



STRUGGLE FOR INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY IN MOHSIN HAMID'S 'THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST'

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ABSTRACT



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The present research paper is an attempt to study and analyze Mohsin Hamid's 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' in the light of Identity Crisis, cultural discrimination, terrorism, political corruptions and inferiority complex in the socio-economic and cultural areas. The novel describes the positive and negative developments in the Pakistan and American relations. Hamid in The Reluctant Fundamentalist has attempted the issues of colonialism and the quest for identity on the part of people from the so called developing cultures in the present day context. Hamid has shown that America has assumed the status of neo-colonial power. In prevention, they espouse extremist ideas and assume extreme shades of indigenous identity. This article discovers the issue of identity in the context of American and Pakistani interaction, through the analysis of the novel in the light of Postcolonial critical approaches.

Key words: individual and collective identity, ethnicity, colonialism and superiority.

Mohsin is a Pakistani writer. His novels include *Moth Smoke* (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was shortlisted for Booker prize in 2007. Hamid had gone to America in his childhood. He has an individual knowledge about American political and cultural identity. This

story takes place between an American Erica and Pakistani Changes. Here, we could see Chris in the back show of the story. Erica was a journalist and had much patriotism towards her country while Changes, the protagonist conveys to Erica, the present neo- colonialism, culture, identity and ethnicity.

The Depiction of American superiority nature, Discovering Individual and Collective Identity

In this novel, Hamid depicts how American Superiority nature spoils the culture and relation of America and Pakistan. Even after independence, Pakistanis are still living in the shadows of American colonialism, which has major impact upon people, their cultural and identities. He uses individual as symbols for their respective national culture and identity. The edgy relationship between Changes and Erica represents the complex and complicated equation that exists between Pakistan and America. Changes, changes his physical appearance to impress Erica, as she likes only Americans. But of course she denies him as she had a childhood affair. The Political and policies of America have an effect upon individuals. This we could find at 9/11 attacks. After the WTO attack Afghanistan and other Muslim countries lived in fear and anxiety. Changes upset at the appearance of the waiter, probably; he takes him to kill. He gets hesitate to sip his cup of tea.

Hamid shows that America provided much financial and military support to Pakistan. Emma Duncan in *Breaking the Curfew* refers to this situation. The meaning of the hero of this novel Changes is conqueror. It's an urdu name. Changes studied in America and excellent in English, have good communication skills. He can grab any challenging job in American Firm, with a brand-name. He was fell in love with Erica, a symbol for beauty and attraction. Changes hides his culture and background to impress her. His attraction towards Erica resembles the attraction towards America. Erica's charm, attractions reflect the world status and power of America. Her name was part of America. Changes introduce himself as a New Yorker and behave and speak like American. It is very true that we can act like romans in the Rome but we can't be a roman. In the same way Changes was not camouflaged by his expensive

suit, car and even American friends. He adapts American traditions, culture. He adopts the neo-colonialism but he never be compared like white American, Chris, an ex-boyfriend of Erica. Erica was unable to forget her dead lover, she used to wear his T-shirt to remember her bond with American Chris. Unfortunately, Changes and Erica becomes one in physical contact. Even that time also, Erica images Changes as her ex-boyfriend Chris. Actually Changes offers himself to become Chris, in his desperation to overcome the dilemma of dysfunctional love of Erica. When changes gives up his name, identity, and culture only Erica accepts Changes as her boyfriend. Then, Changes realizes his place and identity. This is the turning point to discover his identity. Hamid points out his finger at the American culture for its negative influence upon many individuals. Hamid shows that American culture suffers from very serious infection.

Changes understand the American, in Lahore, not by the color of his skin, dress or fashion and style but by his bearing. Hamid conveys that Americans culture expresses a sense of superiority among American and their behavioral attitude. American think that other people would become their servants. Changes experienced religious and geographical differences. Jim, the interviewer could not accept a person from Third World Muslim country like Pakistan. Even Erica's Father has similar attitude towards Changes. He reminds to Changes that he comes from a backward culture with its inherent problems of corruption, dictatorship, the class differences and poverty.

“Erica's father had asked me how things were back at home, and I had replied that they were quite good, thank you, when he said, Economy's failing apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers.” (Mohsin, 2007: 54)

In further Changes speaks regarding dress code, especially points out that Pakistani girls from National College of Arts wear T-Shirts and jeans, to reflect the flexible cultural attitude of the people of Pakistan. The entire world especially, Asians impacted by American culture. Erica was a

Still America is showing its dominating nature on other countries. Mohsin emphasizes upon the issues of struggle for individual identity, collective identity in Pakistan and the resultant shame and regret, who experience attraction and repulsion towards American culture simultaneously.

The Depiction of 'Changes' Disillusionment and the Negative side of American Society Changes faced vulnerable issues and he lived pathetic conditions. Mohsin conveys that Americans have full of racial discrimination and prejudices against the people from non-European Countries. Changes was never accepted as an equal person by American people. Americans always reminded him as an immigrant. Changes

"I was in my room, packing my things. I turned on the television and saw what at first I took to be a film. But as continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction but news. I stared as one- and then the other – of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed". (Mohsin, 2007: 72)

Mohsin shows that Pakistanis and Asians after 9/11 were subjected to a similar humiliation

"When we arrived, I was separated from my team at immigration. They joined the queue for American citizens; I joined the one for foreigners. The Officer who inspected my passport was a solidly built woman with a pistol at her with a

metaphor for American culture and colonialist ideology.

"But my cultural reference has fallen on deaf ears! Yu appear distracted, sir; those pretty girls from National College of Arts have clearly recaptured your attention". (Mohsin, 2007: 22)

were better than many other personalities. His academic achievements, his dignity, his talent and potential are unimportant to Americans. Changes get confused by this situations and tells to his close American friends and Changes wish would that the dictator president from non-European countries rule America. The present American Society is actually lost its power and identity in some sense. The previous American President Obama Barack hails from African countries.

America makes Changes conscious of being another in American culture and society. The impact of horrible experiences and situations made him disappointed. Unknowingly he starts hating America. He gets unconscious smile at the time of WTO attack.

and even worse. Changes discriminates at the Manila airport based on his racial and cultural home. It was very terrific that he is separated from his colleagues at the immigrant counter. He was treated like a criminal and he was made to sit near by a tattooed criminal at the New York airport. Heartless American colleagues did not wait for him and he rides to Manhattan that evening very much alone.

smile. What is the purpose of your trip to the United States? She asked me. In the end I was dispatched for a secondary inspection, where my tea did not wait for me. (Mohsin, 2007: 75).

E.M Forster conveys in his book (A Passage to India) that love or friendship is not possible between the masters and subjects. Due to similar, Dr. Aziz returns to his own Indian identity in the end. Mohsin expects a positive relationship between America and the non- European world.

Changes regrets the colonialist ideology and its assumptions of superiority by asserting his pride in his past Asian culture and civilization. He remembers the past achievements of the native

Changes Declining American Identity and ascertaining native identity

Hamid shows Changes perception of individuality. People like Changes suffered a lot in America and got interest to know native identity. Native culture and identity is awesome for every individual. Changes worries that even after all the sacrifices and services of Pakistanis has never

America might be a great country but the country has been progressed by fundamentalists like Changes. Changes was better than American academics in few areas. Changes was intelligent,

Mohsin blames America for its selfish and egocentric attitude. People of America failed to understand other people. Changes discovers his identity and he grows his beard in protest at the discrimination and humiliation he experiences

However, Mohsin and Changes expresses American superiority, culture, identity is unavoidable in the aspect of global collaboration of individuals and culture. Changes lives in Lahore

Conclusion:

The study shown that the impact of American culture can influence individual

But Changes gets disappointed by American policies and attitude. Mohsin says that American capitalism focuses upon the fundamentals. This kind of issues makes Changes to discover his own identity.

culture he comes from and reminds American. He worries that every Pakistani abroad is treated as a fundamentalist. Mohsin encourages Asians to love their original identity.

treated Pakistan as ally or friend. There is probability that Americans might have encouraged Indians to envy with Pakistanis. Hamid painfully conveys that Americans never treat non- European Countries as their friends and they treat like tissue papers.

achiever. People like Changes are treated as belonging to a subject race and therefore are discriminated against on the basis of their racial and cultural identity.

while living in America to index his deep anger. Hamid warns America to come out from the clouds so that they may see the true world. America has the self-destruction like Erica, who refused to adopt truth and perished.

at the end. He still lives with the residual impact of American culture. He was a true lover of Erica who hails from America.

identities as well as collective identities. He dealt with American superiority, hybridity, neo-

colonialism, mimicry. Hamid shows that the American culture is extremist, as fanatical of the racial, culture and ideological differences as any so called third world culture. He points out at America and its culture for producing extremism, hatred and global tensions and confrontations. People with unity can grow faster and easier. It leads to world's excellence of communication and relation. Disrespect and lack of acceptance by

America culture from other culture is the major barrier in the way of natural and mutual benefits. Changes rejects all American benefits and status and becomes American fundamentalist. Finally Changes discovers his identity and happily lives with it. It is wonder and surprise Barack Obama from African roots elected as President of America twice.

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