

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature have existed for a long time in humanity's history and have had varying forms depending on the era and place such as poetry, prose, drama, fiction, and so on. Literature have remained relevant and popular for people of all ages or status because it allows the reader to experience something that they have never or will ever feel, moreover it also acts as a window to different information or even worlds. It is also possible to argue that certain literature can serve as social documentation because of its mimetic nature (Busyeiri & Dinanti, 2021). The most popular form of literature is book or prose due to its accessibility; books are more affordable compared to Drama and can be enjoyed anywhere because of its size. Many people have grown attached to books because not only that it acts as a source of information but it also acts as a companion. "Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers" (Elliot, 1896, p. 20).

One of the most popular forms of literature in the modern era is prose in the form of novel. Prael (2019) states that novel is typically a work of narrative fiction that tells a story about specific character's experiences over a considerable length. Prose style and length, as well as fictional or semi-fictional subject matter, are the most clearly defining characteristics of a novel. There are, however, other characteristic elements that set the novel apart as a particular literary form.

Immigration have always been a huge part of first world countries history like America. Thousands of people around the globe have emigrated to America for years in search for a better life, whether that comes true or not is different for every person but many immigrants live in American even until today. These immigrants come from many different parts of the world, from Asia, Africa and the middle east. Regarding Pakistani Immigrants to the United States, the first wave began from around 1893 and 1917 before the independence of Pakistan while the land was still under British control (Moore, 2011).

The Pakistani immigrants brought with them their culture that they practiced even while in foreign lands. During their work in California, Muslim agricultural laborer including Pakistani immigrants sometimes brought an Imam or learned man to work alongside them in the fields. When the men took their breaks, the Imam prayed from the Holy Quran multiple times a day.

(Pavri, 2006) states that while most immigrants encountered prejudice based on race, Muslims from the subcontinent faced additional hostility based on their faith, Islam. Those who considered Muslims as polygamists and so unfit to enter America were among the prevalent misunderstandings about the Islamic faith that prevailed in America at the time; there were even demands for the deportation of Muslims already in the nation. Other Euro-American employees sought expulsions of Indians from the towns in which they worked. In 1907, the Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL) was founded to promote the deportation of Asian laborers, including Muslims from Pakistan.

Islamophobia peaked in the United States in 2001, following the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center, New York, which resulted of more than 500 hate crimes occurred against Muslim in the United States. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). Unfortunately, media coverage that frequently presented Muslims as perpetrators in terrorist incidents persuaded the majority of American residents to stereotype Muslims as aggressive and a threat to their environment, resulting in a negative impact on Muslim rights in the US (Powell, 2018). Many Americans began to dread, distrust, and even detest their Muslim neighbors, despite the fact that Muslim religious leaders and organizations in the United States and throughout the world swiftly condemned the attacks as un-Islamic. In 2001, the FBI recorded a 1,600 percent rise in anti-Muslim hate crimes (George Washington University Law School, 2011). Moreover, the fear of Muslims or Islamophobia is still very relevant and rising even until today. Various news outlet in 2022 still reports of Islamophobia rising all around the world especially western countries such as America. VOA News (2022) reports that there is a 9% increase in the number of civil rights complaints it received from Muslims in the United States since 2020, they also reported the fact that the persecution of Muslims is even worse in China where the minorities of Uyghur are reportedly incarcerated en masse in so-called indoctrination camps.

Identity is an important aspect within a person psyche, in which people have certain ideas regarding who they are as a person and what they should do. Taking it to the extreme, identity might as well control every single part of our life as most of the time we make decisions based on who we are as a person. Hall (1996) states that identity is a process of becoming rather than being, in which someone poses

questions based on historical, linguistic, and cultural resources that have affected how they have been represented and how they could represent themselves.

The concept of identity then becomes much broader when combined with the concept of culture as both of them can rarely be separated. Ethnicity is an important part of identity as human tends to learn and copy based on the surroundings. Identity relates to Individuals' feeling of belonging to a certain group of people of similar nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion is built and sustained via the act of collectively sharing information such as traditions, heritage, language, norms, and conventions (Chen, 2014).

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group. Although ethnic identity is sometimes used to refer simply to one's self-label or group affiliation, it is generally seen as embracing various aspects, such as self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes toward one's own ethnic group (Liebkind, 2006). From Liebkind we can understand that Ethnicity is an essential part of identity, as an individual's sense of self is heavily influenced by their environment.

Identity negotiation, according to Ting-Toomey (2015), is the capacity to compromise between two or more different cultures in order to integrate with the majority population within a given cultural context. In the lives of immigrants, identity negotiation aids them in finding a balance between different cultures.

Ayad Akhtar is a dramatist and author. Over two dozen languages have published and performed his work. He has won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the

Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for Fiction, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature (Akhtar, About, 2022).

The plot of *Homeland Elegies* is about an immigrant family, their ties to their homeland of Pakistan, and the new lives they make for themselves in the U.S. The narrator's name is also Ayad Akhtar, and it reads like memoir but it's a novel. The novel is written in such a way that it blends fact and fiction which creates this some sort of fun in trying to tell what's fact and what's fiction. The novel goes through extreme detail the feelings and experiences that immigrants go through, the good, the bad and the ugly. It explores the fear many American-Muslim at the time 9/11 was happening. The prejudice and hate crimes they received from others, and also the anxiety they have with their identity as a Muslim.

The novel presents the reader with the problems of identity on immigrants such as the Akhtar family in this novel. Although Akhtar and his parents are part of the same family, they have different opinions and stance regarding Pakistan, America, and also their identity or homeland. This difference stems from the fact that Akhtar is a second-generation immigrant, while his parents are first generation immigrants. Different generation of immigrants faces different hardships and problems during their lifetime in the foreign country, and of course they also have different opinions regarding their homeland and current home.

One of the initiators of post-colonial theory is Homi K. Bhabha. In post-colonial theory, Bhabha (1994) carries the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. Hybridity is a combination of various cultural backgrounds within the individual so as to create a new self-identity. Mimicry is an act of imitation carried

out by the colonized in the hope of achieving a level of power equivalent to that of the colonizer. However, in reality the colonized will never completely become like the colonizer. Bhabha further explains that mimicry leads to two problems, namely the problem of mimicry itself and the problem of ambivalence. Ambivalence is a complex simultaneous attraction and repulsion to the colonizer by the colonized (Bhabha, 1994). Ambivalence occurs when people face a culture that is opposite to their environment.

Mimicry is stated as the complex strategy of reforming correspondingly as the other culture that visualized power (Bhabha, 1994, p.86). “Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled –exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human welfare.” (Lacan as cited in Bhabha, 1994, p.85). Bhabha (1994, p.86) borrows the term of mimicry to define ‘the desire for a reformed recognizable ‘other’ as a different subject that is almost the same, but not quite. It is also one of the most elusive and effective strategy to enforce colonial power and knowledge. In summary, mimicry depicts the desire of people from the colonized society to imitate the colonizer culture in order to be recognized as equal with the colonizer. Furthermore, Bhabha (1994, p.88)

As per Bhabha (1994), ambivalence is a complicated simultaneous attraction and repulsion of the colonized towards the colonizer, adapted from a psychoanalytic phrase. He defines ambivalence as simultaneous contradictory feelings of the colonized towards the cultural traits of colonizer. Ambivalence emerges when the colonized need to quickly adjust themselves into the new cultures

within colonial dominance that resulted in the feelings of resistance and admiration of the colonizers and their cultural attributes at the same time.

Hybridity, as one of the most extensively used and contested terms in postcolonial theory, refers to the emergence of new transcultural forms within the bounds imposed by colonization. It refers to the cross-breeding of two species by transplanting or cross-pollination to produce a third, 'hybrid' species in horticulture. Hybridization can take numerous forms, including linguistic, cultural, political, and racial hybridization (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p.108).

Bhabha (1994) states that hybridity is a fusion of several cultural backgrounds in an individual that occurs at the in-between stage, the time where two or more cultures coexist. Hybridity thus gives rise to a new self, a new identity, as a result of the individual's many cultures coming together.

Orientalism in Said's Theory is described as a study which focus is based on a geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit called Orient (Said, 1978). Orient refers to the east in which it can be considered, at least in the past, as a product of the west or occident. During colonialization times, the west creates this hegemony through their literature in which the east is made to be "the others" due to the strange and wild differences they have when compared to the west. The "occident" was seen to be logical, developed, compassionate, and superior, whereas the "orient" was thought to be strange, undeveloped, inferior, and unchangeable (Sawant, 2015).

Culture's complexity is found not only in its varying processes and social definitions – traditions, institutions, and forms – but also in the dynamic

interrelationships of historically diverse and variable parts at every step in the process. A cultural process is taken as a cultural system, with defined dominating features: feudal culture or bourgeois culture, or a transition from one to the other, in what William calls "epochal" analysis (Williams R. , 1977). William states that there are dominant, residual, and emergent parts of any cultural group.

There have been several other studies regarding the issue of identity negotiation and post-colonialism. Shuang Liu (2015) discussed the identity negotiation that happens in first, second and 1.5 generation of Chinese immigrants in Australia, titled "Searching for a sense of place: Identity negotiation of Chinese immigrants". The research was done by doing 35 semi-structured interviews of first, second and 1.5 generations Chinese immigrants in Australia. The author notes that there are certainly wide differences regarding the different generations. First generation immigrants had to improve their English skill to be on par with the natives and also adapt to the culture of the locals. Second and 1.5 generation of immigrants are equipped with better English skill and also knowledge regarding the culture, however the study finds that all three generation suffers from the problem of belonging; in which it means that identification with a culture does not necessarily suggest belonging to that culture.

Rizzo et Al (2020) in their research entitled "I feel Moroccan, I feel Italian, and I feel Muslim: Second generation Moroccans and identity negotiation between religion and community belonging" analyzed how second-generation immigrants, especially Muslims, negotiate between their inherited and acquired culture in Western societies. The research was done using semi-structured in-person interviews and highlighted how their religious, ethnic, and national identities relates

to their daily life and community. The research shows that most individuals found it quite difficult managing their ethnic and religious identities and how they practice them in everyday life.

Meanwhile Alivin (2021) in his research entitled “Identity Negotiation in the Age of Global Migration in Exophonic Novels” examined how identity negotiation operates in several novels in the early 2000s, the novel chosen are all exophonic in which the novel is written in a language that is not the mother tongue of the authors. Alivin used Bhabha’s theory in analyzing the identity negotiation that is experienced by Muslim characters in the novels of *The Kite Runner*, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The study found out that identity negotiation often occurs in the context of power relations and more often than not can be hegemonizing. This idea is supported by the fact that the identity negotiation process is difficult not just at the junction of opposing cultures or civilizations, but also at the intersection of politics and power relations.

Different from the studies mentioned above, this study is aimed to analyze and highlight identity negotiation of immigrants which occurred in the novel *Homeland Elegies*, as it will focus on Muslim Immigrants, mainly Pakistani-Americans. The study of Identity itself is important to be discussed nowadays because the issue is still very much happening among immigrants and people that lives in other countries different from their own. As mentioned previously that many news outlets still report the rise of Islamophobia in many parts of the world, as such the issue of islamophobia is still significant enough until today in human society where it is still a big problem in western countries such as the United States. Furthermore, the writer believes that this study will help people to get a better

understanding of the issue of identity and prejudice that many immigrants and Muslims still suffers even until today.

1.2 Research Question

A. How does Pakistani-American Muslims negotiate their cultural identity in *Homeland Elegies*?

B. What are the forms of Pakistani Pakistani-American Muslims Identity Negotiation in *Homeland Elegies*?

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study aims to investigate the process and reasoning of Pakistani-American Muslim negotiation of their multiple identities in *Homeland Elegies*.

This study also aims to investigate the form of Pakistani-American Muslim Identity Negotiation in *Homeland Elegies*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the narrations, dialogues, and events in Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* that shows cultural identity negotiation of the Pakistani-American main character and his family. Utilizing Said's orientalism, Bhabha's post colonialism concepts, as well as Raymond Williams' culture theory in order to analyze the processes and the reasons of the main characters' identity negotiation.

The novel *Homeland Elegies* is chosen because of its exemplary depiction of Muslim immigrants and their struggles. The author believes that analyzing the

novel will provide a better understanding in society regarding immigrant culture and identity negotiation that happens within immigrants.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be useful for the author, Universitas Negeri Jakarta and the readers of this study. Theoretically, this study can be used as reading material regarding literature. For the author, this paper is useful to increase the writer's insight and knowledge related to literature. Furthermore, writing this work also developed the writer's creativity.

The findings of this study are expected to provide a better understanding in society regarding immigrant culture and identity negotiation that happens. K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, Edward Said's orientalism theory as well as Raymond Williams' culture theory. For researchers, this study could serve as a reference point if they want to do additional research on identity negotiation, particularly among Pakistani-American Muslims.

