

**Globalization and Cultural Identity in Mohsin Hamid's
*The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

Mausumi Pattanayak

Ph. D. Scholar in English

Dept. of HSS, C.V. Raman University, BBSR

Supervisor

Dr. Mukesh Tiwari

Assistant Professor

C.V. Raman Global University, Bhubaneswar

Abstract

Globalization signifies the increase speed of movements and trade off human beings, goods, services, capital and technologies in all over the world. It improves the interrelationship between different kind of regions and population around the planet. It is one of the most well-known issues as a mobility which has world-wide effects on all of the nations. This paper makes an attempt to shed light on the theme of Globalization in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. Hamid's fiction can be considered as the global and local cultures, which cannot be divided from identities of individuals and cities that seem to be the basic carries of cultural values. This paper examines the national identities and negotiation of religious amongst young British Muslim from South Asian. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the narrator uses the conception of creole culture and dilemma of a Pakistani immigrant in America. The writer shows cultural outcome of globalization which do not imply any homogenization for cultural identities of cities and individuals. The novel is centered with the problem of the hybridity and struggle for identity as it is happened to, Changez, the protagonist of the novel.

Keywords: Globalization, mobility, identities, cultural values, negotiation, creole culture, dilemma, immigrant

1. Introduction

After the rise of globalization people and cultures are interrelated with culturally, economically, and socially. Where nationalism is described the modern period, how people are established social bonds and allegiances as well as how nations develop its industry. The current period of globalization is defined by multinational interaction in all spheres of human life. The economic borders are being connected by transnational corporations, cultural products and commodities streaming through a global network of connected cities; the global capitalist system represents organizes and settles the lives of people in all over the world. It is a movement that breaks the boundaries between countries, cultures, and societies across the globe. Globalization is also concerned who plays the role of dominant in dissemination of certain imperialistic ideas and products across the planet. For example, Pieterse, implying that one of the theories on globalization hinges upon potential power of the imperialist Western world claims: “In either conceptualization, whether centered on capitalism or modernity, globalization begins in and emanates from Europe and the West. In effect, it is a theory of westernization by another name, which replicates all the problems associated with Eurocentrism...” (2009:67).

Globalization mainly aims on the following idea: “Impinging global influences can also lead to a revitalization of indigenous cultural forms” (Berger, 2002:10). This may be rises from the fact that governments and local societies feel in danger by the rapid domination of the global cultural forms which they believe that it will cause aboriginal mannerism and values of local to become extinct owing to the irresistible influx of the global products and norms into their native territory. Globalization does not simply signify that the Western outlook will make the local cultures dissolve in the future and establish a sort of world in which there will be only the global or Western styles and forms and that local revival will be reached in its original form without any global outcomes. As Appadurai puts it, “Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization and to the extent that different societies appropriate the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories and languages.” (2005:17)

2. Introducing Mohsin Hamid and His novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

A Pakistani born British writer, Mohsin Hamid is well known for his diaspora writings. His second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was published in 2007. This novel is also shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize for fiction. It is also adopted in a film of the same name. The writer mainly emphasizes on the struggle of the protagonist, Changez, to find his identity within the Western culture. Changez, the protagonist, is a Pakistani who graduates from Princeton University and joins a highly end valuation firm. The story of the novel starts in Lahore where Changez meets an American man, who is a tourist and he tells him his story of how he loses his job, identity, sense of belonging and love. After 9/11 attacked in America the world is not same. Changez is faced a lot in America for searching his identity. Because of his identity, at the airport he is stopped for inspection. Being a Muslim and a Pakistani, Changez struggles a lot to search a place for himself in the society of America. This novel also pays attention on the struggle of Changez's hybrid identity and how his political, social, and personal life is affected.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Mohsin Hamid expresses “America as transcultural space in which different cultures reflect and refract each other and as a landscape in which South Asian citizens look at this country through their distinctive lens of both Eastern and American civilization and in which they begin to comprehend the American imperialist policies toward their homeland more clearly” (Gray, 2011: 90-91). The novel is also dealing with the hard conditions that Muslims communities in America have to witness and suffers a lot after 9/11 attacks especially by being seen as potential terrorists and threats for the country in spite of being innocent. This novel can be explained in terms of globalization and its effects on the local identities of Eastern immigrants in America and on the metropolitan cities as well as the prospect of preserving local cultures in the face of the global forces.

3. Globalization and Cultural Identity in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

The narrator makes it clear-cut that globalization has been noticed not only by individuals but by cities into many parts of the world. The writer indicates the idea that cities cannot remain

unaffected in their pure forms and structures in this global era, being well established in accordance with the current global and Western tendencies. In the last several decades, as Taylor et al. puts it, “transport and communication/computing technologies have been fostering an intensification, expansion and extension of inter-city relations. In this way cities have become central to how many people understand contemporary globalization.” (2007: 13). Consequently, it is unexpected to observe that many metropolitan cities in the world have had in common a lot through the global networks and interlinkage among each other. It is highlight in the novel as follows:

“You will have noticed that the newer districts of Lahore are poorly suited to the needs of those who must walk. In their spaciousness – with their public parks and wide, tree-lined boulevards – they enforce an ancient hierarchy that comes to us from the countryside: the superiority of the mounted man over the man on foot. But here, where we sit, and in the even older districts that lie between us and the River Ravi – the congested, maze-like heart of this city – Lahore is more democratically urban. Indeed, in these places it is the man with four wheels who is forced to dismount and become part of the crowd.” (Hamid, 2013: 36)

The narrator is describing the reforming structure of Lahore in which automobiles and other modern transportation vehicles are common. The writer contrasts the contemporary scene of Lahore with its previous features. Thus come to an end that the city is organized according to the society’s latest requires regardless of what the traditional people who walk and not use any automobiles have or demand. The narrator does not feel like an outsider or stranger after moving to New York, because metropolitan cities with their same architecture and global reflection lead immigrants to think that they do not stay in a foreign and unknown land, which is mentioned in the novel: “Like Manhattan? Yes, precisely! And that was one of the reasons why for me moving to New York felt – so unexpectedly – like coming home” (Hamid, 2013: 36).

Despite the changes occurring as a result of globalization in Lahore, the writer references to the city’s older buildings that underline the esteemed properties of its civilization, and try to match the city with New York’s historical vision in which a rich culture and history are not present

while Lahore has its own grand and stately buildings which disclose a kind of distinctiveness and supremacy:

“We built the Royal Mosque and the 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, 2013: 116)

Moreover to Lahore’s global experiences that unfold higher buildings, shopping malls, new structures, streets and which is dissimilar to the city’s older structures in any way, in the other hand it displays an anti-global environment where a long history and indigenous worth come out to the modern citizens. However Lahore looks very dependent and governed by the Western civilization in the process of globalization. As especially metropolitan cities in the world can be “conceptualized as local sites of cultural appropriation, accommodation, and resistance to ‘global conditions’ as experienced, interpreted, and understood in the everyday lives of ordinary people and mediated by the social networks in which they are implicated” (Smith, 2002: 119). Lahore, like other big cities, looks to be this sort of setting which develops the native citizens to experience both a combination and opposition when they look at its structural features in detail.

The novel inquiries the perception that globalization has gone along into the Eastern nations constantly and one-sided way whereas the Western world has not been effective by cultures and traditions of Asia and other countries who were colonized since the beginning of the global mobility. “Immigration movements mean from once colonized nations to the Western metropolitan cities; the Eastern civilization and local customs have had the chance of invading the central sites of Europe and America by reversing the colonial period where the colonialist powers invaded the Eastern world through their attempts to infiltrate the colonies with the Western cultural products.” (Morley and Robins, 2002: 114). Introducing the indigenous cultural products into the American territory and metropolitan centre, immigrants of once colonized nations have repaid while the imperial centre New York has had to tolerate such an introduction and retaliation. In the novel, it is introduced that:

“But there were other reasons as well: the fact that Urdu was spoken by taxicab drivers; the presence, only two blocks from my East Village apartment, of a samosa- and channa-serving establishment called the Pak-Punjab Deli; the coincidence of crossing Fifth Avenue during a parade and hearing, from loudspeakers mounted on the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Association float, a song to which I had danced at my cousins wedding.” (Hamid, 2013: 36-37)

For the author, thus globalization probably nothing to merely the penetration of American culture into Pakistan and working together with Pakistani culture in the cities like Lahore; as an alternative, it has also to do with the concept that New York embodies have an effect of the global streams on a variation of aspects in its citizens’ lives. As the global movement and travelling have generated a growing middle and upper class of immigrants in the United States, this new emergent class “has an easier access to the materiality of homeland culture via foods, places of worship, etc.” (Rajan and Sharma, 2006: 4). Nations like India, Pakistan, China, Africa and so on, which has contained diverse nationalities, America becomes an area where traditions and cultures of these nations are put together and displayed to both native people and Western citizens. Transmigration of these nations into the conventional of the Western civilization in America creates the emergence and production of their cultures, languages, religious ceremonies and buildings, food, music, clothing, and lifestyles which are thought to disarrange. Like other Western metropolises, New York is supposed to lose the authority of its cultural worth and peculiarities and appears to hold the foreign cultural products and structures in its heart. The city generally included Christian citizens who were performing their rituals in churches, before the arrival of these immigrants. However, the immigrants of Islam, Hinduism and other religions entered the city in the global age, they established their own religious and began to perform their own ceremonies. Besides, this shift of immigration to America has outshone the popularity of fast food and McDonalds due to the production and selling of immigrants’ traditional dishes that drew the attention not only of immigrants but also of American citizens. In Considering of these immigrants have big families that will increase year by year in America, the setup relationship between American culture and other foreign ones will probably be damaged and even become reversed in such a way that American lifestyles may be placed in a subordinate status in the future.

About the result of globalization on individual's cultures and identities, the novel illustrates how some clues of the global and the local culture can be traced in an individual in a blurred and confusing manner. This state of cultural identities can be made it clear through the idea of "creolization" as it makes us "freed to focus on cultures in transition, allowing us to grasp the in-betweens the ambiguous spaces where cultural boundaries blur and disappear as hierarchical categories collapse into each other." (Baron and Cara, 2011: 4). Showing the possibility that the local culture and the global can be living side by side in clothing, eating and speaking habits of a person, the writer of the novel is an instance example of individuals reflecting more than one culture in their attitudes continually going away from one culture and caring towards another. He says that "... I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither ..." (Hamid, 2013: 168).

4. Conclusion

Thus, Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant fundamentalist*, can be examined with reference to the global process and outcomes of globalization which have to do with world cities and ethnic identities of individuals who are turn between localization and globalization. It is also summarized the responses of cross – culture conflict in past 9/11, which has been displayed vividly in the novel. The period of his departing from America and going back to Pakistan that his native country opens many questions connected to rise of multiculturalism conflict and fear of disconnecting identity in the twenty – first century, especially after 9/11. Globalization has an effect on both the Eastern and Western worlds by generating global cities in a fragmented and unsettled way. The cultural identities of individuals who try to save their native traditions and cultures. It is also being affected by globalization which aim to impose the Western culture and civilization on once colonized nation.

Works Cited

1. Appadurai, A. (2005). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. The United States of America: the University of Minnesota Press.
2. Baron, R. and Cara, A. C. (2011). *Creolization as Cultural Creativity*. The United States of America: The University Press of Mississippi.
3. Berger, Peter L. (2002). "The Cultural Dynamics of Globalization." In *Many Globalizations*,
4. Karagoz, Cengiz. (2020). "Globalization, Creole, Culture and Cities in The Reluctant Fundamentalist" 10.30520/tjsosci.667210
5. Gray, R. (2011). *After the Fall American Literature Since 9/11*. USA and UK: Wiley Blackwell.
6. Hamid, M. (2013). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Great Britain: Penguin Books. York: Columbia University Press.
7. Morley, D. and Robins, K. (2002). *Spaces of Identity*. New York and London: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
8. Rajan, G. and Sharma, S. (2006). "New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the United States at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century." In *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the US*, ed. Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma, California: Stanford University Press, p. 1 37.
9. Smith, M. P. (2002). "Power in Place: Retheorizing the Local and the Global." In *Understanding the City*, ed. John Eade and Christopher Mele, UK and USA: Blackwell Publishers, p. 109-131.
10. Taylor, J. Peter et al. (2007). "Introduction: cities in globalization." In *Cities in Globalization*, ed. Peter J. Taylor, Ben Derudder, Pieter Saey and Frank Witlox, New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, p. 13-19.