

Glocalism, disguised oppression and parochialism: a study of *Karachi You're Killing Me*

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Abstract

Underscoring concerns related to gender studies, postcolonialism, and glocalism, this paper presents a discussion about how local is being presented in chick lit by a Pakistani female author Imtiaz (2016) in her Anglophonic novel *Karachi You're Killing Me!* Applying Dirlik's (1997) theorization about global and local in *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, where he asserts how the local gives an illusion of empowering the local, but in reality, local is viewed and presented in a parochial manner and put in a reductive category. The focus on the local, therefore, is a new gimmick of colonizers and imperialists. With this theoretical perspective, in this paper, it is argued that the representation of the locals in the novel is eclipsed by the colonial narrative. By underscoring negative aspects of local the writer seems to be performing the role of a native informant and is a re-endorsing colonial narrative about the orient. It is also argued that this local female author has been empowered to write but the agency she is granted is loaded because it is, in fact, quite restricted.

Keywords: Euro-American anchors, globalization, international division of labour, native informant, local under erasure, restricted agency.

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1. Introduction

Karachi You're Killing Me! (*KYKM* henceforth) by Saba Imtiaz (2014) belongs to a burgeoning genre of contemporary time called Chick lit. The genre began with Fielding's (1996) novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* and since then many writers from all over the world are producing chick lit. *KYKM* begins by giving a sort of tribute to *Bridget Jones's Diary* by beginning the novel with a quote from it. The novels of this popular genre have certain fixed features which are present in most of these novels in varying degrees. The novels are "humorous" (Ferriss, 2006, p. 38) and usually about women aged between "twenties and thirties" (Ferriss, 2006, p. 03). They "celebrate the pleasures of feminine adornment and heterosexual romance" (Genz, 2009, p. 76) and they show how these women try to handle their careers along with their romantic relationships. However, this Pakistani chick lit i.e., *KYKM* is different from usual chick lit novels. It touches significant and grave issues of the country, which are being discussed in this paper as the novel not only presents the problems of a single girl which is a common feature of chick lit texts, but it also gives a picture of the country she is living in.

KYKM narrates a story of a young girl named Ayesha. The story is written in first person and is about her experience as a journalist living in Karachi and finding the true love of her life. It is a debut novel of Imtiaz, and it has also been adapted as a Bollywood film titled *Noor*. The novel has been discussed as a book that gives a slice of the life of Karachi, describing the daily experiences of a common person in the city. It constructs a vivid picture for a reader to take a city tour along "with the protagonist through the underbelly of Karachi" (Virani, 2014). The novel has also been considered as a narrative that challenges the stereotypical description of Pakistani women and provides "alternative discourse" (Abdullah, 2017, p. 93) in this regard by showing bold, independent women who are not subscribing to the norms of society. In this paper, the portrayal of the people, city, and the country in *KYKM* is analysed which seems to be done in a grim manner. The discussion is limited to this novel and the representation of the country in it. The objectives of this research study are to study the depiction of the city and country in the text and to trace the links between the particular depiction and the motives behind this depiction.

2. Literature review

Globalization as a concept has engaged theorists from all disciplines equally, including sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, and linguists. They all employ it as a useful concept in their respective fields. Thereby, the literature we come across in this field is vast. However, few works are discussed in this paper considering the definitions and the historical underpinnings of the concept, precisely regarding social, economic, and cultural globalization.

Bauman (2005) in his work *Globalization: The Human Consequences* reveals that globalization as a process has deeper effects than its surface manifestations. Globalization is a common word today; a craze quickly "turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries" (Bauman, 2005, p. 01). The word has different connotations for different people; the concept has rather initiated a debate that divides people across the world into two camps. For one group, embracing globalization ensures happiness. On the other side of this continuum are people who believe globalization is what marks the doom of everything happy as it is a gateway to eternal unhappiness.

However, globalization is an irreversible fate the world has to face today. It seems it is affecting everyone in similar ways and to a similar extent. Therefore, today almost every society and everyone is being globalized, and being 'globalized' means that all the societies and individuals are becoming identical, with the cultures amalgamating and impinging upon each other. Though looking back at history, one can raise questions as to what degree the geophysical features, the natural and also the artificial boundaries of territories, isolated distinctive identities of culture and populations, in addition to the intact distinction between the inside and the outside, all the normal objects of the geographical science, were in their essence simply the fabricated artifices or sediments of "speed limits" (Bauman, 2005, p. 12). Bauman, looking at massive globalization crashing every kind of boundary, wonders if the boundaries that existed in the past were true or just constructed to curtail the freedom of movement in the past.

He asserts the concept of a geophysical border is getting more and more troublesome to sustain within the 'real world'. It suddenly looks clear now that the divisions of continents and that of the world into borders were once made imposingly real through the hardships of travel through these different and distinct geographical territories separated by physical borders. In this regard, financial limitations are the main constraints for the state economies in trying to overcome these physical restraints, along with the socially produced factors such as; maintenance and keeping intact local collective identities; ensuing the enforcement of borders and cultural barriers. "The 'inside' vs. 'outside', 'here' vs. 'out there', 'near' vs. 'far away' opposition recorded the degree of taming, domestication and familiarity of various fragments" (Bauman, 2005, p. 13), of both human and inhuman fragments of the encompassing world. Bauman's view regarding polarized opinion about globalization is useful for this paper as effects of globalization upon literature with reference to selected the text is being analysed in it, considering the writing style and cultural representation done by the novelist.

Scholte (2005) has identified five broad definitions of globalization through his elaborate work called *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. One everyday notion defines globalization in terms of group action. From this angle, the term global is solely another adjective to explain cross-border relations between countries whereas the term globalization is used to describe the increase in the speed of exchange and interdependency in the international system. He describes globalization in terms of a huge and increasing flow of resources and capital investments between different countries of the international system. A second usage of the word globalization views the economic process as relaxation. Here it refers to a method of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries to make it possible for countries to open their borders for the world economy.

The third concept of globalization, Scholte explains is associating it with universalization. Therefore, in this usage of the word, "global" refers to "worldwide" and thereby; globalization is that method that indicates the spreading of numerous objects and experiences of individuals to every corner of the planet. The fourth definition is linking globalization with modernization, particularly in "Americanized" (Scholte, 2005, p. 16) way. Following this concept, the process of globalization may be considered dynamic because the social structures of modernity which include rationalism, economy, capitalism, etc. are unfolding the globe in new and different ways than historic ways. Therefore, they are associated with destroying the pre-existent cultures and native self-determination. Thus, globalization in this sense is usually represented as an associate of imperialism of McDonald's, Hollywood, and CNN. In this way, the

globalization is what we tend to refer to within the Third World, for many centuries, like colonization, even though it is manifested in slightly different ways than the historic imperialism and colonization.

The fifth idea of globalization identifies globalization as deterritorialization. According to this definition, globalization entails a reconfiguration of the geographic structure of the world, thus indicating that social area is no longer completely mapped in terms of territorial distances, places, and borders. He describes globalization as a process or a combination of processes that represent a metamorphosis within the special organization of social relations and transactions.

Scholte's (2005) five comprehensive definitions are useful to form the background of this research study, particularly the fourth definition associating globalization with America and its influence on third world countries.

Friedman (2005) in his book *The World is Flat* classifies three main epochs of globalization. He demarcates the first era from the year 1492, with the expedition of Columbus till the year 1800; the period that opened up trade between the Old World and the New World. This is the period Freedman calls globalization 1.0 and according to him, this particular period reduced the world from a size large to a size medium. Globalization 1.0 was all about muscles power, and thereby, the key agent of change here that drove the process of the global integration was measured in the forms of how much; brawn, "muscle, ... horsepower, ... wind power, ... [and] steam power" (Friedman, 2005, p. 09) a country could generate and its ability to utilize this power creatively.

After era 1.0 of globalization, came era 2.0. Freedman identifies this time period from 1800 to 2000, interrupted by World War I and II and the great depression. It minimized the world from "size medium to small" (Friedman, 2005, p. 09). The key agent of change in globalization 2.0 was multinational companies. According to him, these multinational companies went worldwide to acquire labour and markets, led by the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the Dutch and English joint-stock companies.

On the tail of the globalization 2.0, came globalization 3.0 minimizing the world further from "size small to tiny" (Friedman, 2005, p. 09) – flattening and levelling the global playing field along with reducing its size. The dynamic force becoming the agent of change for the globalization 3.0 became the newly discovered strength for individuals to participate and compete globally.

He asserts the world is flat now metaphorically because most of the barriers are now lifted and technology is playing a very significant role in flattening the world. Giving an example of his visit to Indian call centres, he explains there is a whole generation of Indians who are mimicking the English language like the natives. Freedman refers to this as a world that is so intermingled together by capitalism that one might not identify one place from another. Thus, there is no single master, but anyone can compete for economic gain including individuals and companies from anywhere in the world.

Friedman (2000) in his other work titled *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* identifies the causes that are globalizing the world at the end of the past century and their effects on the territorial makeup of the international system, economics, politics, and culture. He believes globalization

is a process, which is the inevitable amalgamation of markets, nation-states, and technologies to an extent that was never witnessed before. It is a method that is enabling people, firms, and nation-states to reach around the world “farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper” (Friedman, 2000, p. 16) than ever before. Friedman, furthermore, emphasizes that the driving plan behind globalization is free-market capitalism; the more a country opens its economy to trade and competition, the more its economy thrives and flourishes. Globalization suggests the development of free-market capitalism reach nearly every country in the world.

He points out that standardizing marketing forces and homogenizing them poses a threat to local culture and therefore suggests a balance between Lexus and Olive Tree. Where Lexus symbolizes modernity, and the Olive tree symbolizes traditions and the roots that anchor human beings. He slightly sheds light on the threat to the local culture posed by neoliberalism. However, being an advocate of it, he does not fully and strongly criticize it.

Pieterse (1996) in his article “Globalisation and Culture: Three Paradigms” has given three categories of cultural globalization. These include “differentialism, ... convergence, ...[and] hybridization”(Pieterse, 1996, p. 1389). He writes that though the world is getting interconnected but at the same time, conflicting conceptions of cultural differences are originating. He defines cultural differentialism as when cultures retain their particular qualities largely despite globalization.

Convergence and hybridity are two other categories of cultures described by Pieterse. They are interrelated and one leads to another. Both convergence and hybridity are opposite to the perspective of cultural differentiation and they both subvert nationalism. He claims, from this perspective, the barriers among nations are getting weak. There is a free flow of people with migration or exiles and exchange of information with technology. Culture from various parts of the world flows strongly and blends with the local culture, creating a new culture, which is the combination of both cultures. Hybridity especially represents a postmodern trend of blending. Thus, at present the cultures are becoming similar to each other, adopting characteristics from each other. All three concepts of culture differentialism, convergence, and hybridity discussed by Peiterse are significant to form the background of the research paper as cultural representation in the age of globalization is being analyzed in it.

Appadurai (2010) in his essay, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” discusses five different ways of global cultural flows. These include (a) “ethnoscapes”; which comprises of people who are on the move like tourists and refugees; (b) “mediascapes”; electronic productions and transmission of information around the world; (c) “technoscapes”; spread of information through technology; (d) “financescapes”; currency exchange and transfer of a huge amount of capital; and (e) “ideoscapes” (Appadurai, 2010, p.06); a flow of images which are political in nature. These scapes he believes are disjunctive, unpredictable, and fluid in nature. In his view, these scapes are the building units of “Imagined worlds” which are formed by the “historically situated imaginations” (Appadurai, 2010, p. 07) of a group of people, scattered around the world. Thus, a very significant fact of today’s world is that a lot of people in the world live in such imagined and unreal worlds.

Appadurai believes there is a tension between homogenization and heterogenization in the present global world. He asserts that there is no single model of cultural domination and

therefore disregards “centre-periphery models” (Appadurai, 2010, p. 06) which he believes are not applicable now because of the movement and intermixing of cultures. Thus, he overthrows the previous notions of pure capitalism because the five scapes of global cultural flow are creating “disorganized capitalism” (Appadurai, 2010., p. 06) and in this way, global flows characterize cultures and their relationships, not autonomous nations. He believes these diasporic cultural products need to be studied profoundly to understand the global economy because the cultural economy at present is multifaceted, disjunctive, and overlapping.

Appadurai asserts these scapes work independently and sometimes are in conflict with one another therefore they spread heterogeneous culture, not homogeneous culture. Appadurai’s work gives an important insight of the spread of culture through scapes therefore it cannot be ignored while doing a cultural analysis which is being done in this study by analysing a selected novel.

3. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this research as mentioned in the previous section Dirlik’s (1997) ideas discussed in *Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* are used. He asserts that during colonization localism was “suppressed or, marginalized in various ideologies of modernity” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 86), but at present, there is a recent trend of focus upon local. The focus on local gives an impression that it is a step towards empowering local as for colonized countries it embodies hope for decolonization. However, Dirlik finds a connection between a sudden concern for local with “global capitalism” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 85) and “Eurocentricism” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 92). He asserts that “the apparent end of Eurocentrism is an illusion; because capitalist culture as it has taken shape has Eurocentricism built into the very structure of its narrative” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 92). Thus, despite the focus on local, the system is still benefitting both economic and cultural Eurocentric motives by promoting them under a camouflage of glocalism. To show Eurocentric concerns present in *KYKM*, textual evidences are given and analysed in this discussion.

As this research is related to “interpreting subjective experiences” (Grix, 2004, p. 32) avoiding fixity of meanings, thus it is qualitative in nature. Therefore, a qualitative method of inquiry is used to analyze data which is textual analysis. Catherine Belsey (2005) explains that textual analysis is not a random association of ideas of two texts; rather a primary text invokes texts from different genres, and thus “research involves tracing these intertexts” (Belsey, 2013, p. 164). In this paper, I am trying to trace the presence of latent elements of consumerism and colonialism present under the guise of glocalism.

It is significant to understand the term glocalism which is also used in the title of the paper. The term was proposed by cultural sociologist Robertson (2012). Tracing the etymology of the word he links it with business jargon used in Japan in the past. He defined it to be a combination of “global and local” (Robertson, 2012, p. 36) products in the market to bring “diversity” (Robertson, 2012, p. 37) and to expand the market. The selected theorist for this paper that is Dirlik defines the term using Kenichi Ohmae, who explains it as “seventy percent global and thirty percent local” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 95). Dirlik critically analyses the representation of local to be eclipsed under dominant global trends. He asserts local is viewed and presented in a limited and biased manner. He terms this practice as parochial. The word is used in the same sense in the title of this paper.

4. Discussion and analysis

Non-native writers like Rudyard Kipling (1901) and E. M Foster (1924) had been producing Anglophonic novels using the settings and characters of the subcontinent, however, Pakistani writers using the same language started writing their own stories with local settings and characters quite late. Thus, *KYKM* written by a native Pakistani writer giving a local setting and characters gives this hope of giving a story with local flavour that may help readers to know about the country using first-hand information. As in this regard, Shamsie (2017) in her book quotes a British critic, Bonamy Dobree: "It may well be that we shall not understand India until it is explained to us by Indian novelists of the first ability, as it was that we understood nothing of Russia before we read Tolstoy, Turgenev, and others" (Shamsie, 2017, p. 69).

Moreover, as Dirlik writes highlighting local gives hope of decolonization because it serves as a "site of promise" (Dirlik, 1997, p. 85) for countries that were once colonized. It may assist them in constructing a positive self-image. In this regard, Fanon (2004) was of the view that the native intellectuals can play a significant role, by writing "literature of combat" (Fanon, 2004, p. 155) and presenting national culture against the colonial narrative. In this way, the native intelligentsia can uplift the nation by constructing a positive image of the nation and help in registering their existence as a nation. Imtiaz being educated is among the intelligentsia of the country and therefore she is expected to perform the said role. To some extent, she appears to be performing this role as *KYKM* seems to be helping in decolonization considering a few incidents in the novel. For instance, Imtiaz criticizes a British journalist Jamie for deceiving her and procuring from her a scoop of news regarding a prominent prisoner and publishing it under his name. She compares his act to the way "East India Company" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 176) secretly procured its hold on the subcontinent. However, most of the time she seems to be criticizing her country, as discussed below.

Karachi is depicted in the novel with details such as narrow streets with "overflowing gutters" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 140) and "rubbish clogged drains" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 196). The protagonist compares Karachi to a "Wasteland" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 15) referring to T. S. Eliot's (1922) poem where Eliot described wasteland as worthless and fragmented land. She also mentions Karachi "as good for nothing city" (93). Therefore, she finds it hard to write about the development of the country in more than "six hundred words" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 01) and finds it funny.

Imtiaz criticizes different departments of the government to show the malfunctioning of the government. She illustrates that there is no law-and-order situation in the country and people who are financially powerful follow no rules (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 08) and can dictate law enforcing agency that is cops. She also criticizes the government by explaining that public hospitals give water-filled injections to children in the name of "Polio" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 06) vaccine which shows that they are not sincere with the public.

The author also shows that Karachi is packed with muggers and sarcastically writes that prospects of hiring "an assassin" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 15) in the city are more than finding a prospective lover (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 4). To substantiate this idea she narrates various incidents. For example, the protagonist of the novel explains that the citizens of the city drive like "maniacs" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 228) to save themselves, as the roads are not safe due to muggers. They think of ways to keep their expensive belongings such as phones safe by keeping them at a place other than their purses so that even if they lose purses, they can save their phones

(Imtiaz, 2016, p. 80). To endorse the idea of muggings Imtiaz includes an incident where Ayesha's friend Zara gets robbed at a traffic signal. The looters not only snatch her purse but also take away her glass of "fresh juice" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 190). She adds details and writes that thieves are not always grown-up men but even teens are also involved in these crimes (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 150). She explains nobody in the city is safe from harm, even a poor shopkeeper who sells juice has to maintain his security by keeping a security guard to save his day's meager earnings (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 215). Moreover, these robbers are ruthless because if victims show resistance, they readily murder them after tormenting their bodies (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 4).

To refer to unrest in the country, the author also brings up various blast incidents in the novel. For instance, Ayesha describes an explosion "at train station" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 16) depicting a horrific picture of the blast site which is full of smoke and blood (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 241). She describes the bloodshed appeared to be like "aftermath of Bakra Eid" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 249). Ayesha confesses that as a journalist, to report repeatedly about explosions and bloodshed in new ways (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 249) gets hard for her. This shows that she frequently needs to report such incidents.

The situation of women in Pakistan according to Imtiaz's depiction is also dreadful. Women are harassed with catcalling and getting molested (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 21) in public places. A conversation between police and journalists reveals that "thousands of girls are raped every day" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 45) in the country. Hence rape is not considered to be a grave issue by people; therefore, it is indifferently discussed by them. Even if such cases get attention, criminals pull influential contacts which even include the "prime minister" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 114) as well to halt the investigation. Through this, she emphasizes how sexual harassment cases are dealt with in Pakistan. She also highlights how the public acutely judges a woman by her dressing while discussing a rape case, police explain that the victim was wearing "jeans" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 43) and that provoked the men's attention which justifies what happened with the girl. Imtiaz is not presenting the situation of the Muslims differently than a white woman such as Fielding as she discussed the Muslims as "vicious" (Fielding, 2012, p. 290) toward women.

Moreover, like a traditional style of chick lit novels where some information is given in the form of inventory in the beginning of each chapter, *KYKM* also follows same style. The chapters in the novel begin with news headlines related to the country. This piece of information is fragmented and is like a loose thread that is not directly related to that particular chapter. Virani finds each of them "more laughable than the other" (Virani, 2014). However, this information helps to add in the negative portrayal of the country. For example, "[B]ooks not bombs at Pakistan Literature festival" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 47), "10 million Pakistanis drink alcohol" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 106), or "Tomato goes out of reach" (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 203) are few headlines that show a negative picture of a country.

Jeremy Tambling in *Literature and City* (2016) writes that "[M]odern novel attempted to know a city" (Tambling, 2016, p. 2). To write about a city he explains how the "urban consciousness" (2016, p. 6) of an author is shaped and experienced. Every city has a "diversity of cultures" (Tambling, 2016, p. 18) and different authors write about a city according to their own parameters. As he gives an example that in Charles Baudelaire's poems Paris is not described using "landmarks, sights, and monuments" (Tambling, 2016, p. 13) whereas Emile Zola

describes the same city giving “panoramic views” (Tambling, 2016, p. 14) of the city. Similarly, the same country that is America is described differently by white and black authors according to their experiences and perceptions. It is, therefore, significant to consider the perspective which Imtiaz chooses to share with her readers about the city. Constructing an image of the city using imagery and details such as filth, dirt, muggings, bomb blasts, political issues and lack of government certainly seem to be giving a negative image of the city.

Besides the city, she gives a detailed description of people as well. West had been describing people of the East in various ways. Edward Said (1978) explains in his book that Orientalists described their colonial subjects as “lazy” (Said, 1978; 2003) but Imtiaz also describes them as providing a similar monolithic view of the West about the people of the country. For instance, Ayesha makes a list of staff members who are not present at work on a certain day, along with the reasons for which they are absent on a working day. The reasons she sarcastically notes are described as excuses only and the staff is shown as work shirkers. Most of the employees are said to be ill and one suffers from Dengue. But she explains that he is lying because Dengue occurs only under specific weather conditions (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 03). She asserts that they are all making excuses to avoid work. Moreover, she also ridicules people for having no regard for punctuality (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 06) and confirms that even the gentry and educated class have no concept of time, as it is normal for them to start “getting dressed at the time of invitation” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 24) and reach late at events.

More details about the locals are shown through various events in the novel. Imtiaz tries to show that violence is innate in the nature of local people. She provides details of the ruthlessness of the people by referring to an unpleasant incident where a son murders his mother and decapitates her “head” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 69). She describes people to be callous to an extent that they enjoy dragging dead bodies and “playing football” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 59) with their heads. She also points out at unruliness of the general public by referring to different incidents, such as a street fight among shopkeepers and customers (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 02), a brawl between a car and tank driver on the road (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 196), and an argument between a vendor and a bus passenger, because the passenger “spits paan” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 110) on the vendor from the window of a bus. All these incidents show that the local community of the country is crude and rough.

Besides this Imtiaz also mentions sectarian violence practiced in the country. She gives a passing mention to it while trying to satirize journalists by saying that they do not value the emotions of people and mock them by saying that girl at a sectarian protest was protesting as if her mother had died (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 45). However, while satirizing journalists she does not abstain from giving a hint of sectarian violence in her country. She also mentions a religious group called “Sipahe-Sahaba” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 74) involved in endorsing propaganda for sectarian violence and murdering the Shia sect. Thus, by giving these passing references Imtiaz gives an idea to the reader about this practice in the country that is murdering each other in name of religion.

Imtiaz associate’s violence with Pakistan through other incidents as well such as through the description of a fashion show. Violence is endorsed and appreciated at the event as the models walking on the ramp are dressed up depicting suicide bombers, wearing a kind of jacket used by a terrorist “Ajmal Kasab” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 117). Moreover, though she expected that the audience of the show will criticize the “military aggression” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 118) presented

through a group of models dressed up as commandos, however, she explains the audience applauds them, supporting the same idea that the nation likes aggression and violence.

On the one hand, she portrays the occurrence of frequent violent incidents in the country on the other hand she shows that the general public is unaffected by these disturbing incidents. For instance, Ayesha while attending a party unceremoniously breaks the news of the death of twenty-five people in an accident (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 38); however, the party still goes on. Not only Ayesha is indifferent towards human miseries, but she provides examples of other characters as well in this regard. She elucidates just after an hour of heavy exchange of firing between two groups of criminals in a playground, children start playing at that very place. Besides children, she also describes a woman in the same vicinity who was doing her laundry on a terrace of her house in a carefree manner with a “nonchalant look on face” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 60), as if nothing unpleasant and unusual happened over there. Imtiaz shows through these characters that such kind of violent situations are normal for Pakistanis because as Ayesha states people are “blowing themselves up” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 176) in Pakistan, every other day. Similarly, the public seems immune to crimes, in spite of being robbed every second day, as they do not abstain from carrying costly items with them. Violence and crimes have become normalized components of their everyday life, therefore she writes that the public does not “raise an eyebrow” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 107) on tragedies anymore.

Associating barbarity and violence with the people of Karachi or Pakistan by Imtiaz is not new as Said (1978) also pointed out that an Orient is portrayed in the West as a “violent” being and a “murderer” (1978; 2003). However, Said refers to this practice done in the past by the West, but Imtiaz is associating the same ideas with Pakistanis at present. Besides her, other neo-orientalists are creating discourses and associating violence with Muslims at present. For example, an article published in the Guardian newspaper on 28th August 2013 explains that New York Police department speculated mosques suspiciously and labelled them as “terrorist organizations”. It was said that consequently every individual who enters the mosque for prayer is carefully spied on even if that person lacks any criminal record. Imtiaz also discusses a mosque in a similar way. When the protagonist visits a prominent prisoner under heavy security she gets terrified, however, she feels better when she reminds herself that she is not visiting a “training camp of militants” or a mosque that provokes “violence in the Friday sermons” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 139). In this way, she juxtaposes a terrorist training camp and a mosque. Thus, she mentions mosque not in a different way than the West discusses it. This shows that she is in one way or another supporting the Western narrative about Muslims and Pakistanis and is a part of the “consciousness-raising journey against Pakistan” (quoted elsewhere) to link it with terrorism.

The position Imtiaz is taking on the subject of terrorism in Pakistan is complex. It may be considered as a satire on whites by showing how easily they relate the country with terrorism and stereotype Pakistan. However, as Beukeboom *et al.* (2020) explains by reiterating negating a stereotype helps in maintaining a stereotype. She calls this type of stereotyping “negation bias” (Beukeboom *et al.*, 2020, p. 219). Thus, with the unclear position, Imtiaz is taking in this novel, she is doing what Dirlik calls “political manipulation” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 89) while presenting local.

Imtiaz not only associates the country and religion with terrorism, but she even candidly gives anti-state narrative in the novel by criticizing the institutions of the state such as the Army. As

Ayesha expresses her disbelief when the public appreciates armed forces of the country at an event and asserts that they should not be applauded because they are responsible for “genocide in Bangladesh, hundreds of extrajudicial killings, and for torturing activists and journalists all over the country” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 118). On another occasion, she mocks the Army chief referring to a conversation between him and his brother, where she explains they were bickering like “schoolboys” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 170). Mentioning this incident in the novel is maybe to show that the chief of the Army is immature because there does not seem to be any reason for including it as it is not adding any humour. However, it is mentioned just as a passing remark, but the nature of the comment is derogatory.

Thus, as Dirlik explains that local which had to emerge “as a source of national identity” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 86) is becoming a source of tainting national identity because the author is degrading her own people, religion, and country and becoming a mouthpiece of West. This form of emphasis on local is disguising “oppression” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 85). “Local narratives” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 87) were brought into focus so that “metanarratives” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 87) may be rejected in the postmodern era. *KYKM* is apparently a local narrative, but it is similar to metanarrative in nature, as the ideas of colonial masters are reflected in it. Imtiaz is performing the job of native informant in this novel and is unapologetically describing the country and its nation from a Western viewpoint.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the genre of chick lit is traced back to the novels of Jane Austen (Whelehen, 2005, p. 181) and therefore *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a light read without touching political issues, as apparently these issues were not touched upon by Austen as well. However, Said explains in an essay “Jane Austen and Empire” (1994) that every aspect of Euro-American culture was in sync with the “grand idea of empire” (Said, 1994, p. 80). He analyses British literature written before and during the period of colonization and considers how Britain and other parts of the world are represented in literature. He asserts these narratives assisted in convincing the people in their homelands to invade foreign lands. The writers justified foreign invasions by constructing binaries describing their homeland using “positive ideas” of a nation, appreciating their language, “good behaviour, [and] moral values” (Said, 1994, p. 81). Thus, even the literary figures like Austen who are considered to be “modest” (Said, 1994, p. 87) were part of the colonial mission and her apparent apolitical texts were aligned with the aims of the empire. However, Imtiaz is writing entirely against the country, its people, and even their religion as well.

She criticizes religion not only by associating it with terrorism as discussed above but also in other ways, such as by criticizing religious parties. Ayesha discusses the ferocious behaviour of religious parties and expresses that considering blasphemy as an excuse they can easily “lynch” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 75) anyone for an inadvertent mistake. She also depicts their abhorrence for America by narrating an incident that incited hatred against America, where anti-American literature is being distributed at a convention of “Jamaat-ud-Dawa” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 109) which is one of the religious parties of the country.

She also makes fun of a spokesperson of “Sipah-e-Sahaba” whom she describes using negative adjectives such as a “potbellied man” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 77) and a murderer of numerous people of the Shia sect. However, to show that he respects women, he keeps his gaze low while talking to Ayesha. Imtiaz reveals his hypocrisy by mentioning that he calls Ayesha at midnight to “chat” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 83) with her, although she is the same woman with whom he was

avoiding eye contact during an interview. Besides Ayesha, bad experiences of other female journalists with religious parties (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 187) are also mentioned in the text. Therefore, Ayesha refers to them in an abusive manner calling them “bloody beards” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 240). Likewise, to emphasize the double standards of religious groups Imtiaz brings in another incident in the novel where Ayesha gets attacked by a gang. They are said to be “religious activists” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 244), however, they are properly dressed up like gangsters by covering their faces with a cloth and holding guns in their hands. Thus, as Negra (2009) states about chick flick movies that they are not produced entirely for “entertainment” but they do have a “cultural agenda” (Negra, 2009, p. 7) to promote as well, similarly *KYKM* seems to have an agenda and that is a negative depiction of religion.

A distinguished critic Sara Suleri criticizes the prevailing culture of “anti-intellectualism” (Suleri, 1992, p. 756) concerning identity formation, commonly practiced in mass media. She emphasizes that the subject of identity formation requires to be addressed by the “academy” (Suleri, 1992, p. 757) and should not be dealt nonchalantly and frivolously, because it is a serious matter. It can be observed in *KYKM* that Imtiaz is dealing with serious issues of country and identity formation of the nation by flippantly criticizing and satirizing blending it with dark humour. She is not seriously dealing with the issue as it can be observed that *KYKM* is not even edited properly and careless mistakes can be found in the text, for example, she has written “Friday, February 5, 2012” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 47) and skips Saturday and refers to Sunday as “February 6, 2012” (Imtiaz, 2016, p. 64). She is underscoring a serious issue of terrorism faced by the country in a light read and subtly replicating the ideological underpinnings of the West regarding Pakistan. She is looking at her fellow citizens with “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 2007, p. 8), which includes herself and the consciousness of a colonizer. Therefore, she is focusing more on negative aspects of her nation in this novel and not presenting her views with responsibility.

It can be inferred from the discussion that Imtiaz is performing the role of a colonizer. She is not opting for homegrown ideas but is writing while keeping her colonial baggage intact, showing disliking for her nation and country. There may be another reason for highlighting negative aspects of the country. For this Imtiaz’s background needs to be considered. She is currently working for The New York Times and The Guardian newspaper and has availed several American fellowships in the past. Having experience of living and studying abroad and working for foreign companies she has that know-how which Rushdie (1991) identifies as “double perspective” (Rushdie, 1991, p. 19). He explains such people by being local and having experience of living abroad in conjunction become both “insiders and outsiders” (1991, p. 18) of the country they describe. Imtiaz seems to be focusing more on the outsider’s perspective disseminating Western ideology, although she appears to be an insider.

She might be performing this role unknowingly; however, she is ignoring the latent pitfalls of this restricted empowerment. She is enjoying empowerment to write a local story and share it with the world by getting it published, but this empowerment is given to her upon conditions and that is to express local with a “parochial” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 85) lens. Under this restricted empowerment she is presenting a narrative that is in sync with the colonial narrative.

Arundhati Roy condemns corporations for keeping reins of “media” (2015, p. 11), “art magazines”, and “literature” (Roy, 2015, p. 18) in their control. She explains they are reliant upon corporations because, “the major share of their revenues comes from corporate

advertisements” (Roy, 2015, p. 14). Therefore, media runs by catering to the interests of corporations and categorizes a piece of news either as blasphemous or as “free speech” (Roy, 2015, p. 18). According to its interest, significant news gets highlighted, or a blind eye is kept towards it (Roy, 2015, p. 19). Likewise, an art form that caters to the agendas of corporations is promoted by a corporation through a “literature festival” (Roy, 2015, p. 19). Therefore, it can be witnessed that Imtiaz is endorsing the imperialist schema as *KYKM* is published by Penguin Random House India. This publishing house has its main office in New York, United States. She is writing against the country and appears to be loyal to the publishers just as Roy explains that “Hum Tata ka namak khatay hain” (Roy, 2015, p. 20) therefore she cannot betray them. She is not revealing “practices of resistance” and “national loyalties” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 77), because she is a product of the same system, and it is benefitting her. She is fulfilling the colonial motives of the West under glocalism, by reconstructing identities for locals from western perspectives. However, this form of writing is consuming local identities.

In addition to this, as Dirlik explains that “process of production is globalized” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 90) and there is “international division of labour” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 91) owing to globalization. Thus, under globalization, corporations start working at local locations which gives an illusion of power to local, however even then the power lies with “global headquarters of the company” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 95) that control all activities of its associated local branches. Thus, under the system of global division of labour and “transnational corporation” (Dirlik, 1997, p. 92) a Pakistani writer that is Imtiaz is writing for the West and getting her work published in India, through a publishing house run by America. In this way, the author appears to be an instrument of Euro-American imperialism, as she is a worker of Penguin publishing house which is anchoring the writer to reiterate Euro-American motives.

5. Conclusion

Imtiaz in *KYKM* is presenting a local city, country, people, and culture and getting her work published by an international publishing house which shows globalization. The apparent focus on local also gives this hope that it is a fresh perspective to highlight local and different from overarching episteme of colonizers about the local. However, unlike the expectations of the postcolonial theorists, the focus on local is disguised oppression. It is a step towards keeping the local at the margin and under erasure. Local is being looked at and presented from a parochial perspective underscoring all the negative aspects of it. It is showing all the streaks of colonizers’ discourses though it is written by a local author.

The novel is considered to be a satire on local public of Pakistan; however, it is significant to consider that according to financial survey in 2015, the literacy rate of the country was 60 percent, according to an official government website for surveys, in Pakistan. In this percentage, only 49 percent of the females are included while most of them are men. Chick lit novels like *KYKM* are primarily written for female audiences and as less than 50 percent of women are not able to read English this attests that the novel which is written in English is not primarily written for the local public per se but for the international audience. Moreover, even if it is produced for locals, Imtiaz is inducing an inferiority complex in the public, regarding their country, society, and fellow citizens by garnering and highlighting all the negative facets of the country.

Secondly, there is a possibility that Imtiaz is writing satire believing that there are faults in the society which she can mend through satire, as this is the purpose of satire. However, her perception of the country and people is tainted because she is looking at them through the spectacles of a colonizer, as discussed above. On the other hand, if she is writing the novel to ridicule the perception of the West regarding the country, she is writing back to the empire. However, considering the negative portrayal of incidents and characters in the novel, assist us to observe where the sympathies of the readers are invited.

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