

## Islamophobia in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid



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**Abstract:** *The novel Reluctant Fundamentalist has been analysed from various perspectives. However, its analysis from an Islamophobic perspective has hitherto remained unexplored. This study aims to identify the elements of Islamophobia—the unjustifiable fear towards Islam and its practices that non-Muslims in general and people of the United States of America in particular have developed after the 9/11 incident. The researcher possesses a comprehensive understanding of the 9/11 incident to investigate its impact on the lives of Muslims worldwide, particularly those residing in the US. With reference to the novel The Reluctant Fundamentalist(2007), this research shows what kind of discrimination Muslims face in western countries, especially in America. In this novel, the main character's newly grown beard, a symbol of sympathy with his Muslim fellows, leads to harsh treatment. People frequently question his beard, leading him into a never-ending sea of sorrows, troubles, and miseries. In the end, he is compelled to leave the US because of the unusual fear (Islamophobia) that people have developed against him, his structure, and his actions. Furthermore, the research examines what people fear from Islam after the 9/11 attack on Americans.*

**Keywords:** 9/11, Islamophobia, America, and Islam

### Introduction

September 11, 2001, is considered a black day in American history. It was a day when America's political, economic, and commercial excellence turned upside down. According to a CNN news report, the terrorist group named Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, resulting in heavy losses of lives and wealth for the US. The group hijacked planes and then targeted the World Trade Center. It was one of the world's largest and most famous buildings at that time. The success of a terrorist group on such a large scale was not only a great shock to the United States, but also to the whole

world. Later, as reported by BBC news on October 29, 2004, Osama Bin Laden, the leader of the AL-Qaeda group, claimed responsibility for masterminding the attacks. The incident changed the whole scenario for Muslims worldwide. As the 19 terrorists claimed to be Muslims and carried out that attack in Islam's name, an instant wave of hatred erupted against Islam and Muslims around the world. This 9/11 incident destroyed the image of Muslims around the world. The United States government declared the "War on Terror," launching attacks on Muslim-majority nations such as Iraq and Afghanistan that resulted in the deaths of

thousands of innocent civilians and significant infrastructure damage. Both as a nation and as a state, America appeared to develop a fear of Islam as a religion. They began to view Islam as a tool for terrorism and distraction, targeting both America specifically and the world at large. They began to view Muslims in general, and specifically those residing in America, as a threat to American civilization.

As a result, hate crimes against Muslims in America skyrocketed. American Muslims were no longer considered gentle and humane. Their religion and ethnicity were questioned. The hatred and skepticism became so great that the Americans started teasing and threatening Muslims in general, as well as those with beards on their faces. This act of racism and ethnic segregation caused unrest among Muslims and posed numerous challenges of various kinds.

This novel narrates the scenario through its protagonist, Changez. The narrative is his life account and personal experience of his stay over there. He can be considered both an eyewitness and a victim of America's post-9/11 reality. Any Muslim living in America can relate to the stereotyped character of Changez and his sufferings. The fear of Islam among Americans escalated to such an extent that it resulted in a perpetual state of unrest worldwide. The United States initiated wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over the past 19 years, America has persistently waged its "Global War against the terrorists". More than ten years have passed since this incident occurred, leading to numerous hypotheses at the global level. Numerous writers and individuals have contributed to this issue, each with their own unique assumptions and interpretations. While supporting this theory, the researcher will investigate the impact of the 9/11 incident on American Muslims and their religion, Islam. The primary focus will be on the basic concept of Hamid's novel and its impact on the Muslim community. I will try to explain America's unusual hatred and fear for Islam and Muslims.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aims to find answers to the following research questions:

What distinct aspects of Islamophobia does Mohsin Hamid identify in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?

How does Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* use these elements to illustrate the theme of Islamophobia?

Beard serves as an Islam-phobic element in the novel *Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

### **DELIMITATION**

The researcher has restricted his study to the components and portrayal of Islamophobia in

Mohsin Hamid's novel "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*".

### **Significance of the Study**

The research holds significant importance given its subject matter, particularly for individuals who may not have been exposed to the American preoccupation with beards and their association with terrorism. After 9/11, attitudes towards Muslims experienced a great shift. At the national and international levels, politics took a new direction. The innocent Muslims have endured immense suffering and continue to do so. They face scathing discrimination across the west. This study will not only show the problems American Muslims are facing but also present an overview of all Muslims around the world, focusing on the discriminatory attitudes they are facing. The study has demonstrated its significance by examining how Americans perceive and react to Muslims with beards as potential sources of violence and terrorism. Future researchers can benefit from the answers to these questions.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is qualitative, and a qualitative research evaluation shall be beneficial for this research project, using objective methods such as gathering relevant data from the specified documents and compiling databases in order to analyse the material and arrive at a more complete understanding of the work of Mohsin Hamid and the attitudes of the Americans presented in the novel towards the Muslims. The researcher may find it challenging to respond to the questions outlined in the research question

section.

This study employs qualitative research methodology. We have qualitatively analysed the data to gain a deeper understanding of the issue at hand, which is the Americans' attitude towards Muslims. We have conducted a qualitative analysis of Mohsin Hamid's novel XXXX, detailing the precise method of data/text analysis.

### **Method of Data Collection:**

The data for this research consists of different research articles, literary reviews, literary critics' opinions, and a general note collection. We plan to use various secondary and primary sources to gather comprehensive data and create opportunities for future researchers. The researcher plans to review both recent and old research on the subject, specifically the short stories under consideration, to validate the collected data. After gathering the qualitative data from the aforementioned sources, the researcher will conduct a thorough and meticulous analysis.

### **Literature Review**

Conflict between societies is the most important theme of contemporary literature. Modern literary writers pick up and tackle these difficulties in order to solve them. They investigate causes and propose solutions. Modern literary writers focus on many cultures and nations. Society also needs philosophers. They based their ideologies on individual and social conflict. Modern writers seek ethnically diverse characters and highlight their socioeconomic issues. Conflicts arise because everyone has different opinions and reasons. Powerful or powerless people dispute. People fighting for their rights or opinions cause the most social conflict.

The study examines how individuals fear Islam and Muslims after 9/11, as depicted in *Reluctant Fundamentalists*. Hamid's novel is postcolonial in its perspective. This study examined postcolonialism aspects from various critics' perspectives. Identity confusion is central to postcolonial literature. Muslims were confused about their identity after 9/11. They were

desperately trying to find closure and suppress their thoughts. They struggled to decide whether to sympathize with Pakistan or America. Postcolonial critics focus on powerful and subjugated nations. Critics want them "forced." Following the events of 2001, numerous authors penned pieces on this topic. 9/11 literature became a distinct genre. Foreign writers' post-9/11 attitudes vary. The writers investigate this incident and encourage people to think more about it. Many occurrences in history illustrate the damage that still haunts us. The researcher has listed some 9/11-related material below.

After 9/11, writers wrote about different cultural groups because American cultures are "blended", according to Richard Gray. "With the collapse of communism, a sinister other that enabled American self-definition may have disappeared," he added. However, Islam has superseded it.

In 2003, Jhumpa Lahiri wrote *The Namesake*. The novel's postcolonial elements are clear. Assimilation, immigrants, unhappiness, love, society, class, and family concerns were Lahiri's focus. Mohsin Hamid's novel addresses these concerns, including immigrants, society consciousness, and love and culture conflicts. Lahiri's novel described American-Indian socioeconomic issues. She explained why nations usually want to cooperate. Due to life's complications, people always try to establish their true identity but fail.

"We All Fall Down" by Eric Walters is key 9/11 fiction. It depicts the world's future.

Don LeLillo's contemporary American novel, *Falling Man*, is significant. On September 11, 2001, the tale begins with twin towers of smoke and ash. The novel covers the turn of the century in America and worldwide. In this work, LeLillo concentrates on human psychology rather than culture. Because 9/11 affected everyone differently, he concentrated on human psychology. On video, the live crowd feels different from those outside or inside the building. Not folding family relationships.

### **Story of the *Reluctant Fundamentalist***

The novel centres around Keith, Justin, and

Lianne's spouse. Their flat was near the towers. This novel does not mention politics. It depicted human tragedy and positive personal growth. After his friend's death, Keith took a positive approach to his life. "Keith, too, was going slow, casing inward," he said in the story. He wanted to be a living body, day and night. Now he drifts into spells of reflection, "thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience" ("Falling Man," 66).

His wife still grieves. The tragedy had a greater impact on Lianne as she watched the man descend from the tower. Novel summary. This novel delves into how the incident affects relationships and the world. This novel examined September 11, which affected our memories, opinions, and feelings about the world.

"An Interview in Union Square" The New York Times reported that "they gathered at Union Square because everyone has different feelings and responses, but everybody agreed that they must remain united."

In his story, Mohsin Hamid explains that "every person is not the same, and we cannot blame everyone because of the few people." In an interview, Al-Abidin mosque's imam said, "We join with our fellow Americans in prayer for the killed and injured," which is evidence that people have different beliefs about their social affiliations, actions, and relationships with people of different beliefs.

Many writers covered 9/11. The author of "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" hails from Pakistan. The narrative shows how Pakistanis are seen in this situation. This incident was entirely Muslim-related. After 9/11, foreigners read this novel because it contains their most important history. This novel has been reviewed by authors and journals.

"Because of sheer curiosity, that is why Changez was tagged as a reluctant fundamentalist, and how he would manifest itself," Herman Norford stated of the novel in 2008. The title's richness and subtlety delighted me as I read the book. Mohsin Hamid's novel handled the tough matter

well.

Libyan and American writers agree on Mohsin Hamid's work. "Mohsin Hamid's forthcoming novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, artfully carves out its own stillness amid the urgent befuddlement of these turbulent times" ("Hisham Matar").

"This work demonstrates what certain trumped-up laureates of post-modernity seem incapable of grasping: that it is possible to simultaneously address the byzantine monstrosity of contemporary existence and care about the destiny of one's characters." A resounding success. "Not unworthy of Nabokov" ("The Village Voice, March 22, 2007").

According to Paula Bock, the Changez character in the novel depicts Hamid's writing style exactly as he wanted. He wrote: "Changez's voice is extraordinary, cultivated, restrained, yet also barbed and passionate; it evokes the power of Butler Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*... brilliantly written and well worth a read" ("The Seattle Times Aril, 2007").

Mohsin Hamid enjoys it. The reluctant fundamentalist begins with ambiguity. By the novel's end, it's a disturbing payout. Perhaps readers hastily draw conclusions, or perhaps the book serves as a mirror to reflect our subconscious presumptions. The novel's suspense stems from our ignorance ("New York Reviews of Books, October 11, 2007 by Sarah Kerr").

Elegant and chilly... A less educated author may have told a one-note story about an immigrant's estrangement from bigotry and ignorance. "Hamid's novel... depicts Changez's class aspirations and inner struggle" ("Newspaper, The New York Time").

This novel followed "Moth Smoke" by Mohsin Hamid. His novels gained him notoriety: "This author's second novel performs exceptionally well." ("Booklist, starred review, January 1, 2007").

Other critics discuss "The Reluctant Fundamentalist." Websites and newspapers feature book reviews from many publishers. "An effortless, eco-friendly, captivating story... an

outstanding endeavor... " This fictitious relationship benefits Pakistani literature and identity in many ways. "Hamid has done something many Pakistani writers, especially Urdu writers, should learn: the art of understatement" ("The News Pakistan, April 29, 2007 by Saeed urRehman"). On March 1, 2007, Siobhan Murphay remarked, Mohsin Hamid writes novels well and tries to capture real-life characters. Emotional stories dominate. Murphy and another critic, 'Alastair Sooke', call it a narrative with multiple incidents. Alastair told The Daily Telegraph (April 18, 2007) that this work is a miniature version of East-West negative doubts. This novel entertains despite its serious subject, he added.

"Beautifully written and superbly constructed, this is more exciting than any thriller I've read for a long time, as well as being a subtle and elegant analysis of the state of our world today" ("Philip Pullman").

"A brilliant book with spooky restraint and masterful control, Hamid unpicks the East and West," says Desai. "Love, as powerful as the sinrecedes force gathering, even when it races into a phantom of hope," balances the story.

Mira Nair calls his work "A searing and powerful account of Pakistan in New York after 9/11" ("Director of The Namesake").

"This novel's firm, steady, oven-beautiful voice proclaims the completeness of the soul when conjoined personal and global issues" (Booklist Reviews).

"A superb cautionary tale" (Publishers Weekly).

"The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid impressed Philip Pullman. It is well-written and well-constructed. The author has ratcheted up the suspense almost imperceptibly, creating an exciting thriller. I read a lot of thrillers—or rather, I start reading a lot of thrillers and put most of them down—but this is more fascinating than any thriller I've read in a long time, as well as being a deep and exquisite examination of our world today. I was tremendously impressed".

"I have seen Muslims do so well in the US," said Sean Paul Kelley. Although I relocated from

New York to London in 2001, there are still many rich Muslims in America ("April 2nd in the Agonist").

These analyses reflect personal preferences and dislikes. My research examines how 9/11 affected Muslims, particularly American Muslims, and how people fear Islam.

### **Islamophobia: Theoretical framework**

According to Merriam-Webster, "phobia is an exaggerated, usually inexplicable, and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation." The afflicted may struggle to explain their fear, yet it exists. Islamophobia has swept Western society.

Islamophobia is the belief that Islam has no morality or value. Western social and moral values are superior. Westerners believe Islam is a crisis religion and do not want Muslims to live and preach in their country. Islamophobia's origin;

**Labeling: In 1923, English Language and Literature invented Islamophobia.** "Fear of Islam or Islamic culture and politics, or a fear of anything associated with Islam and its practices" was the 1910 French term isalmophobia, which Alain Quelling used in his thesis. In the early 20th century, Islamophobia was a daily occurrence. The report states that Western anti-Muslim prejudice is growing. The heavy use of this term necessitates the creation of new vocabulary. Muslims didn't recognize it until 1990, when they referred to it as "rehab-ul-Islam" (meaning "Phobia of Islam").

According to Leroy Rosenior's research, "Someone [always] has to be afraid of something and put a label on it—in my day it was the IRA: if you spoke with an Irish accent, you were in the IRA." Islamic people carry bombs under their shirts. Cultural ignorance is dangerous."

George Boateng asserts, "We have good religious people, but we also have bad religious people." The point is, we shouldn't assume that all Muslims or all Christians are the same; instead, we should give each individual a chance, get to know them, and then determine if they have a good heart.

Some commentators argue that September 11 increased Islamophobia. Others have linked it to rising Muslim populations in the US and EU. Some questioned the term's appeal. Islamophobia is a reaction to the global Muslim public identity. Muslims do not exhibit Islamophobia. Islamophobia is about power and state repression, not Muslims. Orientalism underpins the clash of civilisations narrative. It instilled Islamophobia. Islamophobia views Islam as backward, in crisis, inferior, and monolithic, inherited from Orientalism. Political power and ambition drive Islamophobia, just like they do Orientalism.

Islamophobia is not Orientalism. Some Orientalist philosophers revered Muslim history, culture, languages, and faiths. Orientalists did not necessarily detest Islam or Muslims, but many did. Islamophobia refers to the pain and hatred experienced by Muslims towards Islam. Orientalism originates in academia. Schooling, whether Muslim or Islamic, does not create modern Islamophobia. The mainstream approach to fighting Islamophobia. Supporting the US makes you a good American Muslim. The empire will gladly absorb Khizar Khan, whose son died in the Iraq War, challenged Trump's Islamophobia. He took the paper out of his pocket and said, "Donald Trump, have you even read that US Islamophobia is a project of empire building? It has a connection to capitalism, and no amount of explaining Islam will begin to address those realities. ("Nazia") "Islamophobia" is a useful term for institutional bigotry and prejudice against Muslims. Rooted in a variety of historical and political causes that view Islam and Muslims as threats, For example, people often assume that Sikhs or Indians who identify as Hindus but are perceived as Muslims or Pakistanis are disloyal, foreign, and violent, regardless of whether they were born in America or hold US citizenship. ("Aziz").

"The Muslim subject is irrational, pre-modern, static, unable to embrace development, modernity, and so on," claimed Dr. Hatem Bazan. Dr. Hatem Bazan makes the assumption that only European discourse is modern, reasonable, progressive, and inclusive. What does it mean to be a Muslim and a foreigner?

Because humans are humans, they shouldn't try to humanize themselves.

Dr. Salman believes Islamophobia "narrates a different kind of planet." Islamophobia serves as a vehicle for the erosion of civil rights in policy, legislation, and global culture. Islamophobia revives white supremacy on a global scale. Not just far-right parties. Islamophobia affects more than just Muslims. Muslims face lynching in India, a phenomenon akin to Jim Crow. What does multi-culture failure mean? It implies that white privilege is harder to prove.

Arian Al Sami states, "A lot of the Islamophobia networks want to construct an image of Islam."

### **Islamophobia causes**

#### **1.1 Racism**

Racism is the belief that one class is superior to another, which leads to prejudice against people of different races or ethnicities.

(1.2) "Various people or groups use the word terrorism to justify cruel actions and deeds that serve specific goals and motives."

(1.3) Stereotype "A stereotype refers to an incorrect belief or notion that some individuals hold about a particular thing or group, which they utilize to discriminate against another individual."

(1.4) Media "Media are the communicative tools or outlets used to utilise and convey information or data." Public understanding that Islam opposes terrorism and promotes peace helps lessen Islamophobia. To overcome societal issues, Muslims should soften Islam, especially among youth.

Islamic groups should communicate Islam clearly. Organizations from Islamic countries should provide assistance. The University of California at Berkeley's 'Islam phobia Research and Documentation Project' asserts that the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure provokes a creative fear known as 'Islam phobia'. Islamophobia perpetuates global resource distribution disparities.

The novel "Reluctant Fundamentalist" is about a Pakistani student who is studying in the United States. The novel "Reluctant Fundamentalist"

primarily explores the aftermath of 9/11 and highlights the Western world's arrogance, particularly that of Americans towards Muslims. The novel, *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is primarily autobiographical, and as the writer is a Muslim from Pakistan, he strives to depict his experiences in America through fictional narratives. A little report and research into the author's private accounts make it clear that the places mentioned in the book are where the writer spent his life. Mohsin Hamid has employed a prototype character, a real and authentic character named Changez, who is not the author himself.

The novel's story (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) revolves around a conflict between two different countries. The novel's main character, Changez, serves as a symbol for all Muslims worldwide, illustrating how a particular identity is shaped. In the novel, the writer used an epiphany, which is when two characters realise that they are from two different worlds and that their identities are different. The definition of individuality varies between an American and a Pakistani, leading to a clash. Despite her fondness for Changez, the girl struggles to feel at ease. Erica realises that American and Pakistani values, dogmas, and perceptions towards life truly differ and cannot meet; they rather repel each other.

The novel starts at a hotel in Lahore. Here, Changez, for the first time, tries to speak to a stranger. He thought that the stranger was an American secret (private) agent because of his behavior. Appearance plays a vital role in the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Changez observed that the stranger might frighten his beard.

"Do not be afraid by my beard; I am a lover of America," he said (Hosseini, 2007, p. 1).

Here, the beard symbolizes Muslim culture's "ethnicity" and "identity," which are two key components of postcolonial theory. Here, the bear symbolizes Muslim identity and ethnicity, while the stranger's looks represent his way of life. In essence, not all bearded individuals identify as Muslims. The bear is also a moral symbol for Sikhs and Jews. However, Muslims

typically associate a long beard with morality.

Subsequently, Changez responds to the stranger's inquiry, recognizing him as an American. Following this, he extends an offer of tea to the elderly Anarkali and expresses his desire to continue their conversation. Later on, Changez learns about the stranger's behavior and the careful steps he is taking in the market. The stranger's appearance changes throughout the novel. Changez is a Lahore Pakistani national, but he graduated from an American university and currently works for American companies. He loves a luxurious life. He shares his fantasies about Americans with strangers. He says:

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) describes this as a realization of a long-held dream (p. 2). He believed that professors at Princeton University were the titans, and students were 'philosophers' in their duties. He diligently worked to maintain his status in society, juggling three separate jobs. At the beginning, he was reluctant to discuss American life styles, but suddenly shifted his focus to discuss the challenges faced by foreign students, particularly Muslims. Whether they are working in an office or studying at any university, they face severe favoritism. The writer says:

"The Americans faced much less daunting odds in the selection process (Hamid, 2007.P.2), and the foreigners, especially the Muslims, faced too many difficulties.

After 9/11, the image of Pakistan became totally different. The writer also has a beard, with or without one. He says that everyone has the right to do what they want; a man cannot reproach the girls because he has a beard. He says, "You think he will scold them for the inappropriateness of their dress—their T-shirt and jeans (Hamid, 2007, p. 13).

After being part of American society, Changez did something different in Manila. "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American (Hamid, 2007, p. 38). He represented himself as an American. He feels ashamed many times for not showing his real identity, but he is proud because of his work, not because of his nationality.

Before 9/11, Pakistanis and Americans were both trying to play an important role in the world by merging their cultures. Mohsin Hamid says, "What does your writing look like?"

I said that Urdu is similar to Arabic but we have more letters. She said it's beautiful (Hamid, 2007, p. 17). These lines show that both Changez and Erica seemed interested in each other's culture, and both were trying to strengthen their relationship. Both of these characters serve as symbols for two distinct civilizations. Both of these characters represent the perspectives of two distinct civilizations. Their relationship grew stronger and stronger with the passage of time.

Latter Mohsin Hamid shows the moral beliefs of Pakistani men. Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol, yet many Pakistanis adopt the lifestyles and languages of foreigners. He also provides a light-hearted explanation of Pakistan's constitution. Changez, a Pakistani, assured Erica's father during their meeting that he would consume alcohol.

"I once employed a Pakistani worker." Erica's father said, I never drank.

I do, sir; I assured him" (Hamid, 2007, p. 32). Moreover, further attaches details of his drunkenness while talking to a foreigner. He says, "In truth, many Pakistani drinks; alcohol's illegality in our country has roughly the same effect as marijuana's in yours" (Hamid, 2007, p. 32).

Mohsin Hamid explains that after the 9/11 incident, appearances and beliefs really matter. This book shows a picture of the relationship between Americans and Muslims. For Asians, America is considered a city of dreams. "I knew her family was wealthy, and I wanted to dress as I imagined they would, in a manner of elegance but also casual," Mohsin Hamid writes in a novel (Hamid, 2007, p.29).

The writer employs a technique known as "mimicry" to draw comparisons between himself and the wealthy class of American society. Following the 9/11 attack, Americans shifted their focus to colonizing the Muslim world. They initiated the 'War on Terror' under

the guise of combating terrorism. This situation becomes increasingly critical. Others target Pakistan as a terrorist country during this critical moment.

Love, desires, wishes, and a thirst for material things play vital roles in the novel. Changez said, "All these things filled me with desire" (Hamid, 2007, p. 51). Erica charged his relationship with emotional attachment, and as she spoke, I realized that her familiarity resonated with me (Hamid, 2007, p. 54).

Before 9/11, Muslims in America struggled to adapt to their new country and continue to do so even after more than 13 years. Before 9/11, Changez's life was going well with a lover and success, but after the 9/11 attack, everything changed for Changez and for the whole Muslim community in America. Al-Qaeda attacked the US on September 11, 2001, resulting in heavy losses of lives and wealth. When the incident occurred, his group was in Manila. When he first saw the news on TV, he smiled and said, "I stared as one of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed." And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased" (Hamid, 2007, p. 43").

This incident totally changed my whole frame of mind. Non-Americans are an integral part of America, whether they identify as Pakistanis, Americans, or neither. Because of different cultures, they are being confused about colonization. They lack a clear understanding of their true identity, which further contributes to their confusion regarding the 9/11 incident and how they should respond within specific timeframes.

Here, Changez portrays all non-American thoughts; he is in a state of dual consciousness. On the one hand, he appears to be in a happy mood due to the attacks on America, but he is unsure of why. "The symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees," he said (Hosseini, 2007, p. 43).

He was content with his own thoughts, but he couldn't pinpoint the reason behind his happiness regarding America's current state. Throughout the entire novel, he considered

himself a lover of America, and he was not at war with his beloved country. He tried to explain his previous statements as "I was infatuated with an American woman" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 43").

He does not show great consolation towards the affected people in 9/11 because no one in that building was close to them, or they simply gave on thoughts about the victims of the incident. Later on, he gives an explanation of this act, saying that he is not mentally stable and was confused. However, upon learning about Erica's death, Changez experienced genuine worry for her. He says, "I was almost relieved to be worried for her and unable to sleep; this allowed me to share in the anxiety of my colleagues and ignore for a time my initial sense of pleasure (Hosseini, 2007, p.4").

At the immigration counter, he faces harsh treatment from the security officers just because of his Pakistani nationality. Armed guards escorted me into the room (Hosseini, 2007, p. 44"). His flight was not good because of his appearance; many of his fellow passengers were thinking badly of him because he was the last one to board the plane. "I was aware of being under suspicion; I felt guilt and therefore tried to be as nonchalant as possible; this naturally led to my becoming stiff and self-conscious" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 44). The development of color-based opinions for a certain "race" and "ethnicity" negatively impacted Changez's "identification".

The customs staff treated him properly when he arrived at the American airport. They asked the same question again and again: "What is the purpose of your trip to the United States? She asked me. I live here, I replied. This is not what I asked you, sir, she said.

What is the purpose of your trip to the US?" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 44"). Others treated Changez poorly due to his "religion" and "race." Rather than identifying as American, he faced harsh treatment as a Pakistani and a Muslim.

As a spokesperson for Mohsin Hamid, Changez attempts to justify the inhumanity of life and relegate humans to the status of "animals." He believed that although humans are not inherently good, there are certain harsh realities of life that

every individual must confront. What is our perspective on the impossibility of achieving 100% accuracy? He said,

Hosseini, (2007) noted, "It is remarkable indeed how we human beings are capable of delighting in the mating call of a flower—but then we are remarkable creatures (p. 46).

Upon his return to America, he found the entire city of New York in a state of despair. The mistreatment he experienced at the airport and the behavior of his fellow passengers intensified his feelings towards his country. Erica told Changez, "I like the way you talk about your background. She further added, You become so alive" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 48").

Because of the attacks, his lover was also afraid—of dying at the hands of the terrorists. After attacks, he suffered extreme homesickness: "Perhaps because of our conversation, I dreamed not of Erica but of home; what she dreamed of, I did not know" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 54").

Following the 9/11 incident, Muslims faced severe discrimination. The chaotic situation was created between two nations in one country. The diverse aspirations of non-Americans, particularly Muslims, crumbled with the collapse of the Twin Towers. Finding a new foundation for Muslims in a foreign country became increasingly challenging. Because of this terrible incident, Native Americans' anger was at its peak. "A growing and self-righteous rage gripped America in those weeks of September and October as I cavorted about with Erica" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 56"). The Muslim community also attacked the FBI, prompting them to pose various questions about the Muslim community. People at places like Bushfire passed different theories: "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 centres for questioning or worse (Hosseini, 2007, p. 57)." Americans were blaming all Muslims for this incident and treating them badly, leading to numerous problems for Muslims. "Our telephone

extensions and fax machines would mysteriously stop working; our security badges and notes would disappear. Frequently, when I would emerge from the car park, I would discover a puncture on one of my rental car's tires—a occurrence too frequent to be merely a coincidence (Hosseini, 2007, p. 57").

Pakistan is not the only country to face these problems after 9/11. Iraq and Afghanistan are also grappling with similar issues within their respective nations. The conflict between neighbouring countries worsened, with India threatening to launch a war against Pakistan. The United States also initiated a war in Iraq under the pretext of combating terrorism.

The bombing of Afghanistan had been underway for a fortnight, and I refrained from watching the evening news due to the partisan and sports-event-like coverage of the mismatch between the American bombers equipped with twenty-first-century weaponry and the ill-equipped Afghan tribesmen below (Hosseini, 2007, p. 59"). The chances of war between Pakistan and India rose just after the 9/11 incident. "That week armed men assaulted the Indian parliament, and instead of celebrating my good fortune, I was confronting the possibility that soon my country could be at war" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 86).

America attacked Iraq after six months; "six months later, the invasion of Iraq would be under way" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 108").

"I telephoned my parents, and they told me that the situation in Pakistan continued to be precarious; it was rumoured that India was acting with America's connivance, both countries seeking the threat of force to coerce the government into changing its policies" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 89").

At the end of the novel, he remains confused; at one point, he called September a month of starting relationships: "September has always seemed to me a month of beginnings" (Hosseini, 2007, P. 20). However, later on, he associates September with battle: "September was deemed the best month for battle" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 107").

The unknown stranger used the reference to 'janissaries', attempting to give thought to colonization. "They were Christian boys, he explained, captured by the ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at the time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal; they had fought to erase their own civilisations, so they had nothing to turn to. He went on to say that they had always taken the janissaries during childhood. It would have been far more difficult to devote themselves to their adopted empire, you see, if they had memories they could not forget" (Hosseini, p. 91").

While ending the novel, Changez considers himself a servant of America and concludes that he was a modern janissary. "A servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with kinship to mine and perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 91").

Mohsin Hamid employs irony by comparing a "beard man" to a mouse. He says that words can play an important role in men's lives. Therefore, he acknowledges his status as a "subaltern" in society, limited in his ability to express himself through expression and depression, and reliant on the methods of societal control.

He no longer finds happiness in his life. "The luxuries of our cabin no longer excite me" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 84"). This specific incident resulted in physical torment for individuals, yet its psychological effects were uniform. This whole atmosphere creates a disturbed situation in his life. The political situation disturbed him mentally: "I neither ate nor slept; my thoughts were caught up in the affairs of continents other than the one below us, and more than once I regretted coming at all" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 84").

He resigned from his job after a bad government, and he plans to return to his own state. After resigning his job, he doesn't want to think about anything else. "All I understood was that after dedicating days to studying fundamentals, we had reached our conclusion" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 92").

When he returned from the USA, he started his job as a lecturer at Lahore University. He suffered from internal chaos in his best career

stage, and he protects his act as "I was an incoherent and emotional madman, flying off into rages and sinking into depressions" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 101").

Changez describes the political unrest following the 9/11 attacks, drawing from his personal experiences. Changez's perspective on the political landscape and America's attempts to control various nations evolved over time.

"Your country's constant interference in other people's affairs was insufferable." The major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my mother continent, Asia, included Vietnam, Korea, the Straits of Taiwan, the Middle East, and now Afghanistan. America played a central role" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 94").

Even though Changez returns from America to Pakistan, his emotional attachment to America is still there. Changez is determined to cherish the wonderful time he spent in America, as well as the memories he holds of his lover. He recounted the entire tale of his journey, which took him from Pakistan to America and back to Pakistan.

"Here we pay all or we pay none" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 98"). This line presents the true reality of life: either we have to live our lives in this crucial situation or we pay nothing and enjoy our lives as champions.

In postcolonial literature, the most important aspect is the confusion of identity. Following the 9/11 incident, Muslims found themselves in a state of confusion, unable to make a decision. All of them were in a state of uncertainty, desperately trying to articulate their thoughts. They were in a confused state about whether they felt sympathy for Pakistan or sympathy for America.

"I was not certain I belonged here—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither—and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 89").

He also explains his confusing state in other places: "Not—please understand me—that I was convinced that I had made no mistake; no, I was merely unconvinced that I had not made a

mistake." I was, in other words, confused" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 96").

In this novel, Changez portrays Muslims' intermittent exploration of life's meaninglessness. He does not know how he should behave in all these situations. "This caused me to reflect again on the absurdity of my situation, being two hemispheres" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 90").

In American history, the 9/11 incident is considered a black day, but it also brought about changes in the lives of people. This event psychologically affected everyone, regardless of their direct or indirect association. At one place, Changez said, "As for myself, I was clearly on the threshold of great changes" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 90").

In this novel, Changez is considered a hero because he changed his personal attitude many times. America brought revolutionary changes in his personal life, whether it was his financial life or his love. "It occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence." I had changed (Hosseini, 2007, p. 74").

After 9/11, relations between Americans and Muslims were unkind towards each other. Many readers find Changez's initial appearance shocking, but he later explained the reasons behind it. The Americans referred to Changez as 'Arab' and used vulgar language to describe him. He reluctantly considered himself in a fight: "I felt at that moment fully capable of wielding it with sufficient violence to shatter the bones of his skull" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 70").

Both Muslims and Americans, specifically Changez and Erica, have a strong emotional connection to the past. Erica, Changez's lover, frequently expresses her inability to forget her homeland as an American. Changez, following the 9/11 incident, viewed himself as a foreigner: "I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by

"Its determination to look back" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 69"). In one place, Mohsin Hamid says, the Americans' behaviour towards Muslims was not good because they were also emotional

about the past. "Possibly this was due to my state of mind, but it seemed to me that Americans, too, were increasingly giving themselves over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 69").

Americans were protesting against the attacks; American flags were everywhere, showing that they were still one nation. In short, both Americans and Muslims were frightened of each other. They all seemed to proclaim, We are America, not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different: the mightiest civilization the world has ever known, you have slighted us; beware our wrath." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 47").

Despite these challenges, Muslims' feelings towards Americans remained unchanged. "But she had been tense at the start of the evening, careworn and riddled with worry. Like so many others in the city after the attacks, she appeared deeply anxious" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49").

Changez's thoughts remained unchanged despite living in an educated and diverse nation. According to Changez, he graduated from Princeton University, but no one can ask a question because he is poor. He always kept this view in mind; poverty always remains the subject of cross-questioning. In the whole novel, Mohsin Hamid explains the reality of life as "time only moves in one direction. Remember that. Things always change" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 57"). Erica represents American society; after 9/11, she behaved coldly towards Changez, who was feared by the terrorist. Her anxieties seemed only indirectly related to the prospect of dying at the hands of terrorists" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49"). Instead of being a lover of America, he felt hurt, characterised, and upset: "There were in me at least some elements of the anger and hurt vanity of a spumed lover, and these unworthy sentiments helped me to keep my distance" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 68). The Muslims and Americans were both trying to help each other with their worries. Changez was trying hard to bring Erica back to life, while Jim was trying to help Changez in his crisis. "If you ever need to get something to talk to, call and I will buy you a drink" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 96").

Most Muslims believed Americans could not understand humanity's misery because they thought of themselves as superior beings. "America was only interested in posturing. Hosseini, 2007, p. 101" states that as a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you and to stop it in the interest not only of the rest of humanity but also of your own.

Changez is not only teaching their students about the country's situation; he is also observing them on love issues. "I became a mentor to many of these men and women, advising them not only on their papers and their rallies but also on matters of the heart and a vast range of other topics" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 109").

Lastly, Changez says that he is simply a university professor, nothing more than that. "I can assure you that I am a believer in nonviolence; the spilling of blood is abhorrent to me, save in self-defence" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 110").

In the end, Mohsin Hamid tries to justify the intention of his writing, "I am a believer in nonviolence" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 2007, p. 110). "I am a lover of America" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 1").

Mohsin Hamid's "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" accurately depicts the post-9/11 events. He accurately observed the entire situation and concisely portrayed it in his novel. His novel accurately depicts the state of American society at the time of the 9/11 attack, as well as their attitudes towards Muslims and Islam.

## Conclusion

The peace-loving portrayal of Muslims and particularly Islam in the world in general and America in particular is greatly scratched and sabotaged after the heinous 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. The conditions for Muslims in the United States of America have undergone a complete transformation. The attack has profoundly impacted the entire globe, with Muslims serving as a focal point for victimization and ongoing impact. Countries from all over the world, especially America,

have shown an unbiased and inhuman attitude towards Muslims around the globe. The attackers have confessed that they are Muslims. The attackers' confessions sparked a global war against Muslims, targeting them both mentally and physically. All European countries question the appearances of Muslims and present them with significant challenges due to the presence of bears. In some countries, Muslims have been banned from wearing bears and hijabs in public places. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, the US illegally attacked two Muslim countries, Iraq and Afghanistan, while violating all UNSC resolutions. Both countries are still struggling with this vision, both financially and physically. A significant number of innocents—men, women, and animals—lost their lives and are still facing numerous threats from the war. These people's religion is labeled a terrorist religion, which hurts them spiritually. The US war has caused significant socio-political, economic, cultural, religious, and mental losses in these countries. The unannounced war has caused an abrupt decline in the economies of these countries, and people are struggling to meet their basic needs.

Islamophobia has resulted in Muslim communities living in Europe and America losing their financial credibility and public property. Islamophobia even led them to lose their friends and family members in their home countries. It was tragic for them that the same society they loved for several years now considered them outsiders. They are now considered aliens in the place they love the most.

On the other hand, it inspires Muslims worldwide to unite and confront Islamophobia in a cohesive manner. It provides a platform for Muslim unity, enabling them to counteract the baseless propaganda of some individuals. It is time for all Muslim countries to convey a powerful and positive message of peace, as well as to restore their identity and prosperity to the world. They have the ability to show the positive and peaceful message of true Islam to western countries. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* accurately depicts the events that followed 9/11. He accurately observed the entire situation and concisely portrayed it in his

novel. His novel accurately depicts the state of American society at the time of the 9/11 attack, as well as their attitudes towards Muslims and Islam.

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