

DILEMMA OF WESTERNISATION AND MODERNISATION IN ORHAN PAMUK'S THE MUSEUM OF INNOCENCE

Geeta Shree

Research Scholar

HNB Garhwal University, India.

Abstract

Modernization, theoretically, refers to a model of an evolutionary transition from a 'pre-modern' or traditional to a 'modern' society. Historians link Modernization to the processes of urbanization and industrialization as well as to the spread of education. Instead of being dominated by tradition, societies, undergoing the process of Modernization, typically arrive at governance dictated by abstract principles. On the other hand is the theory of Westernization wherein societies come under, or adopt the Western culture as they try to progress in terms of industry, army, technology, politics, lifestyle and philosophy. From a comparative standpoint, Turkey is the most suitable country to study the alternative paths to modernity. Pamuk's, The Museum of Innocence, is set in the 1970s. There was a charm for leading a western style of living. The novel is woven around a tender love story but along with this writer cleverly brings out the growing craze for the west. While talking about the love between Kemal and Fusun he explains how the process of Westernization has influenced the Turkish society. Present paper seeks to establish that there has been a state of constant confusion for the Turkish society where they could not get a clear picture of which way to follow as it was very difficult for them to throw away their values at once and follow something that was not their own. So they just put Western and Eastern things together but could not go far away in this approach.

Key Words: *Modernisation, Westernisation, Turkey, Melancholy, Social change, Illusion, Dreams*

DILEMMA OF WESTERNISATION AND MODERNISATION IN ORHAN PAMUK'S THE MUSEUM OF INNOCENCE

- Geeta Shree

Modernization, theoretically, refers to a model of an evolutionary transition from a 'pre-modern' or traditional to a 'modern' society. Historians link modernization to the process of urbanization and industrialization as well as to the spread of education. Instead of being dominated by tradition, societies, undergoing the process of modernization, typically arrive at governance dictated by abstract principles. In some cases traditional religious beliefs and cultural traits usually become less important as modernization takes hold, whereas westernization is a process whereby societies come under, or adopt the western culture as they try to progress in terms of industry, army, technology, politics, lifestyle, language, religion and philosophy. Westernization has been a pervasive and accelerating influence across the world in the last few centuries. It is usually a two-sided process in which western influence and interests themselves are joined by a wish of at least parts of the affected society to change towards a more westernized society in the hope of attaining western life or some aspects of it. According to a Turkish historian, S. Alpay in his book, *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, states;

An aspiration to Westernize and to become part of the West is mixed with certain ambiguity towards the West. Rightist and leftists, secularist and Islamists, liberals and conservatives all share a certain feeling of mistrust and suspicion towards the west, which may be partly explained by Turkey's historical experiences about the western powers. (70)"

Modernization emerged in the late nineteenth century and was popular especially among scholars in the mid twentieth century. The theory stressed the importance of societies being open to change and it saw reactionary forces as restricting development. According to the theories of modernization each society can develop from traditionalism, they follow similar paths. More modern states are wealthier and powerful and their citizen free with a higher standard of living. As described in the present novel under study the protagonist hails from a wealthy business family so he enjoys certain liberties, like breaking his engagement and regular visits to Fusun's family despite her marriage.

Modernization includes a favourable attitude towards urban-industrial society, belief in mankind's ability to improve the environment and condition of life, belief in obligation to intervene in the economic and social affairs. Thus, it can be said that modernization is a practical process and westernization is the state of mind which can be referred to the effects of western expansion and colonialism on native societies.

From a comparative stand point, Turkey is the most suitable country for studying alternative paths to modernity. The irony of Turkish experience is that Turkish elites have unambiguously adopted the West as their reference point and modernization has typically been interpreted as being identical to westernization developing close, organic relation with Europe was a natural corollary of this style of modernization. Westernization, in Turkish context meant a commitment to reach not only the standards of economic, scientific and technological development of the west but to establish a secular and democratic political order. Yet, the process of top-down modernization that Turkey experienced has created tensions not only domestically within a predominantly Muslim society but also in her encounters with Europe.

In the *Museum of Innocence* there is a mesmerizing meditation on love and loss in a bygone Istanbul. The novel depicts some traces of melancholy too. Through the word 'melancholy' is usually referred to sadness, suffering and depression, it also has other associations with meanings like creative energy, brilliance, thoughtfulness and in some cases, idleness. Pamuk uses melancholy in two distinct senses. One of them is the common association with the feeling of loss. The other, less explicit one is connected to the city's landscape. Pamuk refers to the literary implications of early twentieth century literature of Istanbul. During that time, melancholy was fairly common term in everyday Turkish as well as in prominent novels, poems and cultural magazines. The new life that was constructed in Ankara in the early twentieth century as a sign of the new Turkish republic resonated with a melancholic echo in Istanbul. This perspective can, indeed also be defined as a melancholy that arises as a consequence of the asymmetric relations operating during the moment of Modernization and Westernization of Turkey.

Museum of Innocence (MOI) is set in the 1970s. It was the time of rapid social change in Turkey, when the city's population exploded and its trade with the west intensified. There was a charm for leading a western style of living. In this atmosphere of 'change' there goes a love story between a rich businessman and a beautiful poor girl. Though the main track of the novel is the tender love story, still with the help of characters Pamuk showcases the craze for the West; along with the saga he describes the fears, trends and living style of the so called elite class of Turkey. In eighty three chapters, the protagonist, a

privileged Istanbul resident named Kemal Basmaci, the scion of a prominent Istanbul family which owns the business Satsat, tells of his obsession for Fusun, a beautiful shop girl and distant, poor relative. The story of this ill-fated passion is preceded by a map of the city. The city is on exhibit, the romantic touch of decaying wooden houses, the sturdy apartments of the nouveaux riches, the postcard views of shimmering golden horn. Throughout the novel, Kemal is the narrator and this often reminds that he is describing every incident of details from memory. As stated earlier the time period of this novel under study is of 1970s, which was a time of rapid social change. It was during this phase that city's population exploded and its trade with the west intensified. The novel begins with the chapter named, "The happiest moment of my life." The book expands around this moment as its protagonist begins gathering moments that remind him of the bliss he experienced at a glance at a quarter to three in the afternoon of Monday, May 26, 1975. His and the novel's painstaking collection of objects, memories, vistas and characters attempt unsuccessfully to recreate this once known reality of being "beyond sin and guilt," in a world "released from gravity and time" (Pamuk, *Museum of Innocence* 10). During that afternoon, an upper-class young man named Kemal made love to Fusun who was his distant, poorer cousin and also a shop girl. He was thirty she was eighteen. The lovers met in cluttered Merhamet apartments. This flat was abandoned by Kemal's mother and she used it as a storage space. The whole set up describes the atmosphere laden with the air of love: The spring breeze lifted the curtains. Fusun discovered that she had lost an earring. Pamuk shows how this event becomes the focal point of a passion that outlasts both the lovers themselves and Istanbul as they lived and experienced it.

The novel is cleverly constructed as a fictive museum of memories. As the reader progresses through the clutter of Kemal's personal recollections, kaleidoscopically refract different facets and faces of Fusun. Pamuk's art of masterly storytelling convincingly portrays how a simple tryst comes to redefine Kemal's life. This long love story stretches with different incidents where Kemal frequently visits Fusun. On the other hand engagement preparations with Sibel are also going on. Here a conflict of love and society are clearly emerging. Kemal, before meeting Fusun, was already seeing Sibel as she was the one chosen for him by his mother. His confusion can be related with the social pressure as well as his inner will.

Preparation for the engagement party rooms for many chapters while Kemal's enchantment with the beautiful Fusun blossoms. In between Kemal describes the mementos of his affair, a hairclip, a cup Fusun touched, and an earring (which he keeps collecting). In the engagement party Kemal turns out to be a confused person as he is very

happy to have Sibel, a girl of his own class, as his fiancé. At the same time he looks for fun sun around because somewhere he has love flame kindling inside for her.

After sometimes Fusun suddenly disappears from the scene. Kemal first goes to shop and then to her house in search of Fusun. Her continuous disappearance awakened Kemal to the depth of his attachment to her, prompting an increasingly desperate quest to track her down in the hope of recovering his lost happiness. In his museum he has displayed the clock and some matchsticks and matchbooks to suggest how he spends the slow ten or fifteen minutes to accept that Fusun will not come to the apartment. For quite a long stretch of time Kemal tries several ways to bring life to a normal track by reading books, concentrating on business projects, and above all, depending more on Sibel. The story moves in a snail speed, in between Sibel leaves for Paris without her fiancée, Kemal. Later when she returns, she meets Kemal for some serious conversation including issues like virginity. Their discussion over such topic is also a sign of modernity as somewhere they know that their traditions don't allow them to have such open discussions. Even if certain sections of Turkish society were following western lifestyle still they were tied to the hooks of traditions.

Obstinately unrelenting Kemal decides to pursue his love in an eight year odyssey that transports him into an Istanbul diametrically opposite to the posh, upscale neighbourhood of his birth. His visits to Fusun's family, in the shanty towns the backwater districts where he finds comfort in the middleclass life of television dinners and casual yet earnest discussions. For years at Fusun's home, Kemal watches with the family everything Turkish television has to offer. The contrast is between the dying Turkish aristocracy and the new entertainment of television and movies. He compulsively steals any object associated with Fusun during all these years. In a way Kemal seems to be continued that he can win her back by drinking the cup of humiliation to its bitterest dregs, he befriends Fusun's parents and spends the next nine years as an increasingly pathetic appendage to the family. He even goes to the limits of abandoning his friends, mismanaging his business and letting his former glided existence fall steadily into ruin. The novel progresses very slowly with every event taking a good span of time. Fusun becoming ambitious, to her divorce with husband Feridun and at last situations towards marriage of Fusun with Kemal. After all these years of wait finally comes a moment when things are favouring this love story. Kemal's mother gets ready to marry both of them with a condition that there will be no engagement, just a small affair with family and friends. Before marriage the couple (Kemal & Fusun) decides to go for a Europe trip. But even before they can actually reach Paris, Fusun meets an accident. The story comes to a tragic end. For Kemal her memories become the dreams of the past.

The museum of innocence is a love story with the impact of the process of westernization by the Turkish society. He implicitly criticizes the ruling elite in the 'westernized' Turkish society. While talking about the love between Kemal and Fusun, Pamuk clears the picture that, "(t) his is love in a semi-repressed society, where communication between men and women is limited, where sex outside of marriage especially before marriage is also a taboo. What Pamuk tries to emphasize is that even though the Turkish people have undergone a series of reforms to approach the western society, what they have learned so far is still something superficial. *Museum of Innocence* can be understood as a love story but it says more than just love. Kemal's obsession is heroic, appealing and utterly sympathetic, while all the normal modes of living, of whatever class, are all shams. The author has destroyed almost all illusions Turkish society must have held about itself since the Kemalist has left something in its place revolution eighty years ago, but has left something in its place.

Works Cited

Alpay, S. *Turkey and the West: Changing Political And Cultural Identities.*

Ed. M. Herper and H. Kramer, London: I.B Jarrsis Co. Ltd, 1993. Print

Pamuk, Orhan. *The Museum of Innocence.* Trans. Maureen Freely. London : Faber &Faber Ltd., 2008. Print.

Electronic sources: "Orhan Pamuk's Museum of obsession, Innocence"

Washington D.C. September 2009. Web. 3 January 2011.

(<<http://www.nr.org/templates/story/mui>>)

Journal of Higher Education & Research Society