



## RESEARCH PAPER

### A left Critique of Neoliberalism and Resistance in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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## ABSTRACT

Neoliberalism, as a latest phase of capitalism, is countered by the recent left. Using the paradigm of the recent left critique that is a kind of “neo-Marxist” critique against neoliberalism, the present study aims to investigate the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* critique and resistance towards neoliberalism. According to the left critique, neoliberalism advances the interests of corporate elites, dominant groups and states and has negative consequences for the working classes and peripheral societies that ultimately results in schism. The findings shows that the novel reveals that neoliberalism promotes the wellbeing of prosperous corporations and the leading states, and it has negative implications for the working class and third-world countries. Consequently, neoliberalism engenders oppositions among the downtrodden towards the rich. The study is handy in exploring the contemporary left critique of neoliberalism in art works, particularly, in Anglophone Pakistani writings. Thus it is suggested to carryout further research in the area.

**KEYWORDS:** Neoliberalism, Left Critique, Corporate interests, Disparity and Resistance

## Introduction

Neoliberalism is a theory of political-economic practices that endorses open market economy, free trade, privatization, minimum intervention of state in private enterprises and cuts in social services (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). However, to the critics of neoliberalism, especially the recent left, the given practices just protect the wellbeing of corporate elites, dominant groups and rich nations, and have negative consequences for the downtrodden across the globe (Harvey, 2005; Krishna, 2009).

Neoliberalism generates the wealth of the rich both at national and international levels (Makawana, 2006). At domestic level, in neoliberalism wealth goes “upwards towards the large corporations, their wealthy CEOs, and their financial/legal advisers at the expense of the poor” (Harvey, 2005, p. 188). At global level, it protects the interests of the few rich countries and dominant groups. As Walonen (2016) argues that neoliberalism redistributes wealth “from the periphery to the centre internationally and from the working and middle to the upper classes domestically” (p. 9). Hence, neoliberal capitalism serves the interest of the rich at global level as in neoliberalism “upward transfer of wealth has been taking place” (p. 9).

As unregulated system, neoliberalism boosts the wealth of the rich at the expense of the poor, the result is that there is a vast disparity in the world “unregulated capitalist growth has always been highly unequal, producing prosperity for the few and

immiserization for the many, both within particular nations and across the world" (Krishna, 2009. p .4).

The substantial disparity and concentration of wealth in the hands of few give birth to dissention between the few rich and the majority of poor across the globe: "[in neoliberalism there is] Manichean social rift between the haves and have-nots" (Walonen, 2016, p. 94). The social strife and criticism against neoliberalism is echoed in academia and different political movements. Critics belong to different schools of thought criticize that neoliberalism, as a recent form of US capitalism, endorses the wellbeing of dominant nations and corporate elites and it has adverse consequence for the poor. In the USA, it is also "subject[ed] to ferocious internal criticisms, from conservatives, nationalists, nihilists, socialists, communists and radical of all kinds" (Gamble, 2009, p. 10). For instance, the American left critic "Noam Chomsky dubs it an 'ideological weapon' used against the poor domestically and abroad" (cited in Walonen, 2016, p. 6). Likewise, it also criticized bluntly by the various political movement and intellectuals belonging to third-world left (Sandbrook, 2007, p. 46). Similarly, the contemporary writing especially narrative fiction also contests neoliberal hegemony. As Walonen (2016) states: "[Contemporary world narrative fiction] variously attempts to conceptualize and resist the common political-economic dominants that have swept the globe within the neoliberal world system" (p. 13). Gohar Karim Khan opines that the contemporary Anglophone Pakistani fiction also contests the forces of neoliberalism (p. 88).

Using the perspective of the recent left that is, as Huehls (2016) puts it, a kind of "neo-Marxist" critique that the left wants to make against neoliberalism" (p. 6), this study aims to explore the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* critique of the adverse impacts of corporate imperialism and neoliberalism on the working class and third world countries especially Pakistan and its working class both at home and abroad along with the looking at the novel's opposition and resistance towards neoliberalism.

### Literature Review

According to Shah and Sheeraz (2022), neoliberalism though hardly touched in Pakistani academia, as new discipline, is significantly investigated by Western researchers. However, regarding Anglophone Pakistani fiction few studies are available that explore neoliberal issues (p. 685). The brief review of these studies is given below:

Shah and Sheeraz (2022), while drawing upon the critique of recent left-wing writers, investigate Naqvi's novel, *Home Boy's* critique of neoliberalism and conclude that the novel depicts the neoliberal themes of precarious condition of the downtrodden class, absence of social security and job protection, extreme disparity and spatial differentiation in the globe. They further highlight, "The novel reveals that neoliberal practices grind down the downtrodden, migrant workers and peripheral societies at global level; consequently, neoliberalism engenders resistance and hostility among them" (p. 683).

Poon (2015) reads the novel, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, by Hamid, as a self-help genre, that proffers a critique of "neoliberal self" and links it with deceit and fraud. The novel satirically teaches the readers how to become affluent by practicing neoliberal values and its treacherous means.

Raggio (2016) also investigates Hamid's post 9/11 works, through Butler's theory of precarity and highlights that Hamid's work, including *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, re-educates the West that the rise of recent wave of resentments, especially in South Asia, against the West is not due to religious fanaticism; rather, it is the outcome of neoliberal

policies of the West that make their life precarious and thus engender anti-Western sentiments among them.

Hayat (2014) also alludes to the negative impact of neoliberalism on Pakistan in his part four of PhD dissertation that answers to the question-4, in which he compares the postcolonial work of Pakistani poet, Faiz, and Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda. He concludes that their comparative study shows that they proffer a postcolonial-Marxist critique of neoliberal corporations which exploit the underdeveloped countries, including Chile and Pakistan.

The brief review of literature shows that the literary studies have touched slightly the various themes of neoliberalism in Pakistani Anglophone fiction, including Hamid; however, they missed the left critique and resistance towards neoliberalism, particularly of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the novel's critique and resistance towards neoliberalism.

### Material and Methods

The research uses qualitative research to analyze the novel's critique of and resistance towards neoliberalism. The study sketches out the key features of neoliberal capitalism at the introduction section. In the analysis section, it cites an issue of neoliberalism delineated by the left-wing critics and on the basis of that quotation the research interprets the text, especially the narrator's commentaries, in order to explore the novel's left critique of neoliberalism.

### Theoretical Framework

Neoliberalism "encompass[es] both politics and economics" (Kenton, & Westfall, 2020, para. 1). It "covers a wide spectrum of ideas and beliefs" (Gamble, 2009, p. 10). The present study explores *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* critique of and resistance to the economic issues of neoliberalism like corporate interests and its negative consequences for the deprived sections. The research encompasses the outcome of neoliberalism like global inequality, and the resistance of working class towards neoliberal capitalism. The research investigates these issues by using the left critique of neoliberalism that is, a kind of "neo-Marxist" critique that the left wants to make against neoliberalism" (Huehls, 2016, p. 6). The research refers to left critics like Mie, David Harvey, Walonen and Krishna who argue that neoliberalism, as a recent phase of capitalism, advances the interests of the dominant groups and corporate elites, and it grinds down the poor both at national and international levels. Consequently it triggers resistance among the downtrodden towards the rich.

### Results and Discussion

#### Critique against Corporate Imperialism

*The Reluctant Fundamentalism* proffers a critique of a neoliberal corporation and its adverse impacts on the downtrodden classes and third world countries. It highlights the neoliberal practices of American based multinational corporation, Underwood Samson, which amasses wealth at the expense of workers, particularly third-world talent, that ultimately empowers the US and relegates the poor to impoverished and dependent position. Consequently, these practices harbour, opposition and resistance among the poor.

A neoliberal corporation advances its sheer interests regardless the wellbeing of masses. According to Mie (2005) a neoliberal corporation entails:

Self-interests and individualism; segregation of ethical principles and economic affairs, in other words: a process of 'de-bedding' economy from society: economic rationality as a mere cost benefit calculation and profit maximization: competition as essential driving force for growth and progress; specialization and the replacement of subsistence economy with profit-oriented foreign trade (comparative cost advantage); and the proscription of public (state) interference with market forces. (p. 34)

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the mentioned aspects are the core values of the US based corporation, Underwood Samson, which are persistently criticized by the narrator. These interrelated aspects are analyzed one by one.

**Self-interests and Individualism.** The novel criticizes that Underwood Samson is operating for its own gain regardless of what happen to others, particularly the workers. It also suggests its client organizations how to maximize profit at the expense of others. Unlike public organization, which operates for the general welfare, the sole objective of Underwood Samson is advancing its sheer interests. The narrator, Changez, who works as analyst with Underwood Samson, states that the firm aims at how to get maximum profit apart from the general wellbeing. In initial training, the analysts are told by the vice president of the corporation, Mr. Jim, and the instructor of finance, Mr. Wharton, to pursue no more than single objective -that is to gain "maximum profit" at all costs, regardless the consequences for the peoples. Changez criticizes the "systematic pragmatism" of the training that stresses on to hell-bent on utmost gain: Maximum return was the maxim to which we returned, time and again. We learned to prioritize—to determine the axis on which advancement would be most beneficial—and then to apply ourselves single-mindedly to the achievement of that objective" (Hamid, 2007, p. 20).

Changez harbours resentments for the firm, as he realizes that the firm promotes the fundamentals of American capitalism by merely operating for its own gain and the corporations it values. Consequently, he is reluctant be the part of it (Tetek, 2012, p. 25).

**Segregation of ethics and economy.** The second fundamental of a neoliberal corporation stated by Mies (2005) is "segregation of ethical principles and economic affairs" (p. 34). Harvey (2005) states that neoliberal economy is distanced from ethics and morality like social justice and welfare. In the novel, the firm, Underwood Samson, not only segregates economic transactions from ethics, but its activities are totally against the ethical and moral principles. The narrator states that the firm focuses on merely economic gain at any cost regardless the wellbeing of the general public.

The firm educates its staffs to make out the opposing disposition, behaviour, and agendas of people, for example of uncooperative chiefs and financial officers and irritant clients, and redirect them to its own benefits. As Changez criticizes that during the Soft Skill Training Sessions, they were trained to make out the people's style of thought, in order to exploit their agendas and achieve the desired objectives. The narrator holds that this exploitative program of the firm is described as a type of "mental Judo for business" (Hamid, 2007, p. 20).

The firm looks upon human being as commodity. When the managing director, interviews a person for the appointment, he asks him what makes him special so that he may be bought. As he asks Changez: "Sell yourself," he said. "What makes you special?" (p. 7). The M.D. has no consideration for anyone but selects those who are perfect and valuable like a commodity. The narrator compares him to a jeweler who has no empathy but buys the precious metals merely for personal gain:

His eyes were cold, a pale blue, 2nd judgmental, not in the way that word is normally used, but in the sense of being professionally appraising, like a jeweller's when he inspects out of curiosity a diamond he intends neither to buy nor to sell. (p. 7)

Likewise, the firm's attitude towards the workers is worst. It looks down upon the labourers, including older workers, and suggests their downsizing to the valued firms as they are often termed burden on their purses. Thus, the firm's activities are against the moral values and social welfares of the masses, as it considers them as commodity for profit maximization.

**Absence of Social Welfare and Security.** Neoliberalism promotes privatization that enlarges the wealth of corporations and its owners and it is detrimental to the wellbeing of working class; as a private entity provides least amount with no additional assistance, hires minimum workforce and downsizes the surplus. The working class hang on 'private service' that is poorer in qualities and the least reliable than the public service. Hence, in private corporation the notion of social security disappears (Werlhof, 2008). Harvey (2005) observes: "increasing job insecurity, and in many instances loss of benefits and of job protections. Such trends are readily discernible in all states that have taken the neoliberal road" (p. 76).

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Underwood Samson, advances neoliberal values and does not take into account the idea of social and job security, but indorse the interests of corporation. Its only credo is to value how to get maximum productivity (Hamid, 2007, p. 53). To ensure maximum productivity and enhance profit, it suggests the corporation to eliminate subsidy and sack workers. In Manila, the firms tells the music business to remove the workers as they are burden (p. 32). Likewise, in New Jersey, during the valuation a cable operator, its analysts locate the substantial "potential for headcount reduction" (p. 44). The workers rail against the arrival of Underwood Samson, as they are acquainted with its anti worker schema and anticipate their downsizing. Consequently, they show furtive resistance towards it by harming its belongings and employees surreptitiously (pp. 45-46).

As the analyst of the Underwood Samson, Changez, also recommends to sack the workers, but his conscience prick him as he is troubled about the sacking, especially the older workers: "But it would not be true to say I was completely untroubled. There were older people among the workers of the cable company.... and me imagined many of them had children my age" (p. 44). Feeling extreme remorse for the unfortunate workers, he asks one of his colleagues, Mr. Wainwright, whether they work for the well-being of the mass. To which Wainwright retorts that he should focus on the fundamentals of firm- that is his agreement with corporation- which exclusive aim is achieving maximum profit regardless the welfare of the masses. Changez feels an extreme pity for the cut-backed but could not resist openly because he would have to follow the fundamentals of the firm; or else, he would be also sacked "our job required a degree of commitment that left one with rather limited time for such distractions" (p. 46). Thus, he had to follow the fundamentals reluctantly.

The appearance of Underwood Samson in Chile for valuation the publishing company is not hailed by the company managing director, Juan Bautista. He is hostile to the American capitalist agendas and her corporations' operation in third-world countries. He severely opposes the anti labourers program of the firm and its skilled staffs who make money at the expense of workers. He heatedly asks Changez, if it troubles them to make their living "by disrupting the lives of other" (p. 67).

Underwood Samson sacks its workers on the very spur of the moment. As after 9/11 when it faces depression, it settles on to remove its workforce immediately (p. 55).

Underwood Samson, as unfettered private corporation, has its free will to hire and remove workers and state does not intervene to regulate its anti workers agendas and safeguard their social security. As in as in neoliberal capitalism, state does not intervene private organizations to guarantee social protection such as done in communism, socialism and in Keynesianism, as Mies (2005) argues the neoliberalism proscribes the state's intervention to regulate the market forces in such cases (p. 34).

**Pragmatism and Economic Rationality.** The practices of Underwood Samson, are based on rationality and pragmatism. During its valuation of the client company, it estimates thing in a very rationalistic, realistic and authentic mode and then suggests how to achieve maximum profit apart from the welfares of others. Changez labels this rigorous and rational analysis as a "systematic pragmatisms".

Likewise, its valuation makes out and gives priority to the axis that is paramount for economic gain and after that takes practical steps to accomplish it. As narrator highlights, "Maximum return was the maxim to which we returned, time and again. We learned to prioritize—to determine the axis on which advancement would be most beneficial—and then to apply ourselves single-mindedly to the achievement of that objective" (p. 20). To achieve maximum return, the firm is carless of the values of friendship, social security and morality and the careers of laboureres. If a worker is the best and useful is included; otherwise is sacked on the very spur of the moment.

**Profit Maximization and Cutthroat Competition.** Neoliberalism entails profit maximization within "shortest possible time" (Werlhof, 2008, p. 96). The novel proffers a critique of the notion of profit maximization in minimum time that badly exploits the working class. In the novel, Underwood Samson involves its skilled workers in cutthroat competition and exhaustive activities; consequently they have not a single moment for fun. The workers are being exploited like the particles of machine that work harmoniously and quickly for maximum profit. Its MD, Mr. Jim, moves fast. He takes interview of a candidate once and tells during the very interview if he is chosen or not (Hamid, 2007, p. 10).

When the firm is invited by a client for valuation, it visits instantaneously to complete the project both within and outside the country. When valuation is ended, the firm turns back right away to its base in New York or moves quickly to finish another project. Mr. Jim refers to the rapid movement of the firm: "It has only one service line: instantaneous travel. You step into its terminal in New York, and immediately reappear in its terminal in London. Like a transporter on Star Trek" (p. 10).

Workers are engaged almost all time having no spare moment for fun, a merry chase (p. 19). For example, as a tireless worker, even the VP has no time for taking adequate rest. He is working from morning to the mid night (p. 64). The firm is mindless of the political and emotional concerns of workers, but stresses upon finance and intensive activities to attain the maximum profit (p. 65).

Another issue associated with profit maximization is a cut-throat competition, as neoliberalism sees competition a vital force for progress (Mies, 2005, p. 34). Underwood Samson engages its staffs in an excessive competition so that they don't divert concentration away from duty and gain maximum profit, and to compete with other corporations. The workers who cannot compete are removed. The vice president warns the new recruits that no doubt they are taken from the most prestigious institutions and are

the smartest, but meritocracy of the company does not bring to a halt with selecting the best. The performance of each recruit will be ranked at the end of six months and his additional benefit and staffing will rest on his ranks. He will be rewarded if performs well; if not will be fired: "If you do well, you'll be rewarded. If you don't, you'll be out the door. It's that simple" (Hamid, 2007, p. 19). Likewise, in the very initial training, the new recruits are told that one of them would have his first ranking at the closing of "training" (p. 19). Hence, rivalry begins among them for getting the top position (p. 22). For example, to get the top ranking, the autodiegetic narrator, Changez, embarks on overwork to defeat his colleagues, especially his friend, Wainwright, who is in a strong contention (p. 22), and thus he wins many time the first place and the M.D applauds him repeatedly for his competitive spirit and "a bit of warrior" in him (p. 22). To arouse a competitive spirit in him, the M.D compares him to a shark that "never stopped swimming" (p. 34).

Thus, the novel offers a critique of the competitive and exploitative system where transnational corporations accumulate wealth by involving the co-workers in cut-throat competition to get more out of them.

**Exploitation of Third World Talent.** Underwood Samson merely focuses on profit oriented trade and self interests. To gain comparative advantage, it recruits highly efficient and skilled peoples. The firm is in contact with the prestigious institutions of the US which provide it third-world talents like Changez. Changez is a graduate from Princeton, one of the prestigious institutions of the US. To enroll the Pakistani talents, Princeton offers merely two scholarships. Million of Pakistanis compete for and after the rigorous tests and interviews, only Changez, is selected. In Princeton, his performance is better than the natives and he secures A-grade in each course (Hamid, 2007, p. 6). From Princeton, over hundred smart students apply for job to Underwood Samson, eight are interviewed, and among them Changez is selected, for he is "something special" and "perfect" among them (p. 6).

Other staffs taken are equally talented and graduated from the prestigious institutions of the US (p. 19). For example, Mr. Jim, the MD, graduated from Princeton is a highly proficient and gifted personality. Although he gets specialization in finance, he has a deeper understanding of human psyche. He identifies one's true potential on the very spur of moment, as Changez claims, "[Jim] had, after all, seen through me in a few minutes more clearly than had many people who had known me for years" (p. 8). The novel shows that most of these talented workers are taken from third-world. The narrator criticizes that in America, the prosperous corporations are in touch with the government and educational bodies and exploits the poor countries' talent for profit maximization. The third-world talents are given scholarships by the prominent institutions and subsequently shown to corporations which offer them high salaries. Thus, the third world talent is exploited by the developed world like the US that ultimately results in brain drain:

I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective, like so much else in America. We international students were sourced from around the globe, sifted – until the best and the brightest of us had been identified....given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and invited into the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society. (p. 6)

### **Extreme Inequality**

Neoliberalism engenders a substantial inequality both within and between the nations that ultimately gives birth to schism across the globe (Krishna, 2009, p. 9).

The novel gives a critique of a vast disparity within countries and between the developing Asia and the, the USA that are given below under subheadings.

**Income Inequality in Pakistan.** The novel proffers a critique of a vast disparity in Pakistan. It depicts the rise and extreme rich status of corporate elite and the decline of the feudal and middle classes and the abject state of the poor. Changez' feudal family members possessed a rich history and an affluent past, but in neoliberal epoch, its status is waning. In the past, his father and grandfather were affluent enough that they were graduated from England. His grandfather, as renowned barrister, is affluent enough "to endow a school for the Muslims" (Hamid, 2007, p. 8). His family's home occupies an acre of land at an expensive site of Gulberg Lahore, suggests that they were extremely wealthy, as Changez affirms, "we were a family of great wealth" (p. 9). However, the family status quickly declines. Nowadays the members are not well-off as most of them are working people and employee, while in neoliberalism the corporate class and business elite have monopoly, whereas workers live a miserable life. As Changez claims:

But we are not rich. The men and women – yes, the women, too – of my household are working people, professionals. And the half-century since ... has not been a prosperous one for professionals in Pakistan. Salaries have not risen in line with inflation, the rupee has declined steadily against the dollar.... So my grandfather could not afford what his father could, and my father could not afford what his could, and when the time came to send me to college, the money simply was not there. (Hamid, 2007, p. 9)

The condition of the former feudal classes and workers is degenerating in contemporary era, while the business class is thriving. Consequently Changez' family (representing moribund feudal and the working class) detests the booming of corporate elites that enjoy life in luxury of which the members of his family are deprived of: "And we look with a mixture of disdain and envy upon the rising class of entrepreneurs – owners of businesses legal and illegal – who power through the streets in their BMW SUVs" (p. 9).

Likewise, in Pakistan, the business class not only outstripped the feudalism, but it has also crushed the middle class as well: "we are part of a broader malaise afflicting not only the formerly rich but much of the formerly middle-class as well" (p. 9). Thus, the country is sharply divided into two classes: the prosperous corporate elites and the poor that includes the moribund feudal, the former middle class and the underprivileged.

Hence the novel offers a critique of growing extreme income inequality and the empowerment of corporate class that accumulates wealth by disposing the formerly rich feudal and middle classes to the extent that they are now incapable "to purchase [what they] previously could" (p. 9). The affluent class, that contains the few corporate elites, accumulates wealth through legal or illegal practices and squanders lavishly, while the masses have meagre capital to meet their day-to-day needs. This critique is also voiced by Erica's father: "Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption.... the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers.... the elite has raped [Pakistan]" (p. 28).

Thus, the novel critiques the growing inequality and the rise of corporate elites which are the central issues of neoliberalism.

**Substantial disparity between the North and the South.** The novel displays a substantial disparity and uneven distribution of wealth between the poor and rich countries by comparing the socioeconomic status of third countries (i.e., Pakistan, Chile



and Philippine) with the most advanced country, the USA. The novel depicts that uneven distribution leads to schism and conflicts.

The comparison of Pakistan with the US displays a vast disparity. The depiction of Lahore, the heart of Pakistan, reveals the deplorable condition of the country. The new districts of Lahore poorly meet the requirements of pedestrians. Although, constructed in modern time, the designs of these districts do not reflect that, as their roads, buildings, and parks demonstrate the old fashioned-style and culture of country-side. The condition of old districts is worse than the new. These thickly populated urban areas are incommodious and jam-packed. It is not easy to drive in their usual traffic congestions; consequently, "in these places it is the man with four wheels who is forced to dismount and become part of the crowd" (Hamid 2007, p. 18)

Same condition is prevailed in Valparaiso, the capital of Chile. The narrator states that the past of the city is magnificent like Lahore but its splendid past is razed to the ground in contemporary neoliberal era. Due to the severe economic crisis, "a sense of melancholy pervade[s] its boulevards and hillsides" (p. 64).

Manila, the capital of Philippine, too represents an appalling condition. It slum around its airport, and the dirty looking people dressed in unclean white undershirt reclining in the front of repair garages, may be compared to the poor version of American lifestyle depicted in the 1950s movies (pp. 31-32). Like Lahore, it is full of pollution. The roads mire with mud and its congested population and traffic-Jam are akin the city of Lahore (p. 32). Hence, the novel sketches the indistinguishable vista of the major cities of developing world. They are highly polluted, overcrowded, badly planned and backward.

Contrary to major cities and capitals of developing country, the American cities reproduce a different world. The description of New York is marvelous. The city has alluring spacious, clean and up to date avenues. Its parks are captivating, i.e., Central Park. Though a highly congested city, in New York there is no concept of traffic jam that is the prevailing condition of Lahore and Manila. There are subways for different vehicles, and their multi-view images produce enchanting multihued panorama (p. 18).

New York is so much alluring. Although after 9/11 the narrator harbours bitter feelings towards Americans, and returns to Pakistan but as he remembers its splendor he becomes maudlin: "I tend to become sentimental when I think of that city. It still occupies a place of great fondness in my heart" (p. 19).

The narrator states that the forty first and forty second floor of buildings are usual height of buildings in New York (p. 19). In the entire Lahore, there may be two or three high-rise structures of such a height (p. 18). The narrator, Changez, imagines that the US' tower blocks and sky-scrappers can only be matched to Himalayas in Pakistan. The status of Pakistan is very impoverished compared to the advanced civilization of the US. As the narrator comments, "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" (p. 19).

The residential areas and housing of Pakistan and the USA also show an extreme disparity. The Americans enjoy the most modern housing with eye catching features. Changez, uses beautiful compliments for them. He extols that Erica lives in an "impressive building" (25). The dwelling of M. D, Mr. Jim situated in New York is declared "so splendid" (23). Likewise, Mr. Jim's abode in Hamptons is eulogized as fabulous. His flat, located in Manhattan, is portrayed more strikingly. Changez is amazed at its elegant

design: "I was struck by its fashionable quality, the sense it conveyed of attaching great value to design.... perfectly curated... featured impressive and forceful works of art" (p. 54).

In comparison to the US, Pakistan faces severe housing problems. They are short of sanitation, built of flimsy materials and have irregular electricity supply. The narrator's house situated in Gulberge, an expensive site of Lahore Pakistan, but it appears to him shabby when he returns to Pakistan. The narrator, Changez, states that it is difficult for a Pakistani to adjust in his country after returning back from the US: "There are adjustments one must make if one comes here from America" (p. 56). Looking to the deplorable status of his house compared to the US, he is ashamed and feels "lowliness" (p. 56).

Thus the comparison of housing facilities and living standards of US and Pakistan affirms Harvey (2005), who opines, "the vast wealth differentials of neoliberalism tend by nature to produce greater rather than lesser degrees of spatial differentiation" (cited in Walonen, 2016, p. 126).

The novel also compares strong economy of the US with Pakistan that also shows an extreme disparity. The steady decline of the latter economy compared to the former can be measured from the depreciation of Pakistani currency against the US. Changez laments that the steady decline of rupee against dollar has casted a horrible impact on working class as their remuneration doesn't keep up with the surging inflation (p. 9).

Further, the weak economic status of Pakistan is compared to American may be estimated from their budgets. For example, the individual budget of highly developed universities of the US is larger than federal budget allocated the whole education sector in Pakistan: "America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education" (p. 190).

Changez harbours resentment to the US when he grasps the extreme disparity by comparing the impoverished condition of his country to the prosperous condition of US: "Such comparisons...more than trouble me: they made me resentful.... this vast disparity was, for me, to be ashamed" (p. 19).

Thus the novel's depiction of extreme global disparity between corporate elite and the masses, the global North and South and its outcomes like engendering opposition among the deprived people towards the privileged are the important traits of neoliberalism.

### **Class conflicts and resistance**

The extreme disparity caused by neoliberalism espouses class conflict and anti imperialist feelings among poor sections, especially of third-world, towards the rich. In the novel, as narrator, Changez, compares the impoverished economy of his homeland with the advanced status of US, he observes an extreme disparity that makes him resentful towards the US (Hamid, 2007, p. 19). Likewise, in Valparaiso Chile, Juan Batista, the left-wing publisher, shows extreme hostility towards the US corporations. He believes that American based corporation like Underwood Samson makes money "by disrupting the lives of others" (p. 67). He thinks the US imperialism exploits the talents of third world for advancing its interest. He also criticizes the skilled workers of developing countries who sacrifice themselves for promoting the US economy by working with its corporations, instead of serving for their countries. He called it "Jannissary" that is sacrificing themselves

for the empire that is working against their homeland countries for advancing its sheer interests (pp. 137- 38).

The novel also narrates the prevailing Anti-Americanism in Philippine under the mini-narrative of local driver who looks towards the Limousine of Underwood Samson including Changez with extreme hate that is termed by Changez "third world sensibilities" (p. 33).

Changez, the protagonist, is working with American firm, but he also harbours resentment towards the corporation and the US as he claims that he shares with Pilipino driver "a sort of Third World sensibility" (p. 33). His anti-American feeling is further increased when later on instead of feeling pity for, he smiles at the collapse of W.T.C: "And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased" (p. 35).

Hamid (2007) in his column also gives argument about the prevailing anti-American feeling especially his hero Changez' reaction to WTC and states that such outlook is widespread response of the marginalized communities and poor states towards the imperial and prosperous nations. The uneven distribution of wealth that empowers the US is one of the reasons that espouses confrontation and anti-Americanism: "The richest, most powerful country in the world attracts the jealousy of others in much the same way that the richest, most powerful man in a small town attracts the jealousy of others...This is natural" (Hamid, 2007). Due to one of the given reasons, the author, his hero, Changez, and Muslims are hostile to the US (Hamid, 2007). Hence, Hamid offers a Marxist rationale that the underprivileged and poor communities including Muslims are antagonistic towards the US because of the latter primacy and economic dominance.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the novel's critique of neoliberalism reveals that the few rich are benefited from the recent capitalism that is detrimental to the interests of the poor. Owing to neoliberal free market economy, the downtrodden are being badly exploited by the few dominant nations and corporate elites who accumulate wealth at the expense of the poor by dispossessing them. Consequently, there is substantial disparity both at national and international levels. This substantial inequality engenders dissension between the rich and poor. The deprived and working classes deem that they have been exploited by the rich, and consequently, they espouse bitterness towards the rich. Thus, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* depicts that the rise of resentments towards the rich, particularly America, is because of its corporate imperialism and neoliberalism.

## Recommendations

The literary research on neoliberalism is established in the West, and recently the researchers have also begun investigating neoliberalism in Pakistani Anglophone writing. However, no research is available on the left critique of neoliberalism, especially about corporate imperialism and its implications for the developing world and the downtrodden. The present research is a systematic analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by using the recent left critique of neoliberalism and thus tries out the topic scarcely touched in Pakistani academia. The finding has open up new avenue; it is therefore suggested to carryout further research in the area.

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