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Post-9/11 America and the Return of the Pakistani Prodigal Sons

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ABSTRACT*: The paper, through a close analysis of the fictive characters of Changez and Chuck, reads together Mohsin Hamid's* The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) *and H. M. Naqvi's* Home Boy (2009) *as pioneering literary texts that highlight the post-9/11 plight of American society plagued with xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia. Both the novels forward the images of the Pakistani expatriates, by fictionalizing their post-9/11 identity transformations, with their fast weakening ties with the host-land [America] as they are compelled to return, like prodigal sons, to their native homeland [Pakistan]. The paper exploits the theoretical observations regarding diasporic identity by the Postcolonial Studies scholars to provide a theoretic framework to guide the discussion of both the novels. The paper concludes that both Changez and Chuck are the prodigal sons whose decisions to return to their homeland are direct results of their inability to anchor in the host-land and wave off the traumas of their nightmarish social experiences as Pakistani expatriates in America in the turbulent times right after 9/11.*

Keywords: Diaspora, identity, Pakistani expatriates, prodigal sons

Introduction

The event of 9/11 changed the American society: where the white Americans, blinded by their grief, resorted to racism and hate crimes against the immigrant Muslims, the immigrant diasporic communities also went through a drastic transformation. As for Pakistanis, it was a high time to revisit their identities as expatriates in the wake of rising xenophobia and Islamophobia among the white Americans. The paper aims at critically analysing two Pakistani English novels: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* within this socio-political context of post-9/11 America. The analysis seeks to highlight both the novels not only as the earliest fictive responses to the event of 9/11 by the novelists of Pakistani origins, initiating a tradition of Pakistani Anglophone 9/11 novel, but also articulates the argument that both these novels chronicle and document, fictively of course, the subsequent identity crises among the Pakistani expatriates, immigrants, and 2nd generation Pakistani-Americans.

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These fictive imaginings of the identity crises among the Pakistanis refer to the exclusionary cultural logic of the American nation-state after 9/11 and challenge the equilibrium of American ethics of socially engaged transactions, distinctively multiculturalist prior to 9/11, across and among its sub-cultures. The American socio-cultural configurations of a melting pot are effected to the malpractices of racism and xenophobia, as registered through these two novels, homogenizing all its 'Others' (read here as immigrants, the national citizen offspring of immigrants, and expatriates) as 'terrorists'. Such reconfigurations of the American society post-9/11, as both these novels depict, opened up the eyes of Pakistanis in America to this rise of cultural exclusionary specificity stunting the fluid social formations previously hallmark of American multiculturalist society. These two novels record the plight of Pakistani expatriates in America during these changing times and fictively bring out their reactionary moves as responses to problematize these post-9/11 socio-cultural American reconfigurations.

Literature Review

King (2007), noting the similarities between Hamid and his fictive character Changez reads *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a third world protest against the exploitations of Capitalism (p. 684). Morley (2009) records that the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in America, right after 9/11, submitted American as well as the global public to the "pervasive rhetoric of fear" (p. 83). She examines Hamid's novel with a view to gauge "the effects of constitutionally-sanctioned surveillance and pre-emptive action upon the individual" (p. 84). Awan (2010) reads Hamid's novel to be motivated by "a clarification campaign" in order "to counter the negative representation of Islam" by engaging in "reverse-stereotyping" (p. 535). Scanlan (2012) observes that the post-9/11 fictive works by some of the mainstream American novelist followed the ongoing trend of equating Islam with violence and fanaticism (pp. 22-23). She identifies Hamid's novel as the fictive work "that challenge[s] the simplicity of [post-9/11] public rhetoric" prevalent in America and "revise[s] the west's visions of itself as a haven for the oppressed" (p. 23). Hartnell (2012) maintains that the US, despite her sloganeering for multiculturalism and boasting a self-image of a 'melting pot', had always harboured a racist imaginary which reached "intensification" after 9/11 and it is this paradoxical state of the American state and society that Hamid's novel implies (pp. 84-85). Liao (2013) observes that Hamid poses an ethical question regarding the

relationship between the host and the guest, during any pressing times like those of 9/11, through both his characters: Changez and his interlocutor (p. 153). Ng (2014) rejects the assumption that the failure of multiculturalism tantamount to "the rise of terrorism" (p. 71) and reads Hamid's novel as a literary endeavour to "challenge the equation of South Asian culture [at Western spaces] with terrorism in the post-9/11 environment" (p. 72). She observes that the exclusionary patriotism in America has marginalized the "multicultural rhetoric" to strict "assimilationist policies" which in return fan "extremism" among the immigrants like Changez (p. 88). Araujo (2015) observes that the novel, through the character of Changez, "comments on the limitations of the American dream" after 9/11 (p. 103). O'Gorman (2015) observes that though "Islamist terrorism [apparently] enact[s] more manifest violence than US-style capitalism" still both are run by the same desire: the focus on the fundamentals (p. 129). Waterman (2015) suggests that the social shift after 9/11, marked by suspicion and othering, reminds Changez of his new social identity of an outsider in the post-9/11 America (p. 33). Clements (2016), highlights the novel not only as an "act of 'writing back' to contemporary Anglo-American fictions of Islamic identitarian issues and interconnections" (p. 62) but also as an attempt to make the West "recognise the impact of its neo-imperialistic attitudes and policies on the theatre of the East" (p. 66). Olson (2018) observes that the character of Changez, providing an alternative Eastern vision through a "monologic confession and occlusion of the American's voice" (p. 159), turns the post-9/11 American narratives, emphasizing "innocence" and "exceptionalism", on their head (p. 160) by mimicking the very "American forms of narrating" themselves (p. 170).

Mansoor (2012) makes the point that as the post-9/11 times put the Pakistani government to a perplexing situation of choosing between the identity of either a friend or foe of America so it did to Pakistani expatriates too, like Chuck, to review their identity anew. Mansoor, reading Chuck's last act before leaving for Pakistan: saying prayers for his friend Mohammad Shah (Shaman) who had died in the 9/11 attacks, concludes that "Chuck finds a pragmatic course of action through re-embracing his religious identity" and that "the idea of Muslim-hood [lodges] as a latent seed in every person of Muslim origin" to sprout in the testing times, like 9/11, to provide them with "a solid sense of identity consciousness" (p. 41). Waterman (2015), reads *Home Boy* as a literary illustration of the dismal consolidation of American "borders, or constituencies" into "a zone of exception" during the times after 9/11 (p. 139). Zayed (2016) reads together Hamid's novel with Naqvi's in

order to highlight "the vicissitudes of post-9/11 urban experience" in New York with a revised distribution of "precarity" (p. 69). He maintains that both the novels, recording the return journeys of alienated Pakistani expatriates, point to the post-9/11 change in the urban social structures of the cosmopolitan city of New York as "the city's [reconfigured] distribution of precariousness", now after 9/11, includes the hitherto "excluded South Asian upper echelon made up of educated middle-class and relatively well-off Muslims" like Changez and Chuck (p. 72).

With these critical perspectives in the background the paper aims to add on to the critical discourse and engage at more deeper a level to the aspects of Pakistani expatriate identity in post-9/11 America as more of a vulnerable social condition to the changing American circumstances. The Pakistani expatriates are compelled to choose for return journeys back to homeland (Pakistan) like in the cases of Changez and Chuck in comparison with Pakistani immigrants as well as the second generation Pakistani-Americans.

Research Methodology

The paper follows qualitative research method. As it is based on the study of Pakistani expatriate characters therefore descriptive research method is used as a tool of analysis to highlight the lives of these Pakistani expatriate characters after the 9/11 attacks in the US leading them to return to Pakistan. Their traumatic interactions, dialogues, and internal conflicts in post-9/11 American society are studied by using descriptive narrative methods. The data comprises of two novels: Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Naqvi's *Home Boy*, selected thematically for sharing a similar theme that is the return of the Pakistani prodigal sons from post-9/11 America. So both the main characters: Changez and Chuck, as depicted by the writers of both these novels, are analysed through descriptive qualitative method.

The paper draws its theoretic framework by using the concept of diasporic identity as approached by the scholars of Postcolonial Studies. Nayar (2008) defines diaspora as a phenomenon of a community's shifting to another "geographical and cultural region" caused by "migration, immigration, and exile" (p. 187). He further says that "[t]he theme of identity in diasporic writing is not merely an exercise in exploring multiplicities of location and subjecthoods [rather i]t is a larger political issue of global justice, cultural rights, self-determination, and cosmopolitanism" (p. 191).

The event of 9/11 had ineffaceable effects on the lives of Pakistani-American expatriates forming Pakistani-American diasporic communities. Kalra et al (2005) are very much accurate in their observation that "the activities of diasporic people have been seriously curtailed, and […] once applauded hybrid creativity seems meek and mild" (p. 1). Nayar (2008) observes that the postcolonial writers, of diasporic identity experiences, are almost invariably the ones with the first-hand experience of a diasporic hyphenated identity themselves in "their real lives" (p. 188).

Mohammad Arif (2009) observes 9/11 as a temporal marker that shuffled the identity of Pakistani-Americans as "a well-integrated [c]ommunity" (p. 327). She maintains that the event of 9/11 has caused a confusing cleavage among the Pakistani-Americans vis-à-vis their hyphenated identity as they oscillate now less assuredly "between Americanization and the upholding of their [Pakistani] cultural heritage" (p. 328). She observes that at one pole end are Pakistani-Americans who have halted their religious practices publicly and on the other pole end are those who have rekindled and reawakened their Islamic identity with a refurbished and renewed energy in their religious practices (pp. 328-332). She, in this rapidly changing post-9/11 world, predicts more hostile "stigmatization and discrimination" against Pakistani-Americans to come their way unless they fight against it, steadfastly enough, to ensure their inclusion again in "the American landscape" (p. 333).

It is in the context of these changing dynamics of Pakistani-American identity post-9/11 that the paper attempts to critically evaluate both the Pakistani Anglophone novels showcasing treatment meted out to Pakistani-American expatriates in post-9/11 America.

Data Analysis

The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007)

Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is the first ever direct fictive response to the event of 9/11 by a novelist of Pakistani origin. The novel is set in the year 2005 (four years after the event of 9/11) and adopts the stylistic mechanics of a dramatic monologue by forwarding the character of Changez (a university lecturer in his mid-twenties and supporting a beard) engaged in a dialogue with an American visitor (potentially an undercover agent on a secret mission) on a fine late Spring evening at a 'chai-khana' of Old Anarkali Food Street in Lahore. Changez recollects his memories, emotions, frustrations, and philosophical reflections related to his stay in

America from 1998 to 2002. Changez takes this 'chance' meeting with an American visitor as an opportunity to narrate his journey of identity transformation from a modern young man to a 'reluctant fundamentalist' at first and finally a whole hearted one who abhors violence and bloodshed until instigated to it in "self-defence" (p. 110).

Changez, like normal brain drain stuff, considers himself to be lucky to get educational facilities at one of the top most American universities like Princeton and it is like a dream come true when he finally lodges himself at a promising job opportunity with the top notch business firm: Underwood Samson & Company. Nevertheless Changez is not unaware of the discriminatory nature of the American education system for national as well as international students. It only invites to education the best and sharpest of brains all across the globe, through rigorous evaluations, and prepares them to meet the requirements of the American capitalist job market whereas their own American national youth which makes the lot of the American ruling elite are nothing more than mere "upstarts" (p. 13). Changez, as an evaluation analyst, recognises the fundamentals of American capitalism operating under the guise of meritocracy. The "systematic pragmatism" basing on value driven "efficiency" and "[m]aximum return[s]" are the ultimate objectives of American capitalism (p. 22). Changez' alignment with the American culture completes when he starts dating Erica: his only strongest link to America which he will not be able to break free from even after his intellectual transformation after 9/11.

Changez' motives for identity transformation are based on his grievances against America on three levels: personal, religious, and national. Right after the event of 9/11 when Changez is returning from Manila to America he has to suffer humiliating 'Othering' on the airport when he is asked to strip himself down to his "boxer shorts" and his whole return flight is clouded by an awareness of "being under suspicion" (p. 44). His whole dream of adopting American culture crashes when he is separated from his team members for a detailed scrutiny as a foreigner and consequently a very lonely ride back to Manhattan. His courtship with Erica during the month of September is a source of personal happiness for him yet he is aware to the frenzy of self-righteousness that is overwhelmingly gripping the American masses and the state alike. During his evaluation project in New Jersey he finds his rental car stealthily punctured by the local goons "far too often…to be mere coincidence" (p. 57).

Changez' grievances against America shift from personal to national and religious domain as there are increasing instances of reportage of the incidents of beatings of Pakistanis; the humiliating raids on houses, shops, and mosques of the Muslims; growing number of missing people; and unlawful and intimidating detentions of innocent people by the FBI, though he is lucky enough as an individual to have satisfying courtship of Erica and the pacifying comradeship of his boss Jim. America's all-out 'War on Terror' and invasion of Afghanistan flare up Changez' Muslim self as he considers it to be an unjust affront to use the most sophisticated American weapons on "the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghan tribesmen" (p. 59). Changez' heart is constantly gnawed by this shaping of world scenario tarnished by a coercive war. He is perplexed by this use of American might as he is unable to ascertain as to what she wanted as a nation: "dominance", "safety" or "moral certainty". He, for the first time, feels that America had gone berserk in its futuristic visions and had rather stooped low to "a dangerous nostalgia" for her history of wars (p. 69).

When Changez is hurled with abusive disdain and called: "Fucking Arab" (p. 70), he recognises that the American paranoia is not limited to his nationality but spread over the religious domains with media reporting stories of discriminating Muslims in almost all walks of life in the American society. As Changez' grievances against America are oscillating from personal to religious to national domains there is the news of this attack on the Indian parliament in December of the year of the 9/11 attacks. While Changez is spending his Christmas holidays in Pakistan and the sourness in bilateral relations between India and Pakistan has reached new heights as India deems Pakistan to be guilty of attack, it is expected from America to morally support Pakistan too, as Pakistan had readily extended her support for America as a close ally in her 'War on Terror', and play a pivotal role in pulling off the standoff between both the governments of India and Pakistan over the issue of attack on Indian parliament. America's taking of a neutral position, in such circumstances when a little wrong move could ignite a new war between the neighbours, is the least expected a reaction for Changez. This gesture of neutrality, for Changez, is no less than a betrayal, in the time of need, to an ally like Pakistan. This is a revelatory moment for Changez and a time to review his prospects of an American life.

Changez' meeting with Juan-Bautista, during his evaluation project in Valparaiso, Chile, reveals to him the shallow fundamentals of finance deeply rooted

in the insensitive principles of capitalism. He is made to read himself as "a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire" (p. 91) and decides to quit his job, then and there, to return to Erica. She being the only lynchpin between him and America is unable to shake off her nostalgic past with Chris and had, in the meanwhile, gone through a nervous breakdown again as Changez had been able to take her to bed impersonating Chris. Erica's gradual fading away, culminating in her suicide, severs all the ties holding Changez to America.

Changez' disillusionment with America is complete and he is ready for intellectual transformation. He promises himself to engage in acts aiming at stopping America from its foolish politics and blind revenge seeking acts as perpetrated against Afghanistan. He returns to Pakistan and takes up the job of a lecturer with a university in Lahore in order to disengage the Pakistani youth from becoming a modern day janissaries fighting for the American Capitalism.

Changez' narration of his identity transformations after 9/11 to his American interlocutor is an attempt to catch his collective conscience as an American. In the end he apprises the American that he knows that his attempts are labelled as anti-American (which conversely can be pro-Pakistani too) and that America might have sent "an emissary to intimidate" him or even to kill him (p. 110). Hamid finishes his novel with the suspense as to what may follow: waiter, who seemed intimidating to the American, has either come just to shake hands with the American before he enters his hotel or to take him hostage in connivance with Changez to teach America a lesson and stop her from meddling with the affairs of nation-states like Pakistan. The latter situation seems more probable and likely. His statement that as all Pakistanis are not "potential terrorists" just as all Americans are not necessarily "undercover assassins" (p. 111) might be true in general but here in his and the American's case it is certainly the opposite.

Hamid forwards an interesting itinerary of a Pakistani's identity shift. Changez' attempt at adopting the American ways of living, readily, soon after his arrival in America as a student of one of the most prestigious educational institutions, is paced by his securing of an elite job as well as his fling with Erica. His faring with Pakistani-Americans are not frequent enough and do not find any space in the concise narrative of the novel except a passing reference that Changez occasionally visits the diasporic 'dhaba' (dining hotel) named "the Pak-Punjab Deli" (p. 20). Most of his knowledge, regarding the shifting circumstances in the American

society vis-à-vis the Pakistani immigrant and diasporic communities in the wake of 9/11, is based on Television news or casual hearsay. Therefore his response to this social shift in America is either solely personal or a result of US media projections. It is difficult to say that what course his responding acts might have taken had he been more entrenched socially within the Pakistani-American diasporic communities.

Changez is a simple 'brain drain expatriate' who is closely known to his family's economic as well as social status as that of a decadent Pakistani elite class with more stories of past grandeur to keep the appearances than the sources of income. Therefore Changez' internal motivations to escape the social plight of his family, through a promising American education ensuring prestigious job prospects in America at the cost of losing his Pakistani national identity, are obvious pressures on him. Yet he is unable to shake off the circumstances of growing racist and religious bigotry plaguing the American society post-9/11. His compromised national and religious awareness, at the tender age of just twenty-two without any counselling from the Pakistani-American diasporic community and the impossibility of familial counselling due to the family's natural incapability to envision the social changes taking place in America as well as its Messianic expectations from him to take the family out of its economic torpor, makes him shift, albeit reluctantly at first, to the more radical and fundamentalist a position naively committed to the ideal visions of nation and religion. Erica could have served as the last hope to restrict Changez from falling to the lure of extremist fundamentalism for the sake of nation and religion. But she is stuck with the nostalgia of her past with Chris. She is unable to allocate Changez a corner in her heart, even smaller than the one extended to the memories of her dead boyfriend Chris, just as America is unable to let go her past history of national pride in wars it waged and no flinching back from waging new ones. America is hoodwinked by her self-righteous whims post-9/11 once again to adopt an exclusionary policy to shun her diverse citizens like Changez from merging within her national 'quilt'. Changez suffers from doubly unrequited love as Erica and America both leave him to a maddening loneliness.

Hamid seems to draw home the understanding that love can be a light to show the right path in the turbulent times like those that ushered in post-9/11. Erica's incapacity to come out of past and give room to new and vibrant love is the main cause of bringing darkness and loneliness in her as well as Changez' life. Likewise America's getting blindfolded by revenge and hate serve her nothing much

but to tear apart its own social fabric by bringing in socio-political unrest among her citizens and alienating further those expatriates/immigrants already mesmerized by her national melting pot vision of coexistence. Hamid's fictive narrative of Changez' return to Pakistan and his loss of belief in the American culture of coexistence is a timely intervention to clog this growing distrust within the multicultural American society which if left unattended may incite more dangerous forms of fundamentalism and radicalism among her alienated citizens.

Home Boy (2009)

Naqvi's *Home Boy*, like Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, also fictionalizes the turning points in the lives of Pakistani expatriates, soon after the event of 9/11, that made them opt for their return journeys to homeland recognising bitterly the fact that the American myth of the melting pot had actually evaporated with the changing times marked by American reactionary exceptionalism, racism and xenophobia. Both novels feature, mainly, the return of the Pakistani prodigal sons. Whereas Hamid's novel focused on its central character Changez with the help of the pointed and jagged stylistic form of dramatic monologue, Naqvi utilizes the tactics of the art form of novel by depicting the socio-political positions of all kinds of Pakistanis in America: the expatriates, the first generation immigrants, and the second generation Pakistani-Americans, albeit the main focus of the novel, throughout the course of its action, remains on the character of Chuck. Both the novels, through their respective characters, voice the massive transformations in the lives of Pakistani expatriates' post-9/11 and the shades of their immediate reactions to their changing socio-political positions in American society let alone its effects on their mental states.

Naqvi's characters: Jimbo (the second generation Pakistani-American); AC (the Pakistani immigrant); and Chuck, (the Pakistani expatriate), combined together present the fictive imaginary of Pakistanis in America after 9/11. The event of 9/11 as a temporal marker left indelible marks on the personalities of these three self-styled "boulevardiers" (p. 1) and "Metrostanis" (inside cover jacket blurb) as they falsely believe their "fingers [to be] on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (p. 1). They have become the new "Japs, Jews, [and] Niggers" (p. 1) as these were the three ethnic categories that were 'Othered' in the American society's history prior to 9/11 and now Pakistani-Americans, immigrants, and expatriates as well as Muslims were included in the list of newly 'Othered' communities in America after 9/11. The pre-

9/11 peaceful America, where all immigrants were equally American without any botheration for origins, has suddenly metamorphosed into an ogre of a state that is run by the sentiment of an exclusionary politics. America has voluntarily blindfolded herself from her multicultural imagination. The blinding racism and xenophobia has returned with the homogenizing of all into one identity as that of 'terrorists'. "A-rabs" (p. 23), "Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever" (p. 24) they are all alike: terrorists in the new imaginary of the American nation. Ironically this renewed nationalism of American society post-9/11 has led her to blind herself from the other nations that had actually helped America wield a multicultural identity of a melting pot in the first place. All the immigrants, in this case Pakistanis, are terrorists and 'Others'.

The circumstances, however, change dramatically in the lives of these three 'Metrostanis' after 9/11. Gone are the pre-9/11 days when once Chuck visited his friend Lawrence ne Larry at Omaha for "a real American turkey dinner" on Thanksgiving and was acknowledged by his friend's mother for being "so well-mannered" just "because he's Mooslim" (p. 55). The title of a "homeboy" given to him by a local "squat gangbanger" (p. 64) is now replaced with derision and racist 'Othering'. The first such revelation of being an outsider comes to the trio when they are visiting Jake's place almost after a fortnight of the 9/11 attacks. AC has called for a meeting at Jake's not only to come out of the post-9/11 trauma and malaise but also to discuss the missing status of their combined Pakistani expatriate friend Mohammed Shah (Shaman) who had actually died among the people in WTC on the dark day. It is there while they are planning their own kind of 'Jihad' of finding out about Shaman that they are invited into a brawl by two drunkards. They call them, blinded by their xenophobia and racism, as "A-rabs", "Moslems", and "Mo-hicans" and the trio knows, for sure, that "[t[hings were changing" (p. 25) when Jake kicks them out and not the white Americans for picking a fight at his place.

Naqvi brings out a scary picture of social transactions in the post-9/11 America. Chuck, after getting his eye busted in a brawl with the drunks on prowl for hate crimes against Muslims or brown immigrants after 9/11, is further frustrated to read news reports (in the prestigious American newspapers like the 'Post' and the 'Time') by American journalists loaded with irresponsible and emotive recommendations, to masses, of highly vitriolic and callous responses against those who even raise a slight suspicion (pp. 41-42). Naqvi, through his showcasing of hatred-mongering in the leading newspapers of America, indicates America's hang-

up with a nationalist exceptionalism en masse. The state's expectations from its citizens "to be vigilant" in order "to report suspicious activities" (p. 56) is dangerous as it gives the American citizens a chance to indulge deep in their prejudices blindly by reporting even on innocent people. So is the case with Jimbo, AC, and Chuck as they are, during their mission to check up on Shaman at his Connecticut residence, reported by the neighbourhood and are taken into custody by the FBI on the exact time of the very night when George W. Bush made his notoriously famous address ("Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists") to the joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001.

Naqvi gives us the glimpses of the harsh and insensitive treatments heaped on the suspects at the Metropolitan Detention Center: "America's Own Abu Ghraib" (p. 105), where the trio is taken right after their arrest from Shaman's place. Jimbo, AC, and Chuck are readily beaten and humiliated with a blind rage, befitting for regular terrorist, by the FBI agents without bothering to check up on their particulars first. However Jimbo is lucky enough to get a phone call and through the help of his girlfriend Dora's godfather, who happens to be a Governor, is released. Chuck too has to go through unbearable sufferings like his friends. With a visa status expiring in a week he is threatened to be deported to "Bumfuckistan" (p. 107): a national abuse hurled on him during interrogations. It is curious to note the paranoiac state of mind of one of the investigators who, through his interrogations with the detainees, is bent on generating a whimsy theory of his own as to why the Muslims, particularly, terrorize (p. 115). Chuck's detailed answer to him, however, thwarts his ambitions to generate some such foolish theory. Luckily he is released from detention as his track record is clean and does not support any charges of terrorism fixed on him but he is unable to shed away the trauma of his detention experience. He becomes all the more anxious when one Pakistani-American diasporic, present among the gathering at Auntie Mini's place, vehemently expresses the need to deal with the terrorists within themselves whether they be "Muslims, Arabs, or South Asian". Chuck interjects at once and reminds the gathering that a blind national security mechanism often leads to state crimes against the innocent and breaks the news, to them, of AC's detention on terrorist charges as he himself has been released after a "forty-eight hours" long detention (p. 136).

The FBI's manhandling of AC's case, desperate to fix him as a terrorist just because his personal library is filled with diverse books, is alarming for Chuck. These

events are enough to put Chuck under deep stress and anxiety. Deep down in his heart he knows that the circumstances might have been different had 9/11 not happened (p. 174). But "in a changed America, it seemed anything could happen" (p. 112). He is observant to the changes that have taken over the "Little Pakistan" (p. 181) spread across Jackson Heights, Queens in New York. The hustle and bustle of Pakistanis: expatriates, immigrants, and Pakistani-Americans alike, at "the legendary Kabab King" has waned since 9/11 as many of the Pakistanis in New York had gone in hiding and more probably the illegal Pakistani immigrants had to leave America in order to avoid detentions, racism, and xenophobia. After his detention, Chuck himself has developed a social phobia. He swoons with a panic attack when he sees a "black female cop", while passing from "the Children's Zoo" (p. 196). He confesses that the officials like the cop lady, instead of giving him a sense of protection, had become a source of fear: "scarecrows" and "avatars of the Bogeyman". They gave him "existential heebie-jeebies" (p. 197). Desperate times call for desperate measures. Chuck therefore tries to commit a half-hearted suicide in extremely stressed a situation of loneliness when it is neither easy to withstand the close proximity of authorities, nor it is bearable to swallow the possibility of deportation looming large just at a distance of a couple of days.

Though Chuck is offered a job with the Boutique Research House at the most crucial time in his life when he has already attempted a half-hearted suicide, being at the lowest of his strength, his decision to quit America is an impulsive reaction and is revelatory to him too. While he is narrating to his mother, via phone call, the dramatic shifts in his life since the event of 9/11: his personal brush with racism at Jake's; arrest and detention by the FBI; rising anxiety and panic attacks in the presence of officers; AC's 15 years sentence; and the "sadness around" (p. 206) in New York, he is convinced in the very spur of the moment that life has changed after 9/11 and he is "afraid all the time", therefore, it was best for him to leave. When Chuck is ready to leave America he is visited by Amo who has not only come to ask him about his reason to leave America but also to suggest their chance together through even a hasty marriage if necessary. Chuck notices that Amo was no longer wearing the 'hijab'(the headscarf veil) which she had, in fact, decided to wear in the first place as a warding off tactic from attracting boys during her senior school days. Chuck is sure, in his heart, that she has dropped wearing the 'hijab' due to 9/11 in order not to divulge her religious status so openly lest she may attract racists, xenophobes, or hate criminals. Chuck tests Amo by inviting her to Karachi to which

she does not respond even: a signal enough for Chuck to understand that their relationship has no scope beyond America which for him is the last place to live in now.

Naqvi gives an interesting ending to his novel with an 'epilogue'. The epilogue gives a glimpse of the time when a new Pakistani expatriate, like Chuck himself, takes his first flight bound for America. The epilogue shows clearly that the seeds of return to homeland are sown in the very moment when the flight takes off for the host-land. No doubt the dreams of higher studies and settlement in America mark the naps during the long flight to America; still the mind is stealthily registering, at the same time, the emptiness caused by leaving behind the warmth of homeland. And on the arrival in America one comes to know the insufficiency of one's efforts to merge in American culture and ways of living that one had learnt in preparation for America. The first-hand experience of American social life is, of course, different from theoretic assumptions as Naqvi shows through his fictive imagining of the character of Chuck.

Findings

The return itineraries of both Changez and Chuck show that their ties with the host-land were actually basing on their dreams of bright futures. But their dreams come crashing alongside the twin towers on 9/11. Changez and Chuck both had left their country, for a higher education and ultimately a happy ever settlement in America, at the very tender age of 18 years when the dream world is equally strong as one's storming hormones and the shadows of reality are still not cast long. Nevertheless 9/11 shakes awake the realities of a multicultural society in America, nudging both Changez and Chuck to the peripheries of its mainstream national culture and at the same time reviving the memories of the culture of peace and honour at the homeland. As Changez is steeped deep in the capitalist culture of America so his understanding of his status as a brain drain janissary, fighting the American war of capitalism, is stronger whereas Chuck's very brief stint at the Wall Street as a banker is not enough to make him realize his contribution to American capitalist culture as a brain drain stuff. Therefore both of them react to their post-9/11 social situations with different scales of severity but with one similarity: that it is no longer safe for their kinds of Pakistani expatriates to stay in America any longer as the mental scars, which they have received due to the rising American national culture of racism and xenophobia, are deep enough to heal easily. Changez becomes

a staunch fundamentalist reactionary with a bent of mind to teach America a lesson whereas Chuck, engrossed so much with the fear of attracting hostile American state authorities as well as American citizens, decides to leave America to go back to the solacing lap of his motherland whose memories have not left him alone in the past four years that he had spent in America.

Changez and Chuck, both repulsed by the growing racism and xenophobia of American society, still might have found love in America. Changez' unrequited love with Erica and a deep understanding of American capitalist system honed by a selfish nationalism make him leave America and look back to his homeland culture with more love and understanding missing earlier. Unlike Changez, whose reaction to 9/11 to return to Pakistan is guided by a revengeful rage, Chuck's decision to go back to homeland is guided by extreme fear. The alternatives like that of marrying Amo, and an American life are so clouded by his loneliness and a sense of impending danger, right after his release from the Metropolitan Detention Centre, that when Amo suggests a future together for both of them in America he is not willing to envision it unless it is in Karachi: the homeland. Amo is a second generation Pakistani-American whose roots to homeland (Pakistan) had never been watered enough and have gone dry; therefore, she cannot imagine a future for herself in Pakistan albeit together with Chuck for whom she definitely has "a thing" in her heart (p. 49). So we can see that both Changez' as well as Chuck's return journeys are guided by the respective emotions of rage and fear and essentially originating from their similar status that of being Pakistani expatriates with only a short history of emotional investments in America, not enough to help them sprout alternative roots, as in case of second generation Pakistani-Americans, anchoring in the American host-land.

Conclusion

Both novels allude to the post-9/11 socio-political conditions of American society, blinded by exclusive American nationalism with widespread instances of racism and xenophobia against her immigrant and diasporic communities that led to the unnoticed exodus of Pakistani expatriates, legal and illegal alike. Both novels fictionalize post-9/11 return journeys of Pakistani expatriates with Changez and Chuck as fictive case studies for this return of the prodigal sons of Pakistan.

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