

## Analyzing the social and ideological effects of 9/11: A Meta-critical analysis of *The Blind Man's garden and Kite Runner*

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**Abstract:** This study explains the social, economic, geographical and political imprints of an imposed war as a result of an unfortunate incident known to the world as 9/11. The study specifically unveils the traumatic effects of the identity that the West has related to symbolising Muslims and Islam. The purpose of the study is to bring under discussion the opinionated and judgmental approach of Western nations/media towards Islam and Muslims. The study purposes to frame a scheme against violence non-violently by highlighting the sense of hatred that has developed as a result of misapprehension between Islam and other nationalities. The basic purpose of the study is to clarify the image of Islam to the world that the ugliness of 9/11 has affected not only the West, as they picture it, rather Muslims specifically and other religions, The Sikhs for instance, have also faced the adverse circumstances because of an imposed 9/11 war.

**Key Words:** 9/11 War, Traumatic effects of Tri-Nation War, Islamic Symbols, Resemblance, Appearance, Sikhs, Muslims

## Introduction

The post-9/11 effects of terrorism are undoubtedly a greater dilemma that has not only affected the geographical, economical, and historical stuff but on top of all societies and ideological communities suffered a lot.

At times this hatred goes beyond hostility to specific interests or actions or policies or even countries and becomes a rejection of Western civilization as such, not only what it does but what it is, and the principles and values that it practices and professes. These are indeed seen as innately

evil, and those who promote or accept them as the "enemies of God. (Lewis, 1990)

The purpose of the study is to pave ways towards new horizons. It helps in expanding knowledge and understanding of the world. It expands the knowledge to understand the connection between nations or countries, and it values their ethics and traditions. A strong connection with humanity is thus been made. As it is always a good story that can put you in someone else's shoes, metaphorically. Now we are seeing that it may also be happening naturally.

Different types of mediums like media, literature, journalism or politics and show

business are used by people around the world to condemn the current war on terror and violence in different countries of the world. It is therefore on the credit of a visionary writer who foresees the aftermaths and consequences of an action or event by analyzing the ongoing situations. Visionary writers with their skills of strong observations and scholarly approach towards the specific situation can conclude the results and sometimes foretell or point towards the fearful consequences.

The texts of Pakistani English novelists *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam and *Kite Runner* by Khalid Hosseini are selected for evaluation and analysis. The research conducted is based upon the textual analysis of "*The Blind Man's Garden*" and "*Kite Runner*" by Khalid Hosseini through George Lakey's eight Strategies. Different parts of the novels are selected which correlate the theory in a befitting way. Out of Eight strategies put forward by George Lakey, only two strategies (I) "Natural ethics" and "Parallel Intuitions" were used to highlight the problems.

## Research Questions

The present study focuses on the following questions:

1. How the Muslims globally are directly and cultures like Sikhs in particular having identical religious ethics affected by the aftermaths of 9/11 in the context of *Blind Man's garden*?
2. How the misapprehension of western media has flocked the world anti-Muslims in the context of Khalid Hosseini's Novel *Kite Runner*?

## Research Objectives

1. To picture the adverse consequences of 9/11 affecting Muslims comparatively more than Westerners.
2. To highlight "natural ethics" and "Parallel Intuitions" among masses

affected by war as post-trauma therapy.

## Discussion and Analysis

The Pakistani English novel/fiction is gaining fame in today's world. The classification is as mentioned earlier based on pre and post-9/11. The voices of new authors have come to the screen which includes good names like Sara Soleri, Mohsin Hamid, Khaled Hosseini, Nadeem Aslam, Moniza Alvi, Tariq Ali, Hanif Kureshi, Muhammed Hanif and Kamila Shamsi.

Some of the writers among these contemporary writers like Nadeem Aslam or Mohsin Hamid and Tariq Ali are not residing in Pakistan but still, they have some spiritual and cultural links with Pakistan. And they proudly call themselves Pakistani writers. We have a list of renowned authors like Mohsin Hamid. His Novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. "It suggests that while Hamid's novel undoubtedly identifies and critiques the racism at the heart of the so-called war on terror – expressed both in domestic and foreign arenas" (Hartnell, 2010)

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a perfect reflection of the identity crisis both political and personal. The novel reveals the hardships of the immigrants due to discrimination and the hateful attitude of the Americans, which made the immigrants feel a sense of alienation in the US. *Changez*; the hero of the story is the portrayal, whose inner struggle and eagerness to become the US elite is notable.

The novel is a dramatic monologue which is narrated by a third person *Changez*. It is based on the "East" vs. "West" dichotomy. Because *Changez* the high-spirited protagonist of the novel narrates his story as an ambitious and talented youth. As he himself states that I considered myself James Bond with a bit of a dark complexion but handsomely paid. But after 9/11 his company proliferated the conception of "sticking to fundamentalist" that somehow as

a reaction made *Changez* reluctant towards 9/11 and a smile/grin is seen on his face when he sees the visual clip of the demolishing Twin Towers; after the hijack planes crashed. Mohsin Hamid is well known for his potential to address the current global and most burning issues in his novels. His characterization focuses on the impacts of such global issues on common Pakistani.

"The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) challenges the orthodoxies of the post-9/11 novel that, until its publication, had generally taken the form of documents of personal trauma and loss, or recapitulations of unproblematic notions of essential cultural difference, and that took as its default position a "clash of civilizations" mindset." (Morey, 2011).

### Transformation of Talib into Mujahid and finally becomes Terrorist by Western Media

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Talib in fact is an Arabic word for a person who seeks Islamic knowledge. It is derived from Talab, which means the wish and desire to get something. But in modern dictionaries, it is misinterpreted and deformed as Talib is a person who belongs to a group of terrorists called the Taliban.

"Basically the Taliban are an indigenous movement whose motives of action are rooted in the norms and values of a large part of the traditional society." (Glatzer, 1998). The Taliban were earlier the Muslims Freedom Fighters called "Mujahideen" who fought against Russia in Soviet Union War. They emerged in the early 90s in the Northern areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan. They claimed to be the guardians of Islamic laws and Sharia and practised the execution of these laws by force. The concept of Taliban and Talibanization is purely and solely associated with the Afghanistan war. There are also other Muslim groups fighting against foreign invasions on their lands like ISIS or DAISH

but they are not called Taliban. The terms used for them are fundamentalists, liberation front or freedom Fighters etc.

### Misapprehension of Ideological Symbols

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US government in President George W. Bush's regime started this war as revenge for the 9/11 attacks on Pentagon, but soon they realized that it was a devastating mistake made by the then US government. There aroused a sense of insecurity and fear in the whole US. People started suspecting every Muslim or a person with a Muslim look. A beard kept in an Islamic pattern or a hijab carried by some lady was suspected to be a symbol of terror and was supposed to be a foe to every US. It was observed in after 9/11 that Muslims, irrespective of their nationalities, faced discriminatory attitudes from the US nationals. This behaviour was generally non-violent, for instance, verbal abuse, social isolation or bad looks or hooting and calling names to them. We can also refer to the investigating officer; David in Nadeem Aslam's novel *The Blind Man's Garden*, as well. (see chapter 4 section 2.3). Most of the discrimination experienced by Muslim Americans was of non-violent nature and included bad looks, verbal abuse, as well as social isolation. (Livengood & Stodolska, 2017)

Sikhs were also targeted in some places because of wearing turbans. Turbans are stereotypically linked with Muslims. A reporter of *The New York Times*, Tamar Lewin reported the brutal murder of a Sikh, as a Muslim suspect. Balbir Singh Sodhi, who was the owner of a gas station, was fatally shot in Arizona on 15 September 2001, as he was mistaken to be a Muslim. (*The New York Times*, 2001)

But on the other hand, another undeniable situation is also seen on behalf of the US government and its citizens' response to the US Arabs and Muslims. The

discriminatory behaviour of the US White citizens is regretful. At times this hatred goes beyond hostility to specific interests or actions or policies or even countries and becomes a rejection of Western civilization as such, not only what it does but what it is, and the principles and values that it practices and professes. These are indeed seen as innately evil, and those who promote or accept them as the "enemies of God." (Lewis, 1990)

No Longer Invisible Arabs and Muslims Exclusion After September 11 published in 2002: Indeed, the greatest source of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims in the US today is the US government, mostly the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). According to a Council on American-Islamic Relations report released in April, more than 60,000 individuals have been affected by government actions of discrimination, interrogation, raids, arrests, detentions and institutional closures. Secrecy, due process violations, arbitrariness, unlawfulness and abuse of power are among the terms used to describe the Bush administration's post-September 11 activities by, among others, Human Rights Watch, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press and the US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. (Cainker, 2002)

### The Missing People Statistics

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, nearly 10,000 people have gone missing in the country since 2001, with nearly 3,000 still unaccounted for. In 2016 alone, there were 728 disappearances. The HRC and human rights activists say these numbers are significantly underreported. (Nazish, 2018). Our country Pakistan is presented by Western countries as the most dangerous and insecure country in this regard.

The actors behind the past thwarted attacks in the Spanish city denoted an

intriguing combination which, indicative of the operational limitations faced by Al Qaeda and the early manifestation of the Punjabi Taliban network, reflected an evolving terrorist threat to the West related to Pakistan. (Reinares, 2010).

According to Dawn, statistics of the highest number of missing person cases were registered with the commission in 2016. Along with other catastrophic effects of 9/11 the cases of missing people were also produced in the news. "Supreme Court bench hearing the missing persons' cases on Monday admitted that it was still groping in the dark as it had failed to make much headway." (Dawn, 2018).

We have two such cases in *The Blind Man's Garden* also. First, it is the case with Mikal's parents. They had been missing when Mikal and his elder brother were still young. It is told in the novel that they had been abducted by some military agency on the basis of suspicions that they were some activists working against the state.

Secondly, the character of Major Kyra is also the best representation of such missing people. Major Kyra served in Pakistan Army as a respectable officer but the circumstances after his brother's brutal murder, have made him revengeful towards the same Army. He goes against them and at last went mysteriously missing. The missing suspects, media persons, journalists and people like Doctor Afia Siddique are continuously reported after the September 2011 incident happened.

### Natural Ethics

Why does it happen? Why will someone risk his/her own life for others? These questions have puzzled philosophers and scientists as well. But the ultimate answer may be provided by the phenomenon of "Natural Ethics" Generally, a question comes into mind why do people do good? In some cases people risk their lives to save others; sometimes the reasons are known while in

other cases the reasons are completely unknown. For instance, in 2007 a construction worker Austrey, saved an epileptic person from a train, putting his own life at risk. Luckily both survived, when asked why he did so Austrey said: 'I just saw someone who needed help. I did what I felt was right. Mikal and Jeo represent the phenomenon of "Natural Ethics". According to this school of thought, it is not religion that teaches us how to take care of everybody else. It is the ground for common sense that is termed as the supreme religiosity, and it is meant to do well and to reject evil. So it seems not on the credit of any religion or preacher that teaches someone to be virtuous. George Lakey suggests a strategy to fight against terror non-violently. An aspect of it could be that a good deed is a person that may motivate others to do the same. It could be Geo's good intentions of attending the injured of wars, that had motivated Mikal to accompany Geo for his safety. Both risked their lives for the sake of someone else's life.

I made mistakes when my son was a child,' Rohan says. 'His mother had died in the state of apostasy and as a result, I enforced an extreme form of piety on myself and on my children, making them pray and keep fasts, revealing to them things inappropriate for their ages. The transience of this life, the tortures of Hell and, before that, of the grave. I stopped eventually, seeing the errors, but it must have marked them. I wonder if that is why he went to Afghanistan. (Aslam, p98)

The sense of good morality is independent of the laws of religion. Jeo left for Afghanistan with the intention to serve the injured and wounded people of war, irrespective of their nationality or religion. He is a medical practitioner who wants to present his services to the needy. His approach towards life and humanity could be his inherited gene from his mother Sofia. [chapter4 section3.1]

Secondly, we could also examine the same case with Mikal as well. He accompanied Jeo to Afghanistan to provide him with security because Mikal knew the possible threats in the war zone. And he fears that Jeo won't be able to survive in it. "Did you hear how the Taliban are putting inexperienced Pakistani boys on the frontlines, where they are getting slaughtered?' The organization I am dealing with has nothing to do with combat. We are not going there to fight." (Aslam, p28)

Mikal has lived in the slums but was adopted by Jeo's parent so he has the affiliation with his foster brother. (Steve, 2013).

The sense of good morality is independent of the laws of religion. "Natural Ethics" basically helps to identify and then differentiate between what is good and bad.

### The Need for Parallel Institutions

Thus keeping in view, the above-mentioned problems, there is a need for the rehabilitation and reformation of the affected class in this regard through "Parallel Institution".

According to Metta Center for nonviolence "Parallel Institutions" are basically meant for educating people non-violently in awakening the right kind of power in people to lead a peaceful and successful life. It could rightly be called a constructive social program or campaign in rehabilitating the process of traumatized persons. That could educate people about the true spirit and teaching of Islam because "Pedophilia" kinds of acts are the products of misunderstanding and miscomprehending of the true Islamic values. Earlier the warlords allowed this act for their political objects. By educating people about the true spirit of the divine lessons of Islam a progressive social code of Islam could be established.

In Sofia's character, Nadeem Aslam seems to present a centre of rehabilitation. As

if she is the person who contributes to consoling heart broken or grief-stricken people by providing some remedial factors. For instance, she painted the walls of Mikal's and Basie's poverty-stricken room not for the sake only, but these colours may help to provide a colourful remedy against their colourless childhood. She uses colours to express her emotions. And not even colours, her art of calligraphy of the Islamic transcripts in different parts of the school (The Ardent Spirit) and Quranic verses on Jeo's ruby pendant also show her love for Islam and the Alma Mater (The Ardent spirit) though she is doubted to be an apostate by her husband. As Aslam says "The calligraphy is in Sofia's hand and its grace makes the reader aware of, and even feel responsible for, the soul of the calligrapher." (Aslam, p21) She one way or another other contributes to providing relief and ease on humanitarian bases. She uses different mediums of art like painting, Calligraphy and making sculptures to attain her ends.

## Conclusion

The study reveals the ugliness of an imposed war and its imprint on the lives of the individuals residing in Pakistan and Afghanistan. For instance, through analyzing different works and incidents. Common men are caught in the clutches of war.

The true purpose of the study is the closest imitation of men and manners. And to portray the true picture of society as it really occurs. As the visionary approaches have more awareness towards such adverse situations like terrorism, identity crises or the ugliness of imposed wars so the study is used as a medium. It is not a humdrum situation but the work has almost fulfilled its responsibility for the readers in promoting Islam as a peace-loving religion rather than a misleading and terrorist-producing ideology.

Though the research project attempted is admittedly brief, it proposes an overview of

the outcomes of 9/11 in the days that followed the incident. In sum, this study will provide a foundation for future researchers to study in the fields like new syllabus designs for BS programs, which will help the individual (students) to cope with the situations like the present insurgencies in the shapes of discrimination, national identity and to identify our moral or social ethics in comparison to West.

The post-terror recovery programs and pro-conflict education and training could be of greater help if implemented in post-9/11 rehabilitation and recovery policy. Because, 9/11 has fed a sense of revenge, hatred and racial discrimination. Westerners suspect every Muslim a terrorist and Muslims have insecurities towards Westerners. So, if proper educational guidance is provided in the form of a "Parallel Institution" these fears could be cured.

The purpose of conducting this research study is to prevent a violent reaction by Muslims and particularly by the youngsters who might have been directly or indirectly affected by the incident of 9/11. The study will be helpful in serving as a rehabilitation remedy in regard to providing educational awareness among the masses.

One of the important issues regarding the study was the non-availability of the material in hard and soft form. As a comparative study of novels of Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden*, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* has been conducted because it deals with much of the issues and reveals the aftermaths of 9/11 the best. Unfortunately, his status being a contemporary writer proved the hindering effect in achieving certain goals, because fewer reviews and papers are available for Nadeem Aslam's works. And therefore, a small number of analysts' reviews are provided.

As Pakistan is directly affected by the War on Terror (post 9/11), contemporary Pakistani English writers have an advanced approach to analyzing the situation. The major portion of syllabi and textbooks are designed in English, if the literature of contemporary Pakistani English authors becomes a part of the BS program, it could

serve as an educational tool. This recommendation could also serve as an educational therapy for establishing a sense of reconciliation among students. As a result, unfortunate incidents like the Mashal case in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and student riots at Punjab University could be avoided.

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