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EXAMINING COLONIAL LEGACIES: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF HANIF KUREISHI'S *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA*

ANÁLISIS DE LOS LEGADOS COLONIALES: UN ANÁLISIS POSTCOLONIAL DEL BUDA DE LOS SUBURBIOS DE HANIF KUREISHI

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Abstract

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* critiques the persistence of colonial ideologies in post-imperial Britain by exploring how race, mimicry, hybridity, and performance shape immigrant identities. This paper examines how immigrant characters, particularly Karim, Haroon, and Jamila, are marginalized through racial stereotyping and forced to perform culturally exotic roles. Drawing on postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, the analysis reveals how Orientalism and mimicry constrain these characters within colonial expectations, yet also become sites of resistance and reinvention. Gender dynamics further complicate identity formation, with Jamila challenging patriarchal and colonial structures alike. Urban space, particularly London, is portrayed as a racialized landscape that reinforces power hierarchies. Ultimately, the novel argues that identity is not fixed but negotiated, shaped by both historical forces and acts of defiance. Kureishi's narrative emphasizes the need for self-determined representation in multicultural societies still haunted by empire.

Keywords

Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Mimicry, Orientalism, identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Although Britain is depicted as a liberal and inclusive society, *The Buddha of Suburbia* of Hanif Kureishi (1990) explores that the colonial mindset exists subtly through social attitudes and structures. Immigrant characters are forced to perform culturally exotic roles that conform to white fantasies rather than express authentic selves. This paper argues that Kureishi critiques the enduring impact of colonial ideologies by illustrating how race, authenticity, mimicry, and hybridity shape the identities and social experiences of immigrant characters. Drawing on post-colonial theories from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and Homi K Bhabha's *the Location of Culture* (1994), this paper examines how Kureishi shows the deep entanglement between colonial histories and contemporary multicultural Britain, ultimately advocating the need for resistant, self-determined modes of identity formation. While much scholarship has discussed Kureishi's engagement with colonial legacies, this paper extends those conversations by foregrounding the ambivalence of mimicry and hybridity not only as theoretical constructs but as lived contradictions for diasporic subjects. My analysis emphasizes how Kureishi complicates Bhabha's optimism about hybridity and reveals the silencing mechanisms that Spivak (1994) warns against. In this way, the research contributes an original reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* that interrogates the limits of canonical postcolonial theory when applied to multicultural Britain.

Critical scholarship has long examined *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a key text in understanding postcolonial identity and cultural performativity in late-twentieth-century Britain. Susheila Nasta emphasizes the novel's representation of a protagonist who "navigates a world that demands mimicry as a condition of acceptance" (2002: 134), reflecting the subtle coercion immigrant characters experience in order to gain social legitimacy. The text critiques the paradox of a multicultural Britain that outwardly celebrates diversity while implicitly reinforcing assimilation and racial othering. Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, which refers to the colonized subject's attempt to imitate the colonizer in a way that is "almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 86), aptly illuminates the ambivalent positioning of characters like Haroon and Karim. These figures, in adopting orientalist performances, reveal the performative expectations imposed by a dominant white gaze, thereby exposing the continuing power of colonial discourse in shaping postcolonial subjectivity.

Edward Said's Orientalism further provides a critical lens for analyzing how cultural institutions in Britain continue to reproduce colonial binaries. Said asserts that the Orient was historically constructed by the West as "a theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (1979: 63), a metaphor echoed in the literal and symbolic performances Karim must undertake to be accepted. Scholars such as Bart Moore-Gilbert expand on this notion, arguing that "Kureishi self-consciously engages with the orientalist legacy by foregrounding the theatricality and artificiality of racial identity" (2001: 204). These performative constructions underscore the contradiction between Britain's proclaimed liberalism and its sustained reliance on essentialized racial categories. Recent postcolonial criticism has also highlighted hybridity as

a double-edged concept—both a site of marginalization and a potential source of resistance. Elleke Boehmer observes that hybrid characters "occupy liminal spaces that allow for subversive rewritings of identity" (2005: 232), a point especially relevant to Karim's in-between status as a British-Indian adolescent. In this regard, John McLeod contends that Kureishi's fiction "destabilizes notions of fixed identity, suggesting that cultural belonging can be self-fashioned rather than inherited" (2010: 147). This destabilization becomes central to Kureishi's broader critique of postcolonial Britain, wherein hybrid, performative identities emerge not merely as consequences of colonial legacy, but as acts of defiance and reclamation.

2. COLONIAL STEREOTYPING AND ORIENTALIST REPRESENTATION

Despite the appearance of multiculturalism, colonial stereotyping and Orientalist representations continue to shape the experiences of immigrants in British society. In the novel, Kureishi presents this issue through Karim, who is offered a role in Shadwell's play. Rather than being offered a role based on his talent and skills, he is offered the role of a stereotypical Indian character, "Mowgli", fully based on his racial appearance. Shadwell's calls to Karim "In fact, you are Mowgli, you're dark skinned, you're small and wiry, and you will be sweet but wholesome to the costume" (1990: 142-43). This scene resonates with Edward Said's notions of *Orientalism*, which he describes "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (1979: 3)". To Shadewell, Karim is not an individual with dignity or creative potential, but merely an objectified "Oriental" figure who fits the exotic mold.

As Said further notes, "Orient was almost a European invention…a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes" (1979: 1). Shadewell's offering the role of a typical Indian character to Karim illustrates how British cultural society and institutions still view non-white characters through an outdated colonial lens, reinforcing stereotypes rather than challenging them. Karim's emotional response to being forced into stereotypical roles reveals the psychological damage caused by Orientalist portrayals. He protests internally, "I flushed with anger and humiliation…I wanted to shout (1990: 280)". This powerful statement shows that the colonial mindset within the British society traps Karim between two cultures. Though he was born and grew up in England, the British society takes him as an immigrant rather than a British boy, reducing him to a stereotype. This experience is part of a larger pattern where Western societies control how non-Western identities are expressed. Yu-cheng explains, "authenticity is not something granted to the postcolonial subjects but something appropriated by the West to fit its narrative needs (1996: 4)". This shows how Karim's identity is not accepted on his terms but is instead molded to satisfy the expectations of the white audience. This pressure to perform a constructed version of his ethnicity keeps him away from both his British identity and his true self.

Even today, colonial attitudes have not disappeared but have only changed their forms. This is evident when Shadwell calls Karim, "You're supposed to be an actor, but I suspect you may just be an exhibitionist," showing how Karim is dismissed and treated, not through direct attack on his race, but through subtle and coded language (1990: 147). The continued use of such Orientalist stereotypes controls and reduces people from former colonies. Rather than being recognized as immigrants with equal status, they are reduced to roles that fulfill white fantasies and expectations. As Said points out, Orientalism is not just a past system but a way of thinking that still "affects the way we perceive others and ourselves (1979: 6). Kureishi's novel critiques that this enduring struggle against colonial stereotypes is far from over, and true equality can only be achieved when these outdated ideas are replaced with more honest, respectful, and diverse representation.

3. MIMICRY AND THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY

Kureishi presents Karim as a young man molded by the pressures of colonial mimicry. He tries to copy British manners, culture, and speech to fit in and be accepted. Yet, despite his efforts, he is never fully considered to be one of them. He confesses at the beginning of the novel, "I am an Englishman born and bred, almost" (1990: 3), a statement that emphasizes his internal confusion and social exclusion. This reflects his position in what Bhabha calls a space of "partial presence", where the mimic man imitates the colonizer but is never accepted as equal. According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is "at once resemblance and menace", and it produces a version of the colonized subject that is "almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 86). Karim's experience shows this contradiction; he acts British but is still treated as exotic or foreign, especially in the theater world, where he is offered roles that emphasize his racial background. His identity is reduced to what others expect of him as a non-white British individual. As Azeem et al. write, "the immigrant trying to imitate the cultural values, language, habits, and manners of the white men… never fetched the desired effects" (2020: 161). For Karim, mimicry does not lead to full inclusion; it leaves him suspended between cultures, unsure of where he truly belongs.

Furthermore, Karim's father, Haroon, a first immigrant from India, adopts a performative identity that romanticizes white English people towards Eastern knowledge. Though he is not a deeply religious man, Haroon reinvents himself as a kind of "Buddha", going far away from his Islamic heritage to cater to British people. He dresses in Indian robes, quotes Eastern texts, and performs yoga not as a spiritual practice but as a way to gain respect and admiration. This reinvention is also a form of mimicry, as Haroon adopts the Western fantasy of the wise, mystical Easterner. During one of their visits to Eva's house, Karim notes how his father is praised for his supposed spiritual role, which is more performance than genuine belief. As Haroon states, "They've called me for the damn yoga Olympics" (1990: 4), mocking the superficiality of his performance. Although this role may seem empowering on the surface, it reflects Bhabha's idea that mimicry is a strategy "for authority and deference" that

still keeps the colonized within the boundaries of what the dominant culture wants (1994: 88). Haroon's identity, like Karim's, is shaped by the expectations of the British elite. Both Karim and Haroon illustrate that while mimicry may offer temporary status or opportunity, it ultimately reinforces the unequal power structures of colonial and postcolonial society.

4. DIASPORIC HYBRIDITY AND GENDER POLITICS

Kureishi (1990) presents characters in the story who are caught between two cultures, suggesting the postcolonial condition of hybridity and the cultural confusion that results from it. This experience of in-betweenness, which Bhabha (1994) refers to as the "third space", suggests how individuals shaped by migration and colonial legacies occupy spaces that are neither entirely colonized nor colonizer. Haroon, Karim's father, is a striking example of this dislocation. Originally from a rich Indian family where he "had never cooked before, never washed up, never cleaned his own shoes or made a bed", Haroon's life in Britain is marked by a loss of status and identity (1990: 23). Though he does everything to fit into British society, such as acting as an Englishman and standing out less in an embarrassing way, Karim ultimately finds all his effort fruitless. In response, he begins to exaggerate his Indian accent, "putting it back in spadeloads" (1990: 21). Then, he makes a twist in his life, reinventing himself as a spiritual guru, not out of genuine knowledge, but as a performer to amuse the white British people. This act shows both his desire to be visible in a society that marginalizes him and a deep sense of personal displacement. Stuart Hall explains that "cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (1990: 394), which shows how Haroon's identity is constantly in flux, shaped by both his Indian heritage and the cultural pressures of British society. Haroon's shift suggests the complexities of hybrid identity, where adaptation often leads to alienation. Bhabha argues that the hybrid subject emerges "in the emergence of interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference" (1994: 2). Haroon's life, caught between admiration for British liberalism and a guilt-laden detachment from his roots, becomes a strong example of the fragmented self that emerges within the third space.

The experience of hybridity is also seen in Jamila, who actively confronts and resists the roles traditionally expected of her as a girl /female from an Indian Muslim family. While her father, Anwar, favors cultural practices, Jamila reclaims her voice, constantly refusing the arranged marriage proposal of her father. Instead, she wishes to embrace individual freedom, seeking control over her own body. Her attachment to personal growth and self-discipline can be seen in her daily routines: "learning karate and judo, getting up early to stretch and run and do press-ups (1990: 56)". Her rebellion does not simply reject her Indian traditional assumptions, it also critiques the limitations of British society, particularly its racial assumptions. By resisting binary identities, Jamila becomes a symbol of transformation within the 'third space,' where cultural elements mix and new meanings emerge. Bhabha states that hybridity "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power" by creating identities that are flexible and resistant to fixed definitions (1994: 112). Similarly, Hall

asserts that diaspora subjects "must reinvent themselves by drawing on heterogeneous sources of identity" (1990: 395). Jamila's journey captures this reinvention, which challenges both patriarchy and colonial stereotypes.

Kureishi, through Jamila as a character, shows how hybridity is not only a source of confusion but also a means of resistance and redefinition. *The Buddha of Suburbia* ultimately shows how characters caught in this cultural in-betweenness must find their own voice space within the complexities of postcolonial Britain. Kureishi critiques how colonial ideologies continue to influence gender roles within British diasporic communities, particularly through the character of Jamila. Though Jamila is raised in Britain and holds a strong influence of British culture in terms of her personal choices, such as marriage, education, and other activities, she experiences heavy pressure from her father to uphold traditional values, such as entering into an arranged marriage within the cultural group and planning for children immediately after marriage. Her resistance is clear when she says, "I was compelled to marry him… I do not want him here. I do not see why I should care for him" (1990: 108). She does not accept Changez, a person whom she was forced to marry by her father, as her husband. Jamila's rejection of the arranged marriage shows how women are controlled and treated as symbols of cultural preservation. As Kalra et al. explain, "women become the carriers of culture and morality in diaspora," with their femininity used to uphold collective identity (2005: 43). By showing Jamila's refusal to submit to these expectations, Kureishi critiques the idea that maintaining cultural tradition should come at the cost of women's freedom and self-determination.

Meanwhile, the novel also addresses the emasculation of men within postcolonial contexts, mainly through the character of Haroon. Haroon's reinvention of the yogic character, a spiritual figure for the English white people, symbolizes both a reclaiming of identity and a performance targeted at colonial fantasies. His role is not empowering; instead, steeped in irony, he is both elevated and mocked, feared and exoticized. Scholars note that diasporic men often find "a crisis of masculinity" due to the influence of colonial legacies, which frame them as either threatening or impotent (2005: 45). Haroon's fall from a respected social status in India to a source of amusement in Britain exemplifies how men, like women, are reshaped by the colonial gaze. They are accepted only when they fit within roles predefined by the dominant culture. Through this portrayal, Kureishi shows that postcolonial gender identities continue to be sites of struggle, performance, and negotiation, with both men and women trying to find space for authenticity in a world still haunted by the power structures of empire. Importantly, Kureishi does not present hybridity as an uncomplicated space of liberation. While Bhabha focuses on hybridity's subversive potential, the novel underscores its psychic costs: Karim's uncertainty, Haroon's humiliation, and Jamila's isolation suggest that hybridity can also entrench exclusion. Similarly, Spivak's warning that the subaltern cannot easily speak resonates here, as both Karim and Haroon are heard only when they perform in ways that please the dominant culture. By foregrounding

these tensions, Kureishi complicates the celebratory tone sometimes associated with postcolonial theory and reminds readers of the structural constraints that limit agency.

5. URBAN SPACE AS COLONIAL/POSTCOLONIAL SITE

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, London is a postcolonial urban space with opportunity and exclusion, which reveals complex dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging. The portrayal of London in the novel is not just as a unified whole, but as a fragmented and shifting space where different cultures, histories, and identities intersect. Karim's move from Bromley, a southeast suburb of London, to the heart of London is more than his personal story; it represents the experience of second-generation immigrants and British-born immigrants who seek freedom and opportunity but encounter social barriers. Karim views the suburbs as limiting and dull, referring to them as "the leaving place" (1990: 117), and imagines London as a space where identity can be remade. However, his experience in London remains contrasting. He quickly learns that he is an outsider in the city, where his identity formation occurs based on his skin color, rather than on his talent. In his theatrical debut, he is required to perform versions of his ethnicity to gain acceptance in the theatrical career. While London is a developed city compared to the suburbs, it does not represent a city that fosters equality for all in the novel. Critic Jung Su makes it clear that London's presumed modernity and development coexist with deep social and racial inequality. She writes that immigrant protagonists' movements through the city "disclose the socially and politically marginalized immigrant communities which are either demonized or stereotyped in the racialization of space" (2010: 243). This observation shows that London, despite being a metropolitan center, is structured by racialized spatial divisions that limit equal belonging, where characters like Karim need to experience deep exclusion and subjugation despite it seeming open on the surface. Thus, London becomes both a place of possibility and a site of subtle colonial tension.

Furthermore, Haroon's journey from India to the suburbs and then to the heart of London illustrates how urban spaces serve as sites shaped by past colonial legacies. Originally from a well-to-do family in India, he experiences a loss of identity and respect in Britain. Every attempt he makes to adopt English mannerisms becomes increasingly challenging, ultimately forcing him to reinvent himself as a "guru" figure to the British people. His guru persona is widely accepted by them. As Karim states, "Dad had a regular and earnest young crowd of head-bowers – students, psychologists, nurses, musicians - who adored him… there was a waiting list to join" (1990: 115). This shows how his spiritual reinvention was popular among the white English. Haroon's actions represent more than just a personal choice; they reveal how urban space compels minorities to perform for visibility. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses this kind of identity negotiation in what she calls "spaces of dispersal," where diasporic people are "both detached and reassembled" through cultural performances that reflect their in-betweenness (1994: 343). Haroon's acceptance into London society

depends on fulfilling the role of the exotic *Other*, highlighting that even within supposedly inclusive urban spaces, racialized individuals often gain visibility only when their difference is packaged in ways that reinforce old colonial fantasies.

On the other hand, Eva and her son Charlie's move to London provides a picture of how space operates differently for those who are racially white English people. Eva, as a white English woman, has a wide connection with the elites working in the arts in London, without alerting her identity. Similarly, her son Charlie also finds immediate fame as a pop star in London, which shows his white English identity working without needing any support or reinventing a new identity. Karim asserts that "Charlie was smearing blood over his face and wiping it over the bass guitarist… was magnificent in his venom, his manufactured rage, his anger, his defiance" (1990: 154). This theatrical performance, praised and accepted in London's cultural scene, shows how Charlie's whiteness allows him to be seen as edgy or artistic, while Karim, a mixed-race boy, must constantly negotiate and justify his place. This contrast emphasizes how inclusion in London's spaces is uneven and often racialized. Su notes that "identity in urban space is mediated by inherited power structures", making it clear that not all identities are treated equally in a supposedly multicultural city (2010: 253). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also builds on it that diasporic individuals must constantly adapt to "the paradox of presence and exclusion" in these reconfigured urban zones (1994: 344). In this way, Kureishi presents London not as a neutral or fully open city, but as a postcolonial space where inclusion depends on race, heritage, and performance. The contrasting movements of Karim, Haroon, Eva, and Charlie reveal that the city's embrace of diversity is conditional, shaped by who is allowed to belong and on what terms.

In postcolonial literature, many characters are treated not as full individuals but as "others" and objects, reflecting the processes of *thingification* and subaltern marginalization. Scholar, Aimé Césaire's argues that colonialism is dangerous as it dehumanizes people and turn them into objects, as he asserts "domination and submission, which turns the colonizing man…a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production" (2000: 42). This description captures the treatment of non-European peoples as objects existing only to serve colonial interests. In the novel, the characters Haroon and Karim both experience this reduction. Haroon is treated as a cultural spectacle for white women, performing a version of Eastern spirituality for their entertainment, while Karim is hired for acting roles purely because of his racial identity.

According to prominent critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" addresses this issue of marginalized people and their state of having a muted voice. Spivak explains that the subaltern is "defined as different from the elite" (1994: 80). Both Haroon and Karim, along with the Anwar family, are different from the white English people as a result, they need to experience challenges to get accepted in the British society. Critics further emphasize that "colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another" (2017: 1). In this way, the treatment of Haroon and Karim reflects broader postcolonial patterns of commodification and silencing.

Haroon's role as an entertainer for white women profoundly illustrates how thingification operates on a personal level. He is often accepted well for this role of spiritual teacher only; the rest of his existence for the white English people is nothing. Besides the spiritual role, "there was disapproval from the clerks he worked with: there was mockery behind his back and in front of his face" (1990: 115). This scene clearly shows Haroon's real situation in British society. His spiritual identity is irrelevant to the white audience; what matters is the spectacle he provides.

Césaire says that "between colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance" (2000: 34). This shows Haroon's status as an immigrant from a former colonized country, India, and his assimilation into the British society is far from reach. Haroon is just a cultural product for consumption and entertainment. Spivak's analysis reinforces this idea by pointing out that "the subaltern's speech is either ignored or transformed into what the dominant culture wants to hear" (1994: 77). Haroon's real self is silenced beneath the costume of exoticism he is forced to wear.

Furthermore, Kohn and Reddy's study suggests that colonial powers justified their exploitation by creating images of the colonized as "mysterious, inferior, and useful only within certain frames" (2017: 10). Thus, Haroon's performances, while seemingly harmless or amusing to his audience, are a continuation of colonial structures that objectify and silence individuals from former colonies Karim's experience as the token brown boy further deepens the exploration of thingification and the subaltern condition. Karim is not valued for his acting skills or unique talents but rather for his skin color, which provides an illusion of diversity. He reflects on his journey of stage theater with so much of degraded activities for his Indian roots stating "I would wear a loin-cloth and brown make-up, so that I resembled a turd in a bikini-bottom" (1990: 146). Here, Karim's identity is used as a tool to serve the dominant culture's self-image.

Césaire's assertion that colonial societies "commodify human beings in service of their own narratives of progress and civilization" directly applies to Karim's situation (2000: 38). Karim's ambitions and individuality are irrelevant compared to the symbolic role he is forced to perform. Spivak's theory is again helpful in understanding this, as she writes, "even when the subaltern seems to speak, they are speaking in a voice already shaped and controlled by colonial discourse" (1994: 83). Karim's supposed success is not on his own terms but within a system that commodifies his racial difference for institutional gain. In both Haroon's and Karim's cases, their racial and cultural identities are not seen as valuable in themselves but are used instrumentally, maintaining colonial structures of thingification and silencing subaltern voices.

6. RESISTANCE AND REDEFINITION OF IDENTITY

Kureishi shows the pressure of colonial and postcolonial expectations being weighed heavily on major characters in the novel, but at the same time, many find ways to resist these

challenges and redefine their identities on their own terms. Karim, Haroon, and Jamila are examples of such characters who embody different forms of resistance, developing personal and political paths that diverge from the stereotypes and roles assigned to them by British society.

Their acts of rebellion and resistance illustrate what Hall describes as "the capacity to produce, to create, to conduct and reconstruct culture and identity" even under conditions of dominance (1990: 392). Through activism, artistic rejection, and self-reinvention, these characters not only refuse to submit to imposed narratives but also reshape the meanings of identity in a multicultural society like Britain.

Similarly, Jamail's role of self-motivation and her attachment to independence are other examples of resistance in the novel. Despite having pressure for the arranged marriage, she seems strongly resistant to it. She marries for the family, but she defies the traditional role of marriage, like sleeping with the husband, having sex with the husband, and planning kids. In contrast, Jamila seems a political character to defy the tradition built into marriage. Jamila strictly says to Changez, her husband, from the marriage that "we won't be husband and wife - you know that will never happen" (1990: 216). Kureishi's critic, YuCheng Lee notes "Jamila asserts her independence by combining feminism with ethnic identity", challenging both colonial and ethnic structures (1996: 5). Her resistance indicates that this is not just her personal one, but rather it is broadly connected to the social movements. Adding on this, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains that "performance is a vehicle through which marginalized individuals claim agency", a concept that can be aligned with the seemingly political act of Jamila to redefine her agency (1994: 343). Thus, the close analysis of Jamila's act of resistance is not just for her personal goal-reaching mission, rather, it targets broader possibilities of post-colonial identity formation.

Haroon also stands as a strong example of resistance and reclaiming identity. With a royalist lifestyle back in India, he happens to encounter challenges to survive in Britain. Starting from low-level government jobs, he loses almost everything. His giant personality, as Karim describes, "Dad was also elegant and handsome, with delicate hands and manners; beside him most Englishmen looked like clumsy giraffes" (1990: 4). However, this dignified personality changes after he migrates to the UK. He is forced to work for just "3 pounds per week" (1990: 26). Besides, even his name is taken from him; his wife's relatives refuse to call him by his given name, Haroon, instead calling him "Harry." This erasure of identity and persistent belittlement push him to a breaking point. This sort of humiliation reaches to maximum, and then, he is forced to reinvent himself as an Indian guru to resist the ongoing situation in life, turning into so so-called "Buddha of Suburbia". With this new identity, he begins to receive attention and respect, which ultimately helps him to reclaim his lost dignity in British society. Kirshenblatt- Gimblett's theory that performance can both "resist and remake social realities" aptly describes Haroon's strategy (1994: 341). Though his spiritual persona may appear opportunistic, it constitutes a deliberate act of survival and self-assertion within an alienating cultural context. Haroon, then, happens to negotiate with his

identity as a guru to the white English people of the society and regains his lost dignity of life. In doing so, he illustrates that redefinition is not just a personal transformation, but a way of reshaping the fundamental frameworks through which society understands the immigrant identity.

Analyzing the three major immigrant characters- Jamila, Karim, and Haroon, it becomes clear that the identity in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is fluid, contested, and open to reinvention. Each poses different forms of resistance, such as Jamila's political activism and Haroon and Karim's performance and self-reinvention. With the distinct resistance approaches, defiance is possible against colonial and racial pressure. These acts of resistance affirm Hall's idea that identities are not "eternally fixed in some essentialized past," but are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (1990: 394). Through Kureishi's strong and complex characters, *The Buddha of Suburbia* ultimately presents identity as a site of resistance, creativity, and endless becoming.

7. CONCLUSION

Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* does not just examine the struggles of immigrants in British society of the 1970s, but it also offers a powerful critique of the lingering colonial ideologies of British society. Through the struggles of Karim, Jamila, Haroon, and other immigrant characters, the novel strongly exposes how racial, cultural, and social discrimination still overpowers British society and imposes colonial biases. Though the British society of the 1970s is depicted as inclusive and diverse in the novel, the experiences of immigrant subjects are marked by subjugation, exclusion, and discrimination to assimilate. The immigrant characters are often obliged to carry out roles of performance, designed by a colonial mindset, or an act of mimicry. The portrayal of everyday experiences of marginalization and the acts of resistance, Kureishi not only reveals the impact of colonial legacies in the post-imperial British society, but also challenges readers to question how deeply race, gender, and identity are constructed by the colonial inheritance.

Moreover, Kureishi's novel has its significance in today's conversation about multiculturalism, race, and identity. In contemporary societies where the debate about culture, multiculturalism, race, inclusion, and identity is a dominating issue, *The Buddha of Suburbia* makes modern readers aware of the ongoing struggle for identity and representation. The novel gives a strong message that race, place, gender, and identity are fluid aspects of society, and they are shaped and reshaped by historical and social forces, often connected with the colonial legacies. The case of Jamila's political rebellion, Karim's artistic struggle, and Haroon's reinvention proves that the resistance against imposed identity is challenging but necessary. The efforts of Kureishi's characters to redefine themselves align with those of everyone who goes through the same challenging situation of negotiating identity in diverse but still unequal societies. In sum, this study demonstrates that Kureishi's novel both utilizes and unsettles the frameworks of postcolonial theory. By

showing how hybridity can become alienation, how mimicry is both survival and entrapment, and how subaltern voices remain circumscribed, *The Buddha of Suburbia* exposes the contradictions of multicultural Britain. The novel's enduring relevance lies in how it compels us to rethink the adequacy of theory when confronted with the lived complexities of diasporic existence. Thus, the novel is a good piece of work that urges the immediate need for more honest, inclusive, and self-determined narratives in discussions about multiculturalism today.

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