

## Navigating Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Host Location[S] in Post 9/11 Context in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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- Identity
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### Abstract

*This research attempts to explore in detail the issue of identity in contemporary Pakistani-American diasporic fiction. It throws light on how diasporic identity forms and transforms across cultural boundaries, especially in post-9/11 times when almost all South Asian Muslims living in American metropolises were suspects. Moreover, it seeks to appreciate how the phenomena of appropriation, acculturation, displacement, racialization, and alienation supported by the host state apparatus and its institutions affect diasporic mediations. The researchers have critically analyzed the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF) in the light of diasporic mediations between home and host. I use TRF instead of writing the complete name of the novel. This study calls attention to the issues of fragmented identities of the then Pakistani Americans whose lives have been painfully presented in the primary text selected for textual analysis. This reading invokes specific theoretical concepts of Homi K. Bhabha, Gyatri Chakravarty Spivak, and Frantz Fanon, and their critical assumptions serve as a theoretical framework for this exploration. This research finds that the protagonist (Changez) of the selected novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* strongly realizes that he needs to revisit his fancy notions of being Americanized in the backdrop of the 9 /11 upheaval.*

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## 1. Introduction

This research relates to the fantasies and anxieties of diasporic people, with a focus on Pakistani-American fiction in the post-9/11 times. It is argued that they are not only physically displaced but also psychologically unsettled due to spatial and temporal remoteness from their homes and find themselves [t]rapped between the two cultures which are poles apart. They feel rootless and homeless and remain plagued by a sense of loss. These conditions spell out their serious crisis of identity in Mohsin Hamid's *TRF*.

The diaspora with this unsettling state of mind, try to assimilate to the new cultural conditions. The very pull/push (quest for economic gains, educational opportunities, and cultural freedom—for love-making) to stay in a host country at other times make them nostalgic, psychologically alienated, and socially marginalized. When I use the term marginalized I argue they are politically muted and culturally unvoiced. Moreover, their exclusion based on color and creed makes them further estranged and alienated. They feel and find themselves rootless and homeless and remain plagued by a sense of loss. The phenomenon of 9/11 has drastically changed the socio-cultural, political, and historical conditions for the diaspora. This (un)fortunate event makes the reader understand who they are and where they are. What is their race, name, history, religion, and origin? What they want to become and what they have become! How soon after the incident, their dreams and expectations turn into dust they experience a sense of insecurity, racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination. Under these pressing conditions there arose a strong sense of urgency for having and recreating a positive identity not a stereotypical one (terrorist, fundamentalist, and alien/intruder) that might further marginalize the ethnic minority. The necessity of staying in the host country gives rise to the questions of identity, loyalty, and affinity with the host country. Diasporas are torn between a conflict of living between the native and the host country. Physically they are here (host country) but imaginative there (native land). They find themselves caught in an enigma of the cross and multicultural societies. Clifford (1994) affirms that “Whatever their eschatological longings, diaspora communities are “not-here” to stay. Diaspora cultures thus mediate in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place” (p. 311). To cope with the demanding circumstances and their strong desire to stay in the host country make them meditate a new policy of appropriation and acculturation that is strategic essentialism. During this process of adaption and integration, the interstitial space between cultures makes allowance for a new identity through the promise of cultural mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. Hybridity is a blend of native and foreign cultures. Since diaspora carry the baggage of native culture(s) and try to mimic the culture of the host country, they become a bi-product of two or more cultures. In this process, they don't remain the same but become a new: a different with some difference. This hybrid space becomes extremely unstable. Hybridity promotes assimilation into the dominant culture to enjoy material gains in a host country. Assimilation is a kind of absorption in a dominant culture that makes them transcultural or multicultural.

### 1.1. Research Question

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How do diasporic mediations between home and host affect the psychological and existential pattern of Muslims in general and Changez in particular in the post-9/11 scenario?

2. How far the elements of mimicry and hybridity help Changez camouflage his ‘true’ identity and his claim to be American, moreover, to what extent the phenomenon of 9/11 dispels/disillusions him of his fancy notion about America (a melting pot and land of opportunities) and ‘being American’?
3. How far he is marginalized and silenced by the state apparatus that lead him to serious crises of identity?
4. In what ways, issues of ethnicity, religion, and origin influence the diasporic community, and how these factors lead Changez to the process of Othering?

## 2. Method and Theoretical Framework

The researcher has employed textual analysis as a research method because I am involved with the analysis and interpretation of the text. I have used Catherine Belsey’s insights for textual analysis as a research method for my primary text *TRF*. In this regard, throughout the process of interpretation, the role of the reader becomes central and critical; s/he is constantly engaged and conducts a dialogue with the text to look at it from somewhere else. There are no two exact synonyms in English language. Words always have a shade of difference in meanings and connotations. As a matter of fact “Research involves tracing these intertexts and reading them attentively too, to establish the difference of the text in question” (Belsey, p. 164).

This study qualitatively analyzes the text invoking the specific theoretical concepts developed by Homi K. Bhaba, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Bhabha is considered one of the most important and dominating voices in postcolonial criticism. He is highly respected and valued for his contribution of thought-provoking concepts, such as Mimicry, Hybridity, and Ambivalence. He is immensely influenced by the Western poststructuralist theorists like Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault. His masterpiece work, *The Location of Culture* (1994) has fairly colored postcolonial discourse. We have divided this section to explain terms like hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.

### 2.1. Theory of Mimicry and Ambivalence

The very passion to look modern, authentic, and recognizable Other gives rise to mimicry. Mimicry initiates a process of self-assertion through appropriation and abrogation. The researchers intend to invoke the following specific concept of Bhabha’s definition of mimicry while reading the text *TRF*. Bhabha (1994) defines mimicry in the following words:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference, that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference . . . Mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a disavowal. Mimicry is thus a sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. (p. 86)

Ambivalence/Mimicry brings indeterminacy and rupture in colonial discourse. At times mimicry becomes an exaggerated replication of manners, culture, and ideas that conforms to



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mockery. Mockery is taken as an extended and comic approach to colonial discourse; a reaction to the stereotypes circulated by the empire. Bhabha has argued that mimicry becomes a mockery when the self-esteem of the colonial subject is represented by the white man (ibid., p. 85). This very ambivalence and mimicry transform the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. Bhabha considers partial both 'incomplete and 'virtual'. In this regard mimicry is a double-edged weapon that is resemblance and menace at the same time (ibid., p. 86).

## **2.2. Theory of Hybridity**

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin agree, "hybridity has been seen as part of the tendency of discourse analysis to de-historicise and de-locate cultures from their temporal, spatial, geographical and linguistic contexts, and to lead to an abstract, globalized concept of the textual that obscures the specificities of particular cultural situations" (p. 119-20) In postcolonial theory, the concept of hybridity is central. It means a blend of cultural signs and practices between the dominating and dominated cultures. The concept also helps Bhabha challenge the notion that cultures are homogeneous, monolithic, and fixed. I have invoked the following Bhabha's notions of hybridity to read the primary text. We explain these concepts for the reader to appreciate these notions. Hybridity serves as a cultural bridge between the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha contends that "all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls "Third Space of annunciation" (37). If we explain it in terms of horticulture, it is like grafting or cross-pollination, a kind of cross-breeding of two species to form third space (Ashcraft et al., 118). In other words, it is a cross-cultural exchange. The protagonist of the novel *Changez* becomes a hybrid product. Bhabha considers the concept of hybridity a positive, enriching, dynamic and cross-cultural fertilization along with its oppressive impact. Hybridity emerges specifically from multicultural and diasporic societies. Hybridity deconstructs identity and destabilizes all collective or individual identities, as we find Muslim characters in *TRF*. The concept of hybridity is linked with diaspora who become hybrid and try to relocate themselves for their being recolonized in the Western metropolis. To Bhabha, the concept of identity is not fixed, it is fluid, diaspora negotiates different forces and cultures which are at work and affect identity. In the process of negotiation, diaspora-postcolonial-subject fluctuates between self and other, East and West, and experiences ambivalence. To him, hybridity is a cultural mixture that lacks absolute purity. In short, cultures cannot be compartmentalized in isolation; they always intervene and interact with one another. Hybridity is an ongoing and unending process. Hybridity chafes colonizer as well when he finds resistance from the colonized; diaspora complies and rejects colonizer's culture simultaneously.

## **Frantz Fanon**

Among the notable postcolonial theorists is Frantz Fanon, a man of extraordinary potential and multidimensional personality. He was a revolutionary writer of two powerful works: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Being a political analyst, a psychiatrist he developed a thorough analysis of the psychological and sociological consequences of colonization on the colonized. I have invoked Fanon's concept of 'gaze and other' while analyzing my text. The very thought of racism and Eurocentrism in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and his struggle to make white man realize that "the gaze" and "the other" generates in black [sandy man/Asian] a sense of inferiority, a pathological dis[ease]—asymptomatic syndrome which affects his performance, efficiency and personality. Sartre

views the gaze of the other is alienating. Fanon's canonical work *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the very concept of 'gaze' serves as a framework for the analysis of my novel. Self is based on the inclusive policy whereas other denotes exclusive. Fanon (1967) has argued that the colonial world is "a world cut in two", it is a world 'without reciprocal exclusivity' in which no 'conciliation is possible' between the settler and the native (qt. in McLeod 2007, p. 165). The cultural values are internalized that made their consciousness sick and self-alienated. The protagonist of *TRF* remains a constant subject to American gaze, Othering, and colonization. He is being vigilantly observed through the invisible eye of the larger forces/state apparatus (FBI) and the American public. He had to experience physical and psychological torture daily because of the very surveillance.

Fanon (1986) argues that:

I had to meet the white man eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world, the man of color [South Asian Muslim] encounters difficulties in the development of his body schema. . . . I was battered by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects. . . . I took myself far off from my own presence. . . . What else could it be but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (qt. in Bhabha, 1994, p. 42) .

### **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

Spivak finds clear-cut signs of epistemic violence in Western discourse. She demonstrates through her analysis that so-called imperial history is not simply a product of distorted facts, it is produced through [a systematic] process of 'epistemic violence' (p. 200). To appreciate epistemic violence, we would recommend reading Redfield's "Virtual Trauma: The Idiom of 9/11." This cultural trauma is for Americans and especially for those who were near Ground Zero. For Changez, it was a spectacle: like a movie, like a dream, something special with voyeuristic pleasure. It also criticizes political manipulation and its mediation for representing and propagating one-sided narrative under the banner of "War on Terror" by excluding all those facts and figures which don't suit the U.S. In colonial discourse, the white man is speaking to a white man about other, black or sandy/brown Asian. Spivak strongly criticizes the desire and power of the West for 'subjectivity' and to conquer the cultures of other, non-white people and speak with authenticity in its paradigm. She explores the methods for counter-discourse not through reacting Western thought and history but critically examines and traces the system of which they are constituted (ibid., p. 215). She terms this method as strategic essentialism. We also invoke Spivak's coinage and the concept of the term Othering and the process of imperial discourse through which colonizing Other and the subject colonized other is produced simultaneously. It is a constant desire of the colonized other to be with the M[Other] or [F]ather or Empire, is Othered by the (M)Other and the subject feelings are not mirrored and reciprocated through the images of the imperial Other, rather the subject has to experience constant gaze form (M)Other that cause Othering and affects the self of the other. There are numerous occasions when Changez experiences the process of Othering, especially after the 9/11 catastrophe. He too had to bear the very experience of Othering after his return from Manila to the American airport. There being fired from the job and the Changez-Erica relationship is pertinent examples and the manifestation of Othering.



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In the next section of our article, we intend to analyze my primary text *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the light of the theoretical lens to contextualize my research in the existing body of scholarship.

### **3. Analysis of the novel: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

A detailed textual analysis of *TRF* written by Mohsin Hamid is conducted within the parameters of the theoretical framework as discussed above. Changez is a fine example of mimicry, hybridity/ ambivalence. The novel deals with diasporic mediations between home (Pakistan) and the host (America). It accentuates civilizational, social, and cultural differences prevalent in the two worlds i.e. The First World and the third world. It interrogates diasporic suspended identity and explains how it evolves, develops, and accelerates into serious crises if any mayhem takes place. It also doubts the diaspora's true loyalty to the host country or the natal land. In the backdrop of 9/11, the issue of cultural differences and the identity of South Asian Muslims and Arabs underwent a complex transformation. Redfield (2007) contends that 9/11 has provided U.S. officials to unleash a wave of violence against any 'Axis of Evil' since the fall of 2001 (p. 55). The protagonist and the other characters had been the lover of America but now they are constructed and stereotyped as 'terrorists and fundamentalists' through dominant colonial discourse, it made their lives unbearable by the coercive politics of the larger forces and institutions i.e. state apparatus.

The analysis also endeavors to explore and understand the phenomenon of identity transformation from pro-American to non-American and non-American to anti-American; so-called 'radical fundamentalist'. It looks into what are those undercurrents that play a pivotal role in shaping new identities? The analysis of the text centers around the issues of discrimination and marginalization and the process of Othering, Othering of minorities, especially Muslims on ethnic and religious bases. Moreover, it focuses its debate on concerns like American imperialism, multiculturalism, interculturalism, and transnationalism.

Hamid (2007) has tried to showcase that Changez cannot assimilate in America without appropriation to be someone or something that he is not. These strategies are essential for survival and to be a modern, successful, and 'authentic' individual. This very point of strategic essentialism is rightly emphasized by renowned critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She considers strategic essentialism as a practical and pragmatic minority strategy to be in the mainstream with certain objectives: socio-economic and political gains. Changez has to remind himself time and again that his existence in the 'new world' in which he travels needs constant innovation and re-creation to fit-in the existing setup. This all make-up is being done for the desire to be recognized, and his ambivalence of cultural supremacy is a part of the essential strategy.

He becomes a perfect mimic man: in sophistication, in dress, manners and his Anglicized accent sign of wealth and power, this all makes Jim accentuate his doubt about his grooming, Jim feels greatly struck without giving an explicit impression to Changez. Hamid (2007) has given reflection to his colonial consciousness through the following line "like Pakistan, America had been a former British colony" (p. 25). Here is another example through which Hamid has endorsed his pro-American and Eurocentric disposition and his desire for being 'authentic'. Changez overlooks a point that mimicry is mere repetition, not representation. In the very maiden meeting with Erika's parents, her father asks, 'You drink?' he replies

without hesitation, 'I do, Sir,' to show that he is the same as they are (real and authentic), whereas the other Pakistanis working for his father, who never drank, were different and unreal. After all, he is a western-educated urbanite and wants to be 'authentic and real' (p. 32). In Macaulay's Minute on education (1835) he argues regarding 'reformed colonial subjects', "a class of persons [Pakistani] in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, morals, and intellect—in other words a mimic man raised through our English Schools" (p. 49). This all is true in the case of Changez, a Princeton graduate, and Underwood Samson trainee. Dayal (1996) refers to the Althusserian image of model immigrant that you are allowed to be here as a model immigrant, but mind you, you will never be like us—so be vigilant and exhibit as an exemplary role model for other immigrants to be followed (p. 50). Otherwise, there is always risk and threat of dismissal from the job or deportation, as we find in the case of Changez. He does not keep his beard on his first visit to New York as a part of strategic essentialism, a *modus operandi* of camouflage, because Americans misconstrue its significance (Hamid, 2007, p. 32).

Till before the happening of 9/11, Changez had the inner compatibility with American Empire and Americanism. He speaks, dresses, and behaves in the same manner as Americans do, but is different from his American colleagues, "*almost the same, but not quite*" (emphasis original, Bhabha, p. 86); it upsets him a lot when he was being ignored by Filipinos for not considering him a part of the American team. Hamid (2007) refers that Changez openly confesses that he has never done it before; to mimic Americans, because he wants his share of respect that Filipinos extends to Americans, whom they consider members of the officer class of global business. To strengthen this inkling, if someone asks him where he comes from, he tells them without reluctance that he is from New York (p. 38). Radhakrishnan brackets diaspora in mathematical terms that diasporas are a collection of certain statements: like, the influence of metropolitanism and globalism that results in loss of native culture, language, history, they become politically de-linked on both ends: the homeland and the host land to the extent and reach to the point of anarchism. They find themselves gripped in new history, new time, and a new location that is neither home nor not-home (p. 175). At this point, he wants to de-link himself from his natal place, because it brings him shame and an inferiority complex. Mimicry hardly conceals one's presence or identity behind its mask. Hamid further writes that mimicry gifts the colonial subject a double vision that not only disrupts the authority of the colonizer but also lends the colonized partial/virtual identity, representation, and recognition (Bhabha, p. 88). Mimicry also highlights inappropriateness, racial, cultural, and historical differences, and disturbances.

Bhabha (1994) contends that diaspora confronts glaring cultural differences through displacement and it is the moment where interstices emerge and cultural values are contested and negotiated to form subject 'in-between, or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (p. 2). Hamid (2007) has candidly accentuated Changez's ambivalence when he was on the excursion trip on the islands to Rhodes, where he could not help himself and was invited/forced to stare 'wholeheartedly' but at the same time he was 'uncomfortable' with Erica's nudity to find "the sight of her breasts had been the most natural thing in the world" and he communicated his appreciation for what she had revealed was something unusual (p. 14). Dayal (1996) refers that "Doubleness is more productively conceived as the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, falsely comforting identifications reifications and its negative value is that it denies the subjects sovereignty and stresses the performativity of the subject" (p. 48). Bhabha (1994) has drawn



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our attention through the very concept of cultural difference to the issue of its interpretation and misappropriation, the problem occurs at cultural borders where at times cultural signs, values, and their meanings are (mis)read and (mis)appropriated. It becomes loud and poses a challenge when different cultures are in contestation for their articulation of everyday life, in due course of time some of the meanings are further lost between races, nations, genders, and classes (p. 34). In Eastern culture, the girls with T-shirts and jeans look out of place. But this can be termed as a multicultural initiative. This difference of social articulation, especially with reference to a selected or minority class (those girls of NCA) is not well accepted in fixed or traditional honoring societies, like Pakistan. A similar situation we find when the bearded man checks himself to stand beside them for the inappropriateness of their dress and their undue freedom of culture (Hamid, 2007, p. 13). The bearded man wants his distinct culture to be secluded, fixed, and compartmentalized. The culture of the eastern women is entirely different from that of the western culture presented in beaches/islands of Rhodes. In Pakistan, sex is not an open affair as we find this privilege and pleasure confined to the white world. Hamid states that “My parents were strict, and sometimes weeks would pass without us being able to meet those we thought of us as girlfriends. So we learned to *savor* the denial of gratification—that most un-American pleasures!” (p. 41). According to Hamid (2007) “Many of the European women nearby were, as usual, sunbathing topless—a practice”. Changez discusses it in a very light-hearted manner, when he says, girls in Pakistan are “exposing only the flesh of the neck, the face and the lower three-quarters of the arm” (p. 16). This offers a sharp cultural contrast of here and there, now and then. Here lies a clash of cultural civilization and ideology, and the two different modes of living make him bamboozled.

Changez’s downfall commences when he comes completely under the magic spell of [Am]Erica. She proves to him a quagmire, a whirlpool that never let him out to retain his sense and sensibility. The entry of Erica drags the protagonist out of frame from all those extraordinary qualities for which he was known for. He not only loses his concentration, professional obligations, the integrity of character, and socio-economic identity but also loses peace of mind, composure, confidence, dynamism, and self-esteem. In an adventure of love he loses everything and becomes a person of confused and defused identity. Furthermore, it is his insatiable desire that pushes him to a series of serious crises. Though he does his level best to cope with the situation and settle in America—the land of his dreams to prove his worth and identity he becomes unhomed. Bhabha (1994) has captured his state of mind in these words “To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public sphere” (p. 9).

When Changez writes her name Erica in Urdu, it reminds me of America, both share similarities in appearance and temperament. Apparently, like an oyster that couldn’t turn into a pearl. Both, America and Erica are affluent, admired, adored, and stunning, but inwardly flawed, hollow, self-centered, and detached (Hamid p. 31). Hamid (2007) has tried to make a point that the relationship between Pakistani-Muslim-American was never compatible, through these lines, one can read in between the lines the true nature of Changez-Erica relationship “I found it difficult to enter her; it was as though she was not aroused. She said nothing while I was inside her, but I could see her discomfort, and so I forced myself to stop . . . her eyes filled with tears. ‘I just can’t wet. I don’t know what’s wrong with me . . . *her body rejected me*” (italics my emphasis pp. 53-54). Changez did his level best to penetrate through her psychologically and physically but was declined for being ‘non-American, non-White and non-Western’. Bhabha (1994) has stated the difference that Erica’s denial of their

relationship is obvious for her cultural, racial, and sexual difference and superiority. Therefore, Changez's marginalization and Othering is but natural. Bhabha (1994) "Almost the same *but not white* . . . therefore, not permissible, and he has been made clear the difference between American and being Americanized" (p. 86). Hamid (2007) has noticed that all this made him uncomfortable and "he dreamed not of Am/Erica but home" (p. 54).

Hamid delineates the graphic presentation when Changez arrived, he was segregated from his American team at immigration; he joined the queue of foreigners, his passport was closely inspected by a well-built woman with a pistol at her hips who asked him twice the 'purpose' of his trip to the United States, on feeling disgruntled, she sent him for the second inspection and was made to sit on a metal bench next to a tattooed man (the terrorists killed and arrested during terrorist activities in Pakistan were found with tattoos on their backs and shoulders) in handcuffs (pp. 44-45). It can be implied that he was suspected as a terrorist that made him sit with the company to construct and articulate negative diasporic consciousness in him. His team left him all alone as if he had never been a part of it. The very feeling of being alone and segregated scars and gnaws him inwardly that he is not what he thinks of himself; part of an American team member. The position of Changez is that of other and colonial oppressed. This social alienation leads to psychic alienation that produces aggression, inferiority, self-hate, and violence.

According to Clifford (1994) acceptance, rejection, segregation, inclusion, and exclusion of the new arrivals is based on ethnicity and class variation that determines their social structures and status (p. 311). Through the very policy of exclusion, racial discrimination, and marginalization negative identity consciousness is inculcated and constructed in the diaspora. You cannot be American till you look American in terms of color. Hamid (2007) states, "How did I know you were American? No, not by the color of your skin. . . ." (p. 1). Wainwright caveats him, when he refers to the darker side of Americanism, "Beware the dark side, young Skywalker" (Hamid, 2007, p. 23). His forefathers had been and he is experiencing the whetting of white man's gaze that split his body and disturbed his vision to perceive his own (self) and the world around him. Bhabha (1994) has captured the psychological state of colonized (colored/south Asian/Arab) man, how he feels "the shadow of a colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divide the very time of his being" (p. 44).

In Sartre's views, the gaze of the other is alienating. The gaze generates in oneself a sense of inferiority. Changez talks about the American gaze that he carries when he returns to Lahore and finds his house and everything shabby due to his dislocation. The moment he changed his American lens he again found himself relocated and things looked in better shape. Now, the previously shabby house seemed proper again through his Pakistani lens—to drive pleasure and pride in his own culture and history: a sign of strategic essentialism. The point Hamid wants to assert here is that the American gaze does great damage and makes (compel) diaspora look through Other's gaze. It is required to seek one's identity through one's own eye and take pride in one's own culture, history, and values.

Diasporic dislocation(s) results in a conflict and dilemma of here and there and time and space. Most of the time, Changez finds himself divided into locations and configurations of the time. Clifford (1994) has also accentuated a similar situation as Bhabha talks about that "in diaspora experience of "here and there" is articulated with an antiteleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by past



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that is also desired, but obstructed, future: renewed, painful yearning” (p. 318). He has to think and rethink; calculate and recalculate the temporal and special difference; previously he was in America but now in Manila, feels divided: in Pakistan (Lahore), America (New York, Manhattan), and Filipino (Manila). While making calls to his friends and family he has to keep in mind the time difference and distance when he receives mail from Erica it’s evening whereas, she writes in the morning always keeps him on alert mode. Hamid (2007) has narrated Changez constant reminisces, having his first meal with Erica in New York; he recalls one of the pleasant summers in Lahore, a cool breeze blows carrying the aroma of the baked meat in some open-air restaurants preparing for the dinner, fills him with greater felicity for being in the company of alluring Erica (p. 33). The concept of Americans about Pakistan and its people sounds quite weird to Changez as if Pakistani’s are of Stone Age or have no aesthetic sense; Erica’s question demonstrates her perception when she asks, “Do people have a picnic in Lahore?” In response to the question, he reminds me of Nathia Galli (p. 35). Hamid (2007) makes a very interesting and sarcastic observation through Changez that rationality is only specific to the west, how a person of the third world can ‘think’, who grew up on the other side of the globe! Furthermore, he expresses his dilemma by saying that [he] is “neither here nor there” (p. 14). Massumi (1992) has stated that “Diasporas are fully self-reflexive “ambivalent” and cosmopolitan nomads “riding” cultural difference” (p. 5).

At times, diasporas feel a strong pull for home and try to reach out for the places that give them a sense of homeliness. Pak-Punjab Deli is a place that mitigates the sense of unhomeliness, and here diasporas have tried to create South Asian culture of their own in this diverse location of the world. Wainwright and Changez feel starved and were served free meal: a sign of cultural hospitality and token of friendship, as it was their first meal and the place (Pak-Punjab Deli) becomes ‘home’, away but not that far away, because the savor of the food and the language he uses is his own, Urdu. We always tend to take inordinate pride in our food, says Changez (Hamid, 2007, p. 20). Hamid (2007) noticed those moments when Changez was in the firm grip of cultural nostalgia for food. He loves tea of different kinds: like regular tea, with milk and sugar, or green tea perhaps more for its aroma. Now he is in Pakistan, but missing Princeton and when he was there he was missing tea and Jalebis. He remembers that he ate grilled octopus, drank sparkling water and red wine but simultaneously missing his native city Lahore that was ninety minutes away from here by air Changez recalls all the memories of when he was enjoying a vacation in the company of sweet Erica (p. 12). Places, food, memories are typical nostalgic signs of diasporas, and Changez exhibits these signs to the maximum. Ghosh (1989) has referred that “Diasporas have the tendency and power to revive a culture in various locating” (p. 306).

Going and coming to one’s country makes a difference and one feels rejuvenated and recuperated. Hashimoto (1992, citing Chiha) has presented this concept very beautifully and interestingly through a metaphor of butterfly and a caterpillar. He says, “A butterfly becomes a caterpillar again” (p. 98). A similar kind of idea is expressed by Hamid (2007) when he refers to Changez regarding his feelings on coming home “he felt suddenly very young—or perhaps he felt his age: an almost childlike twenty-two, rather than that permanent middle age that attaches itself to the man who lives alone and supports himself by wearing a suit in a city, not of his birth” (p. 75). The very contrasting environment: the warmth of home and hostility in the host country offers a sharp contrast to make him feel—a butterfly becomes a caterpillar again: He felt suddenly very young—or perhaps he felt his age: an almost childlike twenty-two (p. 75).

The mediations (pull and push) for home and host country are simultaneously at work and making Changez agitated; diasporas feel divided and torn, and he grapples with the question of either to stay or leave. He faces a similar kind of situation, where he finds himself in a predicament that puts him in an indecisive dilemma. His family members are caught in fantasies and want to know about his life in New York and his job's perspective and promotion, on the other hand, Changez is curious to know, how things are shaping at home. The answer to both the questions is equally disturbing. He wants to prolong his stay in Lahore, but his parents were bent to send him back to America for his better and secure future. When his family members were talking about the India-Pakistan relationship, everybody expressed serious concerns regarding Indian hostility towards Pakistan. Under the circumstances, he feels unnerved over the vulnerability of his country and his sense of haplessness and helplessness. He considers it coward to leave his country when the security and honor of his country are at stake. He finds it equally distressing that 'the most primed and the most promising' are leaving (a strong sense of brain drainage) whereas the old and the children (non-productive and dependent) are staying home. This fully elucidates his affinity and concern to his natal land. Then the discussion centers around Pakistan-American 'friendship', everyone was/is doubtful and uncertain about American sincerity towards Pakistan because of its previous track record and 'pragmatic' politics. So, Changez is caught in a dilemma: the situation at home is equally disconcerting as the situation in America in post 9/11 scenario is also perturbing, moreover, Erica's refusal to see him, with whom he is/was emotionally attached and dying for her. He is grappled with these questions time and again without seeking a proper answer.

Changez like his name is now turning to be Genghis Khan (The Mongol Emperor), but in Urdu, it is known as Changez and rightly so, for his having a bit of warrior in him in the words of Jim—his immediate boss. His mood is getting reactionary. Clifford (1994) has suggested that under the circumstances diaspora culture is seen as consistently antinationalist (p. 307) Two-week-old beard is a moment of cultural uncertainty and representational undecidability. It is the point (boundary/margin) from where he thinks himself of a subaltern is eager to rethink, relocate and translate his cultural identity by reverting to his native repressed traditional culture, without knowing its consequences, is a daring step towards fundamentally establishing his radical identity and a political struggle in the days to come. He was not warmly received by his colleagues after he came from Pakistan for his two-week shave. The shave of two weeks has become a cultural symbol that has been stereotyped, re-historicized, and de-coded afresh sign or reference of terror through Eurocentric forces. Previously, he did all to become American, but now he does not want to be homogenized, Americanized with all his other colleagues who are clean shave youngsters.

This cultural and racial marginalization makes him audacious; he denies the cultural diversity and insists on his own cultural identity of otherness. He did not pay heed to the suggestions of his colleague to shave; because it was a form of protest and struggle on his part. He had the feeling that his cultural and religious signs are derided and humiliated. The beard is stereotyped as a symbol of a terrorist as Fanon's essay "Algeria unveiled", in France veil is made controversial by alleging that it conceals bombs in it when Algerian police searched everything but find nothing (Bhabha, 1994, p. 63).

He associates himself with the dispossessed and dislocated persons who experience social, racial, and psychic trauma of alienation and marginalization. Gordon (1964) states that



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America has become a melting pot through the fusion and diffusion of race and culture (p.117). Spickard (2007) noted that WASPS (White Anglo Saxon Protestants), were neither derided nor excluded, rather considered as an asset who added to the core of American society, culture, and economy (ibid., p. 871). The moment, when privileges are dispossessed, a person mere reduces to a farce. The 9/11 phenomenon had a direct impact on the global economy and things were changing fast. The future scenario was not shaping well for the diaspora. Apart from the economy, social conditions were also becoming hostile, people started reacting on ethnic and racial grounds, and some of them became too aggressive and abusive.

For instance Hamid (2007) has narrated Changez's experience:

Once I was walking to my rental car in the parking lot of the cable company when I was approached by a man I did not know. He made a series of unintelligible noises—'akhala-malakha', perhaps, or 'khalapal-khapala'— and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine. . . . . Reluctantly, the first allowed himself to be led away. 'Fucking Arab', he said. (p. 70)

The protagonist of the novel (Changez) is upbeat, emotional, and reactionary. To him, the situation is unacceptable and unbearable. Hamid (2007) has captured his emotional and psychological turbulence in the following words:

But my blood throbbed in my temples, and I called out, 'Say it to my face, coward, not as you run and hide.' He stopped where he was. I unlocked the boot, retrieving the tire iron from where it lay; the cold mettle of its shaft rested hungrily in my hands, and I felt, at that moment, fully capable of wielding it with sufficient violence to shatter the bones of his skull . . . he departed muttering the string of obscenities (pp. 70-71).

The situation mentioned above clearly shows how murky and tense is the situation in which Changez finds himself gripped. Jim noticed it through his demeanor that something is eating him up and he is not in his own self—seems preoccupied with his thoughts, especially his concerns for his homeland, Changez declined Jim, that he may not take the inkling that his loyalty is more towards Pakistan than the host country America (ibid., p. 72). Changez equally felt troubled over the growing racial discrimination and Americans' deep-rooted hatred for Arabs. It's but natural being a Muslim, his emotional and religious ties are with Muslims and the Arab world. The phrase 'Fucking Arab' echoed in his mind that pressed him to look at the other side of the story.

Diasporic tension persists that pushes Changez to leave America, but he is very much there emotionally and imaginatively. His inhabitation of America never ceased. Hamid (2007) articulates his warm feelings for (Am)Erica and his melancholic state of mind leads to a serious crisis of identity in the following lines:

I remained emotionally entwined with [Am]Erica, and I brought something of her with me to Lahore—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I lost something of myself to her that I was unable to relocate in the city of my birth. Regardless the effect of this was to pull and tug at my moods waves of mourning washed over me, sadness and regret prompted at times by an external stimulus, and at others by an internal cycle that was almost tidal, for want of a better word. I

responded to the gravity of an invisible moon at my core, and I undertook journeys I had not expected to take. (p. 104)

In locating Erica, he becomes dislocated. To him, the stay in America and his relationship with Erica is no less than a trauma that scarred him emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. Bhabha (1994) has beautifully explained this situation of displacement “the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (p. 9). To Hamid, (2007) Changez is experiencing a similar problem of location and diasporic mediation which he accentuates in these words:

It is always possible to restore one’s boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us. (p. 105)

The very dislocation affects everyone though it is an American or non-American, makes one feel like a ‘predator or prey’ and the level of uncertainty is bound to generate virtual and cultural trauma (Hamid, 2007, p. 19). Outsiders generally ingrain this very impression that they are being observed and similar kinds of sensations are experienced by Changez especially after 9/11. The presence of patrolling police even fills an outsider with fright; a similar feeling was experienced by a certain ‘type’ of American who felt nervous at the sight of patrolling police.

Changez’s mind is wrought with so many complexities that make him feel as if he is lacking a stable core. His emotional attachment is disproportionately divided into different places: he is in New York having his first meal with Erica, he recalls of pleasant summer in Lahore. When he is having picnic lunch with Erica in Central Park, in response to a question, Changez talks about Nathia Gali, in the foothills of the Himalayas, Valparaiso reminds him of Lahore lacking glory and grandeur. The buildings of Lahore and load shedding in Pakistan remind him of the architectural magnificence and stunning illumination of the Empire State Building of New York. The very comparison and contrast leave him with the sense of confusion that he belongs to both—New York and Lahore or perhaps belongs to nowhere. The place gives one’s identity and also affects one’s identity, irrespective of good or bad. When one loses a place, his identity becomes fragile and compromised.

There are some articles written by different researchers in the novel. Islam Shihada's article “The Backlash of 9/11 on Muslims in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” is written on the background of 9/11. Muhammad Rizwan’s article “Religious and Racial Profiling in Mohsin Hamid’s novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” mainly covers religious and racial profiling of the Muslims. It is a counter-discourse against Euro-American hegemonic discourse stereotyping Muslims as terrorists and fundamentalists. Amani Salmeen’s article “The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Hybridity and the Struggle for Identity” focuses on a postcolonial aspect of hybridity and certain other aspects suggestively and passingly. In the article “East and West Trust deficit in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Uzma Imtaiz invokes theoretical concepts of Jean Baudrillard to read the text through the Critical Discourse analysis model by Fairclough. Sobia Khan’s article traces the identity crisis in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Hanif Kureishi's *Black Album*.



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This research of ours not only fills the gaps in other research articles, but it also explores postcolonial theoretical aspects and diasporic mediations between home and host countries. No other research articles have explored the issue in this fashion as this research article does. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it is a comprehensive and critically well-documented research article. This research enlightens the reader how mimicry/ambivalence, hybridity, and process of othering affect the psychological bearing of the protagonist and lead him to serious crises of identity. Furthermore, the phenomenon of 9/11 resurfaces the issue of race, class, religion and origin. Moreover, critical insights of the researchers give it a different look and understanding to the reader and make it different from the rest of the articles mentioned above.

#### **4. Conclusion**

After analyzing the text, it can be said that the diasporic community in general and Changez in particular exhibits diasporic mediations between home and host. Diasporas undergo pulls and push of home, homelessness, and unhomeliness. The study helps appreciate navigate identity cognitive— a process that goes within the diasporic community. This research demonstrates how the notions of “the melting pot” become “smelting pot” and “the land of opportunity” and the myth “of freedom of expression and constitutional rights” is shatters by an upheaval like 9/11. It also exposes the true color of the empire, its intolerance on a public and individual level. When the conditions become hostile, diaspora longs for a return to natal land and the pull becomes intense that gives birth to their restlessness, and rootlessness. This very condition generates polarities of self/other, home/homelessness or unhomeliness, majority/minority, inclusive/exclusive, white/non-white, and center/margin. The enamel of ‘humanity and cultural diversity’ erodes in the wake of the 9/11 phenomenon. Though they become mimic men, still remain non-American and non-White. The elements of hybridity and acculturation could do no magic to them. This research cogently sets historical records in a correct perspective through the eyes of the diasporic writer Mohsin Hamid. The phenomenon of 9/11 re-surfaced the differences drastically. It is a clash of cultural civilizations; the two worlds are poles apart in every respect. Whatever they did, they could not be integrated and assimilated. East and West are two different modes of living, like a track of train or banks of a river that never merge and their merger is a mere mirage. Their identity is always suspended, suspected, and questioned. American hegemony, globalization, and persecution of the larger forces marginalized and precipitated the process of Othering.

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