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**Ambivalence in “*How to get filthy rich in rising Asia*”- A novel by Mohsin Hamid**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article describes the ambivalence in the novel of Mohsin Hamid “How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia”, highlighting the contradictory statements in the novel, by exposing the contradictory nature of the ‘lover’ who proves to be an unfit member of aristocracy and is ultimately treated as an outsider. All this shows ambivalent societal standards. Like other works of Hamid, this novel also manifests the comparison East and West by highlighting the ambivalence in the development of Asian Society. The love story of the protagonists is dysfunctional and show ambivalence more than any other aspects, as the protagonists always loves his teenage lover even after getting married with another woman. The narration style of this novel i.e the indirect narration also contributes to the ambivalence as we are the protagonist and we are the reader at the same time. The style of ‘self- help genre’ sincerely cross examine for the methods of helping one-self. This novel discloses are two level story of love and ambition underline the social and economic changes in Asia, metaphorically. The title of the novel and the titles of some chapters in the novel also indicates ambivalence as these present contrasting stories. This novel truly presents ambivalence in the form satire and mockery of the Asian Society.*

**Keywords:** Ambivalence, Mohsin Hamid, novel

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## INTRODUCTION

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "ambivalence" as "the coexistence in one person of the emotional attitudes of love and hate, or other opposite feelings, towards the same object or situation." Ambivalence is a situation where a man has two options; however he is confused to pick one of them. Ambivalence can be considered as inconsistent or dilemmatic. Ambivalence itself is derived from the latin prefix ambi meaning both and valence is derived from the Latin word valentia meaning strength. The word ambivalence is used for a wide range of psychological conflicts that comprise of opposite components. This word was introduced by the Swiss psychiatrist, "Paul Eugen Bleuler" (1857-1939), into psychology in 1911, at the first time to introduce two concepts of fundamentals to analyze schizophrenia which indicates the loss of contact with reality.

Recent research has identified two major sources of attitudinal ambivalence. "Ambivalent attitudes are generally thought as weak attitudes, as they are less predictive of behavior, less stable and less resistant to persuasion (Armitage and Conner 2000)." Priester and Petty (2001) have suggested and found that while one's own positive and negative feelings are important bases of attitudinal ambivalence, one's significant others may have influences on attitudinal ambivalence. One recent finding proposed that feelings of attitudinal ambivalence can come just because of an individual's own feelings of positivity and negativity or because of interpersonal attitudinal discrepancy (Kiwan).

Psychologists and other therapists, in their practices see many examples of individuals sick with distress by ambivalence. They feel an inability of deciding anything often. Individuals frequently are uncertain about various alternatives: for measuring arguments for and against each side they comprehend both sides, but they can't decide even by doing everything. At the end they caught up to act in one way or the other. In this situation maybe, they toss a coin or get counseled by a psychiatrist or take after the assistance of a friend or trainer. The individual with ambivalence can move in one direction and after that get confused and move in another direction and after that again get confused thus on to the point where he or she behaves like a paralyzed person.

Ambivalent attitudes share many attributes and results that differ from non-ambivalent attitudes. For example, ambivalence is connected with moderate assessment, low attitude stability. Ambivalent effectively supplemented by personal experiences, point to a simultaneous consciousness of reliance and autonomy such as in caring relationships. In different cases, we can watch individual inclinations measured against an ideal of normality for example in the quarrels about whether to become a mother. Thus, social structures, beliefs, and ideologies get to be significant. Such efforts go on in every day processes of socialization within the family but also with formal education and, sometimes, in mentorship relationships. Situations may quicken into conflicts between love and hatred.

In any given situation or a given period of regular activity there are at the same time contrasting feelings, wishes, thoughts and aims. However there are likewise similar evaluation of social relationships, social structures, societal powers, and interests. In numerous instances, a few or all of these upgrade and impact the others and lead to an amassing of ambivalences. Our inner experiences have twin features. If we take the so-called "religious" experience, it can be seen as an experience of the divine realm, or of a sophisticated realm than our own, or of a realm that can clarify our ethical truths which helps us in this life, on the one hand. Such experiences can, with all the efforts which these involve for self and others, prompt to a mental discontinuity from reality, on the other hand. This dual aspect of the religious experience can lead to paralyzing doubt in a man who is enticed to seek one but who knows about the risk.

It happens that individuals, who are truly dedicated to either belief or conviction, all of a sudden turn around totally and start believing on the reverse. We call this a conversion when this is an unexpected change from a life of misconduct to a good and religious life. We see this type of ambivalence in the protagonist of "*How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*", when he takes admission in university. YOU (the unnamed main character) falls victim in university with some sort of religious organization that offers him "a monthly cash stipend, food and clothing, and a bed" if he joins it. So he joins it. When he grows a beard he notices that now richer students and dishonest officers of university take him with something like fear and regard him to some extent. But when his mother dies, an extremely agonizing death from cancer, he thinks to take away himself from the organization because its doctor conveys him that except prayer his mother's condition cannot be improved by any means. We see the ambivalence when the narrator advice to "Avoid Idealists" but "YOU have, as was perhaps to be expected, fallen in with university idealists yourself." (Hamid 58)

The ambivalence in their motives and goals of the characters of the novel is exposed. It critiques the dual face of society and attacks the role of leaders who are supposed to strive towards a classless society but are not. Through the character of YOU, it is also revealed that the contradictory nature of a lover who becomes an unfit member of aristocracy and ultimately is treated as outsider.

Hamid highlights that the class difference is deeply rooted even in the modern society:

"In the months that follow, you receive anonymous death threats and meet with politicians you thought were allies but prove barely able to conceal their gloating. You are caught up in one of the cynical accountability campaigns periodically launched by your city's establishment, tossed to the wolf pack of public opinion, unsubstantiated rumors of your shady dealings receiving scandalized attention in newspapers. You have always

been an outsider, and finally you have been wounded. It is only natural that you be sacrificed so that the rest of the herd may prance on. (Hamid 190)”

Hamid also conveys the bitterness, dislike and wish to compete that “America” and the “West” has incited. For instance a retired brigadier describes his awe-making plan of creating a “premier housing” development that would have “its own electricity plant” and drinkable tap water. When you enter it, “it’ll be like you’ve entered another country,” he says. “Another continent. Like you’ve gone to Europe. Or North America.” Ambivalence can be seen in this society:

“Change has arrived in fits and starts: poverty and high-tech modernity exist side by side, turning the country into a patchwork of the old and new, and the ugly urban sprawl of the in-between. In the city’s outskirts, on one of a thousand and one rutted streets where a few years ago were only fields but now little green can be seen... (Hamid 23)”

*Mehak Faisal Khan* in her thesis “*Resisting Consumable Fictions: A Play-Centric Approach to Reading Postcolonial Formal Collapse in the Ludic Century*” says that the problem, in a world that is becoming increasingly urban and where the majority of the world’s population lives in urban areas, is the increasing physical and emotional isolation. Though all of his works have elements of love, emotional contact, and are “love stories” in a sense as Hamid likes to point out, they are of a unique kind. Whatever love exists in the novels is never realized, and is always undermined by economic difficulties and ambitions. In fact, the novels, given the nature of the emotional bonds between the interested characters, would be better labeled as “lust-stories.” Indeed, there are no characters (outside of those from an older generation, parents, etc.) who are really capable of being romantically involved for an extended period. Through all his work, romantic interests are always accompanied by an element personal advancement. Bodies of women and men are valued and commoditized and suited for conquest.

Even what could possibly be read as the best representation “love” in *Rising Asia* between “you” and “pretty girl” is rendered impossible, at least until the end where the characters are elderly and beyond ambition, which shows the dysfunction of this love affair. We can see ambivalence in his married life even after the protagonist getting married with another woman he considers the pretty girl as an “archetype” for his wife which verifies his never dying or ending love for her. After getting married and having physical relations with his wife the protagonist says that because he still loves the pretty girl it is hard for him to love his wife fully. Nevertheless, he cannot stay with her owing to their commitment to their careers and non so selfish love. “Seeing reminders of the pretty girl in her, as though the pretty girl has become your archetypal women, of which your wife can only be a copy” (135). The protagonist is signifying that his original love of

the pretty girl is being copied in his relationship with his wife when he refers the pretty girl an archetype. “Archetypes” can also be an echoing theme as we can see this depiction of the pretty girl being an archetype is correct as she is a prevailing notion and obsession that the protagonist undergoes in the bulk portion of the novel. Similarly, even if the protagonist’s life and the pretty girl do not openly connected, she is always present during the course of the novel, attesting that she certainly is an archetype.

In “How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia”, the indirect narration contributes to the ambivalence. Narratively you are the protagonist who is going to fight the system of oppression and rise to the top. However, formally, this choice is already made for the reader, as the only way he or she can interact with the text is to keep reading, its linear structure not actually offering an alternative path to take or a choice to make at all.

These two elements, the metafictionality and the self-help genre, are intricately connected to produce the ambivalent and dubious selfhood of the protagonist in the text, and thus your (that is, the reader’s) potential to reflect his or her self-identity within the text. As we will see, the text forecloses the reader’s ability to truly impose any of his/her selfhood onto the text, which communicates to the reader that although a text is interacting with him, he may not affect the rigidity of the formal structure at all.

In her book review “Love and Ambition in a Cruel New World” in “The New York Times” *Michiko Kakutani* comments:

“Mr. Hamid’s new novel, “How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia,” also tells a compelling story that works on two levels — in this case as a deeply moving and highly specific tale of love and ambition, and as a larger, metaphorical look at the mind-boggling social and economic changes sweeping “rising Asia.”

“It is a measure of Mr. Hamid’s audacious talents that he manages to make his protagonist’s story work on so many levels. “You” is, at once, a modern-day Horatio Alger character, representing the desires and frustrations of millions in rising Asia; a bildungsroman hero, by turns knavish and recognizably human, who sallies forth from the provinces to find his destiny; and a nameless but intimately known soul, whose bittersweet romance with the pretty girl possesses a remarkable emotional power. With “How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia” Mr. Hamid reaffirms his place as one of his generation’s most inventive and gifted writers.”(Book Review)”

We can grasp ambivalence in “*How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*” comprehensively. The title shows ambivalence as this does not help in getting rich at all but it helps in knowing the truth of humanity. It helps us understand

the human race and its ultimate wish to be loved and die peacefully. We see the effort of a man to get his love in the story outwardly describing his effort of becoming rich. The titles of Chapters three and four are also showing ambivalence i.e., *Don't Fall in Love* and *Avoid Idealists*. These describe the contrary ideas to their titles; the protagonist falls in love and follows the idealists in these chapters instead. Title represents ambivalence; AS its "how to" style of the "self-help genre" make it more advance and sincerely cross-examines for the methods of helping oneself. It makes this question to the much more advanced level of what the term could signifies: "Why, for example, do you persist in reading that much praised, breathtakingly boring foreign novel, slogging through page after page after please-make-it-stop page of tar-slow prose and blush-inducing formal conceit, if not out of an impulse to understand distant lands that because of globalization are increasingly affecting life in your own? What is this impulse of yours, at its core, if not a desire for self-help?"

"Look, unless you're writing one, a self-help book is an oxymoron. You read a self-help book so someone who isn't yourself can help you, that someone being the author. This is true of the whole self-help genre. It's true of how-to books, for example. ... None of the foregoing means self-help books are useless ... But it does mean that the idea of self in the land of self-help is a slippery one." (Hamid 3)

This section poses a lot of questions and shows ambivalence. Is the writer trying to help the reader, or himself? He must necessarily help himself in order to help the reader, but if he fails to do so, will the reader fail?

In Wajahat Ali's interview with Mohsin Hamid "A Fake Self-Help Book on 'Getting Filthy Rich' in Asia" Hamid himself says:

"And in regards to the title *How To Get Filthy Rich In Rising Asia*, it's exactly what you said - those sorts of books are the ones people are reading in Karachi, Delhi, and Lahore. There are more self-help nonfiction books being read than literary fiction.

So, I'm willing to play with this idea. In a sense the book is about how to get filthy rich in rising Asia, but it also isn't.(Global)"

"*Jim Cullen*" in the book-review puts in, "It (*How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*) is a wonderful love story, an eloquent case study of the pros and cons of family nepotism as a society safety net and a brilliant expose of the inner workings of military/industrial / governmental corruption (Cullen, 2013)." This exhibits that the writer has intentionally propelled satire on the nation's sad condition of political and administrative subjects. "*William Skidelsky*" pointed out the first word of the novel's title in an interesting way. He writes, "Hamid adds extra satirical bite to this tale

by presenting it in the guise of an inspirational 'how to' guide, of the sort that has become popular in sub-continental Asia (Skidelsky 2013)." He considered it an effective mockery. The novel gets more generality by the method of not naming people and places. Like he observes, "And the truth is that How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia, while effective as satire, works less well on the human level. The basic problem is that the generalizing tendency of self-help (a genre whose goal is to suggest that we are basically all the same) rubs up against literature's need for specificity (Skidelsky 2013)."

The whole scheme of Self-Help book shows the ambivalence. Each chapter starts with this self-help style but it is not a self-help book at all like itself says:

"THIS BOOK, I MUST NOW CONCEDE, MAY NOT HAVE been the very best of guides to getting rich in rising Asia. An apology is no doubt due. But at this last juncture, apologies alone can achieve little. For more useful, I propose, to address ourselves to our inevitable exit strategies, yours and mine, preparation, in this life long case, being most of the battle." (Hamid 219)

This novel presents the story of a person who could be anyone among us. The wishes and struggle of the main character are the wishes of any person in the contemporary Asia. The struggle of the main unnamed character "YOU" shows the motive and psychology behind these. "YOU," the un-named protagonist, is not a primarily nice character. The story emerges as dim reading by the style of narration by an impassive narrator. However, he is absolutely convincing as in the third world where prevailing poverty drains individuals and influences nearly every feature of society with problems of morals.

"Witness the final reversal. The book ends with you, the hero, in your eighth decade, a Gatsby we never knew: an old man in a hotel room, trying to remember to take his medicines regularly. And as it turns out, there is still something left to learn, something more vital than how to get Filthy Rich. You teach us how to lose. How to relinquish health and hope; how to surrender assets to thieving relatives and one's children to America. "Slough off your wealth, like an animal molting in the autumn," Hamid writes. Look up the pretty girls of your youth. Find someone to play cards with. "Have an exit strategy."(Sunday Book Review)"

Ambivalence can even be considered positive. If it can be supposed of as a "Check and Balance System" when it becomes unbalanced, then the overall entity is not involved too far some direction. The inner struggle serves as the alteration of the entity. We humans and possibly everything is ambivalent. Ambivalence indicates the presence of two contradictory conflicts or struggles or needs, thoughts, tastes, values or descriptions. As already said it is normally believed that there are frequent such conflicts going on most of the time in all of us.

## CONCLUSION

The work under study concludes that under the process of reading this novel through psychological perspective, one achieves a sense of the universality of human existence. It can be seen through the presence of ambivalence not only in the characters but also in the narration of the novel. This ambivalence leads to the learning that the humanity of a person gets brought into relief from the co-existence of flaws and virtues. For example, the protagonist deceives customers about the authenticity of his product; kickbacks government officials; employs men based on nepotism; and commits other immoral or hasty actions. Yet he somehow upholds our empathy throughout. Why? His faults are rationalized with an air of fairness, and he upholds several other virtues as well. Real persons are a combination of the good and bad. This study explores this nuance in the novel through a wide lens. We see both flaw and virtue, and it reminds us of ourselves, and makes the entire story feel related.

One assumption comes at the end of this, which can be subject of another research that these Freudian theories can also be applied to Hamid himself in order to comprehend his psychological concentration and its effect on his writing. The application of Freud's psychology to works of Hamid such as "Moth Smoke", "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" and "How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia" demonstrate an appealing look into the roots of the psychological field. It highlights to a great extent, on the psychological condition during which Hamid was writing these novels. The resemblances, between the characters he portrays and himself, are very outstanding. It can become field of interest for the psychoanalytic researchers, focusing on the state of mind of author.



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