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Dr. Saad Abd Saadoon

Lecture, Department of
English, University of
Thi-Qar/ College of Education
for Humanities, Iraq

Herd instinct in Naqvi's home boy

Dr. Saad Abd Saadoon

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Abstract

This study deals with Naqvi's novel Home Boy (2009) in light of the psychological term "herd instinct" that is adopted naturally by characters in the novel to feel safe in the middle of critical or hard times they have been in. The research is built on answering questions involve: How is herd instinct revealed throughout the events of the novel? Which characters can represent the term? What benefit does the feeling of herd instinct offer to characters that demonstrate it? How far feelings of comfort can overcome the feelings of fear through sticking to groups of similar conditions? the study ends with a conclusion sums up the findings.

Keywords: Herd instinct; Naqvi, home boy

Introductions

Throughout an individual's suffering of different crises, there are ways, cases, locations, and persons one may attend to find safety. One of these cases and the most natural behavior is the tendency to the group to which a person belongs due to the feeling of "herd instinct". The word "herd", according to Cambridge dictionary (2022) ^[5, 6] means a large group of people regarded as one unit. To Merriam Webster Dictionary (2022) ^[13], the word refers to a typically large group of animals or people. At another place, the word includes the common people, masses, rabble, etc (Dictionary.com, 2022) ^[8].

In the same domain, the word "instinct", as defined by Cambridge English Dictionary (2022) ^[8], the way creatures naturally react or behave spontaneously. Merriam-Webster (2022) ^[13] dictionary, to keep on, demonstrates the word as an act of action in response to a stimulus that is inborn capacity rather than experienced. Once more, Britannica Dictionary (2022) ^[4] presents the term as a way of behaving, thinking, or feeling of unlearned natural desire or tendency. in other words, a complex of unlearned responses characteristic of a species.

To combine the two stems, it is the term "herd instinct" that refers to the instinct or urge to be one of a group and to conform to its standards of conduct and opinion (Miller-Keane, 2003) ^[14]. It is the tendency or inclination to band together with and share the customs of others of a group, and to conform to the opinions and adopt the views of the group (Farlex Partner, 2012) ^[9].

At the outset, the term "herd instinct" has various meanings used according to the field in which it is referred to. Sigmund Freud, claims that, as Bocock (2002, p. 97) ^[3] explains, "there is a collective unconscious desire to arrange social groups, and societies into this type of group structure. This group structure which lurks behind all human societies is the *primal horde*, the concept Freud had first developed from Darwin". William Hamilton (1971) ^[11], a biological theorist, in the same sequence, introduces "selfish herd instinct theory" in which he hypothesizes that individuals of a group are trying to dive deeply into the center of the group to obtain safety for they know that the danger is up at the edge like sheep behavior. Richards (2015) ^[16] points out that a person tends to seek out safety and avoid risk through the instinct that informs an individual to be safe is to stay with the group as the best way to survive.

In Freud's explanations of herd instincts, there is a reference to Trotter's portrayal of the term as the latter deals with it as a mental phenomenon, showing it occurring in groups of herd instinct ("gregariousness") that is innate in species. Trotter, as Freud keeps on, lists examples of these instincts which he considers as primary such as these of self-preservation, of nutrition, of sex, and of the herd.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Saad Abd Saadoon

Lecture, Department of
English, University of
Thi-Qar/ College of Education
for Humanities, Iraq

Totter also develops from the herd instinct the brutal forces which psycho-analysis has displayed to exist in the ego. On the other hand, communication takes its importance to its ability for shared understanding in the herd, and upon it the identification of the persons with one another largely rests. To Freud, one feels 'incomplete' if he is alone. The horror shown by small kids would seem already to be an image of this herd instinct. The herd instinct would demonstrate to be something primary or natural. Freud shows that Trotter's model of herd instinct neglects the role of the leader in a group that in the expressions of Freud: it is impossible to grasp the nature of a group if the leader is disregarded. Thus the concept appears of social and psychological feelings. (Freud, 1955).

The Novelist and the Novel: A General View 2

Hussain M. Naqvi (b. 1974) is a Pakistani writer who was born in London and grew up in Karachi. He received degrees in economics and English literature from Georgetown University (1996). He spent most of his time among major cities: Karachi, New York and London. He wrote novels, poems, articles and alike. He was a hardworking who works and writes at the same time. In last years since 2007, he has situated in Karachi and worked on reportage as well as in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Really, he is a writer of several literary sorts including contemporary Pakistani art and minorities. He is the winner of several prizes in literature (Waterman, 2020) [18]. Deccan Herald, as (cited in Naqvi, 2012, p. V) [15], claims that:

Naqvi is a serious writer, and an effective one. In the rush of 9/11 literature, his novel is a singular voice that tells a story allowing a slow influence of political events, rather than foregrounding the terrorist attack and building a story around it (p. V)

As cited in (Naqvi, 2012) [15], *Home Boy* is criticized by *USA Today* as a "slam-dunk for H. M. Naqvi" (p. iv). *The New York Times* is also sheds light on the novel as that a work "is at once immigrant narrative, bildungsroman and New York City novel, with a dash of the picaresque... a remarkably engaging novel that delights as it disturbs" (p. iv). In an interview, Naqvi replies on a question concerning whether *Home Boy* belongs to: the American or the Pakistani literature: "Home Boy is many things. It's an American novel that features Pakistanis; at the same time, it's a bildungsroman, an immigrant narrative that subverts the conventions of the respective tropes" (quoted in Naqvi, 2012, p. iv) [15].

Home Boy is set in post-9/11 New York. It tells the story of three young Pakistani men who view themselves to be New Yorkers; then they are arrested and treated by the police as terrorists. Chuck (Shehzad) is an immigrant into America, who comes to New York to study literature, leaving behind a widowed mother in Karachi. He begins by presenting his life in pre-9/11 through the free-living, eating, drinking, and behaving like an American- a way of survival that he and his two friends AC (Ali Chaudry) – an immigrant who pursues his 'on-and-off-again doctorate' (p.3) and Jimbo (Jamshed) are used to. The three men are tied together by their ethnicity, religion and cultural background though they are Americans in identity. *Home Boy*, is a "monologue novel," retold from the perspective of Chuck.

Daily-Bruckner (2016) [7] explains that Ali Chaudry (AC) is a green card holder, Jamshed Khan (Jimo) is a "bonafide

American" (p.3) who was born and raised in New Jersey, and Shehzad (Chuck), a typical successful immigrant man comes from Karachi to attend college in New York on a student visa. Chuck finishes college early and gets a job "at a big bank that had just become bigger" (p.35), voicing the success of pre-9/11 America as a space where immigrants can early find a good job; consequently he brings his mother from Karachi and "live happily ever after like a happy, all-American family" (p.32). After September 11, 2001, the economy starts to cut out, Chuck loses his job. After a period of such depression, Chuck finds himself at a Pakistani restaurant at one night, drinking with a company of taxi drivers, declaring "I want to become a cab driver" (p.38). The three "Metrostanis" (p. 14) have the courage to claim the place as their own. But when they travel on a trip to the hinterland weeks after 9/11 in search of their friend Shaman, who disappears into thin air, they find themselves in a changed situation in America. Here, the feeling of herd instinct works strongly. It helps the three men to feel safe as one is near the other a well as their search of their friend emphasis this natural desire. They share the same fear and critical conditions; at the same time one tries to give courage to another.

Naqvi's *Home Boy* in terms of Herd Instinct

The feeling of herd instinct is considered as one of the most important psychological drivers of human behavior. It has a major role in controlling the behaviors of human beings, who have a high sensitivity against any threat. Sensing any threat or danger in the surrounding environment stimulates the herd instinct of the individuals to act quickly without long thinking, as fear changes our behavior and judgment on things. To depict an example, if the a man of passed centuries noticed something that suggested a danger, fear controlled his decisions to go beyond the limits of his logical thinking- to be with a group.

Man's awareness of himself and his role as an independent subject is related to his levels of cognitive and learning awareness. The more awareness a person becomes, the more he abandons his instinctive behavior, searching for the herd that adopted in the hidden feelings of the psychology of the species.

Accordingly, *Home Boy's* immigrant characters that live in diaspora practice naturally the case of seeking to be with the similar herd to obtain safety. The novel narrates the experience of Chuck (Shehzad), Jimbo, and AC. They are arrested by the FBI agents on terrorism charges. The crisis broke out as a result of the changing circumstances after September 11 at New York City in which they have become pariahs after it previously embraced them as its own. As "self-invented and self-made" (p.1) persons who have their "fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (p.1), they look forward to be recognized as global citizens with their original roots (AlZayad, 2016, p. 71) [1]. However, to be together sharing the same problem can help them to overcome their fair/horror of the unknown that awaits them. Being together in such situation activates their feelings of herd instincts to help them to seek refuge.

The protagonist, Chuck, begins his continuous account by:

We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo, and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic. (p. 1).

Chuck (Shehzad) is a recent immigrant from Pakistan, while AC and Jimbo are longer settled in America. Yet the three are of the same origin.

The outset lines of *Home Boy* express the narrator's frustration and the discrimination in social and racial class among multicultural societies. Al Zayed (2016) ^[19], in this sense, explains that the "lifestyle that chuck and his friends take as a talisman against the persecutory mechanism of the state apparatus is leveled off by sweeping cultural and religious homogenization in the post-9/11 united states"(pp. 70-71).

The first lines refer to the generalizations of the multicultural races who are regarded together with other Muslims as a source of disorder and must be brought under the control of the state.

However, the three persons look forward to be recognized as global citizens with their original roots (AlZayad, 2016) ^[1]. Mansoor (2012, p. 8) ^[12] proclaims that "Before the 9/11 debacle, the USA was seen as the Promised Land for political exiles and migrants. Yet history proves that the Japanese, the Jews, and the Black Americans had faced an uphill task integrating into American society". Thus, within this new community, each folk tends to the members of its race.

Initially, Chuck is regarded as pro-American. He has integrated with the American races "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (p.4). Yet, he cannot isolate himself from the qualities he shares with his original country:

We listened to Nusrat and the new generation of native rockers, as well as old school gangsta rap, so much so that we were known to spontaneously break into Straight outta Compton,... From a gang called Niggaz With Attitude but were overwhelmed by hip-hop's hegemony... Though we shared a common denominator and were told half-jokingly, Oh, all you Pakistanis are alike, we weren't the same (pp.1-2).

Mansoor (2012, p. 22) observes that Chuck is fluctuating "between US brands and Pakistani food, between locales like Rothman, Lincoln Plaza and Clifton Beach and Bundoo Khan". He also mentions his circle friends: Tja, Roger, Faiz, Ari. He displays the way in which they are gathered in groups, never know the discrimination and racism found in American society between the blacks and the whites. And so you have Jimbo the desi Rastafarian DJ who serves up "curried riddims" (p. 7). The third angle of the trio, AC is a smoker, dooper, coker, rapper and self-appointed political analyst and resident expert on all matters contentious. The three Pakistani young men fancy themselves as renaissance men. After the event, changes cover everywhere. They give up their lifestyle to watch CNN/ TV all day, feeling "anxious and low and getting cabin fever." (p.7). Eventually, They schedule for a road trip to look for a friend.

Naqvi's young Pakistanis characters are displayed as "privy to the imperatives of wild men and the goings-on in far-flung arenas of the world" (14). They are attacked as "Arab" (p.30), a word ironically becomes "like a dagger thrust and turned" (p.30), yet they seem more intended to the violent condition of American multicultural low class (Banita, 2012, p. 205) ^[2].

Chuck realizes "Things were changing" (p.31). "I didn't know where or who I was" (p.32). He was fired from his job in the bank. He and his friends may all be taken as the marginalized communities on New York. The neighbors

called the police to them. Mansoor (2012) ^[12] includes that after 9/11 USA, Pakistanis like Chuck faced a dual burdens due to their religious association with Islam. They feel their otherness. For example, after the event, Chuck and his friends are suspected for being "terrorists." They are arrested for forty-eight hours on a charge of terrorist intent and for breaking into Shah's estate; one of them begins to discuss the Japanese imprisonment. On this occasion, Banita (2012) ^[2] Demonstrates that Naqvi's is only in a series of novels that have shifted the focus of post-9/11 literature from debates on American domestic affairs to a set of questions by which writers attempt to locate the post-9/11 experience in space and time (p. 206).

Shanthi (2016) ^[17] observes that *Home Boy* deals with racism directed against immigrant Muslims in general and Pakistani Muslims in particular who are all reduced to the 'other'. The critic reflects the novelist's observation of word "Arab" that denotes, according to the context of the novel, 'mutated overnight' (p. 92).

They failed to be homeboys. Despite trying every means to become homeboys they are not able to as their behavior is 'defined by certain contexts' (p.93). Chuck is driven to seek solace in his religion. "Islam" becomes a means of resistance for the traumatized individual.

The news in programmes that Chuck watches while at Shaman's home gives a practical sample of this fact. The story of Ansar Mehmood's arrest is narrated as: "the FBI found that Mehmood had no terrorist objectives, an investigation revealed he had assisted some friends who had overstayed their visas, making him guilty of harbouring illegal immigrants..." (p. 115) to Chuck's situation, since his visa was nearing its expiry date and he too was helping friends. They are tied by inborn conditions activated by their herd instincts. However, Chuck realizes that being Pakistani "no matter what [he] did, [he] couldn't change the way [he] was perceived" (p.130).

While the FBI arrests AC, Jimbo, and Chuck. The three men are transported to the "Metropolitan Detention Center... DMC" (p. 133). They are interrogated through a system as a much more of American way instead of a terrorist charge, as Daily-Bruckner (2016) ^[7] explains that "one by spilling his guts in exchange for freedom, the next by being booked on illegal substance rather than terrorism charges, and the third by having a political favor called in by an old college friend of the governor's" (p. 228). The critic adds that "if this system represents America, Naqvi's protagonist is most certainly not on board". (p. 228).

Chuck's car ride with the Feds ('Do it here! Barf, buddy, barf!' (p. 132)). The scene of his interrogation: 'You're not American!' he's told, 'You got no fucking rights.' (p.135). The three friends are dragged away to a dishonorable imprisonment center where Chuck is asked why, as a 'Moos-lem' he still drinks alcohol.

The interrogation itself reflects the dual relation with the opponent which Baudrillard has referred to. Grizzly. Chuck was accused of being terrorist due to his being a Muslim. After his being free of jail, Chuck asks his friends, a previously told by the officer who called Grizzly (p. 143), to "Go home, boy!" (p. 150). And so he does. This emphasizes their tie of herd instinct. Daily-Bruckner (2016) ^[7] declares that:

Poetically, by drawing on *Catcher*, Naqvi emphasizes the American whiteness [...] to illustrate just how far-removed Chuck has become from his ethnic identity during his

coming –of –age journey. It is in this moment that Chuck reaches his own, personal, very black-and-white decision to cut ties with America and return home to Pakistan in order to reclaim his ethnicity. (p.228)

According to the above quote, it is clear that an individual's original tribe, people, land, nation, are the important factors that endowed feelings of safety more than one's ambition and dreams of wealth. However, Chuck, the protagonist, realizes that the awakening is harsh: "I understood that just like three black men were gangbangers, and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell. And later, much later, the pendulum would swing back, and everybody would celebrate progress, the storied tradition of accommodation, on TV talk shows and posters in middle schools. There would be ceremonies, public apologies, cardboard displays." (p. 153). Thus, the experiences in jail instill in him a sense of reality and makes him shed the last element of Americanness that he took pride in possessing/performing his original tradition.

Examples of seeking herd instinct is when Chuck, after his release from the jail, at Washington Square Park where people from seemingly every nation on earth suddenly descend to blend into one writhing, jiving mass. 'It became a free for all' (p. 206) Chuck muses; as has America itself, one supposes, though it's probably safe to assume that that is not what the forefathers had in mind when they dubbed it the land of the free. And winding back to that element of duality, though the home of the brave has its huddled masses who can celebrate the similarities among "salam," and "sholom" and "salami" (p. 224), Chuck also comes to a realization, like for example, that 'You were a squatter all this time, not an original settler.' p. 264). He decides to go back to his homeland. Chuck packs for his departure to Pakistan. He departs after a great struggle. Daily-Bruckner (2016) [7] draws: "Naqvi's protagonist requires a more radical change in order to reclaim his full identity; he therefore chooses, even when offered a good life in America, to return home to Pakistan". (p.229).

In a struggle, as an example, Amo, Jimbo's sister whom he always attracted, She does not want him to return to Pakistan, but Chuck now sees America as a police state:

[...] there's sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring,... but now I'm afraid of the, I'm afraid all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, maybe it'll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe,... history will keep repeating itself..." "I want to come home, Ma" (p.262).

After reading in a newspaper about the death of his missing friend Mohammed Shah (Shaman), Chuck remarks: "there was no mention of the ship jumping, as pimping, porn watching, cigarette running ... and there was no mention of us. The story was simple, black-and-white." (270). Apparently, in spite of his being away, his instincts still in contact with those who share with them the same critical conditions.

In the final pages, Chuck, who now referred to by his real name, Shehzad, "spread the rug from the suitcase" (271), "positioned generally east, toward Mecca, recited the call to prayer" and then "when it was time to go, [he] ... left" (. 271).

Daily-Bruckner (2016, p. 229) [7] concludes that "*Home boy* leaves readers with an ending that equally signals a new

beginning, a reclaiming that had been suppressed by contemporary America". In the same domain, Mansoor (2012, 8) [12] sees that Chuck's returning to his religion-Islam- reveals feelings of adopting his original identity.

Conclusion

Throughout the events of the novel, Chuck faces huge dilemmas politically, socially and psychologically. The only refuge for him is to be with those who share them everlasting similarities, which in psychology can be occurred within the group of herd instincts. Eventually, Chuck has to make a real decision: to stay in America or to go back.

To answer the questions given initially, the analysis demonstrates the following answers:

1. How is herd instinct revealed throughout the events of the novel? It is revealed the bond and tendency among Muslim characters especially Chuck and his friends.
2. Which characters can represent the term? They are the characters of similar ethnicity especially those of Islamic religion and Asian origin.
3. What benefit does the feeling of herd instinct offer to characters that demonstrate it? The characters can obtain safety and feelings of courage and comfort when they being in a group together in the middle of critical conditions.

How far feelings of comfort can overcome the feelings of fear through sticking to groups of similar conditions? to the point that Chuck leaves his American dream of wealth and high position and returning back to his religion, mother, and homeland.

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