

## Tangent Cultural Interaction and Postcolonial Hybrid Societal Edifice in Hanief Kureshi's "My Son The Fanatic"



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### ABSTRACT

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This study set out to identify the types of hybridity that arise from postcolonial cultural interaction with colonial formation. The depictions of Parvez and Ali from Hanif Kureshi's short story My Son the Fanatic are hybrids, according to researchers. The Homi K. Bhabha concept of hybridity was used in this study, which followed a post-colonialist strategy. Bhabha's viewpoint (1994), it is the result of a tangential interaction in distinct cultures. In this instance, hybridity is understood to be the result of the dominance of colonial power dynamics which involves not only the merging of cultures but also cultural objects that are situated in social as well as historical space as a result of post-colonialism. Due to its significance in analyzing descriptive text in predetermined literary works, the qualitative descriptive approach was employed in this research. According to the research's findings, there are two different ways that hybridity is represented in this research. First, because of the content creation that was created, mimicry has a character that is ambiguous and contradictory in the context of cultural fidelity. Parvez, an individual in the narrative, serves as a metaphor for mimicry. Second, Ali, his son, represented ambivalence in the story. Ali resisted the construction because he understood how colonialism discriminated against his culture, but he was confused about what identity he should adopt. The short story "My Son the Fanatic" by Hanif Kureishi depicts cultural hybridity through the characters Parvez and Ali, who represent mimicry and ambivalence resulting from the dynamics of colonial and postcolonial power.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial studies revealed that the so-called "third world" is not a homogeneous region. The locale, the individuals, and the society all contribute to the heterogeneity. Additionally, it demonstrated that there was some opposition from the East to the west. One extremely popular variation is what Spivak refers to as "subaltern".[1] In short, postcolonial presents a framework for deconstructing the assumptions that have always been formed about the main and most general realities in Western thought. The postcolonial paradigm was created in a stranded way by presenting several actual examples of colonialism's negative effects on physical, political, and cultural spheres. The purpose of postcolonial theory development is to deal with the ongoing impacts of colonization on knowledge, which involves the cultural aspect. A new system of international relations will be realized in the future as a result of postcolonial ideology. To address the direction of colonial and colonial states' cultural evolution, postcolonial theory both asserts and examines key differences between them.[2]

This theory is used to examine the societal traits that emerged, particularly in developing nations or former colonies in the decade following the end of colonialism. Postcolonial theory is a theory that can be used as a method of analysis to criticize

colonialism actions that are still being practiced of oppression which gives rise to racism, unequal relationships of subaltern cultures, power, hybridity or theory of creation is not through propaganda about war and brutality but rather is logically

through awareness or ideas.[3] The term postcolonial refers to a group of philosophical or different methods that challenge the status of postcolonial and colonial entities.[4] Kitchin comes to the same conclusion as Makaryk that post-colonialism refers to methodologies taken to study various cultural manifestations that take place in Modern Europe's former colonial nations, such as history, economics, politics, literary works, and various other writings.[5] Alternatively, to put it another way, postcolonial is a term or an implement that examines the economic, cultural, and social connections where postcolonial concerns are represented.

On the other hand, Bhabha criticized Edward Said and other orientalist concepts' binary opposition paradigm of relations between colonies. While Fanon concentrates on colonial discourse, Said does as well. Both contemplate that the situation between colonized and invaders is incorporated and constant, also diverse and conflicting with each other, while Bhabha's notions claim that neither the invader nor the occupied are autonomous of each other. Between colonized and invaders, in the words of Bhabha in Mashlihatin (2013), there is an "intermediate space" that permits interaction. There is room for opposition in the space between the two.[6]

As a result of the interaction between colonized and invaders in the wide space between these, a hybrid identity is created. In the opinion of (Aleksey, 2023) the word "hybridity" is used to describe interactions between various cultural forms that can lead to the creation of new identities and cultures, each with its own history and literary forms. Utilizing imitation, the technique of hybridity must be carried out.[7] The term 'mimicry' is a dispersed imitation of colonial identity in an "impure" world of colonialism, reconfigured to fit the unique sense and apprehension of colonialism. Because there was inconsistency in the colonial discussion, the mix of individuality as a result of imitation was not entirely organized or managed by the power of colonialism. According to Bhabha, colonial influence has always been ambivalent, torn between showing itself as genuine and knowledgeable through its articulation, which demonstrates repetition and distinction.

Numerous journals published research that dissected Kureishi's masterpiece *My Son the Fanatic*. (Nilam, 2022) analyzes the cultural conflicts faced by immigrant families, especially Muslim immigrants, and the clash between their ethnic backgrounds and the host culture in a western multicultural society, as portrayed in Hanif Kureishi's short story "My Son the Fanatic".[8] (Murad, 2023) examines the ambivalent aspects of postcolonial identity, culture, and integration in the fictional narrative "My Son the Fanatic" using Homi Bhabha's concept of third space.[9] This paper compares how Lalami's "The Fanatic" and Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic" depict the generational conflicts caused by the rise of political Islam.[10] (Jamie, 2020) shows it is not relevant to the query "my son the fanatic", as it appears to be an academic analysis of the short story and film of the same name, rather than a direct answer to the query.[11] The last, (Karam, 2018) examines the ambivalent aspects of postcolonial identity, culture, and integration in the fictional narrative "My Son the Fanatic" using Homi Bhabha's concept of third space.[12]

The narrative of Hanif Kureshi's masterpiece *My Son the Fanatic* portrays the phenomena of hybridity and mimicry. The life of a Pakistani immigrant who resided in England is depicted in this short story. Parvez, a taxi driver, and their father decided to migrate from Pakistan to England to live a decent life. His problematic holy education, which was so demanding that it led to a diverse sense of religious authenticity, was the cause of his traumatic childhood. He worked as a taxi driver for 40 years while living in England and visited brothels. Instead, his son Ali, whom he had wanted would carry on the family's vision of achieving success and riches in England, took a different path. Since Ali became aware of their religious beliefs, he has made an effort to change his behavior and way of thinking. He disagreed with all of his father's practices, which were unreligious and based on eastern culture.

The difference between the two characters' perspectives is what prompted this study's postcolonial analysis. The preparation of colonization does not need to be imperialism as it was during the previous colonial era. The ideas of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence discussed above all deal with it. This work is full of cultural identity depictions of hybridity. The main aim is to portray the procedure of hybridity, mimicry, and contradiction in the different characters of the particular text by employing the postcolonial method. Individuality can be determined by the way the people in the story behave and speak.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although those who assert to be professionals with a postcolonial viewpoint are not able to evade this trap, Brett (2022) stated that the 'Postcolonial Theory' came into being between the half of the 20th century which is perceived as a process of deconstruction of binary and dual intellectual frameworks concerning the book by him titled as "Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Standards, Politics and Governance". The dualist rational paradigm that dominates Western knowledge, particularly in the Eastern concerns, all the time puts the West, the colonizers, oneself, spectators, and the East as an inferior world. The East is occupied; foreigners are treated as commodities.[13]

Easterners are perceived by modern Westerners as being irrational, sentimental, and barbaric (they are sometimes referred to as "Eastern despotism" in politics). A subset of postmodern ideas, the concept of postcolonial theory is a theory of criticism. Postcolonial research demonstrates that the so-called "third world" is not a homogeneous region. The locale, individuals, and society all contribute to the heterogeneity. He also demonstrated that there was some opposition from the East to the West. In summary, post-colonialism offers a structure for destabilizing the fundamental tenets of Western thought, which have consistently asserted that they are the main and most worldwide truths. The postcolonial concept was created in a stranded way by bringing up numerous real examples of colonization's adverse impacts on physical, political, and cultural spheres.[14]

The goal of postcolonial theory development is to address the ongoing impacts of colonization on knowledge, which involves the cultural aspect. A new system of international relations will be realized in the future as a result of postcolonial ideology. A theory known as postcolonial posits and investigates basic distinctions between the colonized nations and colonizing relations in sense of their respective progress. It is used to examine traits of culture that emerged, particularly in developing nations or former colonies during the years following the end of colonization.[15]

### Bhabha's Hybridity Theory

The emergence of different cultures in the area of interaction created possible by colonization is known as hybridity. The stint relates to the blending of two separate classes to produce a third form, known as a hybrid species, just like in horticulture. The concept of hybridity is linked to Bhabha's analysis of the interactions between invaders and colonizers, particularly how they rely on one another and co-create their subjectivities (mimicry and ambivalence). All cultural expressions and systems, according to Bhabha, are created in what he refers to as the "Third Space" of Assertion. Cultural uniqueness evolves in ambiguous and contradictory situations, which Bhabha refers to as the "purity" of an unsustainable cultural order. According to Bhabha, acknowledging the conflicting space of cultural belonging can aid in overcoming the variety of different cultures and acknowledging hybridization power in its locales with different cultures. The cultural power will ultimately lead to superior culture and inferior cultural construction. By introducing the notion that the tradition they bear is higher to the culture of the colonized, they want to construct the thought of colonialism.[6]

### Mimicry Theory

Bhabha's point of view, that imitation is a form of culture that gives the colonial subject autonomy and the chance to interact with the dominant power while also participating in it by displaying a subjectivity that mimics the colonizer but is not completely identical. One way the colonized express their perception of the invaders' dominance is through mimicry. People who have been colonized feel more powerful and in a higher place than other colonized people because they imitate.[6]

### Ambivalence Theory

Shabrang's (2020) viewpoint, ambivalence is both a fascination and resistance to a specific thing, individual, or activity. In this instance, ambivalence refers to the fluctuating state of the connection between collaboration and resistance in the issues of colonialism.[16] As stated by Bhabha (2012), ambivalence demonstrates that the context of colonialism is linked to the oppressed people or instructs simultaneously. According to Bhabha, the colonial discourse's ambiguity had effects on both the invaders and the colonized.[6] This idea has something associated with hybridity. This is a result of the ambivalence of dispersing authority, specifically from a place of supremacy, to allow for hybridization or transformation when dealing with other cultural backgrounds in colonial discourse. If the imitation represents the attitude of accepting the colonialists' superiority as true, the act of opposition signifies the boldness of rejecting the concept. There was a confrontation with all kinds of colonialism, as well as submitting to the notion that the colonizers were superior. It is important to stress that when the term "colonizers" is used in this context, it refers to all forms of colonialism, including racism, and patriarchal systems, and not just the Europeans or Dutch who at the time dominated the Dutch East Indies.

### 3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the phenomenon of cultural hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's short story "My Son the Fanatic." [17] This method is chosen because it allows the researcher to examine and interpret the meanings embedded in the literary text in depth. The data used in this research consists of relevant excerpts from the short story. These excerpts are then analyzed using postcolonial theories, particularly the concepts of hybridity and mimicry as proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. The analysis is conducted by reading and identifying elements within the text that reflect postcolonial dynamics and identity changes.

The data analysis process involves several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data collection is done by carefully reading the text and noting parts that are relevant to the research topic. Data reduction is performed by filtering the most significant information for further analysis. Data presentation is carried out in a narrative form that describes the main findings of this research. Conclusion drawing involves formulating new understandings about the phenomenon of cultural hybridity and identity dynamics in the postcolonial context. The validity of the research is maintained through theoretical triangulation and confirmation of findings with relevant previous studies.

### 4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In the historical context of colonialism, physical and psychological violence, as well as prolonged conflict, are inevitable legacies. The discussion of this paragraph can focus on how colonialism created social hierarchies that persist into the postcolonial era. Colonialism not only left direct impacts in the form of physical destruction and aggression but also shaped perceptions of inferiority among the colonized societies. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to examining how colonial legacies continue to influence social and cultural relationships around the world, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. [18]

Hanif Kureishi has portrayed the concept of cross-culture and hybridity in his masterpiece titled *My Son the Fanatic*. His main aim is to present the deep effect of colonization on Eastern minds. He has brought two main characters; Parvez and Ali just to fulfill his goal. Parvez belongs to Pakistan and then he moves to England for a decent and better life for his family. There he has been working as a driver. He wants to spend his life according to the European style as he is much inspired by their superior system. His son Ali is totally against European values. Ali prefers Eastern values and he has a firm belief in Islam. An identity clash is found in both characters as Parvez follows Western life while Ali is a religious person and follows his forefathers' values. The question raises in their minds "who are they"? [17]

When two cultures mix, then it gives a formation of a new mixed culture and that is called hybridity. Hybridity is not only the concept of cross-culture, rather it clears the sense that colonizers impose their power through thinking and living style. [19] They allow Eastern people to raise their lifestyle, but according to Western values. They install the idea of successful life and superiority in Eastern minds. Just after the Second World War, many people moved to England as they wanted to make themselves decent. People from many countries migrated to the UK and these countries were Pakistan, Mexico, Jamaica, India as well as Bangladesh. [20] In the short story, *My Son the Fanatic*, Parvez's family is a true representation of hybridity. It is quoted that: "Parvez has been a taxi driver for twenty years. Half that time he had to work at a firm. Like him. Most of the other drivers are Punjabis. They prefer to work at night, the roads were clearer and many are better." [17]

Hanif Kureishi, in "My Son the Fanatic," explores the identity tensions faced by individuals in the postcolonial world. The discussion here can highlight the importance of literary narratives in reflecting the impact of colonialism on cultural identity. Through the characters Parvez and Ali, Kureishi demonstrates how Western and Eastern values interact and conflict. Further analysis could discuss how Kureishi depicts the transformation of individual identities as a reflection of broader social transformations caused by colonialism. [21]

The concept of hybridity, which is central to postcolonial theory, is well illustrated in this story. The discussion can focus on how hybridity is not just about cultural exchange but also about how colonial power imposes its values. [22] This process creates mixed identities that are often conflicting. The discussion can explore how these hybrid identities reflect resistance and adaptation to Western cultural dominance and their implications for understanding power dynamics and identity in the postcolonial context. [23]

Parvez's family in the story serves as a tangible example of hybridity. The discussion can explore how immigrants like Parvez navigate their dual identities in a new country. By working as a taxi driver in England, Parvez and other immigrants strive to adapt to their new environment while maintaining their ethnic identity. This discussion can cover the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrant communities in preserving their cultural heritage while trying to integrate into a new society. [24]

Ali, with his rejection of Western values and return to his religious and cultural roots, represents resistance to colonial influence. The discussion here can address how Ali's actions represent a form of defiance against Western cultural superiority. Analysis can explore how the religious and cultural symbols adopted by Ali reflect his efforts to redefine his identity in the face of assimilation pressures.[25]

Through Kureishi's narrative, we gain insight into the complexities of identity and generational conflict in a postcolonial context. The discussion can focus on how the father-son relationship between Parvez and Ali serves as an allegory for broader cultural conflicts. Further analysis can explore how this narrative offers a critique of lingering colonial power structures and encourages a deeper understanding of how identities continue to be negotiated in a world shaped by colonial history.[26]

### **Mimicry**

To imitate something refers to mimicry. This key term is given by Homi K. Bhabha. He installs the idea that colonized mimics colonizers. They follow the liberty, cultural values, traditions, and norms of colonizers just to make themselves sober and decent, just like colonizers. This mimicry identity gives them satisfaction in an "impure colonial environment". The character of Parvez is the perfect example of mimicry, part of Bhabha's theory as he mimics the pattern of European life, but in reality, he belongs to the East. Parvez is disappointed with his own cultural identity because he believes that this lifestyle is not given him a clear identity, full liberation, and a way to a successful life. He thinks that the life he has been spending in Lahore is against his principles. In *My Son the Fanatic*, it is claimed that: "Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught, Koran. To stop him from falling asleep when he studied, The Maulvi had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez hair's so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake." [17]

From the above quotation, it is clear that Parvez suffered mental trauma in his childhood when he gave attention to his religion and studied Islam in his homeland, Lahore. The wrong guidance provides him with the wrong paradigm of religion. [27] He considers it a rigid, conservative, and restrictive religion. While, on the other hand, in England, he refuses to follow the system of his own culture, rather he firmly follows Western values. It is clear from the quote: "Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, you're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in." [17] This claim of Parvez is shown how he mimics other cultures. He knows that alcohol and pork are strictly forbidden in his religion. Knowing all of that, he wants to take such a type of food. His claim, "You are not in the village now", shows that he consciously consumes these drinks and forgets the rules of his religion. These claims are not shown only the wrong guidance, rather it hits the idea of a hybrid ideology that allows him to follow Western culture if his religion or culture restricts him, but he still does so consciously. [28]

### **Ambivalence**

Ambivalence is also given by Homi K. Bhabha. This is considered the most important concept in postcolonial literature. It refers to the elements of love and hate, repulsion and attraction, disagreement and agreement, nurturing and exploiting, disliking and liking at the same time in any society. [29] It shows the disturbing affiliation between colonized and colonizers. It is closely associated with the relationship between orientals and Occidentals in the subcontinent. Hanif Kureishi shows ambivalence in his masterpiece *My Son the Fanatic*. The characters of Parvez (father) and Ali (son) are the perfect example of this aspect. The title itself suggests the idea of ambivalence to the readers. Parvez wants to follow Western people, on the other hand, Ali wants to follow Eastern culture. Parvez neglects the rules and regulations of his religion, but Ali leaves Western education just to spend his life according to the values of his homeland. Parvez agrees with Western values, but Ali does not. Parvez likes colonizers, but Ali hates them. Parvez feels attraction towards the Western lifestyle while Ali shows repulsion towards Western culture. It is clearly shown in the original text by Hanif Kureishi: "I feel as if I've lost my son. Parvez told to Bettina. I can't bear to be looked at as if I'm Criminal. I've decided what to do." [17]

In this short story, Hanif Kureishi portrays Parvez as an ambitious character. He wants his son to be a perfect gentleman and prepares him according to Western people. He wishes that his son educates well, gets a good job there, gets married happily, and lives a cherished life. But Ali leaves all the ideas of his father. He leaves his degree, music, and white girlfriend and throws his favorite magazines. Ali's attitude vanishes the wishes of Parvez. Parvez's efforts are seen as useless efforts as they do not change his son's life. It is quoted: "What do you mean by make the best of it? Asked the boy 'well'. Said Parvez. For start.... You should enjoy yourself. Yes. Enjoy yourself without hurting others." [17]

### **Resistance**

Ali is considered the most prominent example of resistance. Ali shows resistance to the cultural identity of Western people. He resists his father as well. He leaves all his previous habits like playboy magazine, and his girlfriend, throws his favorite music accessories, and firmly follows his religion. He prays five times a day. He resists the idea of superiority because he does not

consider the West superior. His father beats him many times just for the sake of following the West. He has his religion, cultural values, customs, traditions, and norms and he prefers them. It is clear from the quote by Hanif Kureishi: "The Problem is this, the boy said. He leaned across the table. For the first time that night, his eyes were alive. You are implicated in western civilization...The western materialist hates u, Ali said. Papa, how can you love something which hates you." [17]. Ali stocks in a third world as he does not follow the Western living style, while on the other hand, he is in confusion because he does not recognize Eastern values. This resistance is the main conflict between them, father and son.

The conflict between Parvez and Ali in Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic" serves as a powerful representation of the broader cultural and generational tensions that frequently emerge within postcolonial societies, where identities are caught between tradition and modernity. The transformation in Ali's behavior and beliefs is not simply a matter of superficial change but rather signifies a profound shift in his identity, values, and worldview. This shift becomes evident as Ali increasingly embraces a strict and puritanical form of Islam, in stark contrast to the more secular, liberal, and Westernized lifestyle that his father, Parvez, has adopted in pursuit of a better life in a foreign land. The memory of the Moulvi tying a string to Parvez's hair to prevent him from falling asleep during religious lessons serves as a poignant reminder of the rigid and oppressive religious discipline Parvez endured during his own upbringing, which he had deliberately tried to shield his son from. However, Parvez's hopes for a more open and assimilated future for his son are shattered as Ali begins to voice strong criticisms of his father's way of life, accusing him of repeatedly violating the teachings and laws of the Quran. This growing ideological rift between father and son reflects more than just a difference in religious beliefs—it symbolizes a fundamental clash of values, where Ali rejects his father's efforts to integrate into Western culture, now viewing it as morally corrupt, spiritually empty, and fundamentally at odds with his newly adopted religious convictions. The intensity of Ali's rejection is indicative of his desire to assert an identity that is grounded in a purist religious framework, which he perceives as offering clarity, purpose, and moral integrity in contrast to the materialism and moral ambiguity of the Western world that his father has embraced. Ultimately, this tension embodies the deep-seated struggles faced by many immigrant families as they navigate the competing demands of tradition, faith, modernity, and the desire for belonging in a society that is often at odds with their cultural roots.[17]

Ali's demand for freedom of choice, encapsulated in his plea, "Let me out!", signifies his desire to break free from the constraints imposed by his father and the Western lifestyle he embodies. This request is not just about physical freedom but also about the autonomy to define his own identity and values. Ali's transformation, marked by the adoption of religious practices and the abandonment of his previous Western-influenced habits, is a clear manifestation of his resistance to his father's way of life. He challenges Parvez's previous values and behaviors, asserting his own beliefs and creating a distinct identity for himself. This shift causes Parvez considerable distress, as he perceives it as a rejection of the life he has worked hard to build in England. The stark contrast between Parvez's integration into Western society and Ali's return to religious roots highlights the complex interplay between cultural heritage and personal identity in a postcolonial world. This narrative illustrates the broader struggles of immigrant families as they navigate the challenges of cultural preservation and adaptation in a new environment.[30]

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "My Son the Fanatic" offers an in-depth exploration of themes of hybridity, cultural conflict, and identity in the postcolonial world. The discussion can emphasize the importance of understanding the enduring impacts of colonialism on individual and cultural identities. By analyzing the interactions and conflicts between Parvez and Ali, Kureishi invites readers to consider how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary social and cultural dynamics. This discussion can inspire further research into how identities and power are negotiated in the ever-evolving postcolonial context.

In this text, we can see the concept of ambivalence as well. The elements of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, agree and disagree at the same time. Both son and father are closely associated with this term. The father loves Western culture, but the son does not. The father feels attraction towards the West, while his son resists this identity. Ali resists the thoughts of his father. He rejects his previous priorities in his life. He becomes a religious person and wants to spend the rest of his life according to his own culture and religious values. Ali lives his life in a third space as he does not like Western identity, but at the same time, he does not recognize Eastern values.

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