

9 11 and muslims in the reluctant fundamentalist

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Historically, man is being treated according to his Race, Religion, sex, and Culture. Since the inception of Islam and particularly after 9/11, Muslims have never ceased to be important for the West as depicted in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. September 11, 2001, the 'tumbling' of New York's, Twin Towers; a date of changing the world's Scenario. The tragedy permanently changed America's perception of security. It was a day of grief and chaos. It was a hardest and nostalgic day in New York history. Everyone was frustrated. This attack affected USA particularly. However, after this tragic incident, America feels insecure and becomes more sensitive to their security. Muslims of the world especially in America were discriminated and faced a lot of hurdles. This discrimination and hurdles is the result of Muslims Profiling done by the institutions and intellectuals working for propagating the ideology of the West to the rest of the world through Media.

The novel is loaded with infinite ideas. One can explain it from many perspectives. There are many critical views regarding different aspects depicted in the novel. The novel has been commented upon by many critics worldwide.

In order to analyze Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the first focus is on the tragic incident and impact of 9/11 on literature, Culture, Religion and geopolitical situation. Different writers and critics have commented it from their own standpoint.

Muddasar Nazar in his article *Identity Crisis in Pakistan* talks about post-9/11 situation: "The post-colonial state of Pakistan is faced with identity-related

challenges, and is struggling to define its identity, particularly from the onset of 9/11 attacks on the United States. Parallel movements are moving across the landscape of Pakistan, as some demand as Islamic State, some a multinational state, some fight for a secular one, and some a democratic Islamic Republic, and if Islamic state, again beset with complexity as to what type of Islamic State-Shia or Sunni- Pakistan should be and to what degree.”

These lines show the issue of division among different Sects, Religions, cultures and Societies. There is always a core conflict between within, i. e. Liberalism and Fundamentalism. There is then further subdivision among these two. Within these, then there is Pakistani Taliban, Afghani Taliban, Islamic state, Liberal state, Shias and Sunnis etc. They are hung up between fire and water. There is no clear distinction and the situation is blurred within when it comes to Islam. This shows that people or nations have divided and subdivided into so many classes like on the basis of Religion, Race, Class, and Language. Those who migrate and want to find meaning in their life, still fail to discover the true identity. Such problem is beautifully highlighted in Modern Writings and Particularly in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Dr. Abdus Salam in one of his articles, *Conflicting Images of Muslims in Post 9/11 American Literature*, emphasizes on how Muslims have been the central focus after the tragedy of 9/11. He states, media has played a pivotal role in developing the negative images of Muslims and this depiction has changed the perception of people at a large scale. He writes: “ There is a wide discrepancy between the way Muslims in America find themselves and the

community of Muslims worldwide and how other Americans perceives and project them”.

He argues, the Muslims have often been viewed in stereotypical ways by the Western media. They have presented a very dark and gloomy picture of Muslims. They have made black out of white and regarded Muslims responsible for this act. He comments, Muslims are not responsible for such actions. Muslims are innocent in this regards; however, considering Muslims responsible for every damage, resulted in hatred among East and West.

Dr. Muhammad Ayyub Jajja has talked about this novel through the lens of identity and regarded this novel as a ‘ Quest for Identity.’ “ During the colonial days, colonized people would mimic their colonialist masters, to gain acceptance. But they would soon realize, that in spite of their mimicry, they were still regarded as the lesser and inferior Other.”

He argues, the colonized people always try to mimic the one who have colonized them which is because of the left influence of the colonizers. They copy them for their personal gain and acceptance in their society, but they do not get what they want. The colonialist look at them with little importance and term them “ Inferior Others.” This results that colonized people were exposed to reality and realized their own status and came back to their own position. Hence, they quickly recognize their own culture and identity.

Mohsin Hamid has very skillfully highlighted the issues of mimicry and quest for identity in the character of Changez. He is presented as a man from outside world who follows his colonial masters with the hope to make place

in their society which never came true. Furthermore, America in the novel is depicted as a colonialist country. People are attracted toward America, but in response they kicked them out. As a result of this disgust people return to their own culture and tried to know themselves truly.

The 'traumatic' event of 9/11 has a strong impact on Westerners attitude toward Islam and Muslims which results in distrust between them. The novel is not simply narrating a story, but the language tells us about the kind of complex relationship of the West with the East. The two distinct characters, the protagonist, Changez (a Pakistani Muslim) and the stranger, (an American) are not merely two individuals but they represent two different Countries. Changez represents the East, Muslims while the stranger American represents the West, Non-Muslims. From the very start there is distrust between two , Changez (Pakistan) and Stranger (America). In the very beginning of the novel, Changez says that he has alarmed the American which shows the lack of trust on each other and similarly the American looka at Changez with suspicious eyes. Ms. Uzma Imtiaz (2015), in her article, "The East and West trust deficit in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist." She writes in her article;

"The very beginning lines of the novel reflect that Changez and the silent American do not trust each other. In fact they have doubts against each other, the words "alarmed you" that Changez uses while talking to an American reflect that the American startles to see Changez, while when Changez asks him about the purpose of his visit shows his concern. Yet

Changez tries to comfort him by offering his services to him and showing him his affection for America.”

The silence of the stranger shows that, America do not consider Muslims worth talking. They are not giving us full attention. There is so much Colonialism, so much superiority. Americans considers themselves so high of birth. They are like heaven born. They are not considering Pakistani even of their standard, nor valuing their point of views. So they are looking down upon East form a Superior which show distrust amongst East and West.

Furthermore, novelist like Mohsin Hamid put forward a new kind of transnational narrative, distinct from the Anglophone literary manifestation of 9/11 and the post 9/11 condition. Peter Morey observes in his essay “‘ The Rules of the Game Have Changed’: Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist and post-9/11 fiction that; Initial fictional responses to 9/11 often took the form either of ‘ trauma narratives’ attempting to trace the psychological scarring and mental realignment of character caught up in the Twin Towers attacks, or Semi-fictionalized ‘ Muslims misery memoirs’ which often serve to underscore the injustice of Islamic rule and justify neoconservative interventionism”(136).

There is significant number of Muslims who identify themselves as culturally rather than religiously Muslims. They do not strictly observe to the injunctions of Islam and nor do they religious orthodoxy (Moghissi et al., 2009; Rahnema, 2006). From the very start after the arrival in USA, his religious identity has replaced as cultural identity. He keeps on wearing beard after the 9/11. He keeps on drinking with colleagues in a party hosted

by Jim. He doesn't care about the dominance of Western Culture. He even has not found praying once throughout which shows that his religious identity is replaced by cultural identity.

Ultimately, the novel, gives a counter narrative of the 9/11 from the lens of the current political situation of the world. Although, these analysis by different critics provided a very basic and useful information about the novel. It has highlighted some of the important and hidden issues that have caused great damage to Muslim countries. Thus, the novel truly depicts behavior of looking down upon of West toward East.