



**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Different Post Colony: A Comparison between Manto and Shahab**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This work encompasses the vision and reaction of Indo-Pakistani Muslim writers and common people to colonial discourses and hybridity, analyzing the metamorphosed characters and the common people's attitude to them, a field that comparative theory and studies among native and non-native literatures have not measured out while ending up with scrutinizing the regional and racial writing back. This study looks deep into the ignored reaction to and contempt of the colonizers on the part of the Indian Muslim colonized with deeply rooted Islamic background.*

**Key words:** Postcolonial, Comparative literature, Hybridity, Narrative, Discourses, Islam

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**INTRODUCTION**

The discipline of Comparative Literature is a method in the study of literature in at least two ways. First, Comparative Literature means the knowledge of more than one language or literature, and it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in the study of literature and second, Comparative Literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, be that a marginal literature in its several meanings of marginality, a genre, various text types, etc.

In comparative literature where a lot of work has been done in the field of postcolonial branches of study, especially in hybridity and diaspora identities, then the narrative that has influenced the lives of billions of people among which hundreds of millions have been victims of colonialism i.e. the narrative of Islam on identity that creates a very different attachment to a system of thought that does not leave a person in the lurch when he is enslaved physically, mentally, culturally, politically and spiritually, giving him a pedestal to fight back and assert his previously engraved solid identity that is not easy to be shaken off by the *soi-disant* 'civilized' discourses, has not been handled in depth.

Colonial intervention into cultural universe of the localized resulted in two different ways depending on two different sites of contention: one is the native culture as a product of region and the other is culture as a product of religion. Both sites gave different results of the cultural assault of the colonizer: the regional cultures with their own particular backgrounds were suppressed to an extent that the natives finding themselves hybridized and hence belonging to nowhere and the cultures (especially Indian Muslim) with a religious narrative to produce and support thinking that confronted and challenged the westernized approach, not after independence but during subjugation as well.

We have a lot of examples like Akbar Ilah Abadi and Iqbal who did have an epistemology more striking and comprehensive than that introduced by the colonizer. This was not the matter that the understanding of the Islamic epistemology was the province of only a few people well learned in Islam. We can compare it with language learning: as a native speaker unconsciously knows the correct sentence structures, so is every Muslim (especially Indian/Pakistani middle class Muslim) unconsciously aware of the religious structure that underlies his conscious knowledge of his culture and tradition. We will

witness the tangible shape of this seemingly bizarre point of view during the analysis of various characters and incidents from *The New Constitution* and *Do Rangasoon* in the following pages.

The reaction of Indian and Pakistani narratives to the whimsical fancy of Lord Macaulay that India and Arabia have neither a culture nor any good piece of literature can be taken as derisive both at the level of a layman and of literary production with the examples of the excellence shown in great pieces of literature and the characters looking down upon the loopholes of the Western civilization. This goes different from the complicity of literatures advocating the inferiority of Eastern norms and art and from many non-subcontinent postcolonial writings that show the trauma of hybridity engraved in modern tattered characters with no parallel example or solution.

Here in this study, the objective of comparing Manto and Shahab is not to bring to light the factor of marginality in the colonial period of India because libraries are packed with such works; more efforts in exploring the already admitted facts are nothing more than waste of time. The objective of this study is entirely new viz. an operation of the ways Indian Muslims who are deeply rooted in their Islamic and geographical cultures see the civilization of the invader and how they react to the efforts of the colonizer being made in order to reshape their cultural standing.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Basnett (2000) quotes Ganesh Devi saying, "Comparative literature in India is directly linked to the rise of modern Indian nationalism, noting that comparative literature has been used to assert the national cultural identity." Basnett focuses the nationalist approach to catastrophes of colonialism in literature by asserting the awakening of Indian national cultural identity. There is a minute difference between two types of identities: cultural and religious. Cultural identities are more vulnerable and susceptible under the influence of invader culture for all cultures of the world influence each other more than a religion is influenced by other religions or cultures; it rather influences the cultures in a way at times that it utterly modifies them as it happened with Indian culture with weak religious roots when Islam invaded India in 8th century.

Ashcroft *et al.* (2002) locate four models of postcolonial writing that are 'national or regional models, race-based models, comparative models of varying complexity and comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybridity and syncreticity.' All these four models, in which latter two models fall directly in the range of comparative literature, do not debate with religious narrative and its safeguarding forces that protect indigenous people and their culture against the invading episteme.

Mullaney (2010) finds African writers, facing the trouble of decolonizing their people, reforming and revitalizing a national culture, having first to document the legacies of colonialism, the forces producing hybrid African creatures, the contesting identities and debating cultural values. To her, postcolonial comparative studies are fraught with notions of the indigene and indigeneity, exploring the traumatic history of past encounter between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and its aftermath.

Nandy (1983) mentions two forms of colonization: physical occupation of territories and colonization of minds and cultures that is supported by rationalists, liberal's and missionaries who claim to have the responsibility of civilizing the uncivilized world. This colonization of minds is pegged with bodies and it facilitates the colonizers to alter the cultural priorities of the colonized cultures once and for all. Like Nandy, there are many (Bhabha etc.) who talk about Christianity that has supported colonial expansion but they stop short when the question of a contesting religion occurs.

Said (1978) has gone very close to the factors resisting intrinsically against the prevailing colonial discourses and finds the colonizers imposing their culture on the colonized through different means. He shows the haughtiness of the West in treating the east as culturally inferior however omitting the solid background that provided the Easterners with a vision that had the potential to challenge and fight the colonizer's civilization.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the forces that can contest colonial assault on culture?
2. How does an Indian Muslim react to the *soi-disant* civilized colonizers?
3. How do deeply rooted indigenous people behave to the hybrids?
4. How and why are Manto and Shahab derisive about the Western civilization?

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore the way Islam works unconsciously in contesting colonial assault
2. To investigate how Indian Muslims react to the culture of the colonizers
3. To investigate the behavior of pure indigenous people towards hybridized 'Gentlemen'
4. To evaluate derision of Manto and Shahab for the Western civilization

**COMPARISON BETWEEN MANTO AND SHAHAB**

Making us see the events occurring before our very eyes and hear the thoughts of the characters, both Manto and Shahab depict life as it is without any voice of the author, observing it very closely, Manto being a wanderer, spending days and nights in the streets of Lahore and Bombay and Shahab being a civil servant of British Raj, exploring life from the angles of both the colonizer and the colonized. People may criticize the personal character of Manto in the perspective we are dealing with, but being a drunkard does not decree the absence of religious vision. Moreover, it is more about the religious roots of the character under scrutiny than the direct religious point of view of the author that we take into account; Manto never asserts his personality through his stories.

The protagonist of *The New Constitution*, Ustad Mangu, is an illiterate person, reiterating the fact that he is not educated in the educational system of Lord Macaulay (see Introduction) that is admittedly a supportive tool in making of hybrid characters who, in Macaulay's words, are 'a class who may be interpreters between us (the colonizer) and the millions whom we govern (the colonized); a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'. Being pure of this alloy, Mangu hated the British because according to him they ruled over Indians against their will and treated them as if they were some 'lower creation of God, even worse than a dog'.

Another criterion that is helpful for analyzing Mangu's vision in the absence of Western education is his hatred for white complexion. Fanon (1986) brings to light the black man's identity crisis that, generating from black stereotyping, resulting in a situation in which the black man is refused consideration, leads him to desire for whiteness. This desire is a result of internalizing the values, ideologies and culture of the colonizer that is yet a result of incorporating his language that has brought with it this thinking paradigms causing displacement of the native values and discourses in the personalities of native children who are brought up through the education system of the colonizer and who internalize the white man's civilization and system of thought that, instead of 'civilizing' them, make them consider themselves the outlawed creatures, the ousted 'blacks' who are low, inferior, uncivilized, cannibal and savage. Mangu felt nausea when he confronted the *gora* soldiers, called them human monkeys and said that the faces of the British reminded him of 'decaying carcasses', an extreme expression of disgust pinpointing his impulse of despising them also with, 'look at them... don't they seem like lepers? Something dead and rotten!' an expression coupled with a wish to stand equal and counter instead of any wish to be like them or follow their ways. Mangu's disgust showing in these words, 'every time I look at their blighted faces, my blood begins to boil', suggests it is not simply because the British ruled the Indians against their will, as the span of time covering more than two centuries was sufficient to change the will of the native as it happened with most of the natives who were brought up through westernized 'liberal' education with eliminated religious discourses. It was also the matter with Mangu who, being a Muslim with a glorious past of Indian Muslims and typical ego and pride of Muslims that they have in their religion, is contemptuous toward the British and does not consider them worthwhile to rule them viz. Indian Muslims, especially clearly emitting his contempt in

these words, 'the way they order you around as if one was their father's slave'. As a representative of the Muslims, not gone far away from the unconscious religious inculcations, Mangu was not merely stirred by the promise of the new constitution; he was rather waiting for a new law (that we see in the start of the story) that could liberate the Indians from their plight. Schooling had not given him the awareness of the plight but the treatment of the British and the vision that enabled him to compare the colonizer with Muslim rulers gave him the power to have pride in himself and the glorious past of Islam with unparalleled civilization and the power to despise the colonizer that is visible in Manto's words, 'there was a smile on his face and he wished nothing better than immediate demise of this impertinent *gora*' and 'Ustad Mangu looked down on the short-statured soldier with great contempt. Then he raised his arm and hit heavily on the chin. He followed this with a merciless beating of the Englishman.'

Zameeruddin, alias Do Ranga, on the other hand, is a symbolic character of Shahab representing a hybrid creature, a typical production of the Western civilization, having no morals, ethics or constituents of character, perpetually becoming a sharp contrast with Ustad Mangu who stands pure with high morals, ethics and a civilization that does not give space to utilitarian and Machiavellian characters like Do Ranga.

Shahab symbolizes the mixing of an Indian into the Western civilization as the disease of vitiligo that Do Ranga suffers from, making us recall Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, but the white mask is not complete as Do Ranga's wish to become white is incompletely fulfilled in the shape of vitiligo in which he has got white coloured patches all over his body. Shahab makes visible Do Ranga's scornful attitude to the black colour of his skin while he was studying at Govt. College Lahore under the aegis of the British imperial educational system, showing his inferiority complex and his desire to be white in following the masters.

Shahab's operation of the Western civilization and the symbols he uses to describe it go superbly perfect as we see the contrast with the Eastern (Islamic) civilization through his depiction of the replacement of the name of the coffee house (*qahwakhana*) with the name of brothel (*qahbakhana*) as both *qahwakhana* and *qahbakhana* are Urdu words and are evidently used by Indian Muslims with a background of Persian learning. Another symbol of the decaying civilization of the West is Barbara who, now in India, posing to be the niece of "Sir William Mcpherson", supposedly some grand lord, is in reality a bar dancer, a stripper and a prostitute, stripping off the falsehood of the proclamation of the West to civilize the East by dismantling the hypocrisy and vanity of the West in these words of Shahab, 'and at that time, standing in the balcony of hotel Taj Mahal, Barbara, who once washed dirty utensils for ten shillings a week and sold her body for four shillings a night in East End, did thus do justice with her moral and humanistic obligation of emancipating the poor of India from dirt, poverty and misery.'

Shahab's derision for the vain civilization of the West is also overflowing in the description of Do Ranga's washing habit that he left after going to London, adopting the use of toilet paper, typical of the West, causing his body to stink nauseatingly and repelling others from his company. The hybrid product, Do Ranga, is altogether a despicable creature for any reader who has got the rudiments of Islamic culture and civilization, contemptuously disregarding the ways he lived a life of a vulture, made even clearer in these words, 'in bribe one thousand, or wife, or mother, or sister? As for Do Ranga, everything was fair and licit from the flesh of a pig to the eggs of a vulture.'

The ultimate pitfall of the Western civilization, the most satirical and ironic end of Barbara is her arrival at a brothel that represents the collective response of the so-called uncivilized natives to the *soi-disant* civilized colonizer.

## CONCLUSION

The presupposition of the West that the orient is primitive, child-like, savage, uncivilized is not just countered on the basis of the native culture but there are other discourses working behind the minds of Indian Muslims who have always been more civilized than

the Westerns and have been aware of the fact, also knowing their own educational and cultural background with the admitted fact that Islam has not only been a religion but also a force that governed the Muslim culture, making little room for the West to nullify the native civilization even when the British tried it hard by replacing the language and declaring in this way all local people uneducated even if they were highly qualified in Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and Persian with all the cultural heritages of these languages and the oldest history of the subcontinent.

Though the replacement of language helped the colonizers to break the backbone of the native revolt, it could not eliminate the vision and the worldview of the Indians, especially the Muslims who, with their strong roots in Islam, were never impressed by the self-claimed civilization of the West and who always compared the Western norms with their own, disliking and disregarding those of the West as it is represented in the character of Do Ranga whose stinking body repelled the people around because he used toilet paper instead of washing his faces.

It is not to say that Islamic background and unconscious inculcation rendered all Muslim Indians immune to the Western cultural invasion; the point is that there are characters like Do Ranga, who got hybridized and still are there, who are the products of westernized education. In fact, Islamic discourses do work as a safeguard. The more one is in the range of this safeguard, the more one remains pure and clear in one's head. We can have the examples of the current times also in which people with urban background and modern education are more vulnerable to taking up the Western norms and cultures whereas others with rural and/or religious background are more resistant to the Western civilization and more critical about its loopholes and drawbacks, having no issues of hybridity that are the burning questions and great problematic for the urban cultures. This lack of hybridization and a collective contempt for hybridity renders the subcontinent a post colony different from those with weak or no religious backdrops.

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