

POST –MODERN DILEMMA OF TURKEY IN ORHAN PAMUK'S *THE BLACK BOOK*

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.Abstract

Orhan Pamuk being a realistic writer enjoys writing about modern Turkish identity. Pamuk's novels are intertwined in post-modern mysterious conflicts. The novels of Pamuk have created an intense debate in the Muslim world because of the discussion on the clash of the civilisations. Pamuk followed the entirely newly emerging genre of post-modern mystery. His books depict paradoxical beauty intertwined in the themes of crime fiction. His books are exemplary literature of Turkish history. Pamuk's novels are a kind of microcosm, depicting East-west relationships. In the novel *The Black Book*, the characters find themselves in the conflict of identities. The novel is a mysterious detective novel and has failed detective, the protagonist. The protagonist, Galip fails to locate her wife Ruya, until she was dead. The novel is a representation that nobody in modern Turkey is satisfied with their existing self identities.

Key words: Identity, Modern and West.

Being a post modern writer, Orhan Pamuk's writing is characterised by post modern narrative techniques like unreliable narrator, paradox and fragmentation. These kinds of narrative trends cropped up in the period of post- World War II. Pamuk followed the entirely newly emerging genre of post-modern mystery. His books depict paradoxical beauty intertwined in the themes of crime fiction. His books are exemplary literature of Turkish history.

In the novel *The Black Book*, Orhan Pamuk has provided a simulacrum of the present- day Istanbul. *The Black Book* was published in Turkish as Kara Kitap in 1990. Later it was

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published in English by Guneli Gun and then Maureen Freely in 1994 and 2006 respectively. The novel is a Post-Modern mystery composed of history, detective story and a metaphysical debate of identity. It is a pioneering experimental and innovational piece of literature. *The Black Book* is set in the historic capital city of Istanbul, Turkey in 1990's but sometimes the columns of Celal and nostalgic thoughts of Galip takes the reader in to the period of 1960's. Other than the means of interchanging social and political enlightenment, the novel has an artistic excellence which makes it a form of literature. If one reads the novel, *The Black Book* after reading *The White Castle* and *My Name is Red*, he can notice the big change in the cultural structure of Turkey. The novel highlights the difference between the existence of Eastern and Western cultures and their effect on both the past and present of the nation. Sevine Turekkan says: "He uses new and old language resisters, experiments with language and syntax, and creates a complex narrative rich in allusions, sound and meaning. He transforms formal and syntactical aspects of the language to reveal his mastery in traditionally storytelling and journalistic writing." (160)

The story of the novel centres on the protagonist Galip and his eloped wife Ruya. Galip a thirty three year old man is a lawyer by profession has an unconditional love for his wife Ruya. On the contrary, Ruya is a lackadaisical, once divorced lady and always passive towards Galip. The exploration of the novel begins with the disappearance of Ruya, who: ". . . had written her nineteen-word goodbye letter. . ." (Pamuk 48) to Galip. While searching for the clue, Galip discovered that his cousin and Ruya's half-brother Celal is also missing. Galip concludes that Ruya had eloped with Celal, a renowned columnist, who writes for famous Turkish news *Milleyat*. Without informing anybody Galip leaves in search of his beloved wife, which makes the reader to explore Turkey and its ambiance. Pamuk has given a unique shape to the structure of the novel, as one chapter exhibits Galip's journey in search of his wife and every other chapter is a newspaper article of Celal.

While chasing his wife Galip went through mystifying provinces of Istanbul and came in contact with eccentric persons in Turkey. In the beginning of the novel, Pamuk has highlighted one of the prominent post modern issues in Turkey, which are the migration and its affect on families. The pull and push factors of migration in Turkey has been economic factors, socio-cultural and

political factors. The economic factors were lack of opportunities for advancement, unemployment and low agriculture income. Mostly the literate ones used to migrate to western countries, the things which attracted them were superior working conditions, higher wages and striking facilities.

Pamuk has highlighted the issues in the social context and has depicted the pathetic condition of the families who are left behind by the migrated members. Migration proves unfortunate from the part of parents, wives and children of the migrated person. Pamuk has portrayed the migrated characters as Uncle Melih and narrates his family agony as:

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. Uncle Melih, who had gone of to Europe only to settle in Africa and who after returning to Turkey, had lingered in Izmir for many years before returning to the apartment in Istanbul. Whenever the barber asked after him- so, when's the eldest son of yours returning from Africa? - Grandfather would bridle; seeing his reluctance to discuss the matter . . . Grandfather's "bad luck" had begun when his oldest and strangest son had gone abroad, leaving his wife and their son Vasif behind, only to return years later with a new wife and a new daughter. (Pamuk 8)

Including the other cultural aspects of West, the Turkey used to copy the cuisine of West also. Western dishes and drinks like coffee had become the part and parcel of their daily life. Due to the prominence of the western style food, people made special efforts to learn their preparation. Pamuk says:

Uncle Melih began to talk about going to France or Germany: he wanted to learn how to make European-style confitures; he would find out where to buy gift paper for wrapping candied chestnuts; he would see if they could go in to partnership with the French and set up a factory that made colored bubble bath—it might be an idea to visit the factories . . . to buy up some of their machinery. (9)

To make the expressions more accurate, Pamuk has made the use of ironies. Ruya, the name Galip's wife, which means 'dream' in Turkish, ironically came out as a dream for Galip also. Throughout the novel, Galip is chasing his wife, racing for his dream and after toil he got her but she is found dead, murdered. It ironically depicts the journey of modern men in Turkey, who is

chasing the culture which does not belong to them, they are in quest of something of which they are not a part, and they are in constant illusion and end in failure. As depicted in the *The White Castle*, *The Black Book* again exposes the human desire to be oneself or to become somebody else. Galip has always wished to be like Celal and eventually the circumstances made him to adopt the identity of Celal. Taking the identity of Celal was the only way for Galip to locate Ruya and resulted successful. He lives in Celal's apartment, wear his clothes and write articles by his name. Pamuk here gives another perspective that a person sometimes understands himself after understanding others. Galip, living the life of Celal discovers his hidden potential of a writer. Jonathan Beckman says that: "Pamuk structures the story by alternating chapters of laconic narrative and Galip's neurotic self-analysis with Celal's florid opinionating, which oscillates from low-life portraiture to metaphysical speculation on the nature of personal identity."

In order to address the identity crisis of Turkey, Pamuk has always traced past and scrutinized the historical facts of the country. The works of Pamuk expose the influence of a particular space on the setting and character of his novels. Pamuk epitomizes both a synthesis of and a tension between his Turkish and Western sensibility. His novels are means for understanding the importance and specificity of Turkish modernity and of western revolution of Turkish sophistication. Though, the key argument of the novel remains the construction of modern Turkish identity at varied levels. As the central character Galip is not satisfied about his own individuality. He hates his profession of being a lawyer, and has a strong desire to live a life of a famous columnist Celal. The twist of the novel lies in the identity switch of Galip to Celal, as Galip discovers his true identity after emulating and living the life of Celal. So the most debatable aspect of the novel remains those identities. Galip explores his talent of a prospective writer in himself by becoming the fusion of both personalities. So like the people of Turkey, Pamuk's characters are in a constant dilemma about their identities. Looking at his novels, one can find the juxtaposition of history, modernism, west, secularism and Islamic radicalism.

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