Temporal Displacement And Cultural Identity: A Study Of Changez's Narrative In Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist

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Abstract: *This research paper examines the process of identity development experienced by the main character, Changez, in Mohsin Hamid's novel, The Reluctant Fundamentalist. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States serve as the backdrop for the text. Amidst such a tumultuous scenario, the preservation of one's identity becomes an exceedingly critical concern, particularly for individuals hailing from economically disadvantaged regions. The protagonist, Changez, undergoes a series of stages in his personal and cultural identity while in the United States. The writer's Pakistani background undoubtedly influences the protagonist's ideological perspective. The researcher has attempted to examine the three phases of identity development using Eura Jung and Michael L. Hecht's (1993) Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), which encompasses four frames: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. However, the researcher has restricted his research to solely focusing on the application of relational frames. The use of 'I/We/You' pronouns emphasises the protagonist's relationship identity and creates a contrasting comparison pattern.*

Introduction

Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani novelist, encourages his compatriots, particularly aspiring writers, to explore new opportunities and possibilities in their future endeavors. He has a substantial readership both domestically and internationally. He desires for his youth to possess greater potential and vitality and be filled with challenges in all aspects of life. His words inspire individuals and the nation to find their own identity. This novel, "The Reluctant Fundamentalist," follows the journey of a 22-year-old protagonist who travels to the United States for educational and financial reasons. The first-person point of view presents the narrative in the present tense. It takes the form of a prose theatrical monologue, directed towards an unidentified individual at a restaurant located in the Anarkali Bazar of Lahore city, Punjab Province of Pakistan. The first-person narrative

uses the second person, 'You', to provide a suitable divergence for contrast and comparison. There are actually two narratives: the first is Changez's account of how he achieved success as an employee at a prestigious American company. Underwood Samson had a deep physical and emotional connection with a young American female named Erica, who is still grieving the loss of her late partner, Chris. After the 9/11 tragedy, he experiences disillusionment in both his endeavours; he loses his job, and Erica tragically commits suicide due to stress. Changez's beard and turban, symbols of his original cultural backgrounds, ultimately make his survival untenable, compelling him to return to his homeland. He assumes the role of a professor at a university, where he instructs students on the principles of fundamentalism and the importance of unwavering allegiance to their state and ethnicity. The plot of the novel unfolds against the backdrop of the 9/11 attacks,

a period when the preservation of identity for Muslim expatriates in America became a highly significant subject. Following the tragedy in America, Changez experienced significant upheaval. Being both a Muslim and a Pakistani, he endured significant hardships until he fully embraced fundamentalism in its truest form.

Literature Review

Language serves two primary tasks concurrently: it acts as a tool for communication and also in order to assert one's individuality or distinctiveness from others. A shared language can convey the unique qualities of a community and foster a sense of belonging based on a shared identity (Dieckhoff, 2004). To put it simply, language can serve as a powerful indicator of social identity, both uniting and separating different groups. Its significance might overshadow other identities, such as ethnicity or religion (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009). The beliefs and values of the individuals who use it always influence language, making it more than just a collection of spoken or written words and sentences. More precisely, it functions as an indicator of identity at both the individual and societal levels, encompassing social and cultural dimensions. Cultural distinctiveness is constantly changing and developing new perspectives and ways of behaving. Typically, an individual's life and identity are subject to change and are not constant. Cultural identity is the ever-evolving perception of one's isolated distinctiveness in relation to other people in their surroundings. Throughout social interactions, interpersonal communication establishes, collaboratively constructs, and strengthens a person's cultural identity. Our individual life trajectory and personal encounters have an impact on these tangible aspects of societal existence. Developing a cultural identity entails selecting the cultures with which one identifies and choosing to become part of the cultural group to which one belongs. One or more communities can modify or adjust their beliefs and practices. Each person is a member of multiple cultural and sub-cultural groupings, some of which may overlap with each other while others may not. Consequently, he possesses distinct identities at various levels that

contribute to his cultural identity. Tajfel (1982) provides a definition of social identity as the aspect of an individual's self-concept that arises from their awareness of belonging to a particular social group. Recently, there has been a discussion about how social or collective identity forms when individuals define themselves based on a common aspect, such as a belief, symbol, psychological or physical trait, and so on (Simon, 2004). For instance, the prominent aspect that establishes the social identity of an ethnic group could be a shared belief in a common heritage. Social psychologists assert that changes in the social environment can jeopardise people's sense of identity by threatening their perceptions of continuity over time, distinctiveness from others, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1986, 1992; Brewer, 1992). This topic demonstrates that social settings have a significant role in determining and establishing an individual's identity and recognition. As the social situation evolves, individuals must either oppose or adapt their identity. By adapting and modifying one's established patterns of thought and behaviour, one can successfully navigate through changes and continue to thrive. When someone completely resists new circumstances, they typically seek a way to escape from them. Multiple authors emphasise the correlation between language and ethnic identity (Cho, 2000; Baker, 2001). Under certain circumstances, one's ethnic group can significantly shape their identity during early life. Due to their involuntary immersion in their own ethnic group's culture, children tend to place a high value and emotional importance on this group. However, we universally acknowledge that other identities may hold greater importance or prominence in some cultures. For instance, British Pakistanis identify religion as a particularly significant aspect of their identity. Cohen (2000) suggests that individuals can adopt different identities throughout the day, such as being Muslim in the mosque, Asian in the street, Asian British at political gatherings, and British when travelling abroad. This concept may also apply to individuals who aspire to settle in the USA, where both individuality and ethnic attributes

play a significant role. We expect identities within and outside of the local context to exhibit significant qualitative differences in various respects. In fiction or narrative, the writer assigns identities to characters based on a variety of factors, including their name, geographical and historical background, dress, physiognomy, and local ecological context. When writers from a specific culture, with their own unique philosophy and upbringing, have the audacity to construct a protagonist that serves as a spokesperson in a foreign cultural environment, they inevitably engage in a process of comparing and contrasting the two distinct settings. As a result, people either become fully engrossed in the alluring world of glamour and technology or they actively resist the unrelenting assaults. Accommodation and resistance processes may coexist simultaneously until the individual or emotional consumer gains clarity about the situation. The protagonist in the novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" has indecision but eventually makes a definitive decision. Identity theory also emphasizes the concept of salience. Identity salience refers to the degree to which a certain identity is prominent and influential in various settings. (Hage, Jerald, & Charles H. Powers, 1992.) Typically, we organise identities in a hierarchical manner. People are more likely to put into action identities that hold greater importance in the salience hierarchy. The level of commitment directly correlates with the hierarchy's order. There is a positive relationship between identity commitment and identity salience. The novel under study demonstrates the speaker's consistent maintenance of their position and role as a representative of their cultural identity in an unfamiliar setting. Jane Collier and Milt Thomas (1988) assert that the perception of others and our own self-perception shape our identity. These scholars refer to the coexistence of these attitudes as avowal (external perception) and ascription (self-perception). Undoubtedly, both avowal and ascription are crucial for achieving a fair and balanced solution in any situation. These two extremes provide an appropriate contrast for the development of Changez's ideology as a fundamentalist. This context views fundamentalism as a positive attribute that

aligns with his national and religious identity. The protagonist, acting as the spokesperson for the writer, continues to analyse and highlight the similarities and differences between his own group and other groups. Thus, we can observe Changez's development as it progresses through several phases. However, the researcher chooses to utilise Hetch's (1993) Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) to examine and analyse the various stages of Changez's development, from his individual perspective to his sense of belonging to a community, ultimately culminating in his representation of his own cultural heritage.

A Framework

Eura Jung and Michael L. Hecht developed the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) in 1993, which forms the basis of this study's qualitative research approach. He presents the following four levels or frames of identity: the personal frame refers to an individual's perception and understanding of oneself. People commonly refer to it as a self-concept. This component emphasises an individual's self-perception and self-definition, reflecting their internal thoughts and self-awareness. The novel portrays personal identity using the first-person singular pronoun 'I'. The writer assumes his own enunciative stance as a Pakistani writer through the use of the pronoun 'I'. Changez, the main character in the novel, occupies the same enunciative posture. Thus, the narrator outside the text and the narrator within the text converge, often adopting the pronouns 'I' or 'We' interchangeably. The framework that defines an individual's identity through language and communication is known as an enacted frame. An individual's identity can also be expressed non-verbally, such as through their accessories, garments, fashion, designer labels, gait, appellations, and other factors. Cultural and native identification markers such as kuta, jalebies, anarkali, and nathia gali are utilized. These marks establish the position of 'I/We' to convey the narrator's role. By comparing and contrasting two individuals or personalities, the relational frame forms a framework or layer of identity. It embodies a sense of comparison and contrast. The protagonist hails from Pakistan,

and the narrative takes place in America. Throughout the entire narration, the hero engages in a series of comparisons and contrasts. The contrasting position marker 'I/We-YYou' establishes the overall foundation for this investigation. The markers 'I/We/You' are not merely pronouns, but they possess several parallels and affordances. I/we: The first-person pronoun(s) should be replaced with Changez. Replace "Changez" with "Jim." Replace the unnamed American kurta and turban with a bikini and pants. Speaker Spoke Self versus Other Indigenous Foreigners The government college in Lahore is located in Pakistan, but Princeton University is located in America. The Communal Frame represents a significantly larger and more comprehensive framework for identification. Here, the identities are specified collectively or group-wise. The collective acquires a novel sense of self by virtue of their shared concepts, legacy, historical background, nomenclature, and literary works. A sense of camaraderie, or collective identity, emerges among the members of the group. One group of individuals may consist of Muslims, while another group may consist of Christians. Alternatively, one group might include individuals from Pakistan, another group might include individuals from America, and so on. The mode of communication between one group and another establishes the group's collective identity. Groups may undergo categorization based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, geography, or political affiliations.

Delimitation

The process of defining something's boundaries or limits is known as delimitation. The researcher has restricted their study to the use of a relational frame, specifically focusing on the contrastive analogy between the first person (I/we) and the second person (you), as illustrated in the provided table. Three distinct stages characterize the protagonist's identity evolution: the illusory stage before 9/11, the disillusionment stage during 9/11, and the fanatical stage after 9/11.

Methodology

The novel's story exhibits a symmetrical arrangement consisting of 12 chapters. However, philosophically, there is a division into three parts, with Chapters 1 to 4 focusing on chapters. Changez's perception of America as a dreamland is altered, shedding its glamour. Chapters 5 to 10 depict his condition of disillusionment, whereas sections 11 to 12 portray his position as a fundamentalist. We carefully selected and subjected the textual data pertaining to the three stages, as presented in the corresponding chapters, to qualitative analysis using the method of critical discourse analysis. The comprehensive method of critical discourse analysis examines text as a type of social activity, focusing on the perpetuation of social and political power dynamics in written and spoken communication. Scholars from multiple disciplines use this technique to analyse literary materials and social sciences.

Data analysis

We have carefully selected and evaluated the provided literary quotes within the framework of relational identity. First Stage: (Chapters 1 to 4): Illusion; Prior to September 11th (A) Indeed, you are correct; it was Princeton! Impressive speculation. I must express myself. This is a realisation of a long-held aspiration. This is a realisation of a long-held aspiration. Princeton evoked in me a sense of being the protagonist in a film where limitless possibilities awaited. I felt privileged to have access to the exquisite architecture. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed instructors, experts in their respective fields, and my fellow students, aspiring philosopher-kings. Chapter 1, Page 03 (B): I must admit that I was taken by surprise and unsure of how to respond. However, I was genuinely pleased with Jim. In just a few minutes, he was able to perceive my true nature more clearly than many individuals who had known me for a long time. (Ch.1, P.10)

Discussion

In the excerpts provided, the speaker establishes their relational identity structures by repeatedly using the pronoun 'I'. The attributes associated with 'I', such as "a dream come true," "everything was possible," "professors who are titans," and "I was impressed with Jim," strongly

indicate that Changez is in a state of illusion. Firstly, the process of universalizing traits, such as the possibility of anything and the presence of highly accomplished academics, emphasises the aspect of identification that involves establishing connections. It suggests that Changez had numerous shortcomings and unfulfilled aspirations in his native country, and he believed that America would promptly fulfill all his desires. Changez, like every Pakistani, clearly connects these ambitions to the allure of the economy and finance, which he requires to manage his affairs effectively. Furthermore, Princeton evoked a strong sense of inspiration in me, and I was much struck by Jim's indication that the speaker has a profound fascination with the ontological structures of America. The Princeton University building appears charming to him, and Jim's style and manners greatly impress us. Furthermore, the esteemed professors, who are highly knowledgeable and influential figures, establish the epistemological allure that suggests that all knowledge resides within America. This may lead to the perception that we, as Pakistanis, are lacking in education and study. Furthermore, the use of figurative language such as "dream come true," "Philosophers-stones," and "Titans" serves to emphasise the exceptional level of the speaker's creative imagination in relation to America. Typically, we associate such delusions with Europe, especially America, where we envision the fulfillment of all our desires. These ontological and epistemological metaphors create a sense of dissatisfaction with our own nation and past. Changez was on the verge of experiencing the same situation as a communicator in a meaningful way. Stage Two (Chapters 5 to 10): Loss of illusions that occurred during the events of 9/11. However, the American individual was apprehended by one of his acquaintances, who firmly grasped his arm and pulled him away, indicating that the endeavour was not worthwhile. With some hesitation, the first individual consented to be guided elsewhere. "Offensive racial slur directed at an individual of Arab descent" (Chapter 8, Page 134): Despite its physical insignificance as a mere hair style, the presence of a beard on a man with my skin has a significant impact on

your fellow countrymen. On other occasions, while riding the subway, where I usually feel like I fit in well, I experienced verbal harassment from strangers. Similarly, at Underwood Samson, it seemed like I became the subject of gossip overnight, with everyone staring at me.

Chapter 9, page 148: Conversation In these passages, the speaker 'I' once again conveys their identity to the readers using the same relational approach as before. However, he is currently experiencing a strong feeling of disappointment, similar to the intense sense of illusion he formerly had towards America and its people. The Americans commonly refer to him using the derogatory term "fucking Arab." This entity compels him to introspect and identify himself as a practitioner of the Islamic faith. He may be of Arab descent, but he is not engaging in sexual activity. Others may feel humiliated and contemptuous towards us due to our hairstyle, beard, and complexion, leading to verbal abuse in numerous situations. His hair style, beard, and skin not only create a clear contrast with Americans in terms of culture and ethnicity, but also greatly undermine his appeal and representation of American culture and ethnicity. The term 'beard' undoubtedly represents a symbol of ethnic identity in a broader context, but on an individual level, it is the distinctive and noticeable facial characteristic that sets him apart and makes him stand out in American society. In addition to his beard, his turban also accentuates his uniqueness, which he desires to preserve and uphold. Page 1 contains the statement "Do not be afraid of my beard." American society frequently perceives the beard as a symbol of terrorism, thereby causing fear. However, when it comes to removing it, the individual in question consistently displays hesitance. He sees it not just as a fashion statement, but as a symbol of his unique identity, intricately linked to his cultural and religious beliefs. The United States' support for India over Pakistan has disillusioned us as a nation. Examining the perspectives of identity creators within broader political parameters allows us to discern the political shift of paradigms. Six chapters (Ch. 5 to 10) thoroughly depict Changez's transition from a

state of illusion to disillusionment. It signifies his actions or intentions. It required a significant amount of time to recover from the deep-seated confusion and uncertainty related to the nature of existence, knowledge, and the political landscape in America. His uncertainty as the voice of all the different aspects of himself is coming to an end, and he is on the verge of transitioning into a new realm of identity. Stage three (Chapters 11 to 12): Defense; Post-9/11, I adhere to the principle of nonviolence, finding the act of shedding blood repugnant, save in cases of self-defense. Chapter 12, page 206: It may be self-evident, but it is important to understand that not all Pakistanis should be perceived as potential terrorists.

(Ch. 12 PP 208, 209) Analysis: The allure has worn off. No further disillusionment. The foregoing samples clearly demonstrate the individual's self-awareness and identification as both a nationalist and a Muslim fundamentalist (in a positive sense). The speaker has resolved his ambivalence. I have changed the word 'I' to 'We' because I support nonviolence and we, as Pakistanis, are not all terrorists. His contrasting perspectives on the world establish his identity. In this context, the use of pronouns 'I/me' holds great significance because they explicitly establish a connection between the reader, the writer, and Changez. According to Catherine Belsey, the use of 'I' in the text combines the concepts of ennui (the writer as a narrator outside the text) and enounce (the narrator as a protagonist inside the text). This suggests that the novel merges the identities of the writer and the narrator into a single entity, symbolized by the character Changez. The enunciator represents both himself and the fictional creator. The 'you' is undoubtedly the opposite. Furthermore, it is worth noting the intriguing juxtaposition of the duality between 'I/We' and 'You'. One uses I/we, a first-person pronoun, to refer to themselves or a group of people. You is a second-person pronoun that refers to the person or people being spoken to. Modify the term "Americans" to reflect that Pakistan is a country and America is another. Mohsin Hamid, Peaceful Aggressive Advocates of Peace Terrorists, is a writer from the western part of the world. It is evident that the pattern of dichotomy, as presented in the table, is not solely based on language but also on ideology. Pakistan and America are two areas with contrasting ideologies, making it extremely challenging for someone like Changez to thrive. Ultimately, he is compelled to acknowledge his stance and beliefs as those of a fundamentalist. Changez's ability to maintain his identity justifies his decision to return to his hometown.

Conclusion

To sum up, looking at the data through the lens of the relational frame makes it clear that the character Changez's identity changes as a result of contrast (the change between first-person singular and plural pronouns and second-person pronouns) in the work. He progresses through three stages of identity development, ultimately becoming a fundamentalist. The research emphasises that, following the events of 9/11, the preservation of identity among Pakistani immigrants in the USA became significantly more important. The jeopardisation of their Islamic and national identities rendered their survival in such a situation impossible. Through Changez's transformation, the novelist embodies all of these qualities.

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