



**TRACING THE NEOCOLONIAL INTERVENTION IN
THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF YOUNG WRITERS
FROM THE FORMER COLONIZED REGION:
A CASE STUDY ON WORKS OF FATIMA
BINTY SULEMAN**

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Abstract

Despite the absence of direct control by colonial powers, the impacts of British colonialism remain evident in former colonies in various ways. This has led to situations where the inhabitants of former colonies become victims of colonization themselves. Such circumstances facilitate the emergence of neocolonialism, trapping people in colonial mindsets characterized by feelings of superiority and inferiority. This mentality has also been adopted by the younger generations in former colonies. During their formative years, children internalize the perceived superiority of English and Western literary aesthetics, leading them to emulate these styles in their own writings and creative endeavors, even though they have their own literary traditions and languages. Regarding such discussion, one case can be traced through the study of the child writer of Pakistan, Fatima Binty Suleman. Thirteen years old who published four novels and various short stories in 2020. This study is aimed to trace neocolonial interventions among the unconsciousness of children in following Western literary aesthetics in their writing while analyzing the case of Suleman. The study is conducted through a closed textual analysis of her novels within the concept of mimicry given by Homi Bhabha. Bhabha elaborated on how former colonies mimic colonizing powers in different aspects. Analysis reveals that she has written all the novels and short stories in English and adopted the literary aesthetics of the West. The study also discloses that children adopt this attitude in their unconsciousness from the neocolonial exposure they get from their surroundings.

Keywords: *Colonial Mindset, Colonialism, Critical Period, Literary Aesthetics, Mimicry, Neocolonial Intervention, Unconsciousness.*

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Colonialism has affected many indigenous nations across the globe, leaving undeniable impacts on society, literature, economy, and politics. European power exploited many colonies and their natural resources and thus create negative effects on lived experiences of natives. Colonization mugged natives of their language and culture and they are still struggling with their fragmented identities. According to Boahen most serious impact of colonization is psychological damage affecting numerous indigenous people (107-108). Colonization affects the mental health of people. Even young writers also internalized colonialism. Internalized colonialism creates a feeling of shame and destroys self-esteem. Evidence of this mentality in structural institutions is obvious for instance in Pakistan regardless of the existence of more than 300 native dialects, the official language is spoken in Pakistan is English. Moreover, English dominates in government affairs and also in the education sector. For instance, students are taught and evaluated in English throughout their academics. Institutions do not continue teaching the Native language after the intermediate level. Remnants of colonization are also eminent in the language and literature of natives. According to David and Okazaki, "Colonial mentality is a form of internalized oppression . . . characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority" (241).

In this regard, when language loses its influence, ideology gets affected one way or the other. Ideology is a set of ideas and social beliefs based on which people define their social institutes such as the schooling, nation-state, dispute settlement, gender and even law. The influence of ideology does not exclude language. Beliefs in language are substantial for societal as well as linguistics study because they are not only about language. Rather, such beliefs incursion and endorse connections of language to groups and individual identity, epistemology and art to morality. Through such connections, they every so often reinforce essential public institutions. The imposition of stately language and education is disseminated through ideological state apparatus. In most colonized lands the effects on indigenous culture and societal values are permanent.

Therefore, Language plays a vital role in the ideological process as both are intertwined. It acts as a bridge to link an individual's knowledge and social practices. Language shapes individuals' thoughts and behavior. For example, R. Williams opined that, "A definition of languages always implicitly or explicitly a definition of human beings in the world." Language and culture become the first target of colonization and so to make the colonized mute and illogical. Their voices cannot be heard because powers do not want the world to hear them. Owing to this deprivation, they start to copy superior Other.

At this stage, the colonized natives belong to Lacan's 'mirror stage', a stage where a child has no language nor culture he just looks at his image in others to imitate them. The colonial power comes with the ideology of language change. A language is a first-

hand tool of colonialism. Colonizers invade with the commodification of the native language which results in an ongoing change in culture and norms. In some areas colonialism results in a decrease in speakers of indigenous languages and some cases language extinction. Okoth okombo concludes this, "the death of a language is like the burning of a library." According to a survey conducted by UNESCO about two thirty-one languages have gone extinct in the world, thirty-seven of which originated in sub-Saharan Africa. All these languages were replaced by English, the language of western colonizers. The British empire colonized many countries mainly through language that is English. English is made superior through linguistic and cultural hegemony. English is the top second acquired language and third most spoken language in the world. European colonialism destroyed indigenous culture and language. Colonialism created a different group of languages like pigeons and creoles. Such hierarchies become socio-political identities of different groups. Colonialism has a deep influence on literature emerging from colonized states. Loomba also investigates the relationship between colonization and literature. and he asserts that English literary studies induced in the colonies through the system of education had an ideological purpose to serve. Today the linguistic legacy of colonialism can also be seen in our native speakers. Still, we are using English as a medium for our official and academic institutions.

We believe colonialism is terminated from Pakistan, once a colonial state, among many states which got independence, but it's not the case. We might be escaping colonialism but are getting trapped in neo colonialism through linguistic and cultural hegemony. Colonialism is said to persist in the form of neo-colonialism where independent states internalize the hegemony of colonizers and recentralize them through generating discourses against them. Neocolonialism is said to impose the continued post-colonial impact of progressive industrial states on the educational systems and plans as well as the intellectual life of evolving areas. English is considered a necessity to study in the most prestigious institutions and to work anywhere in the world. English is used as a medium of communication between two non-native English speakers who do not share a common native language. Neo colonialism made English a requirement of today's world. People are in a continuous struggle to perfect their understanding of English rather than preserving their own culture and language. Natives of Pakistan are subjected to linguistic colonialism; one of the effects of colonialism that cannot be gotten rid of.

Neocolonialism is partially a strategic policy of developed countries to sustain their hegemony and political impact on the developing states. According to Kwame Nkrumah, "...the essence of neocolonialism is that the nation which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outside trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside", (132).

Neocolonialism serves as a key marker for certain third-world nations of the 1960s. neocolonialism is a paradoxical term explained by Kwame Nkrumah as, "a modern attempt to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about freedom". For Nkrumah, it is more like psychological control over third-world countries. The first noted use of the term neocolonialism is contained in Jean Paul Sartre's colonialism and neocolonialism 1964. It has become a fundamental theme in African political philosophy. Sartre argued for the complete detachment from France's control and total eradication of the continuous influence of French policies on the former colonies.

Additionally, the post-colonial societies are under the influence of the educational system of the West. This influence is called educational neocolonialism in the way that the West tends to shape and influence the thinking patterns via education through globalization. To attain the standards of ruling countries, the policy makers of third world countries try to follow western patterns and policies. So, they borrow policies from a culture different from their own and it leads to many problems for example losing the linguistic and cultural heritage of owns own country.

The language of different colonial countries remains under the influence of British rule even after colonization. As a result of which these states cannot be said to be postcolonial thoroughly. Colonial mindsets cannot be scraped off by the people of former colonies. Colonial influence still prevails in almost every walk of life chiefly in culture and language. In the same way, the South Asian countries are still under the influence of colonial rule like Pakistan. In Pakistan, we are so much under the impact of British colonialism that we still imitate them in every domain from language, culture, food, hairstyle to dressing. Binary of West and Rest has been formed efficaciously by making everything of West as the prestigious representation to rest of the world. Obsession with the international brands is also a result of this representation. Fading our cultural and ethnic values is also a repercussion of neocolonialism. According to Nayyar, "our postcolonial reality is that all the institutions the British used to control India exist to this day and the hegemony of the English language is still present".

The fact we are not appreciating is that Pakistan is a multilingual state where more than sixty-six languages are spoken and during the division of the sub-continent, almost fifty-six percent of the population spoke Bengali while the majority spoke Punjabi. At that time, Urdu was spoken by a minority but it became the national language. Whereas, today irrespective of the fact that we possess multiple languages, we are using English as our official and academic language. English is now a requirement for studying and teaching at the most prestigious institutions like Beaconhouse, City school, American Lyceum, Renaissance, Beginnings, Roots, Grammar School, Hills Dale School., and so on. These are also the most expensive learning institutions in Pakistan as only elites can afford to send their children to these institutions. So, English has become the symbol of elitism and

status in the former colonial state of Pakistan. Students are made to internalize the significance of English and English literature during schooling in such institutions. They adopt this neocolonial intervention in their unconsciousness during their critical period for English literary aesthetics. Critics are of the view that contemporary juvenile fiction failed to promote a going view of the world. It did nothing to promote cultural values and deny to remain under the influence of British rule and identity. Rather, children's literature is enforcing neocolonialism among young readers when they start to internalize the superior-inferior duo from a very early age. The consequence of this can be traced in the fiction writing of young students of Pakistan who write fiction in English and the tenet of Western literary aesthetics at a very young age i.e. their critical period. One of the most prominent cases of this phenomenon is that of the youngest Pakistani Wattpad writer Fatima Binty Suleman. It has become a grave issue to ponder on that what makes our children follow the Western style and literary aesthetics while we do have our native language which is an amalgamation of many rich languages. How much practice has become internalized in the unconsciousness of former colonies' young children and how the traces can be seen in their works?

For analysis, we evaluated the works of Fatima Binty Suleman, a young Pakistani student who wrote four novels in the year 2020 and made her name at a very young age as a published writer. No doubt, she is a student of the 8th standard with a marvelous creative mind. She also published short stories and a play in 2021 and plans to continue her writing. She published her novels on Wattpad, an online publishing platform for nascent writers. Also writes teen fiction and her works are open to readers of every age. She made her name at a very young age; her school also appreciated her achievements and praised her works. Her novels include Finding, The Journey of a Broken Heart, The Girl and The Promise Breaker, and the Fool. All these novels are written in English and the plot and the name of the characters are like British writers. And she gets most of her readers from the UK, Australia, USA, India, and Pakistan. Her novel The Journey of Broken Heart has also won the award of a best ongoing story on Wattpad. She and many other young writers write in the same way to make their work acknowledged by the colonial power, the West. And in doing so they try to mimic them which (mimicry) Homi Bhabha explores as one of the most effective strategies of colonial knowledge and power in colonial discourse. For Bhabha, mimicry ensues when colonized peoples imitate language, politics, dress, and appropriate to some extent the culture of colonizers.

In colonial and postcolonial states/literature mimicry is seen as one's action of imitating another actor who is the superior one. While copying the colonizers or masters one has to suppress his language and cultural identity. To mimic the western style becomes the ultimate desire of natives of colonized states. In this regard, M.S. Narajan states 'to this divided self of colonized states as 'unhomeliness. He argues that one becomes a

psychological refugee, in not being able to feel at home even at one's own home' (187). The research uses a postcolonial approach. Berteus and young are of the view that the Postcolonial approach deals with the interaction of two different cultures and in end, the superior inferior duo is created and one dominates the other as a result new culture emerges. The ground theory that is applied in this research is the concept of mimicry devised by Bhabha in the book "the location of culture (1994) and Nation and Narration (1994). The term mimicry is defined as an exaggeration of copying language, culture, ideas, and ethics of superior culture that is different from one other based on mere imitation.

Homi k. Bhabha is of the view that colonized nations mimic colonizers to improve themselves but in doing so they still maintain an air of difference. Fatima Binty Suleman, the youngest student also writes in the language of colonizers (West) and mimics their writing style as all these novels are similar to the writing style of western writers such as John Green and Lauren Oliver and even uses the names of characters like them like Laura, Lynn, Cath, Lur., etc. The title pages are too similar to the ones we find in novels written by West i.e. fair complexion, blonde hair, Western attire, etc.

These writers appear as neo-orientalists by being inspired by Western hegemonic discourse so are inhabitants originally but English in taste and intellectuality. This admiration for western literary aesthetics affects our realism for our lived reality, cultural and ethical values are far more different. But these writers portray western realism and style even very young writers to make their work acknowledged by a colonial power.

The present writers are becoming mimic men by portraying western staff in their writing to be renowned at the international level. The same thing is internalized by children at a very young age in consequence many started writing in English and following western literary aesthetics. The Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie in her TED talk "the danger of the single story" that in her early childhood she read stories by British and American writers. Thus, when she wrote as a child her characters were blue-eyed, drinking ginger beer eating apples, and playing in the snow. India in the 1990s, Kenya in the 1950s, Nigeria in the 1980s, Trinidad in the 1960s, ... Childhood experiences of all these were molded by British colonialism these countries experience as a colony.

The theory of literary aesthetic development refers to the approach that artistic appreciation is associated with the development of the human mind. Some theorists associate certain stages of aesthetic development. As James Mark Baldwin is of the view that certain process is included in aesthetic and human development i.e. semblance, personalization, immediacy, and idealization. Manoa and Eva Moravick, in their article "A thing of beauty is a joy forever: Aesthetic development n young children" deal with the issue that how the environment affects the aesthetic development of children.

Besides, N'gugi Wa Thiong in the chapter "the language of African Literature" is of the view that how language shift exists between children's domestic conditioning and formal education. He argues that "English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education... the official and the magic formula to colonial elitedom" (Thiong'o 11-12).

Ideas and stories are evolved from aesthetic formations to philosophical and political relics when they pass along the paths determined by neocolonial processes. The children's literature introduced to and formed within the colonies effect the partiality and positionality of the colonial child. They bring with them perceptions of childhood and ideas about children which can, in turn, lead to a culture of surveillance or resistance. In this context, Donnarae MacCann writes, "Colonialist children's books are agents of art that help produce a colonial-based socialization" (186). The impact of colonial education dismantles the harmony between children's written and spoken discourse. This thing creates a feeling of alienation from their own culture and feels ashamed of their linguistic expression.

The Mama Parsi Girl's secondary school is in Karachi and was established on April 1st, 1918, in which Fatima. The school has matriculation as well as Cambridge system. There is also a House system in the school to produce a sense of leadership skills, contribution, and team building. Internalization of English seems obvious in the school system for the whole setup is in English. The influence on literary aesthetics of unconsciousness of young children is also certain, the most obvious example is one of the budding writers Fatima Binty Salman.

Fatima, in her very first novel *The Girl* and the first book of a series of five, is a story of a girl named Anesthesia Wesley written in the form of magical realism. Currently, the only first book of the series is published but the story is very interesting. It is full of compassionate characters, numerous exciting events, and imaginative situations. Anesthesia is a simple girl with extraordinary powers, living contented in her beautiful small house with her family including her brother Jae Wesley, her mother Zinnia Wesley, and father Fred Wesley. Ann and Jae are twins and they have fine friends Soph Marsh, Jack Marsh, Grazer, and Laura. Ann possesses some magical and extraordinary powers, but this secret is kept hidden from her. Her mother is not happy with her extraordinary powers and decides to send her to a new home. Ann feels like a normal kid after bottling up with her magical powers for a long time. But living there demands a price. She has to put herself in danger to save her new home from being overthrown. The theme of magic is prevailing in the story which is also generally present in Western fiction and said to be originated in Shakespeare for instance, *Weird Sisters* in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Prospero* in his *The Tempest*. The names and descriptions of the characters are in English, for instance, "Ann had blue eyes just like her mother...she had lovely locks of thick brown

hair..." "Soph was blonde and had a pale heart-shaped face...Soph had green eyes..." "Laura was a peculiar girl with light brown wavy hair..." Because such features as colored eyes, fair complexion, and brown hair are most commonly possessed by English people.

The cover page of the book contains the picture of a girl standing with blonde hair. All this reveals how much the writer is influenced by Western literary aesthetics in her fiction.

Fatima's most renowned work is *The Journey of a broken heart*, which she published at the age of twelve, the story is about Laura and her sister Lynn and their struggle in life as Lynn was battling Osteosarcoma (cancer) but she remains optimistic till

her last breath. On the other side, Laura suddenly came to know that she was suffering from heart disease but she never told this her family. The themes used in the whole story are purely adopted from western writers i.e. the last wish. In our society there is no such concept but when it is revealed that she is going to have critical surgery in which she may lose her life so her parents ask her about her last wish. The portrayal of characters and their names is also depicted in western style. One thing that surprised us was the cover page in general. The blonde-haired girl was so similar to the cover page of the novel 'Timid' by Devney Perry. Perry's work received apperception and Fatima opting for exact portrayal on the cover in no less than a surprise. The mind of young ones is attracted to these representations that we unconsciously are attracted to them.

At many places in the novel, the writer adopts many things from well-known works of English for example, "After dad's long explanation of Petunias and Lilies I took Lynn inside..." here the Petunias and Lilies were used as a reference to Harry Potter. In another chapter, she quotes Charlotte Bronte "Since birth, it has always been a sign that you are alive." Besides this, the relationship of Laura with George is described very explicitly. Even Laura narrates her first kiss scene when she was in school. All these things show the direct neocolonial effect on the budding authors of colonial states that they feel embarrassed while talking about their culture so they are coping with other's styles consciously or unconsciously.

Finding is another novel that got immense readers and comments and votes on the Wattpad. It is a story of a girl Cath, a second-year college student suffering from a painful household. She meets with unexpected hatred from her close ones. Tries hard to find a loved one and wanted the position for herself. Hannah and Kate are her sisters and Lisa and Amy are her best friends. "...there was a girl with shoulder-length brown hair and olive skin." "...Amy who was almost like a china doll; Fair complexion, cute freckles around her nose and big, blue eyes..." Setting and events are also Western like going girls outside anytime freely, occurring different events, etc. For instance, Cath says, "Okay, I am going out and will come as soon as possible." 'I said and ran to the parking lot to pick up my bicycle, I want. I went to buy some tulips for Rage, her favorite because she is my favorite, and I bought some apples for grandma too.' In our society, usually, teenage girls

cannot be found going bazar on bicycles or alone. In our society, engagements or marriages also do not happen silently alone but there happens a family and friends gathering and proper announcement and planning while in the West having boyfriends and silent engagements are common as in the novel. For instance, when Rage says, "Oh honey, I got engaged!" and on this Cath says, "Why didn't you tell me?" Astoundingly, the names of all protagonists are English names. Pakistani never name anyone as Cath or Rage yet the novels are written for Pakistani audiences. The fantasy of white supremacy has trapped the mind of young ones and we believe, it is the institutions of our state that have made our language and culture weaker as compared to the West.

The Promise Beaker and the Fool is another continuing book of Fatima, which is a story of two different but close friends Fizzy and Zea. The names again are not native but West-centric. More like Western style, the setting and descriptions of events and characters are also carried out in the Western way. The cover page contains two girls one with white skin and red hair while the other has dark skin and black hair, portraying an ideal western protagonist. The character Zea is rich enough to possess her car while Fizzy is financially not stable enough and her mother is a single parent. Her father dies of a heart attack when she is only three years and then her mother decides to work as an editor in a magazine to meet their needs. The financial crisis makes Fizzy an introvert, caring daughter and more concerned for her studies. While Zea is a jolly, lively, fashionable, and caring friend who remains a friend of Fizzy for eight years. Fizzy and Zoe meet into an accident owing to their fast and careless driving Zoe while Fizzy keeps her warned. In the hospital, Fizzy is shocked by the news that Zoe mentions Fizzy's name as the owner of the car. She overwhelms with different feelings and emotions at this news. Again, there is the Western description of characters when Zoe says, "A petite girl with blonde hair, grey eyes and a small button nose wearing an oversized hoodie and black leggings met my gaze." Again, Fizzy describes a man who meets her in the hospital, "I turned my head around to a first-year med student with wavy brown hair, green eyes, and a short button nose...". Then there is another event in the hospital when Fizzy says; "Nicholas by the way, nice to meet you." 'he returned, extending his hand.' Our culture does not accept it too, it is a Western style to extend the hand to opposite genders who are not in blood relations. This is also mimicked from English published work by our writers and is now commonly found in the fiction of young children.

Various stories of Fatima have also been published on Wattpad and Dawn's Young World Magazine in English and in the same style as novels. Numerous other young children are writing in the style of colonizers, among them, Fatima is the most prominent with many publications. Her audience consists of readers from USA and UK which means that her work is being accepted and admired by the West. The same is the case with many other writers who write for Appreciation and in western style to make their work

acknowledged and admired internationally. Because whether it is to be accepted or not but English has become a global language and is the prerequisite of the hour to knowing English.

Not denying the fact, that the West is a colonial power, now colonizing the world in different and modern ways. Imperialism is now replaced with neocolonialism, West plans so cunningly like a mastermind in making the world paralyzed intellectually through literature, films, and technology. In this process, children being adaptable during their critical period become the easier target of neocolonialism, and literature is seen as playing a significant role in this phenomenon. Children become easily fascinated by magical and supernatural elements in stories and also by to dress style and independent actions of girls in English fiction. Children start to idealize such characters and events in their minds and then start portraying them in their stories.

In various parts of Asia, the patrimony of colonial power is still prominent in the educational system. In educational institutes, teachers and policy makers are cloning the theories that are different from their indigenous culture and resulting in ineffectiveness in academics. This cloning of mismatch policies of cross-culture causes drastic effects on the development of children as according to cognitive psychology what children adopt or observe at an early age affects their whole life.

The only way to get rid of these colonial and neocolonial dependency is that these third-world countries to resist these western policies and go for their cultural values. As Sardar says:

Resistance to Eurocentrism, and hence development, can only come from non-Western concepts and categories. The non-Western cultures and civilizations have to reconstruct themselves, almost brick by brick, by their world views and according to their norms and values. This means that the non-west has to create a whole new body of knowledge, rediscover it is lost and suppressed intellectual heritage, and shape a host of new disciplines.” (57).

Observance and learning of children start from birth, they learn and adopt from their surroundings and exposure. This learning remains more crucial till their critical period. The same happens with the adoptability of English and English literature. Children first find English environment from their parents and then in schools. Continuous emphasis on English leads to the internalization of English and English literature in the unconsciousness of children from a very early age. This internalization poured by elders is the outcome of colonial mindsets. We as former colonized, are still under the influence of colonialism and now we lead ourselves to be colonized by idealizing and following the Western trends. And the same tendency is being inculcated in the unconsciousness of our children which makes the process of neocolonialism easier, for children of today are the adult citizens of tomorrow. The consequence of this results in the writing of our children adopting Western

style and events. They have started to give more importance to English and English literature, it is good although for the global status of English while on the other hand detrimental to our national language and literature.

There is a need to indoctrinate the importance of our national language and literature among our children both at home and in educational institutions. There is a need to realize that learning English is a need of time to meet the modern requirements of the day but completely adopting the language for recognition, appreciation, or for gathering an audience is harmful to the status of the national language and literature as it compromises ideology too. Moreover, this aids in the lenience of neocolonialism, we are leading ourselves to the control of the West unconsciously. Consequently, there is a need that parents and educational mentors, both have to play an effective role to educate the young generation regarding language and its importance. They must contribute to inculcating the fondness for national language and literature and getting rid of colonial mindsets among young children.

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