



**REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS' CONDITION IN AMERICA
AFTER 9/11 INCIDENT: POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF THE NOVEL
'THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST'**

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Abstract:

The present study compares the conditions of protagonist of the novel, Changez, with the colonized nation. The study shows the place of Muslims and Muslim countries in the eyes of Americans after 9/11 incident. Changez as postcolonial subject represents the state of the Muslims, colonized by Europeans. In America his way of living represents him hybrid, who, leaving his native culture adopts the culture of another country. 'Other' is the most important element of postcolonial theory found in the novel. After 9/11 incident, Changez feels that he is 'other' means not fully human. Americans' changing attitude makes him diaspora. Before the fall of World Trade Centre, he never remembered his home. As a nativist, he has beard in protest and leaving his job comes back to Pakistan. Moreover, research will describe the values and demands of the Muslims who were well settled in America since long? The paper will focus on the sudden changing attitude of Americans to Muslims after 9/11 incident.

Keywords: hybridity, other, diaspora (unhomed) and nativism

1. Introduction

Changez is undoubtedly a post-colonial subject. His condition is far more complex than any colonized nation. He is free but everywhere he is in chains. He is hung up between fire and water. After the incident of World Trade Centre he wants to be back but his family ignores his request. On one hand, his family, his beloved Erica, his ideal job and luxurious life prevent him to be back and on the other hand, Americans' changing attitude, America's cruel attack on Afghanistan and Indo-Pak tense relation compel him to be back. Changez, after completing his graduation from Preston University, gets job in prestigious worth Assessment Company named Underwood Samson. He is satisfied with his life; enjoying life as an American. He has adopted American culture. He wears clothes, deals in like an American. He falls in love with Erica; he loves her from the core of his heart. Everything was going on peacefully as it had gone on, but 9/11 incident

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brought earthquake in his life. On media the news of 9/11 incident spread like the fire of forest and it highlighted that Al-Qaida an Islamic religious extremist group attacked World Trade Centre. Their Physical appearance generated hatred in the hearts of Americans for Muslims. Though Changez did not belong to Al-Qaida, he was sincere with America and his job. But his beard put him into hot water. People stared at him, called his names and behaved him unfriendly. His colleagues compelled him to think that where he had come. Now he began to feel himself unhommed. In revenge, America attacked Afghanistan. As Muslim and Pakistani, he started abhorring America because Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbor and fellow Muslim nation. Just to finish a few people of Al-Qaida many innocent were killed. On the other hand, India's attack on LOC grows tension for his country. Because of these incidents, he could not concentrate on his job and failed to achieve the assigned target. So, on this ground he was fired from the firm. He experienced and understood that for him America had become unsuitable place. He came back to Pakistan and joined University as a lecturer.

2. Research Question

How has Mohsin Hamid presented the condition of Muslims in America after 9/11 incident in his novel: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?

3. Methodology

3.1 Descriptive Qualitative Research

The present research in its nature is qualitative and employs textual-narrative analysis of the novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" from the vantage point of Postcolonial Literary Discourse. The collected data for the present paper are descriptive and narrative. Therefore, the qualitative tools like definition, explanation, interpretation are employed to analyze the data and draw generalization and conclusion.

According to Kothari the writer of "*Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*" discusses the major purposes of the descriptive research and description of the state of affairs as present. The research can report what has happened or what is happening. (Kothari, 2008, p.3). Moreover, in the eyes of Calmorin et al (2007) descriptive research is to find new truth. According to his deep study in the field of research methodology, "*truth may have different forms such as increased quality of knowledge, a new generalization or a new „law“, an increased insight into factors which are operating the discovery of new causal relationship, a more accurate formulation of the problem to be solved and many others*" (p.70)

3.2 Post-Colonial Literary Discourse Research Method

So far as Postcolonial Literary Discourse Research Method is concerned Ashcroft et al. (1989) maintains the very momentous aspect of this literary discourse in which Indians have been colonized and made them slave in their own territory. One of the greatest

postcolonial theorists Homi K. Bhabha describes that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized Third World come to be framed in the West (Bhabha in P. Mongia, 1997, p. ix). The treatment of English people with native people has microscopically been studied in the light of postcolonial theory. The elements of postcolonial theory which the present paper has selected are Other, Diaspora, Nativism, and Hybridity. These aspects of postcolonial literary discourse are very much relevant to the textual study of the novel *"The Reluctant Fundamentalist"*.

4. Data Analysis / Discussion

4.1 Hybridity

Hybridity shows combination of two products. In literature, hybridism is used to represent the character knotted between two cultures. Any character who leaves his own native culture and adopts another's culture called hybrid. MR Habib says *"the nation hybrid is central to Bhabha's work in challenging nations of identity, culture and nation as coherent. Hybridity express a state of 'in betweenness' an in person who stands between two cultures."* (Habib, 750) This characteristic of hybridism is found in the character of Changez. He is basically a Pakistani, loves his country very much. On scholarship, he comes to America and does his graduation from Princeton collage. After graduation, he gets job in Underwood Samson Company, a small yet exalted in reputation, valuation firm. Now Changez has got his ideal place, he is enjoying his luxurious life with peace and contentment. He has adopted American culture and made America his home. He says at the very outset of the novel. *"I am a lover of America"*. (Hamid, 1) Changez adopts American culture completely. He loves Erica; he makes love with her *"and we made love with a physical intimacy that Erica and I had never enjoyed"*. (Hamid, 120) He often goes out with her. But in Pakistan his way of living was totally changed. Changez replies to Erica when she asks him of his experiences about the nature of sex. *"I told her I had never had to nothing in the way of sex before coming to America."* (Hamid, 104) In America, Changez starts drinking as Americans are used to. He shows his interest in drinking when Erica's father asks him if he drink alcohol. Changez says *"I do, sir"*. (Hamid, 61) In America, his way of living was totally different from Pakistan.

4.2 Other

Other as Postcolonialistic element represents discarded people. Colonizers considered native people different; that's why they kept them away from them. They treated brutally as though they would be worst creature of the world. They could not join their company and even their entrance was not allowed in their colonies and hotels. EM Forster writes in *'A passage to India'* that Indians and dogs were not allowed in their colonies and clubs. It is discussed in detail in critical theory today by Lois Tyson.

As the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper 'self'; native people were considered 'Other' different, and therefore inferior to the point of being

less than fully human. This practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human is called othering, and it divides the word between us (the 'civilized') an 'then' (the 'other' or 'savages'). (Tyson, 420)

After 9/11 incident Changez realized that he was 'other' for America. The country for which he was working, the people to whom he was benefitting and the colleagues to whom he considered his friends at all sudden they had become indifferent to him. At the Airport of New York, he was strictly checked and asked his purposes of to be in America. He answered; he lived in America since long. But on his irrelevant answer, he was again asked that for what purpose he had come in America. Though Changez lived in America and worked in well-known firm for a considerable time but his beard and Easter look mixed his services of years into dust. Now he was not more than a Muslim. When his checking was under process his colleagues leaving him at the port left for Manhattan. It was the first time when he had to travel alone after 9/11 incident. Before this incident, such moment had never come in his life in America. *"My team did not wait for me; by the time I entered the custom hall they had collected their suitcases and left. As a consequence, I rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone."* (Hamid, 86) Elements of other was also mentioned in chapter two when group of Erica and Changez got together in evening, they asked to reveal their dream one by one that what they would most like to be. When Changez's turn came, he said he wanted to be a dictator of an Islamic country that owns its nuclear power as well. Everyone in the group confirmed that if he was joking. His dream shocked the group, because his beard was a solid proof of him to become what he had expressed. That's why for confirmation he was forced to explain that he was serious or joking *"when my turn came, I said I hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability; the others appeared shocked, and I was forced to explain that I had been joking."* (Hamid, 33) In chapter number eight the elements of other is obvious. After 9/11 incident Changez had become joke in the eyes of America. His colleagues had not been sincere with him. Every American considered him their enemy and agent of Al-Qaida. People contemptuously stared at him and called his names. He was irritated with different ways: *"once I was walking to my rental car in the parking lot of the cable company when I was approached by a man I did not know. He made a series of unintelligible noises- "akhala-makhala," perhaps or "khalapal-khalapala"- and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine"*. (Hamid, 133)

Beard had become enemy of his life. People called him *"fucking Arabs"*. (133) Overnight Changez had become the hot topic among his colleague. It seemed as if he was entangled in America. His condition was like a colonized people. Day by day, his life was becoming difficult for him. Americans looked at him with such glance as if he had demolished World Trade Center or he was the master mind of the plane. He felt that life had been narrowed for him. He could neither sleep calmly nor awake coolly. Americans had snatched his sleep of night and peace of day. He came to the state of dilemma when he heard people talking about his involvement in 9/11 incident. *"I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares."* (Hamid, 148) Due to unfriendly attitude of

colleagues, baseless talking of people and Indo-Pak tense relation distracted his attention from his duties. He failed to completely concentrate on his task. His less concentration devalued the firm which caused his termination from the job. At last he had to say America farewell forever. He had never wept in his young hood but after losing his job he lost his control on him and he could not stop his tears. If he had not been compelled, he would have not left America. He did not come here to be back. He graduated from top ranked university, got job in prestigious valuation firm. His dream had come true; he did never think that he had to be back with broken-hearted and weeping eyes.

"I realized how deep was the suspicion I had engendered in my colleagues over these past few –beaded and resentful-weeks; only Wainwright came over to shake my hand and say farewell; the others, if they bothered to look at me at all. The guards did not leave me until I was outside the building, and it was only then that I allowed myself to rub my eyes with the back of my hand, for they had been watering." (Hamid, 181-182)

4.3 Diaspora (Unhomed)

According to Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary Diaspora or (unhomed) people are those who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland. In post-colonial theory, the term is used to discuss the feeling of people separated from their original homeland. Though separate people are well-settled in new place but they remember their native place very much. According to the term, people leave their home for employment so that they could support their family. They kept on helping their family and become slave of other country. They want to be back but they could not do so. If they come back, how they will fulfill the need of their family.

"Forced migration, either as quest for employment, including indentured servitude, or as the result of enslavement scattered large numbers of people around the globe and large populations of their descendants have remained in the diaspora, or separated, from their original homeland." (Tyson; 421)

In the novel, Mohsin Hamid depicted Changez as diaspora. Changez is doing job in America and his family is in Lahore. His family is financially weak; facing domestic problems and Changez is only one to support his family. After the incident of World Trade Centre, Changez realized that he was actually a diaspora; separated from his homeland. Before the incident of 9/11 attack Changez was living peacefully. He was enjoying his life with Erica and his colleagues. He always focused on his work; his busy life schedule never let him remember his family and country. He believed that America was his country and its people were his compatriot. He never thought that he would suddenly be stranger in the country with which he loved a lot and where he wanted live forever: *"but as I reacclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence. I had changed; and not just any*

foreigner, but that particular type of entitled an unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classroom and workplace of your country's elite. This realization angered me; staring at my reflection in the speckled glass of my bathroom mirror I resolved to exorcize the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed". (Hamid, 141)

For Changez Americans detestation was unbearable. He said he was a lover of America but his love had turned into hatred when he observed that the country which he loved a lot had become enemy of Muslim World. And the people whom he had been considering his brothers and friends had become haters. America, to take revenge from Al-Qaida, had attacked Afghanistan. Afghanistan was one of the closest neighboring countries of Pakistan; its border was connected with Pakistan. Afghanistan was a Muslim country and it was friend of Pakistan. Americas cruel Attack on Afghanistan and killing of its innocent people broken Changez's heart into uncountable pieces. When he saw destroyed areas and scattered corpses of innocent Afghans; he shocked and could not tolerate pain of his Muslim brothers. He was caught by the acute thought that Pakistan might be next target of America.

"Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by our country men caused me to tremble with fury." (Hamid, 113-114) In the beginning, Changez avoided America's unwise decision of removing terrorism by attacking Afghanistan. But when he observed extremism in destruction and killing of Afghan People; he was discouraged and hated to be called American. He completely knew that he was not American; he was just there for earning and to financially support his family. When Changez came to Pakistan on vacation he did not want to go back. *"...what sort of man abandons his people in such circumstances? And what was I abandoning them for? A well-paying job and a woman whom I longed for but who refused even to see me? I grappled with these questions again and again. When the time came for me to return to New York I told my parents." (Hamid, 145)*

Now he understood that Pakistan is his homeland and did not want to remain unhommed anymore. Now he could not bear Americans' contemptuous look and Laughing at him. Moreover, Americans' cruel attack to Afghans had disheartened him and devalued the image of America what he had in his mind. He said that he wanted to stay more but his family did not accept his request: *"when the time came for me to return to New York I told my parents I wanted to stay longer"* (Hamid, 145) but they would not hear for it. Unabated firing from both sides on border and test of atomic missiles had much worsened Indo-Pak relation. Furthermore, America, between India and Pakistan was playing its apparent neutral role to fulfill its mission. America's scheming role provoked them to take action against one another, but these countries did not understand America's plane. Due to tense relation of Indo-Pak Changez could not concentrate on his task. This was the reason of sudden change and the problem he was facing; but there was no one to understand man inside him. He was always obsessed with Pakistan, which distracted his mind from his work. He could not paid required attention to his work. And at last on this ground, he was fired from his beloved firm.

4.4 Nativism

The term nativism defines *"the protest of the native people against the colonizers' culture; and readoption of their native culture."* Basically after colonization native people showed their hatred with colonizers by rejecting and cursing the bad governance and culture which replaced their ways of living. Natives in post-colonial theory are shown leaving everything which connected them with colonizers. They don't want to live under western influence that's why they even leave the job offered by Europeans. Natives don't want to have anything related to Europeans. Nativist prove that they were and will ever be civilized, no colonizer can crush their noble culture under their feet. To cast erode western ways of living and adopt native culture is called nativism or nationalism. This element of post colonialism is discussed in detail in critical theory today by Lois Tyson.

She says many ex-colonial therefore feel they must assert a native culture both to avoid being swamped by western culture so firmly planted on their soil and to recuperate their national image in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. This emphasis on indigenous culture especially when accompanied by the attempt to eliminate western influences is called nativism on nationalism. (Tyson, 423)

To leave the desired job and his favourite country proved Changez that he did not want to stay there anymore under the influence of that country where Muslims had no respect and that brutally killed innocents Afghans with massive munitions. Changez in protest had beard, left the job and said farewell to America forever.

Jaun-Bautista made Changez realize that he was indirectly involved in all corruptions committed by America. Through conversation with Jaun-Bautista Changez came to know that he was indirectly supporting America in attacking Afghanistan. Changez was shocked to think that he was killing his Muslim brothers. His money was involved in destructive weapons. He cursed himself that he was killing his brothers and destroying his Muslim country. In America, whoever was working; they were directly or indirectly supporting America in its corruptions. After having discussion with Jaun-Bautista, Changez perceived himself Modern Janissaries, he was being utilized against his own Muslim country, but he was unaware of his participation in corruption done by America. Jaun-Bautista told him that their Christian boys who had been captured in their childhood and were made devoted and dangerous soldiers. They were utilized against their own homeland. They unknowingly killed their people because they didn't their birth place. In the same way, Changez came to America, worked for it and indirectly helped in attacking weak countries: *"Have you heard of Janissaries?" 'No,' I said. 'They were Christian boys,' he explained, "captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in Muslim army, at the time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal; they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to."* (Hamid, 171-172)

After listening Jaun-Bautista's comment on Janissaries, he realized that he was modern Janissary. He was annoyed at his versatility that how he failed to know that he was supporting America in destroying his Muslim brothers: *"In any case, Jaun-Bautista's*

words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become. There really could be no doubt: I was a modern day- Janissary." (Hamid, 173)

5. Conclusion

Americans' attitude to Muslims after 9/11 incident reminds us the treatment of British with Indians. American Muslims' condition, after the incident of the fall of World Trade Centre, can be compared by any means with that of Muslims shortly after the war of independence 1857. Changez the protagonist of the novel *'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'* depicted as post-colonial subject represents the state of the Muslims, colonized by Europeans. In America, his way of living represents him hybrid who leaving his native culture adopts another one. 'Other' is one of the most important elements of postcolonial theory that is prevalent in the novel. After 9/11 incident Changez feels that he is "other" means not fully human for America. Americans' changing attitude and its attack on Muslim country made him diaspora. Before such cruel behavior of America, he was not much worried about his home and homeland. As a nativist, he has beard in protest and comes back to his homeland.

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