

## Female Identity Crisis: A Postcolonial Feminist Study of Mohsin Hamid's *The End of Innocence*

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### Abstract

This study explores Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* as a critique on patriarchy. Women subjected to an identity crisis, discrimination, and oppression in society through many forms. The study focuses on patriarchy as one of the major reasons for discrimination against women in the underdeveloped societies. The males of the society based on their gender and financial dependency have treated women as subjects and tools. The stark contrast of cultures and uncanny resemblance of discrimination, identity crisis, and oppression faced by women is one of the main components of this study. By restricting the movement and work of women in the public sphere, women made financially dependent on the males of the society, which in turn leads to gender-based discrimination in the private spheres. To reclaim power and reassert their identities, women form bonds with each other and gain financial independence as a counter-narrative to patriarchy. Women try to overthrow the system of oppression and subjugation. Using qualitative research methods this study examines the complex relationships between postcolonial feminism and more general feminist ideas that support gender equality by analyzing the text *The End of Innocence* through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory. This study explores the struggle of women in patriarchal societies to overcome gender-based discrimination. They form bonds to renegotiate their socially and culturally marginalized identities and empower themselves in both public and private spheres.

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, Postcolonial feminism, Female identity crisis, Public and Private Spheres.*

### Introduction

Postcolonial feminism is a development of classical feminism that looks critically at how gender, ethnicity, and colonialism connect with women of earlier colonized countries. Understanding the many forms of discrimination that women experience in postcolonial societies—where they face oppression not only because of their gender but also because of the legacy of colonialism—requires a grasp of this theoretical framework (Mohanty, 2006). Through an examination of Mohsin's (2007) novel *The End of Innocence*, which offers a potent critique of patriarchal norms within a developing society, this study explores these complexities.

*The End of Innocence* is a story of a young girl's confrontation against patriarchy. The resistance and persecution of a 15-year-old Christian girl, Rani, living in the conservative feudal rural area of Sabzbagh in East Pakistan. The manipulation of a teenage girl, not only by men but also by other females who are inconsistent to

accept any change, women who prefer honor on life and withdraw the case against the murderer. The story recounted by another teenage girl Laila, a Muslim upper class, and a 9-year-old daughter of liberal parents. Rani faces double exploitation. The *End of Innocence's* depiction of society standards powerfully captures the enduring oppression women experience due to their gender. As portrayed in the text, patriarchy limits women's freedom of movement and public engagement, which increases their reliance on males for financial support. This cycle of oppression is sustained by the financial subordination that results in more discrimination in private spheres (Said, 1978). This study aims to illustrate the systemic nature of gender-based discrimination and the cultural variables that contribute to it by looking at the dynamics within Mohsin's narrative. *The End of Innocence* emphasizes women's unity as a means of defying patriarchal oppression. In the text, women's desire of financial independence and the development of relationships among them act as a counter narrative to patriarchy. These activities are in line with postcolonial feminist ideals, which support marginalized identities' reassertion in the public and private domains as well as the reclaiming of power (Hooks, 2000). The novel's depiction of the challenges and victories faced by its female protagonists offers insightful perspectives into the larger feminist conversation about resistance and empowerment.

Therefore, through a meticulous textual analysis of *The End of Innocence*, it is possible to understand how women manage their lives in patriarchal societies and how they can fight discrimination on the basis of their gender. The position of Rani and the other female characters in the novel represents how women submit to the patriarchal dominance and how women fight it in different ways (Lorde, 2012). The study analyzes *The End of Innocence* from the perspective of postcolonial feminism. This study intends to provide a further insight into the situation of women in postcolonial society based on the intersectional approach to gender, and to add the knowledge on the gender power relation and the fight for women's rights in patriarchal world. Through analysis of Mohsin's work, the audience gets an understanding of the principal problems characteristic of East Pakistan; at the same time, the work touches upon the international concerns based on the concepts of feminism and post-colonialism.

### **Objectives**

1. To identify the effect of colonization on women in *The End of Innocence*
2. To examine the oppression and identity crisis in *The End of Innocence*

### **Research Questions**

1. How does *The End of Innocence* portray the impact of colonization on women?
2. How do the societal expectations and gender norms of the time lead to the oppression and identity crisis of female characters in *The End of Innocence*?

### **Significance/ Rationale**

This study closely examines how the masculine power structure in to perpetrate subjection, disregard, and oppression of women in the emerging nations especially the South Asian region of Pakistan and India. The culture of oppression of women in third-world countries is evident by the interaction of these societies with traditional patriarchal structures and the resulting high level of female insecurity

due to lack of awareness on the real causes of their oppression. For this reason, various women accept their plight and assume that they are inferior because this is how things have always been. At the core of this problem is the issue of financial enlargement of women by men which only worsens their identity crisis and brightest gender prejudices.

The rationale of this study is to provide an understanding of how and why true emancipation which leads to the assertion of women's rights can only be actualized through economics independence thereby being the main liberation tool. This perspective is depicted as an opportunity available to such women in developing societies, and as a call to all women in the world to fighting for their rights, and changing their social statuses from what male domination permits. Through choosing the qualitative research approach, the study explores the complex relationships between postcolonial feminist theory and other formations of the feminist theory, and discusses Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* to discover the diversity of the development of Muslim women and their fight against Patriarchal societies. As mentioned earlier, this examination would not only shed light on the specifics of gender dynamics, but also open people's eyes to the opportunities provided by the global gender equality movement.

#### **Research Gap:**

The key variance between this study and previous studies is its focus on a postcolonial feminist analysis of Mohsin's literary works, particularly *The End of Innocence*. Prior study has not comprehensively surveyed the core factors contributing to women's exploitation and identity crisis in Mohsin's writings, nor has it compared these aspects across different authors. It also highlights the contests women face when they attempt to resist and stand up against societal, cultural and male-centric norms.

#### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The stretch of the study may limit the scope of the investigation. It may not be possible, given the temporal limits, to document long-term deviations in identities and behaviors or to evaluate the long-term efficacy of methods in promoting sustainable behaviors. In particular, the study focuses on how patriarchy affects female identities, environmental consciousness and behavior. The study delimited to specific types of conditions, which may constrain how broadly the results be applied. The study works as a cross-disciplinary methodology. It could not fully take into justification viewpoints from other pertinent fields.

#### **Research Methodology**

This study deals with qualitative method of research. This research method evidenced very effective in explaining the different situations and issues. This study distributed with a very basic idea of qualitative research. It pronounced the conditions and events, character analysis, moreover the different historical views in this project. This method deeply related with every minor part of this study.

This study based on Mohsin's most famous work, *The End of Innocence*. The study termed this novel with the help of Postcolonial Feminist Theory. This study, in very well manners, distinct postcolonial Feminist theory. The researcher dispensed with this theory in the light of feminism and developed ideas about the

postcolonial feminist relationship with feminism. Feminism is a theory that covenants with equal rights of females as males have. This theory helps the women to demand their rights openly as men have the authority to speak for their rights.

### **Literature Review:**

Srivastava and Kumar (2015) sued that Mohsin's work is famous for its feministic elements. The feministic approach strains the central rights and central place for females in society as males have. Women are originators or part of history, cultures, conventions, and different genres of literature. As producers or inventors, they have a central place or work in every culture.

Tyagi (2014), in *Understanding Postcolonial Feminism* in relation to postcolonial and Feminist Theories, claims that postcolonial feminism primarily connected with the representation of women in once colonized countries. Females suffer from "Double Colonization" as they simultaneously experience the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. They have to resist the control of colonial power not only as a colonized subject but also as a female.

Hai (2000) argues in *Border work and Border trouble: Postcolonial Feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's Cracking India* that Sidwah's postcolonial feminism: The British colonizing policy that first misreads ailment, problems and then misdiagnoses treatment. However, women express resistance and the dubious paradigm of female resistance based on solidarity built upon the faltering language of one and the speechless exposure of the weakened female body by the other.

Purohit (2012) claims that female exploitation and oppression is one of the disasters standing up to females everywhere throughout the world. This insidiousness further intensified on the off chance that they put in unsteady political, social orders or occasions. Females are unprotected, marginalized or obvious object of mistreatment, mortification, hardship and separation.

Young (2005) claims that feminism in postcolonial fictions highlight the miserable, pathetic conditions and nervousness of females in the postcolonial environment. Pakistani scholars describe the conditions of a female before and after partition. It also shows the before and aftermath possessions of post-colonialism. This type of writing highlights the female issues with social, political, historical, religious and economic backgrounds.

Silva (2003) argues that male oppression over females in Pakistan is a deep-rooted and complex matter. The female body not only characterized at the national level through dress code and behavior but also in terms of its biological features. She claims in the mother or daughter of the nation how a woman's reproductive function and body are instrumental zeds in the state's interests.

Malik and Ali (2015) submitted that the female body in the subcontinent taken as a toy of enjoyment, victory and vengeance. Male contemplate conquering and using a female body to win a world war, especially in India and Pakistan. Mukherjee knows this veracity very well. Although all her novels moved around many social evils and prevailing issues yet feminism in her novels considered as its basic roots.

Spivak (2023) highlights the patriarchal behavior that oppressed the female's voices. Woman repressed, marginalized and disappeared, between colonialism and patriarchy and not into flawless nothingness, but into violent oppression that dismantled her. A woman fixed between tradition, norms, and culture. Western feminism not dealing with the atrocities of colonialism. Rather, they dislodged them, supplanting their voices with their own. In *The End of Innocence*, Mohsin has penned down the sad destiny of Rani who is a poor Christian girl of 15 years living in a conservative patrician society of East Pakistan. Thus, testing to the smallest detail, the novel describes how the oppression of women through patriarchy reinforces their mental and emotional instability as well as continued discrimination and unfair treatment that the feminine sex continually endures. It can, thereby, be seen that Rani's experience form of the experiences of the other women in the patriarchal headline to headmen women as subjects or appendages as a result of the gender discrimination and hence been financially exploited by the men. This particular theme is somewhat prevalent within points advanced by postcolonial feminism, which also call for appreciating the 'double effect' of oppression women experience in postcolonial societies.

Dathorne (1976) stated that *Things Fall Apart* portrays the predominant nature of males, who are oppressing female section. Women subjugated, oppressed and norms identify the relationships among people. Women are ordained to serve the male counterparts and the colonial masters who abused and mistreat them physically to fulfill their pleasures. Women are just meant to cook and serve, take care of the house and look after the children.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The analysis highlights entrenched patriarchal structures in Pakistani society, even after the country gained independence in 1947. Some key points, the birth of boys celebrated, while girls seen as a burden and liability. There is a strong preference for male children. Women regarded as inferior, weak and responsible for upholding the family's honor and respect. Their edification and mobility are restricted. The male members of the society are dignified superior, with the authority to control and subjugate women. Women treated as the property of men. The female body understood as a matter of honor, leading to strict control and oppression of women. Women expected to obey the decisions of their male counterparts. Despite the exertions of women writers to challenge this oppressive culture through their fictional works, the patriarchal mindset remains deeply entrenched, especially in rural, tribal, and feudal areas of Pakistan and India. Moreover, it highlights the obstinate struggle of women in these societies to assert their rights and identities against the overwhelming patriarchal structures that continue to subjugate and oppress them.

The evaluation of *The End of Innocence* based on the postcolonial feminist's theory explores the complex relationship of the gendered oppression and the mechanisms of the societies that sustain the process of female subjugation. Mohsin's depiction of Rani, a fifteen year old Christian, girl is a commercial depiction of the double jeopardy that women are locked in, in a patriarchal feudal society. This story depicts how female persons in society are oppressed based on



their gender and religious affiliation, indicating that women are piled two vices of oppression (Spivak, 2023).

Recall Rani's fight against oppression from the male-dominated society is characteristic of the financial and social weights that trap women from such societies. According to Mohanty (2006), postcolonial feminism requires that the above mentioned identities be taken into consideration as they highlight colonial history's reinforcement of gender discrimination. Rani's total dependence on financial help of male persons in her life proves how important is to be economically independent to free a woman and provide her with the power. This supports the assertion of Hooks (2000) that financial independence known as reclaiming of body or rape of the mind is significant as a way of exercising the right by women.

The novel also reveals the conflict of cultures within the patriarchal societies. Going through both subservience to man's dominance, but also other women keeping to the patriarchal rules, Rani reflects the given society's internalization of oppression and the position of women as agents of gender compliance. This is actually the reality whereby women ensure that patriarchal practices are complied with indicate how power and subordination interrelate in these societies, as pointed out by Lorde (2012). The other point of view is offered by Laila, the narrator, and a privileged young Muslim woman, and seems to underline the differences in the living conditions and rights of women according to their class.

This is so because through constraining women's mobility and employment in public domains, patriarchy keeps women economically vulnerable in order to perpetrate injustice in private domains as well. Such financial domination is a hate device that is applied toward women with an aim of continuing to subordinate them, asserting their inferiority, and inhibiting them from transforming systems of repression- this is according to Said (1978). The ways women in the novel seek to gain the power of their own purse in defiance of dominant male authority resonates with ideas that underlie postcolonial feminism which emphasizes the women's cooperation in struggle against oppression. This also brings the function of regaining cultural and social identities as the method of the empowered into light. The liberation of Rani can be seen as the women's fight in patriarchal societies to reclaim their socially subordinate position as well as demand the possibility of becoming agents of change in both the public and private sphere. This regaining of a self is important to proposing a radical change to the existing order and to empower women (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Hence, analyzing *The End of Innocence* gives a complex understanding of how the elements of patriarchy and conventional societal norms suppress women. Thus, basing on the tenets of postcolonial feminist theory, this work reveals how financial security and collaboration enhance women's agency and resist subjugation of women. The gist of the novel is to expose the amplified gender discriminations that continue to prevail in the developing world and present a story of defiance and survival.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis of the novel, *The End of Innocence*, within the framework of postcolonial feminism, the following key points made. This study stance a critique on patriarchy and its severe impact on the well-being of underprivileged women in underdeveloped societies. Women in these societies face identity crises, discrimination and marginalization due to their financial dependence on male counterparts and considered as the “weaker sex”. Gaining financial independence appears as a way for women to renegotiate their identities in the male-dominated world. The ending of the novel suggest some hope of reformation for women, as they challenge the oppressive patriarchal norms and assert their rights and identities. This study delivers a realistic representation of the patriarchal cultures, highlighting the feministic issues, oppression and identity crises faced by women. Close analysis discloses that the female identity crisis and oppression are not temporary issues, but deeply rooted problems faced by women from the very beginning in these societies. This study represents how patriarchal structures limit women’s spheres, pushing them back from the public to the private sphere and then to a state of cruelty and nothingness. This study concludes that this novel serves as a tool to highlight the feministic struggles and the urgent need to provide women with a central, focused place in the male-centric societies.

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