

Post-Colonial Analysis of Zain Saeed's Novel "The Year of Sound and Heat"

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Abstract

This study examines post-colonialism analysis in "The Year of Sound and Heat" (2022), written by a Pakistani writer, Zain Saeed. For the critical analysis of discovering the main characteristics of post-colonialism, this research draws on the theory of post-colonialism proposed by Edward Said, in his book "Orientalism" (1977). This study explores significant post-colonialism characteristics, including marginalisation, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, and migration. These elements of post-colonialism are evident through the depressed situations, circumstances, and characters of Jogi, Natasha, Billoo, and Disco. The analysis was conducted through textual analysis of a non-empirical research design, followed by close reading. The study concludes that the essentials of post-colonialism, including marginalisation, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity and migration in "The Year of Sound and Heat", are the fundamentals of the book and an in-depth understanding of postcolonial literature that would facilitate its readers, scholars and academics in the field of post-colonialism in modern Pakistani literature.

Keywords: Characteristics, Postcolonial, Sound, Orientalism, Heat, Pakistani Culture.

Introduction

Historically, 24 per cent of the world was colonised by the British Empire. Now those colonies are independent indeed, but under a postcolonial era. Postcolonial countries are still under the social and political influence of European powers (Bhabha, 2012). Pakistan gained its freedom seventy-six years ago, yet its society, culture, government, and mindset still reflect the images of colonialism. The Year of Sound and Heat reflects the elements of Post-colonialism. It was written by a modern Pakistani writer, a dazzling new talent, Zain Saeed, in 2022.

This study provides an in-depth understanding of the postcolonial literature in "The Year of Sound and Heat". As a writer of the Post-Colonial era, his writings indeed depict the elements of post-colonialism. The selected novel (The Year of Sound and Heat) is a perfect example of post-colonialism and its essentials. Zain Saeed's novel unmask the real-life events that occurred in Karachi between 2007 and 2017. Here, he mentions the events of the challenging year of 2007, where Karachi was facing the threats of terrorist attacks and democratic doldrums and the monopoly of the Army that created uncertainty among the people of Pakistan. People tried to flee (migration) for a better and safer life, as in the character of Jogi. The young generation wanted to migrate to avoid facing the challenging circumstances of the time (Park, 2013). On the other hand, Natasha also left Pakistan for much better opportunities in the West, while Billoo tried his best to

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change the society and unfortunately, died. As Pakistan has gone through, a coexisting vision in her social and political system (Sant, 2024) and a layman is tackling the issues of social and cultural identities (Punt, 2003).

By critically analysing post-colonial, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the post-colonial elements in Pakistani society. To understand post-colonial modern Pakistani literature, this study aims to critically analyse *The Year of Sound and Heat* (2022) through the lens of post-colonial theory as presented by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1977). This research will explore the characteristics of Post-Colonialism hidden in the book.

Literature Review

Edward Said (1935-2003) was a cultural critic and political activist of immense talent whose hard work left an unmatched mark in the field of cultural sociology during his lifetime. In his book *Orientalism* (1977), he introduced the main ideas of post-colonialism. "First academic book" on post-colonialism (Iverson, 2002). The application of the foundational theory of post-colonialism identifies its main characteristics, including identity, culture, hybridity, gender, race, indigenisation, migration, and marginalisation. Come, then, comrades, the European game has finally ended; we must find something different. Today, we can do everything, as long as we do not imitate Europe or become obsessed with the desire to catch up with it (Fanon, 1998). Fanon celebrates the post-colonial movement for overcoming the remnants of colonialism.

The research by Sevelius (2020) at the PubMed Centre concluded that marginalisation involves individuals' exclusion from the mainstream educational, economic, and cultural life. It exists due to an unequal relationship of power between social groups. Hybridity is another way to deprive individuals of their identity, culture, and language (Amina & Ilhem, 2019). KC (2021) concluded that hybridity has become a fashion of modern postcolonial literature in his research analysis, *Heat and Dust*, a novel by Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

Clarke (2010) and Volk (2016) have analysed the issues of duality and identity. According to their study, nobody ever comes to know the true or real sense of their own life, and as a result, no one ever realises the true essence of identity. As a result, the characters grapple with the question of whether they belong to the mother society or the adopted society, which raises issues of identity. According to Burney (2012), post-colonialism addresses the challenges of social and cultural identities in post-colonial

Myers (2020) employs the post-colonial value, reflecting economic, sociological, and cultural aspects in the concept of value orientation that crisscrosses cultural differences. The existence of a postcolonial is always in a "Splitting" or "in-between" position regarding cultural diversions, where adapting others' values is an external domain. At the same time, language, family, religion, and personal life form an inner domain that represents the mimesis. The postcolonial consciousness adopts hybridity, resulting in historical transformation and mimicry that are complex and contradict the truth. This issue of values and cultural difference ends in hybridity and mimicry, as said by Bhabha (1992). The study of *Jangid* serves as a bridge between two different cultures, societies, and languages, forming a bicultural or multicultural society and bringing them under the same umbrella. Gunew's post-colonialism and multiculturalism (1997) reflects that multiculturalism manifests differently in various settings. Although the formulae of multiculturalism remain the same, the methods of implementation differ.

Post-colonial addresses both the history of suppression and refutation (Punt, 2003) and the themes of violence and oppression (McQuillan, 2017). It is as old as human history, with colonies and invasions. The issues of race, gender, sexuality, slave trading, and subjectivity have been analysed

by Chen (2021) in the study of Gilssant and Spillers' Middle Passage. According to his analysis, the life of a postcolonial is akin to that of an embryo living in the womb of its mother. Sharma & Borgohain (2023) highlight the characteristics of indigenisation in their critical analysis of liberating the systems of existing knowledge from colonial hegemony. At the same time, Singh (2011) identifies the characteristics of individuality, social, political, and cultural conditions in post-colonial contexts. The study by Park (2013) has classified the elements of migration among post-colonial individuals seeking better opportunities in the West.

To understand the characteristics of post-colonialism in Saeed's *The Year of Sound and Heat*, the present study focuses only on five aspects of the theory proposed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978).

Theoretical Framework

In his book, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said came into the limelight. Edward Said, a Palestinian-American critic, political activist and a prominent professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University, New York, till his death in 2003. Said grounded the theory of post-colonialism in his book "Orientalism" as a cornerstone. Said is the pioneer of post-colonial theory and the father of post-colonialism. His post-colonial perspective was derived from an Orientalist viewpoint, influenced by Western powers since Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798. His book *Orientalism* changed the direction of many disciplines in research and academia. However, Edward Said is not the first to write on Orientalism, as he did in his article "Orientalism Reconsidered" (Brydon, 2000, p. 846). However, Said revolutionised post-colonialism as an academic theory and research area in the fields of biology, racism, history, anthropology, linguistics, theoretical illustrations, economics, culture, and museum specimens (Said, 1977, p.7). According to the text of 'The Economist', *Orientalism* has been translated into every significant language of the world and has become a fundamental work for dazzling progress in post-colonialism (2014).

Orientalism is the difference between cultures; culture works within society, where the position of culture depicts the identity, and social position brings class difference and the dominance of the powerful over the other, even the difference of language between different classes of society and how it is borrowed (Said, 1977, pp. 10-27). Said's perspective of hybridity is historical, blending Western and Eastern cultures. Culture cannot flee from the inheritance of hybridity. All cultures are within one another, and no one among them is pure and solitary. All of them are diverse, extraordinarily different and hybrid (Said, p. 29). What we do and what they cannot do (Said, 1977, p. 12). Post-colonialism, as a term, refers to how culture, ethnicity, human identity, and race are portrayed in modern contexts. (Safak, 2014). Post-colonial constructs issues of identity, social and cultural dynamics related to native and colonial education systems, ethnic minorities, Art marginalisation, cultural differences, hybridity, and migration as fundamental aspects of post-colonialism. The characteristics of post-colonialism, according to Al Mtairi's research (2019), focus on colonial oppression, identities, post-colonial cultural exchange, and hybridity.

Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic and theoretical approach applied in the field of research studies for data Collection, information gathering, and obtaining the required results. It is a technical activity concerned with academic studies (Kothari, 1990). This study aims to gain a better understanding of research projects presented within this analysis, focusing on investigating the postcolonial themes in the novel *The Year of Sound and Heat* by Zain Saeed, using a non-empirical research design method. Non-empirical design is a method of beliefs and a way to conclude

(Howsen, 1979). Viorela Dan (2017) says that scholars using non-empirical design emphasise personal observations and theory as essential tools to answer the questions.

The study is based on textual analysis of selected elements of post-colonialism. Alan McKee (2001) defines textual analysis as a way of gathering information and data to understand the process of living in different cultures. Textual analysis involves a logical and interpretive approach, finding ways to read and examine materials through contextual analysis (Fursiche, 2018).

Critical Analysis / Discussion

Zain Saeed's *The Year of Sound and Heat* is a novel of hope and despair, faith and uncertainty, rejection and acceptance and optimism and depression. It represents the characteristics of post-colonialism through the bewildered situations, circumstances, and characters: Jogi, Natasha, Billoo, and Disco. Although the novel is 188 pages and features limited characters from different classes living in Karachi, they are going through an identity crisis. The novel's main contention is that the major social struggles between authority and marginalisation, tradition and modernity, are waged not only over ideologies but also inside the world of sensation. While the sound of progress serves as a hegemony that muffles opposition, the heat creates a communal impatience that makes violence feel like a bodily release. The protagonists' quest for solitary, peaceful moments or recollections becomes a powerful act of resistance in this overpowering sensory environment, claiming a private world in opposition to the repressive government.

The Year of Sound and Heat skillfully reconfigures the environment as a disputed arena of persistent colonial power relations from a postcolonial perspective. In addition to being natural realities, the terrible heat and constant noise are also tools of a neocolonial order that upholds the same hierarchies that were established during the empire. The wealthy, who are frequently the heirs of colonial structures, can withdraw into climate-controlled silence, a contemporary type of segregation, as a result of this sensory assault, which produces a harsh new geography of power. Controlling one's sensory surroundings is a clear indication of a deeply ingrained, postcolonialisation, as the marginalised are left vulnerable to the elements of violation, their lives still being managed by an oppressive climate. To understand the fundamental aspects of post-colonialism, as proposed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, in Saeed's *The Year of Sound and Heat*, the present study focuses on marginalisation, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity and migration in detail in the following sections:

Marginalization

Zain Saeed went abroad for higher education and returned to Karachi in 2018. As a Pakistani, he knows that Karachi's society is a blend of different communities, including Balochi, Sindhi, Punjabi, Pakhtoon, and Muhajir, all of whom belong to different social classes. This marginalised society is depicted so well in *The Year of Sound and Heat*, where Billoo (Bilaal Hussain) belongs to the upper class. In contrast, Jogi and Natasha belong to the middle class, and Disco is from the working class. Their dressing, language, and way of living are different in various ways. The life of Jogi tells us that he is always under the influence of Billoo, as he belongs to the Elite society. In fact, Jogi's dream of becoming a pilot or flying a rocket never came true; instead, he is sorry to tell Natasha that he is a travel agent (p. 22).

Upon arriving at the airport, Natasha feels disgusted by the sweating people (poor working class) and is eager to leave as soon as possible. She is provoked by the sounds of rickshaws, cars' horns, and the annoying, whizzing sound of motorcycles. Out of disgust, she says, "Something never

changes" (p. 03). This is a very hateful place (Karachi), where people used to live (p. 30). This proves that her temporary stay (almost ten years) in a European country has changed her mentality, and she does not accept the routine life of the society. On page 26, while during the bullet attack, Billoo preferred an Englishman instead of all the local people who were in shalwar kamiz, as they were overbearing, sweating and smoking.

The lifestyle of Billoo and the elite class always inspires the Jogie elite class. Jogi's Nargis (Suzuki Mehran 1995 model) is nothing in front of Billoo's black Civic. Once, when both friends were attending an elite party, Jogi was so embarrassed to be in a t-shirt and jeans, while Billoo was in his black suit and nicely styled hair (p. 17-18). Saeed provides an example of marginalisation: the marginalisation of Bata shoes on the feet of a commoner in society, but not on the feet of the elite. He was wearing a shalwar kameez for the first time since I had known him (p. 49). This concept of dress code is a massive gap between the mindsets of a society. Jogi's gesture proves that shalwar kamees are for the lower and illiterate class only, as the elite class fits itself in western dresses, and if, in any case, they carry a traditional dress, it would be so weird to accept them.

The basic facilities for the citizens of every country include roads, electricity, and petrol, but there is no concept of these fundamental rights in Slums; only the elite enjoy these facilities (p. 65). This dominance of one class of society over the other is evident from *The Year of Sound and Heat*. During the monsoon season, the city became a land of water, and during this crucial time, only poor farmers and peasants suffered. Generators, lamps, fans, ACs and fridges are like materials of war for these people (p. 77). Poor people are addressed as hippies from some other era, and their possession is nothing (p. 81).

The unequal relationship between social classes (Sevelius, 2020) is as crystal clear as the friendship between Jogi and Bilal, as Jogi's papa possesses a Swift car and works in a small office; on the other hand, Billoo's father, who immigrated to the Emirates, has a dining glass table decorated with dazzling silver cutlery and dishes (p. 113). The congested apartments, commercial areas and cafes,while in the west it is so changedwhite, rich, foreign lands (p. 117). The exclusion of communities or classes from everyday social and economic life is one of the main characteristics of Zain Saeed's book.

Identity

One of the challenging issues of post-colonialism is the identity crisis, and it is well portrayed in *The Year of Sound and Heat*. This novel revolves around the lives of three friends, Jogi, Billoo, and Natasha, along with a minor character, Disco. These characters are experiencing a dual identity situation, as researched by Volk (2016). In 2007, when the circumstances of the city were in doldrums, life had become so unsafe that it was a time of depression and uncertainty. Bilal Hussain, Billoo, who belongs to an elite-class family, is a young, well-educated, handsome and good-looking guy. His family shifted to the Emirates long ago, which is why he is an elite. It was the time when Billoo tried to revolutionise the mindset of society. Instead of bringing a change in society, he changed himself. He loses his identity due to his engagement in social causes.

I know I am a coward... it works for me (p. 120). Jogi believes that the only resolution to all the issues within him or society is to leave this country. Jogi is the only character of the novel who does not know his identity, whether as a Pakistani or as a Muslim (Burney, 2012). As a citizen of a country going through tough times, he escapes rather than staying to tackle the problems. As a Muslim, Eid day for him is as ordinary as any other day. It does not matter for him to be whatever he is; instead, he says to himself, Change Jogi change.....(p. 152). The only time in his life when

he gave importance to his own identification was the short time he spent in the West, where he realised his identification as a citizen of Pakistan by talking about Iqbal's poetry (p. 171).

A woman travelling in the aeroplane with Jogi was in a veil. As soon as it took off, she removed her Burqa, put it into her handbag, and changed into jeans and a short top. Changing one's dress is simply hiding one's identification and trying to be someone she is not in actuality (Bhabha, 2012). Playing of Sindhi music (p. 132), being happy on finding the mutual language (p. 187), and, finally, realising that this is my city... my city...(p 176) are other minor elements of identification.

Multiculturalism

Throughout *The Year of Sound and Heat*, it is evident that multiculturalism is one of the central pillar of the novel as Pakistan not only get her independence from the English culture but also the Indian culture as well so, it is no exaggeration that the society of Pakistan contains cultural differences as analyzed by Myers (2020); as a postcolonial country bears both English and Indian salt in her roots. There are many private and government television channels in Pakistan, yet Saeed highlights the BBC as an authentic and central channel for following news or breaking news in the novel (p. 19). The protagonist and narrator of the novel, Jogi, believes that his soul is in Bollywood (p. 53), the Indian film city of Bombay. Jogi has a darling car and his mother named it "Nargis" after the Indian actress from the movie *Mother India* (1957). Billoo named this car the "philosopher's car" (p. 33). These simple names of the car indicated that the Pakistani mindset is still under the spell of Indian and English magic.

We are watching the diversity in the society (Gunew, 1997) of Karachi through the eyes of Jogi. Throughout the novel, when he talked about the streets, their shops and billboards, there are only foreign companies' names, e.g. Nokia company (Finland), Bata shoes (Czech Republic), Lipton (British American) and Pepsi (American), and the only Pakistani company Saeed mentions is of Ufon (p.35). Multiculturalism is evident from the mingling of languages (Myers, 2020). Bismillah Pan, Ideal Bakery, Basic General, and Tip Top Dry Cleaner are prevalent names of every other shop in the commercial areas of Pakistan (p. 63).

On page no. 37 when Billoo and Jogi were stuck in the traffic. He used the metaphors "just like India!" and "These Indians" (p. 72) to express Billoo's rage at being stuck among the crowded streets due to India's high population. Jogi tried to cheer up his mood, using the phrase, *Bollywood Conspiracy* (p.71).

I felt I needed to consume every image of the city. The army man stands at sleepy attention as the school buses whiz by. People on charpoys under the sidewalk trees wake up. stretch, and contemplate how they got there and how there is absolutely nowhere else to go. Honda CD 70s, paan shops, mobile repair stores, fruit waalas, electric wires on poles, maybe crows, Suzuki Cultuses, Sohrabs, masala billboards, telcom billboards, water tankers (kajal eyes and NO FEAR on the back), buses the color of a pummeled rainbow, flower sellers, bunches of roses in arms, masjids, broken signals, sweaty policemen, women in burkas on bikes behind fat man and little children, burnt wires dangling off building, donkeys-things I wondered I would ever see again (p.165).

The Year of Sound and Heat is the amalgamation of both eastern and western cultures at a time, a co-existing vision of society (Sant & Shaikh, 2024). It includes the celebrations of Eid, where people prefer to wear Shalwar Kameez, and Christmas, with parties, alcohol, and chai gatherings. Dyed short hair of Natasha and henna coloured hair of an old lady, the culture of jeans and shirt

and the culture of Shalwar and sooty Kurta, the culture of chai and the modern culture of coffee, the colourful pink topi and the cap, the spirit of south Asian mothers and the American woman more than the American movies, the Sindhi music and the Bollywood movies, the status of woman as Bibi and Aunt, the writings of Dostoevsky and the poetry of Iqbal and; the speeches of Art and the talks about environment.

Hybridity

When I find our mutual language again (p. 187). It was Urdu (p. 104). Zain Saeed, a postcolonial writer, notes that his books contain a variety of examples of hybridism. *The Year of Sound and Heart* depicts the modern era of Pakistani society and its three different classes: the upper elite class, the middle class, and the lower or working class. As the social class is different in living, so is their language (Myers, 2020). The upper class is highly educated, as seen in Billoo, who spoke English; the middle class speaks both English and Urdu; and the peasant class speaks in Urdu or mostly their mother tongue. It is very clear from the book that our society is hybridised, and Saeed consistently maintains hybridity as a fashion of today's modern society (KC, 2021). Instead of using English words, he is using Urdu words, and mixing both languages portrays a widespread picture of a postcolonial society that is deprived of its own language (Amina & Ilhem, 2019).

The single words are: chai instead of tea, topi instead of cap or hat, masala instead of spices, masjid in place of mosque, and iftar instead of the breaking of fast. Azaan is the substitute of call of prayer, Muazzin for the person who gives the call of prayer, khwaja sira for a person of third gender who sings and chowkidar for a gatekeeper etc. few words of one language are adopted into other language and are considered as the words of either language as the word aunt has been strongly adopted into Urdu as an Urdu word, Itar, shalwaar, Kameez, dupatta, charpoy and other so many words are originally Urdu but are used as same in English as they do not have their English substitute.

The word "Bibi" is used for a lady or a respected woman, but it is used in English because there is no equivalent substitute. (The word Bibi is used for the late Benazir Bhutto, twice the prime minister of Pakistan). The author has used the name Disco for a character in the novel, which is quite unusual in Pakistani society and very uncommon, even though its meaning is nightclub or club. However, Saeed is using this as a name to bring humour to the readers or to tell us that this weird name is given to a labour class character by the elite class. Where are you going, Saab? (p. 162). The word "saab" is used for a "gentleman" or a "sir," but it is also used by a driver (a person from the labour class). The pilot said something.....Arabic for God,then in English for..... finally for the rest in Urdu (p. 169). Other mingled words are: juice waala and fruit waalas (p. 165) instead of juice and fruit vendor; women in Burqa (p. 165); and women in veil and Sooty kurta means cotton shirt/kurta (p. 87).

Migration

I got lost once again in plotting my great escape (p. 109). It is very evident throughout the novel that Jogi wished to leave his country and wanted to go anywhere else in the world for a better life, better basic facilities, a better government's policies and a better future where his life is sound and secure, where he has all fundamental rights, where there is peace and prosperity. Billoo's family moved to the Emirates long ago when he was a child (p.10). He asked Jogi to move there and leave Karachi. Jogi, who wants to flee from his semi-halal life, is trying to apply to any country, even if it is Kenya or Cambodia. He is desperate to migrate at any cost on Eid day. Instead of spending time with family and friends, he is filling out his cultural exchange documents for Germany.

According to him, to leave is not a runaway (p. 120). He is wondering why someone from Germany, America, or Sweden wants to come here. His migration documents are 'the most important papers in the world' (p.121).

Indians are civilizationally inferior (Said, 1978, p. 14). In our culture, there is a fixed criterion or societal slander, as mirrored by Mondal (2012). From the very beginning of our academic careers, our parents instilled in us the idea that there are only two professions: to be an engineer or a doctor. However, in a Western country, there are 'grandest dreams' (p. 148). Natasha, who is an artist. She is also a photographer who believes that if she leaves, she could find better education and opportunities, as she has minimal opportunities here (Chen, 2021). Her ideas are not different from Jogi's; there are several ways to flee (p. 56).

Findings

The critical analysis of the novel displays the post-colonial society of Karachi. Karachi is characterised by marginalisation, multiculturalism, and immigration due to a large population of inhabitants, as well as the interests of migrants' generation who want to migrate to Europe or America for better opportunities and a better livelihood. These aspects of post-colonial society dominate in *The Year of Sound and Heat*, which is the social structure of the novel.

The research also finds that in the post-colonial society of the novel, hybridity plays an important role. Whether outside or at home, and in almost every class of society, individuals commonly use two or three languages as a symbol of modern society's fashion.

The study demonstrates that identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, migration, and marginalisation are the core issues of post-colonial societies. Saeed throws light on the lives of postcolonial individuals through his characters (Biloo, Jogi, and Natasha), who are suffering from these issues intentionally or unintentionally.

Conclusion

From the analysis of Zain Saeed's *The Year of Sound and Heat* and according to the notions of Edward Said's post-colonialism, it is concluded that almost every character of the novel is going through the issues of identity, hybridity, multiculturalism, culture, migration, and marginalisation developed from the time of independence, and the present generation has inherited them. In the twenty-first century (2007 to 2017), it is clear that postcolonial societies are still under the spell of colonisation.

A colonial method of close reading, along with the post-colonial theory proposed by Said, the study also analyses the political and social issues of identity, hybridisation, multiculturalism, marginalisation, and migration, as seen in the case of Jogi, who believes that migration is the only elixir to his and society's problems. Biloo, who was mentioned during the time of his parents' migration to the Emirates, is a symbol of multiculturalism and hybridity. Natasha, who has lost her identity and wants to escape reality and Disco, is a perfect example of marginalisation as a poor delivery boy of Karachi's elite society.

Zain Saeed deserves praise for his endless endeavour to expose and portray the characteristics of post-colonialism in the life of a layman through the lens of actual historical events in Pakistani society. For this reason, he abandons his main ideas to reveal the details of political and social hegemony that caused a disease in society and how people tackled and overcame it, keeping the characteristics of post-colonialism alive.

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