



A journey of Turkey's modernization in Pamuk's *Black Book*

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Abstract:

Ferit Orhan Pamuk was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature on 12 October 2006 for his artistic fiction writing and treatment of universality and reality. He has written more than twelve novels almost all of his novels deal with east-west cultures as well as ideologies and its domination on Istanbul in particular and on Turkey in general. The current research paper aims at investigating and studying the desire as well longings of Turkish people towards modernity and westernization in Pamuk's novel (Kara Kitap) Black Book. The research paper reflects journey of modernized contemporary Turkey from conventional Turkishness. Turkey is a transcontinental country between Asia and Europe. Geographically 97% of its territory falls in Asian while as 3% of its territory is in Europe. The desire for modernization and westernization is quite natural. It was published in Turkish literature in 1990. Then it was translated in English in 1994 and 2006 by Guneli Gun and Mureen Freely respectively. It dominantly deals with the theme of identity and love. The novel highly reflects contemporary Turkey and Ottoman Era. Galip is the central character, lawyer by profession and husband of Ruya who is his cousin. Celal is half-brother of Ruya.

Key-words: *modernization, east-west, the Black Book, Ruya, Galip, geography.*

Turkey is a transcontinental country between Asia and Europe. Its geographical location is highly important. 97% of its territory falls in Asian continent while as 3% of its territory is in European continent. It is natural that Turkey is influenced and inclined towards Europe. It gets influenced by almost all European countries. During middle ages western world was going through Renaissance period east was in deep slumber and missed the chance to compete with west. Turkey as well as east remained miles away from science, technologies and knowledge. Ultimately Turkey in particular while east in general got influenced by west in almost all spheres of life. West influenced Turkey's existing political, social, cultural as well as economical ideologies. Turkey's geographical location and west has a key role in the modernization of Turkey. West was ahead of east and Turkey in almost all walks of life such



as science, technology, knowledge and innovations. It laid its psychological impact of superiority of west over east. Orhan Pamuk has always employed local setting with Turkish background in his novels with universal appeal. He has portrayed a viewed picture of Istanbul in particular while as Turkey in general. *The Silent House* 1983, *The White Castle* 1985, *The New Life* 1994, *The Museum of Innocence* 2008, *My Name Is Red* 1998, *Snow* 2002, *A Strangeness In My Mind* 2014, *Other Colours* 1999, *Istanbul: Memories and The City* 2003, *The Red-haired Woman* 2016 are his best-known and famous novels. The dominant themes of East and west, tradition and modernity, secularism and fundamentalism, theism and atheism, master and slave, religion and politics are portrayed in his literary works. He artistically and carefully deals with the theme of love and its failure in human life. His treatment and management of love is quite realistic as compared to romantic and idealistic approach. He is a realist and pragmatic and handles the love with the respective approach. *The Museum of Innocence* is one his best novels. Kema is a central character in the novel. He initially falls in love with the physical beauty of Fusun. It seems erotic kind of love. But soon after his engagement with Sibel, Fusun disappears. Kemal is very much shocked and disappointed by the sudden disappearance of Sibel. His erotic and physical love is transformed into platonic love. She marries with someone else. She gets divorce with the help of Kemal. She finally dies in an accident before marrying with Kemal. He creates a museum where he puts all objects and belongings of his queen of heart Fusun. Pamuk has spent his childhood days in Istanbul. He was brought up in Istanbul. He has deep and strong attachments with the historical place Istanbul which was once called Constantinople. It fell in 1453. Naturally Orhan Pamuk has seen with his own eyes the historical place which was once hub of business in the world, left in poor and dilapidated condition. He has noticed all changes from Ottoman Era to contemporary world. He is at times disheartened by the changes in glamour and greatness of Istanbul city. As depicted in his novels he is highly and emotionally attached to the city of Istanbul. Istanbul serves as the background as well as setting in the novel. As Belge asserts, the city is imbued with a great history, but this has not been internalized ("Rüyadan Kabusa-Fantastik Şehir İstanbul" 207).

As depicted in the novel Galip is the central character in the novel who is thirty-three years old. He is a lawyer by profession. One day he returns back from his office but does not find his beloved wife Ruya at home. She disappears from home and does not inform her



husband. He searches for his wife for a week everywhere in Istanbul. He searches for his wife Ruya which means dream on the streets, bridges, coffee houses, theatre, markets and almost all places of Istanbul. Pamuk deliberately mentions the name Ruya so that he presents the central character Galip searches for his dream which he has lost unknown to him. She leaves a good-bye letter behind but it is not clear why she has left him and where she has gone. Ruya symbolises the tradition of Turkey while as Galip's present symbolises contemporary Turkey. With the disappearance of Ruya (dream or symbol of tradition) Pamuk shatters all identities and myths related to Istanbul. Bosphorus or Strait of Istanbul is a waterway which is highly important nationally and internationally. It is between Asia and Europe which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. It is one of the appealing and solacing spots in Istanbul but has been portrayed as a wreck. He says that Nisantasi has lost its goodness, charm and is smelling very bad. Galip's reminiscences of Ruya symbolises tradition of Turkey. He recalls and remembers his childhood as well as school days with Ruya and the teacher inculcating, "Don't tear pages from your notebook! I want loose sheets! People who tear up our nation's notebooks, people who destroy our nation's property- they are not Turks, they are degenerates! I will give them zero"(Pamuk 49). But Ruya has stunned Galip as she has torn page from notebook.

As mentioned in the novel Galip, the protagonist begins a search for his missing wife Ruya and takes the structure of a detective novel. He searches her almost everywhere and finally thinks that she might be living with his step-brother Celal who is a columnist by profession. He suspects that his wife stays with her step-brother Celal in their ancestral house in City-of-Hearts Apartment. He manages the keys from doorkeeper. He is quite sure that they are in the attic floor. He enters the flat with increasing heart beat but all in vain and of no avail. He finds no one there and comes to know that even Celal has disappeared. Galip stays some days there in the Ancestral apartment and takes the identity of Celal. Celal lives by all alone in his flat. He is a professional and well known columnist. "He's an exceptional man" (Pamuk, 186). Galip is surprised to see the dead body of his beloved wife found in a shop. Celal's dead body is also found the next day on the same location. Both the murderers remain unidentified and the story ends on a mystery. Galip stays there and lives as Celal for many days. He receives phone calls of Celal and acts as if he is Celal. It reflects his desire to be someone else and is unhappy and disappointed with his own identity as a lawyer. He feels



that is because of Celal's success that his wife leaves him behind and stays with him. He longs for Celal's identity because he is a well-known and successful columnist as well as his wife loves him. He is deeply hurt by his wife's infidelity and her staying with Celal. If a person feels someone is successful and happy, he desires follow the person and his identity. He desires to be Celal and live happy-go-lucky life in his identity as he could not do as himself. He admits what Celal tells him,

“how most people fail to see the inner self and essence of the things around them, simply because these things are right under their noses, while they pay great attention to the secondary properties of things that seem just beyond them simply because they find them in dark corners, on the edge things and therefore think them more obscure.” (Pamuk, BB, 94).

He does not succeed in searching his wife but his dream of becoming a writer is fulfilled.

As mentioned in the novel all the main characters including the protagonists are not happy and satisfied with their identities. Galip the protagonist, Ruya and Celal the main characters are fed up with their existence. All these characters are imagining and dreaming to be someone else and live happy and satisfied life. Galip feels that he will live a happy life like Celal. He dreams and longs for Celal's identity. He says, “I had not been myself in the first half of my life because i wanted to be someone else who regretted all those years she had spent not being herself” (Pamuk, 204). He accumulates all most all habits of Celal. He tries to look alike Celal by dressing like him, receiving his calls and acting as Celal, as well starts writing columns in the name Celal. In his own words he says, ‘how much better it hold world be if he could live this world behind forever and live in Celal'sworld instead (Pamuk, BB, 95). He is very much excited in the beginning when he started writing columns in Celal's identity as he begins like this, “I gazed into the mirror and read my face...I dreamed that I had at last become the person I've always longed to become” (Pamuk, BB, 326).

Celal is a well known and renowned communist who writes columns for *Milliyat* news paper. He makes his presence in the novels through his columns and the description depicted by Galip. He is suffering from restlessness and memory loss. Loss of memory and past represents Turkish tradition. If a person is unhappy and disappointed he tries to become

someone else who he thinks happy with himself. Turkey is a transcontinental country between Asia and Europe so it has at times forced to imitate and adopt totally new identity. Its geographical position and some of its leaders force to go for westernization. As depicted in the first half of the novel Galip convenes many of individuals who are almost all suffering from identity crises. Celal Bey, in one of his columns says, ‘I must be Myself’ (Pamuk, 486). Celal says,

“I must be myself, I said over and over. I must forget these people buzzing inside my head, I must forget their voices, their smells, I told myself, as I gazed down at the legs nesting so happily on the stool and I told myself again as I looked up to watch the smoke I’d blown up to the ceiling; I must be myself, because if I failed to be myself. I become the person they wanted me to be and I can’t bear the person they want me to be; if I had to be that in sufferable person, I’d rather be nothing at all (Pamuk, BB, 181).

At the end of day Galip realises that the predicament and dilemma of identity crises has a possible solution that branded and categorized the culture of Turkey. Soon after the murders of Ruya and Celal, Galip needs to go through complete and startling change as well as metamorphoses so that he prevail over the identity crises that is also the issues of Turkey’s identity. Galip seems to be struck between eastern identity symbolised by Ruya and the western identity symbolised by Celal. As depicted in the novel Celal is several times linked with the western world. He says, “When he talks of talks of immorality, atheism and tobacco, he sounds awfully French” (Pamuk, 29).

Galip’s extreme love for Ruya symbolises his longings for Turkish identity. Turkish identity is seen in between eastern and western cultures and ideologies as Pamuk reflects. Galip writes a column in Celal’s name and signs same to same like Celal. Finally he becomes a well-known writer and storey teller. He is satisfied and lives a happy life as a professional writer. He thinks and is of the opinion that Man falls in trouble, disappointment, frustration and dissatisfaction but does surprising comeback to life. Pamuk represents Turkey’s journey from tradition to modernization through Galip’s character in the murder mystery novel, *The Black Book*.

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