



Depicting Cultural Clash and Quest for Identity in Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist*

تصوير الصدام الثقافي والبحث عن الهوية في رواية كونزرو الانطباعية

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الملخص:

يناقش هذا البحث موضوع العرق والهوية والتهجين في رواية الانطباعية باعتبار هذه الموضوعات إرثاً من الاستعمار ويناقش الصراع الثقافي بين المستعمر والمستعمّر وكيف أثر هذا الصراع في البحث عن هوية بطل الرواية في حقبة ما بعد الاستعمار. يُستخدم البحث نهج ونظريات ما بعد الاستعمار لمناقشة الموضوعات المذكورة انفاً. كما يناقش البحث كيف يؤثر التهجين الثقافي وتجارب الشتات على محاولة بطل الرواية لبناء هويته وكيف أن محاولات بطل الرواية لبناء هويته كبحت جماعها نتيجة القيم الثقافية المتناقضة المكتظة في ذهنه بسبب تلقين المستعمر. يجادل البحث أنه من خلال تصوير الصراع الثقافي بين المستعمر والمستعمّر، أراد كونزرو أن يفكك التلقين العنصري الذي يدفع الهنود إلى محاكاة ثقافة المستعمرين واستيعاب وتمثل القيم البريطانية. من خلال تصوير مآزق البطل والحوادث الفضيعة التي تعرض لها، يقاوم كونزرو تراتبية السلطة القمعية الموروثة في المجتمع الهندي. كما أنه يحاول محو التأثير الشائن للاستعمار الذي يشوه الهوية الهندية في حقبة ما بعد الاستقلال ويوقع الهنود في شركها. لقد قام كونزرو بتخليص بطل الرواية، بران ناثان، من الحدود المتفق عليها في المنزل والمجتمع والأمة وعلى مستوى الفرد ودفعه إلى تبني هويات مزيفة. من خلال بطل الرواية، يؤكد كونزرو على أهمية دمج الهويات والحدود واختلاطها في هوية وحدود واحدة، لكن كونزرو نفسه واجه بعض التحديات التي أعاقت تحقيق حلمه في البلدان الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصراع الثقافي، التهجين، نظرية الهوية بعد الاستعمار، البحث عن الهوية، المحاكاة.

Abstract:

The paper interrogates race, identity, and hybridity in *The Impressionist* as legacies of colonialism. It uses the post-colonial approach to discuss these related topics. It deals with the cultural clash between the colonizer and the colonized and the quest for identity in the postcolonial era. It shows how hybridity and diasporic experiences affect the protagonist's attempt to construct his identity. It argues how the protagonist's attempts to construct his identity are hampered by the incongruous cultural values crammed in his mind by the colonizer's indoctrination. It argues that through depicting the cultural clash between the colonizer and colonized, dismantles the racist indoctrination that prompts Indians to ape the colonizers' culture and internalize the British values. Through portraying the protagonist's predicaments and the horrendous incidents the protagonist has undergone, Kunzru challenges the oppressive power structures inherited in Indian society. He also attempts to expunge the nefarious impact of colonialism that maims Indian identity in the post-independence era and entangles Indians in its snare. Kunzru has denuded his protagonist, Pran Nathan, of the definite boundary of society, home, nation, and individuality and provoked him to embrace fake identities. Through, Kunzru stresses the importance of blurring and intermingling identities and boundaries into a single identity and boundary but he himself has encountered some challenges that have impeded achieving his dream in the foreign countries.

Keywords: Cultural Clash, Hybridity, Post-colonial Identity Theory, Quest for Identity, Mimicry.

Introduction

British colonizers indoctrinate the indigenous people with the colonial culture which valorizes the white complexion and vilifies

colored one. They consider their culture the most viable benchmark to gauge other cultures. They ingrained in the minds of the colonized that white complexion symbolizes superiority, civilization, and goodness while black color symbolizes inferiority, backwardness, and evil.

They deliberately shaped the identity of the colonized. The colonized internalized this racist colonial indoctrination that relegated them to the fringe of society.

Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* is the first novel that was published in 2002. It deals with the life of the protagonist, Pran Nath, who struggles to chisel his identity first in the local set up and then at the global level. It deals with the shifting identity and the problems of hybridity in the colonial and postcolonial setup. It interlinks *The Impressionist* with Forster's *A Passage to India*, Kipling's *Kim*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Hence, the novel can be read as a counter-discourse to the earlier canonical literary works that extol the colonizer's culture and disparage the culture of the indigenous people in order to undermine the imperial construction of race and identity. It reveals how British colonialism foisted the claim of superiority over Indians and how it impinged upon the Indian culture and turned it into a hybridized culture.

The title of the novel, *The Impressionist*, hints at the protagonist's transformative nature of identity. *The Impressions* is divided into seven parts which unveil the development of the life of the protagonist Pran Nath Razdan. All the parts are named after the personality and the identity acquired by the protagonist. The first is Pran Nath, the second is Rukhsana, the third is Robert/Chandra, the fourth is White Boy, the fifth is Pretty Bobby, the sixth is Jonathon Bridgeman, and the last is The Impressionist. Pran's transient transformations happen as a response to the different situations and circumstances he is placed. Each transformation creates an impression that reinforces his transitory identity.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Post-colonial Identity Theory

The concept of identity is discussed from the traditional and postcolonial perspectives. Traditional theorists like Erik Erikson see identity as stable and fixed. An individual forms his or her identity according to specific boundaries and categories during the period of adolescence. Once it is formed it remains fixed. Postcolonial theorists see identity as fluid and changing. This paper explains how liminality, hybridity, and mimicry predetermine the

character of Pran Nath. The question that is often posited is whether one's identity is stable and unchanging. Post-colonial theorists see identity as fluid, unstable and constantly changing in the course of one's life. In his masterpiece, *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha asserts that "identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product" (73). An individual adopts different identities, shifting from one identity to another in order to adjust to the current circumstances and needs. Frantz Fanon also sees identity as changing. He opines "In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon 229). In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said avers that "[n]o one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind" (407). Said's statement shows that identity is in flux. The postcolonial discourse asserts that identity is formed through the relationship of the self and the Other, "the existence of the Other gives the self-meaning" (Karkaba 93). The negotiation between the Self and the Other leads to the formation of a hybrid identity that resides in a liminal space. Liminality designates the space, both literal and metaphorical, which is "in-between". The liminal space is the inevitable result of the conflict between the colonizer's hegemonic discourse and the colonized indigenous culture. The native people want to retain some of the attributes of their indigenous culture and at the same time, they ingrain some of the attributes of the colonizer's hegemonic culture. Hence, they experience double consciousness. Some postcolonial writers and critics like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak dissect the concept of liminality and consider it an essential element in forming one's identity.

2.2. Hybridity and Liminality in *The Impressionist*

Hybridity results from the amalgamation of races. It can be the result of miscegenation, racial intermarriages, and cultural contact. Ashcroft asserts that hybridity refers "to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (108). In the colonial discourse, hybridity has a

negative connotation. The colonizers see hybrids as a threat to their superior race and culture. So, they cultivate the hybrids in order to accost the Eurocentric culture. In the postcolonial discourse, hybridity gains a positive connotation. Homi Bhabha sees hybridity as a useful experience that enriches the life of an individual. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha also stresses the importance of the mutual dependence of the colonizer and the colonized within the construction of a shared, mixed identity (68).

Closely related to liminality and hybridity is the concept of mimicry. The colonizer imposes his culture and education on colonial subjects which leads to creating 'mimic men' as Homi Bhabha called them. Bhabha here embraces the definition of hybrids by T. B. Macaulay from 1835: "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect" (128). He further explains the hybrids' penchant to ape the dominant culture, "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). However, this mimicry results in creating an ironic compromise as the hybrids pretend to digest the hegemonic culture but they can't camouflage or expunge the remnant of their original culture. Ashcroft points out that the borderline between mimicry and mockery is often very unclear. Bhabha tersely illustrates the contrast between "being English and being Anglicized" (128). The hybrids are impotent to challenge the ensuing border-line and leap beyond it in order to fully embrace Englishness. Hence, they acquire a blurred identity that oscillates between the two disparate cultures.

Children of biracial origin were rejected by both Indian and English people because they belonged to the liminal space. They were stigmatized by many Indians as, "half-baked bread" (41). Pran's family wants to promote racial homogeneity because they consider their lineage within the Brahman caste as the most superior race or cast in India. Kunzru points out that "Blood is important. As Kashmiri Pandits, the Razdans belong to one of the highest and most exclusive castes in all Hindustan ... The

Pandits are known for their intelligence and culture" (18).

In his paper entitled "Crossing the Borders of the Body Politic after 9/11: The Virus Metaphor and Aut immunity in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*", Liao shows that "*The Impressionist* follows the journey of a half-English and half-Indian boy who takes on several different names and identities to survive in British-controlled India" (53). Sehnalová also explains that "The story of the *Impressionist* depicts the literal and metaphorical journey of a young Indian boy, Pran Nath, who, due to various unforeseen incidents, twists and reversals of fortune, is forced to transform his identity to be able to fit into the new circumstances and environments" (23).

3. Analysis of Cultural Clash and Identity Formation in *The Impressionist*

The Impressionist interrogates the cultural clash between the colonizers and the colonized that affects the protagonist's attempt to build his identity. It presents the cultural clash as a complicated phenomenon because the colonizer aims to control the colonized. Sundnes here asserts that *The Impressionist* is divided into two sections, "one discussing colonialism and one discussing personal and cultural identity in the novel" (22). The Britishers aim to extol their culture and obliterate the culture, dignity, and identity of the indigenous people. They imposed their culture on the colonized in order to hybridize the identity of the indigenous people.

3.1. Pran's Initial Identity and Crisis

The protagonist of the novel, Pran Nath, is born into a Brahman Indian family. The maid Anjali reveals that he is the result of a sexual encounter between an Indian girl, Amrita, and "a pearl-skinned" (12) British man, Ronald Forrester who works as an officer in India who was perished due to a massive flood. Anjali presents him as a "bastard child of a casteless, filth-eating, left-and-right-hand- confusing Englishman" (37). Amrita is married to Amar Nath Razdan, a Kashmiri Pandit and a court pleader of Agra. The couple has a new baby, Pran Nath, but Amrita immediately dies after his birth. Pran is deprived of his mother. His father showers with his love and affection but when his real parentage is disclosed, Pran is tossed into the street by his father and family. His community considers him a pariah and an

outcast. This revelation turns his life upside down because people see him as an illegitimate child. The novel foreshadows Pran's miserable life and changing identity through the astrologist's chart which "was strange and frightening. The stars had contorted themselves, wrung themselves into a frightening shape" (26). Here Kunzru questions the biased treatment Pran receives from his society. By doing so, he wants to challenge the established binary- British/ Indians (to be more specific Anglo-Indians).

Pran Nath is proud of his white skin. Kunzru comments on Pran's complexion by stating that it is "not brown, or even wheaten colored, but white. Pran's skin is a source of pride for everyone. Its whiteness is not the nasty blue-blotched color of a fresh-off-the-boat Angrezi or the greyish pallor of a dying person, but a perfect milky hue, like that of the marble the craftsmen chip into ornate screens down by the Tajganj. Kashmiris come from the mountains and are always fair, but Pran Nath's color is exceptional. It is proof, cluck the aunties, of the family's superior blood. Blood is important" (18). But Pran becomes a victim because of his mixed blood. Kunzru dubs him 'half-baked' (41), 'blackie-white' (44) or 'half-and-half' (50). He "loses his claim to a definable position within the capitalist social framework citizenship" (Newport 130).

In Agra, Kunzru depicts the cultural clash through Amrita (an Indian woman) who meets Ronald Forrester (a British colonial agriculturalist) and saves him from the flood near the Taj Mahal. During their stay in a cave on a dark night, Ronald Forrester has an illegal sexual intercourse with Amrita and impregnates her. Forrester's illegal relationship with Amrita represents the beginning of the cultural clash between the colonizers and the colonized. Amrita gets married to a Kashmiri pandit, Amar Nath Razdan. This marriage leads to a severe sense of clash because the couple has "a white skinned baby (Pran)" (25) who is half-Indian and half-British. The cultural clash begins when Anjali discloses the secret to Amar about Pran's real identity. Disclosing the secret of Pran's real identity makes Amar Nath confused, and then enquires how to "tell a sick man (himself) that his only son [Pran]... [who]

is in fact the bastard child of a casteless, filth-eating, left-and-right- hand confusing English-man?" (37). On this occasion, Kunzru verifies the resemblance of the photo between Pran Nath and Roland Forrester as "two versions of the same image. *This is not his son*. With that, something snaps. His orderly life scatters like an up-ended wooden tray of letters at a printing press. His breath leaves his body in a drawn-out sigh of disappointment" (38). Because of his mixed race, Pran becomes a hybrid who is torn between two disparate cultures. His tragic life is augured by an astrologer who asserts that "(t)he boy's future is obscure" (26). He endures "suffering and loss" (26) of his mother, Amrita that shape his life and identity.

In his article "Resisting Colonial Mastery: Becoming Animal, Becoming Ethical in *The Impressionist*", Price explains "how miscegenation functions as an illegitimate act in arborescent culture, which demands order and a clear filial lineage" (6). Edwards also shows Pran's mixed-identity as

the easiest way to demarcate and separate the people of the Homeland from the people of the colonies and to establish clear boundaries. Pran's mixedness blurs these boundaries as his skin colour makes it harder to distinguish between sameness and difference and his near seamless integration into British society performs this act of transforming British sameness into difference invisibly, without notice... Kunzru's novel the mixed-race figure is a powerful disruptive force, a subject position through which ideas about race, skin colour and the nation are challenged and most overtly instable. (101)

The skin color is a deciding factor in the formation of identity. Because of miscegenation, Pran has a "milky hue, like that of the marble" (20). From the outset, he acquires a fake identity that fouls his origin. His fair complexion enhances his position as "a perfect Kashmiri" (20). Kunzru says in the novel: "Nath is undeniably good-looking. His hair has a hint of copper to it which catches in the sunlight and reminds people of the hills. His eyes contain just a touch of green. His cheekbones are high and prominent, and across them, like an

expensive drumhead, is scattered a covering of skin that is not brown or even wheaten-coloured, but white" (20). He further says: "Pran Nath's skin is a source of pride to everyone. Its whiteness is not the nasty blue-blotched color of a fresh-off-the-boat Angrezi or the greyish pallor of a dying person, but a perfect milky hue, like that of the marble the craftsmen chip into ornate screens down by the Tajganj. Kashmiris come from the mountains and are always fair, but Pran Nath's color is exceptional. It is proof, cluck the aunties, of the family's superior blood" (20). Despite his milky hue and good looks, his skin-color creates a cultural clash in India. His community sees him as an illegal boy due to his skin-color. Hence, Pran becomes an outcast. Kunzru asserts Razdans' superior blood, "As Kashmiri Pandits, the Razdans belong to one of the highest and most exclusive castes in all Hindustan... the Pandits are known for their intelligence and culture" (18). Although Pran's skin color represents his upper-class and "is a source of pride to everyone" (20), Pran is tattooed by the brunt of racism. It seems here that wants to challenge the binary of fair complexion and dark complexion.

Because of his mixed identity, Pran experiences a severe sense of cultural clash. Kunzru states that "differences of race are hard to overcome" (2) in India. Pran attempts to cross the boundaries in search of his lost identity but he faces grave challenges that deter his quest for identity. His migration and his dispersed thoughts are a proof of his desire to reconstruct his lost identity because he does not have "inheritances" (265) in India. As a result of his failure to get "inheritances" (265) in India, he becomes a marginalized person who has neither permanent identity, place or family. His complicated life is a result of his "own marginalization of being mixed-blood... excluded by racial essentialism" (Price 21). He feels that he is not like the other people who have permanent identities, places, and homes. He also considers himself a trifling who has neither permanent identity, origin, house or country. He is "Without any anchor and boundary, he is in a state of fluidity-free to go anywhere and take any identity and place" (Bharti 86).

Because of his milky hue, Pran enjoys the privilege and superiority of the white complexion. He is admired and respected by his family and surroundings. But when his real parentage is revealed, his family and community abandon him, consider him an illegitimate child and brand him the "evil boy" (41), then becomes homeless and ostracized. The novel reads "[t]he crowds scrutinizes him eagerly for signs of Englishness, pointing out to each other the alien features which suddenly seems so obvious" (41). He faces the taunts of a cruel society. Kunzru says: "In his confusion he turns to the crowd, only to be faced with a ring of people who have no reason to like him. The sweet-seller, the old woman from next door, the man who sells dry goods, the druggist's boy – all are smiling the same wolfish, unsympathetic smile... Out of the crowd arcs a lump of dung, which hits him, hot and wet, on the back of the neck. As he scrapes it off, another missile splats into his face. He lunges forward, and a gaggle of little boys scatter, howling with mock alarm. The adults laugh indulgently. Then he goes sprawling onto the ground, tripped by an unseen foot. (39-40). Pran does not know his real father. He suffers a severe sense of identity crisis. He wonders whether he is an Indian or British or an amalgamation of the two. Through depicting Pran's identity, Kunzru implicitly refers to the identity crisis that he himself has experienced. Kunzru is the son of an Indian father and an English mother. Like his protagonist, he was wounded by the taunts of society. "Throughout his life, Kunzru says, he's been confronted by the classic question: where are you from? 'When I'd say 'I'm from Essex,' they'd say, 'No, where are you FROM?'" ("Identity Crisis"). When his true parenthood is revealed and his whiteness is confirmed, he begins to experience an internal racial crisis. His family rejects him and tosses him into the street because he taints their holy Brahmin lineage. He is stripped of a sense of belonging in India. The novel reads. "He does not feel like an Englishman. He is Indian, a Kashmiri Pandit. He knows what he is. He feels it... You are what you feel. Or if not, you should feel like what you are. But if you are something you don't know yourself to be, what are the signs? What is the feeling of not being who you think you are?" (52)

In his book entitled *India The Wasted Years*, Shukla asserts that; "This refusal to accept him, although he is not at all responsible for what he is, pushes him in the dark world of evils" (155). People blame Pran because of his mixed-blood. They actually "scrutinize him eagerly for signs of Englishness, pointing out to each other the alien features which suddenly seem so obvious" (41). Kunzru here declares that people's ominous visions against Pran represent the established racism against the Indians who have mixed- identities. Accordingly, Pran asks himself many questions; Is he a British or Indian? He does not exactly know the answer because he never recuperates his lost identity. Kunzru depicts Pran's journeys in "three main categories: India (Agra, Amritsar, Bombay, and Fatehpur), England [London, the Public School, and Oxford], and Africa" (Sundnes 68). He delineates the cultural clash Pran faces through his multiple journeys. Bharti states that "Hari Kunzru breaks down the structures of the colonizers and tries to say that nothing can be entrapped in a definite boundary...all the boundaries are blurred and everything and every person is free to assume any identity and name" (96).

Kunzru attempts to demolish racism and violence in the twenty-first century. He states that the innocents' sins are due to their mixed blood. When Pran's genetic father is divulged, he becomes "alone in the world" (54) and disqualified to live at Amar Razdan's house. His expulsion from Razdan's house is the beginning of his existential dilemma and his constant quest for real identity. He passes the mountains, hills, plains, forests, valleys, seas, and oceans, searching for his identity. He sees the entire world as his foe because his community sees him as "the evil boy" (47). He experiences a severe sense of identity crisis. Doğangün comment on Pran's identity; "Pran Nath's whiteness is the sum of his genetic history fused with eroticism and commodification of the body" (162). Agrawal describes Kunzru's perspective towards Pran, "as a colonial subject and critically comments upon latter period of the British Empire in India... (he) explores the past through India's latter days of the Raj. From a post-colonial writer's point of view, he is digging the

colonized mindset of mimicry that pushes Prannath in pursuit of an English identity. It is a backlash against racism" (63).

Pran is tossed out of his father's house. Hence, he becomes alone on the streets. He then goes to the brothel in the red-light area in the city of Agra (Fatehpur) to have food and a home. In the brothel, he meets Ma Ji and Balraj (the manager of "a charitable organization" (63)) for the poor homeless. Under the dispensation of Balraj, Pran becomes a captive and endures horrendous treatment. He is imprisoned in a small blocked room and forced to serve Balraj's cruel vagaries. He whips him and keeps him constantly drugged which makes him forget even that he is a living human being. He becomes so vulnerable that he loses his identity completely. The novel reads "something crucial in his mind has been disconnected, and is refusing to recognize the present" (67). Kunzru introduces racism through Balraj's speech: "Normally we don't take in boys... [and] in your case we can make an exception... you will have to do as you are told, and ride the rough with the smooth" (55). Balraj's strident remarks reveal his racism against Pran in terms of binaries: black/white, and boy/girl. After Balraj's death, he was sold to eunuchs who wanted him to act like a girl so that he may serve the gay British officer Major Privett-Clampe for money. The major's sexual assault of Pran is emblematic of British colonial exploitation of the inequity of power. It represents the violence of colonialism that has been inflicted on indigenous people. This enforced sexual interaction between the Major and Pran represents the hierarchy of the British Empire that exploits the natives. Hence, the Britishers obliterate Pran's identity, "Everything seems to have changed. The world is suddenly hectic" (59). Sehnalová asserts that "The changeable nature of Pran's identity follows from the whole impression of the novel where Pran changes his identity in every chapter due to the new circumstances. Each transformation that Pran is forced to go through is by a part of the text documenting the change... Pran is repeatedly compelled to assume a new identity, a new role, in order to survive" (30).

Pran feels scattered because of his lost identity and his multiple movements to different places. His acquired multiple identities aggravate his identity crisis. The novel states "Pran is now in pieces" (63) because his community rejects him. He becomes dispersed spiritually, physically, and mentally wherever he goes. Sometimes, he suggests he could not wear men's clothes because his male identity is stripped by the British Major who treats him as a eunuch. As a result of the cultural clash between the colonizers and the colonized, Pran crosses the psychological, social, and geographic boundaries to reconstruct his lost identity. Though he becomes sad and alone in the valleys, deserts, hills, and mountains that he passed, he still searches for his family's tree. His future and identity become hazy because they are "connected with representation, knowledge, and power" (Sundnes 12). Pran represents his creator. In this regard Bharti asserts that "Kunzru is also supposed as an Indian because of the roots of his father...he is also known as a British national because of the roots of his mother and his birth and geographical location" (218).

3.2. Shifts in Pran's Identity Through Colonial Influence

The second transformation Pran undergoes is when two ladies smuggle him out of the brothel and take him to the palace of Nawab Fatehpur. He was compelled to wear women's attire and a burka garment. In this new environment, he meets Khwaja-Sara, the responsible of hijra, who treats him harshly and enforces to become a hijra, a transvestite. He is named Rukhsana. He is forced to work as a eunuch. His Rukhsana identity reflects the status of a hijra in Indian society. Khwaja-Sara tortures him physically and forces him to change his identity from male (Pran) to female (Rukhsana). In this respect, Khwaja-Sara tells Rukhsana, "We free you of the tyranny of your sex. You are Rukhsana ...you are nothing. You have been brought here to perform a service for the state of Fatehpur, and you will do your duty without complaining. If you do, you will be rewarded...If not, you will die" (77). He is compelled to assume the identity of a girl, Rukhsana to cater to the whims of this British officer. Kunzru affirms that Arjun "was cursed to spend a year as a hermaphrodite conjurer" (68). He is perturbed

by a persistent feeling of becoming a eunuch but this feeling does not come true because Pran has his own genitalia. Despite this fact, Pran is always referred to as a female, "What shall we call her?" (67). He is thrust into the liminal border between masculinity and femininity. But after some time, he reconciles with his new identity: "With every swish of the broom, Pran Nath Razdan is falling away. In his place, silent and compliant, emerges Rukhsana" (94).

In the palace of Fatehpur, Nawab Murad forces him to lure and entrap the British Major Privett-Clamp who has a perverted pedophilia of "the beautiful boy-girls" (81). Nawab Murad wants to lure the major in order to blackmail him and make him abandon his policy of surrounding the State of Fatehpur. Hence, Pran becomes a toy and pawn between the colonizer and his proxy. He is compelled to saturate Major Privett-Clamp's vagaries. He is harshly treated and sexually assaulted. The major helps Pran to hone his English skills and accent in order to enhance his whiteness. He tells him "You've got some white blood in you . . . more than a little, by the looks of you. With training you might understand. The thing is, boy, you have to learn to listen to it. It's calling to you through all the black, telling you to stiffen your resolve" (103).

The Major names him Clive and shapes his identity into a typical English schoolboy. He makes use of the English component of Pran's identity and encourages him to embrace the English identity. He tells him "If you [Pran] listen to what the white is telling you, you can't go wrong?" (103) Pran complies with his new identity as a white boy in order to survive. Like Sehnalová, Edwards also asserts that "Kunzru's invocation of a mixed-race hijra through Rukhsana, explicitly links the history of over-sexualization, criminalization and social isolation common to both experiences and the over determination of both subject positions by intervening, colonial forces" (94).

Pran escapes and heads to Amritsar where he realizes that he can employ his white complexion to make his life easier in colonial India. He uses his whiteness and his enhanced skills to mimic English people as a means to survive the turbulent life and the harsh treatment the Indians endured during that

dangerous time. Kunzru states that Pran's "talent for mimicry, another saving grace, was employed in cruel parodies" (26). Pran "does not speak like a sahib" (170). Because of the milky hue and mimicry, Pran receives good treatment from others. The novel narrates some evidence that shows this good treatment. Indian farmers address him as "sahib" (170), the British soldiers "think he is one of them... How can they be so blind? How can they not tell?" (176). Pran himself appreciates the English component of his genetics and appearance, "the colour streaming off him like sweat" (177). Kunzru additionally declares that though the Indians do not have the power to resist the Britishers' colonization, there is a group of the Indians who hunt an expedition of the Britishers to prove their existence in Fatehpur. Making a resistance against the Britishers' established oppressive regimes introduces a golden chance for Pran to cross the boundaries from Fatehpur to Amritsar and then to Bombay.

In the midst of those contemporary changes, when Pran travels with the other British colonizers to Bombay, he desires to be one of them. The novel reads "He is a trespasser, a black cuckoo in the nest. He tries to make himself as inconspicuous as possible" (179). He resides with the Presbyterian missionaries, the Macfarlanes, Reverend Andrew Macfarlane, and his wife Mrs. Elspeth Macfarlane who lost their boy in the French war. Reverend Macfarlane cleanses Pran's Indian origin and cultivates the English component of his identity. He accords him an English name, 'Robert' because he wants to encourage Pran to identify himself as an English boy and Pran accepts it. Pran changes his identity from Rukhsana to Robert/Chandra. Mr. Reverend Macfarlane names him Robert because of his English ancestry whereas Mrs. Elspeth Macfarlane names him Chandra because she wants to enhance his Indianness. Mr. Reverend Macfarlane is fond of Pran's white-skin, so he tells Pran to change his clothes and wear an "English school uniform" (106). Wearing an English school uniform introduces a new life and a golden chance for Pran to acquire a new identity. Elspeth Macfarlane, his foster mother wants him to cling to his Indian roots. She tells him, "I think

you should be content to be an Indian, which is more or less what you are. It is a fine thing" (188). But he wants to traverse the liminal position and embrace Englishness. She comments on his success in remodeling his identity to acquire a British identity. She further avers "The boy is such a chameleon. Everything he touches, he seems to absorb. When he arrived, he was so gawky, so foreign? Now he has become part of the place" (194). However, her remark suggests that she does not completely approve of his chameleon-like skills that lead to the annihilation of his half-Indian origin. The escalating tussle between Pran's two conflicting identities makes him befuddled about his identity. This instigates him to claim he is different from other people. Kunzru points out "But if men and women are made of dust, then he is not one of them... He feels he has nothing of the earth in him at all. When he moves across it, his feet do not touch the surface. So, he must have come from somewhere else, some other element" (270). His strange feeling can be attributed to his affluent life in his father's mansion where he was excluded from society. Though he exerts his efforts to identify with English people, his body betrays him, hinting at his different origin: "It comes as a shock, as if the English countryside is taking revenge, making some point about people who belong and people who may pretend, but whose bodies betray them" (315). All these show that Pran (Chandra alias Robert) is liminal because of his inborn mixed origin and his changing identity in inimical environments. He is under huge pressure because the freedom fighters reject whiteness and he himself wants to appear and behave like a white man.

During his stay in Bombay, Pran impersonates another identity as Pretty Bobby. He uses his double identity as a means of survival and privilege. Once an Englishman mistakes him for an English boy and talks to him in an intimate way. This incident prompts him to internalize whiteness and transform himself into a white man. But he is rejected by other Anglo Indians. He infatuates with Lily Parry, a white girl but she repudiates him, rectifies his behavior, and rebukes him, "it's a dead giveaway. The two cardinal rules are

never to waggle your head, and never let them see you squatting on your heels" (251). She also forbids him, "Run away, little boy, she says. —Go on. Piss off and don't come back. If I see you again, here or anywhere, I'll tell them about you. They'll put you in prison. No one likes

niggers who play at being white men" (251). She further affronts him by telling him "Run away, little boy" (251). Although Pan succeeds to master the mistakes of his accent in pronouncing English, Kunzru asserts that

They [the colonized] hear an accent and see a face and a set of clothes ... After a while, a few begin to sense there is something wrong, something they can't put their finger on. Were you brought up in the colonies Mr. Best? Rarely does this sense congeal into anything definite, and by then Bobby has moved on. Unless, that is, he makes a mistake. (234)

It is important to mention that the changes that color Pran's, now Pretty Bobby's, identity gradually fade away. Kunzru avers that "Something like this has happened before, but then it was sudden and unforeseen. Now he feels as if he is leaking, all the particulars that go to make up Pretty Bobby draining away to leave behind nothing but an empty vessel. A husk" (258).

Because of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the British prevented Muslims, Christians, and Hindus from entering the city to stop the communal violence. When India was declared free from the colonial clutches, violence was not eliminated. A number of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and the English people had been slaughtered. The novel here states that "Hindus fanatics are attacking Muslims in suburban slums" (259) and at the same time, Muslims also attack Hindus. Mrs. Elspeth expelled Chandra from the house because she thought that the reason for her arrest was Chandra. Pran again becomes homeless. He roams in the street, sees "stone-throwing Communists" (259) and other "men carrying staves, one a long-curved knife" (260) and meets "an English boy" (261) Jonathan Bridgeman. Jonathan tells Pran that he will travel to England the next morning. When they are on the street, an angry crowd of Indian rioters with sticks and knives attack them and Jonathan is killed. After some time, Pran returns to the spot and steals Jonathan's "ticket to England, a passport in the name of 'Jonathan Pelchat Bridgeman'" (269), and an address in England written on a paper. He uses the ticket and the forged passport of Jonathan and travels to the

United Kingdom. Kunzru affirms, "Bridgeman, the actual, physical Bridgeman, is already fading. Someone knew for a few hours only. Emptied and reinhabited. He grins. How easy it is to slough off one life and take up another! Easy when there is nothing to anchor you" (269). Pran completely merges with the identity of Jonathan. Kunzru points out that "It seems to him that Bridgeman and he have always been the same person" (319). In England, he hones his skills at Oxford and imbibes the English cultural values in order to fully assimilate into the English society and appear as a perfect English man. By the dint of his whiteness and the acquired English culture and accent, he excels to assimilate into the English culture and lead a stable life in England.

3.3. Mimicry in Pran's Later Stages

Pran here mimics the British style and imitates the English accent. The novel reads, "He lights a cigarette, holds it elegantly, instantly transformed from a servant to a cocktail-party guest. To complete the illusion, he leans on the wall beside him, crossing one leg over the other. A fashion plate. A man of leisure" (191). He pays special attention to his public visage: "Furtively looking behind to check neither of the Macfarlanes has followed him out, he straps [a wristwatch] to his wrist, breathes on the dial, and polishes it on his European-cut trousers. Now he is ready, his outdoor identity complete" (201). He imitates his mentor's Scottish accent: Kunzru asserts "[t]hough the two look nothing alike, the youth's accent is strikingly like the beard's, with all the prim inflections of an educated lowland Scott" (192).

After crossing a nation's border, immigrants experience identification difficulties. They attempt to adopt the host culture but it collides with their indigenous culture. They find themselves caught in a labyrinth. If they adopt their native culture, they are considered foreigners. They experience an intricate identity crisis that sparks their struggle to chisel a compromised identity. But Pran wants to assimilate into British society.

Pran travels to England as Jonathan Bridgeman, a rich English man who has stayed in India for a long time. He assumes the identity of Jonathan that enables him to study in an English boarding school and pursue his further studies at Oxford University. His multiple journeys are not only to enjoy and spend time but to get his freedom and identity. As an unknown person, Jonathan passes the local and

global boundaries as a free bird who moves wherever he desires and whenever he wants. Besides, Jonathan becomes a free man who "is suddenly without boundaries-neither the boundary of society nor home nor nation nor individuality" (Bharti 85). His multiple journeys are a turning point in his life and a port to a new world. He transfers from a world of suffering in India to a world of luxury in England, from a world of dreams in India to a world of reality in England, and from a world of nomadism in India to a world of civilization in England. Nevertheless, his multiple journeys are full of thistles, challenges, and problems that he faces everywhere he goes. Pran has no boundary to live. He is free to go anywhere and adopt any identity. He has a fluid identity. Kunzru here introduces that

He grins. How easy it is to slough off one life and take up another! Easy when there is nothing to anchor you. He marvels at the existence of people who can know themselves by kneeling down and picking up a handful of soil. Man was created out of dust, says the Reverend. But if men and women are made of dust, then he is not one of them. If they feel a pulse through their bare feet and call it home, if they look out on a familiar landscape and see themselves reflected back; he is not one of them. (283)

The colonizer and the colonized see the identity of people of mixed races as inferior and stigmatized. The Indian class system considers Indians who are of Aryan origin superior to the other classes and even to the English people. Pran, as a hybrid, is precipitated into in-betweenness. The novel depicts hybridity as undesirable by both the colonizer and the colonized. This is evident from the way the director of the school in London where Pran, Jonathan Bridgeman, starts his studies. The director avers that "Each boy has his essential nature... Surely, as observers of creation, we must look upon these boundaries as a good thing? Were there none, the flowers would lose their identities in a hybrid swarm, and nature would be in a desperate mess" (310). He relates each boy to his fixed origin and boundary.

At Oxford University, Jonathan meets Dr. Nobel whom he desires to identify Jonathan's personality. He then gives Jonathan a piece of advice by telling him that "[e]ach boy has his essential nature, and yours, Mr. Bridgeman, is

historical. Surely, as observers of creation, we must look upon these boundaries as a good thing?" (292-3). Nobel's speech about Jonathan's life is a "loss for the boundaries ... lack of boundaries" (Price 21-4). Sundnes also cites that "In Agra he (Pran) is an illegitimate son, in Bombay he is an atheist at a missionary station, and at Oxford he is a man without connections (which is seen as very suspect by his fellow Oxonians)" (62).

Driven by an overarching desire to be one of the British people, he joins Oxford University, immerses himself in his studies, and absorbs the English culture. The novel reads, "Between the petting couples in the back row, he eats an ice and feels Englishness begin to stick to him, filming his skin like city grime. This is what he wanted. This is enough" (303). When he completes his studies at Oxford, he meets the anthropologist Professor Henry Chapel and his daughter Astarte Chapel and falls in love with her. He tries to impress her with his assumed Englishness. He presents himself as a perfect

English man who embodies Englishness in his attire, habits, and demeanor. Though he excels in penetrating into the English society, his attempt to build a relationship with Astarte is thwarted because Astarte repudiates him. Though Star tells Pran that he is "the most English person [she] know" (417), she does not like him and refuses to marry him because she thinks Jonathan is a rich Englishman who lives in ivory tower and is never exposed to the real life of ordinary people. She likes a black Negro, Sweets. But Pran tries to persuade her to change her attitude towards him. He tells her "Star, listen to me. What if I were to tell you I'm not who you think I am. That I grew up on the street too. That I've done all sorts of things.' ... My name isn't really Jonathan Bridgeman. I'm not even – Star, would love me more if I were like Sweets?' ... 'I mean, if I weren't so English. If I weren't so – white. Star retorts 'But you are, Johnny.' ... 'Please, Johnny just go.' ... You're the most English person I know. (416-7). Star does not accept Pran's talk and justification and rejects him. However, he is not hopeless. She also tells him. "I know you, Johnny. I feel I know all there is about you. You're very sweet, but you're exactly like everybody else. You are the most conventional person I know, Johnny... You're the most English person I know" (415). This rejection instigates him to posit a significant question: "Is it too late to change? Maybe he should revert to an earlier incarnation" (418). This means that his Indian identity has not been eliminated. During his sojourn in England, he does not experience alienation and nostalgia.

Jonathan additionally attempts to attract Star's attention by joining her father's, Professor Chapel's, expedition to Africa in order to study the Foste tribes but she rejects him for being so perfectly white and chooses a black man, Sweets who has a stable identity, over him. She tells him he is "wonderful. And he's different. Exotic. Strong. I've never met anyone like him ... You are very sweet but you are exactly like everybody else. You do the same things as everybody else and you say the same things as everybody else ... Anyway, you don't have it and Sweets does" (390-91). Pran is more devastated when it is discovered that Astarte doesn't marry Sweets and she is going to be engaged to the new Nawab of Fatehpur, Firoz,

whom she met at a yacht party in Nice. The only difference between Pran and Firoz is that Firoz is a pure Indian. But both embraced the British culture. Pran's futile relationship with Star shatters his new ephemeral identity and propels him to cross boundaries and travels to Africa with the professor of anthropology in order to conduct a study on the tribes of Africa. He finds that Africans are trodden and exploited and their life was better before the advent of so-called "civilized" Europeans. People began to say, 'life was not like this before.' (430). The colonizers imposed their culture on the indigenous people which negatively molded the life of the natives.

The colonizers attempt to extol and popularize their culture in the colonized countries. This glorification is introduced through Star in her dialogue with Jonathan about the importance of "Englishness" (290) and the superiority of British culture. Price states that Bridgeman "finds himself on the side of the racist ralliers. The protagonist's lack of values results from the ambiguity of his position of hybridity, which he manipulates for personal gain" (16).

Pran witnesses a Russian cabaret which reminds him of his own life. He sees a small man on the stage who is changing various costumes with every turn away from the audience thus changing his identity. Kunzru remarks, "In between each impression, just at the moment when one person falls away and the next has yet to take possession, the impressionist is completely blank. There is nothing there at all" (394-5). This show instigates him to reflect upon his past series of transformations and realizes that the multiple identities he has adopted aggravate his existential dilemma and exacerbate the identity crises he has faced. He deeply ponders over the various incarnations he has undergone in the new milieu and comes to the conclusion that these incarnations have waned his true identity and it is time to recuperate his preordained identity.

When Professor Chapel, an anthropologist, introduces lectures about Africa, Pran desires to identify the Foste tribes "who live in a remote and inaccessible part of West Africa. They must be wonderfully primitive" (341). He then informs Star that the Foste tribes are good and respected people but Star retorts "I thought you

were in favour of primitivism. You are a strange boy! The Fotse are savages...they've never even seen a bath... [they are] poor dears... Most of them don't even wear clothes, unless they're going out" (341). Through Pran and Star's conversation, Kunzru mocks Star's racism against the Fotse tribes. Star's vision of civilization differs from Star's. Though Star is a British woman in blood, she opposes the British culture through her rejection of the principles, norms and values of the English civilization. Her stance instigates Jonathan to ask her: "But aren't you aren't we a civilizing influence on other races?" (335) Jonathan is flabbergasted by her answer that reveals her thinking towards the British culture. In *Writing Otherness: Uses of History and Mythology in Constructing Literary Representation of India's Hijras*, Newport points out that Pran "makes his way from India to Britain and eventually finds personal fulfillment through the rejection of Western civilization ... [he then] returns to his racial roots rejecting white civilization entirely in being embraced by an African tribe" (108-9). Star's "ideas about European degeneracy" (335) and the role of civilization in Africa creates cultural clash between the East and the West in the twenty-first century. Her strident remark to Jonathan succinctly expresses her attitude, "Oh silly Johnny, civilization is the problem! It's stifling us! We've forgotten how to feel. We've you know-lost contact with the earth. We should tear it all down and go back to our primitive emotional selves, running naked on the sands of life! ... it is several huts converted into a villa, but done in a very rustic and primitive style" (335).

Although Jonathan hides his real identity, Star knows it. At the end of the novel, he discloses his identity to her in order to convince her to marry him. He informs her, "What if I were to tell you I'm not who you think I am. That I grew up on the street too. That I've done all sorts of things.... My name isn't really Jonathan Bridgeman" (392). Star refuses to marry him because he does not have stable values, morals, norms, and identity. She prefers to marry Sweets, a black man, who has a real soul and identity. In this regard, Jonathan asserts, "If I weren't so white'. 'But you are, Johnny'. 'Star,

I'm not...I may not be as black as him, I'm blacker than you think" (392).

Kunzru presents Jonathan's espousal of the colonial culture that affects his relationship with Star as a contemporary challenge in the twenty-first century. He thinks that Jonathan's oppositional attitude to Star creates intellectual and cultural clashes. Star sees Jonathan is a rich man and has neither real, values, morals, soul nor identity. He considers himself an elite while others are poor, black, and slaves. However, his colonial dreams and aims have been destroyed because of embracing multiple identities and contact with the Fost tribes' culture. Price asserts that Jonathan's racism represents his "desire for a relationship with an English or white woman, Star, also seems to be informed by his self-interested ambitions and his adoption of colonial racist logic... [and] be more firmly rooted to an established family in a genealogical line of descent" (29).

Although Star is an English woman, she has no English features in terms of envy, pride, violence, racism, malevolence, prejudice, dehumanization, aggressive, snobbery, and jealousy. She vividly attempts to break down the wrong thoughts in relation to skin color. Kunzru introduces the contradictory ideas between Star and Jonathan: "I [Star] know your parents were in the colonies. It may have been tough sometimes... if I weren't so English. You're being stupid... I've made my decision. I didn't want to hurt you... I think it's best if you go. Sweets has quite a temper" (392). Star "thinks that Sweets is a real man who is born in poverty and grew up on streets... [while] Jonathan is a rich Englishman and rich men have no exposure to the real world and therefore have no soul" (Bharti 94). In this respect, Jonathan becomes a separated and unknown man, pariah, and waif in the eyes of the world. He is like the trunk of a tree who has neither a stable identity nor citizenship rights in any place he goes.

Professor Chapel enacts a comparison between the Fotse tribes' culture and the British culture. He asserts that civilization in Fotseland is "at its worst" (337) because the Fotse tribes do not have "the very highest mark of civilization" (352) like the British people. He describes "The social customs of the Fotse" (341) as "complex

and opaque" (341). His rampant racism represents the priorities of the colonizers in Africa because the Britishers prefer to impose their culture over the colonized tribes in Fotseland. Through pronouncing his scientific lectures about Africa in England, Chapel provides his students with a strong impetus to visit Africa and identify the Fotse tribes and their primitive culture.

Depicting the cultural clash "Beyond the boundaries of Oxford" (352), the British people want to reconstruct their identities in Fotseland. Their new journey to Africa can be described as a reflection of their superiority, wealth, and authority as colonizers. Professor Chapel asserts that there are challenges in understanding the Fotse tribes. Those challenges are associated with the "'Fo', which is crucial to any understanding of the Fotse world-picture. Indeed, the very word 'Fotse' is a conjunction of 'Fo' and 'Tse', 'the people who speak/make/do Fo'. Though the Fotse also uses the word 'Fo' to name their language, it commonly refers to a process of bartering and negotiation which takes place after a death" (342). It is noticed that the Fotse tribes do not strive to develop their own lands and prefer to live the life of nomadism. Their customs and traditions are reflected in "funerals... marriage ceremonies (marriage being conceptualized by the Fotse as merely a sub-form of Gofu)" (367). Jonathan describes the "little colonists with their long noses and bulbous hats- all stolen from the camp and brought here to the caves of the dead" (445-6) in Africa. Their arrival at Fotse land creates "many difficulties of understanding" (446) between the colonizers and the colonized.

Professor Chapel thinks that he does not have the freedom to perform his tasks in Europe. He "began to dream of escaping to a blank place, somewhere to which he was perfectly, blessedly indifferent. Africa!" (346). He then announces the main reasons for his journey to Africa, "[t]he idea of actually visiting some of the people... was coming into fashion, and nowhere seemed blanker than the desert lands north of the Oil Rivers in British West Africa" (347). When Chapel asks about the new changes that happened in Fotseland, the answer is "Gofu" (346). This means that Chapel encounters contemporary challenges in

Fotseland because of the Fotse tribes' dissatisfaction and rejection of Chapel's staying with his companions in Africa. His repeated journeys to Fotseland have been announced through "the privations of Fotse life" (347). When Chapel arrives at Fotseland, he sees "Everything was new... soothingly unfamiliar" (347). His experience about the African society marks that he "would spend the vac in Fotseland, taking notes about the people and trying not to drink unboiled water, which they had an annoying habit of offering him, even after he explained that it would make him ill... On his fourth visit, he had the insight that made his reputation, confirming him as one of the great Africanists of his generation" (347). As an anthropologist at Oxford University, Chapel crosses "the boundaries of anthropological science" (399) to study the Fotse tribes' culture. He wants to disseminate the British norms, values, principles and culture among Africans to serve the colonial policy. Kunzru declares that the British government aims "in preparing young men for the Colonial Service... to maintain Britain's pre-eminence in the world" (299). Kunzru also scrutinizes the reasons for the cultural clash between the Britishers and the Fotse tribes. Those reasons represent the dissatisfaction of the Britishers and the Fotse tribes to amalgamate the individual, social, cultural, and geographic boundaries into a single boundary. European people feel that they have authority, quality, superiority, high class, identity, intelligence, hierarchy, proficiency, power, and opulence, while the Fotse tribes have weaknesses in their attitudes, status, opinions, freedom, confidence, ideas, decisions, and authority. Accordingly, Doğangün argues that "Pran Nath makes his transition into different identities is worth consideration as this smoothness accentuates the influence of imitation" (163).

The last chapter of the novel is captioned "The Impressionist" which indicates the complete obliteration of his identity. It shows how Pran (Jonathan Bridgeman) transforms into the Impressionist. Kunzru succinctly explains the transformations that Pran has undergone, "What is static is set in motion. What is solid melts, unfolding, birthing itself out of itself ... And what about Star? He has done everything right, fashioned himself so perfectly. He has

made himself into an accurate facsimile of the right man for her. Is it too late to change? Maybe he should revert to an earlier incarnation. Or should he go on?" (393).

The novel depicts Pran's anticipation of the last revelation that changes his life. It reads, "As the Professor speaks about taboos or marriage customs, Jonathon looks around the hall, afraid of catching an eye or seeing a smirk on the face of someone who knows—who understands that he is called to blackness and savagery by his tainted blood" (359). This revelation happens during Pran's tour of Africa. His journey reflects his persistent attempt to find self-identity. Pran takes part in the English expedition to study the primitive Foste tribes in Africa. The Foste tribes are very angry with the European encroachment on their land and privacy. They have pillaged their natural resources and contravened their culture and dignity. Hence, the Natives kill Professor Chapel and all his companions except Jonathan Bridgeman because they have never seen the colonizer's signs neither on his body nor in his behavior. Jonathan is caught by the natives and exposed to vicious treatment under their dispensation. The team members think that he has been killed by the natives and the British Empire records him dead. Later, he has been spared and offered help by the old man, chief of a primitive tribe, who "Gently, lets him know the worst: that he has been possessed by a European spirit. He can draw the spirit out" (447). The chief of the Foste tribe realizes that Pran is not a European man. He detects the pernicious impact of British colonialism that has been inflicted on Pran's psyche and triggers the identity Pran has endured. He cleanses Pran of the English identity which he has attentively espoused. This revelation makes him believe that he is not a white man. Interestingly, the white identity he has been struggling all his life to achieve and which he finally attains spares his life when the Foste tribe chief tells him that he is not a European or a white man. However, he is leading an enigmatic life. He starts a journey through the desert where "the journey is everything. He has no thought of arriving anywhere. Tonight, he will sleep under the enormous bowl of the sky. Tomorrow he will travel on" (452). He is loitering in the desert

and traveling with a caravan of camels. He is living a nomadic life. Pran really escapes from the reality of the darkness to the enlightenment, from slavery to freedom, and from illiteracy to knowledge because he wants to live like the others. Sundnes states that "the reader does not know where Pran is now or what he will do next. No, he is at least outside of civilization, he is no longer within the sphere of British colonialism and no longer has to define himself in relation to the English or any other conventions" (87).

4. Concluding Remarks:

The paper has scrutinized the cultural clash between the colonizer and the colonized and revealed how the colonizer disseminates racism by imposing their culture on Indians and Africans. It expounds on the protagonist's quest for identity and shows how it is affected by the challenges and the impediments the protagonist has encountered as a result of the colonial legacies that have a detrimental impact on the psyche of the colonized. It reveals that the construction of Pran Nath Razdan's identity in *The Impressionist* goes through three different processes: forming his identity, changing it, and reforming it due to the ambience in which he dwells. It shows his struggle in India and Britain in the early years of the twentieth century to reconstruct his identity. Through Pran's multiple crossings of boundaries, Kunzru challenges the geographical boundaries and exposes his protagonist to embrace different identities. He shows how his protagonist wanders in search of identity and crosses boundaries to settle in a cosmopolitan metropole. In his strenuous journey of self-exploration and his constant quest for identity, Pran defies the national boundaries and travels from Agra to Amritsar to Bombay and from Paris to London and to Africa and embraces different identities, Pran, Rukhsana, White Boy, Pretty Bobby, Jonathan Bridgeman and the Impressionist. By doing so, Kunzru shows how Pran's multiple identities are formed, transformed, and reformed and how they coalesce or vanish in the homeland and foreign countries. Ultimately, Pran is left nameless, homeless, and aimless—like a gust of wandering wind.

Pran represents the post-colonial fluid identity. However, this fluid, loose, and elusive identity does not resolve his dilemma because he is not governed by moral responsibility and his everchanging identity is not anchored to a stable and solid foundation. He has failed in his attempt to construct a sturdy identity. It is true that his stint in Africa has resuscitated his cultural consciousness and provided him with a strong impetus to recuperate his original identity and cling to his cultural roots but it is too late to concretize this revived realization. He loiters in the desert aimlessly.

The Impressionist depicts the shifting identity the protagonist has undergone and explores issues of hybridity and diversity in a colonial and post-colonial setting. It portrays the strenuous journey of Pran who strives for his identity and cultural roots in India and overseas. Pran dreams of thriving in a hostile multicultural country. His mingled Indian and English origin facilitates forging his multicultural transitory identity. He adopts different identities to cope with the situation he is thrust into. His journey towards belonging and acceptance is a quest to understand what it means to be white and British in Indian and British societies. His identity is perpetually in the process of development and formation. He epitomizes liminality, mimicry, and hybridity. His strategy of adaptation confirms his liminality.

The study also shows that identity and hybridity are two related concepts. They are affected by colonialism which impinged upon the indigenous culture. Colonial and postcolonial subjects undergo a crisis of identity. In today's globalized world, the issue of identity and hybridity become complicated. The natives were victims of British colonization which eroded their indigenous culture and ingrained in their minds the colonizer's hegemonic culture. They were propelled to embrace a hybridized culture. Even after the independence of India, Indians were still entangled in the enmeshing of the hegemonic culture and aspired to live in the colonizer's country seeking better livelihood. In the foreign land, they are pulled by the lure of modern globalized life in the western cosmopolitan cities and by their desire to maintain their cultural roots. Hence, they

struggle for their identity. But they find themselves entangled in the limbo.

Kunzru interrogates the colonizers' identity which has been presented as a model for identity in this globalized world. He defies the hegemonic Western culture that indoctrinates the trampled and colonized people that their native culture is inferior and the colonizer's culture is superior. He strikes on the western racist discourse that presents English culture as the only viable model for others to emulate. He avers that an individual can cross many boundaries and assume any identity.

Pran's identity is precarious. In his constant attempt to construct his identity, he embraces Britishness and succeeds to some extent but ultimately loses any sense of self. He transforms from the self-confident arrogant boy the reader is introduced to at the beginning of the narrative, to a hollow, fragile impressionist loitering in the desert aimlessly. The identity that Pran has adopted in every stage of his life is fake. Pran uses cultural appropriation as a tool of survival in inimical environments but it proves futile. Though he appears to be the perfect incarnation of the fluidity of postcolonial identity, it does not seem to work in his favor, since he becomes a rather hollow container, a blank canvas upon which new identities are projected without any considerably stable identity or point of reference.

Kunzru shows how racial identity is tied to the prevalent external perceptions of race and the persistent power inequities between the whiteness of the colonizer and the otherness of the colonized. He interrogates race and shows it demarcates and separates the indigenous people from the British people and establishes clear boundaries. Pran's racial mixedness blurs these boundaries. In this vein, Kunzru challenges the established concept of race that triggers the marginalization and oppression of the natives and the defined categories operating in the Indian society. He challenged the binary notions of race that were disseminated during the British Empire and perpetuated the erection of boundaries between races. He defies these established binaries because they shatter the psyche of people who dwell in the border line under the colonial dispensation. He challenges

assumptions about racial and cultural identity and their concomitant authenticity.

Through questioning racism and depicting the protagonist's quest for identity, it seems that Kunzru suggests that it is ineluctable to have a hybrid identity in a postcolonial setup and a globalized world. He excavates the colonial legacies of racial discrimination and cultural hybridity and shows how they affected shaping Indian identity after the independence. He also aims to interrogate the power structure present in colonial India. He opposes the previous narratives that deal with the problematic legacies of imperialism. In this vein, *The Impressionist* is leaving an indelible impression on its readership.

In his fiction, Kunzru preaches the concept of identity which is in a perpetual flux and presents exquisite multicultural paradigms. He makes his protagonist adopt various identities in order to survive in different locations. Kunzru asserts that the contact between the colonizer and the colonized during colonialism and the tense relationship between the East and the West during post-colonialism led to cultural hybridity and a crisis in nationalism. Hence, he suggests multiculturalism as a panacea for this rampant cultural conflict.

Kunzru believes that one's identity is shaped by one's cultural milieu and language. He sees identity as fluid rather than static. He questions the hierarchical structures of power and epistemology that define people according to their race, caste, hue, religion, economy, and class. He challenges the preordained categories of identities and attempts to deconstruct these deep-rooted bounds. He has cosmopolitan views that defy the operating seemingly impenetrable compartmentalization in the age of globalization. He skillfully obliterates the political boundaries in order to create a global reality. His protagonist's arduous journey towards constructing his identity and fitting himself into an appropriate setting and location encounters many jeopardies. He has embraced diverse cultural identities but they have vanished from Pran. He has undergone different permutations and transcended national, political, and geographical boundaries, and risen above classifications of race, community,

nationality, and religion to become a member of a globalized world where all these lines are hazy. The study shows how Pran's multiple identities are continually constructed, changed, and reformed in order to survive. In a rapidly globalized world, everything is hybridized, and no one is certain of his or her genuine cultural identity.

Kunzru materializes the cultural clash that Pran has suffered during his multiple journeys. He also conveys his message to the readers about the danger of the cultural clash between the colonizers and the natives in the twenty-first century. He aims to break down the cultural, political, ethnic, religious, familial, social, individual, economic, ideological, and geographic boundaries that a contemporary person confronts during his/her life. Though Kunzru is a peripatetic citizen, he challenges those contemporary limitations in order to make his characters dwell in a globalized world. Like Kunzru's multiple journeys, Jonathan's (Pran) journeys pave the way for the other immigrants to cross the boundaries freely.

The study shows that Kunzru does not see people of mixed race as a stigma. He sees Pran as a victim of circumstances. He depicts him as a symbol of the colonial subject who is devastated by colonial usurpation and Indian class stratification. Pran's mixed origin, half-Indian and half-English, determines his identity. He is rejected by his family and society. He abandons his roots completely, accommodates his identity to the environment, embraces multiple identities, and embodies numerous incarnations that present ample evidence of his fluid identity. He crosses boundaries and adopts a fluid identity as a strategy of survival. Kunzru finally introduces the contemporary challenges through Pran who searches for his lost identity. Though Pran loses his identity and position, he never stops his future journeys to achieve his hopeful dreams.

5. References

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