



RESEARCH PAPER

Mediocre Demons: Marginalized but Implicated Subject Changez in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to prove, that Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid is an implicated subject. The idea of implicated subject was introduced by Michael Rothberg (2019), according to him implicated subjects hold such positions in which they can be found associated with and getting benefits from structure of power and at the same time they consciously or unconsciously ignore the violence perpetuated by that powerful structure. The research is conducted after textual analysis, that is, the approach is Qualitative. The research concludes that Changez was caught in complex implication as he was marginalized by one way, but he can still be an implicated subject in another way. The present research recommends that the trauma narratives need to widen its scope by not only reflecting upon perpetrators and victims but also bringing in attention the role of implicated subjects in the perpetuation of trauma.

KEYWORDS Implicated Subjects, Michael Rothberg, Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Trauma

Introduction

The sole narrator in the work is Changez. He narrates his personal story to his unnamed "American interlocutor" (Noji, 2024, p. 30). They were both seated at a café in Lahore. Changez was successful and well incorporated into American culture before 9/11. However, post-9/11 America changed beyond his expectations.

This research asserts that the trauma narratives need to widen its scope by not only reflecting upon perpetrators and victims but also bringing in attention the role of implicated subjects in the perpetuation of trauma. Implicated subjects are such individuals who are not accused of directly causing violence but their role is more significant than merely a bystander. They are associated with the structure of power since they chose to participate in that structure for their own benefits. They have no control over powerful and dominating regime and they consciously or unconsciously ignore the trauma perpetuated by that powerful regime (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1). This research argues that Changez, the protagonist character in the novel was initially an 'implicated subject' because he chose to participate in such a system of dominance in America which traumatized Muslims around the world. According to the philosopher Karl Jaspers, "each individual bears responsibility for the manner in which they are controlled by the governmental authority." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 43) Therefore, it is asserted that although Changez was not a direct perpetrator of trauma for Muslims but his participation in the American society makes him responsible too. To pursue his successful career, he consciously ignored the kidnapping, beating and assassinations of his fellow Muslim men in America. Furthermore, he consciously tried to stay away

from any news about bombing of Afghanistan by declaring that “all these world events were playing out on a stage of no relevance to his personal life” (Hamid, 2007, p. 46). The concept of implicated subjects is extremely complicated and multifaceted; moreover, implicated subjects occupy multiple positions. It is argued that Changez was caught into complex implication. As on one hand he was discriminated as an aftermath of 9/11 attacks and on the other hand he was participating in the society which was traumatizing Muslims.

Literature Review

In this article, *The Perpetrator-Bystander-Victim Constellation: Rethinking Genocidal Relationships* (2005) written by Robert M. Ehrenreich and Tim Cole, the writers argue that although bystanders hold a significant impact yet their role is overlooked. The authors argue that victim, perpetrator and bystander are the three categories in a constellation, which are involved in trauma and “these three categories occupy different roles” (Noji, 2024, p. 22). “The researches on the perpetuation of trauma apparently focused on the individuals responsible for causing harm but the contribution of bystanders has been again neglected” (Ehrenreich & Cole, 2005, p. 218). The authors further explain the reason that why this category is not given much importance, which they argue, due to the lack of explicit records of their impactful role in histories. The authors further argue that although bystander is not the source of generating destruction and harm but they do not belong to the group which is regarded, as victims, by the perpetrators. Moreover, the authors argue that those who are regarded as bystanders are subject to change throughout time. The role of bystanders is illustrated by their response to the policies of the perpetrators and whether they decide to distance themselves from or support the perpetrators' group. In addition, individuals who are in favor of the perpetrators' group may perceive their policies as beneficial, while those who distance themselves from the perpetrators experience the impact of these policies. This article introduces a model which it calls the perpetrator-victim-bystander constellation model. This model has been established to analyze the impacts of the role of these three categories during a traumatic event. The present research argues that the claim of the authors that bystanders cannot be victims (Ehrenreich & Cole, 2005, p. 217), has overly simplified the category of bystanders. As this ‘neither victim and nor oppressor group’ is extremely complex. Rothberg “expanded the vocabulary of trauma studies by including the figure of implicated subjects” (Ayodeji, 2021, p. 3). Therefore, on one hand the present research adds an extension to the over-simplified category of bystander by calling it an implicated subject. On the hand other, the present research also argues that bystander can be both, the victim and the one who is affected. As according to Michael Rothberg, the role of implicated subjects is multifaceted they are oppressed but still can be found participating in the powerful structure that perpetuates injustices and trauma (Rothberg, 2019, p. 37).

Engaging Critically with 9/11 and its Aftermath: Multidirectional Memory, Visual Counter narratives and Implication in Jonathan Safran Foer's Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close and Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalism (2022), this article written by Amber Janssens, contends that “the novel used the term 'you' in order to directly engage readers who hold adverse opinions about Muslims and wrongfully believe that all Muslims are extremists” (Janssens, 2022, p. 67). Janssens further build this argument by narrating a critic Greta Olson who says that, “Changez directly confronts the listener, a fictional White American, in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. However, “you” appears to be for readers” (Janssens, 2022, p. 67; Olson, 2018, p. 160). According to

Janssens readers hold prejudice against Muslims and their biases “make the readers implicated subjects in participating in the structure that discriminates people” (Janssens, 2022, p. 69) hence, the use of the word “you” is for all those readers who are not direct sources of perpetuation of trauma but who are implicated subjects in contributing to generate racial antagonism. The author in of this work confronted readers and asserts that readers are not the ones to start the war but they cannot be considered as innocent or passive bystanders, thus, they are implicated subjects because like America audience, “they would overlook the atrocities caused by the war on terror, which resulted in the deaths of innocent Afghanis or Muslims” (Janssens, 2022, p. 70). So, this conscious ignorance makes them implicated subjects. However, the present research argues that Janssens work is limited as it only calls readers the implicated subject and thus, leaves a gap to analyze Changez as an implicated subject.

Marginalization, Mimicry and Subversion: A Bhabhian Reading of Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2021) is a work written by Muhammad Afzal Faheem and Nausheen Ishaque. The authors analyze the phase of Changez's marginalization in America through Bhabhian viewpoint of mimicry. The authors argue that, during his stay in America Changez tried to hide his original roots. He veiled his Pakistani identity for assimilating into American society and attaining his goals of a successful career. The authors argue that this act of deceptive appearance was Changez's intentional struggle to hide his “Pakistaniness” (Hamid, 2007, p. 35). “Changez thoroughly observed and replicated the American way of life” (Faheem & Ishaque, 2021, p. 228) for instance he learned to speak in “American accent because he was aware of the benefits he would receive” (Hamid, 2007, p. 22) after being assimilated into American culture and society. The authors argue that “Changez wanted to serve US Empire for his personal gains even after knowing about the beating, disappearing and killing of Muslims in America” (Faheem & Ishaque, 2021, p. 232). The authors depict Changez's imitation of American culture only as a means of getting advantage. It is argued that the work in question further, welcomes narrative on a broader topic of Changez as an implicated subject. Therefore, the present research particularly focuses on the instances where Changez intentionally imitated the American way of life to get assimilated. Therefore, it is argued that Changez's imitation was such a desire and struggle to assimilate, that made him an implicated subject to the violence acted upon his poor fellow Muslim men in US.

Material and Methods

The present research is conducted after textual analysis, that is, the approach is Qualitative. Michael Rothberg's theory of implicated subject is employed as a theoretical framework in this research. To prove Changez as implicated subject, a close analysis of his choices, words, and behavior has been conducted and paralleled them with those situations that are described by Michael Rothberg, in which a person may found guilty as being implicated subject.

Michael Rothberg builds his argument on the perspective given by an American author and critic Bruce Robbins. Robbins stresses over analyzing and understanding the specificity of individuals, who alongside perpetrators are directly or indirectly involved in a system that generates trauma, inequality and violence. Rothberg refers to this specificity as the “implicated subject” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 32). Rothberg offers the category of the “implicated subject” to describe those who, “Who neither directly causing harm nor do they create or govern the powerful regime but they are associated, contributing or getting benefits from the structures of power” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1). In

his book *"The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators,"* Michael Rothberg delves deeper into the concept of the implicated subject and contends that there is insufficient comprehension of what Hannah Arendt referred to as "vicarious responsibility" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1) for actions or outcomes that we did not directly commit or bring about. Moreover, there are many indirect and social forms of agency that permit exploitation and dominance yet are often overlooked. "Unlike perpetrators the implicated subjects are less actively involved but they cannot be termed as passive bystanders." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1) In addition to the maintenance of contemporary violence, they play an important role in the perpetuation of the injustices that have occurred in the past. "Strong foundation for contemplating responsibility for past and present injustices can be attained by delving into the intricate realm of the implicated subject." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 33) Furthermore, those who are implicated in acts of injustice may participate in them without being conscious of their role or admitting it, as it is often done "unconsciously or denied" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 11). This idea emphasizes the notion that persons engaged may not possess complete awareness of their actions. The degree of engagement can vary, ranging from complete awareness to complete unawareness or somewhere in the between.

Rothberg states that a group of Black feminists called the "Combahee River Collective" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 35) laid a foundation for intersectionality. Since Rothberg links intersectionality with his concept of the implicated subject, he argues that this integration of intersectionality with his theory is a strong tool for understanding society. Rothberg puts forward the example from the statement of Combahee River Collective for explaining the connection he develops between intersectionality and implicated subjects. The Collective stated that "as Black feminists, they must work in coalition with various groups to survive, but they also fight racism alongside Black males" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 36). In simple terms, this means women of color fight against sexism just like white women but Black feminists are also required to stand with Black men against racism. So, this is an occurrence of intersectionality that is suffered by Black women. Rothberg argues that White women are implicated subjects in this situation. Although coalition with Black women is essential for combating misogyny, "White women are involved in a negative solidarity with White males as perpetrators of racial oppression." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 36) Thus, according to Rothberg such negative solidarity may categorizes an individual as an implicated subject. Also, it is argued that "implicated subjects can be suppressed by one way but they can be the participants in the system of oppression and injustice in some other way" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 37).

Rothberg further describes the state of "complex implication" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 40) by asserting that individuals can be oppressors, oppressed and facilitators simultaneously depicting their multiple positions concurrently. This concept of complex implication further extends the idea of negative solidarity. Rothberg explains it by providing an example of a Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi. The survivor proposed the notion of "gray zone" in his book of essay *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), to describe such a space within the Nazi concentration camps where some Jews in order to feel secure to some extent, had no choice except to align themselves with the oppressors, labor for them, or injure their fellow captives. Such people defy easy categorization but have ties to both the victim and offender groups. Such "morally ambiguous position is termed as implicated subject" by Rothberg (Rothberg, 2019, p. 39) Hence, it is argued that Michael Rothberg's theory of implicated subjects is not limited to a particular form of implication. This concept is very complex and multidimensional as it is argued in the above analysis that a person can be involved in complex implication; a situation where he is victim and a perpetrator at the same time.

In this chapter this concept is further explored through the character of Changez as how the protagonist was involved or a participant in the system of complex implication. Moreover, the research asserts that he was marginalized and still can be witnessed as somebody who is implicit in the perpetuation of trauma and injustices.

Results and Discussion

Before 9/11 attacks Pakistan and America “once started establishing relations, but there their connection deteriorated into conflicts.” (Kux, 2001, p. 359) Pakistan relied on the US to overcome its security and economic needs. Year 1965 marked the phase of first sanction imposed on Pakistan by USA, moreover, in 1979 this practice continued as President “Jimmy Carter put sanctions against Pakistan on uranium enrichment concerns” (Malik, 2012, p. 140). This is just one example of sanctions imposed by USA on Pakistan. Thus, these monetary and military sanctions ended their alliance.

As described above “Pakistan and the US have complicated relations” (Khan, 2019, p. 61). Where US always tried to maintain its power and hegemony in the region and imposed such sanctions that made others to suffer, there also exist such individuals who ignored the abusive power play of dominance by America and still wanted to assimilate into their culture. So, it is argued that Changez the protagonist of the novel, who is portrayed as a marginalized Muslim Pakistani, was initially one of those individuals who neglected this relationship between his own country and the United States “that has been characterized by its depressing nature” (Khan, 2019, p. 63). Moreover, he aimed to be recognized in the American Society and to acquire his American Dream of reaching to his full potential. As he said, “This is a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible.” (Hamid, 2007, p. 6) As according to Michael Rothberg implicated subjects hold such positions in which “they are not direct sources of violence but they are associated with powerful structure they cause injustices” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1) and Changez’s saying that “I am a lover of America” (Hamid, 2007, p. 5), is arguably termed as his admiration of the American culture, moreover, he considered America as his second home. Although he never directly caused harm but his choice of affiliation with the powerful system makes him an implicated subject. This research claims that the dominant political system of America is full of injustices for other governments and states that are weaker for instance, moreover, “it influences the other states internal affairs” (Khan, 2019, p. 64). For instance, Bilal Hamamra, Ayman Mleitat and Ahmad Qabaha in their article “Navigating Economic Inclusion and Psychological Exclusion: Immigration in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” writes that, “America controls and corrupts Pakistan's political and economic institutions through military and financial aid, subjecting it to oppressive policies” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 292). Secondly, for the sake of its foreign policy goals, the US has maintained its hegemony and expanded the “notion of American exceptionalism” (Gray, 2011, p. 17) by dominating weaker governments in every domain from the military, economy to culture. Moreover, America’s hegemony “is a contemporary illustration of an imperialistic force” (Shabbir, 2020, p. 61). Cultures are taken over by economic supremacy.

The economically dominant culture's food, dress and values progressively supplant those of the economically weak culture, until the latter looks identical. This situation is referred as cultural imperialism and it is argued that cultural imperialism is often practiced by America (Tyson, 2006, p. 425).

According to Rothberg, “although the role of implicated subjects is indirect in the structures of power and domination but their role is significant and cannot be ignored” (Knittel & Forchieri, 2020, p. 8). It is argued that Changez’s implication is visible as his role is significant in following the legacy of the dominant USA, as he was captivated by the American way of life. He imitated their culture by all means in order to be recognized and tried to hide his originality. For instance, he said,

I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and—most of all—by my companions (Hamid, 2007, p. 35) and I was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as much as I could (Hamid, 2007, p. 22).

It is argued that Changez’s struggle for foreign accent, appearance and imitation is the coping mechanism for the “nod of approval” (Hamid, 2007, p. 40) from the dominant culture, and it also depicts his aspirations to be a part of the dominating system. Furthermore, “Immigrants from developing nations often find themselves drawn to the allure of the US culture, eagerly seeking to establish their own identity in order to be seen as powerful and dominative like America” (Pandya & Baxodirovna, 2022, p. 5850). When Changez was asked about how he sees his future he replied, “I hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability” (Hamid, 2007, p. 17). It is argued that this witty respond by Changez was his personal view of life. As though he was assured to be a part of such a powerful system that could make him dominative too in his sphere in a certain way, as he said “This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known” (Hamid, 2007, p. 19). According to Michael Rothberg, “the implicated subject, is a transmission belt of domination” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 35) and the implicated subject is not cause for celebration. In fact, the “implicated subject represents, a problem and does not offer a solution” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 200) The research again contends that Changez is an implicated subject, who’s implication was a problem and representing him as somebody who carries further the belt of domination, as he participated or desired to participate in such a system of domination, that has always meddled into the affairs of other states just to maintain their superiority over others, for instance, the “decisions made by the US military have far-reaching consequences for entire nations, often determining their very survival” (Evans, 2003, p. 99).

Moreover, Rothberg draws upon philosopher Charles Mills’s definition of “structural group-based misrecognition” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 34), and depicts that implicated subjects experience this kind of misrecognition. Moreover, this situation is the “lack of awareness that results from having a privileged position in an unequal social structure, which may be attributed to elements like gender, class, and ethnicity” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 34). In simple terms it means that those who occupy privilege subject position, they are ignorant of the unequal practices performed in that social system. It is argued that this idea is true in Changez’s context as well. As he occupied a sort of privileged position in terms of his career as he said, “Princeton made everything possible for me” (Hamid, 2007, p. 11) moreover, “Changez is positioned favorably inside the American capitalist system due to his privileged manner of displacement” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 292), so, he ignored the unequal or unjust system of dominant politics performed by USA. Thus, he became an implicated subject who played an indirect role by inhabiting in the systems of undue dominance.

Following the September 11 attacks, the United States sent a clear warning to nations worldwide, stating that they must choose to “either support or oppose the United States” (Khan, 2019, p. 62). “In an interview with CBS, former President General Pervez Musharraf said that Richard Armitage, who was the US Intelligence Director at that time, warned Pakistan to brace themselves for bombing and a regression to a primitive state” (Khan, 2019, p. 62; Bokhari, 2006). As a result, Pakistan decided to participate in the War on Terror led by USA. The US used the technique of a dominating power by offering aid and funding to achieve its goals and influence Pakistan's war policies. “In the early years of the War on Terror, US policies and actions damaged Pakistan's economy in all key areas” (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2013-2014), Year 2013-2014. In addition to this, US funding to Pakistan allowed the US to dominate its politics, particularly inside Pakistan, to preserve control.

Although, America was a victim in these terrorist attacks of 9/11. But this research argues that the War on Terror launched by USA made it a perpetrator of trauma particularly for Muslims as they were tortured, and finally killed. This mass killing included the murder of innocents as well. For instance, the author Nafisa Haji in her novel *The Writing on My Forehead* (2009), represents the tragic death of Ameena, the elder sister of the protagonist Saira. Ameena was a Muslim Pakistani girl who decided to wear hijab and soon after the 9/11 attacks “she had been shot” (Haji, 2009, p. 204) by an unnamed American man. After her death her husband Shuja laments over allowing her to wear hijab as he said, “I should have told Ameena to take off her hijab” (Haji, 2009, p. 208). Ameena's death portrays the hatred of the people in the USA for Muslims. Without considering the fact that the person they are killing or torturing is an innocent being. After 9/11 “terrorism was linked to Islam” (Scanlan, 2010, p. 266) and anyone from “Afghan, Arab or Muslim ethnicity was seen as a threat” (Bennett & Kennedy, 2003, p. 180) USA fueled the false narratives by asserting that “all terrorists are Muslim and denying the possibility of white individuals being terrorists” (Corbin, 2017, p. 456). This propaganda narrative led to traumatizing the Muslims particularly those who had nothing to do with war or terrorism yet faced the racial discrimination. Moreover, the “the War on Terror transformed into a perilous predicament that increased the Western involvement in Afghanistan” (Connah, 2021, p. 82). Leoni Connah's analysis reveals a staggering loss of life, with over One Lac Afghan citizens and around Sixty Thousand security forces perishing during these interventions (Connah, 2021, p. 70).

This research proclaims that “Changez as a part of the perpetrator group” (Janssens, 2022, p. 58). Despite the violence and trauma perpetuated by the US, Changez still wanted to integrate into the American culture. “Rothberg claims that implication is often unconscious or ignored” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 11) so, according to Rothberg implicated subjects are not always aware of their positions and in some cases, they ignore their implication. Changez appears in the latter category because he was conscious of everything, he said, “that all these world events were playing out on a stage of no relevance to my personal life” (Hamid, 2007, p. 46). It is argued that in his pursuit of upward mobility, he ignored the whole thing happening around him and thus, actively contributed to systems that perpetuate trauma. It also proves the notion that “Implicated subjects are those who live inside or derive advantages from systems of control, but do not initiate or have influence over these systems” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1). So, it is argued that Changez being an implicated subject couldn't do anything about the system or against the system as he said, “there was nothing I could do” (Hamid, 2007, p. 46). But he continued to stay within that system as it was benefitting for him in order to gain success for his own career as he said, “Clad in my armor of denial I was able to focus—with continuing and noteworthy success—on my job” (Hamid, 2007, p.

44). This denial was derived from his choice of ignoring the reality that his countrymen and Muslims were suffering because of USA's War on Terror. Furthermore, "Changez's participation in the American finance industry contributed to the exploitation of Muslim majority countries by the United States" (Nicolai, 2020, p. 63).

Changez falls in the category of mediocre demons, a concept proposed by the philosopher Simona Forti and further discussed by Rothberg in his theory. Mediocre demons are those "subjects whose ordinary and daily actions aid in the development of violence and the transmission of power" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 53). Therefore, it is asserted that ignoring the news about whatever happening with the Muslims and working in the US firm might appear an everyday or usual behavior for Changez but this mundane behavior makes him implicit in the perpetuation of violence. In his examination of implicated subjects Rothberg presents the arguments of the philosopher Hannah Arendt. Arendt posits that while they (implicated subjects) "although they (implicated subjects did not create historical violence and abusive structures but the political responsibility lies upon them simply by living within them" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 49). Moreover, "this concept of membership leads to a sense of responsibility" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 50). In simple terms it means that simply by living in or being part of a group and nation, the mere participation, can make you responsible for all the evil things that took place no matter if you didn't directly cause them. This argument is further supported by an example that "upon his ascension to the throne of France, Napoleon Bonaparte assumed accountability for all actions of his nation between Charlemagne's reign and the terror of Robespierre" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 47). The notion that "we are all responsible" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 47) creates a complex web of implication and it is argued that Changez represents all those Muslims or Pakistanis who ignored "conventional divisive language of the America: West vs. the East, Christians vs. Muslims" (Gray, 2011, p. 17). They ignored the circumstances of their fellow Muslim being killed. For example, Changez ignored as how the "FBI was raiding mosques, shops and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (Hamid, 2007, p. 44). By drawing upon Arendt's concept of "collective responsibility" it is argued that the choice of participation in the system of injustice, merely because it was benefitting in terms of successful career, made Changez responsible for the traumatic political activities of America, thus, making him an implicated subject.

Moving on to the Fiscal exploitation and implication the research argues that, the financial assistance by America made it such a dominant state to control and manipulate the internal structure of Pakistan. "Pakistan's policy decisions during the Soviet-Afghan war and in the post-9/11 era, serve as notable illustrations of America's control of Pakistan's national interests and policies" (Khan, 2019, p. 64). "The theme of fiscal discrimination and imbalance in capitalist civilizations across the world is embodied by Mohsin Hamid in his work *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." (Poon, 2017, p. 2). Rothberg argues that implicated subjects possess "numerous political, economic, and moral associations to supposedly faraway injustices as well as those closer to home" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 32). By introducing an implicated subject, people can delve into the realm of comprehending injustice. In simple terms the participation in the system that creates injustice, can makes an individual an implicated subject, if the injustice affects places closer to your home, country or a faraway state. The particular focus of this research here is on the economic injustices. It is argued that Changez was away from his original roots, his home. Being that, he was serving for American firm "Underwood Samson which reflects the ongoing acts of imperialism within American capitalism" (Nicolai, 2020, p. 63). Furthermore, Juan-Bautista, the chief of publishing

company in Valparaiso, Chile, informed Changez that he in his evaluation job corrupts the lives of others and turns to be like janissaries who “had fought to erase their own civilizations” (Hamid, 2007, p. 67). The US capitalist system created injustices for their own country and for all Third World Countries. This argument is further explored by various examples. “The imperialist capitalist system of the United States has a profound impact on the social and governmental systems of Third World” (Petras, 2007, p. 43), resulting in disparities that subsequently drive mass migration in pursuit of better job prospects and stability. “The imperial state not only facilitates immigration but also controls the socio-economic conditions of immigrants in a manner that aligns with its capitalist objectives.” (Petras, 2007, p. 43)

Furthermore, in the United States, scholarships for international students undergo a hard selection and assessment processes “until the best and the brightest” (Hamid, 2007, p. 6) are chosen. The “scholarship is a component of a larger exploitative system” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 292) it is argued that educational institutions provide the job market with well-trained students “like Changez who unquestioningly prioritize serving the capitalist economy” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 292). The USA’s process of controlling capable immigrants, like Changez, aims to “exploit the human potential of the Global South and use them as tools to advance and work for its imperial capitalism” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 293).

Drawing upon Hannah Arendt’s concept of everyone is responsible, a “collective responsibility for everyone who is part of that unjust” system (Rothberg, 2019, p. 47) it is argued that Changez was equally responsible and implicated as he chose to participate, this participation further proves Rothberg’s idea that an individual becomes an implicated subject by his involvement or presence in “the system that creates inequality in economy of faraway states and closer to it” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 32). Moreover, Changez desperately desired to be recognized in the American system of capitalism and for that reason he compromised the history of his land to the will and whims of his capitalist controllers as in response to “Jim’s demand ‘sell yourself’, he belittled the history of his land” (Rabbani& Ahmad, 2020, p. 93) and described Lahore as “layered like a sedimentary plain with the accreted history of invaders from the Aryans to the Mongols to the British” (Hamid, 2007, p. 8). In addition to this, Changez manipulates the reality of his subordinate racial position to sustain his socio-economic position intact. His negligence to the incidents of mistreatment inflicted on Muslims after the event of September 11 is a denial mechanism. In so doing, “Changez isolates his Muslim identity from his economic accomplishment to retain a sense of personal success” (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 298). He is trying to keep his sense of success separate from the struggles of his ethnic group. Thus, Changez as an “implicated subject is morally compromised and associated to economic dynamics though without any illicit purpose” (Mihailescu, 2019, p. 87).

Changez knew that he was an average US citizen whose tax dollars were facilitating the bomb blasts resulting in the killing of hundreds of innocent civilians, but he chose not to acknowledge it by consciously ignoring the news.

I had been avoiding the evening news, preferring not to watch the partisan and sports-event-like coverage given to the mismatch between the American bombers with their twenty-first-century weaponry and the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghan tribesmen below (Hamid, 2007, p. 46).

Rothberg puts forward the concept of political guilt proposed by the philosopher Jaspers according to him "Political guilt, supposes that "everybody is co-responsible for the way he is governed, responsibility for the state whose power governs me and under whose order I live" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 43). So, it is argued that Changez's implication associated with being an American, living under American rule of law and not acknowledging where one's tax dollars are going – either to bomb Palestine or Afghanistan –is one of the most crucial positions of implication and responsibility one could have. Also, in his consent to authority, Changez "normalized the behavior of non-judgment and not questioning" and this reflects his trait of "obedience in which he served as the carrier of political abuse" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 54). Thus, being a part of that system, the political responsibility is pertinent to Changez as well as he was being governed under that system which was "able to wreak such havoc in the world –orchestrating an entire war in Afghanistan" (Hamid, 2007, p. 59).

To discuss Changez's Gray Zone the research argues that Changez holds "morally vague position" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 39) because his being, as "America's capitalist elite" (Mleitat, Hamamra, & Qabaha, 2023, p. 292) and his original heritage of being a Muslim Pakistani, intertwined together puts him in an "extremely intricate internal structure" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 38). On one hand, he can be witnessed as suffering violence due to his ethnicity. As he said,

I was approached by a man I did not know. He made a series of unintelligible noises – "akhala-malakhal"– and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine. [...] I prepared to defend myself or strike. Just then another man appeared; he, too, glared at me, but took his friend by the arm and tugged at him, saying it was not worth it. Reluctantly, the first allowed himself to be led away. "Fucking Arab", he said (Hamid, 2007, p. 54).

Changez is not Arab yet due to his Eastern heritage he suffered with racial discrimination or oppression. But on the other hand, he embodies "intricacy and ambiguity that resembles implication or implicated subjects" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 37). For instance, he preferred ignoring the news about "the bombing of Afghanistan" (Hamid, 2007, p. 46). Moreover, in his own words he said,

I ignored as best I could the rumors I overheard at the Pak-Punjab Deli: Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives [...] the few with some basis in fact were almost certainly being exaggerated; and besides, those rare cases of abuse that regrettably did transpire were unlikely ever to affect me (Hamid, 2007, p. 44).

It is argued that Changez's character represents that "regardless of the harshness of the conditions, power structures create implicated subjects" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 35). Primo Levi, a holocaust survivor, said that some "Jews were compelled to labor for the Nazis in concentration camps because the desire for self-preservation drove this tough decision" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 69). It is argued that Changez resembles such Jews as exemplified by Levi, and he remained in the "gray zone" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 22). For instance, he was "under suspicion" (Hamid, 2007, p. 36) he was dealt, with discrimination, by the airport security where he was escorted by armed guards into a room and "was made to strip down to boxer shorts" (Hamid, 2007, p. 36). Moreover, "dispatched for a secondary inspection in a room" where "his team did not wait for him" (Hamid, 2007, p. 36). In addition to this he was tortured and teased on a small account but too often as he said, "I would emerge into the car park to find that one of

the tires of my rental car was punctured –far too often for it to be mere coincidence” (Hamid, 2007, p. 45).

But despite of all this discriminatory and indifferent attitude of Americans towards him he continued with his denying approach and at least initially did not care about the sufferings of the people belonging to his own religion and ethnicity even reasoned their suffering by saying, “such things invariably happened, in America as in all countries, to the hapless poor, not to Princeton graduates earning eighty thousand dollars a year” (Hamid, 2007, p. 44). Therefore, the research asserts that Changez was living in what Primo Levi calls “the gray zone” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 37).

In addition to this discussion, it is asserted that Changez as being in the Gray Zone created a situation where there was no clearly defined us versus them. “There was not just one boundary, but rather infinite number of borders” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 38) one border between him and America as after the attacks the US saw the world as “liberal or advanced West and a regressive Rest” (Heidemann & Detmers, 2013, p. 147) second between him and the individuals of his own ethnicity “he ignored that Muslim men were disappearing for questioning or worse” (Hamid, 2007, p. 44) and the third border, is derived from his classist behavior “as he believed that worse could happen with hapless poor and not with somebody like him who is a Princeton graduate, earning dollars” (Hamid, 2007, p. 44). Moreover, it is argued that Changez’s denial and ignorance of the sufferings of Muslims posits to his sense of protection and it is asserted that he developed this approach to save himself from a huge harm. As Rothberg says that “implicated subjects can occupy multiple positions occurring at the same time or one after the other” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 41) therefore it is argued that Changez’s implication is multifaceted he is discriminated and marginalized but he too participates in the system that originates it. Thus, being an implicated subject, he inhabits numerous positions just like the Jews in the gray zone.

This chapter concludes by further arguing its stance on Changez’s implication by drawing example from situation suffered by Black women of “Combahee River Collective” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 36), who made coalition with white women to combat sexism but women of color suffered the racial oppression along with their Black men and were not supported by white women. So, this shows the negative solidarity of “white women with white men”, as they participated in racial discrimination (Rothberg, 2019, p. 36). Michael Rothberg narrates the statement of philosopher Hannah Arendt about holocaust and she says that,

Our friends, who had no role in causing this crisis, were more distressing than those of our adversaries. The Nazis did not rise from within their ranks; but our friends, were captivated by the success of Nazi regime that they denied to challenge the verdict of history (Rothberg, 2019, p. 45).

This statement portrays the concerns of those Jews who suffered not merely because of Nazism but their own people, belonging to their ethnicity and religion, disappointed them. Thus, this is providing an expansion to the concept of negative solidarity. This whole concept and situation of negative solidarity is closely related to Changez. As he “accompanied Erica to fundraisers for the victims of the World Trade Center” (Hamid, 2007, p. 40) and he said “this role pleased me indeed” (Hamid, 2007, p. 40). Meanwhile, he ignored the bomb blasts in Afghanistan and the disappearing and killing of Muslim men in America, he consciously tried to stay away from this news. It is argued that the character of Erica in the life of Changez was more than a love story as

he saw her as somebody who “vouched for his worthiness” (Hamid, 2007, p. 40). Moreover, it is asserted that the relation with Erica was his gateway to integrate into American society and Changez had always tried hard to assimilate into America. Henceforth, it is argued that Changez being caught in the “complex political and moral problem” (Rothberg, 2019, p. 45) consciously supported Erica for her fundraising for the victims of the attack, but on the other hand deliberately ignored the sufferings of the men belonging to his own heritage and, in doing so he appears to be a participant in negative solidarity.

Conclusion

As previous studies and researchers have analyzed Changez as a marginalized man in America but this present research has analyzed him from a different outlook that he is not merely marginalized in America rather he was an active participant in the system that perpetuated trauma for Muslims. He never directly caused harm but being implicated he allowed injustices to occur. Even participated in them by his everyday behavior, by ignoring the killings of Muslim men, this all made him a mediocre demon. He facilitated the exploitative capitalist practices of America by his participation in that system. As a famous phrase goes, ‘it takes a village...’, one can assert that it takes a village to inflict trauma, injustice and violence, it takes an intricate network of individuals who choose their mental and physical comfort over honest accountability, it takes more than a single perpetrator to cause, propagate and facilitate trauma. “It's not meant to take the place of the perpetrator group, but to add to it.” (Knittel & Forchieri, 2020, p. 8) Even in dramatic cases where perpetrators of political violence are readily identifiable, it is asserted that the conditions of possibility for perpetration include a much larger number of implicated subjects without whom perpetration would be impossible or at least would have a limited scope.

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