Neoliberalism and Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Water, (post)Development and Commodification in Mohsin Hamid's "How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"

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Abstract

Due to the induction of neoliberal capitalist structure(s) in the once-colonized nations, literary and cultural representations—once dominated by nationalist discourse(s)—have buckled under the late capitalist pressure to disavow their conformity to indigenous literary representations and hence, conform to a simulated version of commodified reality shaped and maintained by the neoliberal imaginary at the cost of the local ecological and cultural resources. Mohsin Hamid, in "How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia", situates contemporary Pakistani fiction from a national onto a neoliberal epistemological frame to probe and re-assess the rags-to-riches tale of entrepreneurial success of his nameless protagonist. Hamid, rather than presenting this tale from a monolith Eurocentric neoliberal perspective, scrutinizes this discourse of entrepreneurship and (post)development from below and questions its relevance and appropriation in the context of the third world Asian countries where rugged commodified individualism (de)shapes the individuals' desires for simulated neoliberal stereotypical version(s) of reality. For this purpose, this paper focuses on the appropriated and exhausted myth of Capitalist (post)development which unleashes the neoliberal forces of deregulation and privatization and makes vulnerable and prone to exploitation the natural resources like water in the form of commodification. Hence, this paper foregrounds the shift in contemporary Pakistani fiction from postcolonial/nationalist epistemology to capitalist neoliberal imaginary.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, (Post) Development, Commodification, Capitalism, Simulation

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1. Introduction

Pakistani fiction in English, in recent times, has been re-signified and re-contextualized by the forces of the global imaginary, in particular by the authors residing in various parts of the globe, and the national imaginary seems to have been eclipsed or over-shadowed by the global neoliberal/imperial capitalist discourses. This paper attempts to contextualize the narratives produced by the second generation writers of Pakistani origin to probe and assess the shift from the national onto a neoliberal epistemological frame. Mohsin Hamid's fiction, in particular, renders questionable the dominance of nationalist discourses in contemporary Pakistani fiction as his works foreground the global discourses rather than the nationalist discourses. The narratives produced by the second generation Pakistani writers like Mohsin Hamid cannot be limited to the unitary perspective of nationalism quite oblivious to the workings of globalization. Their narratives appear to transcend the nationalistic grounding/orientation of the narratives of first generation writers and attempt to encompass the postnational global issues like capitalism, neoliberalism, development, and the consequent ecological issues. In these times of globalization, neoliberalism as the grand/meta narrative seems to have replaced nationalism in the narratives of writers like Mohsin Hamid whose work "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013) lays emphasis on postnational global simulated versions of reality juxtaposed with a third world sensibility concerning the post development imaginary. In this context, this paper critically evaluates Hamid's "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013) from the perspective of the impact of neoliberalism and it explores the relevance of this Eurocentric notion of development in the context of the third world countries belonging to Asia. For this purpose, this paper employs Harvey's interpretation of neoliberalism (200A) combined with De Vries' (2007) reading of the post development imaginary to comprehend the world of entrepreneurship from below with specific reference to the male protagonist 'you' and his family. This paper also incorporates Vandana Shiva's (200A) notions to further probe the impact of neoliberal notions of development on natural resources or 'commons' as Harvey (200A) puts it.

2. Neoliberalism and (Post)Development

This section maps the relevant theoretical framework employed. It starts with Harvey's reading of neoliberalism as explained in his work "A Brief History of Neoliberalism"(200A) and moves on to De Vries' notion of development as a desiring machine in his work "Don't Compromise Your

Desire for Development! A Lacanian/Deleuzian Rethinking of the Anti-Politics Machine"(2007).

Harvey (2005) defined Neoliberalism in the following manner:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutionalized framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade….The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices…. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture (p. 2).

The predominant emphasis on "individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills" generates a desire for the "senseless pursuit of false utopia" (Harvey, 2005,p. 152) that culminates in the development of a lack among the masses. Neoliberalism with its apparent emphasis on freedom (free market, free trade, democracy, enlightenment etc.) curtails the freedom of nation states and curbs and limits their role from caretakers to mere facilitators or regulators. This Eurocentric notion privileges rugged individualism over the role of the state to better the plight of its citizens and hence, the fate of nations rests in the hands of "self-propelled people" (Joseph, 2012, p. 71)—the entrepreneurs—who internalize the ideological and class binaries along with a cultivated sense of lack and these entrepreneurs turn into metonymic representations of, as Terry Eagleton puts it, neoliberal "neurotic symptomatology" (2002, p. 119).

This neoliberal entrepreneurial individualism is premised on the edifice of development and commodification process. The global capitalist imaginary, especially in the third world countries, imposes capitalist modes of production on non-capitalist local modes of production which result in the destruction and consequent subjugation of local modes of existence to global capitalist (and by this I mean Eurocentric) modes of accumulation. Harvey (2005) believes that neoliberalism operates not through the generation of wealth or income, rather it operates mainly through redistribution of wealth. And, by this, he specifically means "accumulation by dispossession" (p. 1A9). This 'accumulation by

dispossession' mechanism, described by Marx (Marx as cited in Harvey, 200A, p. 1A9) as the 'original' accumulation practice during the rise of capitalism, operates mainly through the process of "commodification and privatization of land, the forceful expulsion of peasant populations,.…suppression of the rights to commons, commodification of the labour power" (Harvey, 200A, p. 1A9). Hamid's protagonist in "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" (2013) goes through a process of metamorphosis where he attempts to transform his plight as an entrepreneur and to overcome the sense of lack which is the cause as well as the consequence of the neoliberal development process but his eventual failure to overcome it signifies a hollowness at the very heart of neoliberal discourse of freedom and emancipation. This hollowness exhibits also a need to re-define the very idea of neoliberal development and the need to detach it from its Eurocentric roots, as Escobar famously puts it borrowing Mohanty's (1988) phrase: "development would not take place solely 'under Western eyes'" (Escobar, 2007, p. 20). In this context, Hamid's nameless protagonist metonymically represents the third world sensibility pinned under neoliberal gaze of development.

To probe the discourse of entrepreneurial skills, it needs to be looked at from below. De Vries (2007) notion of development as a desiring machine that produces the 'object' of neoliberal development is quite significant in this regard. He believes:

> Development as a desiring machine operates through the generation, spurring and triggering of desires, and by disciplining them. It is this double movement of the generation and banalisation of hope that constitutes the dialectics of desire (2007, p. 30).

Hence, to look at the struggle of entrepreneurs as the object rather than the subject of neoliberal development leads to a critical evaluation of this notion from below, rather than a sweeping evaluation from above. De Vries incorporates the Lacanian notion of desire into his interpretation of the developmental apparatus and ascribes to it a status akin to the Lacanian socio-symbolic order that is responsible for the creation and regulation of desires among the masses. In this way, neoliberalism operates mainly through the creation of lack and then it creates the illusion of the supposed fulfillment of the lack among its objects—the entrepreneurs.

3. Water, Lack, & Noeliberal Development in "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"

Hamid's"How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013) is a tale of entrepreneurial success from below but this tale is clothed/disguised as a work of self-help genre. This act of concealment—concealing a neoliberal tale of development in the discourse of self-help genre—is in itself an act of ventriloquism which satirizes neoliberal celebration of individualism and entrepreneurship. Moreover, this act of concealment is also an allegorical act as the allegorical masking of a narrative implies an act of 'speaking otherwise', as an other as Fletcher (1964) describes it. By masking this tale as self-help, it satirizes the very notion of 'self', of subjectivity, of situatedness, and also Hamid's very act of keeping his protagonist devoid not only of name but also of nationality transfers this tale from the national into the postnational global imaginary. Hamid's preference for the second person 'you' rather than the first person 'I' as the epistemic standpoint of this narrative bestows upon it a collectivity, devoid of individual subjectivity inherent in the first person I, and hence, makes it a perfect tool to parody and satirize, ironically, the neoliberal emphasis on rugged individual entrepreneurship. Moreover, this act of ventriloquism, this choice of self-help genre to narrate this tale, is also quite significant. In these postmodern times of deconstruction of grand narratives, the choice of this narcissistic so-called apparently emancipatory discourse of self-help to act as the stand-in for the deconstructed grand narratives of emancipation and liberation like Marxism or feminism is quite ironical and reveals a lack inherent not only in the objects of the discourse of development but also in these grand epistemic standpoints as well.

De Vries' (2007) emphasis on the construction of the neoliberal apparatus of development as a desiring machine is quite interestingly relevant. Using Lacanian framework, he identifies the neoliberal development apparatus as the Big Other, the socio-symbolic order that constructs the object of development. The gaze of the Big Other—the Other which Wyatt (2004) believes structures and shapes our perception and understanding of the world—constructs the object of development through the realization of lack as it is evident from the way you's life is transformed by the haunting realization or rather the compelling internalization of a sense of lack triggered by his marginalized rural positioning. The urban-rural divide, so prevalent in the neoliberal development discourse, is crucial to the creation of the sense of lack as it marks the boundary between the centered

global metropolis and its marginalized impoverished other, the rural. The rural has usually been treasured as the nostalgic keeper of indigenous traditions and values in the rural-urban divide but the migrations due to the changing economic times as well as the internal oppressions and exploitations in the guise of residual feudal class divisions forces the oppressed to migrate to the metropolis. The migration of you's family to the nameless metropolis is quite significant in this regard. The categorization by Vinay Lal of the urban-rural divide as the one between moral-economy and political economy is quite relevant here. Lal defines the rural as: "The village furnishes a 'moral economy' which anchors lives and customs; but the village is also incapable of providing sustenance in conditions of modernity, and its inhabitants are bred in an atmosphere of ignorance" (Lal as cited in Joseph, 2012, p. 77). This construction of the rural as the Other of the urban is essential to give meaning to the modernist project of neoliberal development. The realization of lack or rather the construction of lack in the protagonist's life is quite evident in his rural positioning but to comprehend this lack, the exploitation of natural resources to support the neoliberal emphasis on "accumulation by dispossession" (p. 1A9) as described by Harvey (200A) is essential.

The capitalist practice of "accumulation by dispossession", as mentioned earlier, thrives on "commodification and privatization of land, the forceful expulsion of peasant populations,.… suppression of the rights to commons, commodification of the labour power" (Harvey, 200A, p. 1A9). Water as part of the commons on which everyone democratically ought to have equal right is controlled or privatized for the benefit of the few. This capitalist practice leads to "disproportionate use of natural resources….and environmental violence" (Sze, 2013, p. 131). You's life in "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" (2013) manifests this environmental violence comprehensively. Right from his early childhood, water functions as a lack—a void—that haunts his family life and structures the marginalized positioning of his family in the rural setting. Water-related chores in rural setting function as a metaphor for socialization and bringing household women together to offer a brief respite from the closed and limited domestic sphere of household activities. You's mother is barred from this space of socialization as she is the one left at home to do the domestic solitary chores while the other women "leave the compound, bearing clay pots on their heads for water and carrying clothes and soaps for cleaning." The tasks of these women "are social tasks. Your mother's responsibility is solitary. Her alone, them

together" (Hamid, 2013, p. 8). Hence, these other women are the suppliers/procurers of water while you's mother is just the recipient/consumer of water. In capitalist terms of demand-supply equation, she is already at a disadvantage, at the wrong end—at the receiving end. And the cause of this ostracization, ironically, is her strength. In a patriarchal environment where the luxury of strength is offered only to the male members of a family, she is an aberration, an abnormality. Her strength leads to her being excluded from the feminine sphere of water-related socialization. "The other women of the compound would be frightened of your mother were it not for the reassuring existence of the men. In an all-female society your mother would likely rise to be a queen, a bloody staff in her hand and crushed skulls beneath her feet" (Hamid, 2013, pp. 9-10) The "all-female" environment, ironically, appears to be complicit in you's mother's marginalization through water-related chores and this involvement serves to shatter the claims of inclusion and nurture usually treasured in feminist discourses across the globe. All these women participate in the construction of water as the lack dominating the protagonist's life. Hence, water functions as the metonymical representation of the gendered dimensions of exclusion in a pre-dominantly female yet patriarchal environment.

Water further serves as the metonymical representation of lack in the protagonist's life within the neoliberal frame through the desacralization and violation of its purity and transformation from a sacred pure space to a desacralized polluted location. This act of desacralization, ironically, takes place within the rural landscape, not the urban landscape and hence, it appropriates and challenges Lal's notion of the rural as the site and keeper of traditional moral values. You's rural life is haunted by the lack and also by the impurity of water available for his family to perform their daily domestic chores/activities. The gully beside his house in the village where his family members defecate is insufficiently supplied with "a slender trickle of water" and this gully is always empty, devoid of water, except "during the monsoon… and that too is an occurrence less regular than in the past, dependent on increasingly fickle atmospheric currents" (Hamid, 2013, p. 6). The "fickle atmospheric currents" are caused by the environmental violence unleashed in the name of development by the neoliberal imaginary to accumulate profit with an absolute disregard to the damage sustained by the environment. This construction of water as a lack is further heightened by Hamid's description of the violence—literal, cultural and metaphorical—that is carried out in the name of neoliberal

developmental projects in the rural domain. This entire process of violence is described by Hamid in the following manner:

> The people of your village relieve themselves downstream of where they wash their clothes, a place in turn downstream of where they drink. Farther upstream, the village before yours does the same. Farther still, where the water emerges from the hills as a sometimes-gushing brook, it is partly employed in the industrial processes of an old, rusting, and subscale textile plant, and partly used as drainage for the fart-smelling gray effluent that results (2013, pp. 6-7).

The description of the brook as the recipient of "fart-smelling gray effluent" from the "subscale textile plant" shows the violent exploitation and consumption of sacred spaces/commons to benefit "self-propelled individuals" (Joseph, 2012, p. 71)—the entrepreneurs. The re-use of water at multiple sites conceals the undertones of or rather hints at you's future entrepreneurial venture of re-packaging and selling the polluted bottled water under the guise of purity. It also makes explicit the act of desacralization of a sacred natural space and how this sacred natural space is turned into a capitalist neoliberal location in the post development imaginary. The brook as the sacred essential space depended upon by the people of the nearby villages for their daily chores/activities is corrupted and polluted to serve the purposes of ruthless industrialization.

This construction of water as the lack haunting you's family is not limited only to the rural space; it gets intensified when the protagonist's family moves to the city. De Vries (2007) believes that development in neoliberal times focuses more on desire than on discourse as desire plays the dialectic role of bridging the gap between "the virtual side of development and the actuality of practice" (p. 37). Hence, the construction of water as a lack which is synonymous to desire is highly significant. In Lacanian terms, desire is the desire of the Other, (Lacan as cited in Rabbani, 2014, p. 146) and in the post-development imaginary, as mentioned earlier, development or rather neoliberalism is the Big Other, the socio-symbolic order that constructs and regulates these desires. So water as the desire or rather as the lack of the protagonist leads to his attempt to fulfill the big Other's desire (which is an impossibility) and hereby become part of "virtual side of development" (De Vries, 2007, p. 37). Water as lack in the post development imaginary is made amply evident in you's urban setting. When his family moves to the city, they get their dwelling in the

marginalized part of the city which is separated from the wealthy mansions of the city's rich by a road, open sewer or a railroad track. There, in that humble dwelling, he, along with his elder sister, conjure up a fantasy which they term the "river" (Hamid, 2013, p. 26). When they "play river", they imagine that they are wading through, and fishing, hunting on the banks of an imaginary river but in reality, when all the while they impersonate their roles as hunters and fisherman/woman, they play near a heap of trash beside an uncovered stinking sewer.

> Viewing the scene from the lenses of an orbiting reconnaissance satellite, an observer will see two children behaving peculiarly. He or she would note that they display undue caution in approaching the sewer, as if it were not a trickle of excrement of varying viscosities but rather a gushing torrent. Moreover, although the sewer is shallow and could be crossed with a modest hop, the children stand warily on either side of it, cupping their hands to their mouths as though shouting to each other from a great distance. Agreement reached, one picks up a piece of metal, the discarded spoke of a bicycle wheel, perhaps, and seems to use it to fish, albeit with no string or bait, and no prospect of catching anything. The other takes a torn strip of brown cardboard packaging, long and jagged, and jabs it repeatedly in the direction of the sewer. Spearing transparent turtles? Fending off invisible crocodiles? It is difficult to gauge the purpose of her frenetic movements (Hamid, 2013, p. 27).

This description of an imaginary game being played beside the imagined gushing torrents of a river effectively sums up the gap between the "the virtual side of development and the actuality of practice" (De Vries, 2007, p. 37). The virtual side of development that creates the illusion of fulfillment, plentitude, transformation of the subjugated's plight, stands in stark contrast to what it manages to deliver; instead of the supposed gushing river of fulfilled promises, it manages to deliver the meager stinking trickle of wasted water in the form of an uncovered sewer. This conjured up fantasy and the 'actuality' of it both are the metonymic representations of the Big Other—the neoliberal symbolic order itself—and of the deprived masses pinned under its gaze haunted by their lacks and desires. The "river" also acts as the perfect simulation which has as its referent not the 'original' one with plenty of water rather a perversion of the original—a copy which denatures the reality and leaves behind a fragmented stinking perverted trace of the original which distorts the

meaning and shatters the illusion of an ultimate truth in post development neoliberal imaginary. This clinging to a simulated existence, "the virtual side of development", is further made manifest in the description of the protagonist's brother's working conditions. His job as the assistant of an air-gun spray painter leaves him vulnerable to the inhalation of toxic vapours and fumes from these paints. Again, referring to the gap between the promised fulfillment and the 'actuality' of delivered promises in neoliberal entrepreneurial developmental projects, Hamid makes use of parallels drawn from water and space:

> Your's brother's work is in some senses like being an astronaut, or slightly more prosaically, a scuba diver. It too involves the hiss of air, the feeling of weightlessness, the sudden pressure headaches and nausea, the precariousness that results when an organic being and a machine are fused together. Then again, an astronaut or aquanaut sees unimaginable new worlds, whereas your brother sees only a monocolor haze of varying intensities(Hamid, 2013, p. 31).

The notion of development as a lack that exists in the gap between the idealistic Eurocentric notions of development and the reality of these abstract notions in the context of 'rising Asia' has been made amply evident in this description. His brother's job is an effort to fill the gap between the abstract Eurocentric notions of the Big Other and the hopelessness of his own situation. Through the use of "astronaut/aquanaut" parallel, Hamid plays with illusive possibility of water as the source of exploring "unimaginable new worlds", as the source of innovation—the metonymic space that contains the possibility of fulfillment—but lays bare the futility of this illusion when he puts it in stark contrast to the 'actuality' of what is delivered to you's brother—a meaningless "monoclor haze of varying intensities" (2013, p. 31).

Hamid, in his first novel "Moth Smoke"(2000), categorized different sections/classes of the society on the basis of 'air-conditioners'—the class that could afford air-conditioners and the class that could not. Air conditioning served as the metonymic representation of power and prestige usually associated with the affluent class in the developing/third world countries. In the same way, Hamid, in "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013),uses water as the metonymic representation of the vicious cycle of exclusion and inclusion in pre-dominantly capitalist 'rising Asia' and the excluded marginalized masses occupy, to use Zizek's (2004) term, an 'abject position' which "stands for the lie of existing

universality as represented by universal narratives of progress and human rights" (p. 160). Hence, in Hamid's narrative, possession over the water sources/commons/supply serves as the criterion to define the abject positioning in the neoliberal imaginary. But it is this very act of exclusion or marginalization in the neoliberal imaginary that enables these masses occupying abject positions to resist and redefine "the lie of existing universality as represented by universal notions of progress and human rights" (Zizek, 2004, p. 160). Zizek labels this resistance as a belief in "the ethics of the Real…an ethics of taking risks/decisions, of not compromising a fundamental desire, which for our purposes would signify not compromising on the desire for development" (Zizek as cited in De Vries, 2007, p. 42). For the abject masses belonging to 'rising Asia', this desire for development controlled and perpetuated by the Big Other is hence a double bind—a promise which fails to deliver yet its allure is impossible to resist. Hamid's protagonist in"How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013) tries to occupy this double space, this possible impossibility, as he is ensnared by allure of fulfillment and also, as the narrative progresses, he is despaired by its illusion and hollowed promises. This double bind enables him to perceive water as the desire/lack which could transform his abjectivity into subjectivity and hence make him benefit from the ruthless aloof process of neoliberal development. His decision to enter "the bottled-water trade" (Hamid, 2013, p. 99) is part of this attempt at transformation.

> Your city's neglected water pipes are cracking, the contents of underground water mains and sewers mingling, with the result that taps in locales rich and poor alike disgorge liquids that, while for the most part clear and odorless, reliably contain trace levels of feces and microorganisms.… Those less well-off among the citizenry harden their immune systems by drinking freely, sometimes suffering losses in the process, especially of their young and their frail. Those more well-off have switched to bottled water, which you and your two employees are eager to provide (Hamid, 2013, p. 99).

As mentioned earlier, water acts as the stand in for the protagonist's desire to bridge the gap between the "virtual side of development and the actuality of practice" (De Vries, 2007, p. 37) in the post development neoliberal imaginary. It also involves a hollow promise of fulfillment to transform masses' positioning from what Zizek (2004) terms as abjectivity to subjectivity. As mentioned earlier, the neoliberal development

apparatus operates through the process of commodification not only of the material resources and the labour force but also of the commons. Land, air, water, soil, oil—all are part of the commons on which all the inhabitants have equal claim and hence, these resources ought not to be commodified. But the neoliberal project of "profit over people" as Chomsky (1999) describes this ruthless commodification of resources, perceives "the world only as something to be owned and the market as only driven by profit" as Vandana Shiva (200A, p. 2) describes it. The encroachments upon the "enclosures of the commons.…which imply exclusions and are based on violence" (Shiva, 200A, p. 2) force migrants like you to move to the metropolis to become a part of this violent "resource appropriation" process (Joseph, 2012, p. 78).

> You have thrived to the sound of the city's great whooshing thirst, unsated and growing, water incessantly being pulled out of the ground and pushed into pipes and containers. Bottled hydration has proved lucrative (Hamid, 2013, p. 121).

Water symbolizes the lack in the protagonist's life but it also symbolizes the act of desacralization of commons as sacred spaces as mentioned by Shiva (2005) and Lawrence Buell (2005). Rather than being revered and protected as a common space of community and commonality, it is transformed into a location to be exploited, labeled, packaged and sold to the objects of neoliberal development—the masses. Hence, this common is not a sacred space anymore; rather it is turned into a location that has meaning only as a market commodity as Shiva puts it that humans and their environment are being increasingly transformed into "universally, globalized, undifferentiated or abstract replicable spaces" (Shiva as cited in Huang, 2013, p. 142). This notion of "replicable spaces" is highly significant as the water bottled and packaged by you, the protagonist, is not the 'pure, authentic' original form of water, rather it merely is the replicated version that is bottled and sold, hollow and devoid of purity. The process of replication is made amply evident by Hamid when he describes the 'location' and equipment for the 'purification' of water in the following manner:

> There, in sequence, are a pipe bringing in tap water, a proscribed donkey pump to augment the sputtering pressure from outside, a blue storage tank the size of a baby hippopotamus, a metal faucet, a lidded cooking-pot, a gas-cylinder-fired burner to boil the water, which you do for five minutes as a general rule, a funnel with a cotton sieve to remove visible impurities, a pile of used but well

> preserved mineral-water bottles recovered from restaurants, and, finally, a pair of simple machines that affix tamper-resistant caps and transparent safety wrapping atop your fraudulent product (Hamid, 2013, p. 100).

So what actually is being sold is the corporate image of purity, the pure image of polluted bottled water as the metonymic representation of the hollowness of neoliberal discourse concerning authenticity and purity. This hollowness is quite reminiscent of Baudrillard's (1993) famous dictum: "Artifice lies at the heart of reality" (p. 7A). Hence, the bottled products devoid of reality or real meaning are consumed by the masses.

As mentioned earlier, neoliberal epistemology, as explained by Harvey (2005, p. 2), is premised upon the ethos of human well-being mediated through the liberation of "individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills *within an institutionalized framework*" (Emphasis added). This 'institutionalized framework' when it comes in contact with the recently-liberated postcolonial nations as in 'rising Asia' then the residual forms of oppression and exploitation already inherent in the neoliberal ideology as well as in the governmental apparatuses of these protected economies result in a fragmented, twisted, maligned and replicated version of the neoliberal Eurocentric post-development imaginary. This fragmented, distorted and replicated version involves the construction of a simulated version of reality under the gaze of the Big Other—the neoliberal imaginary. Hamid portrays this desire to cling to a simulated version of reality through you's contract with the "organizations entrusted with national security" (Hamid, 2013, p. 160). You's contract to provide clean, drinkable water to the residents of a housing scheme "marketed and developed…by one of a comprehensive network of military-related corporations" (Hamid, 2013, p. 163) portrays the role of these "self-propelled people" (Joseph, 2012, p. 71), the entrepreneurs, in resource-appropriation/exploitation process. You's shady dealings with the bureaucrat and the politician to procure permits for municipal water contract also amply consolidate the role of entrepreneurs in the process of making decision impacting the general welfare of the masses. Rather than the politically elected individuals leading the way in this decision making process, it is the entrepreneurs, these "self-propelled individuals", who decide among themselves about the future of the state. Hence, the political function once associated with government to better the plight of its citizens seems to now have been transferred to these individual

entrepreneurs who ensure their maximum profit through bribery and corrupt practices.

This allegorical entrepreneurial indifference to the degradation and extravagant appropriation of natural resources and prevalent forms of social injustice consequent of neoliberal development imaginary finally comes to an end when the protagonist suffers a cardiac arrest and is hospitalized. The allegorical rendering of you's tale as emblematic of individuals' desire to bridge the gap between the Eurocentric notions of development and what actually is delivered to them in 'rising Asia' is made manifest in the literal sense when you's body clings to life support machines for survival. This very act of clinging to machines for survival is the metonymic representation of the way states in 'rising Asia' cling to the neoliberal capitalist development imaginary for their survival and also it metonymically mimics the entrepreneurs, the individuals, who, seduced by the Utopian dreams of progress and development, cling to and believe in the simulated versions of reality delivered to them by the Big Other—the development apparatus itself.

> To be a man whose life requires being plugged into machines, in your case interfaces electrical, gaseous, and liquid, is to experience the shock of an unseen network suddenly made physical, as a fly experiences a cobweb (Hamid, 2013, p. 185).

This feeling of finally being trapped, being caught in an invisible web, is akin to the dawning realization of the working of the Big Other and its double bind—the yearning to be part of the socio-symbolic order and also the dawning futility of this desire, being haunted by a Utopian promise and also the realization of its inherent elusiveness, the possibility of desire as well as the impossibility of its attainment. This double bind that keeps the masses believing in development's promise of fulfillment but, in moments like these, it also makes manifest the hollowness of these promises.

> The inanimate strands that cling to your precariously still-animate form themselves connect to other strands, to the hospital's power system, its backup generator, its information technology infrastructure, the unit that produces oxygen, the people who refill and circulate the tanks, the department that replenishes medications, the trucks that deliver them, the factories at which they are manufactured, the mines where requisite raw materials emerge, and on and on, from your body, into your room, across the

> building, and out the doors to the world beyond, mirroring in stark exterior reality preexisting and mercifully unconsidered systems within, the veins and nerves and sinews and lymph nodes without which there is no you. It is good you sleep (Hamid, 2013, pp. 185-6).

Hence, the neoliberal development imaginary persists through failure. Its constitutive impossibility makes the subject/object cling from one object to the other, one desire to another, until the final disillusionment dawns. You's body sustained or rather being drained by these machines metonymically also represents, at the ecological plain, the very resources of this planet like water which are being sucked dry by pipes, turbines running deep into it. These pipes/turbines sustain the facade, quite like the pipes/tubes sustaining you's frail body, of apparently nurturing and sustaining humanity but, in reality, these pipes/turbines represent the neoliberal capitalist forces that are sucking the planet dry only to efficiently maximize their profits under the garb of development and progress. Hamid here seems to posit the Eurocentric neoliberal development imaginary as a hegemonic totalitarian grand narrative that maintains and sustains the systematic exploitation of natural resources in 'rising Asia' at the cost of local and ecological modes of production.

4. Conclusion

In the light of preceding discussion, it can be concluded that Hamid's "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" (2013) epitomizes the impact of postnational global epistemologies. Rather than being limited to or confined by nationalism as the grand or metanarrative in his work, he situates Pakistani literature in English as part of the global literature which is no more defined merely by the past colonial experience(s). His fiction is posited as part of the global fiction which is grounded in the present global/capitalist moment, not in the (post)colonial moment. He has portrayed with brute raw force the appropriated relevance of the neoliberal notion of development in the context of the third world countries. So "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia"(2013) brings to light the modes of exploitation endemic or prevalent in the times of 'free' market and 'free' trade and questions the relevance of this Eurocentric notion for 'rising Asia'.

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