talwan, though a Princeton graduate and meeting his future wife in one of the elitist parties which Lily and her elitist friends enjoy, finds farming as his ultimate occupational field.

The protagonist of the story “Our Lady of Paris,” Sohail Harouni, a Yale Law student, is a true emblem of globalized Pakistani Youth. The story revolves around the future prospect of the relationship between Sohail and his American girlfriend, Helen. The two people spend time in Paris, meeting the parents of Sohail occasionally, leaving the matter of their relationship in abeyance at the end of the story. The story begins with the description of relationship between Sohail and Helen where Sohail mimics the Westernized ways and dates Helen as “they had begun dating two years earlier, at Yale, where she was an undergraduate and he at the law school” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 139). Moreover, there are several instances in the story, which show Sohail to be physically intimate with Helen. On one occasion, on their return after having dinner with Sohail’s parents “they made love, gently” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 150). Helen significantly describes Sohail as an individual with double consciousness, having in mind both Pakistani and American side, and, hence, captured between two opposite cultures. Helen states:

“His life in Pakistan is so different, at least from what I know. But he has an American side, what I think of as American” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 145).

In “Lily,” Murad Talwan and his protagonist wife are also depicted as mimicking the secularized ways of the West. Before their marriage, Lily accepts Murad’s invitation to picnic along the Indus bank on the way to Attock alone. Though both characters show a tendency to escape from the humdrum of party lifestyle, even then they display unconscious desire to mimic the Westernized ways of living which also shows their state of mind confused between the values of East v/s West. Murad Talwan, being a representative of hybrid Pakistani youth, ordered “alcohol from his bootlegger, cases and cases of it” for the party at his farmhouse for Lily and her friends. Moreover, both of them resist physical intimacy, but still they

maintain it before their marriage, which shows West as the dominating side of their identities.

"They slept together for the first time only a few weeks before the wedding, tenderly, gravely—clumsily, both of them, after having resisted so long" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 199).

"Our Lady of Paris" relates the phenomena of identity crisis in the form of intellectual oppression, which West exercises over the Third World nations like Pakistan. In "Our lady of Paris," the way K.K. Harouni and Rafia idealize the notion of freedom associated with America and American ways of life is symbolic of the intellectual hegemony of the West as master and East as an intellectual slave. K.K. Harouni talks about "being absolutely free" and for him "only an American ever feels that" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 148). On the other hand, Rafia idealizes Americanized freedom of woman in the form of comparison between her and Helen as she states, "I envy your freedoms" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 157). The choices for home making by K.K. Harouni and Sohail are also symbolic of the West as ideal and, hence, the master for the peripheral nations and cultures. For Sohail, "Paris would be glamorous" and for K.K. Harouni his concept of home lies neither in India nor in Europe but "Perhaps in America" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 147). K.K. Harouni also speaks high of Americans while talking to Helen and states:

"There's nothing you people can't do when you put your minds to it" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 145).

Murad Talwan, in "Lily," expresses his desire implicitly to have a baby with Lily when he describes the reason that why the farmers have sent an "enormous honeycomb" to a newlywed bride because, according to them, it can help Lily to get pregnant. But in reaction to her husband's desire Lily "...could only think of the pain, her body torn and stretched" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 204) which, in a way, symbolizes her identity under oppression of Western ideology of woman emancipation, the ultimate freedom to decide on body.

Moeenuddin (2009) in the aforementioned stories calls for the need of a 'Third Space of Enunciation' (Bhabha, 1994) for the articulation of identity of individuals in a Postcolonial context. The 'Third space of enunciation' is a site where the multiplicity of identities can be voiced as this site has the capacity to contain the traces of colonial and Postcolonial realities. "Our Lady of Paris" is a story which significantly articulates the dilemma of Pakistani youth where they cannot stop idealizing West as a safe haven and, also, cannot devalue the place of their origin. When K.K. Harouni comments on the contemporary youth that many of the young people like Sohail want to go to America, Helen carefully points out the inclination of Sohail towards Pakistan as according to her, "When he and I first met he told me stories about Pakistan for hours" (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 145). Moreover, Rafia, though Westernized and secularized, shows the ultimate inclination towards Pakistan as she tries to convince Helen that she cannot settle herself in Pakistan as

the legal wife of Sohail because of the disparity between cultural and moral values of Pakistan and America. Rafia, the mother of Sohail, gives a very sound description of Pakistani youth who live in America in the wake of 9/11 where “they more or less apologize daily”. Moreover, when Helen gives a proposition that Sohail can also live in America, Rafia replies:

“He would be emasculated, not American and not with any place in Pakistan, working at a job he wouldn’t like” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 158).

The same identity crisis and dilemma of Pakistani youth is portrayed in “Lily” where the protagonist of the story decides on leaving a kind of party-going-life and, when she marries Murad Talwan out of her resolution in search for a new life, she starts regretting her decision within no time. She experiences “the pull of her old life” after few months of her marriage. Remaining in the suburbs of the Islamabad seems to be difficult for her as “she missed Mino, missed the life of the city” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 206) and feels the need to renegotiate and reconceive the plans they made together for their marital life. In order to mitigate the effect of her boredom, Murad Talwan arranges a party for her at his farmhouse, where she experiences physical intimacy with Bumpy – Shehryar Salauddin. At one point, the experience seems to be pleasing for her but, at a certain moment, due to her realization that she is in a matrimonial relationship with Murad Talwan, she feels an utter shock and disgust for her illegitimate act with her friend, Bumpy. The feeling of guilt and remorse remains in the mind of Lily, which not only depicts her identity crisis but also her unconscious desire to maintain her Pakistani traditional values on one hand, and her own personal freedom on the other hand respectively.

“She held him inside her, legs around his waist, and then the emotion passed, desire crushed entirely. Pushing him off, annoyed with him, his weight on her, the cold, she whispered, ‘Come on, get up, we have to go back quickly’” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 213).

The symbolic description of the two relationships is present in the form of an image of a river – the river ‘Seine’ in case of the relationship between Sohail and Helen as “the Seine doesn’t divide Paris, it keeps the city together” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 142). The two banks of the river are symbolic of Sohail as representative of East and Helen as a representative of West and Paris as the center of their love. Though separate and different, their differences may keep them united. On the other hand, in “Lily,” the Kabul River and the blue Indus “run side by side, like two stripes” (Moeenuddin, 2009, p. 175) but, symbolically, at the point of their meeting they get united which not only signifies their survival of relationship but also the amalgamation of East with West as Murad shows more tendency towards East and Lily shows more inclination towards West.

## **Conclusion**



This research describes cultural hybridity and diversity within Pakistani context. The stories "Our Lady of Paris" and "Lily" significantly depict the identity crisis of elitist Pakistani youth inspired from West on one hand, and bound by Pakistani traditional values on the other hand respectively. For this purpose, the analysis is focused upon the secularized ways of elite class as the characters exhibit double consciousness divided between mimicry of Westernized ways and the maintenance of Pakistani values in the Postcolonial context. Moreover, the study calls for the 'Third Space of Enunciation' not only to voice the plurality in identities but also the dilemma of Pakistani youth where they cannot stop idealizing/idolizing West but, at the same time, they do not want to undermine their regional values as well.

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