

**Volume-1, Issue-VI, Sept- 2017**

# **Research maGma**

**An International Multidisciplinary Journal**

**CONFERENCE**

**of**

**Thiruvalluvar University  
College of Arts & Science, Arakkonam.**

**on**

**"EMERGING TRENDS IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE & LITERATURE"**



# Research maGma

## An International Multidisciplinary Journal

ISSN NO- 2456-7078 IMPACT FACTOR- 4.520 VOLUME-1, ISSUE-7, SEPT-2017

### **TRANSCULTURAL ETHNIC INTERROGATIONS OF WESTERN PREJUDICES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND TRANSPOSED RELATIONS OF POST MILLENNIUM ERA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST***

**K. Muhammed Jamsheer**

Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Madras,  
Chennai

#### **ABSTRACT**

Literature often treats politically and culturally constructed issues through the victim's perspective and writers like Mohsin Hamid done the same in his seminal work *The Reluctant Fundamentalists*. The counter responses of the sufferers can be either criticize on the base of mode of operation or supported massively. The paper states minute shifts of chief protagonists, Chagez's affinity towards his nation, adopted nation, himself and the global fraternity of nation states. Novelist tackles the issues of alienation, hybrid culture, identity crisis and social labeling through the binaries of Pakistan and US , West and East , oriental and occidental etc... A true lover of US turns into vehement critique of their foreign policy once war on terror starts. Hero realizes the need of the service in his own country to defend its culture and understands the difficulties to maintain hybrid identity for longer term. Instead of victimizing a particular ethnic group from targets of the dominant set, the least form of defenses must be welcomed. Older colonizers turned into today's policy makers and resulted creating "others" in their home land as well as outer world.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Hybridity, Subaltern Culture, Social Labeling, Ethnoscape.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The identity and allegiance of Pakistan as a nation state among other countries are often interpreted in multiple senses. Right from the birth of the country they undergo political instability, economic crisis and socio-cultural turbulence. Various groups are fighting each other on the base of minor divisions among them to establish supremacy. The country itself possesses a diverse nature in its socio-political and cultural aspects, though Pakistan resembles unique nation for outer world.

## *"Emerging Trends in English Language & Literature"*

Moreover it is a Muslim populated country but Muslims are dying in the hands of Muslims. Women and minorities are deprived from fundamental rights. Pakistanis are divided in to pro-Talibanies, anti-Talibanies , Liberals , Seculars etc... There are people who stand for Democracy, dictatorship and military rule. Internal complexities make more disturbances in all spheres of the country. Feudal lords and mafias are controlling the key posts of the government, it results keeping common men far away from power politics. A few aristocratic families are enjoying the power as their family affairs. Biased western world concludes that Pakistan's true allegiances are towards terror, offers shelters to notorious terrorist groups and works as south Asian head quarter of extremism. In this complex civic life of Pakistan, it is important to analyze the allegiance of Pakistan towards structure of governance, kind of foreign policy and economic policy.

Pakistani English literature shines in post millennium era by acknowledging cultural complexities of the country with broader perspective. Writers from Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamzie , Mohammad Hanif, Hanif Kuraisi and Mohsin Hamid discuss the crisis faced by Pakistani diaspora and international issues. English has become the official language and it occupy a major role in modern Pakistani literature, in another sense English replaced Urdu. Distinct style of Pakistani English writings reflects the cultural specifications, traditions, regional idiomatic usage. Hence the celebrated writers of this period are living away from their motherland, so the complex issues of identity are often dominated in their writings. Writers like Mohsin Hamid present the theme in a pro - Pakistan context.

Mohsin Hamid, born in Pakistan and grew up in city of Lahore, one of the oldest historical city in pre independent Indian peninsula. He received education from Princeton University and Harvard Law School in United States. He starts working in New York and later returned to Lahore. The reluctant Fundamentalist (2007), one of the seminal works of Mohsin Hamid , shortlisted for Man Booker Prize , Hamid narrates these personal experience and memories to create his main character Changez. He adorns the protagonist with different internal contradictions which is an average Pakistani experience in outside country. Changez reflects the transnational convolutions, identity crisis, ethnic discrimination, question of East West supremacy and social labeling. Novel starts with a unilateral conversation between young beard Pakistani, changes to an unknown American tourist. While sharing tea the young man shared his love towards America and his education from the prestigious Princeton University. His autobiographical monologue reveals the successful days in America as a scholarship student in Princeton, an employ of a valuation firm and his unsuccessful love with Erica. When their talk develops changez shifts into some flash back elements but the identity of strange American remains unknown. Readers can guess him as a tourist or a CIA agent but novel ends in an open ended way. The protagonist has love and care towards America since the country provides best Education and good employment opportunities. He shed sympathy when twin tower attack occurs. Later his adopted country's prejudiced approach towards his ethnic group , his own mother land and neighboring countries ,create alienation and a feeling of 'other' among his fellow friends. All these constitute changez to quit America and returned to Pakistan, then started working as lecture in a state university. He becomes an ardent critique of US foreign policy out of this experience.

Mohsin Hamid starts the novel with an open declaration of changez fondness towards America when the stranger alarmed by seeing bead narrator. He observes it is a country where he receives plenty of opportunities to find his fortune.

"Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you? Do not be

*"Emerging Trends in English Language & Literature"*

frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America.... Come; tell me, what were you looking for? Surely, at this time of day, only one thing could have brought you to the district of Old Anarkali —named, as you may be aware, after a courtesan immured for loving a prince—and that is the quest for the perfect cup of tea. Have I guessed correctly? Then allow me, sir, to suggest my favorite among these many establishments.[ P 1)

Though he belongs to an old influential family from Lahore, the current financial position is not able to support his education in US. Even though he explores the metropolitan cities of America the nostalgic good old days of Lahore often flash in his mind.

Nothing prepared me for the Drama, the power of their view from the lobby.

This , I was realized , another world from Pakistan : supporting my feet where the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known (P 38)

The prestigious Princeton University shapes changez into highly successful employ in a leading valuation firm, underwood Samson. Underwood Samson has the potential to transform my life as surely as it had transformed his, making my concern about money status thing of distant past (P.16))

Once the September 11 attack occurs on twin towers of America the smooth flow of the changez life becomes under threat. People start observing as if he involve in terrorist attack. United States of America responds to it as war on terror and starts invading Afghanistan (Which borders of Pakistan) to catch Taliban terrorists. Anyhow US received support of the world including India and Pakistan. During that time India accuses Pakistan for Indian parliament attack in 2001 and it aggravates the tension in this region. US supported India for finding and exchanging the culprits of parliament attack from Pakistan. So America's allegiance towards Pakistan turns into a new dimension. After 9/11 attack changez starts facing disillusionment from his firm and friendship circle like any other Ethnic minority faces in such contexts. Slowly changez' allegiance towards his adopted country turns into a hostile nature. The mutual suspicion between narrator and the American stranger lasts till the end of the novel, Mohsin Hamid brilliantly portrays distrust between western world and his own ethnic community. After returning from Manila to America changez visits his home land Pakistan and joins the family. There he realizes the terror of US war on Afghanistan, since Pakistan and Afghan shares borders, war can feel with its vigor and vitality from his home. He feels a sense love on his neighboring country, above all he can listen groaning sounds of thousands of innocent people. He moves to America after the vacation with an unshaven face. Once he reaches there he faces alienations and discriminations by the expense his beard right from the airport itself. The same continues in work place and street also. He refuses to shave beard since it projects the identity and individuality of changez as a Pakistani. He returns back to his home land then joined in state university as a lecture. All these made him to an ardent critic of American foreign policy then starts campaign against the country where he visualize all his dream will come true. A paradigm shift of the allegiance of Mohsin Hamid's protagonist towards America can be seen once the novel ends.

However, the sense of hostility towards Muslims by west starts from years before 9/11 attack. The idea of Islam as hostile, inferior and strange culture deep routed in the minds of the west. Edward Said argues in his book Orientalism ,that Europe deliberately operates the ethnic cleansing right from

## "Emerging Trends in English Language & Literature"

the period of crusade. From crusades to present war on terror there are changes can be seen in the mode of operation, earlier they focus on theological counter attacks in order to maintain the supremacy of church. But later it develops into mere extinguishing the ethnic community irrespective of their obligation towards Islam or Muslim.

According to Edward Said the principal dogmas of *Orientalism* exist in their purest form today in studies of Arabs and Islam...one is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient particularly this based on texts representing a "classical" Oriental civilization are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third Dogma is the Oriental is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself: therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically "objective." A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared or to be controlled. (Said, 300-301).

A group western intellectuals conceptualize age old cultural clash between dominant cultural groups in order to maintain the hegemony as "Clash Culture". Samuel Huntington, the propounder of theory of Clash Culture observed that the persistent clatter between leading cultural group results unrest in global scenario in pre and post 9/11 attacks. While Huntington's Clash Theory may provide some explanation for the ongoing conflict, his account is however biased to a certain extent. He opines that –

Muslims fear and resent Western power and the threat which this poses to their society and beliefs. They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent and immoral. They also see it as seductive, and hence stress all the more the need to resist its impact on their way of life. Increasingly, Muslims attack the West for not adhering to an imperfect, erroneous religion, which is nonetheless a "religion of the book", but not for adhering to any religion at all. (Huntington, 213)

Changez maintains romantic relation with a fellow Princeton friend Erica and they both enjoy the relation as well. Erica is a beautiful young girl of rich parents of New York, above all she is an aspiring writer. Her family feels consolation in this new affair since Erica is obsessed with the sad demise of her childhood friend Chris. Changez presence alleviates the mental agony of Erica and he boosts her to finish her creative writing. Erica is also a true representation of America, how US change its attitude to rest especially certain ethnic groups who are under the shadow of terrorism, 9/11 attack changes her attitude towards Pakistan and changes also faces the alienation. The discriminatory attitude of Erica's father is also evident to the biased opinion of West towards East. He often reminds the political instability of Pakistan and criticizes changez. Erica's final journey is almost parallel to 9/11 attacks, she connects the black days of her life, that Chris' death, with twin tower attacks. She got admitted in lunatic asylum and later committed suicide. So the pentagon attack has become an instrumental for the breakup of Changez Erica relations.

Changez finds US as land of opportunity and blessings. This is a dream came true Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible(P3). He perplexes by seeing the tall buildings then he often compares all these things with his

## *"Emerging Trends in English Language & Literature"*

home land. At the same he keeps a special kind love towards mother land.

Often, during my stay in your country, such comparison troubled me. In fact they did more than trouble in me: they made me resentful. Four thousand years ago, we, the people from Indus river basin...while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned ...and America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education (P 38).

Changez's allegiance towards his adopted nation changes once America declares its war on terror up on his neighboring country Afghanistan. He experienced alienation and identity crisis in different contexts including airport, work space etc... later changez realizes the need of extending his open support to thousands innocents of his country as well as neighboring country. He left America and turned into an fervent critique of US foreign policy. Identity crisis, social labeling and question of justice transformed his allegiance towards Pakistan as well as America. It is very clear that the stand of changez is not mere an anti-American but pro – justice and human rights.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Mohsin hamid narrates allegorical allegiance of changez , the chief protagonist of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* towards Pakistan, America , himself , his fellow Americans and between US and Pakistan. The paradigm shifts from each categorical relationshake from the point of post 9/11 attack. When injustice occurs, the natural defense from the part of the oppressed will emerge. It may be a militant attack in one side or hunger strike from another context. The age old colonialist ideology takes new shape and penetrates into the socio-political and cultural sovereignty of an ethnic group or a nation state for maintaining the supremacy up on the rest. Mohsin Hamid shows how far the White American culture is extremist, racial and intolerant in its application. This intolerant attitude is widely criticized from the part of the third world countries. Above mentioned siftings of relations are the results of the intolerances prevail in western superior thought. The term fundamentalism can be rightly applied on those who identity as theirs set of codes are right , in another sense, the famous dictum George W Bush “ Either with us or with them” explains our side is best, nothing more nothing less. Changez left US and came back to his root, discarded the hybrid identity, worked as lecture in state university and started campaigning against handicapped foreign policies of neo colonial countries.

### **REFERENCES:**

1. Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. London: Penguin Books, 2008. Print. 4.
2. Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Penguin Books, 1997. Print
3. Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995. Print.