

## ANALYSING IDENTITY CRISES AND TRANSCULTURATION THROUGH POST- COLONIAL WORKS

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### Abstract

As it is effectively said by Graham Huggan that “We live in Neo-colonial and not post-colonial times”. It can be further argued that the present era is the era of hybridisation. Everything across the global is an amalgamation. All thanks to science and technology, it has made cultural intermixing such an accessible task that the world has been reduced to a global village. This has changed the vocabularies and the meanings of boundaries. This cross- cultural mixing in no ways can be seen with the effect of past, while post-colonial era declared that colonialism is over still it failed to remove the marks from the souls of those who were colonised.

Transculturalism is the child of this mark and it became a key to understand the Identity crises which is named as “hybrid identity” in these neo-colonial times. Identity is no more a fixed entity. In neo-colonial era, it has taken more of the fluid like properties, which keeps on fluctuating between differences. The very introduction of self by any of the diasporas is an example of restlessness that is caused by identity crises, which the postcolonial “self” endures while oscillating between “self” and “other”. Every Diasporas come in terms with “hybridised identity” that connects him with more than one culture at same time but this only confuses him in deciding his chief culture and this raises the conflicts among generations. This paper examines and analyse two postcolonial novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi for the following questions: Can the idea of stable identity hold? Is the idea of hybrid identity feasible? What is the cause of restlessness among postcolonial characters- the hybrid identity or dilution of identity?

Ever since its evolution, human race has travelled a long journey. First the need, then the urgency and finally the greed of Power has constructed the history of human race. This greed, is the child of man’s urge to maintain and secure his identity. Men were divided in groups and tribes because of the fear of losing one’s identity. Once the groups were made next came the demand of a leader, capable and powerful to save and secure the group from other groups.

Basically he was needed to lead his group for absorbing the other groups hence establishing the identity of their group as most stable and powerful. This is the safe guarding of identity which has given birth to power politics and that further gave birth to the religious politics, social politics and economic politics. This urgency of safeguarding the identity is not only visible in human race but is very prominent in animals as well. The identity which is defined as a person's expressions and conception of their own self have been made, challenged and fought for. The major confusion in identity which led to identity crises evolved from the human migration and immigration.

Earlier the world was divided into three phases pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era but now as it is effectively said by Graham Huggan that "We live in Neo-Colonial and not post-colonial times, the world time line got a new phase, that is neo-colonial era. This new phase can further be named as Era of hybridisation. In this era cultures are amalgamated and so are identities. Now the identities are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. By the world being reduced to a global village cultural intermixing has become an accessible task. Hence changing the vocabularies and meanings of boundaries. This has made identity a flexible entity which some decades ago was understood as something concrete and fixed. In neo-colonial era, it has taken more of the fluid like properties, which keeps on fluctuating between differences. It is more appropriate to say that cross-cultural mixing has provided with the possible circumstances for identities to form hybridised identities. Still the cross cultural mixing in no ways can be seen with the effect of past, while post colonial era declared that colonialism is over still it failed to remove the marks from the souls of those who were colonised.

This hybridisation is the result of transition from "acculturation" to "transculturation". No more the concept of transition of one culture to another culture, which obviously was from weaker to stronger culture holds good. Now each culture in contact zone acquires or at least tends to acquire the elements of other or constructing altogether new cultural elements, which further effect the identity. In this case also, though the cultural mixing have been revolutionised still "Power" holding a prime role can be seen. Though transculturation provides the space for both the cultures and the respect for both the identities, but the traits of stronger community are held by another hence weaker culture diffuses in stronger one. So it would be more appropriate to name it as "cultural dispersion" than "Transculturation". This is evident when the Diasporas prefer speaking the language of the land of migration even when they are back home. English which was struggling for respectable place in its own country some eight centuries ago, now enjoys a position of global first language as it was the language of powerful culture, the coloniser. Though every Diaspora comes in contact with the term "hybridised identity" that connects him with more than one culture at the same time but this only confuses one in deciding his chief culture and this raises the conflicts among generations. Parents never feel comfortable in new cultures and they remain rooted but their children undergo a problem of 'no where' and 'every where'. There remains a confusion and debatable issue that whether children of immigrants 'live in-between two cultures' or 'sit on a third chair'. Such a youth is more prone to identity crises, as they are alienated from their parent's culture and for the other culture they remain aliens. Though through transculturation youth forms their own sense of identity still that sense is pretty much confused. This confused state is everywhere in post colonial literary works, one such work *The Buddha Of Suburbia* is discussed here. Karim, the protagonist introduces himself as, "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost.....a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories....Perhaps it is odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not". This problem of here and there and sense of

belonging nowhere is common in migrants. It is a common conversation opening question to a diaspora, where are you from? No I mean ,where are you actually from? This raises a question that if the sense of new hybridised identity is a fact or just an illusion. Kureshi makes a point in his essay *The Rainbow Sign*, where he admits that as a child he had no idea what a Pakistan was like. This alienation is also seen in his novel, where he added that whilst in Pakistan, he experienced identity crises. He is confused by his detachment from Pakistan, especially when he is not welcomed in England. Karim wants to feel patriotic towards England but describes his inability as “I am sick....of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface”. Now the question arises can the people of other culture be blamed for such racial discrimination? Or let this question be asked as why should they be blamed on the first hand? Any racial, ethnic or cultural discrimination is a result of Xenophobia, which arises from the fear of identity crises and that is very much obvious when one ethnic group is being intruded by others. The novel is showcase of identity crises within entire Britain in 80’s. The violent attack on Changez by a gang in the novel is racial war in microcosm. The “gang jumped out on Changez and called him a Paki, not realising he was Indian” it was not an attack on Changez but by one culture on “other”. This process of “othering” enables many to hold their prejudices by excluding others. Even transculturation cannot rescue “others” from this exclusion. Karim is a mixed race but is never accepted as white, neither he is able to relate to other people of Indian descent. His fragmented nationality causes a state of confusion for him and torn out identity. Haroon, father of Karim is also at conflict with his inner self in order to find his true identity; there is a conflict between his Indian upbringing and English adaptation. Karim is confused to an extent that he even confuses his sexual identity by involving in homosexuality. He is never accepted by English society and he never accepted Indian society. He is even more perplexed when he decides to see into the eyes of imperialism through pleasure. He explains his sexual encounters with English women as “As we pursued English roses we pursued England.....we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self regard.”

Conclusion: The idea of stable identity cannot hold in present days of migrations and immigrations. Haroon’s friend Anwar wanted a stable identity and never wanted to be a part of either transculturation or acculturation. He is always at a war with himself to remain true to his Indian roots. This internal conflict is exemplified at so many places in the novel. He is immersed in a new culture completely but still wants to cling to his own culture this leads to his death. With the blurring cultural boundaries identities need to be more flexible. Moreover the idea of hybrid identity is in itself a fallacy as it causes mere confusion rather the very term is confusing. Even if the two cultures intermix and decide to take the traits of both or form altogether new one, still the idea of cultural hegemony cannot be denied. It is the ruling class, in this case, the stronger culture which will decide and whose traits will be dominant in the new sense of identities. This hybridisation of identity is the cause of restlessness among the neo- colonial characters as they develop a sense of belonging to one culture where they are not accepted and the culture which could have accepted them was already rejected by them. If the identities were diluted the problem of restlessness would have never occurred. Had Karim given up the idea of being “An Englishman” he would have saved himself from altogether Identity crises. Anwar would have been saved if he could have accepted the English culture. Migrants see their homes in fragments; they get transformed by migration but sense of displacement remains ever.