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Evolution of Self: Exploration of Personality Development in Kamila Shamsie's Selective Novel

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Abstract: The persona of Hasan in Kamila Shamsie's novel *In the City By the Sea* is a complicated and multi-faceted character whose adventure from childhood to adulthood illustrates his cognitive and psychosocial improvement in the story. In this paper, we have analyzed Hasan's character focusing on his cognitive maturity and social development, discovering through his life experiences and relationships his idea of self and the world around him. Our discussion draws on Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, explaining the ways Hasan's conception of reality and truth undergoes evolution over time as he progresses from a concrete, sensorimotor awareness of the world to greater abstract, formal operational understanding. We additionally utilize Erikson's ideas on psychosocial development, especially the stage of identity versus identity confusion in his theory and the blossoming of Hasan's ego identity. The paper argues that Hasan's immediate life experiences and relationships play an essential function in shaping his idea of himself and the surrounding world. In conclusion, our research offers an insightful interpretation of Hasan's portrayal in the novel, exploring the functioning of cognitive and psychosocial growth at work in his progression from formative years to maturity. The current research highlights the utility of Piaget and Erikson's theories to interpret literary characters and unpack the interplay of both nature and nurture in comprehending the complex phenomenon of human development.

Introduction

Kamila Shamsie is a contemporary Pakistani writer internationally recognized for her novels exploring the themes of power, identity conflict, cross-cultural relationships and history. Born in 1973 in Karachi, Shamsie is the daughter of Muneeza Shamsie, a literary writer and critic herself and hence was exposed to literature since early childhood. She lived in the United States to obtain her formal education. She attended Hamilton College for her BA in Creative Writing and earned her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her works question stereotypes and deal with multifarious

social, cultural and political issues of her native country Pakistan as well as global realities. Her writing exemplifies her accomplishment as a creative writer and her dedication to craft (Omaishat, 2015). Shamsie's novels are rooted in her Pakistani heritage, unveiling the complexities of existence in Pakistan and the Muslim world. Her works regularly discover the intersections of private and political identities and the effect of certain global events and issues on people and communities. Shamsie has gained numerous awards for her writings, such as the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and the John

Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Her novels have been translated into multiple world languages and received approval and appreciation from readers and critics alike. In addition, she has served as a mentor for younger writers in Pakistan. Shamsie's writing style is characterized by its lyrical quality, its attention to detail, and its exploration of the human condition.

These are some major fiction works of Kamila Shamsie, and each one of them certainly considered a completely unique one: "In the City through the Sea" (1998), "Salt and Saffron" (2000), "Kartography" (2002), "Broken Verses" (2005), "Burnt Shadows" (2009), A God in Every Stone (2014), Home Fire (2017), Duckling (2020), Best of Friends (2022).

In the City by the Sea

Kamila Shamsie's debut novel "In the City by the Sea," published in 1998, was shortlisted for the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. It is an interesting tale touching on the topics of love, family relations and tensions therein, and the complexities of relationships set in the rich and complex history of Pakistan. The plot revolves around the ordeal that the family, particularly young Hasan, goes through when Salman Haq is put under house arrest, which in history the General explained as 'protective custody' (Burki, 2019) under the pretext of trumped-up charges of treason. Haq is a dissenting politician popular among the masses and hence posing a real threat to the dictatorial regime in the country. Haq's arrest shatters their idyllic and protected family life creating deep anxiety in all the members especially impacting young Hasan's mind. Hasan is determined to save his uncle and is willing to go to any length to do so, but he is also aware of his inability to carry out any of his plans. The story takes place in the regime of a military dictator reflecting the country's political instability and serves as a vivid recreation of the perplexing world of a young boy on the verge of adulthood and beautifully illustrates the transformative power of the imagination

(Premalatha, 2018). The plot of the narrative reveals young Hasan's imaginary solutions to rescue his uncle and kill the General. The story is narrated largely from his viewpoint but also incorporates the perspectives of female characters allowing the reader to piece together multiple perceptions of different characters and comprehend their motivations. The novel also foregrounds the reactions of various characters, mostly women, as they navigate the tumultuous panorama of Karachi (Waterman, 2013).

The novel's themes, characters, and style all contribute collectively to creating a robust and well-crafted story engaging the reader long after the book is finished. The characters in the novel are well-drawn and complicated, and every one represents a revealing aspect of current Pakistani society. The female characters in the novel, such as Saira, the Widow and Hasan's lover Zehra offer a wealthy tapestry of views and experiences that resist and defy the otherwise male-filled narrative. Themes of love, relatives, and relationships are explored in some detail in the story through the presentation of the characters navigating the demanding situations in their private lives and attempting to discover a manner to reconcile their conflicting dreams and obligations. The issues of identity and cultural history have also been investigated by portraying characters grappling with the idea of their place in the world and facing their past's impact on their lives. As for the style and structure of the novel, Shamsie has employed multiple narrators and non-linear storytelling techniques allowing the writer to discover various themes from a variety of angles to produce a multidimensional narrative representing the perspectives of different characters. The prose is evocative and lyrical, and the writer's use of images and symbolism complements the emotional effect of the tale. The structure, with its interweaving of various views and use of flashbacks, affords the reader a rich and complicated reading that is simultaneously attractive and challenging.

Literature Review

Criticism of Shamsie has largely overlooked her debut novel *In the City by the Sea* and focused on other novels like *Kartography*, *Salt and Saffron*, *Burnt Shadows*, *Home Fire* etc. Interestingly, one research paper on this novel, Premalatha & Swamy (2018), has analyzed Hasan's persona using Erikson's theory of psychosocial. However, the paper is unable to provide a detailed explanation of Erikson's theory or its satisfactory application to the novel to explore its implications. It simply provides a few lines of summary of the novel, followed by an insufficient explanation of Erikson's theory. Instead of a well-formed research paper, it rather comes out as a rough draft of some initial ideas about this interpretation without successfully and effectively producing an insightful analysis as an outcome. In contrast, the current study aims to fill this gap satisfactorily by offering details on both aspects mentioned above. Secondly, it brings together ideas from another theory, that of cognitive development, to illustrate the justification of our argument that without considering the role of both nature and nurture, Shamsie's portrayal of Hasan cannot be fully comprehended.

David Waterman (2003) has analyzed Shamsie's representation of Karachi as a chaotic city. He examines how Shamsie's depiction of Karachi unravels the fractured social and economic interdependence of the city, capturing the resulting violence and political tensions still unresolved. Waterman claims that the novel's portrayal of Karachi reflects the larger challenges confronting contemporary Pakistani society and that its nuanced depiction of interdependence serves as a model for imagining more just and sustainable futures.

Saleem, Saleem and Afzal (2021) have studied the novel with a metahistorical approach drawing on history and historiography, particularly the theories of historiography by Hayden White and *Historical Fiction* by Richard Slotkin. They have examined the novel, focusing on its depiction of

some formative periods in the history of Pakistan, arguing that historical fiction is more productive than history itself. They claim that "History just presents events of the past; historical fiction, on the other hand, presents us with a critique of the past using the imaginative and creative way."

Sahar (n.d.), while discussing the peculiar use of language by incorporating native words into English, she contests the idea of Standard English. She emphasizes the idea of how postcolonial writers exploit the colonizers' language and use it as a tool to challenge its supremacy by tempering it with native words to represent certain indigenous ideas unfamiliar to the English language.

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development is well-known in academia that describes how people experience a process of maturation of their intellectual capabilities from infancy to adulthood. According to Piaget, people's brain development occurs via a range of cognitive changes; each one distinguished by a distinct degree of cognitive functioning. The first stage in Piaget's theory, the sensorimotor level, happens from the beginning to about two years of age and is identified with the development of easy reflexes and the coordinating ability to relate sensory facts with movement. At this stage, kids start making sense of various cause-and-effect relationships and begin forming mental representations of the surrounding world.

The 2nd level in a child's cognitive development is identified by Piaget as the preoperational stage, which happens from 2 to 7 years of age when children develop symbolic thought. At this level, they cultivate the capability of using symbols, which include words and objects, to translate their activities and experiences accompanied by the formation of mental images of objects and events. However, their thinking is egocentric, posing the difficulty

in considering the views of others valid and acceptable against their own.

The concrete operational, the third level in his theory, happens from seven to eleven years of age, and this is typified by the blooming of concrete and logical thinking in a child. Children at this level build the initial capability of using good judgment for problem-solving, comprehension of language use in real-life communication settings, and carrying out intellectual operations. Their ability to think of abstract ideas is still fairly limited.

The very last formal operational stage in cognitive development takes place from eleven years of age and continues onwards. Abstract and hypothetical thinking are the distinct characteristics to develop at this level, enabling individuals to experience the capability of making use of logical reasoning while dealing with abstract concepts and engaging in abstract reasoning and problem-solving. They become capable of establishing relationships between various concepts and ideas and recognize the relationship between cause and effect.

Piaget's elucidation of stages of cognitive development in humans offers a broad-ranging framework to conceptualize how people grow and advance their intellectual capabilities from infancy to adulthood. In his thought-provoking account of the individuals' gradual understanding of the world around them, he particularly emphasizes the formative role of experience and adaptation played in this process. In addition to Jean Piaget's ideas, another theory that appears very insightful to understanding Hasan's perpetual conflict with social norms and expectations is Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Both combined help us better analyze Hasan's persona with its mental and social maturity. While Piaget's exclusive focus remains on the internal development of an individual, Erikson's theory directs our attention to the foundational function of social and cultural factors in shaping the development of the self.

Erik Erikson's Developmental Theory

Erikson, a 20th-century psychologist, was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1902. After his father's death early in his childhood, his mother's second marriage brought him under the guardianship of his stepfather, who never really wholeheartedly owned him as he did his own daughters. This had a deep impact on his mind leading him to be worried about his own identity. Developing his own ideas mostly through experiences and extensive reading, he explained human development in eight stages giving special significance to the influence of the environment. Instead of seeing a child's development in the form of an automatic pre-determined schedule and sexually biased as Freud's theory was, Erikson's theory was based on the epigenetic principle of studying the role of social experience in personality transformation. He explicated it in terms of a psychological struggle and the individuals' response to certain generalized challenges determining their development or stagnation.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development describes human growth in eight stages in the course of the lifespan, each one characterized by a distinct psychosocial crisis whose resolution leads to a human's healthy development. These stages are briefly outlined here for a general understanding of his theory and to facilitate the readers to follow its subsequent application to Hasan's character analysis in the discussion. These stages are the following:

1. Trust vs Mistrust (beginning to at least one year): This stage is marked by the blooming of a feeling of trust or disbelief primarily based totally on the kid's interaction with their caregiver. A baby who develops a feeling of trust will experience stability and confidence, and the one who nurtures distrust of him will be insecure and mistrustful of others.
2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (1 to three years): During early childhood, the kid

cultivates a feeling of autonomy and control over their bodies and environment. Reception of appreciation from the caregiver or disapproval from them determines either the child's development of competence and self-belief or a sense of shame and doubt about their abilities. An excessive amount of complaints or restrictions from the caregiver can result in emotions of disgrace and low confidence in them.

3. Initiative vs Guilt (three to five years): Children at this level feel excitement for discovery and experimentation of any sort. They learn to perform actions without seeking support from anyone around them. It allows them to use and enhance their interpersonal skills initiating various actions to explore them and discover what comes their way. Excessive criticism of this manifestation of self-assertion in children by their parents causes self-doubt and self-reproach in them, inhibiting them from feeling secure to take action.
4. Industry vs Inferiority (6 to 11 years): Industry here denotes mastery over the environment. During early school years, children confronted with academic demands and social roles develop competence if they succeed in these and feel a sense of inadequacy if they fail. Appreciation received from their parents and people around them leads them to grow self-belief in doing tasks themselves.
5. Identity vs Identity Confusion (adolescence): Adolescents during this stage struggle to find a sense of self and purpose in the world realized through various experiences and influences. Their performance during this stage, success or failure, might impact their whole life. A sense of identity is achieved by teenagers through personal exploration of different interests and hobbies. Here, Erikson's idea of ego identity is an important component of his overall theory; by this, he means the

formation of a sense of self-realized through social communication.

6. Intimacy isolationion (young adulthood): This stage is marked by the development of close personal relationships with others; the inability of individuals to form close relationships may culminate in their experience of isolation. Success during this phase, according to Erikson, depends on an individual's performance in the previous fifth stage.
7. Generativity vs stagnation (middle adulthood): A human being's years from 40 to 65 of age are defined by their contribution to the next generation through reproduction and the society at large through community activities and services. This generativity gives people a sense of meaningful contribution to the world, and failure here causes stagnation making them feel their life lacks purpose or meaning.
8. Ego Integrity vs Despair (late adulthood): This last stage of human personality development ends at death. It is characterized by a reflection on one's life and derivation of either a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction therein helps them feel whole and successful or experience despair if they find their life unfulfilling and unproductive. Realization of meaningfulness at this point garners a sense of completeness in them, preparing them to accept the closure of life and death without fear.
9. In essence, Erikson's theory of personality transformation provides a comprehensive and well-established framework, although certainly with some limitations as highlighted by scholars, for understanding the development of the self over a lifetime. Focusing on the conflicting psychosocial ideas faced by individuals at each stage, the theory offers a rich and nuanced account of the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals as they grow and develop

intellectually and psychologically, greatly impacted by the environment over time.

Methodology

The methodology for this paper follows a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to literary analysis. The primary text chosen for the study is Kamila Shmasie's debut novel, *In the City, by the Sea*. To explore and reinforce the main argument about the role of social anxiety and identity crisis in the gradual cognitive and psychosocial growth of a major character of the novel Hasan, two theories, one of cognitive development proposed by Jean Piaget and the second, theory of psychosocial development proposed by Erik Erikson were employed. In order to analyze the character of Hasan in the context of Piaget's and Erikson's theories, the following steps were taken:

A close reading of the novel: The main contention of the research was derived from a close and intensive reading of the novel, followed by the identification of key events and experiences that shape Hasan's character and his journey from childhood to adulthood. The next step was to expand our analysis through the application of Piaget's theory of cognitive development: Piaget's theory of cognitive development was used to understand the ways in which Hasan's understanding of reality evolves over time and how his experiences shape his cognitive development. Along with that, another theory that appeared to help better comprehend and analyze Hasan's complex characters was Erikson's theory of psychosocial development: Erikson's theory of psychosocial development was used to understand the ways in which Hasan's experiences and relationships shape his ego identity and his understanding of himself and the world around him. Using the two theories together in the same analysis demanded an integration of theories: so the findings from the application of Piaget's and Erikson's theories were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of Hasan's character and the ways

in which his cognitive and psychosocial development interact and shape his journey from childhood to adulthood.

Consideration of cultural and historical context also seemed significant as the novel is rooted in Pakistani's society's representative issues of military dictatorship and political chaos. The cultural and historical context of the story helped to understand the ways in which broader forces shape Hasan's experiences and his journey from childhood to the maturity of years. The impact of memory and trauma on Hasan's character was explored to understand the ways in which these experiences shape his cognitive and psychosocial development. On the whole, the interdisciplinary approach to literary analysis contributed to a rich and nuanced understanding of Hasan's character illuminating the ways in which his cognitive and psychosocial development interact and shape his journey from childhood to adulthood. The data collected through this process was analyzed using qualitative methods, including interpretation and description.

Discussion

Hasan, a major character in the novel, is depicted as a precocious adolescent who struggles to locate his place in the world and reconcile his dreams with the expectations of his relatives and society at large. The narrator explores his personality development throughout the story with recurrent references to his age and development. Even in the very beginning of the novel, Hasan himself appears well conscious of his personality development from the changes he notices taking place in his temperament and approach. Chapter one hints at this crucial aspect of his persona through his own observation, "I must be getting very old, he thought. I'm worrying about hygiene" (3). Throughout the narrative, Hasan is rendered as a complicated and multi-faceted man struggling with his aspiration for freedom and his strong sense of duty to his family and society. This deeply felt devotion to

his family and friends creates a tearing anxiety inside him that he struggles to overcome till the end of the story. Hasan's father is a lawyer, and his mother, is a painter. One early summer morning, he witnesses another young boy, his cousin's cousin flying a yellow kite a few rooftops away, fall and die, which garners a sense of guilt in Hasan, who he comes to blame himself for his fall and tragic death believing that he was "getting so involved in making the kite fly *because he knew I was watching*" (198, my italics).

A close reading of Hasan's relationship with Zehra allows the reader better comprehend his internal conflict underlining certain crucial components of his persona. The writer has shown strong ties of kinship between Hasan and his uncle Salman, somehow contrasting his political passion for Salman's revolutionary ideals with his father's pacifist politics. While Hasan arduously supports Salman's confrontational approach to change the structures of his chaotic country, Shehryar desires that society should change but without any violence or sacrifices. "I would rather live under a dictator and have Salman safe at home than achieve democracy through his imprisonment" (90). Analogously, Hasan's romantic interest and involvement in Zehra Uncle Latif's daughter is likewise an equally significant trait in his characterization. This relationship is portrayed as a complicated and draining one, as Hasan is found struggling to figure out a solution to his dilemma, having been caught between his feelings of deep love for Zehra and her attraction towards Najam and friendly behaviour towards some other boys. This bond represents Hasan's constant fight to define his own identity and locate his place in the world.

To expand our analysis, the discussion draws on the two theorists and some of their ideas relevant to the main arguments of the paper. Beginning with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, Hasan's character represents the transition from adolescence to adulthood; Piaget's theory about adolescents in the formal operational stage marked by their engagement

with abstract and hypothetical thinking is relatable to Hasan's struggle to define his own identity and find his place in the world. It can be seen as an example of his formal operational thinking, as he is grappling with abstract and hypothetical concepts such as love, freedom, and responsibility using abstract reasoning and logical thought. His relationship with Zehra, in particular, represents a challenge to his sense of identity and provides him with an opportunity to test his own beliefs and values. Through his relationships and experiences, Hasan provides a rich exploration of the complexities of relationships and the challenges of growing up in a society typified by its own peculiar social issues.

Hasan's Use of Imagination

In "In the City by the Ocean," Hasan's creative mind illustrates Piaget's idea of hypothetical thinking as he tries to interpret various situations he faces and register his own response. Frequently in the story, he withdraws into his own creative world to contemplate his own responses about different topics and adapt to the difficulties he faces. Through his imagination, Hasan can explore the intricacies of life in Karachi, which can be overpowering for a small kid. He utilizes his creative mind to make stories and characters that assist him with getting a grip on the world, bringing him a feeling of solace and control. As a young man experiencing childhood in Karachi, Hasan is highly influenced by his family's advocacy of democracy and resistance against the dictatorial character of the military. "But we don't like military men" (139), Hasan exclaims when responding to General Jojo's invitation to visit an office. He also receives education from his parents' discussions in the narrative about the history of the country, its politics and military interference therein.

Hasan's creative mind, however, has its limitations. On occasion, it can make him become confined from the real world and move away from the individuals around him. As he becomes older, Hasan starts to understand that his

creative mind can't safeguard him from the real brutal factors of life in Karachi, and he should figure out how to explore the intricacies of the world in a more commonsense manner. At times it becomes challenging for him to figure out how to find some kind of harmony between his imaginary world and the real factors of his general surroundings.

Hasan's Use of Logical Reasoning

Hasan's employment of logical reasoning during his interactions with other characters also signifies his cognitive development. It is noticeable, however, that his reasoning exhibits signs of his childish innocence and naivety. When he hears a lady exclaiming on Azeem's chehhlum that since he was pure, "God could not be apart from him any longer" (100), he thinks about his uncle and whether on the 19th May, the day of his trial, he'll survive the death penalty. He inquires his mother, "Is Salman Mamoo pure?" to which she responds, "No, he isn't." The conclusion that Hasan draws is that Salman will not be sentenced to death. Interestingly, although his reasoning is flawed, his conclusion proves correct when Salam is released on the said date.

The second theory, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development outlined in the previous pages, for readers' convenience, especially his ideas on stages four and five, can be applied to Hasan's character to count the role of society in his growth. Hasan goes through subtle psychosocial improvement in the story as the novel depicts how he manages different psychosocial challenges at each stage. Erikson's ideas about the fifth stage of personality development, identity versus identity confusion, which is a crucial stage in a young person's life, are useful for our discussion of Hasan's persona in Kamila Shamsie. During this phase, humans form a stable sense of self and personal direction by making decisions leading to the cultivation of what Erikson calls ego identity through a process of exploration, experimentation, and the resolution of conflicts. Through a variety of

experiences and relationships, they strive to figure out who they are and what they want out of and in their life. This stable sense of self allows them to become well-informed about their own desires, values and beliefs.

Initially, Hasan is an inquisitive and inventive youngster who is entranced by his general surroundings. He is anxious to learn and investigate; however, he is additionally shielded by his family's defensive case. He battles to grasp the intricacies of the grown-up world, and his protected childhood makes it trying for him to connect with the encounters of others. In any case, as he becomes older, he starts to see past his restricted point of view and begins to foster a more nuanced comprehension of his general surroundings. Illustrating Erikson's 6th stage of development, Hasan is seen struggling between his love for Zehra and her friendship with Najam makes him envious of the boy. As Hasan becomes older, he turns out to be more mindful of the differences in his general public. He sees neediness and imbalance firsthand and battles to accommodate his favored childhood with the brutal circumstances of life in Karachi. Hasan's empathy and compassion towards others are demonstrated in his show of generosity by throwing his maths book for the scavenger girl. Hasan's journey towards finding a sense of self is also demonstrated through his relationships with other characters in the novel. For example, his relationship with his father highlights the challenges he faces while developing his own independence of ideas and refusing to comply with his. While navigating these conflicts, Hasan is gradually piecing together his own sense of identity and coming to a better understanding of who he is and what he wants out of life.

Another aspect of Erikson's theory that applies to Hasan's character is the idea of ego identity, which refers to a stable and consistent sense of self. As Hasan continues to navigate the challenges and conflicts he faces, he is developing a stronger sense of ego identity, which will provide him with a greater sense of

stability and direction in life. As Hasan approaches youth, he is compelled to defy the real cruel factors of life in Karachi, like destitution, savagery, and defilement. He is presented to the city's hazier side, and his glorified perspective on the world is broken. Nonetheless, rather than withdrawing into himself, Hasan plays a functioning job in attempting to figure out what he sees around him. He turns out to be more sympathetic and humane towards others, particularly the individuals who are less lucky than him. In this way, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development provides a rich and nuanced perspective on Hasan's character in "In the City by the Sea." Through its focus on the four and fifth stages, the theory highlights the challenges and experiences that Hasan faces as he tries to find a sense of self, and the relationships and choices that shape his journey towards a greater understanding of himself.

Conclusion

The character analysis of Hasan in Kamila Shamsie's novel *In the City by the sea* provides a rich opportunity to explore the symbiosis of cognitive and psychosocial development as it leads to an insightful understanding of Hasan's character. Our analysis shows that Hasan's journey from childhood to adulthood entails how his experiences and relationships have shaped his understanding of himself and the world around him. The application of Piaget's theory helps us map a series of cognitive developments, as he can be seen moving from a concrete, sensorimotor understanding of reality to a more abstract, formal operational understanding. Simultaneously, under Erikson's theory, we notice the trajectory of his life illustrating the blooming of Hasan's ego identity as he confronts the challenges and uncertainties of life with confidence and purpose. The discussion emphasizes the consideration of both nature and nurture in delineating and understanding the complexities of human development.

Additionally, the study highlights the significance of examining the cultural and historical context to foster an understanding of Hasan's character as a product of Pakistan's tumultuous political and social history. Furthermore, the study also touches on the role of memory and trauma in shaping human development, illustrated by Hasan's experiences with violence and loss and how they have a profound impact on his understanding of himself and the world around him. In conclusion, this interdisciplinary approach towards Hasan's character exemplifies the utility of the application of Piaget's and Erikson's theories to literary characters and how it generates a richer understanding of the human experience.

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