

Oscillation Between Two Worlds In A Pair Of Jeans And Other Stories (2013) By Qaisara Shahraz, An Application Of Cultural Materialism

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Abstract:

Qaisra Shahraz's *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* (2013) has been a story of a girl named Mariam. Her oscillation between the two worlds stands for the conflict between conventional and modern values. Conflicts arise not just between values but also between generations. One generation may have a harder time accepting new ideas, traditions, laws, and cultures than another. On the other hand, there is a generation that can change with the environment and is adaptable. Cultural materialism is an anthropological research orientation first introduced by Marvin Harris in his 1968 book "The Rise of Anthropological Theory (1968), as a theoretical paradigm and research strategy. In the preface of his book *Cultural Materialism: The struggle for a science of culture* (1980) he defines, that cultural materialism is based on one premise and that is human life is affected by the existence of earthly problems". This paper contains all the necessary components to highlight the two distinct worlds that the protagonist's current generation and his parents' previous generation once lived in. The nature of this study is qualitative. The method of inquiry known as qualitative research aims to comprehend the essence of its subjects. Instead of seeking to gather and evaluate objective facts, qualitative research explores subjective experience.

Keywords: Oscillation, Cultural Materialism, Cultural Metamorphosis, Transmogrification, Anthropological perspective, Cultural Evolution, Cultural Ecology, Appropriation of English words, Generation Gap.

Introduction:

Humans do not exist in a world where they have nothing. They have a code of conduct that they must adhere to, we can name its tradition, values, ethics, and basic pillars of society. Above all them, there is something with which someone needs to live with, and that is called culture. Humans coexist with all of them, and they cannot exist without these two things. Human tradition and culture are mostly determined by the country in which they reside. Traditions and cultures are

passed down from generation to generation, thanks to the efforts of the forefathers. Tradition and culture are wonderful assets passed down through generations, but they often provide challenges, particularly for women. The majority of traditions and cultures exist to demand women struggle for their rights rather than support them. These two aspects of any society, cause an oscillation of identity. It is not important where characters are living because their roots never leave them. Roots penetrate in minds of people. This research paper is an attempt to reveal all those problems which were faced by the protagonist of the short story while living in a country not her own. She is being judged not only through her way of talking and thoughts but also because she was being penetrated into darkness on basis of her choice of cloth. The author of *A Pair of Jeans*, Qaisara Shahraz, is a Pakistani writer who resides in London. Her background places her in the 'Adapt' phase, in which the writer attempts to incorporate both western and eastern ideologies into her literary work. By displaying the western notion of freedom in the manner Miriam dresses, Qaisara subverts it. She does not reject Western culture, values, beliefs, and civilization and does not embrace Eastern culture. Instead, she put forward conflicted thoughts and ideas which become the reason for someone's identity fluctuation.

Thesis Statement

Cultural studies of the text show the infrastructure of the society has a basic role in the Structure and Superstructure of the society. Added moreover that how these structures let the identity oscillates between two different worlds. Infrastructure has close collaboration between the Culture and ideology of the society in which a person lives and how this ideology affects the Culture of people from the other patriarchal society.

Significance of Studies:

The purpose of this research work is to analyze how Qaisara Shahraz uses the techniques to pen down Cultural studies of the text. Research has theoretical and practical significance in comprehensive research. People are an integral part of society. They have an impact on the development of ethics, norms, and values of society. There is a generation gap between the two people from one generation to the other. There is a Cultural gap also, between the people where one has acceptance while the other has not. Generation gap and cultural gap have close collaboration because a person from the present generation has the capacity to accept the Cultural value and ideas of the other person from other Cultural values. Infrastructure establish the ideological basis of every society because it has a close association between people's perception and impact. There is a complete oscillation of identity in the short story which starts from the very first part when the protagonist's in-laws see her in a pair of jeans, she was someone else to them. A piece of thread controls the whole story entanglement in a way that it turns a charming, active, and progressive girl into a person of deep analysis of identity which is associated with her dressings. Modesty is shown in the story with the level of dressing .when a person is improperly dressed it means that he or she is not modest. A very beautiful abrogation of words has been used by a writer so that it has so solidified impact on the reader that can't be done with other words.

When the writer uses the word Sharif and Izzat to show the mental approach of the person, from the researcher's point of view is beautifully done. The word metamorphosis means when a character change from one form to another means it can be done from personality, value, role, and identity. Transmogrification has the same meaning in addition to metamorphosis, a change in one's mental approach.

Research Questions:

The present research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does society build? Either people around you have much contributed to the building of society and differentiate between culture gap and generation gap as shown in Qaisra Shahraz's *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* (2013)?
2. What are the essentials of Marvin Harris's Cultural Materialism and how infrastructure has been the collaborative factor with Society?
3. What is an oscillation of Identity, Elaborate on how a piece of thread has the magic to change once life and have control over once thought building. What are cultural metamorphosis and transmogrification and their identification in the text of *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* (2013)?

Research Objectives:

The present research aims at the following objectives:

1. To highlight whether people are an integral part of not in the structure of society. To explore the difference between generation gap and culture gap in Qaisara Shahraz's *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* 2013.
2. To explore essentials mentioned by Marvin Harris in the infrastructure of society.
3. To explore cultural metamorphosis and its effects on one identity in the text of *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* 2013.

Theoretical framework:

Oscillation is from the Latin word oscillate which means "swing". So oscillation is when something is swinging back and forth, these vibrating effects are created by a cultural clash between two people, representing two generations at the same time. The researcher is elaborating how these cultural ideologies and principles play a vital role in establishing the social infrastructure and basics of all structures.

This study is going to discuss Cultural Materialism from an Anthropological and literary theoretical perspective. Firstly researcher is going to examine Cultural Materialism from an Anthropological perspective:

"Cultural Materialism is the combination of two words. First is culture, it means every kind of culture irrespective of high culture. The second word is Materialism, this word is the opposite of

Idealism. Idealism means everything is perfect at a right angle. Materialism is the notion that no one is free and independent from material forces and relations of production. Culture cannot simply be pictured as the political and social view of society but at the same time, it cannot be apart from it.”

One of the main anthropological viewpoints for examining human cultures is cultural materialism. Marxism, cultural evolution, and cultural ecology are all incorporated. According to materialism, human behavior is influenced by and constrained by the physical environment. According to materialists, since human behavior is an aspect of nature, it can be understood by applying the principles of natural science. Materialists do not necessarily believe that material reality is more significant than mental reality. They prioritize the material world over the mental realm when describing human communities, nevertheless. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' writings are where the doctrine of materialism originated and developed. Based on a materialist perspective, Marx and Engels provided a model of how societies evolve. From primitive to feudalism to capitalism to communism, they claimed, societies went through many stages. Their work drew little attention from anthropology in the early twentieth century. However, since the late 1920s, anthropologists have increasingly come to depend on materialist explanations for analyzing societal development and some inherent problems of capitalist societies. Anthropologists who heavily rely on the insights of Marx and Engels include neo-evolutionists, neo-materialists, feminists, and postmodernists. (“3.9: Postmodernism,” 2020)

Cultural materialism is an anthropological research orientation first introduced by Marvin Harris in his 1968 book “The Rise of Anthropological Theory (1968), as a theoretical paradigm and research strategy. In the preface of his book Cultural Materialism: The struggle for a science of culture (1980) he defines, that cultural materialism is based on one premise and that is human life is affected by the existence of earthly problems”. His theory priorities material conditions in the society rather than ideas that are too causal in human society. Marvin Harris came up with his materialistic approach in his book “The Rise of Anthropological Theory” (1968) after doing fieldwork in Brazil, Mozambique, and Ecuador. He shows that culture is primarily an adaptive solution to the material circumstances of life and hence people with similar technologies in a similar environment will tend to evolve similar labor arrangements, social grouping, and value systems.

According to Marvin Harris, there are three levels of social systems which are identified by cultural materialists as constituting a universal pattern.

1. Infrastructure

Under infrastructure, he put modes of production and reproduction. Mode of production includes techniques of subsistence (how individuals maintain themselves even at a minimal level), the relationship between technology and environment, our ecosystem and work pattern. Mode of reproduction includes statistical data about the human population in a respective area, how patterns mate, and fertility.

2. Structure

This level of society includes two kinds of economy. First is the Domestic economy, including what will be family structure, what is domestic division of labor, how to socialize and educate, and what is the role of each sex. The second is the political economy which includes political organization, what is the hierarchy, what is a class system, what is taxation, and division of labor

3. Superstructure

It will include all other disciplines which shape our behavior, for example, music, literature, art, norms, science, and ethics. He is not of the view that the notion of ideas can change the world. These notions of ideas have a facilitator role in human life. It gives track of which human can fit their material condition. The significant factor of any culture is mental and spiritual aspects. But these two factors are not enough to determine why the different populations of humans have different sets of values, ethics, beliefs, and norms. Material conditions in the infrastructure of any society always determine the behavior of humans and actions. It includes ideological and symbolic aspects.

All other levels are built on top of the infrastructure, which includes how fundamental requirements are satisfied and how it interacts with the local environment. The structure is concerned with the economic, social, and political organization of a society, whereas the superstructure is concerned with ideology and symbols. Cultural materialists like Marvin Harris argue that infrastructure is the most important factor because it is the point where culture and environment interact. Because the infrastructure, structure, and superstructure are all interconnected. Harris calls for primacy in Infrastructure. Any changes in the infrastructure result in changes in the structure and superstructure, but these changes may not be immediate. While this may appear to be environmental determinism, cultural materialists do not deny that structural and superstructure change cannot occur without first changing the infrastructure. They do claim, however, that if the changes in those structures are incompatible with the current infrastructure, the culture will not accept them. ("Cultural materialism | Cultural Anthropology, "n.d)

In literary theory and cultural studies, cultural materialism can be traced back to the work of left-wing literary critic Raymond Williams. In the tradition of the Frankfurt School, cultural materialism bases analysis on critical theory. Cultural studies is a theoretically, politically, and empirically involved branch of cultural research that focuses on modern culture's political dynamics, historical underpinnings, defining qualities, conflicts, and contingencies. Researchers in cultural studies look at how cultural practices interact with larger systems of power that are linked to or operate through social phenomena like ideology, class structures, national formations, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and generation. Cultural studies views cultures as continually interacting and evolving sets of practices and processes, rather than as permanent, bounded, stable, and distinct entities. Cultural studies cover a wide spectrum of theoretical and methodological viewpoints and practices. Cultural studies, while separate from cultural anthropology and the multidisciplinary topic of ethnic studies, draws on and contributes to both of these fields.

The study of cultures was primarily evolved by Marxist academics at the end of the 20th century and was modified by different intellectuals and experts from various domains from all over the world. The study of culture is allegedly observed as multifaceted and can also be viewed as anti-disciplinary. The main objective of the study of cultures is to investigate the sources and powers that help in making people socially well developed. This also comprises a diversity of subject matters that include various aspects of politics, Marxism, semiotics, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and different literary and social factors to examine cultures in multiple and diverse societies at different time spans.

The critical theory of society is a technique that ponders on the examination of cultures and society, to expose the line of dominance and hierarchy of society. The roots of culture is in sociology and literature, that states the major difficulties and issues of society and these complications arises by social amenities and afterwards by a person and by internal factors. The title or expression Cultural Ecology centers on the point in which it shows the parallelism and opposition of culture with environment. And if we talk about the A pair of Jeans it centers around all these elements of culture and society.

Literature Review:

The goal of a literature review is to locate and contextualize one's research within the existing body of knowledge. This is directly related to the study that was conducted. The correlation of the topic matter also verifies and substantiates the research's argument.

This section of the research is a quick review of scholarly publications on the same topics written by some well-known scholars and researchers. The reader will be able to comprehend the study's cortex and backdrop. It also tells us what the research's goal is. Many critics and researchers have worked on comparable concepts, yet they have varied levels of interpretation.

Dr. Sherin Shervani in her research paper Qaisara Shahraz: The Novelist of New Era highlights the details of the writer of the short story A pair of jeans and other short stories (2013). She is the writer of the new era who notifies the issue faced by modern society. She is giving us insight into the society of Pakistani people. She has written her work without hesitation and has clearly described her characters. Her novels are set in modern-day Pakistan, but the characters transcend the period and place they are placed. The concepts, ideas, and themes are beautifully intertwined. Her novels are captivating and fascinating. The author has handled the most delicate subjects in a nuanced manner. She has a natural flow and may elicit the reader's curiosity at the same time. The glimpse into the lives of each character brings the society depicted in her works to life. Her novel's rustic surroundings highlight the intricacy of life in the Pakistani Rural areas and the tightly-knit society. Despite the fact that her setting is primarily rural, her characters have a broader appeal, as they experience the universal emotions of love, misery, sorrow, pain, and tolerance. Readers are able to identify human emotions, and one tends to live through the characters' pleasures and sufferings.

Stenofi in A Post-Colonial Feminist Analysis of Female Character in Short Stories A Pair of Jeans by Qaisara Shahraz and Everyday Use by Alice Walker mentioned that this short story has been written by Qaisara Shahraz. She was brought up in England. She has written mainly about Muslim women who were living in western societies. She highlighted problems, challenges, and conflicted situations faced by these women in western societies. In her research paper, Stenofi explores cultural conflict with society. The protagonist named Mariam brought up in the western culture. One day she encounters her future in-laws in a western dress. And these Pakistani in-laws broke up their son's engagement on this point. Stenofi in her research paper answered many "How's". How do cultural and societal issues become causes of suffering for someone? How this factor affects the protagonist's identity? How cultural and traditional background of the author affects her way of writing?

The protagonist of the short story A Pair of Jeans 2013 is oscillating between two types of characters. At first encounter, she appeared as a round character. Because the story is totally revolving around her. She has undergone complex and major changes. She was an interesting character. But in the end, she appeared as a dynamic character. She changed herself by showing her western side bravely in front of her in-laws

Multiculturalism is a 21st-century narrative that mirrors modernity, in which the meeting and blending of two or more cultures are seen as a sign of a modern society that is open to acculturation. Because of the continual migration process in numerous countries, including England, multiculturalism has become a prevalent phenomenon in various areas of the world (United Kingdom). According to the 2011 census, the United Kingdom is home to eighteen different ethnic groups, with Pakistan placing third with 2% of the overall population. The identity issue is then triggered by multiculturalism. This study uses modern literature from the twenty-first century to examine how Miriam, a Pakistani Muslim woman residing in England, is depicted in Qaisra Shahraz's short story "A Pair of Jeans." This study discovered that the process of hybridity and imitation in multiculturalism might lead to ambivalence and identity crisis, using Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial analytical method. The ambiguity that encapsulates hybridity and mimicry is at the root of the identity issue. Multiculturalism is like two-sided eye money since it combines two or more cultures. On the one hand, multiculturalism will enrich individual perspectives and experiences because of its cultural richness. But on the other hand, it creates situation confusing ambivalence. From the very start Mariam the protagonist seems confused, as she steps down from her home she was conscious of her appearance. This confusion reached its peak when her mother-in-law sees her.

Miriam felt an inherent tension between the two civilizations. On the one hand, Miriam believes that tight pants and a vest short are merely clothes and that she doesn't need them. Despite wearing clothes that are identical to English fashion, she still feels like herself, a Pakistani Muslim woman (West). Miriam, on the other hand, felt that the things she was wearing didn't suit her and that seeing her own attire made her feel disgusting. Miriam perceived her own identity dilemma as a

clash of two distinct egos. When she wears the western dress, she takes on a distinct persona; similarly, when she wears Eastern clothing, she takes on a different identity.

Research Methodology:

The Qualitative study is based on a textual analysis process which is conducted step by step to analyze the text. It is done in a detailed study by collecting data and elaborating on the opinion and experiences mentioned by the writer in the text. The first step involves the detailed study of the text in order to collect the data which have the characteristics of the relevant theory that will be applied to it. Then examine the collected statement and mentioned their relevance to the work. This textual evidence will be evaluated in light of the Cultural Materialism concept, in order to achieve the conclusion. The available critical works, reviews in the literature, and several articles in the national and international press on the subject of Qaisara Shahraz's work have been used for this analysis. Comprehending the conclusion of the research, Qaisara Shahraz's interview published in periodicals and available on the internet will undoubtedly assist in obtaining a clear picture of author's thoughts, and goals and to arrive at conclusion.

Delimitation:

The present research is limited to the cultural materialistic study of A pair of jeans and other stories 2013 by Qaisara Shahraz. It has a major focus on the thought development process in any society. How people evolve out of heterogenous culture. What are the levels of acceptance of those people? People from patriarchal societies are unable to accept new trends and new versions in any aspect, whether it may be materialistic, physical, socially, culturally and in education. This research has durable interference in the field of culture. Firstly it provides us with a detailed picture of the culture, values, and norms of patriarchal society. Then it gives us significant elements which were affected by these values, norms, and beliefs. A person's whole life is being damaged by these aspects.

Data Analysis:

Research has major concern about the role of culture in the Intergenerational conflict and how these cultural values made a character to been oscillate regularly between the two worlds, one which she finds not bad at all and the other been titled as bad by the other, the word other mean people of same patriarchal society from Pakistan, which she is also part but have the more optimistic point view regarding every situation.

In short, it is the story of a girl named Mariam who has been on a trip with her friends but on the very same day her in-laws are going to visit her, so she needs to be at home so early so that her in-laws would not see her in the clothes which she think might be questionable in their eyes. When she came home she has been encountered by her in-laws in the same tight jeans and tank top which she want to change, on seeing this her in-laws break the engagement with their son.

In the story, there is a continuous collaboration between the Oscillation of thoughts and cultural values which are ingrained in the mind of traditionalists to whom everything is bad and offensive to their set rules and principles, which are not been changed through their stay in the western society for so long ever they got developed a hatred attitude towards those aspects. There are repetitive fluctuations in the thoughts and ideas of the characters of the short story which is better to be called as oscillating the notion of the whole story.

From the very first part of the story, there is an oscillation of the protagonist's thoughts when Mariam was coming back from a trip and she was very self-conscious about her jeans-clad legs and the shorts best she wore beneath. She knows that her in-laws are going to visit their home today so she wants to be at home as soon as possible before their arrival. Here how beautifully the writer Qaisara Shahraz elaborates two cultural values together, from the same piece of cloth which Mariam consider to be fit for hill walking but at the same time this very same piece of thread will be a reason of shame for her, to appear before her future mother and father-in-law. In the flow of these thoughts, she turned back to her outing and remarked, "It had been a wonderful day" and in enjoying those moments she came back to the present and put more rapid steps to be at home.

There is the metamorphosis of character behavior at the very beginning of the short story arose when the in-law of Mariam saw her in the dress they never thought to be ever seen. The concept of metamorphosis is commonly used in pieces of literature to describe an extreme change in character or form. Metamorphosis can also be called transformation and deals with the idea of physical and mental growth. Now, what is this mental growth is established through the character dialogue and action when Mariam saw and say greetings but got no reply from her in-laws elaborating on their rejection of the clothes she was wearing at that time and the same people left the house in a lousy excuse of guest waiting for them at home.

Mariam was the same girl they were impressed with and now only that piece of cloth changes Mariam into a stranger, a western version of Mariam. But one question arose either these cloth change the morals, values, and ethic of the very same girl or this is the only adaptation of the clothes, elaborated by Mariam in a very optimistic way when she enters her room to change the cloth:

"She looked down at them with distaste. Her mouth twisted into a cynical line."Damn it! Her mind shouted –rebellious."

"They are only clothes. I am still the same young woman they visited regularly—the person that they have happily chosen as a bride for their son in their household".

When researcher focuses on the first basic element of Culture Materialism of Marvin Harris is Infrastructure which stated that Culture and Environment have an interconnected force. The application of this idea is understandable by the fact that a pair of jeans which have the only status of thread for Mariam but for her in-laws this thing change her complete identity. A rapid oscillation

of identity from the girl who is a statue of all high morality has all the essentials of Eastern patriarchal society but now she is a girl from the other world of another identity. There are other elements named Structure and Superstructure that hold the social organic and ideology and symbolism of the society, the very first word from the father-in-law of Mariam is “Sharif” which symbolizes the person who wears shalwar kameez, not the Jeans when he argues with her wife about Mariam and said:

“I thought you told me that she was a very “Sharif”, a very modest girl. Was that naked waist what you call modest”?

The Appropriation of English words with Urdu shows that the writer herself wants to emphasize that society has the title of Sharif for the person to seem modest.

Now this word elaborated further qualities of a girl who is not Sharif means she wants a lot of freedom and wants you lead her life with her English college friends and amazingly with the magical quality of twined their husband around their little finger. But for Mariam these things have a different view, she considers them to a cloth that has nothing to do with freedom religion, and modesty. These are the clothes she needs to wear for hiking that’s it. But the society to which her in-laws belong has the equation of Jeans=Identity=problem.

Now being in relation to protagonists is a problem for the Mariam in-laws. At the end of the short story now the word “Sharif turns into Izzat” is When Fatima receives the call of rejection for her daughter Mariam from the Begum. They have respect in society which is now at cost for no reason. She herself has the view that there is a generation and culture gap between Mariam and their generation as wide as oceans. They lived and were brought up in different worlds, traditions, and cultures Above all the world was quickly changing around them. Pakistan was so far from Britain, but it was another place.

Conclusion:

So this study concluded that A pair of jeans (2013) a short story by Qaisara Shahraz have all the elements and essential of Cultural study either from a literal point of view or from an anthropological perspective. It explains the detailed study of the Cultural and generation gap between two families which have exposure to western society but they still have no acceptance for them which can easily be seen through their act of rejection for a girl just to be in jeans who is ideal for them but now she is a girl from the other world. The story ends with the question of whether her fiancé is going to accept her or reject her.

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