

**Literary Responses to 9/11: A Comparative Study of
*The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Terrorist***

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This dissertation titled *Literary responses to 9/11: A comparative Study of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Terrorist** submitted by Samreen Lanker in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in English, is an independent and original piece of research work carried out under my supervision. This research work has not been submitted, in part or in full, to any university/institute for any degree. The candidate has fulfilled all the statutory requirements for the submission of this dissertation.

**Professor HamidaBano
Supervisor**

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**“ALL PRAISE BE TO ALMIGHTY ALLAH, THE MOST
BENEFICIENT, THE MOST MERCIFUL”**

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Introduction

The political affairs of the Middle East and South Asia and the relationship of the United States with many countries in these regions have provided raw material for many fictional works in the past. But 9/11 and its aftermath has given rise to a burgeoning sub- genre of novel as a creative response to the attacks on Twin Towers; as a response to the changed relationship between the East and the West and the fallout of these attacks on countries that have come under direct American attack. These novels explore an issue that has obsessed the West since the attack on World Trade Centre, namely, the psychology of the people who were responsible for the attacks.

Most of the modern day responses in America touch upon the ‘fundamentalist’ over the surface and have only scratched that surface; like *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006) by Martin Amis, *The Cyclist* (2002) by Viken Berberian, *The Attack* by Yasmeena Khadra, but *Terrorist* (2006) by the American novelist, John Updike, is a nuanced one. It is a departure from his earlier concerns and subject matter. It seeks to explore a world view and motivations of religious fundamentalists (within Islam) while dissecting the morals and life style of the residents of decaying New Jersey. It is a journey of research rather than that of imagination to understand the mind of a terrorist, testified by the quotations from the Holy Quran and that is where the East-West fault-lines shape up. From what is required of art are the challenge of speculation rather than the reassurance of certainty or literal signification. That is why few novels get at the heart of the matter. But *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, an upcoming Pakistani novelist, does just that. Hamid’s dissection of the reluctant fundamentalist carries with it a subtle commentary on American neo-imperialism. He touches upon a number of urgent

issues-American imperialism and its effects on culture, religion and individual identity and the imbalances of power and wealth. The novel is a microcosm of the cankerous suspicion between East and West. At its heart is the monologic voice of Changez who eventually becomes a 'Reluctant fundamentalist' after being infatuated and then disillusioned with American dream in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The candid indictment of American imperialism and honest confession of the attraction of her progressive values makes this novel hugely important in an on-going dialogue between East and West.

The present study focuses on a comparative study of *Terrorist* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Whereas Hamid is trying to track the journey of Changez and truly felt exploration of injustice, rage, prejudice, misrepresentation and aggression of East by America, *Terrorist* is an insider's reluctant critique of imperialism, covertly unsettling fixed political positions of Americans' in an oblique and de-familiarized way. "I guess I have stuck my neck out here in a number of ways but that is what writers are for, may be", says Updike(New York Times: 2006).

The selected novels are studied in the broad theoretical framework of post-colonialism as continued imperialistic aspirations of America press into it neo-imperialistic phase. The present study being a comparative study of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Terrorist*, brings out clearly the differences and similarities in their approaches towards the East-West treacherous fault-lines in the wake of 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* begins with a sharp indictment of America but finds it hard to hide his love for America towards the end. It is a reluctant love of those who occupy the 'in-between' space. *Terrorist* begins with a reader trap in the comfortable zone of home turf yet slowly and imperceptibly moves away from fixed political position on the East to imaginative understanding of the issues involved. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is writing back to the empire but stops short of rejecting the progressive American values. *Terrorist* lays the reader trap first and then slowly like Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* interrogates and destabilizes the neo-imperialist from within, thus

allowing for the shifting positionalities of the specific post-colonial discourse.

This study is aimed at exploring these insights fully and the fictional strategies used by the two novelists to convey their responses as they represent peaceful possibilities in a world ridden by turbulent conflict. The methodology focused in research study is an analysis of the narrative strategies while the monologic voice in one and multiple voices in the other are assessed for their efficacy of interrogating the fixed political positions in the novels selected for the study. While Mohsin Hamid is unsettling American arrogance, complacency and exclusivist vision of the world by interrogating their self-styled epistemic and cultural sovereignty, John Updike jolts the Americans' self-righteous attitude through the technique of de-familiarization. In the process, what is evident from this critical study is a creation of innumerable possibilities of peaceful co-existence of the East and the West by deconstructing the artificial boundaries of mind.

This work is an insightful understanding of the post-colonial, post-9/11 literature and the paradigm shift to neo-colonialism. This

gives an introduction to literature produced after 9/11, which has been devised on the latent post-colonial thoughts, but is evolving to a modern trend of neo-colonialism. The literary responses have also benefitted from the Orientalist works.

The dissertation is divided into six parts including the introduction and the conclusion. Chapter I entitled East-West Encounter, traces the history and the origin of the fault-lines in the East and the West. The level of conflict depicted is seemingly dependent on ethnic and religious differences. The periodical shift in power balance in two major realms of the world; that is distinct in culture, in origin, in development, in tradition is significant for it has contributed to what is existent as two bases for launching an encounter. The focus of the chapter is the present day violent encounter that the West has launched over the Muslim East on the pretext of terrorism which has evolved as a new discourse or ideology to justify the encounter.

Chapter II entitled '*The Reluctant Fundamentalist: The Empire Writes Back*' explores the monologic discourse of Changez the protagonist who epitomizes the East-West divide after 9/11.

The chapter analyses in detail the post-colonial interior monologue of Changez where he is holding a mirror up to America about what it has done to the East as a result of her arrogance and power-thirst for dominance and self-styled cultural superiority. It is a story of shattered dreams and reluctant fundamentalism.

Chapter III entitled '*Terrorist: An Insider's Critique*', gives the detailed insider's critique of the decadent American social reality. The Chapter examines how Updike tries to get inside the mind of 'Ahmad', the protagonist-where his fear and malleable innocence are depicted. It portrays the American decay, enabling us to see the rise of social, economic insecurities and violence, besides fundamentalism in the current changing world and how fundamentalism is a personal attitude rather than a fixed religious doctrine.

Chapter IV is a comparative study of the two novels '*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*' and '*Terrorist*' chosen for this study. The comparative study brings out the differences and similarities in their approaches towards the East-West treacherous fault-lines in the wake of 9/11 attack on World Trade Center. In the conclusion,

the scope and future research possibilities of my topic are touched upon.

Chapter-1

East-West Encounter: an Overview

The encounter between the East and the West has its genesis in the basic religious and cultural differences that continue to evolve. These fault-lines have a base in historical patterns of development over centuries. And now, with the world becoming a smaller place and interactions between people ever increasing, the differences are becoming far more highlighted, where preservation of identities is considered as a fundamental requirement. The power of the West is being responded to by a return to the roots by the East.

A large fault line exists between East and West much before 1500 AD; where the major point of conflict has been the religion of Islam for 1300 years. With the advent of Islam, the Arab-Muslims surged towards West and North into the Balkans. These expeditions of Muslims ended in 8th Century and from 11th century up to 13th century, the Western ambitions started with catholic crusadic mission. During this period of dark ages, the Western ambitions of bringing Christianity to Middle-East had the more adverse effects. It laid the foundation for animosity more than ethnicity. This animosity continues in the encounter between East and West up-to modern times. The pre-renaissance period is significant for it was a result of 200 years of crusadic savagery which led to the rejuvenation of the Muslim East. However, the Renaissance of the West beginning in 14th century was a result of the decline of Eastern ambitions. This periodical shift in power balance in two major realms of the world; which are distinct in culture, in origin, in development and in traditions. This difference has significantly contributed to what is existent as two bases for

launching an encounter. Throughout the history of the East and the West, as Belfour's declaration clearly states:

“Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show beginnings of those capacities for self-government having merits of their own...You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government”
(Quoted in Said 1978:32-33).

During World War II, the colonial empires began to disappear, the Arab nationalism grew, the Muslim rejuvenation started once again and the Muslim East became rich and prosperous with oil resources. The West again fought violently for Israel with the Arabs. The wars with East are as such a result of encounters that have an origin in centuries old history. Demography, struggle for power, money, oil, natural resources all have contributed to the development of such encounters. The conflict is recurrent in the heart of Africa along many fault lines, like in Nigeria, in Libya, in Sudan. The rift lines run all along the borders of Bosnia, between Serbs and Albanians, between Turkish and Bulgarians, between Russian federation and its southern states.

And then there is a rift within societies themselves, which is evident on lines of Western and Eastern thoughts.

“The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and the jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior...In the meantime a growing, more and more dangerous rift separates Orient and Occident...The present crisis dramatizes the disparity between texts and reality” (Said:109).

These encounters that are prevalent mostly along the crescent shaped Islamic Bloc from Africa to Afghanistan with the West has a bloody history with violent borders. The conflicts with communist bloc of Soviets and much of Eurasia and the West was a cold emotional diplomatic war; however, the conflict with China and its bloc running into Pacific has a new cold war syndrome. Apart from this, West has at present minor economic tensions with every other country in the East. The level of conflict is projected to be dependent on the ethnic, religious intolerances between the contending parties. The West at present is in a violent encounter with the Muslim East. And the Western way of summarizing the

present is from the past, the past that they have conceived about the East.

“A hegemonic Western discourse on modern democracy structures the encounter between the East and the West while serving to further consolidate Western positional superiority through a negation of the East based on its perceived backwardness vis-à-vis a *Western* concept of democracy” (Rendtorff-Smith 2009: 3).

And this summarization of East and its attributes has achieved a solid shape after 9/11 of 2001. The events of 9/11 could have been no better than a novel written well before it occurred. 9/11 gave the West an another wake-up call regarding their representation, of what Karl Marx conceived, the Western thought on the un-systematic and engrossed East,

“They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”!(Marx 1853, Re-print 1987:124).

9/11 actualized the fiction into reality on video of planes on and on hitting the towers. And what evolved from there is a reality of hatred resulting from pain and grief, victimization and violence evolved from anger. Twelve years on, the world of Islam is going

through the crisis and facing war internally as well as externally. The literature that is presented is a new form of orientalism that is not merely representing the East but making changes occur by waging direct wars. Jay McInerney's "The Good Life", Don DeLillo's "Falling Man" proclaims the West to be getting wiser with planes striking the WTC. It is as if the planes were to show the reality of self-confessed picture of the East. Post 9/11, literature has focused on this single attribute of East; a character who is either a suicide bomber radicalized to hate America or the West or a confused soul uneasy in his thinking. The whole of the East is constructed to look as a terrorist in making, as in John Updike's *Terrorist*, or in O'Neill's *Netherland* who tries to evoke an atmosphere that follows 9/11.

Even before 9/11, decks were cleared for an East-West encounter by a ground breaking book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations*. The author clearly hints in the book that for West to strengthen itself against formidable Islam the West has to remain constantly engage in a conflictual situation with the Muslim East in particular.

“Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1300 years...From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Turks reversed the balance, extended their sway over the Middle East and the Balkan, captured Constantinople...This warfare between Arabs and the West culminated in 1990, when the United States sent a massive Army to the Persian Gulf to defend some Arab countries against aggression by another” (Huntington: 31).

The literary responses have changed on 9/11, 2001; a day which tore East-West relations to pieces. Aggressive orientalism has evolved where rusted thoughts are born from the falling steel of WTC towers. It finds its manifestation in books written on in advent topics like Candace Bushnell’s *One fifth Avenue*, Lionel Shriver’s *Double Fault*. The war on terror, categorization of represented sources of terror as axis of evil, the bloody battle that continues on Eastern soil and its fallout has been a final ignition in this encounter. And it can be seen that after the centuries of hatred, undue representation on world scene, more hatred followed with absolute universalization of Western ideas, the “other” picture is being realized post 9/11.

“we are rushing pell-mell into some universal culture, it seems perverse to deny that present trends are creating cross-cultural ties and even uniformities that did not exist before” (Matlock 1997:433).

For West, East is their invention, a path of colonial journey, a means of achieving an organized structure, a sway in their culture and in their religion. The biggest fault of the West in this encounter is to blow off myths and lies on East in their attempt of representing them. Interestingly, this encounter has been based on a concept of consent under domination. For long, it has been played as “us” and “them” to make the encounter stay.

“For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived” (Said: 43).

The search for a golden goose, greed and no guilt has been a natural instinct of the West. For a desire to determine the fate of the third world, for love of power, for resources, for domination and for control, the West has ventured in Middle East on the pretext of

giving birth to democracy, in near East for battle of ethnicities, in far-East on poverty and in Africa for development. It has been recognized often that the American and European interest in affairs of the East have been political, a field perceived in geo-political terms as a branch of occupation for the birth of a single system, a single super-power. It has been played on religion, and spirituality; Bakhtin's universal values are considered antithetical and destructive to the tolerant, preservative Merton's transversal values of the East. However, given the prevalence of an idiom of divergence in the cultural-religious realms, it is worthwhile to see that it is the atheist West that monologues itself as a universal secular space to a religious East. Moreover, in this battle, Islam as a religion has been dimensioned in an alien space, as one apart from the rest.

In this space of Western dominance, there is an encounter which is manifested in struggle for power. It has become a power discourse with corporate institutions harnessing to maintain the ideological and political hegemony of the West throughout Asia. The result of Westernism has been the political emancipation of

Muslims to counteract the superiority of the Western ideology and its values in near Eastern countries and Middle-East. However, the traditional values of the East have rejected the democratic values of the West as apostasy and linked these with the colonial, imperialistic, racist, ethno-centric and hegemonic discourse of the West; although syncretism based on the direct Democracy of al-shura has been a major idea of democratization of Islamic East; where, the Western ideals of universalism are extraneous.

“There has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living-room” (Said: xiv).

The historical patterns of the imbalance between East and West is nothing but a loci of power which has had an influence on characterization of the East, its backwardness, its degeneracy and its inequality; thereby, prescribing an uncivilized tag on the East

based on 'modern international law'. The fact of substitution and displacement of the Eastern orient, whereby, the East itself has to rely on Western orientalism and look at its advancement, explains the Western dominance of power. On two sides of the realms; a civilizational discourse continues, evolves and changes with the shift in the centers of power. The Eastern enlightenment in contrast to the West is rooted in its strong traditions and morality, while the West has moved on the path of immorality, atheistic values and unrealistic ambitions. Still, there is a stable and ultimate field of unwarranted action by the West in the affairs of the East. The interrogation of this rise, roost and rule is important to know as to why there is an Eastern clash being portrayed through the unilateral vision of the West.

"I say 'civilizations do not clash; it is ignorance that clashes'... What lies behind this talk of a 'clash of civilizations', what cultivates the hotbed of terrorism, is not poverty but injustice, disregard for human dignity"
(Huntington: 1993).

The world witnessed an emergence of a new order after two mighty world wars were fought. Those reminiscent of any found

power were then wrecked, which is the case of Soviet Union. In the scenario of a new world, the old concept of colonization is no longer valid and an authoritarian power has to globalize the world to achieve the globalized power. For this to be achieved, the subjugation has been inventory, with a systematic planning by the Western corporate, media, intellectual, political and social sectors. National, religious, sectarian, capital, technology and resources have been dices of the West on devising a competition within Eastern nations. These fights have been built and boosted. Any idea which is indifferent to the outline of this plan has to be eliminated. Democracy by universalism where every individual is a king to decide his social status, his personal and political life, where power rests in him to decide the fate of a nation; a life of freedom, a field of opportunities and emancipation, where state has no religious binding; where luxuries of life are at one's hands is a world of transient dreams. There can be no better way to populate the ideas of the West than to populate the idea of a freedom.

The scope of introducing the encounter of the East and the West or clash of civilizations or a fight of religions arises in only

one incompatibility to the idea of universal democratization. In the Middle-East, Islam is perceived by this incompatibility claim of the West as offering exceptional resistance to the political liberalization, respect to human rights and formal democratic practice. The exceptional resistance to democracy and its interlinking to Islam is a big flaw in this argument of the West. Interlinking democracy with secularism and the Islamic discourse trying to compete to counteract this argument is a contemporary feed for East-West encounter. The incompatibility claim is a discourse of power and hegemony. Deconstructing the argument, it is argued by the West that countries failing to embrace democracy are politically perverse and morally obtuse. Political backwardness is an exception of the East. Besides, by setting an antagonistic belief of Islam against secularism/democracy, all other beliefs of freedom and equality posed by democracy are believed to be negated by Islam. Ido-Oren's argument is not about democracy per se but it is about being 'America like', measuring the levels of democracy as per the level in America (In the subjectivity of the Democratic Peace 1996: 263-300). It is what Edward Said believed

is the ‘us’ and ‘them’ argument. The formulation of Secularism as central definition to democracy causes exacerbation of the definition of East-West encounter.

“Democracy is treated as an endogenous rather than an exogenous variable in the analysis of East-West relations, and no effort will therefore be made to present an *apriori* definition of democracy. Rather, democracy is treated as a *floating signifier* or an empty container” (Rendtorff-Smith:3).

It is in this light that Islam as a religion was to be proved by few to be compatible with modernity. Accepting the superiority of the Western principles and ideas, ‘Westernism’ puts East in the position of inferiority and thereby, internalization by the East of its representation by the West. Some Eastern countries reject the idea of democracy totally, perceiving it to originate from the West, with their colonial past, with cultural expansion and hegemonic tendencies. Their ‘rejectionism’ is a narrative of confrontation with the ‘jahaliya’. While the rest accept the ‘Westernist’ discourse, they, however challenge the universalism of the West on legal interpretation of Islamic law and its application and rejection of

secularism as both superfluous and irrelevant. This 'syncretism' is a pivotal point of Islamic democracy and of freeing the Middle-East of the psychological-emotional shackles of inferiority induced by a series of antagonistic encounters with the West.

But is democracy the only conceptual field of encounter between East and West in the contemporary times? The discursive encounters are important to know as they have engendered the East with a powerful image of self by distancing and identification, but merely being subjects. But twenty years ago this encounter existed in search for legitimacy in Middle-East. Fifty years back it was an encounter per se the lost identity of the East vis a viz the Western orientalism. Where, the 'other' the East is repeatedly perceived as primitive, originary, exotic and mysterious. The sensuality, backwardness, despotism and abhorrent mentality and the inaccuracy have been the ideas on which the East has been distilled. The perceived separateness of the East, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability and its supine malleability has given the West a notion of its representation, its attention, reconstruction and redemption.

The adventurer West's imagination of a space to scientifically study in eighteenth century, slowly led to colonial commercial ambitions, penetration and insemination. The seeds of this would grow back home with the fulfillment of knowledge and achievement of the strength to conceive more. But Franco-English clash of interest that originated in eighteenth century gradually gave way to necessity. A World War I secret pact between them necessitated a mandated sphere of influence in near-East. Kipling would term these adventures as "white man's day", a mystic "drinking that cup" of the East. This became a firm explanation for classifying "our-us" and "they-their". It is in this light, that the Arab imagination was given a bolt when their moral and material life was thought to have bareness and was described as mental and moral fatigue.

The biological view in the struggle of existence, evolution of British politics contributed in representing white races' superiority. The ghost of the West that swept through world trying to reconstruct it in their language, in their method, in their perspective and in their belief; in spite of ruin and confusing changes led to a

sway of knowledge for determining the future of a “Semitic ottoman oriental” and every “other” race. An Islamic understanding was a narrative that the West never recognized and ever since the religious identity was given a notion of national identity for Muslims. Wherever, the West intervened, the natives perceived themselves with a sort of general despair, which turned to rancor. That rancor today is a basis of hate and hate manifests in action.

An Eastern demography is represented in the West by a dominant male, where stupidity of thought perceives women as identical to male power-fantasy. When Islam is being discussed, it is considered as wretched, cruel and trivial. A religious-political debate on culture of the East is shaped on the lines of women’s emancipation; however, the Mohammedan criticism of polygamy ignores the social set-up of adultery in the West. Islam’s piety and its exterior theological display are broadly criticized for being perceived as heretical Christianity. Other idea of Islam is beset with crippling limitations. The argument of the West is that Islam colors all the aspects of life- social, political and economic of its

followers. Then it is believed that religion is used as a cover by the East, for a totalitarian Islam. A broad level criticism is launched on Muslims as being cheats and hypocrites. Finally, religion has had no influence on the conservatism of the Eastern ways. In a way, it is a criticism of Mohammedan way of achieving authenticity to these national immoralities as summarized by the West. However, it needs to be noted that all these attributes ascribe to Eastern religion are actually creations of Western thought on Islam and not a genuine description of any Mohammedan belief.

An imaginative geography that defines the limits of East and West is a basis of a discourse that originates with Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The unfamiliarity of Orient is described by strangeness. From being exotic, mysterious and alluring, it became malignant, dark and threatening. The broad basis of geographical unfamiliarity led to many minor differences. The history of contact between the East and the West has been convoluted, full of ambiguities, contradictions and enigmas. Today, this unfamiliarity may be mythically presented but there is no unfamiliarity in reality. It is manifested in power fashioned in West and deeply implicated

in imperialism. It is couched in ambitions of corporate institutions in maintenance of an ideological and political hegemony of the West over the East. The corporate tools are epistemic construction of a religious ideology, of political and social construction of the East. In the drive for resources, capital and wealth; imperialistic forms over few centuries have shifted from colonialism to a neo-colonialism. The colonizing knowledge generates a series of stereotypical dichotomies between a rational, democratic, humanistic, creative, dynamic, progressive and masculine West and an irrational, despotic, oppressive, backward, passive, stagnant and feminine East.

‘Hurgronje’ believed that the distinction between the East and West lied in the jurisdiction of an Islamic law (Muslim Idealist or Christian Colonialist: 2004). Gibb believed the inviolable identity of the East and the West and the perseverance of East as a humanistic challenge to the Western ethnocentricity (Said: 257). This view started during World War II because East was now entering a new phase of cultural dialect and self-consciousness and West was in cultural and political crisis. But for the West, Islam as

a religion even during this phase continued to remain opposed to the Christian West; remaining a cultural, socio-economic effrontery. Since, World War II, the Muslim particularly has become a figure in only American popular culture. Arabs, all of a sudden became Semitics with a look of a sharply hooked nose, evil mustachioed leer on their faces; evils behind all troubles of West; which was basically due to gasoline shortage in 1970's. An Arab Muslim is anti-Zionist, and oil supplier who doesn't deserve it. Arab is a slave-trader, Camel driver, money changer, colorful scoundrel; besides a menacing image of Muslim Jihad. The American dream of imperial dominance has its origin in 1843 with President Pickering having a vision of studying the Asiatic societies. America began to study Eastern languages, societies, and the development of the missionaries that believed in their God, their culture and in their destiny. United States policy focused its interest on Zionism and colonization of Palestine with Belfaur declaration of 1917. Mortimer Graves in 1950 measured the forces that contended the American idea, were communism and Islam. Islam changes within itself, thereby there being no difference

between classical and modern Islam. It is clear that the modern Islam has turned away from the West because it is still faithful to its original being, and its only way to modernize is by self-reinterpretation from Western view, which is impossible.

The exclusion policy towards the East and elimination theory that furthers these thoughts today are manifested in the repression in the East; which for many decades is developing little because of support of a status-quo by the Western powers. And this is represented in an interlinked notion of an unvarying matrix of development, history, tradition, and reality in Islam being interchangeable.

The repressive regimes have been supported against sectarian, religious and tribal uprising. Illegitimate structure has been built and the control of oil as a material, and people as men have been formulated in the interest of the West. This calls for a war within the structure of the East-West people to people contacts. A projection of the unending, unresolved conflict where a force against this structure is mythologized into a demon and people of the West are fed on the propaganda that a swarm of famine ridden,

dark and threatening forces are approaching and that a Muslim army will take over the world.

However, this mythological propaganda could not have been comprehended by the East. The East has been a witness to the West's innovations, its cultural materialism, and has viewed these with enthusiasm, amazement and admiration but at the same time has always been suspicious and cautious, criticizing Western morality, humanity, religious attitudes and materialism. The Western dominance and its enriched and overwhelming power in all spheres has stirred the East by a strong nationalistic faith, patriotism, order and diligence of highest standard.

The United States dollar has been framed to take control of the Eastern societies, their financial structure and their welfare. Sanctions have been a tool of punishing and persuading Eastern societies to fulfill the West's ambitions. A fraud on money print, a structure of monetary funds and fiscal revenues and foreign exchanges has distinctly slowed the development of Eastern economies with time. The development of private structure where

welfare of state has no meaning has corrupted societies and brought gross inequalities in them.

The word “terrorist” today for the West serves the main line of keeping the people engaged, stirred up and angry. The strikes with surgical precision today are classified as modern clean wars while the human suffering and destruction are obscured. Terror, unilateral regime changes and pre-emptive wars are endlessly debated and backed by Western think-tanks. In post 9/11 wars, the dehumanizing approach is precariously put when the lines of surgical strikes and killings are perceived as great. Arab nationalistic movements have declared hostility towards the American imperialism. Helpless imprecations have led to anti-Americanism in the East which has gradually grown. Resentment and anger in these societies has grown mostly towards legalistic Islam. Critical thinking, analysis and exchange of ideas have dropped out of site. Orthodoxy and Dogma rule today in this irrelevant exchange of encounters between a de-constructive and degraded West and dejected and destroyed the East. A belligerent neo-orientalism is in clash with rejectionalistic ideology of the

East. West puts it as “a prototype of closed traditionalistic societies”. In all this, a facile notion of “one-world” is a new urgency cropping in the Western thinking.

Osama bin Laden was an icon of terrorism in the recent past. And Osama was a bearded man with Muslim attire. However, Osama, the terrorist was a freedom fighter for President Reagan America in 1980’s fighting against Soviet. The US has been demonizing adversaries and targeting and trading lives of countless Muslims and building its Pride and power over their souls. Jonathan Randal’s “Osama”, speaks of a man who grew up fighting Soviets, turned to Sudan, moved back to Afghanistan and 9/11 takes place. How did Muslims end in such a delicate situation fighting America for the sake of Osama is unclear as of today.

Cromer conceived of empire not as an object ambition but in reality a great sociological, historical and political fact. Thus, describing the East as a “Palace of Art” whose foundations are laid by the skilled hands of the Western powers and thus, should remain only as a setting (Said: V). Today this encounter shapes in a pool of interest, in old boy or expert networks linking corporate

establishments, the foundations, oil companies, the missions, the academic world. There are grants, rewards, organizations and their hierarchies in the West and institutes, centers, faculties and departments all devoted to legitimizing and maintaining the authority of a handful of basically unchanging ideas about Islam, Muslims and the East. There are good and bad Arabs as per West's likings and those once defeated are expected to silently obey. One myth generates another myth and East is kept busy in answering and questioning of these myths.

Today, the Arab Muslims are awakening and the explosion of resentment towards their rented rulers and towards the West is proving to be a clash of identities, survival and triumph in this region. But what is at risk is the character of East. Birth of some form of syncretic democracies against the notion of universalistic Western democracies is a challenge to the Western line of belief. The East may never conceive itself as enslaved; the West will never authenticate an Eastern view as it is paradoxically the same as it has always been. Certainly, the biggest paradox which is not explained and which lives on is that geographically "East is EAST"

and “West is WEST”. This explains 9/11 as a turning point in this realization; thereafter, the two distinct spheres have developed with rigid and hard bases to stand on.

Chapter-2

The Reluctant Fundamentalist:

The Empire Writes Back

‘The Reluctant Fundamentalist’ by Mohsin Hamid written in the backdrop of 9/11 is a continuation of post-colonial narratives that have undertaken to write back to the empire about the misery and suffering, death and destruction that America has caused to Eastern countries. It is a quietly described and cleverly framed infatuation and dis-enchantment with America, build on the treacherous fault-lines of East-West relations, the novel is a finely portrayed misrepresentation of East by the West and the prejudice of the

American setup. This is a story of shattered dreams and reluctant fundamentalism. It is a story about change with a lot of dynamism in the novel both in the settings as well as in the thoughts. The Western control of the empire, the strategies of their Eastern manipulation, and the fermentation of fundamentalism is perceived in this novel in terms of extremism and violence.

Hamid presents a character in this novel who is familiar with the American setup. This character is a Pakistani who grows up in his native place, moves for higher studies to the prestigious American University of Princeton and gets a job as an analyst in the most institutionalized of the American Companies which is outsourcing its ideas and his abilities to materialize into their own concrete progress. The protagonist whose name is 'Changez' is attracted by the American dream and adopts its life-style. The setting of this novel is truly global. The setting of this novel changes from Lahore to New York, then to Manila, to Valparaiso and finally back to Lahore. The settings of the narrator also transform from the old Anarkali road to the modern Piazza in the course of description of this novel.

Hamid gives the location of this novel in the light of a young Pakistani who is from a well off Lahore family. Lahore is the city of Birth for Changez but also the “chosen” city. He describes it as:

“the second largest city of Pakistan, ancient capital of the Punjab, home to nearly as many people as New York, layered-like a sedimentary plain with the accreted history of invaders from the Aryans to the Mongols to the British”
(Hamid:7).

Hamid links Lahore to the idea of empire in several ways. He describes this city which has withstood many invasions and occupations, giving it a diverse history and an implied strength. Although he graduates from Princeton and falls in love with the American girl named Erica, he feels connected to this city. The exact setting of this novel is in a cafeteria in Lahore where Changez outpours a monologue to the unknown American visitor. While he contrasts the settings, he describes Lahore as the capital of the fallen empire and the New York as the capital of the expanding empire.

Changez is from a well off family from Gulberg in Lahore. With his rich social class and former days of glory, he mentions his place as:

“Mughal miniatures and ancient carpets graced its reception rooms ... It was far from impoverished; indeed, it was rich with history” (Hamid:125).

While at New York, Changez is filled with freedom, with endless opportunities. He travels to Athens in Greece, where he formally meets Erica in the backdrop of the meeting point of the East and the West at this geographical location. He sees hope as well as despair in the meeting with Erica. He sees her past and feels compelled to start a new relationship with her.

He feels to be from East when he visits Manila for valuation; seeing the development and the prosperity, he becomes more inclined to be a Filipino than an American. Although he acts as an American in Philippines, he regrets the power of undue manipulation he controls under the American label. The episode of 9/11 makes him a true foreigner. Changez’s unsatisfied dreams of America are filled in prosperity and deprivation. 9/11 gives

Changez a count of the fall of the American world structure; he probably sees the fall of World Trade Center as a fall of the fraudulent American display of freedom, equality, justice, peace and prosperity. He sees America and his girl-friend Erica both in grief on returning back to America. Changez sees New York as separate from America, because America has taken on a new meaning. It is no longer a great, cutting-edge civilization, but a dangerously powerful and reactive “beast.” He moves on a path of challenging the American dream deep within himself; he retracts the path he had adapted to become one like an American in his American dream. He sounds despicable to Americans, but he looks pleased at the idea of challenging the American hegemony, its structure and its systematic colonization of weaker people.

It is at Valparaiso, he realizes during his valuation assignments, the lack of his solid core and the compromise of his image. Thereafter, Changez moves back to his native land being attracted by its sensibility and then challenges the American protraction of its sphere by crude display of hoax dreams. Being a professor at the university, he launches a campaign against

authority to defend the rights and lives of his native people for the same American dreams of peace and prosperity; astonishingly based on the American principles of freedom, equality and justice. The interesting feature of this novel is the setting, the suspense of the visitor and the change.

This novel in short presents the views of a tormented character of ‘Changez’ to the Americans in detail, who has fallen out of love with two, one with a woman and other with a nation. It illustrates to Americans the paradigm of writing that has been witnessed since 9/11. Featuring economy and power, shift in dress and culture, family and social fabric, on human nature and relations, on geography and geo-politics, on beard and religion, on national uprisings and corruptions, on opportunities and hatred, on fear and anger, on life and death, on foundations and fundamentalism, on belief and culture, on attitude and etiquettes; it is a plain talk to Americans to invite them to see both sides of the coin, in short to introspect.

“Fundamentalist” a new harsh term, is used to describe not only the Muslims but also a form of label used to describe

fundamentalist Christians and economic fundamentalists. Although religious fundamentalism makes Americans weary, it is the same fundamentals they prescribe for measuring the fundamentals of the subject as concerned to their companies. “Fundamentalism” is an extreme commitment to fundamental tenets and articles of faith, conservative moral foundations and ways of seeing the world — the opposite of diversity, accommodation and flexibility — but is far off from the thought of violence. Although “reluctant” leads to a series of conflicting doubts and dilemmas with steps of self-introspection while resisting the mechanism of violence. On the other hand, fundamentalism for Changez is a path of success in life while he perceives his career in economic valuation.

The novel is mere precisely the monologue of Changez and begins in a coffee house of Lahore in Anarkali Bazar. Changez is the one to initiate the conversation with the stranger by noticing that he is an American. While the two exchange glances, it is the thought of empire which grips the narrator. Hamid contrasts the visit of American agent to Pakistan and that of Changez to America. The unnamed American is a suspicious observer and his

each and every activity is described by Hamid ‘to be always on a business with a mission’. The business of representing the American setup to investigate, inform and intrude into the affairs of the Eastern countries. Suspicious even of a meal, suspicious of men walking about, suspicious of roadside Romeo’s on bikes and of the beards of men. Changez explains his visit to America for the purpose of education in the most prestigious of University of Princeton. Princeton University is known for its distinct campus architecture in the Gothic style. Changez says that these buildings inspired him to think that his life was like a film and that he was a star and the other students were his co-stars. His representation being negligible makes Changez an exceptional figure. Changez tells the American that Underwood Samson in which he worked afterwards was a valuation firm. He says that for his interview at Underwood Samson he was asked to value a fictional company specializing in teleportation. The dream of America inspired him so much that he says:

“Looking back now, I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective, like so much else in America”

(Hamid:4).

And then he says,

“Students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and invited into the ranks of meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining.”

(Hamid: 4).

However, in the garb of the American dreams, Hamid clears that Americans tend to use the best of the talents of the Eastern mind, give them the best of the opportunities and setups to display those talents and build a system that is most illustrative, practical and unique. Moreover, these dreams are sold by Americans who have no reluctance in harnessing the Eastern talents. A Pakistani like Changez, as Hamid describes him is always being embarrassed at the use of a financial scholarship to get into the American college; when he is being interviewed by an American firm named Underwood Samson & Company for campus recruitment, he was asked by Jim, the company recruiter:

“Do your friends here know that your family couldn’t afford to send you to Princeton without a scholarship?”

(Hamid:8).

The feeling of deprivation and destitution coupled with uncanny dreams posed to Changez is an illustration of the West's attitude towards the East. The demonstration of such an attitude is meant to destroy the confidence of the Eastern students and in a sense lay the basis of the American domineering attitude in young students towards the East. It is on account of this, the lesser nations of East don't utilize the intellectual capacity of their individuals and their talented youth become tools in the hands of the West for their own advancement. Changez repels the interviewer but the staunch American diplomatic interviewer, taunts the temper of Changez into diplomacy. It is this protracted diplomacy that is used to counter the deprivation of the East and their search for dreams into projection of villains. The anger too is controlled and projected as an uncharacteristic phenomenon prevalent in unhealthy East. Changez is selected for Underwood Samson to strengthen the fundamental principles of growth of the company.

To Hamid, deprivation is a recent story of the East and the traditionalistic prosperity of Eastern economies has been converted into materialistic attributes in newer sections of their societies. The

class-consciousness has been deliberately established by induction of corruption and greed in deprived sections of these traditional Eastern societies. This concentration of money in few entrepreneurs has been encouraged by the West to cater to their own benefits while as the Eastern economies, mostly Muslim economies have been manipulated to be shattered which led to their large scale deprivation, anger and 'fundamentalism'. Even Changez's family used to enjoy the days of prosperity and they are left with the class-consciousness despite losing wealth. Besides, the drain of wealth has been a feature of Pakistan and many other nations where American capitalism has crippled their native economies and a story of loss of wealth is a story of drain of wealth that has been a result of periodic sanctions, flawed trade policies and international order of fraud imposed on such economies.

Changez pities the American description of confidence in its materialistic power. While on the tour of Greece with his American class-mates, Changez's description of their behavior and mannerism is disgusting. His friends would spend money at no

limits, at high cost meals and would act like what Changez describes:

“By what quirk of human history my companions----many of whom I would have regarded as upstarts in my own country, so devoid of refinement were they----were in a position to conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class.” (Hamid: 21).

The disparity in wealth is a disparity in power in this world set-up and Hamid questions American's as to what gives them the power to represent, to act on their self-representation, and to perceive their agenda of enforced manipulated systemization of the Eastern setup. For Americans, the perception of the Eastern image is caught in a web of intellectual dilemma and suspicion is obvious in such conditions. Even under such high-handedness, the East is sought to offer hospitality and the visible sweetness has time and again been responded to with a cup of poison. The display of compassion by third world is suggestive of what Hamid terms uniqueness of the East as he puts it:

“But it did not, could not, make me forget such things as how much I enjoy the tea in this, the city of my birth,

steeped long enough to acquire a rich, dark color, and made creamy with fresh, full-fat milk.” (Hamid:15).

The unique Eastern culture has also been intruded by the West to its holistic benefits. The uniqueness of the Eastern culture to Hamid is rich and the intrusion brings about repulsion. As in Lahore, to Changez and American visitor, the girls wearing jeans try to create an attractive modern outlook in a society where the traditional Pakistan dress is a norm. However, culture has also its domains of intrusion in the human feelings of love, faith and description of beauty. On the trip to Greece, Changez falls in love with Erica, an American cosmopolitan well-off girl who is in a chaotic state of mind over the death of her boy-friend due to lung cancer. She is a lonely character, like America, which exists on the top realm of command and control over world affairs. American society finds no big families, no color to add to life with no grandparents, no nephews and no nieces. The disaster that had engulfed Erica had to be found not in her loneliness but in the absent mind of her compatriots, a common feature of that society. In spite of the fact that she has a presence and an uncommon magnetism; it is the American dreams that keep Changez alive and enthralled but once

these dreams find a place in his self, he is marooned in feelings for his faith, his nature of love and his sphere of beauty. He can't keep up with the fundamentals of a perfect recognition of his dreams. The cultural intrusion and the contrast in cultures with traditionalistic societies is described to neo-culturalistic and modern Americans by Hamid, as he describes to them the ethos of Islamic religion, like beard which may seem to the American visitor as out of place in their society and postulated as totally antagonistic to their cultural norms. And this antagonism and fear of beard and burqa has a repulsive attitude within individuals which is described by Changez on spotting a beard:

“I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares” (Hamid: 130).

With changing mindset, Changez is hopeful of a new relationship building between him and Erica and the prospect of his new job. Changez befriends the contender, Wainwright; a talented analyst prone to quoting cinema. Changez also forms a special relationship with Jim, the managing director who hires him. Jim is

prone to insinuating that he and Changez are alike. The first time that he did this was during the interview. Jim told Changez that he could sense he was hungry and that he had been hungry as well. During the summer party at Jim's house in the Hamptons, Jim sees Changez observing everyone else and remarks that Changez is a watchful guy just like himself. Changez does not disagree but doesn't agree either, content to be in his boss' favor.

The similarities that Hamid points to are also received with many disagreements by Changez. One is the American fear of bearded men, for they pose a threat to modernism and modernist outlooks; besides being icons of American terrorist enemies. He considers that a hatred of beard by Americans lead to repulsion to their cultural philosophy which is being extended around the world along with the American hegemony of power. Secondly, the question of women emancipation is usually tackled by Americans in the garb of women upliftment. The veil donned by a Muslim or traditionalistic women is described in terms of the line of fear and subjugation and an attribute of the Eastern world. Such description

is critically countered by Hamid who in defense of veiled Eastern women says:

“If a woman is harassed by a man, she has a right to appeal to the brotherly instincts of the mob, and the mob is known to beat men who annoy their sisters.” (Hamid: 22-23).

Hamid contrasts and compares the two cultures. It is the culture that is a wall in reality that has separated the distinct growth of two spheres, on distinct basis of living and morality. And to confuse this cultural distinctiveness with extreme religious fundamentalism is nothing but incorrect projection and publicity of a dress code that is morally sensitive to Eastern sphere. And once this sensitivity is challenged like a tickle, it makes one either numb or repulsive. That repulsion tends to take many to spot a beard and sensitize themselves behind a cloak or a burqa, although it is a matter of faith or distinctness. Such is the fear of the Eastern distinctness in culture in the West and particularly the fear of Islam as a global religion that Hamid describes that once Changez was asked in a group about his dreams, he explained that he hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability.

It was received with shock and awe, even though it was put forth as a repulsive joke. Changez speaking to the American visitor in the Anarkali bazaar of Lahore, tells him:

“The frequency and purposefulness with which you glance about---brings to mind the behavior of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is a predator or a prey!”

(Hamid: 31).

Changez tells the American of his first visit to Erica’s penthouse. Unsure of what to wear he dressed up in his ethnic attire: a white kurta; Erica’s remarks are great regarding his attire. She presents him with her manuscript, remarking that it is more of a novella than a novel. She compares the novella to a pearl that she has been developing and Changez observes something broken in her eyes. The only thing that upsets him during his visit is her dad’s callous remarks about Pakistan. Changez says that everything is “quite good” at home, but Erica’s dad disagrees citing the corruption and dictatorship in Pakistan.

In the backdrop of his visits to Erica, Changez points to the power that the West commands, has a fear associated with it, one

of losing it and the other of becoming a soft target for its enemies. It is in the light of this that Hamid says that after intruding far enough to control the states of its empire, the fear of having trekked too far and getting lost in the path, has led America to give explanations of its invisible presence and weird behavior. Islam, Communism, Aryan behavior have come to home to roost the American and Western societies. It is in the light of this that Americans have become lonely, alert and aggressive in their approach. But Hamid also alerts the American setup that this fearful exertion of energies is leading them to an unknown path, which one has not witnessed as does the fear of change. The fear of Americans is hidden under the feet of the power displayed by their technology and high rise buildings. And it is this display of power that comes to be challenged by those who understand the basis of exposing the American fear. The vicious propaganda is the basics of aggressive attitude of America. This resembles an attitude where even a scar on an arm is suspected as potential of an aggressive attitude, and is an uncalled for propaganda. Changez tells the American that their aggressive, suspicious and angry attitude has

created more enemies for them. The resentment in the East for American power is reminiscent of what Hamid describes in his brutal comparison of Pakistan and America:

“Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned, unsanitary affairs, and Americans had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education.” (Hamid:34).

He contrasts the economies and cultures of two nations when he says:

“We were not always burdened by debt, depending on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and---yes---conquering kings. We built the Royal Mosque and Shalimar Gardens in this city, and we built the Lahore Fort with its mighty walls and wide ramp for our battle-elephants. And we did these things when your country was

still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent.” (Hamid:101).

The availability of credit at a ready hand to an American national in terms of credit card is in contrast to the begging bowls of the Eastern citizens and this sense of shame to which Asians are put leads to reprisal. The card of American Express, as Changez is to say, is a symbol of hatred for such communities who disregard its value.

Changez tries to explain to the American the contrasts in culture, languages and mannerisms. Changez is bound to feel at odds and out of place for the demands of the American society. And this feeling of odds with America is what leads to his premature repulsion of the Western society. As Changez says:

“Yes, we have acquired a certain familiarity with the recent history of our surroundings, and that ---in my humble opinion---allows us to put the present into much better perspective” (Hamid: 45).

Hamid in this novel even tries to persuade the American people by his further explanation, that it is this knowledge of recent history, the history that has been truly witnessed, and the history

that is authenticated by both sides; which would give a clear understanding to both sides of what circumstances have led to further events. People on both sides of the frontier which divides the East from the West have a feeling of being out of sorts from the recent history, because they are fed on propaganda and publicity from powerful media networks rather than reality. The pursuit of reality and truth demands strong urge and determination on the part of individuals, and not belligerence and un-mindful approach. But power and nationality are such blockades on thinking minds that they rot the hearts and minds; concealing the truth.

Changez proceeds to tell the American about his first business trip to the Philippines and the experience of traveling first class makes a big impression on him. He is astounded to find that Manila is richer than Pakistan. This realization motivates Changez to act more like an American. He starts to cut to the front of the line and make urgent demands. In Manila, he witnesses the rising glittering skyscrapers and walled enclaves besides vast districts of dirty slums. In Manila, the levels of comparison of economy hit his thoughts as he says he felt like being from a nation which is 'leader

of laggards’, way behind Eastern nation of Philippines. It did trouble Changez as it troubles any Eastern citizen from a poor country, when his country is set to comparison in terms of GDP and HDI indexes and feels his country is left out. In this light, Changez is described to be an auditor who is shaping his future through his credentials. He determines the complex financial model, indirectly deciding the fate of the firm, its employees and its growth and development. There he seems to be comparing himself with the gigantic policy shapers of this world that rest in America, who are empowered to decide the fate of the weaker countries, their economies, their manner of activities and indirectly shaping life of every individual in these regions. Changez once riding in an American Jeepney in Manila is stared at by the driver of a jeep, one he is to describe as:

“There was an undisguised hostility in his expression; I had no idea why---But his dislike was so obvious, so intimate, that it got under my skin----Then one of my colleagues asked me a question---I looked at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work---and thought, you are so foreign. I

felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I thought I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside” (Hamid:66-67).

Hamid does not believe fundamentalism to be originating from the problems of governance and state of economy of nation but from the larger context of being made to be left out. Interestingly, Changez talks about fundamentalism to be a necessity of an individual in Eastern world where the overriding powers of money and buying more powers from it has become a means to control. It has become a battle of existence, where hatred for fair skin and light eyes which control 90% of the world wealth is natural. And Changez in Manila had to feel a part of the larger group who lived on a miniscule meal and money a day, who like Philippines’ was not a fair skinned Westerner, Changez saw shame in his actions that were making the existing structure much stronger, in which he was only playing a cameo with no real and significant returns to his belly; which he describes at other point of short messages that he received from Erica from New York as enough to lift his spirits. Because Changez says:

“So we learned to savor the denial of gratification---the most un-American of pleasures!” (Hamid: 69).

But fundamentalism to him is a result from scarcity which requires attending to basics; just like a hunter who might himself become a hunt has to camouflage in requirement of his environment. Beard and burqa as a symbol may not be the fundamentals of a religion but it becomes a basic necessity in disguising self from the rest. While on the other hand, fundamentals of efficiency to Jim are very important. He explains his absence of belonging to the elite despite being on their side, and says:

“I grew on the other side. For half the life, I was outside the candy store looking in, kid” (Hamid: 71).

Changez relates the same positions of American poor who might have an opportunity and caliber to grow and move on other side, the side of elites. The sense of longing that exists in the Pakistani setup as explained by Changez turns to nostalgia. And with it is associated the nostalgia of return to class, wealth, squabbles over inheritances and famine accompanied with suicides.

Extremism breeds from this powerful nostalgia. But where it stops is not what is important but where it ends. Each extremist action ends with the loss of lives.

Changez literally presents the dreadful story of his reluctance to feel outside, camouflage himself and become a hunter from being a hunt; what the other calls a fundamentalist. And it is when Changez is in Manila that the event of 9/11 occurs. While he is in a Manila hotel, he sees the Twin Towers fall and that event is described as:

“I stared as one-----and then the other-----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:72).

9/11 changed everything. It may have been a symbolic attack to bring the America to her knees. But it was equally a slaughter of thousands of innocents. While it brought America to rest, hurting its pride and heating its temper; it initially brought smiles on the faces of those who envy the American power to govern the world. Americans turned hostile and their use of diplomatic, financial

power turned to military fist power. America turned to war with the East. But something which America did not realize that this war was already on when Americans had put an economic, political hold on many countries while at the same time pursuing its geopolitical ambitions of controlling gulf oil, launching a strike on Iraq and fundamentalist Afghanistan. Americans had put their hands into mud many a times and always thinking to be far enough to take back the splashes.

Changez returns to America, where he is met with more suspicion, and more hostility. 9/11 did change one thing. The American public feared and was happy over America taking other enemy nations for a task. Changez would describe something interesting to the America when he asks it:

“But you are at war, you say? Yes, you have a point. I was not at war with America---So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? I did not know, then.” (Hamid: 73).

But, probably he knew the answer but had not thought over it. He had not totally seen the other side of the America which was equally cruel, immoral, unstructured in response to world poverty

and hostile racially. Changez was by no means a sociopath and recognized the suffering of loss of lives; besides being more charitable. And that is the story of most Eastern societies, where the largest donations in charity are made, where many organizations and people are at the fore-front of service. The American response was to dub all Easterners as suspects; from airports to restaurants to hotels, every one became a potential terrorist. All of a sudden Changez felt guilty, partly because he seemed to be pleased at seeing America kneel and partly because he was now all of a sudden one among that society who are accused of the attacks. But at the same time he went out with Erica to high class society. Long beards were surely of the terrorists.

“If you are not yet ready to reveal your purpose in travelling here---your demeanor all but precludes that possibility that you are a tourist wandering aimlessly through this part of the world---then I will not insist”
(Hamid: 77).

Erica too never published her novel, her story and so was the response of America never speaking about its tragedy but rather insisting on jingoism, nationalism and war. Changez still wants to

know the purpose of American occupation of Afghanistan and many other countries and the suspicious movement of Americans in Pakistan. The suspicions are ominous and even a tourist, a social worker, and a scientist is a suspicious figure but what is significant is that there is no one to suggest surely the purpose of American visitors to Pakistan.

The event of 9/11 had a cultural, ethnic and religious significance. The response of Changez was uncharitable and inhuman to killings in World Trade Center when he was in Manila, but the flowers for the dead back in New York reminded him of criticism he was faced with for such a cold reaction. America was feeling a complete sense of loss. It was aghast and wondered how the lesser mortals could dare to do what they have done to America. As Changez has it:

“We are America-the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath”

(Hamid: 79).

The result of 9/11 was the death of countless humans elsewhere. American nationalism grew at deaths, the response it

presented made the East and the Muslims find themselves under a 'Quami' one league;and stick to their identities and basics as strengths of religion to counter the fear of war. But the social status that Changez found as a wealthy lad with a girlfriend from a good social class made him look down the barrel many a times; he thought it was inevitable for him to act like the rich worthy class of America. However, the dilemma of love for Erica was enough to fill Changez with desire but his protectiveness for her made him care for her. Changez illustrates a smooth comparison to what America felt after attacks. He saw Erica lost, distant, and spacing out, struggling against a current that pulled her deep within herself, and her smile containing the fear that she might slip into her own depths, where she would be trapped, unable to breathe. The destruction of world trade center had churned up the same thoughts, the fear, the awe, the distancing of America, the spread of nationalism, the slipping into wars where America would be trapped. Love for Erica was the only reason for Changez for wanting to disbelieve the crumbling of world around him. But as

his love-making with Erica ended in a disaster, so was he witnessing the impending disaster of his personal life:

“America was gripped by a growing and self-righteous rage in those weeks of September and October---the mighty host I had expected of your country was duly raised and dispatched---Pakistan had pledged its support to the United States” (Hamid: 94).

And he heard rumors say:

“Pakistani cab-drivers 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” (Hamid: 94).

Besides, the economy set to depression and unemployment became common in America. Even company assignments received were meant to value the cuts that companies could make, call centers were outsourced, truck rolls reduced and company employees were being curtailed. Changez was received with hostility by the clients because of his profession as an auditor evaluating companies. Jim, the company human resource manager for Samson Underwood once explained to Changez that this bad

time over America would pass by and that it is change that is required to boost economy. Changez too felt that power comes from becoming change but within his mind he realized that the country he came from was condemned to atrophy, to disgust and to mutation. Change with no limbs works on disheartened Changez as it does to numerous people in East who see America harboring the policy of controlling the Eastern economies and letting the worth of these nations be decided by their powerful brains.

The war brought about fears and more propaganda to the forefront on both sides. The war in Afghanistan post 9/11 was a start of an unequal war between 21st century weapons to counter the ill-equipped tribesmen of Afghanistan, with machines becoming heroes. Such a war to Changez where he saw his neighbors, his fellow Muslims being massacred, being invaded over made him angry. He no longer could pretend to deceive himself. His inner soul was waking up, he no longer saw anything pleasing in American dream, and he suddenly became a destitute in his own eyes. He thought of his country lacking in wealth and power but struggling hard; as it had in past with its rich history. A

reassuring counter argument is put by Hamid regarding the pain the Muslims felt of their own brethren being slaughtered; radicalism by no means being the goal that people from these nations perceive as their career but they too see their glory in constructive growth of the world. The East was rich but the Western eye has stolen that color and tarnished its image. Hamid here sees Changez slipping away from American dream and building a radical thought about the face of America. His lines about holding Erica as she was slipping into trauma are complimentary to his relation with America as he says:

“Indeed I wanted to hold onto us---but I did not know how to proceed” (Hamid: 104).

Even in Changez’s lovemaking with Erica, he had to pretend as her boyfriend who had died. This was the same pretense he was adapting to in his dreams about America. His satiation was accompanied with shame. It was a humiliation wherein he had turned to being an American model in pursuit of satisfaction of his dreams; where he had to lose his identity, his nature, his culture and his belief. There was repetition of ‘with us or against us’ that

America called out to nations. It was brief but eloquent, just like with Erica, when her mother treating Changez coldly told him to avoid her, as she needed a friend to guide her and not a boy-friend. The cold-warm attitude offered by America, dilly-dallying and tit for tat attitude was present after 9/11. It dubbed few as ‘axis of evils’ and sought a civilizational paradigm shift on a pretext of clash of titans rather than civilizations. Changez’s tragedy of saying good-bye to American dream with its final blow coming from Erica:

“I watched our skin---mine healthy and brown, hers sickly white---separated by a distance not greater than the width of an engagement ring, but she did not notice me. I waited for proximity to make itself felt to her---Then she removed her hand from where it lay and without ever looking in my direction---covered it with her other hand on her lap”

(Hamid: 112).

As with Erica, America turned into nostalgia, Changez too turned into reciprocal nostalgia. This criticism of America is hampering a war on the basis of propaganda and nostalgia and hurt in love for American dreams had some hopes attached to it. But

America was by everyday distancing itself; killing more people, invading more territories and perceiving its agenda of hatred even more rigorously. An ambience of duty and honor made America look back, longing something from past to present. And this was unclear to Changez as to what America wanted from this dreadful battle it was building in this modern era. Probably America wanted to display heroism, its moral authority to rule the world by aggressive dominance rather than a cold lukewarm response. And was it just the hurt that America felt that made them don costumes of war or was it all fictitious and animated. Once Changez did become a target of attack due to color of his skin whereby he looked like an Arab. He was attacked by a group; his temper too shot up and took an opportunity to counter the American. Changez started to be preoccupied, unsettled, transgressing to his internal conflicts. The potential of an India-Pakistan war at large at the same time also made him averse to suggesting the continuation of his stay in America and he headed back home in December after 9/11. Changez wanted to stay back in Pakistan, become part of those suffering, but he partly had still a part of his American dream

left in him and partly because his family did not want him to. He did not shave and grew a beard, the same beard which would become a symbol of hatred. Changez describes his motivations thus for donning a beard:

“It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind---I was deeply angry”
(Hamid:130).

The 9/11 had built anger and in the aftermath of 9/11; anger had escalated the sense of revolt against the Americans, displaying the face of determination that prompted Changez to take to this path. With time the American war disturbed him further and he took recourse to reading about politics and concentrating on American hegemony. The legitimization of wars on weaker nations and its consequences had a crippling effect on him. And likewise most people began to hate America and wish for its doom. Meanwhile Erica had to go to a rehab center and when Changez visited her, she thanked him for the love-making and everything that he had pretended but in an uncharacteristic sense explained what America says so often:

“You helped me. You were kind and true, and I am grateful” (Hamid:135).

Any hope left in Changez was squeezed and he saw American dream collapsing in that moment. He saw his energies to build the American system, his intellect, his love, everything being just like he was being robbed of his own identity, his own wealth.

As Changez set out to Chile, in Santiago he worked on a publishing company; he saw himself thinking about the potential of India launching a strike on Pakistan. The grievance he had with America then was:

“Surely, with American bases already established in Pakistan for the conduct of Afghanistan campaign, all America would have to do would be to inform India that an attack on Pakistan would be treated as an attack on an American ally and would be responded with an overwhelming force of America’s military” (Hamid: 143).

Changez says that America was maintaining neutrality between the two, favoring the larger combatant, the more belligerent India. This maintenance of neutrality, defining internal matter of Pakistan with India and America being an ally of one and

a friend of another; and then maintaining silence is tantamount to acting as a facilitator of such a war. Taking position of Pakistan's help to tame Afghans and indirectly supporting India in its war was like building two fronts of attack on Pakistan. It was a diplomatic tactic to win over Pakistan and no friend would do that. He could no longer work, concentrate, was dazzled and rendered immobile. Changez takes an infictive journey, and telling the American about his ineffective love with Erica:

“I lacked a stable core---when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her---because my own identity was so fragile” (Hamid: 148).

Americans are ambitious and so are many nations. But the degree of perseverance on the goal is ruthlessly standardized. Pakistani or many such Muslim nations are never recognized because they are seen as failed as nations, as people with no system to their life, to their governance and to their nationalism which is hindered by corruption. And for Changez's change to come back, Jaun Batista, the publishing companies head which was being valued, told him:

“Does it trouble you to make your living by disrupting the lives of others?” (Hamid: 151).

And, then explaining to him by the example of the Janissaries who were Christian boys caught by Ottomans, were as utterly loyal and ferocious to Ottomans that they fought to erase their own civilization. Changez saw himself to be same Janissary, the servant of America. Hard lines for America whether they see that they are disrupting the lives of others, why they are seen as enemies around the world, and he left the Company.

9/11 did tell one thing beautifully to the Empire of America as it told them:

“Thank you---for helping me to push back the veil behind which all this had been concealed!” (Hamid: 157).

It opened all that was known but not testified by America. It brought the real picture of America, its ambitions, its hostility, its loneliness, its power and hatred, it was a shark that wanted to occupy and achieve all the power and let no one benefit. It worked on policy of *live and let not live*. Even though all this had been recognized by Changez, he was in doubt and regret, as though he

had broken in love. He was confused but pride of being solid, pride of his country, he let it go; he let America go.

Erica meanwhile ran away and probably committed suicide. It is worth-while to think of America longing for the dead power, was committing suicide by burying more dead in other parts of the world. It was on a self-destructive path and when Changez read the story of Erica in her manuscript finally, he saw:

“I could not locate Erica in the rhythms and sounds of what she had written; it seemed a mistake, offered me no clues--- But I had begun to understand that she had chosen not to be part of my story; her own had proven too compelling, and she was---at that moment and in her own way---following it to its conclusion.” (Hamid: 166-167).

Changez moves in the in between space, a typical space of the Post-colonial writers. This space is characteristic of the modern view of unfulfilled American dreams of money and materialism and disgust in seeing deprivation. Wherefrom, Changez comes to realize that America has no love for Pakistan or for Muslims, for East and for its Empire. America has her own goals and nothing could separate her from her goals; no human suffering, no

destruction, no threat and though anybody could warn them; they would not listen. They are too trapped in their lust for power. The reluctance of leaving the part of the American dream is so much filled in Changez that he says:

“I lost something of myself to her that I was unable to relocate in the city of my birth.” (Hamid: 172).

But interestingly Changez is seeking American people to understand that:

“Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us” (Hamid: 174).

But it is never true as Changez says that ‘we are all one’ and believes it right to construct a wall to shield each other from harm from one another. And it is nice to have a dream to occupy and rule the world but such magnificent and holistic dreams come at a cost, that is the cost of the others. Such dreams fade with accomplishment paving the way for more beautiful dreams of controlling the world. And to rely on them is a grave sin as once Changez thought of capturing Erica from rehab. But he did not take those steps which would harm someone gravely at the cost of his

dreams. An idealistic view though put forward by Changez is actually the truth he is speaking to the American nation. Changez believes that he actually does no longer believe in America and its dreams though he made his own dreams which are a part of American and part of his Pakistani dreams. This is because America, as per Changez uses conflicts to advance its interests, all in line in the disguise of war on terrorism. And all deaths are put as collateral damage. Changez says that he thenceforth, made it a point to launch a mission to disengage from America and while as a university Lecturer in Lahore began to organize students, organizations, and political youth groups to discuss everything related to society, to America, trying to keep aloof from thugs and violent personnel. It is the rage for America filled in Changez, the Pakistani character that busted the foreign news network with these words:

“No country inflicts death so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America” (Hamid: 182).

And then Changez tells the American:

“You should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins” (Hamid: 183).

The suspicion of America remains and so does of the visitor. He still wants to reach out for weapons while Changez wants him to avoid suspicion and reach out for business dealing. But the mystery of relations between America and East and particularly, Muslims is witnessed here to be one of mistrust, one of occupational mentality, one of seeming out-of-bounds and one of fright and failure and this is what the *Reluctant Fundamentalist* writes back to the Empire.

Chapter-3

Terrorist: An Insider's critique

John Updike's novel "Terrorist" converges the imagined views about America and the way it actually behaves. It is set in the backdrop of post 9/11 New Jersey. The novel charts the development of Ahmad, a serious-minded young American Muslim, as he attempts to set himself on a straight path of a true believer. This American high school boy, who is half-Irish and half Egyptian by background is the protagonist in the novel. Besides, there is an elderly Lebanese immigrant; his American born son and a Yemini Imam who is Ahmad's religious teacher. The eleven year

old fatherless son looks beyond the periscope for guidance that he sees evolving from the spiritual guidance at the hands of Sheikh Rashid, the Negro-American Imam. Ahmad engages with the language of the Quran and finds a refined focus.

Ahmad wears stove pipe jeans and laundered white shirts to school every day. He has no friends, disdains the normal characteristics of a teenage life in America and is both fascinated and repulsed by his sexy black classmate, Joryleen Grant. Besides, the relation with Joryleen seems to be hampered by the presence of Joryleen's bullying boyfriend. Generally, Ahmad views the non-Muslims as little more than amoral and reprehensible "devils" who are seeking to take away his God, Allah. It is on the basis of his Imam's suggestion that he opts for vocational track in High School and opts for his goal of becoming a truck driver. He feels that the college would expose him to corrupting influences and bad philosophy and bad literature. Ahmad is driven to devotion of life and the depth of his faith which he considers exceeding to that of his master's, the Imam's, while he is driven into the arms of those who can capitalize on his hunger for paradise. Updike interprets

this hunger initially in psycho-sexual terms familiar to the West. Ahmad is believed by Updike to be one confused struggling adolescent torn by conflict between the desire and repulsion, between faith and life. But the circumstances in the novel are so complex that Ahmad's longing for 'Shahadah' can't be reduced to secular terms of psycho-analysis but have to be seen in the moral and spiritual dimensions of Jihad and a deeper understanding of Islam.

This individual depicted by Updike also turns out to be a robot without inner life. As he grows, he is depicted as an Islamic terrorist, brainwashed and programmed to spout Jihadist clichés, with a mission to self-immolate for no cause, willing to die and kill for a technical term 'Jihad'. The only reason Updike gives for this attitude of a terrorist is the absence of his father, a flirtatious mother and distorted teachings of Quran by the Imam. This explanation is, however, found inadequate when it is told that Ahmad is a gentle soul, who even visited church and found resemblance between Bible and Quran, but is willing to kill thousands. The Chehab family, where Ahmad finds work as truck

driver, their prospering business and their affiliation to terrorism is not considered suitably either. The rage of Muslim world is not considered in this novel, the US oppression and brutality in Afghanistan and Iraq is not considered in this critique by John Updike.

The setting of this novel is the northern New Jersey, in 21st century, with familiar landscape of marshy land and industrial slough, supporting the decaying remnants of once prospering immigrant energized towns. The town has hard, shiny and artificial life and the dirt and dust of ruined factories. The town is controlled by Jewish dominated federal government, idleness and few city halls. It seems as an opposite model of the 9/11 struck Manhattan, where this valley looks desperate for some change. It is in this town that Ahmad Mulloy who is eighteen years old, studies in a high school where he sees the girls, boys and teachers as nothing else but infidels who are destined on the path of hell fires. He sees his teachers as disorderly with a nasty life and pursuing materialistic world. He sees them deluded by sex and society. Ahmad sees science to be explaining both hell and heaven and the

life on this earth as well. It is this faith that he has developed since he was eleven when he went to Imam, Sheikh Rashid in a local mosque. The life to him is nothing but a gift of God and everything has to go back to where it came from.

But the characteristic of Ahmad's faith is explained by Updike to be greater than that of his Imam, who he likes for his hold on Arabic knowledge but dislikes his interpretations. Sheikh Rashid constantly puts a fear of hell-fire in the minds of his pupil. But the Imam is also fearful of the faith and strong feelings of Ahmad reflected through his questioning. It is in this setting of contrasting school and mosque atmosphere that the sexy, modern, playful and caring black girl, Joryleen is described, who is little miss popular in the school. Ahmad is attracted to Joryleen but his belief confuses and contrasts his thoughts. He even visits the church to hear her sing the solo choir on her invitation. Initially repelling the devilish thought of visiting the church, on Joryleen's annoyance he reluctantly goes to church even though he sees discomfort in it. But the bullying boyfriend Tylenol of Joryleen

subsidies the desirous thoughts of Ahmad by attacking him and his religion.

Although Ahmad's mother, Teresa Mulloy who is a nurse at Saint Francis community hospital is supportive of him but hardly has time and energy to look into what he is striving for. Ahmad in desperation seeks the help of a school guidance counselor, Jack Levy who is a Jew, for his future career even though he knows that true guidance can only be provided in the path of Allah. It is at this point that a confrontational view is expressed by Updike in his novel relating to the mind of a terrorist and of the normal American citizen. Jack Levy who is sought to explain the normal mind of US citizen is also a lonely person with wife Beth and only death to wait for. His son Mark lives and works in New Mexico. This life is recalled as similar to those of Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon and Hitler.

“even the greatest men came to nothing, to a grave, their visions unfulfilled-Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon, the unspeakable but considerably successful and still, at least in the Arab world, admired Adolf Hitler”(Updike 2006: 20).

He daily watches and hears news of death and destruction. Although, Jack has lived a life of a non-practicing Jew since his marriage with Beth, and is troubled with rising housing costs, dwindling peace and prosperity, falling economy and reduced freedom with each terrorist attack yet the life itself has become corrupt and materialistic; he still seems to move on. Jack can't sleep the nights while his wife advises him to visit a psychiatrist.

On the other hand, Ahmad is lonely in many ways and keeps on changing subjects based on distaste for American culture, 'their Godless things', 'bad philosophy' and 'bad literature'. His disappointment is for Americanism and believes only in God, who is his Patron and Helper. His vision is pictured as he says:

"I, of course, do not hate all Americans. But the American way is the way of Infidels. It is headed for a terrible doom"
(Updike: 36).

He is disappointed with his flirtatious, Godless mother; besides his living on money earned by his mother nursing is both painful and disrespectful for him. His life is on edge of either continuing his studies by joining a good college or working. He

can't even think of joining army where he might have to do what is described by Updike:

“The army would send me to fight my brothers”

(Updike:38)

His guide, the Imam has advised him to drive a truck for his well-wishers. It is the fundamentalist religious teachings that Updike focuses on in describing attributes assigned to Ahmad. The belief of Updike that society is plagued with challenges which have become more complex, while the deprivation on one side has been used by Jews to their advantage; Muslims have sought reprieve in faith and challenged the change. This he seems to claim is the reason for origination of terrorism.

This terrorism as explained by Updike has created more depression, deprivation, disruption and little less death and destruction. Economy has suffered. All this has been what Hermione Fogel, the undersecretary based in Pennsylvania says:

“They hate light...like cockroaches, like bats. The light shone in darkness...and the darkness comprehended it not”

(Updike: 46).

It is unclear where this light lies, whether in Christian disbelief or in their materialistic maneuvers. However, the author tries to show that Christians also believe, it is just that the proportioning of faith cannot be done in the same balance. Even though, when Ahmad, in a particular setting visits the church, he visualizes it as a theatre where God is an entertainer, who has depictions and where sexes intermingle and mannerisms are put to rest. He finds truth and faith in the speech of the church preacher, who dictates the story of Moses not being allowed in the Promised Land along with the children of Israel because of the lack of faith within Israelites. Updike sees in Ahmad potentially a good Muslim while other characters mock his faith. To him, faith is in practice and practice is sacred. It is on the basis of this valuation of Americans that Updike divides them into rich and poor, in terms of racial differences and how strongly they come to believe and value those differences in them. He criticizes the same Americans not to be valuing the differences that exist between Islam and Christianity in faith and its practice. It is this faith that the Americans lack and the terrorism may be like the plague on the people as avenge from

God as it was for Israelites in the story of Moses. This perception of Updike is in-effect a criticism of the American society in shaping away from God and moving towards Godless things but it is not clear in the novel as to what holds the Americans back from not following the God of truth, the Bible and what makes the Muslim Ahmad hate the Americans when their God is the same as one that punished the children of Israel for their sins. As the Preacher reads from the Bible in the Church:

“I can’t stand this people...how long shall I bear with this evil congregation” and then says “you lacked the faith...faith in the power of Lord Almighty” (Updike: 54-55).

Joryleen says to Ahmad:

“In whose eyes? I mean, who’s doing this valuing?”(Updike: 68).

Updike is silent on whose eyes, whether Islam or Christianity, whether East or West should be evaluating. But it is recognized by him when he says from words of Ahmad:

“purity is its own end. As we were discussing, it is both being good and feeling good” (Updike: 69).

He claims purity is its own virtue. Faith is in austerity, not materialism and consumerism. It is not to hate the body and life but not to be its slave either. Americans have such a family value that

“even parents conspire in this, welcoming signs of independence from the child and laughing at disobedience. There is not that bonding love which the Prophet (SAW) expressed for his daughter Fatimah (RA); Fatimah is a part of my body; whoever hurts her has hurt me and whoever hurts me has hurt God”. (Updike: 165-166).

The faith in virtue as described by Ahmad is to bear and strive while Christian West proclaims faith is to sin but to believe that God is kind to bear. Updike has described that Muslim faith is the root of their fundamentalism while he describes Imam’s quoting Ahmad from Quran:

“let not the infidels deem that the length of days we give them is good for them; we only give them the length of days that they may increase their sins! And a shameful chastisement shall be their lot”-Quran-3 (Updike:74).

And the Imam would describe these infidels as cockroaches who come out of the sink and are forms of Satan. The faith in itself

becomes Updike's reason for insider's fear and leaves no scope for negotiation unless Muslims don't lose this part of their faith or the Christian West does not agree to bear the part of their sins unlike Israelites or does not wish to live the life on some purpose. It is Ahmad's mother answering Jack Levy on faith considering belief to live on a purpose, a matter of attitude. And this faith and its soundness are described by Updike in positive terms in the two socially different cultures.

Updike is clear that hatred is evident in insecurity, the color of the skin and the distinctness in culture is evident in clothing. To Updike, this difference is significant in separating the two worlds; it is the rustiness, crudeness, rudeness and reckless grammar of English which falls distinct from the rhythmical, partly comprehensible Arabic. Quran thereby is half understandable and probably this is the reason for not comprehending the belief of Muslims by the Christian West.

It is the negative literature printed from the West that becomes what Updike feels, the feed for breeding terrorists. Terrorism, thus to America is a sense of fear imbibed by all forms

of mute attacks by the West on the Muslim society. To Updike terrorism has had a psychological effect on Americans in terms of insecurity and the fear of the imminent dangers from ports, cyber-wars, and potential biological and chemical attacks. This has created an over-reactive America and to add to it the media sensationalism, the exaggerated view of a dangerous East, especially middle-East and more precisely Muslims with beard have become devils for them.

American anger as described by Updike in his novel is also a result of the thought process which has fed on capitalism, free enterprise, competition, cleverness and has failed to be any longer a society of decency. This society has prowled on doggy competition to keep alive and growing. It oppresses the smaller nations, keeping thousands in jails and undertakes worst human rights abuses. The influx of labor from India, Mexico, and China in America has created insecurity but the middle-East which contributes in capital is treated as an adversary for their wealth and luxury. Updike informs Americans that Western nations that support the middle-East governments are the same that depose off

these nations as corrupt, un-civilized and medieval in thought. They are the same who launch war on this terror and in turn lead to terror. It is on these points Updike bases his insider's view of terrorism, the two sides of the coin that he tries to present.

It is at this point that Updike turns from giving an insider's critique to being a modulator as any American think-tank would be or any common American would like to do. He seems to suggest how the terrorist can be handled by encouraging two schemes, one by challenging the confidence of the faithful Muslim by striking his faith and the other by making him believe that insects are too small and as God's beautiful creatures they cannot be compared to 'Kafirs', and thus, refute the interpretation of Quranic teachings. By striking their faith, Updike meant giving Muslims a sexual freedom. This leads to complete indecency and the family values fall as rubbish, the virtue of women which is utmost in Islam with regard to husband, father, sons, brothers and which is compared to the chastity of 'houris' (angels) in Paradise will also crumble down. The shaking of this virtue is shaking of the Islamic faith. This is used by American media, by simple commercials to spread

the message of indecency and brain wash the young minds and make the old to think young. This momentous shaking of faith is categorized in terms of Ahmad's truck owner Charlie Chehab who considers that nothing in the West is free from devilish ways, even sports has become a money game. Updike criticizes the lack of understanding in American parents, in American social scientists, in religious teachers, in political masters for propagating black and white categories while America is so complex that it can't offer answers to its own problems. Updike feels that these are the only answers he can give to such complex problems. As he says that Jack is sympathetic to his wife Beth as he is to Ahmad. "Pre-occupied" Jack feels about Beth and Ahmad likewise. But his physiological wants take him into an intimate relation with Ahmad's mother, the genesis of which is use and throw; the genesis of a normal American citizen and that of the setup.

On the other hand, distantly connected to his own world, Ahmad, who delivers furniture in his truck, is set to become an agent for Jihad while counter forces are also acting against it. Charlie who is an agent of so-called global terrorism, from a

Lebanese Chehab family becomes Ahmad's trucker colleague. He has affection for George Washington, is a radical American Muslim and totally anti-West. His hate is political based on wars and tends to find no link with the religious thoughts of Ahmad. Ahmad's search for Paradise and belief in God is unequivocal. His hate for America is a path to Paradise.

"Only the unbelievers fear death absolutely" (Updike: 183).

At other point Ahmad says:

"Mohammad (SAW) is Allah's apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers" (Updike: 180).

Besides, Ahmad's confidence in God is illustrated in depth as he says:

"I have a God to whom I turn five times a day. My heart needs no other companion. The obsession with sex confesses the infidels' emptiness, and their terror" (Updike:211).

For Ahmad, Charlie is a stubborn, robust guy whose hate is for material reasons, and believes on a tit for tat. He tells Ahmad:

“The Western powers steal our oil, they take our land...”

(Updike: 185).

Ahmad’s sincerity to God is being used by few individuals. And these individuals use his religious doctrine to pursue their cause. He does not know till he sees what he was delivering in one of the assignments. Updike may be separating religion from terrorism but tends to find a connection as well.

Charlie strikes Ahmad’s faith by making arrangement for Ahmad with Joryleen and in turn confusing him in his faith. As his confidence is lost, Charlie and the group feel that he in disgust and in order to prove to God that he is a true believer would end up doing a terror act. It appears a distortion of Quranic teachings when Ahmad is believed to think that this was a commandment from God which would be followed with ease, or it is being projected to Ahmad that this world is a mirage and the thirsty finds nothing in it. Rather, the path to Paradise is projected as instantaneous Shahadah which will also put an end to the miseries of this world. Ahmad’s loneliness, his hope of trance to other world through Shahadah, his belief in solitary Guide, his Lord, is what Updike

says leads him to take the suicide mission in a truck in Lincoln tunnel. His hope for purity is also regenerated.

“Tell me, dear Ahmad, are you afraid of entering into Paradise” (Updike: 106).

But that is compared with:

“Manhattan a single gleaming mass, speedboats purring and ...This beauty, Ahmad thinks, must mean something-a hint from Allah, a foreshadow of Paradise” (Updike:185).

It is at the last moment that Ahmad does not press the button on detonator while Jack Levy in undesirable circumstances is at his side in the truck. This last moment retrieve is a product of complex human behavior that Updike has tried to highlight. He has given a message to both Americans and Eastern Muslims in it. For some Muslims, it is heroic to be like Osama bin Laden and hate their governments who seem puppets of America while for Americans the war on the global terror villains is heroic battle. This dance of death is played on streets everywhere and only those who lose their lives become tools in a large nexus of money, corruption, smuggling, power and greed. And this is found on both sides, one

to retain the hold on the 'other' and other too free from them. A boy who is seen to be so innocent not able to even kill a beetle may become to America an icon of Taliban, an icon of oppression on women, of uncivilized culture and of religious intolerance. For America, such terrorists, their sense is unimaginable, their thoughts and language are unrecognizable. Ahmad's loss of confidence in faith is depicted by Updike in multiple stages, he feels to waver and has water in eyes the night he is going to attack. He even questions his faith as adolescent vanity or just a distinction from the infidels and his co-patriot Muslims that he wanted to establish. His faith is further slumped with the breaking of the plot, with the capture or the killing of Charlie and others and he feels the thirst for worldly aims like Joryleen more than that for Paradise at that time. He sees himself a lone warrior of God to blow a raging fire onto infidels while he drives the truck, but the words of Levy who boards his truck on way of carrying out the mission gradually weakens him. Ahmad is caught in a quagmire of emotions, between meeting God in Paradise and pulling back into this life. He stands for his mission till the last moment but the smiling

children in the car who to him are innocent creatures as those insects he desists to kill, the unending tale of death being in the hands of God alone reminds him of his deed. He cannot stand to kill his teacher Jack Levy as well. He just moves on without pressing the button in the detonator.

The story of terrorist is a story of sympathy with the religion of Islam and Ahmad, the sympathetic Islamist, the lone warrior who is misled into the war of ego, cultures and civilizations, haves and have-nots and becomes a potent weapon for Updike to project. Ahmad who is not enrolled as a listed religious bomber is not a potential threat to Americans but it is the radicalized thoughts in him that are exploited. Although American culture is criticized in a painful and eloquent language through the shift in Ahmad's action at the end, the message to America is clear that they cannot treat the lesser nations of East and Muslims as insects that they can step over, because that amounts to cruelty. Moreover, terrorism is reflected not as an Islamic bomb but a reflection of the American cruelty. It is however, a clear message to Americans that they have waged a war on Allah by repeating acts of deliberate and un-

deliberate aggression to Islamic God, by abstaining from any form of spiritual faith, by feeding impurity to their society, by being materialistic and manipulative and subjecting Islam to a level of a third grade religion. Freeing Islam from terrorism is a contribution of Updike, but equating Islam with radicalization which is silently dangerous is an exaggeration. Understanding Islam through the prism of Quran and misinterpretation of Quranic language is solemn excuse for Updike to understand this radicalization. However, it is important to argue that Islamic society of peace and tranquility as in early Islamic history also needed to be presented to highlight that Islam the cornerstone of Islam like equality, Justice, fraternity and liberty combined with values, virtues, rules and duties. Updike's selective Islamic learning of Quranic interpretations can hardly be an epitome of his success in achieving a true criticism and true appreciation of the thoughts on Islamic world.

Chapter-4

The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Terrorist:

A comparative Analysis

Post-9/11, the post-colonial and neo-orientalist literature that has been written, lacks the broader study of religious, social, cultural and political struggles associated with the contemporary world. However, both '*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*' and '*Terrorist*' by Mohsin Hamid and John Updike respectively, are intriguing novels and portray the resurgence of these associations. These two writers explain the base of the novels from two different locations, Mohsin Hamid in a traditionalistic, religious, male-

dominated and closely-knit society of Pakistan while John Updike roots his novel in the modern, secular, atheistic Christian, mainstream and loose society of America.

While both authors revolve around the event of 9/11 with the fall of the Twin Towers, but as Hamid sees a transformation in the event, Updike is caught in the web of post 9/11 American fears about terrorism. Both however, explore how Americans grapple with fear arising out of cataclysmic events of 9/11. While *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a monologue, the *Terrorist* has multiplicity of voices. The characters in the two novels are astonishingly different; one is a home grown disillusioned and derecognized youth while the other is a sub-continental, Asian, Muslim youth, a powerful character reluctant in love and reluctant in hate. The Updike's *Terrorist* is marked with the central theme of a struggle of a reluctant terrorist, whose reluctance is in his vision of God and his love for peace. Although this novel also seems to be caught in the projection of a semi-secularist humane character of Jack Levy. The theme of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* revolves

around a reluctant struggle for basics and is far off removed from the transition to a terrorist.

The approaches are distinct in the two novels. Updike says regarding American society:

“devils...A few steps from death, these American elders defy decorum and dress as toddler” (Updike: 188).

Or he says:

“They think they are doing pretty good, with some flashy trashy new outfit...It makes you wonder if people deserve to live seriously...” (Updike: 134).

Then he goes on to say:

“God Himself is simple, and employs simple men to shape the World”(Updike: 247).

Characteristically he shifts from dress to religion, to God and to infuse the mind of Terrorist to act. Hamid approaches his novel as he says regarding Erica or probably America:

“She was struggling against a current that brought her inside herself” (Hamid: 86).

Then he says:

“It comes from feeling out of place.....I responded to the gravity of an invisible moon at my core, and I undertook journeys I had not expected to take” (Hamid: 172)

Feeling dejected, he says:

“She attracted people to her, she had presence, an uncommon magnetism.....The ruins claim the building was beautiful” (Hamid: 22).

Mohsin Hamid approaches his novel from dreams, from love, to dejection, to rejection and finally to feel hard. The characters are juxtaposed in the two novels and for Updike, the teenager boy Ahmad is a totally serious minded individual with hardly any interest in life and has a constant guidance from an Imam. For Mohsin Hamid, the highly educated, corporate executive Changez is a zealous and lively character. He approaches life in careful manner and in a state of maturity. The character of Ahmad is a stereotype one and of Changez is a powerful one, all the time interrogating those stereotypes. Ahmad feeds on Islamic knowledge and hate of the other, his visionary thoughts lead him on to journey to Paradise. He reconciles his faith in his everyday life and seemingly takes serenity in destruction of Western infidels.

He takes recourse to religion in matters of death and destruction, the visualization of Paradise. It is the loyalty for his religion of Islam, coupled with his instincts of loneliness, he sets on the course on destroying America by bombarding the Truck laden with explosives on the anniversary of 9/11, to convey a message of non-reconciliation and induce anger and fear in Americans. However, in a fleeting moment he undergoes transformation. His transformation is a generalized inner struggle towards striving as per the will of the Allah and gradually the realization dawns on him that killing is not a holy mission and Americans are nice people but without God. His generosity of spirit is evident when he spares even insects and his belief is evident when he gives up removing the infidels. Changez on the other hand is uncharacteristic in his beliefs and crazy about dreams. But he wants to see the dreams within him in his own life, within his own society and in his own foundation. Changez feeds on American fundamentals of efficiency and wants to bring some of those corporate and systematized ideas within his life. In Pakistan he wants to see a part of America damaged, not in his world but the world of hate as he feels neglect

for the love of the lover. As he strives to change the setup and bring a world where power rests in the hands of the East, he launches a peaceful campaign, to enlighten the West of its negligence. Though, Changez's trajectory of fundamentals is not confused unlike Ahmad's, it is a result of series of events that take him to a state of Paranoia. He challenges his loyalties, his wits make him to take to arguments about his kinships and cultures and the financial conditions. Changez is reluctant in moving towards fundamentalism of confrontation.

The situation of mistrust, the distressing lives and the propaganda of hate has led to an international landscape which is rebellious and confrontational. Both these novels are an exploration of these areas of strains between the contemporary East and West, and in the ethnic profiling and divisions. Both the novels focus on the American society, its culture, its morality, its materialism and its terrorism. Both hardly find any space to club the society of East within their novels and are in turn framing a thought process of defining America to Americans, but in different atmospheres and from different approaches. The distinction is visible in the two

novels in terms of criticism; one is an inapt criticizer and a lover. The other is a healthy inside advisor who feeds on criticism. Both the approaches lead to tranquility in the readers.

While for Hamid, dreams are irrevocable paths to development and to socialize; for John Updike, humanity is to live, to let live and to hang out. The two novels also seem concerned about dress and the level of acceptance; while for Hamid, Changez can't think about the bare bodies in Lahore and feel any level of acceptance for that, and for beard in New York; John Updike seems interested in sharing thoughts on Ahmad's neatly dressed pant shirt in effect being hitherto, distinguishable in the American set up. On matters of faith, the resonance of the novels is opposite. Changez is not faithful but patriotic, Ahmad is of stubborn faith and hardly politically motivated. While for John Updike, materialism has propagated nothing but insecurity in the West, Hamid is a seeker of that materialism in East in congruence to the West.

Both these protagonist are portrayed to be multi-culturalistic and secular towards the climax of the novels. They adopt non-

violence as a weapon of resistance. However, secularist identities are not enlarged but reposted from the idea of clash of civilizations. It is an endeavor of both the writers to find a practical and peaceful solution to the distinct identities in their own domains. It is a deposition by the two authors to put every part of society, that is class, caste, religion, gender, and language in their own places and encourage dialogue to sort out the genesis of the distrust.

Both John Updike and Mohsin Hamid are humanists in the end as they emphasize the value of freedom and respect of the 'other'. This is acknowledged by the both writers as they state the worth of living rather than vanishing. They also emphasize that the West is a ready made target of bombing when it can't introspect and recognize its own pit falls. Both challenge the status quo, the un-employment, the in-equality, the illegitimate system of greed and corruption. Both however, emphasize to East to conserve the positive values, the ethos and arguments, and to the West they ask to introspect and de hegemonize by shunning the policy of global domination and the grand notions of epistemic and cultural sovereignty over the East.

Conclusion

The literary responses to 9/11 have been varied and complex. The novels written in response to 9/11 have broadly concentrated on the themes of terrorism and the propagation of extremism. However all the responses to 9/11 are tarnished by the Huntington's book, *Clash of Civilization* and pseudo-Islamic scholarships. As Don de Lillo in 'Falling man' (2007) portrays the symbolic nature of extremist violence, one that is evident from the mass-media. Joseph O' Neill in 'Netherland' (2009) portrays the sub-alternative of terrorism which is family love, an American

dream that is coupled with nostalgia. This vast literature based on these concepts has led to global feeling of insecurity, propaganda and feeling of hate. But the literary responses point to the long term psychological understanding of the effects of terrorism on families, communities and on the nations. None of the literary responses to 9/11 have been infusing thoughts of Eastern admonition to the West. However, the East-West violent encounter since 9/11 is broadly projected as based on extremist, fundamentalist and terrorist representation of the 'other'. The movement of secular democratization of Middle-East and Islamic world has also been regenerated in the post-9/11 literature.

It is in this background that 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' (2007) and 'Terrorist' (2006) have been studied and analysed. These studies point to the commonality and the distinction from other literatures. The two novels point to the global propaganda about fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism, one from the outside and other from the inside. As has been seen, no other novel is as ethnic and launches as frontal attack on the notion of terrorism as does 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'. The novel examines

American arrogance, their complacency and their exclusivist vision of the world, while interrogating their epistemic and cultural sovereignty. Besides, the richness of the cultural history of the Eastern world particularly of Pakistanis also studied in this novel. The novel has characters and settings transported from Islamic Eastern world to America, highlighting its reluctance to absorb the idea of Islamic fundamentalism as depicted by the West. Moreover, the novel portrays East-West suspicious relations and the ineffectiveness of American dreams in Eastern set-up. The novel also describes the usual American style that of dominant attitude, the way of luxurious living and undue castigation of the 'other'. Besides, this novel describes the glorious history of East to America in the backdrop of the accusations of terrorism and backward culture.

'Terrorist' has the distinction of presenting the self-righteous attitude of Americans. It examines the un-popular cultural base of America through its interiors and explores 'Islamic fundamentalism' as a personal choice as it does not emerge to be a religious doctrine to be followed by one and all. The novel has

characters, plots and settings placed deep within the American world that examine the American fear of terrorism and the wrong policies of America responsible for violent reaction from the East.

It is clear from these selected novels that the so-called Muslim terrorism is due to the in-equality and an adjunct faith that contrasts with the faith of the un-believers. But it is the fundamentals of generosity, of humanity, of equality, of understanding and of knowledge that the West needs to adopt that can prevent the growth of extremism. The novels propose an end to undue suspicious and beginning of unbiased and pleasant mutual interactions based on the recognition and acceptance of the difference of the 'other' that can shift the fault lines of East-West divide. This study concludes that the West in its longing for more power has terrorized and divided the world into spheres of hatred, death and destruction. The fundamental need is to allow the East to be free from western domination and let the ideas flow freely without the interference of West.

As The Holy Quran has it:

“LakumDinakumWalia i-Deen” (Quran 109:6); Meaning--

Unto me my religion, unto you yours.

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