

FINDING THE SELF: DUALISTIC IDENTITIES IN HANIF KUREISHI'S BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA**Rahul Kumar¹ and Dr. Bimlesh Kumar Singh²**¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, School of Humanities & Languages,
Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar²Associate Professor & Head, Department of English, School of Humanities & Languages,
Mahatma Gandhi Central University, BiharE-mail: ¹rahul1430kumar@gmail.com, ²headenglish@mgcub.ac.in**ABSTRACT**

The question of identity is openly posed in front of the residents across the World. The identity factor affects each and every individual, and thus humans are always in a quest to attain a perfection of it. Identity is the sole reasons for the differences among the humans. The natives are intolerant to the different identity factors of the immigrants. The immigrants leave their native lands and with it many of their identity are left behind. The immigrant tries to attain new identities according to the need of their new habitat. This gives birth to dualistic identity and identity crisis in the immigrants and stops their assimilation in the Society. This quest for identity will be explored as portrayed in the novel of Hanif Kureishi Buddha of Suburbia. These factors make the life of immigrants many fold subjugated and troublesome. The society too limits the identities of its member, like, by crushing Homosexual identity and terms it a taboo.

Keywords: Identity, Immigrants, Subjugation, Society and Sexuality.**Introduction**

'Identity', the word may seem futile but it has a great impression and is of herculean value. The definition of identity is arbitrarily ambiguous and hard to reach at any perfect defining characteristics of it. People from centuries are in quest to find its definition and why it has become so important in society. People throughout history seem to have increased the pace of their quest to search for perfect definition of their identity and belongingness, but till now no goal is attained rather they are very far from the goal post of it. The aura of the word Identity is very vast and regularly elongating, thus reaching a perfect definition of it becomes typical. Humans on this planet possess not a single identity rather a number of identities to take a stand in the society. Whenever the Humans lack any of the requisite identity of the society, their identity starts shifting towards an alien identity for the society. The question of identity was not new but in the twentieth century it got a sudden pace. The reasons for the pace were World War I, World War II, Atom Bombings (1945) in Japan. These incidents wiped a major mass of people, the effects of it was very deep, the people became impregnated with ideas of human barbarism. It didn't stop here the freedom fight across the globe and Nazi oppression of the Jews in Germany were also the reason people started doubting their identity or were unsafe with their current identities. These all

incidents diminished value of the human identity of people. The people due to these incidents started to search for safe factions for them. In search of their safe livelihood many had to conceal their identity and many attained new identities according to the demand of the society. Thus, the great race for better identity started which continues till the present moment of time.

The Identity of humans starts from the time they take birth in this mortal World in some society of different culture, language, region et cetera. The societies of this world are very complex in their differences from one another. The society also wants certain identities to be fulfilled to accept one as its member, like being a White may be necessary to flourish well in the U.K. Thus, from here the war of identities begins. The birth in human factions gives them the very first identity of Homo sapiens species or Human Beings the most intelligent living organism. This identity formation moves forward and the born person attains the several identities of son, brother, sister and so forth in their familial relationship. The person grows with time and the number of their identities also grows alongside. The person attains several individual identities in the society, like of a student, citizen, religion, sexuality (Homosexual or Heterosexual), linguistic, cultural et cetera. These pre mentioned identities are generally common for people and they somehow are clear about these identities of theirs. This is not

always the case, in case of some people they are not able to finalize their certain identities demanded by the society. These unclear identities are mainly concerned with citizenship, religion, cultural and now-a-days sexual too.

Crisis of Real Identities

In the novel of Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the problem related to identity is clearly expressed, the characters are found to be in some quest to find their fixed identities, and are seen looming in between dual identities related to their ethnicity, culture, sexuality et cetera. The question of identity crisis is observed from the very first line of the novel spoken by the central protagonist Karim Amir, "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost"(Kureishi, 1990, p.1). It is very clear that Karim Amir is not confirm about his identity as an Englishman. He thinks that he is almost born and bred because he is a second generation Indian immigrant being born of Indian father and English mother. He is a mixture South-Asian and English blood which makes him something of a new person neither English nor Indian or of hybrid identity. Though Karim always wants to be an Englishman the society occurs as the main antagonist in his path. The religion of his, the scenario of his household and the racial attitudes of the English people stops him from being a true Englishman. It is also very clear that Karim is neither able to forget his immigrant identity in whole nor was able to accept the Englishman identity completely.

The identity of Karim was always in question by himself and others. He wanted to become an independent Englishman unlike his father. But when his mum says that you are like your father he questions himself for his real identity whether he is English or Indian. "Well dear, fathers and sons come to resemble each other, don't they"(Kureishi, 1990, p.105). Margaret says that he is totally like his father, which Karim was always the opposite of being. His identity of a son was also under the question, when his mum says that he left his mother like his father. It also becomes clear that He wanted to be away from his mother in search of an independent life. It is observed that Karim assumed his father Haroon as a prototype of failure and never wanted to be in his image. Karim suffered from the postmodern dilemma of existential crisis. He was never clear about the incidents going on in his life. Karim was always in limbo of whether it

was right to leave his mother or not and though he didn't like his father he moved with him to live at Evas' place.

The identity of Karim was in question due to his being of a mixed identity or dual identity, which is formed when two cultures meet. Karim was a second generation South-Asian immigrant (Indian), born of an Indian father Haroon and English mother Margaret, which gave him a dual identity of British-Asian. This mixture of identities was the reason, taken in cognizance the English society too were not eager to accept that Asians can be totally British and denied their integration in their society. The People and leaders of the U.K also had the same ideology regarding the Asians immigrants. Margaret Thatcher, a great leader of the U.K. and also the former Prime Minister of England, openly was against the immigrants or Asian immigrants mainly. She denied the immigrants and the second generation immigrants born there as true Englishman and She openly said in her campaigns that "being born in England does not make Asians a British". Thatcher was of very clear opinion that these Asians can never become an inseparable integral part of the English Society. According to her, it was unacceptable to allow integration of Asians in the English society. She thought the integration of Asians could lead to a catastrophe. Thatcher further pledged during her election campaigns to stop further immigration, as it was thought to be corrupting or degrading the social structure of the great English Society.

It is very acceptable that due to the un-accepting nature of the British for immigrants, they faced many problems and existential crisis. The immigrants were in a dilemma of being and nonbeing in the U.K. due to the hatred against them. In the novel we can observe the trauma of Karim about his identity, he thus says "The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were wogs and nigs and pakis and the rest of it."(Kureishi, 1990, p. 53).

Karim is a new breed or hybrid in the British society as hybridity "is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities"(Bhabha, 2012 p159). His hybrid identity has emerged from the mixture of two old histories. He considers himself to be an "odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not"(Kureishi, 1990 p01). This becomes evident that second generation immigrants

were facing a great identity dilemma due their unclear belongingness and hybrid identity.

Crisis of Place

The crisis with Karim and other characters are not only related to their personal ethnicity, religion, culture et cetera. It is also related to the places they live in the novel, as people also get an identity factor according to places they live. The novel showcases that Karim and his family lived primarily in the suburbs, and later he shifted to the city with Eva and Haroon. In the suburbs Karim always wanted to have a city life and thought that he really belonged to London rather than the Southampton suburbs. In the novel, towards the end Karim thinks that London city is not for him and he really belonged to the suburbs. At this point Karim got the thought that Suburbs are better compared to the city. Karim at this point longs for a fixed residential identity finding out between suburbs and the city, he is not able to finalize which is better for him. The case is not limited to Karim but others too faced similar issues. Haroon and Anwar too faced the residential crisis, who went to the U.K. in the 1950's, for studies and in search of better life compared to India. These first generation immigrants spent more than twenty years of their life in the U.K., but they were not ready to accept the U.K. as their own place. These immigrants while living in London always had diasporic thoughts about their native places and about returning to India. They always had the impression that the U.K. was not really a place for them. They always loomed between India and the U.K., Karim puts this through the words "Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least resisting the English here"(Kureishi, 1990, p. 64). Here these two first generation immigrants are deeply facing a residential crisis after spending major duration of their life in the U.K.

Crisis of Sexuality

The people of post-modern world faces deep identity issues related to their sexuality. Though LGBT is at the fore front, people are not clear about their sexual interests. The society is prevalent with the people who are interested in both the sexes or they are bisexual. In the society certain people tries to be homosexual but are not able to be limited to it and starts practicing heterosexuality too. This issue is very clearly portrayed in the novel and it is observed in some characters of it.

The sexual identity of the protagonist Karim is also under certain fluctuations, as he is never clear about his sexual interests, whether he is heterosexual or homosexual. He just had a liking for both males and females. Karim, like an postmodern boy, had the dream to sleep with as many people as possible of both genitals, "It was unusual, I know, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls"(Kureishi, 1990, p.55). It is evident that he likes boys or males, as he feels betrayed by Charlie, his male love when he is ignored by Charlie or Charlie is with someone else. Karim also had the attraction to female bodies as he feels betrayed by many female characters in terms sexual relationship like from Helen, Marlene, Eleanor et cetera who are his female love. In our society Hetero sexual is only permitted, it is a taken as will of God to be heterosexual. It is very evident due to the theory of procreation and Life force. As only the unity of heterosexual can perform a procreation which is not possible by the homosexuals. It is one of the central reason, which makes homosexuality a taboo in our society. Homosexuality is considered as a matter of curse in the society till present second of time. This can be one of the reason due to which Karim was not able to decide either to be a heterosexual or homosexual, thus he is somehow forced to possess both sexual tendencies. While having homosexual relationship with Charlie they are seen by his father, he fears of him for having a sexual relationship with a boy. Karim is thrashed by his father for the homosexual act, Haroon questions his seed which gave life to Karim, as it was matter of shame for Haroon, as he too was a society member. These catalysts were the sole reasons responsible, which forced Karim to be in a dilemma of his uncertain sexual identity.

The sexuality of Karim is not only in question; it is with other characters too. The case of Jammie (Jamila) is also the same. She used to have illicit sexual relationship with Karim and due to it after her marriage she is very indifferent towards her husband Changez. Further she starts a homosexual relationship with a community girl named Joanna, where she lives. It may be the effect of rapid changing world order that homosexuality along with heterosexuality was practiced by a single person. This is not only limited to youngsters, rather it is with middle aged people too. The same case is with Pyke the theatre director, who have potential relationship with both males and females, as during Karim's Visit to his house he has oral sex

with Karim. It becomes very evident that in the novel Karim, Charlie, Jamila and Pyke are not clear about their sexual identity, which leads them to the nucleus of dualistic identity crisis.

Otherization

The immigrants in the U.K not only faced issues related to identity rather they were also treated as 'Other' in the English society. The whites never openly accepted these first or second generation immigrants (In some cases Third Generation) and treated them as 'others', as Kumaravadivelu puts it "otherization is a crudely reductive process that ascribes an imagined superior identity to the self and an imagined inferior identity to the other"(Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.16). This otherization of the native white towards the colored immigrants is an important reason which limits their integration or assimilation. This otherization leads to great racism and frequent racial attacks on the immigrants. Karim, in the novel says that his father is racially attacked several times and he feared the whites, "for fear of having stones and ice pops full of piss lobbed at him by schoolboy from the secondary modern his father regularly changed his routes" (Kuresihi, 1990, p.28) to office and home. Karim further thinks in this regard, "even if he takes on the role of a guru and gains some kind of respect from some people, he is still an other" (KARA, 2020, p.193). The otherization occurs mainly due to colour consciousness of the white people, thus the whites consider them to be very different from the coloureds. The second aspect of otherization is ethnicity, as if one is not born in the U.K. they are just the 'others' and they cannot be accepted as true Englishman.

The otherization was not only from the side of English people rather from the sides of the

immigrants too, they thought themselves to be better from Englishman in terms of culture, ethnicity and religion. Anwar in the novel points this "That is not our way, boy, our way is firm"(Kureishi, 1990, p. 60). It becomes evident that Anwar and other immigrants considered the ways of the Englishman as not firm or equivalent. Further the immigrants also don't want to accept the ways of English people and boosts the otherization process.

Conclusion

It is very obvious that identity plays a crucial role in the lives of humans. Identity provides the stand one needs in the society but it is hyped. It leads people to great sufferings because of their low class identity. It is evident that the herculean role of identity will remain in the society till time unknown and thus the sufferings and duality due to it too. The immigrants like Karim, Haroon, Anwar et cetera will never be able to become a true Englishmen, due to great consciousness of regional, cultural and racial identity. Though the immigrants contribute to the development of the U.K., leaving the own nation's needs void, still they are not accepted and acknowledged by the English people. This will end if assimilation of immigrants is openly permitted by the U.K. societies and the British people stops thinking the South-Asian immigrants as 'Others'. The government will have to intervene in every problems faced by the immigrants. The government will need to make certain policies and rules for providing the equal rights of immigrants, after these work the immigrants identity may get some value and an end to their crises will occur.

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