



RESEARCH PAPER

An Exploration of *the Reluctant Fundamentalist* from Multicultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates multiculturalism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. Multiculturalism is a technique which author use to tell their stories. When analyzing a novel, it is important to identify this technique. It is used in order to shed light on the ways in which they function in the story. Mohsin Hamid, an emerging novelist of Pakistan has given a new identity to the genre of Pakistani English Writing through his popular novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. In his first two novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid has tried two different types of narrative techniques. While he has used Multiple Narrative Technique in *Moth Smoke*, in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, he uses monologue. The present research proposes to explore how these narrative techniques have their validity to theme and message, the novelist conveys. This study is going to focus on multiculturalism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Written in a critical time, this novel contains too different social issues of Pakistan. It is believed that narrative technique has a vital role to express the temperament of the characters hence; this paper aims at studying how the narrative technique "Monologue" and "Multiple Narrative" and "Multiculturalism" do express the temperament of characters in the selected novel.

Keywords | Monologue, Multiculturalism, Socio economic failures, Temperament

Introduction

The study of culture opens the new ways and new probabilities in the park and playing field of acquaintance and awareness. In the review of Birmingham legacy, Stuart Hall debates and deliberates that the study of culture has always its important political plan. The post Birmingham period opens the new dimensions to the concepts of philosophy, social-structure, dominance and the supremacy of the different theorist to the perception of power and its relationships. The nature of power remains problematic. In the first sense it has taken up a broad sense of definition even welcome new human identity and expressive subjectivities. The second idea is that, it adopted in the field of cultural policies.

Lewis has more offered a detail answer to his question in his book cultural studies. He suggests that culture is fundamentally formed through meanings and definition of culture. Thus, the cultures need to be assumed in the following terms and conditions. A culture includes the *assemblage* and imagination of its meanings. The

human-beings interact, communicate and create community in a culture. The communities and societies are the complicated mixtures of common people. A culture is an accumulation of pictures and meanings. Culture has its own certain empirical solidity. Every culture has its own rules and regulations. When a man lives in society, a man has to follow these rules and regulations. However, the practicable socio-cultural theory does never easily address the idea and impression of the part played in artistic identity, construction and re-shaping of human authenticities. Our idea and imagination of world around us is the starting point of culture (Jeff, 2002).

The culture is an assemblage of meanings that can probably be non-juncture or intersecting. An individual may live in many cultures continuously and due to the change of culture from one culture to another may change his mind. One culture has its own system and the other has its own. The meaning of a word is different in one culture and the other culture has its own meaning. As in Pakistan white colour is the sign of sorrow and in Christian ideology white colour is the sign of happiness.

Culture in its meaning has wide and various concepts in the human life's social observances and cultural performances. In the modern and fashionable cultures, the experiences and imaginations of meaning are informative. The social media had a great influence in twentieth century. Previous human cultures were brought into the cultural discourse. The cultural discourse meaning creates new meaning or non-meaning for the communication-gap.

Literature Review

Multicultural theory of philosophy discuss the post-structural and post-modern views can be explained in this regard. The idea of power, ideology and hegemony is related with postmodern and post-human theory is based on multicultural theory. It can be changed at any time. It is not always fixed in its structure. The experience of power can be applied on individual's body. Power is always changing. Power can be formed through language and always is incomplete. Nations of hegemony and ideology are incomplete for nature of language. Without origin language is disposed. Culture is formed in language and unstable. Culture is a resource of identity, free imagining, diversity and expressiveness. Every theory has its own value. Past theories are different from present theories. Theorists give idea and keep the concept of past and future. Critics are mostly concerned with television culture. Human experiences are unique and highly individualized. Political principles are generalized for community and transgress interest of individuals (Nancy, 1987, p. 12).

Theorists must keep past views and write something beneficial for future. For post-humanist culture and history are characterized from dominant groups. Post-humanism is constructed in a sense of disappointment. Post-humanism is a meaningful communicative form. Communication is a division of subjectivity. Humanism is concerned with new gender identity, ethnicity and sexuality. Post-humanism is also concerned with social conceit. The statement of signifier and signified in the work of valuing is related with human gender, identity, ethnicity and sexuality. The change of human behaviour is reality; one culture behaviour is different from other culture. Thus, as it has been stated, multiculturalism runs the risk of becoming merely a new narrative, an alternative rhetoric, a novel political myth (Kymlicka 2016).

The origin of poetic in postmodern is unmistakable. They use different words in their writing. Some of the words are non-meaning. Communicative experiences are as love, freedom, nation, pleasure, family, television, and music. Different cultures have different meanings which are accepted by everyone. No one can deny any culture. The immigrants also accept the contemporary culture. They follow all rules of the other culture. This is called hegemony theory. Structuralize are trying their best to overcome this problem so that everyone can stay easily in any culture.

The New Civics

In this research theory of multiculturalism philosophy discusses the Foucauldian path of separations is marked by the French philosopher's which devote personal politics and aesthetics. Many theorists copy Foucault's interest in 'governmentality' that is related with cultural studies but quite different from separations towards cultural civics. Foucault's works is very remarkable for governmentality perspective.

Researcher focused his object of government that they should be self-management. They are not concerned with others. This is the main difference between the others and the self. Government is only related to their citizens. They are not interested in the problems of the immigrants. This is one of the main issues in all the countries. If a government takes interest in all humanity, then there will be no problem at all. In his essay, "Self Technologies" clear this notion of the difference between others and the self. The point is, very simply put, that Agamben wants to avoid the ontological distinction between essence and action, between potentiality and actualization, but see them as parts of a continuum, a zone of indistinction (Ugilt, 2014; Agamben, 1998; Barkan, 2013).

Foucault (2009) suggests the governmentality which can be regarded in the sense that government is concerned with the public facility. Governments observe the problem of the nation and provide them better way of living standard. Government is not only concerned with making rules and applying them on citizen. But the main purpose of the government is concerned with to provide things to the nation. Foucault notion is related with the material aspects of the government. Government should provide all the facilities of life to their nation. They should make laws as well to control the citizen. Without making laws means to over control the generation. But the main purpose of the government should be related with providing all facilities of life to their nation. Government should arrange things in such a way that the goals of end be achieved (Foucault, 1982).

Multiculturalism Theory

Kymlicka (2016) concepts of multiculturalism is clear concept for the readers. He thinks that cultural analysis can be seen through social behavior of people and from their pattern of living. His idea of cultural is very broad and covers the vast concept of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is different from the contemporary culture and is related with power formation and meaning making. It is not related with the problems of one native culture. The people face problems in the other culture through language. Social groups create and exchange meanings. It is interested in groups, culture and power.

It emphasizes nature of culture and power of transforms. It deals with language wars, shape and conduct. These languages create stability and instability for individuals and social and their semiotics interests over the others. Multiculturalism maintains that attention to and care about human exchanges should take into account successful cultural interchanges as well as consider and accept the silences, misunderstandings, gaps and failures that can also take place (McLeod 11).

Culture is depicted through the language wars. Language wars are related with social interaction and less deals with material aspects. People exchange their thoughts in a social community through their language. The native people feel superior from the immigrants. Native peoples have more opportunities than the immigrants. Language is an important part of human life. As Stuart Hall's says about language relation with people, "*struggle to signify.*"

Individuals and social groups communicate with one another through language. They communicate and exchange their thoughts. Language is a better way of expressing thoughts. Language is not related with material aspects. It deals with language use. It is not related with vice versa.

Language war has become a general issue in the present time. It increases interest in people through television scope. People can know the happenings of the other country through television. In older days these communications and facilities were less than the present day. Internet, mobility, globalization and internationalization have connected people more near with the happenings of the other country. People can know the better information of the immigrants that lives in the other country. People lives in the other country face problems and exchange their feelings through language.

Power is meaning making and meanings can be controlled. People create meanings through social communication and social practices. The social practice creates concentration of power. The power fixes meaning through ideological discourses. The fix power and meanings can be divorced from daily practice and daily communication. Meanings are not always same. They are changeable with daily life routine. Meanings are different from person to person. In older days the uses of words were different than the present day. The present use words are totally different from the previous days.

Material and Methods

In order to interrogate the elements of *multiculturalism* of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* the research rely and observe the different aspects of culture and its values of living especially regarding American community and its Americanization culture. Then the text of the selected novels will be analyzed through the dialogues as uttered by different characters particularly the characters having multicultural philosophy, in different situations created by the novelist. So textual analysis is the most suitable method that will be employed in order to weigh and judge the grounds that constitute identity crisis and multiculturalism are present in both novels. An introduction to research' describes it as;

The mode of the research is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Along with analysis of the text of Hamid's *the Reluctant Fundamentalist* helping material like

reviews of different scholars, interviews and biographies of the author is observed in order to attain clarity on the issue of cultural Identity. The researchers depend upon textual analysis in this regard. However, discourse analysis of the dialogues and their semantic meanings will also be an important part. Further, the researcher has evaluated the texts by keeping in view the idea of multiculturalism in the post-colonial context.

Researcher has made use of qualitative paradigm in order to comprehend elements of multiculturalism theory of philosophy in Hamid's *the Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Encyclopedia of Britannica has guided the researcher to get the gist of the works with the help of literal, moral and cultural and anagogical perspectives of the texts. Literal perspective will make him able to comprehend the verbal inspiration presented in the book, with their linguistic and historical context. Moral perspective will make able to perceive the moral lessons presented in the book. Cultural aspects will help him to conceive the level of meanings; the meanings that are presented between the lines and the last aspect of analyzing data will be multiculturalism.

Results and Discussion

The world literature has also got new dimensions and variety of themes to tackle. Colonial literature changed into Post-colonial and then modern literature has produced the authors in fiction who have left their eternal marks. Humanity, Reality, equality of genders, common man's tragedies, international politics and the discovery of truth became the favorite subjects of the authors. Particularly, the incident of 9/11 has affected the Eastern literature greatly. Pakistani authors came forward and dealt with the post 9/11 issues in their fiction.

The attitude of the world towards Pakistani migrant families in the multicultural societies was changed and this change brought sufferings for the migrant families. This was the only reason that after those attacks the issues regarding war and terror became central point in Pakistani fiction and perhaps a large number of noteworthy fictional texts have been produced from the particular region.

The story of the novel and *Changez* starts a year before when the militants assault in year 2001 on the world trade center in USA. There are two essential areas for the story – Lahore and New York. In Lahore, *Changez* has a place to an upper class family, whose riches has lessened and is in the shortage of money. It's for the need of money that *Changez* goes to Princeton on a grant of scholarship. Mohsin Hamid himself claims in an interview with Hamish Hamilton (2007):

I then completely revised the novel again and addressed 9/11 directly. I say 'revised' but actually I don't look at previous drafts in the early stages of writing a novel. I write my first few drafts from scratch every time, incorporating elements from memory, and drafts can be so different as to be almost different novels.

This story begins in the background of Lahore. A Pakistani man coordinates an American guest in some tea-cafe. As they sit waiting for their tea, the young man, 'Changez' starts relating a long story especially about his life-time lived in the United States. The unnamed American is desired to leave but stays and keeps on listening to him. *Changez* tells the American, he was a brilliant understudy who finished his four

years' college education in Finance from Princeton University and joined Underwood Samson, a consultancy firm, with the job of an analyst.

Mohsin Hamid describes the criteria of white society for choosing the persons from the other societies of the world and then allows entering them in their own society for their own basic purposes. They are in the need of the best for their own work. They keep them busy all the time in doing their work. They get their aim but do not accept them as the part of their society. Their demand is according to their needs. It was the first ever impact of the multicultural society, when he got the beginning of his good time, he denied to accept his identity and nationality. "On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee, and my firm's impressive offices made me proud. I wished I could show my parents and my brother! (p. 34) (Lin, 2014) describes the work of Changez in USA with relation to the international politics and trade:

Changez's works symbolize distinctive phenomena of international trades. Under the logic of neoliberals, a kind of invisible hand, global enterprises in the West can facilely dominate fragile economic entities in developing countries,.....Donald E. Peace argues that the U.S. has adopted "neo-colonialism" to establish its "empire without colonies". After the 9/11 events, Changez realizes that 'finance is a primary mean by which the American empire exercises its power'. Globalization accelerates Western economic hegemony. (p. 120)

Changez is much attracted towards the glory of modern cities of the United States. He considers himself, his society and his people very narrow in front of the towering cities and white people. It seems that he has been struck in a dilemma, has lost his own identity and wants to get another a new one. At this stage, he is unavoidable in making the comparison between two different societies, cities and even the conditions of countries as well. He starts comparing Lahore and Pakistan with New York and the United States in every affair of life. It was the start of his crisis, he begins to consider himself inferior in front of the white supremacy results in his bitterness and annoyance. The situation of using advance technologically back in Pakistan creates the feelings of shame and complexity inside him. "Eight months in New York, another world from Pakistan...achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known... comparisons troubled me...they made me resentful" (p. 34)

Changez suffers from the inferiority complex and begins to compare things with his own country. He is much attracted by the pomp and show of the modern world. He is being trapped by the modern livings of the multicultural society. He finds the Western living style and cities better than the Eastern cities or livings in this comparison. He is struck in a dilemma and compares the expressions of gate keepers of Erica's home with the large homes gate keeper standing in Lahore. He finds the lacking of warm welcome as he finds in Lahore. This dilemma becomes totally unusual and upsetting when he goes to Philippines and tries to find the city like Lahore or Karachi, he has already got a belief regarding the inferiority of the eastern countries but he was left surprised to distinguish,

I expected to find a city like Lahore – or perhaps Karachi; what I found instead was a place of skyscrapers and superhighways. Yes, Manila had its slums; one saw

them on the drive from the airport: vast districts of men in dirty white undershirts lounging idly in front of auto-repair shops. (p. 64)

Changez's fear, he states as the 'rumors' but were realized in America after 2001. There was an increase in doubts, suspicions, verbal abuses and attacks on the common Pakistani people and associations believing them to be the Muslims. The authority illustrates all psychological, emotional, financial, professional, and security troubles of the people of at those times. The Pakistanis were abhorred by American and they were teasing Pakistanis and Arabs. After spending four and half year in America, Changez proved that a stranger lived in a strange land. He was not and could never become the part of white society despite of losing all of his living style and culture. There is no value for the strangers in the host-land multicultural society. The strange issue of 9/11 suddenly raised a spirit of strangers in the minds of the people of the world. They believed that strangers could not be placed here in America. Their violence and teasing forced the Pakistanis for leaving America because they were insecure there.

The FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse. I reasoned that these stories were mostly untrue; the few with some basis in fact were almost certainly being exaggerated. (p. 107)

Changez in this situation tries to keep himself away and struggles to hide his dilemma or the crisis of identity in which he was struck. But he has to face different attitudes of the local white people. They look at him like a terrorist. He becomes 'Other' for the white multicultural society.

Mohsin Hamid has proved that the white people have their own culture and use others only for their motives. They offer to enter in the multicultural society but do not allow anyone to be the part of it. Changez khan lived in the America but he was stranger till the end in this multicultural society. Changez always tries to be a part of American Whites. He tries to merge in them. He attains all the customs and manners of whites and begins to live his life accordingly. He leaves his real identity. But despite all these efforts, he is always discriminated and mistreated as an alien in the end. It was the basic reason of his identity crisis. This treatment again raises the question of identity for him. Narrates in the story in this way:

The attitude of the surrounding, which add meaning to geographical location and defines it as a modifier of national belonging. Namely, this elaborate or instinctive attitude of others intensifies the main character of Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Chengiz's inner conflict which arises from binary cultural values and forms his feeling of cultural belonging. (Hajiyeva, 2017, p. 139)

Changez is continuously under suspicion by every white person living in America. Even her beloved Erica also shows some sort of irritation after 09/11 incident. He finally decides and resigns from his job. He decides to return towards his origin for what he is. He wants to seek his identity and respect. He listens from all around and is blamed for "Islamic fundamentalism" towards the end of the novel: he is considered as agonizing, suspicious, whiskery, and unsafe, rejected and retaliating. This love and romance with the outcomes of America is totally broken up when Changez understands the commitment of American monetary or economic

"fundamentals" not just to the inconvenience of people but to the countries as well. He mentions it straight forward when he is in the process of his regaining his own identity:

I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable. Vietnam, Korea, the straits of Taiwan, the Middle East, and now Afghanistan: in each of the major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my mother continent of Asia, America played a central role. (p. 156)

These murderous attacks were soon accredited by Al-Qaeda, a so-called Muslim organization. Reportedly was instigated and originated in late 1980s in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These aircrafts were crashed on the war of terror. After this event, the America increased their security and emphasized on the immigration law. All the Pakistanis were banned to come in America. They were considered terrorists in the western countries. All the Pakistanis had to face different kinds of violence and difficulties by the natives and military. Changez suffers the aggression and unfriendliness of his work-mates and fears from the murder attacks;

Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse. I reasoned that these stories were mostly untrue. (p. 107)

The identity crisis of Changez may be clearly observed when he returns to his own country Pakistan. His decision of returning to Pakistan is concerned with the sense of identity and it is not of the religious fundamentalism. He gets failure in residing and is lacking any sense of belonging with American multicultural society. At this time, the strong feelings of alienation become the result of pushing him back to Pakistan. (p. 9) Comment regarding the loss of his identity:

Changez needs his identity in America which is everywhere denied. All developments led to Changez's constrained acceptance of his real origin and his ultimate decision of return to home. This is his pursuit of identity because long since he came to America he had been estranged with his Pakistani lineage and later he stood lost when Americans disowned him (being Pakistani, suspiciously lackey of attackers). (P. 11)

It was a time when American society begins to look at him as an outcaste and one of the companions of attackers and hackers. His identity crisis may be seen in these words: "I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged, in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither..." (p. 168)

The image of American society and culture was going to destroy with the destruction of his own personality and identity. It was the country and society that was worshipped and ideal for Changez. When he is rejected on the basis for which he is not responsible. He is totally confused and suffering from the identity crisis.

It seemed to me that America, too was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time. There was something undeniably retro about the

flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as duty and honor. (pp. 114-115)

In light of the clear parallels Hamid portrays the attitude of the beloved Erica and American multicultural society; they both love to dominate over the 'Other'. Changez wants to join the both full with vim and vigor. In the very first attempt of sexual closeness, Erica is welcoming to Changez but at last it proves only "acceding" and "not aroused," this sort of attitude makes the efforts of Changez complete failure. Finally, his relationship with Erica a few weeks later comes to an end in depression and she stopped contacting with Changez, though he endeavors to Erica to imagine that he is Chris while they have love, romance or intercourse.

I thought of Erica. It occurred to me that my attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence [...] to try to take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile. (p. 164)

He sacrifices his personal identity to satisfy his ambition and desire. (Smith J. a., 2010) States that the novel is excessively oversimplified in its clarification of the reasons for 9/11 might be:

The West deserves the home grown threat for its failure to address terror's root cause, namely the liberal state's rejection of the non-Western 'other, and that this sort of aspect ultimately undermines the foundations of political association properly understood. (p. 944)

Same thing happens in relationship with the multicultural American society, as being a brilliant he is warmly welcomed but rejected at the end. His experience explains both his sexual relationship with Erica and the collapse of his responses with the "fundamentals". (p. 106)

Conclusion

Mohsin Hamid has described these socio-economic conflicts through his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. He infers how the class differences affect badly the lives of the people. He seems to be presented that every society is multicultural. The basic difference is of the class difference along with other issues like race and place. He describes the element successfully in both the novels that the finance and money is the source of attraction for the people. They are ready to quit their identity and absorb in any culture demanded like Changez for their reach towards the higher status. They forget their morals and values like Daru who begin to sell drugs among his own people. Reason is simple he wants to compete and become like the upper class citizens in a multicultural society. Mohsin presents how the higher classes enjoy all the luxuries of life and are law-resisted resulting in creation of hatred among the different socio-economic classes in a society. This sort of inequality on the social and economic level brings identity crisis among the people of society and they are force to take the revengeful actions. Both the novels are the demonstration of inborn disputes and conflicts between two societies like the Asian migrants' society and American society and between the Air-conditioned and the non-Air-conditioned division of communities in Pakistan. In *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, it seems to be proved that Changez is a modern tragic hero. If he is analyzed from this perspective, he contains

different qualities of Aristotle's concept of tragic hero like Hamartia (tragic flaw), reversal of the fortune, change of tragic situation, tragic conflicts and the error of judgment. Now these are the elements that lead him towards his identity crisis, his downfall and finally the loss his love and status in the multicultural society of America.

Further Mohsin Hamid relates Changez to a 20th-century tragic hero. He is a common person who is struggling for his own future. He is not a king, prince or a nobleman. He almost comes to a noble position after a great struggle in the life and then suffers from the tragic flaw and it is also fairly evident in the play. In order to modernize the tragic hero, Mohsin introduces the social issues of 20th century America and then the hero is launched in a multicultural society. Now it is the dilemma of the multicultural society and the social context that make it possible for Changez to suffer. Then the incident of September 11 changes the whole scenario and in this way hamartia is being produced by the context of a multicultural society. Mohsin Hamid shows that the particular decisions made in the past and actions being taken in the present have great impact upon the relationships at local and global level or in a multicultural society. Further, Mohsin explores that injustice, subjugation or conflicts at the social or broader level affect the lives of individuals. Then such individuals may become revengeful and damage the social set up.

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