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CRITICAL STUDY OF SHAMSIE'S NOVEL "BURNT SHADOWS" IN THE LIGHT OF POST COLONIAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The present paper intends to discuss different elements of post-colonial theory in the novel. The study addresses the condition of the people of pre and post Indo-Pak partition. The aim of this paper is to see how colonizers (English) treated colonized (Indians) and how natives reacted against their injustice. Furthermore the study discusses the condition of the people living in their colonizers' country. The paper also tells the history of India. How many rulers had conquered it, and how they governed and treated natives? English also occupied and ruled India, but how their ways of ruling were different from all others previous rulers.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Post-colonialism is basically a reaction of colonized people. How people were colonized and treated is discussed in the literature based on post-colonial theory. Colonizers' injustice and limitless cruelty remain main theme of this literature. The novel in discussion is divided into four parts. The first part deals with 1945, the atomic bombing; the second with 1947, the immediate partition scenario; third with 1982 Pakistan and fourth with 2001-2, the post 9/11 time period. The story has quick changing in itself which creates complexity in understanding the novel up to the mark. Post-colonialistic elements such as, Metropolitans, Eurocentric, other, Mimicry, Diaspora, Hybridity and Nationalism are discussed in the novel. The novel is divided into four parts. Quick changing in every coming part in the novel creates complexity. In elements of Post-colonialism, Metropolitanism, Other, Hybridity, Nativism, Diaspora and Unhomeliness have widely been discussed throughout the novel. In all Post-colonialistic elements, other is dominant in the novel. British came to India, divided Hindus and Muslims and ruled over them. They colonized Indians and considered them other, which means savage, undeveloped and unsophisticated. Sajjad is protagonist of the novel represents India; on the other hand his employer James Burton represents British Raj. English as colonizers considered themselves culturally superior to other and to Indians culturally backward people. To think in the way, comes in the category of metropolitanism. Feeling of otherness of Burtons for Sajjad germinates another element of Post-colonialism that is called nativism. In this element Sajjad leaves Burton's job and puts off English clothes and puts on kurta Pyjama. Sajjad has also been depicted as hybrid that is shown in the novel knotted between two cultures. The novel *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie is really based on the theory of post-colonialism. In this novel almost all elements of post-colonialism are skillfully applied. In all elements, other is dominant throughout the novel.

Sajjad and James Burton's relation is technically mentioned; Sajjad is puppet in the hand of James. Sajjad represents India and James English. Sajjad as Hybrid tied between eastern and western cultures. Hiroko's arrival in sajjad's life gives sense of freedom. Her love enables him to prove himself nativist.

a. Metropolitanism

According to metropolitanism colonizer consider colonized undeveloped, and think that without their assistance they can never be progressivists. In colonizer eyes their culture is superior to other. European colonized lands to develop backward people, but their argument was totally opposite to their actions. They basically occupied lands to loot natural resources of the area. "The colonizers believe that only their own Anglo-European culture was civilized, sophisticated, or as Post-colonial critics put it, metropolitan. Therefore native people defined as savage, backward and undeveloped. Because their technology was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religion, custom, and codes of behavior of the peoples they subjugated". (Tyson, 419)

Elements of metropolitanisms can be noticed in very beginning of the novel when Sajjad ruminates on British India. Sajjad cast a glance at the downfall of his homeland and quick disappearance of its venerable culture. He contemplated that British came to India for trade but they slowly got power and occupied it and colonized us in our own homeland. Injustice of British Raj with Indian remained unsurpassed in the history of post-colonial literature. After English had occupied India, they made their separate colonies. Their colonies were well organized and demarcated

by the boundary of huge and strong walls. They always kept Indians away from their company. To prove my argument I quote from the text, Sajjad says: "there was Delhi; city of the Raj, where every Englishman's bungalow had lush gardens, lined with red flowerpots. That was the end of Sajjad's ruminations on British India. Flowerpots it summed it all up. No trees growing in courtyards for English, no rooms clustered around these courtyards; instead, separations and demarcation. (Shamsie, 33)

Whenever Sajjad looked at those demarcating flowerpots, his sorrows increased. Britisher's Separate ways of living had proved that Indians were savage, backward and inferior to them.

Sajjad wants to see British out of his country. Because he, living with Burtons, has known well that this English beaten with broom can never be sincere with Indians. India, Sajjad thinks, is just a guest house for English. They have to move back their home, if not in this century, must be over the next century. They have lived in India more than hundred years but could not learn any native language, could not adopt any culture and always lived separate like strangers. Sajjad says: "yes these are interruptions-1857 was one, perhaps the departure of the British will be another-but believe me over the next century Dilli will continue to what it has been doing for the last two centuries. (Shamsie, 40)

James Burton believed that India, before advent of English people, was undeveloped and its people were uneducated. In his eyes it is British Raj that endowed India with a new life by bringing modern technology in sub-continent. He thought that if British had left India, It would have destroyed. Burton says "if that really is the case, then you are mistaken in thinking you will live and die there" (Shamsie, 40-41)

b. Hybridity

Hybridity represents transfer of culture. After colonization native people had knotted between two cultures. They, willingly or unwillingly, had to adopt new culture. The case was same with Indians. When English occupied India, they ruled India cruelly and crushed people under their feet. Indian had to follow fixed rules set for them. During colonial period India had lost its identity because of amalgamation of English culture. M.A.R. Habib says "the notion of Hybridity" is central to Bhabha's work in challenging notions of identity, culture and nation as coherent and unified entities that exhibits a linear historical development. Hybrid expresses a state of in betweenness an in person who stands between two cultures. (Habib 750)

Sajjad is hybrid; he stands between two cultures. His family follows Delhi's culture, interested in poetry. He enjoys remembering early days of his life, when he listens them saying poetry in gathering. Another side he, having English clothes, plays chess with James since dawn to dusk. Sajjad is chained between two cultures; at home he wears shalwar kameez and on duty English dress. To prove this I quote from novel. "He had talent for verse and it was only when in Delhi that he spoke fervently of the culture of poetry he had grown up with, in Dilli itself, while his brothers and sisters in law and aunts and cousins and mother traded couplets with each other, his mind would occupy itself with thoughts of chess games which he and James Burton carried over from day to the next as though they were stories of sultans and djinnis. If there was to be honest, he missed the day when it was legal document rather than chess game which occupied his thoughts each morning but one day they would return to that no doubt. James Burton had promised him (Shamsie, 34)

James Burton always kept Sajjad engaged in chess, and whenever Sajjad asked him to give him time for law practice, he just promised to discuss that some other day. Sajjad as a hybrid had to bear all unjust behavior of Burton's family.

c. Other

Other as Post-colonial element represents discarded people. Colonizers considered native people different; that's why they kept them away from them. They treated brutally as though they would be worst creature of the world. They could not join their company and even their entrance was not allowed in their colonies and hotels. E.M Forster writes in "A passage to India" that Indians and dogs were not allowed in their colonies and clubs. It is discussed in detail in critical theory by Lois Tyson. "As the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper "self"; native people were considered "Other" different, and therefore inferior to the point of being less than fully human. This practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human is called Othering, and it divides the word between us (the "civilized") an "then" (the "other" or savages"). (Tyson 420)

Kamila Shamsie has analyzed post-colonial notion throughout her novel "Burnt Shadows". She expounded the concept of "other" and "Otherness" in the novel. For James Sajjad was other. James represents Occidentalism which is opposite of Orientalism, then how opposites can be sincere with other. Sajjad was servant of James Burton. His job was nothing except playing chess since dawn to dusk. Sajjad is interested in law and anxious to be a lawyer. He always requested James to give him time for law but, James always promised and kept Sajjad's request aside. He never helped Sajjad in his studies except lending books. Sajjad slowly understood that English can never be sincere with Indians, they never want Indians proceed in walk of life. Sajjad, once being completely disgruntled with James's

constant attitude of avoidance of his request, says "is this what you call a flourishing life? Spending my days playing chess with". (Shamsie, 41)

Sajjad is basically representing India and James to British Raj. Sajjad was living in fool's paradise created by James. He always be fooled him just promised to guide him in law practice someday.

Peak of hatred of English with Indians can be noticed with this reality that English had lived in India more than hundred years but even then did not learn any single language spoken in the region. Moreover if anyone would show their interest in learning native language his interest was weakened by throwing cold water. They said the interested person that English language is sufficient for living in India. This reality has beautifully been mention by Shamsie in the novel. Hiroko says "I'd like to learn the language they speak here, she had said. It's not necessary. English serves your fine. (Shamsie, 57)

Elizabeth Burton disliked James and Sajjad's gathering. She asked her husband to treat Sajjad like an employer. She says that Sajjad is our servant and he is paid for work not for playing chess. You should utilize his services. You have to leave this friendship like gathering. Elizabeth says "and in any case you and Sajjad do nothing but play chess all day; let the boy wok for his salary again." (Shamsie, 20)

Hiroko was also "other" in Tokyo when she was taken for emergency treatment. After she had recovered; she worked as a translator for over a year. She was Japanese girl, different in look form Americans. Moreover Japanese were considered their worst enemy. Her friend, to save Hiroko from Americans attack, took her to parlor, where she got her hair done and wore American dress. She changed her appearance just to hide her identity. For Americans Hiroko was other. Even after war their hatred with Japanese did not abate. That's why her friend, was a nurse, changed her look so that nobody could harm her. This event skillfully discussed by Shamsie in the novel when Hiroko says "I worked as a translator for over a year. Made friend with one American nurse in particular, who took me to take my hair cut short like hers, and let me borrow her clothes when we went to night clubs to gather. (Shamsie, 64)

Though Sajjad was sincere servant of Burtons, but feelings of otherness was bitter for him. Sajjad belonged to poor family, can't buy new clothes. He took them from James to be on duty. But this was unbearable for Elizabeth. She says "I wish you would not give him your clothes Elizabeth said without turning towards James. He's started looking at everything you wear as if his it's his property; did you see how upset he was yesterday when you split ink on your shirt (Shamsie, 34-35)

d. Nativism: (Nationalism)

Nativism is basically an expression of lost culture, which shows that even now love of pre-colonial culture is alive in their heart. People of post-colonial, adopting past culture betray colonizers. Ex-colonials prove themselves nativist rejecting imposed rules and culture of conquerors. Nativist prove that they were and will ever be civilized, no colonizer can crush their noble culture under their feet. To cast aside western ways of living and adopt native culture is called Nativism or nationalism. This element of post- colonialism is discussed in detail in critical theory by Lois Tyson. He says "many ex-colonial therefore feel they must assert a native culture both to avoid being swamped by western culture so firmly planted on their soil and to recuperate their national image in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. This emphasis on indigenous culture especially when accompanied by the attempt to eliminate western influences is called Nativism on nationalism. (Tyson 423)

After Sajjad had decided to get married with Hiroko, he made his mind that he would be no more of James servant. The day of entrance of Hiroko in his life was the day of deliverance for him. He was now quite free from western culture. He put off English clothes and put on kurta payjama and demolished western cultural boundaries.

Now Sajjad was follower of his native culture, cursing so called job and English culture. His readoption of native culture and betraying of English culture showed Nativism. To prove my argument I quote from the novel.

"James turned. Walking through the moist towards him was Sajjad, dressed as had been the first time James saw him, and never since in white muslin kurta pyjama. A large umbrella was touched under his arm, leaving a wet imprint down one side of his body. My dear fellow James stepped forward, extending his hand. Sajjad looking at it in confusion, and James laughed and clasped the other man's shoulder. Didn't bring a chessboard with you I suppose; Sajjad pulled away I'm not here to return to my duties (Shamsie, 110-111)

Sajjad is determined to live in Dilli and drive out English from his homeland. Sajjad says "I will die in Dilli. Before that I will live in Dilli. Whether it's in British, Hindustan, Pakistan that makes no difference. In Sajjad eyes his colony is still saved form effects of British culture. He says to James Burton that the next century India will be free from British Raj. And all lost culture of Dilli will revive soon. Sajjad says "not believe me over the next century Dilli will continue to be what it's been doing for the last two centuries (Shamsie, 40)

Sajjad's mother hates and detests English language and specially dislikes some key words that based on the meaning or definition of demarcation or separation. She knows that English culture and language are disconnecting them from their native culture. The word modern shows newness or change with which she hates. Modern? His mother repeated the English word with disgust, And Sajjad tried not to imagine the Burtons laughing as her pronunciation; 'Maa-dern'. Do they tell you that are what you English are? Modern? These are words created only

to cut you off from people and your past.” (Shamsie 52) In the history of sub-continent, India had been conquered by Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol and Persian whoever came here, mingled with native people and adopted their culture and ways of living. They were sincere with natives treated with them like brothers. They lived in India as they had lived in their own country. They had made India their home. When they were going back to their homelands: they were heartbroken and tears were running down from their eyes. But the case with English was totally different. They came to India for business but their greed changed their intention into occupying the land. English had live in India more than hundred years but could not mingle with Indians. They always kept Indians away from themselves. They governed India cruelly and looked down upon them. They could not make India their home. Sajjad says “throughout India’s history conquerors have come from elsewhere, and all of them-Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol, Persian- have become Indians. If- when- this Pakistan happens, those Muslims who leave Delhi and Lucknow and Hyderabad to go there, they will be leaving their home. But when the English leave, they’ll be going home. (Shamsie, 82)

e. Diaspora or Unhomliness

In post-colonial theory people separated from their original homeland, come in the category of Diaspora. During colonization native people were used for different purposes. They were taken for work far away from their residential areas. They were enslaved there and behaved like animals. Workers did hard work from the sun rise to sunset. Sometimes months and years passed, but they could not see the faces of their family members; they were provided low quality food and at night chained and locked. To separate someone from his native place where he was born and grew up is called Diaspora or unhomliness. Feeling of Unhomliness is different from the feeling of homelessness. Unhomed people represent the people who are away from their native place. Whether they are settled or unsettled in their new place but recollections of their birth place recall the days which are unforgettable. When they remember the days of separation, their sorrows renews and their rage of taking revenge reaches its peak from the people who caused separation. To prove my argument I quote from Lois Tyson “being unhomed” is not like the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself, your culture identity critics has made you’re a psychological refugee, so to speak.” (Tyson, 421)

Sajjad never ever wanted to leave Dilli. To Dilli he always said his Dill (heart). Hindus and Muslims have lived together form thousands years, and in this duration India had been attacked by different conquerors, but the concept of separation never occurred. British came to India and governed applying theory of divide and rule. They grew hatred in hearts of Muslim and Hindus which generated racial tense, enmity, massacre and then separation after a cold-blooded massacre of innocent civilians. Sajjad had to say farewell to his homeland, where he grew up, spent his childhood, and enjoyed his younhood which he can never forget. Though he is settled in Karachi but his recollection of Delhi life always gives rise to his anxiety. Those memorable days begin again his pang and sorrows of separation—from Delhi. To prove my argument I quote from the novel “he would not ever have believed that he would come to think of Karachi is home and that his bitter regard about his separation form Dilli would be the absence of safety nets that the joints family system had once provided. (Shamsie, 134)

2. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to discuss the novel ‘Burnt Shadows’ in the light of Post –Colonial theory. So, the paper reveals that India had been governed by many rulers in past like Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol, Persian but English occupied differently. They basically came here for trade, but, greed to become owner of all natural resources aroused them to occupy it. They, slowly and gradually, took power in their hands and made Indians their slaves. English considered Indians savage and backward. Previous all rulers were sincere and friendly to the natives. They made India their home. When they left; they were disconsolate. English’s injustice compelled Indians to take action against them. This is all shown in character of Sajjad. Sajjad and James Burton’s relation is technically mentioned; Sajjad is puppet in the hand of James. Sajjad represents India and James English. Sajjad as Hybrid tied between eastern and western cultures. Hiroko’s arrival in sajjad’s life gives him sense of freedom. Her love enables him to prove himself nativist.

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