



# Tracing the Predicament of Refugees in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Mausumi Pattanayak<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mukesh Tiwari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D. Scholar in English, Dept. of HSS, C. V. Raman University, Bhubaneswar, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, C.V. Raman Global University, Bhubaneswar, India

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**Abstract**— A refugee is a person who is forced to leave his or her home country due to war, violence or persecution and seeks safety by crossing public borders, with no intention of returning home. The number of refugees has increased due to major crises around the world as the conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan, etc. In Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, the impact of refugees is explored, with a focus on the challenges of exile such as language barriers, racism, financial difficulties and ongoing health of a young couple, Saeed and Nadia, as they flee their country due to civil war and start a new life through magic doors. The major themes in the novel are refugees, migration and terrorism. The advantages of refugees include economic growth, new ideas and artistic impact, but it also brings social, economical, political problems. *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid is a book that sheds insight on the current global refugee issues. The book was released in the year of 2017.

**Keywords**— refugees, displacement, migration, terrorism, magic doors.

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to numerous experimenters, refugees are people who force to leave his or her own country because of war, violence and persecution. It follows a process of moving from one place to another place. Humans, animals and birds are also involved in the process. Starting from the ancient times, people have been left from one place to another for better agreement. As specially, for food, water, jobs, etc. In the current script, people leave their own land for safety, good jobs, education and better openings, etc. It's added with to global issues including poverty, status in politics, profitable economic growth and human rights. Now-a-days, refugees are getting numerous social and provident benefits and the present challenges too. The advantages are increasement of profitable growth, new ideas and inventions artistic impact, etc. On the other hand, it includes the problem of social, economic and political. It increases the population, the demand for food, religious problems in an entering country. Mohsin Hamid was born in Pakistani. After that he is settled in British and become a writer and novelist. Hamid's fourth novel is *Exit West*. In 2017 the

novel was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The novel presents an idea about the contemporary global refugee crises.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The novel is a work of tremendous sensitivity and restraint, according to Omar El Akkad in *The Globe and Mail* (2017). Its relationship to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis was exalted by Time Magazine's Sarah Begley. It has been referred to as a "magical vision of the refugee crisis" by The Guardian. *Exit West* was on Barak Obama's list of the finest books he read in 2017 as a former president of the United States.

In "Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*: Co-Opting Refugees into Global Capitalism" (2019), Sercan Hamza Baglama focuses on the depoliticisation of refugee problems and examines the social, artistic and economic status of refugees in a Western country.

Mir's (2018) "Refugee Crisis" identifies social and economic instability as the driving force behind migration in search of a better life. He sees Hamid's *Exit West* as a contemporary illustration of the necessity of intercountry mobility. Mir clarifies *Exit West's* portrayal of the unfavorable circumstances facing migrants in an unidentified megacity that has been decimated by internal conflict.

*Exit West*, *Pakistaniaat – A Journal of Pakistan Studies* (2018), written by Anum Aziz, focuses on the metamorphoses, migration, and identity struggle of the battle metropolis. Aziz explains how magic realism is used to depict the predicament of displaced people.

Muhammed Salahudeen in his review on *Exit West* entitled "An analysis in the light of global migration crisis: *An international referred English e-journal*" (2017), discusses the global migration crisis and the issues of religions, immigration and refugees.

In "Waiting in Motion: Mapping Postcolonial Fiction, New Mobilities and Migration through Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2019), Amanda Laji offers a fresh viewpoint on postcolonial literature and mobility studies.

Michael Perfect explores how the novel depicts the tragedies of migrants and their suffering in "Black Holes in the Fabric of the Nation: Refugees in Hamid's *Exit West*" (2019). The image of migrants is one of a vast mass, with muddled individual identities.

Under the backdrop of the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, Oana-Celia Gheorghiu focuses on how *Exit West* portrays the extremeness of refugees on both a personal and a political level. In her essay "As if by magical realism: A refugee crisis in fiction. *Cultural interactions*" (2018). The author employs magical realism to depict the calamity of migrant refugees.

In "In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid Mixes Global Trouble with a Bit of Magic," Michiko Kakutani (2017) discusses how *Exit West* is no exception, relating the story of the migrants Saeed and Nadia, who leave an unnamed country in the middle of a civil war and their trip to Greece, England and the United States of America in a trouble to construct new lives for themselves.

Jaspreet Singh presents his idea on migration in "Envisioning Co-Existence: Exploring Responses to Migration in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*" (2019). He states that "Hamid through delignating migrants experience, their hassles with new cultures, societies and responses of natives surfaced out of these hassles provides a comprehensive understanding of the migration in our contemporary times."

Bilal Mushtaq highlights in "Reading Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* as a World Novel" (2020) that "It appears that for

Hamid, the source of irreconcilability between migration and republic is the institution of the nation-state and that this irreconcilability will remain undetermined as long as the freedom of movement is regulated by nation-states."

In an interview with Amina Yaqin, Hamid described that, "Human beings are coming to recognize the vision that nations are out there as empty spaces, they are beginning to work against those vision, whether it's migration of people across places, terrorists who strike across countries, whether it's global capitalism, whatever it is."

### III. THE REFUGEES' SITUATION IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *EXIT WEST*

*Exit West* (2017), a book, takes reader on a psychological trip from the East to the West. The novel's plot centers on how someone feels after leaving their own country. The novel presents a story of two protagonists, Saeed and Nadia, who are left their own land by force and how they are suffered for identity in a new place. As Saeed and Nadia are forced to flee their unidentified cities, their migration begins. The major reason for the departure of the both characters is searching for safety and they try hard to find out their separate living places in the new land. The war causes them to witness their help vulnerability and it force them to move to another place. Their individualities form and diverge from one another. Hamid views migration as a state of being in the world as opposed to only the time between leaving and arriving. *Exit West* shows how identity is changeable and migration is a common way of life. With his characters, Hamid illustrates this as they relocate from their native country to Mykonos, London, and San Francisco. The connections between Saeed and Nadia are impacted by each place. The challenges of a stranger in a foreign country are highlighted in a number of modern novels on emigration and immigration. Hamid, though, envisions a scenario in which migration is accelerated by magical entrances, allowing people to freely pass national boundaries. Many writers steer clear of generalizing migration out of concern that doing so will minimize the emigrant's suffering. However, Hamid gets around this by giving each of his characters a unique set of feelings. Many authors avoid universalizing migrancy, fearing that it diminishes the emigrant's struggle. Yet, Hamid gets around this by giving each of his characters their own unique feelings as they deal with war and migration. We are all time migrants, according to Hamid (2019) and, by way of illustrations, supports this claim. The story of Saeed and Nadia is interrupted by a contemporary occurrence in every chapter. Although they have had extremely distinct migration experiences, any person who migrates through time will go through changes in both the landscape and their

identity. This indicates that as time goes on, an immigrant can no longer rely on their native country to prove who they are, in addition to fact that they are moving.

The characters move between new locales by use of doors throughout the book. Via one of these doorways, Saeed and Nadia flee the war-torn cities they were living in and arrive on Mykonos. Then, knowing that the locations of the doors cannot be predicted, they travel to London and San Francisco. In his book *Exit West*, Hamid describes rumors of doors that can transport people to distant and safer places. Some claim to know people who have gone through these doors, which can appear suddenly and without warning. Every time they enter a door in the book's characters, they take a gamble because they do not know where they will finish up. In order to make the point that some suffering is too impossible to depict in narrative fiction, Hamid accentuates the blackness of the doors. The doors also make it more difficult for migrants to return home because they do not know where they are going and it can take hours to locate an unsecured door. The doors stand in for the rise in migration on a worldwide scale, not just for refugees but also for those who freely choose to relocate. Hamid tells the story of an accountant who discovers a door in his bedroom and steps through it to see what is on the other side. The magical doors symbolize the passage of time and the inability to return to a former life. As Saeed and Nadia travel from their homeland to various cities, their individualities change in response to the different settings.

*Exit West* emphasizes the myriad personal problems that displaced individuals today confront in an effort to shift attention away from the idea of a single, distinct geopolitical boundary, as Perfect notes. Hamid underlines how migration can result in a lack of awareness of one's own experiences and connections. The relationship between Saeed and Nadia becomes more complex as they move from one place to another. While they were complementary to one another in their home country, migration made them yearn for stability, which led Saeed to rely less on Nadia and more on his recollections of his past. Although Nadia's native nation makes her think of a time of war, she grows stronger as she develops her independence and explores her sexuality. As they move to different places, Saeed and Nadia's relationship changes, affecting their individual identities. Initially, their relationship was suitable, but as their environment changed, their desire for each other faded, and they became more independent. They were initially focused on finding a safe place to live, but as they adapted to new surroundings, they began to seek comfort. Eventually, they both find their own homes in San Francisco. As Nadia exhibits her uniqueness and sexuality, which she was unable to do in her native country, Saeed finds comforts in a community of people from his nation

who practise his religion. Saeed and Nadia prioritise various facets of their lives, including kindship, religion, and family, depending on where they are. Their freedom is restricted by war conditions in their own country, and fear has an impact on how they see each other in their relationship.

According to Hamid, although Nadia was dubious of her sentiments but acknowledged their intensity, Saeed was certain he was in love. The circumstances surrounding their relationship, similar to those of other new lovers in the city, tend to evoke strong emotions (Hamid 54). As their relationship progresses, Nadia seeks Saeed's company for physical intimacy not because she is extremely excited but rather to take her mind off the horrible event that happened outside the bank. She does not express her want to Saeed directly, implying that she is afraid but also craves intimacy (Hamid 64-65). While premarital sex is not permitted by his religious convictions, Saeed finds comfort in simply being in Nadia's company.

Saeed and Nadia turn to familiar parts of their lives as they grow more concerned about their safety. In difficult circumstances, Saeed turns to his family and his religious beliefs, praying with his father and seeking solace in their presence (Hamid 51-52). The same reason Saeed spends time with Nadia is the same reason he prays with his family: Saeed finds comfort in both Nadia and his family. Saeed invites Nadia to move in with him, his parents, and himself out of concern that he won't leave any of them alone (Hamid 74). He establishes a secure environment for himself in which he may express his worries and pray for his loved ones by doing this. Nadia, on the other hand, takes comfort in her ability to exercise freedom and make her own decisions. Wartime constraints including curfews, militant checkpoints, and the suspension of cellphone connections limit her independence. Nadia tells Saeed that she wears a black robe so that "guys don't bother her" rather than as a religious practice when they first meet (Hamid 17). The black robes serve as a covering and symbolize a decision she made for herself. Saeed and Nadia's romance evolves while they tour Mykonos. Saeed develops nostalgia for his childhood home, while Nadia takes solace in putting her war-torn city in the past. Their personal ties to their homes evolve, and their care for one another does too. By extending an invitation to Saeed, Nadia makes a statement. "Nothing is going to happen," she made it clear. "Let me say that clearly. When you come over, I don't want your hands on me (Hamid 26). This demonstrates her need to feel significant in a country that largely governs her action. Nadia is more at ease since she moved to Mykonos. She consents to a nanny caring for her: "An incompletely shaven local lass who was not a nurse or nanny but was just a volunteer... Nadia's arm was delicately cleansed and

bandaged while she held it almost sheepishly, as if it were something valuable. When asked what Nadia and Saeed needed, the youngster responded she wanted to help them. They underlined the need for a way off the island most of all (Hamid 117). For the same reason that she was first drawn to Saeed, Nadia is fascinated towards the nanny because both make her feel secure while she is feeling helpless. *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid explores how the yearning for home can hinder one's ability to adapt to new surroundings. The novel depicts how immigrants often struggle to adjust to their new society due to their constant longing for their homeland (Hamid 9). Saeed meets a fellow countryman in Mykonos who calls himself a "people smuggler" (Hamid 113). Saeed considers this to be good fortune and offers to pay the man, but the stranger leaves and Saeed feels misled. Nadia realizes that Saeed's desire for familiarity has clouded his judgment, causing him to make poor decisions and strain their relationship. As they settle in London, they begin to see each other in a new light and their relationship evolves as they interact with other migrants. Nadia finds solace in a group of Nigerians, despite being the only non-Nigerian present (Hamid 147). The group accepts her, and she feels a sense of belonging. Eventually, Saeed and Nadia go their separate ways, with Nadia working at food cooperatives and Saeed devoting himself to religion. Fifty years later, they meet again, and Saeed promises to take Nadia to the deserts of Chile. The novel ends with their journey yet to be taken.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Therefore, refugees are faced numerous hardships in a new place. While thousands of people force to leave their native place. It's an unwelcome process. The terrible aspect of the world is shown in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. The book addresses the issues associated with exile and emigration. It also provides hope for better settlement in a new place. Now-a-days, the migrants are living their lives freely in a new place, indeed getting better openings in a new place. In the novel, Saeed and Nadia first move their own land for safety. But latterly, they choose comfort. By the time the requirements of humans are changed. Presently, many associations in the globe take many steps to give good living to the migrants in a new place. It helps them to ameliorate their particular capability as well as they contribute commodity towards the host country.

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