



UNRAVELING COLONIAL MENTALITY AND RESISTING OTHERNESS: A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF HANIF'S *A CASE OF EXPLODING MANGOES*

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Abstract

This research offers the exploration of postcolonial identity and resistance within Muhammad Hanif's captivating novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, particularly focusing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, the study delves into the nuanced portrayal of characters tackling with the pervasive influence of colonial ideologies in postcolonial Pakistan. From the authoritarian regime of General Zia-ul-Haq to the personal struggles of individuals navigating cultural and political landscapes, Hanif's narrative serves as a powerful reflection of the complexities of postcolonial existence. By unraveling the layers of colonial mentality and illuminating strategies of resistance against 'otherness', this research invites readers on a thought-provoking journey into the heart of postcolonial literature. This study also underscores the enduring relevance of Hanif's work in confronting the legacies of colonialism and envisioning pathways towards collective empowerment and liberation.

Keywords: *Colonial Mentality, Otherness, Identity, Resistance, Post-colonialism*

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1. Introduction

A Case of Exploding Mangoes by Muhammad Hanif is set in the 1980s against the backdrop of General Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship. The novel follows the intersecting lives of various characters whose paths converge in unexpected ways. It is a compelling and multi-layered novel that combines elements of political satire, mystery, and black comedy to provide an intense critique of power and corruption in Pakistan. Through its engaging plot and well-developed characters, the novel offers readers a unique glimpse into the tumultuous landscape of postcolonial Pakistan and the lasting effects of military dictatorship. As the plot unfolds, Hanif masterfully weaves together multiple storylines, blurring the lines between fact and fiction, truth and conspiracy. The result is a riveting and thought-provoking narrative that offers both entertainment and insight into the complexities of life under authoritarian rule. As Hanif skillfully moves between the ridiculous and the menacing, themes of corruption, authoritarianism, and the fallout from blind loyalty are prevalent throughout the story. Hanif exposes the hypocrisy of those in positions of power who exercise it without consequence and exposes the abuses of military dictatorship with sharp wit and dark humor.

At its core, postcolonial critique aims to deconstruct the binaries of colonizer/colonized, self/other, and center/periphery, revealing the complex interplay of power dynamics, cultural hybridity, and resistance within colonial and postcolonial contexts. By viewing the text through a critical postcolonial lens, we would develop the ability to understand the complex legacies of colonialism and imperialism and their ongoing impacts on contemporary societies. Postcolonial critique interrogates the ways in which colonial powers constructed and perpetuated representations of the colonized "other" as inferior, exotic, or primitive. It also examines how colonial ideologies and structures of power become internalized by colonized people, leading to forms of self-imposed oppression and subjugation.

In the landscape of postcolonial literature, Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* stands as a poignant exploration of power, politics, and identity within postcolonial Pakistan. With the dictatorial regime of General Zia-ul-Haq as the backdrop and the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, the novel weaves together a tapestry of intrigue, satire, and dark humor. As readers embark on a journey through the corridors of power and the complexities of Pakistani society, they are confronted with themes of colonial mentality, resistance against "otherness," and the enduring legacy of colonialism in shaping individual and collective identities. This research study seeks to unravel the layers of meaning embedded within Hanif's narrative, employing a postcolonial lens to analyze the intricacies of colonial power dynamics and the strategies of resistance employed by characters within the novel. By delving into the complexities of

the novel, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of postcolonial literature and its relevance in navigating the complexities of contemporary societies.

2. Problem Statement

While existing scholarship has explored themes of colonial mentality and resistance against 'otherness' in postcolonial literature, there remains a need for a focused analysis of these themes within the context of Muhammad Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Specifically, the problem statement addresses how the novel portrays colonial mentality and the strategies of resistance employed by characters within the complex socio-political landscape of postcolonial Pakistan.

2.1. Research Questions

These research questions aim to delve into the portrayal of colonial mentality and resistance against 'otherness' in the novel, offering avenues for a comprehensive analysis of postcolonial themes within the text.

Q1: How does Muhammad Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* depict colonial mentality and the internalization of colonial ideologies among characters within postcolonial Pakistan?

Q2: What strategies of resistance against 'otherness' are employed by characters in the novel, and how do these strategies intersect with broader socio-political dynamics in postcolonial Pakistani society?

2.2. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research study are to analyze the portrayal of colonial mentality within Muhammad Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and to explore the strategies of resistance against 'otherness' depicted in the novel. Along with that, it directs towards examining the intersectional dynamics of power, identity, and oppression within postcolonial Pakistani society as portrayed in the novel. The main objective is to apply postcolonial theoretical frameworks, including concepts such as Orientalism and colonial discourse analysis, to the analysis of the novel in order to assess the relevance of Hanif's work in challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices within postcolonial literature.

2.3. Research Significance

This research study bridges the gap between literature and socio-political theory by employing a postcolonial framework to analyze literary texts. This interdisciplinary approach encourages dialogue between different academic disciplines and fosters a more holistic understanding of complex social phenomena. The research studies analysis of colonial mentality and resistance that has implications for contemporary socio-political contexts beyond the novel's setting. By highlighting the enduring effects of colonialism and the strategies employed by marginalized communities to resist hegemonic power structures, the study offers insights into broader struggles for social justice and liberation.

The study also enriches our understanding of postcolonial literature by offering a focused analysis of Hanif's novel. By examining themes of colonial mentality and resistance against 'otherness' within the context of the narrative, the study provides insights into the complexities of postcolonial identity construction of power dynamics. Lastly, through its examination of colonial ideologies and strategies of resistance, the study sheds light on the socio-cultural implications of colonial legacies in postcolonial societies. By exploring how these themes manifest in the lives of characters in the novel, the study contributes to critical conversations about identity, agency, and cultural representation.

3. Literature Review

Postcolonial literature has emerged as a critical field of study that interrogates the legacies of colonialism and imperialism and their impact on literature, culture, and identity (Said 1979; Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1988). Scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have pioneered theoretical frameworks that illuminate the complexities of postcolonial experience and representation (Said 1979; Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1988). Postcolonial literature challenges Eurocentric narratives, amplifies marginalized voices, and offers alternative perspectives on history and power dynamics.

Central to the study of postcolonial literature is the concept of colonial mentality and Orientalism, as expounded by Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism* (Said 1979). Said argues that Western representations of the East are imbued with colonial ideologies and power dynamics, perpetuating stereotypes and hierarchies that position the West as superior and the East as inferior (Said 1979). Scholars such as Frantz Fanon further explore the psychological effects of colonialism on colonized peoples, highlighting the internalization of colonial discourses and the struggle for decolonization of the mind (Fanon 1963).

In postcolonial literature, characters often navigate oppressive power structures and assert agency through various forms of resistance (Achebe 1958; Thiong'o 1980; Roy 1997). Strategies of resistance may include cultural reclamation, subversion of dominant narratives, and outright rebellion against colonial rule. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Arundhati Roy depict characters who resist colonial oppression while reclaiming their cultural heritage and asserting their humanity.

Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* offers a rich terrain for exploring themes of colonial mentality and resistance against "otherness" within the context of postcolonial Pakistan (Hanif 2008). The novel satirically depicts the authoritarian regime of General Zia-ul-Haq and its impact on the lives of ordinary citizens. Through the protagonist Ali Shigri and other characters, Hanif explores the internalized colonial ideologies that permeate Pakistani society and the strategies employed by individuals to resist hegemonic power structures (Hanif 2008).

An intersectional analysis of postcolonial literature reveals the complexities of identity formation and power dynamics within colonial and postcolonial contexts (hooks 1981; Crenshaw 1989). Factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion intersect with colonialism to shape characters' experiences and responses to oppression. Scholars like bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw emphasize the importance of intersectionality in understanding systems of domination and liberation.

While postcolonial literature has made significant strides in challenging colonial hegemony, it also faces critiques and debates within academic circles (Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1988). Some scholars question the essentialist tendencies within postcolonial discourse, while others highlight the need for greater inclusivity and representation of marginalized voices. Additionally, debates around the politics of representation, language, and identity continue to inform discussions within the field.

Despite the enormous range of scholarship on postcolonial literature, there remains a gap in research concerning the specific themes of colonial mentality and resistance against 'otherness' in Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (Hanif 2008). This research study seeks to address this gap by offering a focused analysis of the novel through a postcolonial lens, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of postcolonial literature and its effects for modern societies.

4. Research Methodology

This research study combines textual analysis with theoretical frameworks from postcolonial studies. This research study is academic and qualitative in nature. The research design chosen for this purpose is interpretive and hermeneutic. The study revolves within the robust theoretical frameworks of postcolonial studies, Orientalism, colonial discourse analysis, and related theories. It draws upon concepts from scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Frantz Fanon to form the analysis of the novel. The research methodology comprises of a close textual analysis of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* to identify instances of colonial mentality, Orientalist representations, and strategies of resistance employed by characters. It also analyzes narrative techniques, character development, and thematic elements within the novel.

5. Discussion and Analysis

Muhammad Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* intricately navigates the postcolonial landscape of Pakistan, offering a nuanced exploration of power dynamics, cultural identity, resistance, language, and nationalism. Through a postcolonial lens, the novel reveals the complexities of navigating a fractured national identity in the aftermath of British rule and military dictatorship. In the novel, the exploration of colonial mentality and resistance against 'otherness' is deeply embedded within the intricate layers of the narrative, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of postcolonial identity and power dynamics (Hanif 1). As Hanif writes, "the British ruled the subcontinent for a

hundred years and the place was still a mess" (Hanif 13). Through the protagonist, Ali Shigri, and other characters, Hanif exposes the pervasive influence of colonial ideologies on Pakistani society, particularly within the military establishment. The novel's satirical portrayal of General Zia-ul-Haq's regime serves as a poignant commentary on the enduring legacy of British colonialism and its impact on Pakistan's political landscape. For example, the character of General Zia embodies the authoritarianism and cultural imperialism characteristic of colonial rule, as he imposes his narrow interpretation of Islam and suppresses dissent through draconian measures (Hanif 25). In the novel, the Pakistani military establishment emerges as a central locus of power, echoing the legacy of British colonial influence. General Zia's regime epitomizes this continuity of power, with its authoritarian rule mirroring colonial structures. As Ali Shigri reflects on Zia's reign, he ponders, "Our president was a dictator, our newspapers were censored, and our history books were rewritten" (Hanif 43). Here, the censorship of media and manipulation of history underscore the perpetuation of colonial control mechanisms. Additionally, Hanif also employs humor and irony to underscore the absurdity of colonial mentalities and their detrimental effects on individual agency and collective consciousness. He writes how "there was something quite perfect about the British...they knew how to turn anything into a competition. I could see why they had colonized half the world" (Hanif 32).

Furthermore, the novel delves into the theme of resistance, as characters navigate the fraught terrain of political intrigue and personal vendettas in their quest for liberation from oppressive structures (Hanif 87). In one instance, a character reflects on Zia's dictatorship, stating, "The president was dying, but he had already taken half the country with him" (Hanif 124). This subversive narrative challenges the legitimacy of authoritarian rule and exposes its destructive consequences. Ali Shigri's determination to uncover the truth behind his father's death symbolizes a broader struggle against entrenched power dynamics and the perpetuation of "otherness" within Pakistani society (Hanif 145). Moreover, the novel's portrayal of diverse voices, including those of marginalized individuals like the low-ranking soldier Obaid, highlights the resilience of those who resist conformity and challenge dominant narratives (Hanif 203). Hanif also skillfully portrays the struggle for cultural identity amidst Western influence and traditional Pakistani values. Ali Shigri, educated in England, wrestles with his sense of self as he navigates the complexities of Pakistani society. His conflicted identity is epitomized in his name, a fusion of East and West, reflecting the cultural hybridity inherent in postcolonial identities. Hanif writes, "Ali Shigri, part of me was still British, part of me was still Pakistani, and part of me was neither" (Hanif 97). Shigri also ponders on how he "could never get the hang of saying Allah Hafiz instead of goodbye", depicting his cultural hybridity and identity (Hanif 145).

Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, provides a crucial framework for understanding the dynamics of colonial mentality and the construction of "otherness" in postcolonial contexts. Said argues that Western representations of the East, or the "Orient," are not objective but are instead shaped by colonial ideologies and power relations. Said explores the power dynamics inherent in Orientalist discourse, highlighting how Western scholars and policymakers have wielded knowledge to maintain dominance over Eastern societies, stating that "orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and... 'the Occident'" (Said 12-13). These representations often depict the East as exotic, inferior, and in need of Western domination and intervention. In the context of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Said's ideas can be applied to the portrayal of Pakistan by both Western and internal colonial powers. General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, depicted in the novel, embodies a form of internal Orientalism, wherein Pakistani leaders adopt and perpetuate colonial narratives of cultural superiority and religious purity. Zia's strict interpretation of Islam and suppression of dissent can be seen as manifestations of this internal Orientalism, as he seeks to assert control over the populace by reinforcing colonial-era binaries of "us" versus "them."

Furthermore, Said's concept of 'Orientalism' sheds light on the ways in which characters like Ali Shigri navigate the internalized colonial ideologies that permeate Pakistani society. Ali's quest for truth and justice in the face of state oppression can be understood as a form of resistance against the Orientalist narratives that seek to marginalize and silence dissenting voices. By challenging the dominant discourse perpetuated by figures like General Zia, Ali embodies Said's call to subvert colonial representations and reclaim agency and autonomy. Language also serves as a tool of resistance and representation in the novel, reflecting the struggle for narrative authority in a postcolonial context. Hanif employs Urdu and English interchangeably, highlighting the tension between colonial and indigenous languages. Through linguistic experimentation, the novel disrupts dominant discourses and amplifies marginalized voices. As Hanif writes, "In the cacophony of languages, the truth was lost" (Hanif 213), underscoring the complexities of linguistic negotiation in postcolonial societies.

In addition to Said's work, Frantz Fanon's theory of colonial psychology also provides a compelling framework for understanding the psychological effects of colonialism and the dynamics of resistance within the novel. Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, explores the internalization of colonial ideologies by colonized individuals and the resulting psychopathologies that emerge as a consequence of oppression (Fanon 13).

In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Fanon's theory finds resonance in the characters' experiences of internalized colonialism and their struggles for liberation. The protagonist, Ali Shigri, embodies the psychological complexities of living under an authoritarian

regime, where fear, paranoia, and disillusionment pervade everyday life. Shigri's journey reflects Fanon's notion of the "colonial neurosis," where individuals internalize the dehumanizing discourses of the colonizer and grapple with feelings of inferiority and alienation (Fanon 19). The pervasive atmosphere of fear and paranoia in the military barracks reflects the psychological toll of living under a repressive colonial regime, where individuals internalize the dehumanizing discourses of the colonizer (Hanif 23).

Moreover, Fanon's concept of "violence as a cleansing force" offers insights into the novel's portrayal of resistance and rebellion against oppressive structures (Fanon 92). Characters like Shigri and General Zia engage in acts of symbolic and literal violence as a means of asserting agency and reclaiming their dignity in the face of colonial domination. Through these acts of resistance, Hanif highlights the transformative potential of violence in challenging entrenched power structures and instigating revolutionary change. Acts of symbolic violence, such as Junior Officer Ali's defiance of authority through his eccentric behavior, serve as expressions of resistance against the oppressive power structures (Hanif 67). Consequently, the climax of the novel, involving the explosion of mangoes at the military academy, can be interpreted as a symbolic act of violence aimed at destabilizing the colonial order and asserting agency (Hanif 274).

Additionally, Fanon's emphasis on the importance of decolonizing the mind resonates throughout the novel, as characters grapple with their internalized colonial mentalities and strive to reclaim their cultural identities (Fanon 34). Shigri's quest for truth and justice becomes a metaphorical journey towards psychological liberation, as he confronts the contradictions and hypocrisies of the colonial regime and asserts his right to self-determination. Fanon writes how "colonial aggression turns inward in a current of terror among the natives" (Fanon 18). Ali Shigri's pursuit to uncover the truth behind his father's death represents a journey towards psychological liberation and the decolonization of the mind (Hanif 132). Fanon explores the quest for liberation and the assertion of identity among colonized peoples, advocating for a radical transformation of society, "for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (Fanon 42). Through Shigri's introspection and interrogation of the dominant narratives, Hanif highlights the importance of reclaiming one's cultural identity and challenging colonial mentalities (Hanif 189).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, "Unraveling Colonial Mentality and Resisting Otherness: A Postcolonial Reading of Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*" delves deep into the intricate layers of postcolonial identity and power dynamics within Hanif's gripping narrative. Through a lens sharpened by postcolonial theory, the study illuminates the pervasive influence of colonial ideologies and the enduring struggle for agency and

liberation in postcolonial Pakistan. Hanif's portrayal of characters navigating the oppressive landscape of colonial mentality resonates with the complexities of our contemporary world, urging readers to confront the legacies of colonialism while envisioning pathways towards collective empowerment and liberation. This research serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of postcolonial literature in challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices, offering a compelling call to action for critical engagement and social transformation. Through a nuanced exploration of the themes in the novel, the analysis sheds light on the complexities of navigating a fractured national identity in the aftermath of colonialism and military dictatorship.

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