



## Study of Cultural Clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

**Samina Bibi**, Elementary and Secondary Education, Punjab, Bhakkar, Pakistan

**Dr Abdul Waheed**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

**Nijat Ullah Khan**, Elementary and Secondary Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Pakistan

**Abstract-** This paper aims to explore the cultural clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from post-colonial perspective. It investigates how the self and the other are at clash in the novel. It also examines how the cultural clash affects human psyche in the novel. The main objective of the paper is to explore the situation where cultural clash can be seen and how human psyche develop. The study is viewed under the vision of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The nature of the study is qualitative study which explores man's constant struggles for cultural gratitude. The study also explores the issue of the self and the other, as it could be seen in the life cycle of Changez Khan how he suffered when he left his job. The study contributes the main stream of knowledge as it reveals the man's psyche, in particular the one who is in power.

**Keywords:** post-colonial perspective, Edward Said's point of view of self and other, cultural clash, 9/11 attack, American society.

### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to examine cultural clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from post-colonial perspectives of the self and other. Using the theoretical framework, this paper intends to explore the situations where the cultural clash is prominent and it overlaps to other cultures, it also highlights the impact of the cultural clash on human psyche in the novel. Mohsin Hamid born in 1971 in Lahore is a British Pakistani writer considered as one of the greatest novelist to write in the post-colonial literature. His critical gaze and deep study especially in post-colonial literature gave him a prominent place among the leading literary figure. His work has lauded for portrayal of imperialism and post colonialism, as its best example is *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is a post-colonial study of cultural clash between two societies. The writer highlights that in an alien civilization, people have to face so many differences, dilemmas as trials which creep up the cultural identity. Due to the clashes of cultures one's own individuality is going to be at risk, it leads towards the conversion of self to achieve hegemony.

### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cultural conflict monitors the problems like psychological, sociological, and ideological and religious which cause issues in the life of immigrants and hang them between their homeland and the adopted land, and as a result they remain rootless in their entire life. Keeping in view these phenomena, the current paper explores cultural clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from Edward Said's point of view of the *self* and the *other*. This paper examines the situations where the cultural clash is found in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It also highlights effect of cultural clash on the life cycle of people in the novel. The aim of the study is to project how cultural clash leads to misunderstanding and chaos in relationship.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has been widely appreciated and also criticized from different standpoints. Jajja (2007) in his article comments on the cultural, political and social identity of two nations. He highlights that colonized are the problematic being and they are locked in the zone of non-being, they want to get out of this zone by mimic the cultural, social and political values and tradition of the colonized

but they could not do so. Humaira (2010) examines *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the perspective of identity crises. She defines that an immigrant loses his original identity by leaving his native homeland, he tries to settle down his new identity in new country but he becomes a misfit person in everywhere even sometime he feels himself stranger for his native homeland. She further explores that Muslims are bound by their identity which is shaped by two factors one is their religious interaction and the other one is citizenship of Pakistan. She discusses that how Islam has integral part in the development of Muslim identity in non-Islamic country. Khwaja (2007) in his article explains that Mohsin Hamid's purpose to write this novel is to highlight the fear and danger of both countries. America is also in danger from prevailing interest of Islam in all over the world, while on the other hand Muslims have fear to be killed by the extremists of America. There is a reluctant condition between both countries and its people which Anderson (2009) has also briefly described the story of the novel which revolves round the main character who is an ambitious and passionate young man but after 9/11 the mutual distrust and doubtful relationships create harsh and painful change in his life. To write this article his aim is to examine the nature of perception and prejudice which is prevailing highly in a globalized world. Shirin (2012) analyzed two post-colonial novels *An American Brat* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from the perspective of Stuart Hall and Homi.K.Bhabha's perspective. She discusses that both protagonists of these novels are torn between two identities. They are suffering from outer and inner selves, in both of the novels protagonist comes from Pakistan to America in quest of their American Dream. Fateh (2017) in his term paper discusses the effect of 9/11. It deals that how the Muslims writers have tried to express the effect of 9/11 on Muslims community in America. It discusses that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is basically a story of unrequited love, it is about the mutual interaction between a Muslim Changez and an American girl Erica. According to this paper both of the character stand for two different cultures of their own. These differences of their culture create complexity and raise conflicts between two countries.

#### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is theoretically based on Post-colonial aspects of self and other which are best presented by Edward Said in his notable work "*Orientalism*" (1979). According to him Post-colonial literature is the study of the cultural inheritance of colonialism and imperialism, concentrating on the results of the hold and exploitation of colonized by the colonizers. Through deep studies Edward Said have explored that post colonialism chiefly concerned with social and political power relations that run under colonialism and neo colonialism. Broadly speaking the presenters of the theory observes the ways in which colonized writers share their cultural similarities. They also compare the ways in which the colonizers prove themselves superior and self and considering the colonized as inferior and others. It is based on the western idea of the oriental. It is also based on the concepts of the west is wise, powerful and well then the orient is weak, timid, bad, poor and not rational. Colonized people are decisive in power, weak in their tradition and from the colonizers point of view the colonized are considers as other. They are also distinct from each other and cannot be labeled as whole or total.

#### V. METHODOLOGY

This paper is qualitative in nature. It explores how cultural clash affects the life cycle of an individual. The words, phrases and sentences are used to out the issues of cultural clashes in *The Reluctant* analyzed from the perspective of Edward Said's point of view. Data are categorized into thematic patterns with the help of scholarly articles, reviews of the paper, thesis and theoretical orientation. Close reading technique is employed for data analysis and data collection.

#### VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the paper explores the cultural clash in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from the perspective of post-colonial aspects of the self and the other. Each chapter of the novel has its own history related to America and the perturbed mental condition of the main character Changez. Post-colonial aspects of the self and the other have been used to uncover the cultural clash between two countries.

In his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Hamid appears to ponder his genuine educational experience, which enables him to rethink American open treatment of Islam and individuals with Muslim foundation

when all is said and done. The view of Muslims in the western world is regularly in view of assumptions and adages, which strengthened after the 9/11 assaults when the gathered Muslim psychological oppressors were pronounced the most outstanding foes of American majority rule government. Throughout the novel, the pursuer can yield after the improvement of Changez's association with the US and its developing movement. Changez is the principle character and the single narrator of the novel, attending to a visitor at a bistro in Lahore is highly affected by the cultural clash. This novel reveals the normal bias of the Native American, as in the opening line narrator wants to pacify the visitors by saying "*I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard. I am a lover of America*" it is clarified the reason behind this hatred. The incident of 9/11 shows the relation between the American and non-Muslim. The 9/11 incident reveals one effect of changed social process. The Muslim community is being considered as the other. Hero is really a mouthpiece of the Muslim community. Hamid shows the flexibility of the Islamic world, it is multidimensional. The writer adopts the expedient of a theatrical clash to describe the conflicting views of the both countries. There is a conflict between the self and the other, as in the novel, America is proficiently depicted silent, before the Muslim community.

The first sentence in the novel carries even more questions when they are talking about the beard, the protagonist clarifies himself by saying lover of eastern societies. He consoles the foreigner that don't need to be frightened to consider him as an extremist, because the beard is the symbol of extreme religious tradition, he invites him to come and also estimates about his arrival in the Anarkali, he thinks that it is the quest of cup of tea. We realize that these two men represent two different cultures. Changez also suspects that the foreigner has come to attend some specific purpose he may be have a mission. The narrator even also comments about his sitting style with his back to the wall, this shows him susceptible about security condition. The American is afraid because he is an American in a Muslim country.

This is an indication that the American suspects all Muslims to be terrorists, they consider them as the other and inferior therefore; he does not want any Muslim to sit behind his back. His feeling of fear continues when the waiter brings them tea. Changez clarifies him about the cup of tea, reader knows about the suspicious attitude of the foreigner as he is in fear to be killed by poisoning tea (1-2). The American is nervous and careful as a stranger in a foreign country. Changez's attitude is very pleasant towards him, apparently it seems he is trying to less the fear of the stranger, he wants to satisfy him by his polite behavior, even reader notice his effort to pacify him with his apparent well-mannered and friendly manners. Even reader notices his effort to pacify him more clearly when he talks to change his cup with him. By the attitude of narrator, it's cleared to us that stranger even feel nervous from waiter, he puts his hand into his jacket when he sees the waiter, it seems to put out pistol for safety.

Similarly, Changez suspects the American to hide something under his jacket. He suspects that he may be carrying a gun. Changez's suspicion arises curiosity among the readers about stranger (2-3). The writer expresses the fear of both characters who feel uneasy about each other, these uneasy situation leads towards suspicious condition between two countries, eastern and western societies have an ambiguous and insecure feeling about each other. Changez continues telling the nervous American that to earn his living he started to work in three jobs in his University. The first job he got was in library of the eastern studies where no one went. This points out that the Americans were not interested in reading on the east or Islam or Arabs before the September, 11<sup>th</sup>. They had no interest in studying cultures other than their own. Changez's self is on stake when between advancing and beginning his place at Underwood Samson; he has to fell in love with an American young lady, Erica. She introduces Changez to her prosperous family. Though, she is shocked by the loss of her youthful sweetie, Chris; but she seems to be fond of Changez, but the latter is unable to replace her dead boyfriend. After the death of her boyfriend she feels herself unable to develop a new relationship with anyone, she seems to be disappointed more withdrawn and disheartened. Her family also belong to New York, invites Changez to come in her house. Her father offers Changez a drink and also tells him about a man who has worked with him for a long time but has never drunk. He is expecting the same attitude to Changez but he has to be surprised when Pakistani accepts the offer to drink alcohol having beard on his face which apparently shows him strict extremist. The narrator even clears the fact that most of Pakistani drink alcohol, in this way Hamid wants to change the views of American towards of tradition of Muslim community and that is the time when the leading character starts the journey of losing his self as a pure Muslim. The Americans set their own assumption against Muslim's practices. This is also an effort to divert the stereotype images which are fixed in the mind of eastern societies and create an atmosphere of suspicion which further leads towards aggression.

After attending dinner Changez and Erica spend the time in Chelsea where he notices that although she pays a little attention to Changez but not fully devoted because of Chris, he whispers to her that she could feel him as her Chris for attending the beauty of Erica ,he pretends to become Chris ,this is the very movement when protagonist loses his own self to meet the beauty .At this moment his self becomes totally on stake ,later he realizes that at the end of this act they both feel ashamed and frustrated .He desired her to love him being ready to give up to please her even though he realizes that she could never love him the way she loved her ex-boyfriend , Chris. The narrator feels much humiliation to examine his own act to give up his self, this act shows the effort of Changez to go in the zone of beauty, to achieve this he has to lose his own self, but is still powerless and could not attend the affection of Erica.

This love story could be seen as an allegory if Erica is seen as contraction of America. It seems that Erica is the representative of American world and as a foreigner Changes has to face the difficulties. He has struggled to achieve the same status of an American men, he adopts the culture, tradition and way of life even at the end he gives up his own self to disguise his identity but could not get the approval. He remains alien for this American country the people who live in .All his efforts to become the lover of Erica proves useless. Through the depiction of this struggle of love, Hamid tries to create a link between Erica and America in the mind of protagonist. The writer fully supports the collaboration of political and personal life, for him both are one in the same, he highlights his political situation as he is an immigrant who falls in love but cannot conquer the position which Chris as a native has even after losing his own self. Changez tries to combine his existence into hers when he pretends to be someone she very much likes to see. America wants them to absorb and accept American nationalism. This country holds on to old traditions and values and has no desire to adopt new-fangled convictions. This failure of love leads to his political breakup. (25).

Changez second job takes him to New York and there he saw technology human mind could not imagine. Everything in New York is inspiring and fascinating. Changez is resentful because he thinks that America is the reason behind the destruction in the Middle East. For him, it is hard to think about the glory that will never come back. America now is the new majestic authority. Changez is indignant whenever he thinks of the past glory of Muslim Civilization. Changez also highlights the comparison between two countries, in leaving a prosperous country, America; he recalls his past and surely the glorious past of the ancestors before being colonized. But after that Pakistan loses strength .By this comparison he analyses that his country is still unplanned while America becomes a dream world having all the high facilities .This makes him ashamed. (26)

Changez's pleasure and his inner conflict could be revealed when the safety of the American lifestyle is terribly shaken by the attacks, when two stole aircrafts are crashed into the World Trade Centre in New York City, causing the towers to fall down and resulting in the death of almost three thousands victims. A third stole airplane destroyed the Pentagon in Arlington. The American conventional media's reply to 9/11 and the following War on Terror is basically "unsophisticated and unenviable, and has left its disastrous impact on Muslims"(32)

When Changez sees the attacks on American TV Channels, he expressed his pleasant state. After watching the news of attack, he takes it as a film, but after continuous watching he realizes that it is .The attitude of Changez is really shocking. After staring for few minutes, he smiles, this smile is his initial reaction on this disastrous news. This smile shows that although he has adopted American lifestyle but he has the loyalty and strong feelings for his own native homeland. Though his reaction is unpleasant, but it leads us to inspect the real motivation behind it. He is happy not because people were killed but because America's greatness and pride are shaken at last. He realizes that this country is suffering from the very destruction that it inflicts upon its enemies. It seems that Changez is rather bit confused between the self and the other. Part of him looked for harm to a country that had educated and supported him. Changez comes back to be angry again because the attacks have been ascribed to Al-Qaeda. Therefore; as a part of their plan to fight the peril of terrorism, America has invaded Afghanistan under the pretext of fighting the terrorists and chasing Osama bin laden who has resided in Afghanistan. This makes him angrier because he sees the American invasion of Afghanistan as an encouragement of India to invade the weaker neighbor, Pakistan. For Changez, Afghanistan is Pakistan's fellow Muslim nation. The narrator along his family has to experience uncertain condition and fear to be invaded for a long time. Lasdon argues that Changez's initial infatuation with America was transformed into disillusionment. When Changez went back to Pakistan, he saw hunger, poverty and corruption. But he preferred staying in his destructed country. For him it was better than serving the "Wrong master". His personal development also accords with the World Trade Centre attack after which racism increases. The response of America on September 11 attacks

becomes sever especially for the immigrant of the people who are non-native, national security system increases restriction, they are being treated as the other. (34)

Olsson (2007) states that the media of America has indorsed the values of fear and doubt among the Americans. It makes it easy to create a phenomenon of a hidden and abstract enemy called terror. The Americans anticipate that once America is confronted, it will be hit again by extremists (3-4).Changez found he could no more live in the same way he used to live before the attack because he is being humiliated by the hand of Americans who are considering themselves as *Self* and superior therefore; he went back to New York only to say goodbye to his friends and his beloved Erica. Changez searched his self and thought if he stayed in America he would become the employ of this society and he would be humiliated by the Native American. After this terrible attack the narrator is fully determined to disagree the culture and the status which is affecting his own native culture. (37-38)

It is true to blame the culture of America for promoting hatred and prejudice in Changez when it holds all Muslims responsible for the fall of Trade Centre. Changez is insulted and many times suspected, he shares his experience and also expresses that after 9/11 he has lost his dignity, even he confuses about belongings he is not sure where he belongs weather from his Lahore. It is clear that when Changez comes to America he is happy and he adopts the ways and norms of the American, he considers American, as his new home, his ambitious attitude is obvious throughout the novel. But with the fall of the Twin towers he starts to think about his real identity. He feels ashamed and uneasy to accept the fact that his dear new home is no more willing to accept him, even he faces a sudden shock at the airport, when he is being suspected by a lady officers, she is not to accept the response of Changez instead of it she accept more justification about his travel. She cannot accept his first response therefore she repeats her question again waiting for another and different answer. This indicates that he is no more accepted in America and he begins to be treated as an outsider as other. Hamid also clarifies the attitude after the actions pathetically through Changez's character over again who is unable to live as normal as nothing happened now; Changez seems as if overwhelmed by suspicion, as he has a strange sense that he is being observed by all the time.(38-39).

This difference and doubts increases Changez' hatred and estrangement, and as he frees himself from the effect of the West, he puts question about the cruel behavior of the America (42-43). 9/11 attack changes Changez views about the western societies, for him America is a place where his "dream comes true" but dust of the destructive twins' tower has also damaged his dream. He clarifies to himself that America is far off from what they depict. American dream is finally a dream which is never fulfilled by anyone .It is a society where you devote your own self but in return they humiliate you and your feelings. They were suffering from their own superiority complex. All other societies for American are inferior and rebellion (45).He goes back to his country where he becomes a lecturer in a university. And he bears the responsibility of pushing his students to call for entire independence in Pakistan. When Changez went back to Pakistan, he saw hunger, poverty and corruption. But he preferred to stay in his own country. For him it was better than serving the "wrong master" that is why he is regarded as an anti- American rebel. The sum and the substance is that man always struggles for the cultural acceptance. He has to face the cultural clashes which affect the human psyche and he is torn between the self and the other.

## VII. CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Hamid explores that there is a constant battle between two sides of the world from the perspective of post-colonial aspects, one is from the self's point of view and the next one is from the other's point of view. Cultural clash is found at the very outset of the novel. The opening sentence is a paradoxical statement when the narrator explains that though he has a beard but in spite of all this he is the lover of American culture. He blindly follows their ways and means, but after the incident of 9/11, he shows all his support is towards the Muslim culture. He was there in America but he was considered as the other. He was an alien. The protagonist of the novel after reaching America gradually follows their culture. He adopts their life cycle, he mixes himself up with the girls .He devotes all his efforts with the company where he works .But after 9/11, he realizes his degradation because he has to face totally different attitude of the Americans .It is also found that 9/11 event is the terminal point in his life which help him to recover his own cultural values and tradition. To conclude, the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is embedded with the issue of cultural clash from the perspective of post-colonial aspects of the self and the other .It also deals with the bitter effects of 9\11 on the life cycle of the hero of the novel. It is no doubt a fact that the novel has historical significance but Hamid has ability to paint as he sees. His use of diction and metaphors is realistic. He is not in favor of presenting an imaginative world. Hamid's presentation of cultural clash is

superb. At one place he presents the issue of cultural clash but does not ignore the post-colonial aspects of the self and the others. At the same time he is ready to portrait the characters who are boldly facing the challenges of the cultural clash. Whatever the case is, the paper finds out that Hamid has a modern outlook towards life and this may best be reckoned by illustrating the effects of cultural clash. It seems that through Changez's portraying the issue of cultural clash, he wants to make the people aware of the bitter effects of the cultural clash employed by the west. His description of the issue of cultural clash in the novel shows that he dislikes its deeper effects on the minds of the colonized.

#### WORKS CITED

1. Anderson, Carol (2009) *"The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid: A Brief Synopsis"* 1-18.print
2. Ahmad, Ayesha (2017) *"The Transgression of Belonging in Mohsin Hamid's novel The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 1.print
3. Blum, Verena (2013) *"Identity and Identification by Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 1-3.print
4. F.Yasmeen.et.al (2016) *"Psychoanalysis and Transformation of Heroes in Mohsin Hamid novels "Moth Smoke and The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 10-11.print
5. Fateh, Bouner (2017) *"The personal and the Political in The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Once in a Promised Land"*.58-59.print
6. Haolai, Hoineikip (2015) *"Post 9/11 Islamic Identity in The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid"* 301-304.print.IJHSS
7. Huntington, Samuel (1993) *"An Article on The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 23-39.print
8. Imtiaz, Uzma (2015) *"The East and West Trust Deficit in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"*346-353.print
9. Islam, Shahida (2015) *"The Backlash of 9/11 on Muslims in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"*386-451.print.
10. Kiran, Sobia (2013) *"Identity Crises as Reflected in Selected Works: The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid and The Black Album by Hanif Quraishi"*34.print.
11. Khwaja, Irfan (2007) *"The Reluctant Fundamentalist: a novel by Mohsin Hamid"* 184.print
12. Olsson, Karen (2007) *"I pledge Allegiance" Rev. of "The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 2-8.print.
13. Shirazi, Quratulain (2015) *"Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"*40.print
14. Sheeba (2015) *"The Crises and Complexity of Identity in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 386-391.print
15. Tariq, Humaira (2010) *"Identity at Stake Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist "* 13.print.
16. Tetek, Richard (2012) *"Post 9/11 Tension in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* 5-6.print
17. William Kornblum (2011) *"Sociology in a Changing World"* 191-205 ISBN
18. Zubair, Shirin (2012) *"Crossing Boarder, Reinvesting Identity Hybridity in Pakistan English Fiction"* 65-66.print