

## **The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Post-9/11 Aura of Distrust and Suspicion**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to analytically assess and understand the aura of distrust and suspicion prevailing among the American and Pakistani common people in the wake of 9/11, depicted in The Reluctant Fundamentalist, the second novel of Mohsin Hamid. The worthwhile aspect of this study is to estimate and establish that how the attacks affected life of common people from both America and Pakistan. It also undertakes the issue how post-9/11 power discourse with an emphasis on excessive security measures affected Asians living in America. In addition, the paper traces the impact of the attacks permeating in different parts of the globe and causing disharmony and divide. Besides, it deals with the issues of indiscriminate attitude which begets hostility among various nations. The study implies for the holistic progress of humanity and global peace. Subsequently, some strategies should be devised to keep intact the good will of people either from the affected or affecting group, who are not part of any evil action, so that atmosphere of global pluralism, transnationalism and transculturalism should prevail. The researchers applied close-text analysis methodology to collect the data from the web and texture of the novel to draw conclusions.*

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**Key words:** *The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Post 9/11 Power Discourse, Distrust, Suspicion, Cultural Conflict, Fundamentalism*

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### **Introduction**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks emerged as a turning point in the geo-political and socio-economic history of the world. Olson maintains, “The events have been of great importance for the world’s development in the last ten years and affected people in their everyday life” (Olson, 2011:1). Poole adds, “Commentators ... continue to argue that the event of 11th September

signals a kind of rupture, that the world has changed irrevocably and that a new world order must be established. At a global level, the media have played a role in constructing this idea in the psychic imagination” (Poole, 2002:1). The then American president, George W. Bush, in his immediate address after the tragic attacks unequivocally declared that the heavy wrath of America would fall upon those who planned and perpetrated the attacks. He categorically asked all nations to ascertain their positions whether they were with America or with her enemies. Lyon adds, “President Bush declared in a pre-emptive strike that those not against the terrorists were with the terrorists” (Lyon, 2003:51).

The USA alleged Al-Qaeda responsible for perpetrating the attacks. The ‘War on Terror’ was announced and the Patriot Act of 2001 was promulgated. Samuel Huntington’s theory ‘clash of civilization’ came into vogue and long-repressed term ‘crusades’ also reverberated in each section of socio-political arena, which paved the way for the post-9/11 power discourse with the emphasis on American xenophobic hegemonic order. As a result, every Muslim across the globe and especially in America was suspected as a potential threat and was treated with intensive suspicion, hatred and xenophobic feelings. It established new and reviewed set of codes to determine the relationship between Muslim world and America. World, at large, witnessed conspicuous change. Foreign policies were reviewed and redesigned, security measures were rechecked and reassured. Internal and external vigilance was enhanced. The rules of immigration were devised with great prudence and meticulousness. The immigrants in USA faced dual and discriminatory treatment on the part of law enforcement agencies because of security measures and on the part of American people owing to their distrust and suspicion spun after the attacks. It proved as the point of departure between the east and the west. The incident culminated in devastating consequences and incessant repercussions which changed the entire phenomena: age-old-friendships were discontinued, people living and working together became altogether strange and untrustworthy, diversity of culture, language and traditions which once was a source of beauty and fascination became cause of danger and frightfulness. The East and the West, which to some extent were drawing near after the centuries of the blood-curdling crusades and the later confrontation or clashes ensued in the wake of colonization of the East by the western imperial powers, to join the mightier course of global progress and development became subject to declared, undeclared, proxy and quasi wars. Thus, it halted the peace and prosperity of the world in general and the Muslim world in particular. Its

impact globally trickled down from mainstream political and economic institutions to the life of a common man.

The literature, being the representative of life, started to respond to the event. The post-9/11 fiction emerged as a genre to represent the strained circumstances ensued in the wake of the attacks. The initial response was one-sided in which Muslims were stereotyped as fundamentalists, extremists and indispensable evil-doer. In the latter phase, Muslim fiction writers also responded the issue and presented other side of the coin.

Mohsin Hamid, Pakistani English novelist, has marvelously depicted the other side of the coin or another aspect of whole picture along with the response of Muslim world to the attacks in his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). He has profoundly delineated the dilemma, distrust and complexities of the relationship between Pakistanis and Americans, because he himself was witness to the entire post 9/11 phenomenon as he studied and worked in USA during the period of attacks in America

### **Scope**

The paper attempts to critically analyze and establish the relationship between Pakistani people and their counter parts in America from the point of Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in the post-9/11 perspective. In addition, the paper provides further insight into the loss a common or Pakistani Muslim endured in the aftermath of the attacks. The Pakistani muslim was same time the victim of militancy and American dual treatment. The paper attempts to clear the common misconception prevailing in the mind of an ordinary American native. The paper aims at bridging the gap between two nations for further harmony, development and progress in holistic perspective.

### **Research Questions**

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the feelings of suspicion, distrust and fear prevailing among common people of different nations portrayed in the '*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'?
2. How does '*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*' portray the impact of the 9/11 attacks on other parts of the globe?
3. How does the novelist portray the impact of post-9/11 power

discourse with an emphasis on vigilance and excessive security measures on the life of “others” of America in ‘*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*’?

4. How does an evil act done by a band of people affect the life of all people belonging to affecting and affected nations in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?
5. How does the novel portray indiscriminate treatment begets hostility among different nations?

### **Literature Review**

The literature produced in the wake of terrorist attacks on twin towers has attained an established form / genre of literature having distinctive thematic characteristics: to encompass various issues regarding the tragic catastrophe, to delineate diversified responses, depict various personality trait and attitudinal shift in the aftermath of the incident, to graphically portray the sorrows and pain of the people who were either directly or indirectly affected by the event. Butler (2004) maintains that the 9/11 terrorist attacks have cast tremendous impact on the psychology and the culture of the American people.

Besides, the responses and reactions to the event were profoundly world-felt and globalized in its consequences. It left entire world inquisitive and gasping; American attack on Iraq and Afghanistan raised ambivalent feelings of support and protest across the globe. American law and security enforcement agencies arrested involved, alleged and suspicious persons and imprisoned them into Guantanamo Bay with/out trail; torture-inflicted inmates in Abu Ghraib reached world’s attention with ambivalent feelings of sympathy and anguish (Butler, 2003, 2004).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were the most influencing and most pictured event in American history which left abundant impact upon the culture of America. The live scenes of the incident went all across the world which gave it global outlook and incorporated world-wide responses (Redfield, 2007). There was divided viewpoint regarding the coverage of the event. One believed that these pathetic scenes should be aired, transmitted and telecast to the minutest details, whereas the other school of thought preferred certain limitations and restraints on the basis that how far one can show the sufferings and miseries of other people. Journalism has, however, its norms and ethical restraints and restrictions being corporate in nature;

while the realm of literature has its own characteristic freedom and privilege to portray artistically and allegorically the bitter realities of life in a fact-like-fiction manner. For instance, *War and Peace* (1869) of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) incorporates the incident of French attack on Russia, Gunter Grass, German Noble laureate author, born in 1927, in his novel *The Tin Drum* (1959) depicts organized onslaught and massacre committed by Nazi regime and Joseph Heller (1923-1999), famous American post World War II satirist, in his famous novel *Catch-22* published in 1961 portrays devastation of the Second World War.

The genre of post-9/11 literature is quite a new and fresh. Mishra (The Guardian, May19, 2007) while reviewing post-9/11 literature mentions that because the mainstream media and American government intensified the patriotic response and the feeling of nostalgia to much heightened level; therefore, the writers initially had either reservation or could not dare to touch the topic, whose agony and bruises were still fresh. It also invoked debate about the extent of the post-9/11 literature was pertinent to thematically deal with all aspects of the event. In the beginning, the works produced in the context of terrorist attacks merely presented white man's point of view without diagnosing the psychology of terrorist and perpetrators. It was rather one sided outlook upon the most complicated phenomenon, John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Martin Amis' *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* bear good testimony to it and were not well-received.

In the later phase, there was profound contribution of European writers to the post-9/11 literature, which allotted it the seriousness of presentation, profundity of theme, ingenuity of contents and effectiveness of representation. Frédéric Beigbeder, French novelist born in 1965, in his novel *Window on the World* (2003) narrates the story of a father who is having breakfast with his son on one of the Twin Towers when the terrorist attacks hit them. The novelist marvelously presents the father reflecting on the last moments of his life. The critics regarded the novel because of the protagonist sitting in the very epicenter of the attack reflecting about his life.

Ian McEvan's *Saturday* (2005) portrays the contemplative responses of a 48 years neurosurgeon in London, who gets struck in a protest against American attack on Iraq 2003. Thus, he deeply cogitates over the after-effects of attacks on the Twin Towers and the need of protest and its underlying factors. An encounter with a troubled person perturbs the peace

of otherwise happy and content day of the surgeon being busy with his routine chores and family excursion for outings. The novel discusses the question of existence and essence of life in postmodern period.

American author, Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) narrates the sorrowful story of an intellectual 9 years boy, Oskar Schell whose father dies in the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the boy attempts to assort information from New York about the key he finds in a vase belonging to his deceased father. Besides, he also tries to decipher the secret of his family history which his grandfather, the survivor of Dresden firebombing in the Second World War, has written in letters. Each letter divulges hidden secret about courtship, marriage, separation and the loss his grandfather sustained during the Second World War. The mourning of both the son and the grandfather at the loss of their father and son respectively is the striking theme which has been marvelously presented in the novel.

Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006) is the most daring post-9/11 novel. The novel tells a humorous story as both wife and husband wish that their estranged partner has died in one of the collapsing towers, but to their surprise and disappointment they both survived. It raises a question to probe into the underlying factors leading towards such odd feelings of hatred.

Don DeLillo, world-renown terrorist fiction and conspiracy writer, has posed another question in his novel *Falling Man* (2007) when the protagonist walks out from one of the tumbling towers and goes to his separated wife. The encounter with death changes him and he resumes his family life with his deserted wife but again engages himself in infatuations with another survivor of the attacks and gets addicted to gambling.

Joseph O' Neill, born in Ireland, brought up in Netherland and now working in New York as barrister, touched the theme of 9/11 terrorist attacks in his novel *Netherland* (2008). Hans van den Broek, the protagonist, Dutch by origin, marries an English attorney and endeavours to accomplish the career of a successful stock analyst, is altogether bewildered, ruined and deprived of his family life in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. His wife, Rachel, is caught by the fits of depression, fear and anxiety, even the sound of speedily passing motorcar by her house leaves her scared, frightened and obsessed with the fear of death and she starts vomiting. The constant fear of death begets estrangement and deteriorates the harmony and communication in

the family. Subsequently, Rachel leaves with her son for England, Hans is left behind to mourn and grieve over loss of his family. Andrew Anthony ( Guardian, September 7, 2008) in the review of *Netherland* mentions: “But here’s what “*Netherland*” surely is: the wittiest, angriest, most exacting and most desolate work of fiction we’ve yet had about life in New York and London after the World Trade Centre fell.” The above reviewed post-9/11 literature presented one side of the picture: the western point of view, responses and consequences of the attacks borne by the western world and one-sided outlook upon this world-felt event.

Conversely, Mohsin Hamid, the Pakistani novelist, is first Eastern writer who presented the other side of the coin or reaction of Muslim world to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He marvelously depicted that how the common Muslim people suffered the aggression, agony, bitter reactions and consequences of the attacks in his second novel: *The Reluctant Fundamentalists* (2007). It is written in first person narration. Changez, the protagonist of the novel, tells his story to an American citizen, at a café in Anarkali Market, Lahore. Changez narrates that he went to America, graduated from Princeton, earned the respectable and ever-flourishing career of Management Consultant in Underwood Samson Company and got the true love of an American beautiful girl, Erica. But the 9/11 terrorist attacks spelled steep downfall and disintegration in his life. His American dream was shattered and his love for the US withered. The odd treatment and alien attitude bewildered him, harsh dealings, prevailing suspicion and diehard distrust demonstrated on the part of the natives compelled him to leave America. He, who previously was clean-shaven, has grown up beard on his face and has become staunch activist and organizes demonstration against American attack on Iraq in 2003. It shows how Changez, Pakistani immigrant and American lover, is altogether transformed, and he is torn apart between magnificent pull of his American dream land and loyalty towards his country.

The novel presents insights into eastern mind, agony and response of Muslim world and suffering of the common man from east in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. The novel shows that 9/11 was equally appalling for the USA, Pakistan and world at large. In addition to Americans, it affected the life of the Muslims living in America and outside world. Kiran Desai, Indian author, born in 1971 and now living in US, in her review of the novel maintains:

“A brilliant book. With spooky restraint and masterful control, Hamid unpicks the underpinnings of the most recent episode of distrust between East and West. But this book does not merely excel in capturing a developing bitterness. The narrative is balanced by a love as powerful as the sinister forces gathering, even when it recedes into a phantom of hope. It is this balance, and the constant negotiation of the political with the personal, that creates a nuanced and complex portrait of a reluctant fundamentalist.”

The review given so far highlights the theme of distrust and suspicion. Next section proposes methodology to undertake investigation in the present novel.

### **Methodology**

The undertaken study is qualitative in its nature and the data collected are in narrative and words form. To address the proposed research questions, the close-text analysis methodology is applied, in which the researchers collected the data from the text of the novel for analysis. Since the data collected is narrative therefore qualitative tools like explanation, interpretation, analysis and evaluation have been used to draw conclusions.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Feelings of suspicion, distrust and fear**

The feelings of suspicion and distrust are all-prevailing in the whole plot of the novel. The terms like “I/you suspect” appears 17 times during the conversation between Changez and American fellow (p.7, 13, 18, 23, 25, 42, 45, 48, 51, 64, 68, 70, 71, 73, 77, 95 and 99). The word “doubt” appears 6 times (p.7, 24, 91, 95, 95, 110) and the word “suspicion” has 2 entries (p.44, 97). The frequent mention of these words shows that mutual trust, respect and understanding between American and Pakistani common people are disrupted in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. The novel begins at a café in Lahore, Pakistan, where Changez from Pakistan and an American with unrevealed identity representing two nations and minds – Eastern and Western, two religions – Islam and Christianity meet with the aura of suspicion and distrust. The American fellow is “alarmed” at the first sight of bearded Changez, whereas Changez believes that the American fellow is on a “mission”. The “beard” of Changez and “bearing” of the American, which otherwise serve as the sources of cultural diversity and religious plurality or multiplicity, have become cause of suspicion and alienation in the post-9/11 period. Changez ensures the American that he must not get

scared in his company and even the people around them would not harm him. (Mohsin Hamid, 2007, p.1). The American fellow is not willing to remove his jacket even in the hot evening and prefers to sit having wall in his back, which creates doubts and suspicion. In addition, the waiter of the hotel mentioned as “burly fellow” (p.3) and a bearded man wearing a jacket stare at the American with strange oddity which shows that these two nations have completely lost their trust and faith in each other. Changez switches the cups of tea (7), and takes the first morsel from each dish served for dinner to assure the American fellow that they are not poisoned and would cause no harm to him (73). Changez believes that the American fellow is on “business” (22); moreover, he is very much curious to know the “nature” of business” (38), but eventually he suspects that he is “in service” (78). During conversation, there comes a bearded man who at one moment casts angry looks at girl students of National College of Arts wearing T-shirt and Jeans (13-14) and at other moment glares at the American with suspicious outlook (16). He is, perhaps, angry because the youngsters, especially the woman, of his country have adopted western culture, what he thinks is “intriguing” as it poses a threat to the culture of the land and likewise he deems the presence of the American fellow very harmful for his nation. Once Changez, after his return from USA, imagines as if Erica were with him in Pakistan, but the people are casting strange looks not at her spell-binding beauty but at her foreignness. When the living things, out of utter hatred and contempt, become unacceptable it symptomizes disintegration, but if the dead things are also rejected, it is the worst and deplorable state of alienation.

The American during conversation with Changez does not attend the calls but prefers to respond through messaging (18), he again receives a message as if someone wanted to know about his safe being (69). The American has got an expensive, reliable and modern satellite phone without being dependent on the local means of communication, moreover the power supply cuts would not halt the communication. Indeed, it is security concern, for what he has taken such extraordinarily per-emptive and over precautionary measures, but in the same time he is very much conscious and scrupulous in using that phone in the presence of “others”. Such kind of activities raise the feelings of suspect and doubt.

Changez metaphorically compares uneasiness and alarming mental “tick-tick-tick” state of the American fellow being surrounded with stranger people in Lahore, with a beast that goes beyond the area of its sway while

searching for food and is likely to fall either upon a prey or encounter a predator (19). The American fellow is so much over conscious that he even notices the small mark of cut on the forearm of Changez caused by a burning candle during load shedding hours in childhood and assumes that he might have been engaged in training camps. Even the sudden failure of electricity leaves the American fellow choked and Changez soothes his uneasiness by clarifying that such kinds of fluctuation and blackouts are the most common phenomena in Pakistan. Changez further assures him that he does not need to put his hands into jacket, as nobody would steal his wallet, yet this adds to the prevailing distrust and increases suspicion about the motive of the American for putting his hand in the jacket (36). Further, when he leans to side while sitting, the manifesting bulge around his armpit wears the look as if he were wearing a holster for taking arm (84).

While they are on way to the hotel, the American is staying at, the sputtering sound of a rickshaw leaves the American fellow both harassed and proactive. He takes it as if someone has shot fire at him (106). Besides, the persons who have been chasing or following them, linger behind and pause when Changez and the American fellow stand by the road. But the moment they start walking, the figures in shadow also start following them (106). When they depart at the threshold of Pearl Continent Hotel, Changez sees the glint of the metal and the chasing figures also beckon at him to stop the foreigner as if they want to get certain business settled with him, the glimpse of the face of bearded waiter makes him recognizable (111). It seems for some people the presence of western people in Pakistan is generally subject to doubt and suspicion, even without any concrete evidence of their being harmful.

As westerns are dealt with the feeling of suspicion and distrust in the east, so are the eastern people in western block. In Greece, the island of Rhodes has fortified cities, which were encircled with primitive old buildings to shield them from Turks, yet the part of the wall against East still stands (14), which shows that feelings of distrust still prevail and linger around to cast a gloomy shadow to worsen the already intensified split between the east and west. These feelings leave permanent marks of paranoia and jingoism on the collective conscious of the people of both blocks and such undeclared rivalry goes on with generations. As Spanish character Juan Bautista, allegorically symbolizes John the Baptist, the chief priest who baptized Jesus Christ and is respected in both Islam and Christianity, disillusions Changez, when he goes to Valparaiso, Chile, to value a book publishing

company. Juan-Bautista tells him about the janissaries, the young Christian boys who were taken into possession when they were still child by the Ottoman Turk Empire, and after being trained they were used to destroy their own Christian civilization. Juan-Bautista, by employing that allusion, calls Changez a modern day janissary, who is working in corporate sector to strengthen the economy of a country that is not sincere to his nation, country and civilization. Besides, he is using his talent and knowledge for others which is tantamount to weaken his own civilization (91). Since, Spain had been center of Muslim civilization at various time between the period of 711 AD to 1492, but King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella conquered Granada in 1492 and ended the rule of Muslims and they also patronized Christopher Columbus to colonize America; therefore, Juan Bautista may in his sub consciousness retain the element of sympathy for Muslims and grudge against Americans.

Since Philippines had been under military rule and territorial subservience as a colony of United States from 1898, till it got its independence in 1946; therefore, the people of Philippines have ambivalent feelings of respect because of fear and hatred against Americans. Changez experiences it when he with his other Underwood Samson fellows arrives at Manila to value a recorded-music business. The Americans commanded overwhelming respect over indigenous people, they were considered having globally supreme and enviable entity, but in the same time Changez also got the glimpses of hatred the people of Philippines carried in their bosom against Americans. The episode of jeepney driver, glaring at Changez with both anger and hatred (39), establishes the fact that the economic disparities and oppressive intrusion in other country harbour the seed of disrespect, annoyance and clashes. Such phenomenon becomes social rampant, when one group or nation develops the conviction that the only reason lying behind their impoverishment and deprivation is the exploitative practices carried out by another nation or group of people. Thus, the gulf between the two increases to the state of complete disrespect and detachment. After experiencing such odd treatment, Changez fails to “focus on the fundamentals”, the guiding principles of Underwood Samson (92).

Perhaps, it was the same feelings of inherited rivalry and prejudice borne in the collective consciousness of people which triggered Changez for such odd behavior. When Changez watches the news of attacks and subsequent fall of the towers, he smiles at the idea that there is still someone who can strike down America to its knees (43), he, however, confesses that he is

neither sociopath nor xenophobic or jingoistic. Moreover he regrets over it after his arrival in New York when he finds whole America immersed in intense mourning and churning with the splashing waves of wrath and retaliation. The heart-aching sight of condolence words, bouquets hanging around the corner and trees and lowly-hoisted flag of America make Changez lament over his inhumane “smile” (47). When he shares his immediate response to the attack, the American fellow demonstrate extreme anger by clutching his fist and conspicuous streaks of anger and pique spread all over his face, but the same American feels pleasure when the enemies of his country are buried under the debris of heavy structure demolished with the American munitions.

It is really alarming when the ideas like: “All Pakistanis are potential terrorist and all American are undercover assassin” (111), becomes established part of the collective consciousness of the nations. It is the extreme state of hostility and distrust.

### **The Impact of the attacks permeating other parts of the globe**

No event either good or bad is limited in its consequences. Its outcome and repercussion reach every corner of the world directly or indirectly. For instance, in the midst of post-9/11 tension and impending Pakistan-India war the economy of Pakistan crashes, rupees’ value deteriorates, dollar rate increases drastically, which culminates into high inflation, as a result Changez family falls on the hard days (6).

Conversely, Americans who are very much alive, optimistic and well-known for their futuristic positivity first time after the attacks were found looking back moreover with great intensity and assertions (69). Consequently the American society becomes unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain, they assertively mark to their superiority and indifference against those who attacked them; which can be justifiable but treating all from the East with the same yardstick begets total breakage – cultural, political, social, geographical and human. It shows that pain and reality sometimes becomes relative, what is pain for one it may be pleasure for other, but its eventual consequences permeate and affect all directly or indirectly (105). Erica and her family are suffering in America, Changez and his family is under same torment in Pakistan having no conspicuous faults in their accounts. The waiter of the hotel in Lahore has become anti-American because some of his relatives are killed in American attacks in Afghanistan, whereas the American philanthropist working for the welfare

of the rural society of Pakistan is targeted for what reason? It is a question of both law and fact.

Before 9/11 event, when Changez and Wainwright, his Underwood Samson office fellow, dined together at Pak-Punjab-Deli – subcontinent cuisine, both friends having different cultures, languages and food taste or flavor, enjoyed the food without an iota of distrust or suspicion. Owing to its taste, Wainwright started licking fingers at the end of food, but in fact it was trust that allowed these two nationals to share the best of their cultures with each other as Changez affirms it: “I had found a kindred spirit at the office” (24). However, the situation is outright different after the terrorist attacks, the American fellow is traumatically doubtful while having cup of tea or food with Changez in Lahore that it might be poisoned, therefore they have to switch their cups and Changez has to take the first morsel for assurance (7). When he was interviewed in America before the attacks, the sky was brilliant blue, but when they sit in Pakistan after the incident the sky has become orange and dusty; the dust serves as a symbol of fogginess and unclarity of vision, whereas the sign of orange shows that something blood like or revolutionary is going on in the Heaven which has changed its colour (9).

America, famous for democratic norms, cultural diversity, religious pluralism and diversification of languages and communities, seems to be losing its variety in the wake of the attacks, partially because of over vigilance and partially because of paranoid feelings. All American friends of Changez have “Monosyllabically monikered” names like Chuck, Mike and Jim (11), which shows that America is going to lose its diversity, pluralism and variety, which signifies the loss of international understanding, belief in diversity and prevalence of religious pluralism, which gradually would shut the doors of knowledge, progress, and development at global level.

The serene and life-friendly environment of past is being substituted with the polluted, smoky, and uncongenial environment, which has compelled butterflies and fireflies to leave the cities, whereas only bats are left to add ugliness, cunningness, deterioration and disintegration to the society. The dream world has ended, relationships have become blind like bats to grope around the darkness, no sooner does the day light appear, they wither (37). After attacks, Changez to his dismay finds that Gallery of Chelsea and Central Park, once he used to visit with Erica, vanish as if they were

changed or have lost their existence, it is not a physical change, but in fact it is the sense of detachment, which makes the most familiar and collective heritage of humanity the most remote and absurd. Besides, Erica can only think of Changez when things are frozen in time, when she visits a rockpool where she sees a surrealistic state of things. (40-41)

Though pain and death are subjective phenomenon and relative in nature but their impact is always universal. Changez also endures same pain of desolation and desperation because of his attachment with Erica (44).

### **Post-9/11 power discourse with an emphasis on vigilance and excessive pre-emptive measures**

It is indispensable to take all possible measures to curb terrorist activities all across the world, but excessive vigilance and extra meticulous treatment victimizes innocent people. Consequently, it creates a gulf, and divides humanity at large, which again adds to the triumph of evil forces. When Changez is travelling from Manila to New York after attacks, he is made to strip down his shorts at the Manila airport and he is the last person to board out. The fellow travelers look askance at him, and the embarrassing outlook of Changez induces the feeling of suspicion among them. Moreover, at New York airport, the foreigners are being separated from the Americans. The custom officers stresses on the word that what is his “*purpose*” of coming to USA. Moreover, after such kind of odd treatment and eccentric experience, when he comes out, to his dismay he finds that all of his colleagues have left the airport without waiting for him (44-45). When Changez develops beard, he becomes subject to suspicion and extra vigilance.

In the USA, the Pakistani cabdrivers were beaten, FBI raided mosques, shops and even people’s houses, the Muslims men were picked up and went missing, some facts of detentions and persecution were exaggerated and sometimes fabricated, yet there was stark truth to raise the feelings of distrust, suspicion against long stretched pre-emptiveness (56). Building walls to shield oneself from being harmed is not a bad idea, but when such walls are excessively heightened, they create a gulf to impede the holistic efforts to contribute for the general good and development of humanity at large. It can protect our individuality but it mars collective and universal harmony. Consequently, life being devoid of collective wisdom recedes into realm of self-devised marginality, ethnicity and individualism. As a result, holistic productivity and progress of human being recedes into isolated

attempts with limited scope and bound impact.

### **All have to pay the price**

Whenever such kinds of evil deeds occur, they not only affect the innocent people of the grieved party but they also become equally horrible for the innocent people of the group, who have inflicted such misery upon others. As Erica from America suffers unimaginable pain and anxiety likewise Changez from Pakistan also loses his love, career and dream world. The attacks leave Erica shattered. She is being caught by the fits of depression, anxiety and paranoia; as a result, she loses her vividness, confidence and liveliness. Her face becomes pale, lips dried and there occur dark spot below her eyelids because of anxiety and sleeplessness. She wears a desolate look on her face. Given to her anxiety, she remains upset and unable to sleep; subsequently, she uses tranquilizers but to no avail. Moreover, the side effects of tranquillizers add much to her agony rather than soothing it. The brief time of a few weeks adversely transforms a teenager girl into a time-worn woman. She finds a bit of consolation in Changez's company, but she again loses the poise, when he leaves for his business errands to New Jersey. She being entangled in precarious state recedes into the past. Her mind is always obsessed with haunting memories of her dead lover, Chris (62). She fails to concentrate on her novel, which otherwise is true inspiration of her love for Chris, and being reluctant does not receive the calls of the agent she contacted for the publication of her book. Changez wishfully strives to pull her out from the pitfall of desperation and restore her to usual course of life (63) and the mother of Erica also beseechingly entreaties Changez to take intensive care of her ailing daughter as she is in dire need of a friend rather than a boyfriend (66). Erica, eventually, goes to a clinic like institution where people get restored to their normal life (79).

On the other side, Changez also becomes very much disturbed and divided because of deteriorating state of Erica, consternation of her mother, prevailing suspicion, harsh and dual treatment he receives from the American natives, suddenly transformed alien attitudes of his colleagues and impending war in Pakistan. The state, however, worsens when Erica refuses to see him. She neither attends his calls nor does respond to his mails. Moreover, her mother also advises him to leave Erica alone for time being; his feeling of equanimity seem absurd (68) and his failure at concentrating on his work leave the dream world of Changez shattered. In America, he loses his entity but now his existence is in the state of jeopardy,

as he cannot help Erica, neither can he help out his family that is mentally tortured and agonized because of impending war between Pakistan and India. Changez comes to know that his family members have excavated an artillery battery to seek shelter in case the war begins. The development sector of his country is halted, poverty lays its vicious claws, job opportunities become scarce and parents also expect certain concrete contribution on his part in those rainy days. Moreover, leaving his country and people in lurch, for the sake of his dreamland and a white girl, is tantamount to committing treason or hatching treachery against his own land and people (71). Despite the strong exhortation of his mother he stops shaving (72).

Moreover, the novel also portrays the effects of post 9/11 on the life of an American fellow, who has been working as the Coordinator of Rural Development Support Program in Pakistan. A plot has been hatched to murder him (109). It does not resonate with reason that a person from other nation comes to support and elevate the downtrodden part of a society, in its return the same society plots to assassinate him. In fact, only evil actors can harbour such motive, so that the overall progress and universal peace can be halted. Yet, it again adds to their pernicious motive when the innocent people are being persecuted for such crimes. It poses an important question that if death is the return of doing good deeds, then who will dare to contribute for the welfare of others!

### **Indiscriminate treatment begets hostility**

The holly-than-thou and indiscriminate attitude creates hostility, misunderstanding and lack of mutual respect for the cultures, religions, languages and traditions of both groups. Thus sometimes even moderate and gentle people become diehards and reluctant to regard the means of collective good and mutual respect. The continuous mistreatment creates communication gap, divides people into ethnic groups, factions and individuality. Such trends and traits halt global peace; universal wisdom remains divided and means of progress linger behind with a particular nation. The ideal state of humanity is that when a person is treated equally in all corners of the world irrespective of his/her caste, creed, colour, origin and religion!

It is mutual respect and trust that bind two persons from the different poles of the world in the bond of love. Erica chooses Changez because he is polite and gives space to others, which is unusual (15) and Changez because of his

love and attachment feels uncomfortable at seeing the nudity of Erica (14). It shows that these two people having different origin, belonging to different poles – the east and west – love, like, respect and care for each other unconditionally only when they are bias-free, judicious after shunning the inborn prejudice they inherit for each other. Erica accepts and loves Changez with all his merits and fallacies, he informs her about his country, its geographical position and beauty, having diverse geographical divisions like plains, mountains, seas, pastures, farming lands, valleys, his travel to China along with his family, wine-drinking people, though prohibited in Islam (16); moreover, he writes their names in Urdu on the sand of seashore (17). Love is such a binding force that it compels man to pay no attention to the creed, caste, nation or ethnic group of the person, one falls in love with. Changez still cherishes the good memories of his stay in New York and has sentimental attachment with the city and confesses his liking and love for the city, which ostensibly is incredible for the American; hence, this unexpected response and attachment intensify the feelings of dubiousness and doubt (20).

When Changez meets Erica's father, who criticizes the poor economic state, dictatorship, corruption and malpractices of rich and ill-mannered politicians in Pakistan, hence, it is his "American" tone which make Changez very much touchy about his country; nevertheless, he spoke of reality, facts and true state of the country (33).

Changez was also shocked at the misconduct of American students with Greek people when they went to visit Europe after completing their degree in Princeton. They snubbed down the local people with curt replies like: "But you told us" (13); besides, the spendthrift, extravagant and self-righteous attitude of American made them intolerable. They were not refined in their dealings with other people, the sort of attitude they demonstrated it posed as if they were the rulers of entire world. In addition, Changez during his business excursion in Manila being clad in American clothes and surrounded by American fellows introduces himself from New York because American were over respected there but at other moment he feels embarrassment at his "identity loss" (37-38).

Jim always calls Changez "hungry"(26) and "shark" (41). One day Jim defines economy as animal that evolves gradually, after physical growth it drains the blood from extinct part of body and sends to the mind – finance – to still grow invincible. Thus, the potential and brilliance of people like

Changez are exploited all across the globe to strengthen the backbone of the staggering animal of economy (58). This is how the developed economy gnaws the developing and dwindling economies. Hence, the strongest economy becomes enviable yet it remains subject to hatred and resentment either, such response was quite noticeable in the attitude of natives of Manila towards Americans – ambivalent feelings of envy and contempt.

In New Jersey, an American passes derogatory and abusive remarks viz. “fucking Arab” (70) against Changez. As a result, they are on the verge of quarrel, but the timely intervention of other persons present in the canteen evades the mishap. Changez’s blood boils out of exasperation and humiliation, which triggers drastic change in his attitude towards the people of his dreamland.

When Changez goes back to America, after visiting his war-prone country, his fellows greet him with suppressed consternation. His beard causes unusual whispers and receives peculiar stares. When he quits his job, all fellows turns stranger and demonstrate odd attitude. During the whole process of undertaking and winding his business or collecting his personal belongings, he is escorted by the guards. The man who remained cardinal part and number one analyst of the company, overnight has become alien and is treated with much suspicion and vigilance. After having undergone the phase of disillusionment, Changez becomes an Anti-American, and organizes demonstration against American attack on Iraq and Afghanistan (108).

Though Pakistan supported America in war against terror in Afghanistan, but the latter does not initiate to settle the tension between India and Pakistan ensued after the attack on Indian Parliament (76). Besides, Changez looks aghast at the American troops being dropped into Afghanistan (59) and he reacts with fury when the troops strike the Taliban Command Post (60), because Afghans are his neighbor, friend and Muslims fellows.

The above mentioned discriminate behavior and persistent feelings of exasperation, embarrassment and humiliation disillusion Changez altogether. In the wake of terrorist attacks, Changez, who was a clean-shaven and thoroughly gentleman, develops beard, leaves New York, becomes anti-American and is engaged in organizing demonstrations

against American attack on Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, the long-cherished American dream of Changez is pathetically shattered in vain (32).

### **Conclusion**

It is undoubtedly true that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 culminated into difficult phase of human history. To curb such evil attacks in future is indispensable, yet the beauty of reason lies in keeping the universal bond and collective harmony intact. If humanity gets divided, poles stand alien and the east and west become rivals, in fact, it would be triumph of the evil actors. In this situation, the severest victim would be none but the common man no matter from the East or West. Diversity of religions, cultures, languages and traditions is not a demarcation or dividing line, it rather serves as spice to life, which lends beauty and verisimilitude to it. Terrorism is not the matter of only West or East. It plays havoc with the both poles of the world, impedes universal development and disturbs collective harmony. In such situations, the cultural or traditional diversification becomes sign of contempt and indifference.

There are so many common people like Erica and Changez, who have lost their lives, possession, career and trust in the wake of terrorist attacks. The serene course of their life is altogether perturbed in the post-9/11 scenario. Suspicion, distrust and suspect permeates all sections and parts of globe. The mental agony of pure and innocent souls like Erica and drastic transformation of gentlemen like Changez into diehards are, indeed, alarming phenomena and need to be addressed on priority bases. It, however, remains well-established fact that indiscriminate reaction and over-vigilant precautionary measures further worsen the already precarious situation, in which the innocent people pay the price.

When Osama Bin Laden was captured from Abbotabad on May 2, 2011, Hanan Ifitkhar, who was running technology firm with his American partner in Islamabad, received an email from his partner asking for the distance between Islamabad and Abbotabad. To which he replied that it was about 100 kilometers. In the afternoon he received another email from his American partner showing the termination of business partnership (Daily Dawn, Tuesday May 3, 2011). It is pathetic to ponder over that what fault was there in the account of Hanan Ifitkhar and for what reason he sustained the loss in the wake of termination of business partnership.

If a band of evil people enacts detestable plot, it does not mean that the

whole nation or ethnic group should be dealt with that perspective. Pakistan consists of about 180 million people, they should not pay the price for few handful number of evil actors, who are not only dangerous for west but they are also playing havoc to devastate the peace and progress and development of Pakistan too. Moreover, America has attained the zenith of political wisdom, democratic values, scientific erudition, business acumen, educational triumph and cultural harmony, being in the phase of self-actualization and spearhead of the march of civilization, she has to lend her share for the uplift and progress of under developing countries like Pakistan. On the contrary, in the wake of terrorist attacks so many common people from Muslim world and especially from Pakistan are deprived of quality education, business opportunities, exchange of wisdom and experiences owing to strict policy regarding the issuance of visa and other security measures. Conversely, the western companies and business parties also show their concerns while invited to invest in the East. Indiscriminate persecution develops the feelings of disharmony and undeclared rivalry. Sometimes, such event also leave permanent mark of despise and indifference on the collective consciousness and general perception of the people which keep escalating its seminal effects to be borne by the forthcoming generations. “Those who ply and perpetrate the harm should only be to bear the consequences” should be the maxim to rule the world. All people either from the East or West cannot be made responsible for the act of a few criminal minds. Collective consciousness needs to be kept intact. Harmony, mutual respect and reciprocal trust should be allowed to preserve the holistic beauty of the world. The people from East and West need to be the ambassador of universal peace, harmony and respect. Let diversity prevail all over the world to mark mutual understanding, global peace and universal prosperity. May East and West go hand in hand to diminish the evil from the face of earth and establish the monument of invincible harmony par excellence for the forthcoming generations!

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