

Tribhuvan University

Racial Critique in Ayab Akthar's *Disgraced*

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Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled,
“Racial Critique in Ayab Akthar’s *Disgraced*”, is my original work carried out as a Master’s student at the Department of English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus except to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis’s design and conception or in presentation style, and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for the thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no material which led to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Racial Critique in Ayab Akthar’s *Disgraced*”, submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, by Khushbhoo Basnet has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research entitled “Racial Critique in Ayab Akthar’s *Disgraced*” attempt to cast light on how race and racism has caused discrimination and struggle for identity of Muslims in America. The thesis studies how Muslims are discriminated and racial victims and their sufferings in post 9/11 America. The research proves that racial identity of a person can bring irrevocable changes and crisis in life and there is domination of the basis of identity. Racism includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their color, ethnicity or national origin. The concept of racism and inequality exists regardless of any group in 21st century. The traditional views associated with racism are more focused on religion. Islamophobia is new method of racism which denotes hatred and negative feelings associated to religion. Racism is revealed through people’s actions as well as their attitudes and can be reflected in system and institutions.

Disgraced is mainly about the protagonist’s complicated life due to his racial identity, the racial segregation of Muslim and Islamophobia in American society in the aftermath of 9/11. Living amid American Whites, hiding his identity, Amir, the male protagonist finds himself in complex situation due to which he comes to realize that what he has been doing to alienate from own race and identity is good for nothing. His continuous efforts to adopt the American lifestyle or whatever that needs to be American do not help him to be like them. He, despite his all his attempts, is denied to be accepted in all walks of lives- personally as well as professionally. This propels him to grow sort of rage and continue to hold his tribal identity, identity of birth and education. Hence, the American Amir bitter experience as Muslim makes him sympathize his roots and culture and adopt behavior of his ancestors.

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Introduction: Race, Racism and *Disgraced*

This research deals with the racial issues of a Muslim in post 9/11 America. It projects the racial discrimination as the main issue to analyze Ayab Akthar's *Disgraced*. To understand the racial discrimination, it is essential to understand the terms, race and racism. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *Key Concept in Post-Colonial Studies* explain 'Race' as "Race is a term for classification of human being into physically, biologically and genetically distinct group" (180). Here, race is related to biological standpoint which means people identified as distinct from other group because of supposed physical or genetic traits shared by the group. Similarly, *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines race as,

The term *race* has also been applied to linguistic groups (the 'Arab race' or the 'Latin race'), to religious groups (the 'Jewish race'), and even to political, national, or ethnic groups with few or no physical traits that distinguish them from their neighbors (the 'Irish race', the 'French race,' the 'Spanish race,' the 'Slavic race,' the 'Chinese race', etc.). (24)

Race is group with distinct language, religion and furthermore can consist people with same belief related to politics, nationality and ethnicity. It can also include a group of people related by common physical traits like skin color, hair, shape of eye, etc.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines the term racism as the racial worldview that divides people into many separate categories. It says that there is link between physical traits and personalities. In other words, a certain group of people to others sets the meaning or definition. It began in the 18th century by the westerners to

distinguish them with others whom they thought were inferior. Likewise,

Encyclopedia Americana defines ‘racism’ as follows:

Any action, practice, or belief that reflects the racial worldview—the ideology that humans are divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called ‘races,’ that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural behavioral features, and that some ‘races’ are innately superior to others. Racism was at the heart of North American slavery and the overseas colonization and empire-building activities of some western Europeans, especially in the 18th century. (1581)

Thus, the word racism is not a natural phenomenon but it is created by European and American white, so-called superior, to dominate others, especially the black people whom they used as slaves. Likewise, Robert Jones defines racism as:

An active or passive response to the specious belief that genetically transmitted traits are linked to social characteristics. . . . Racism at individual level involves a misguided personal belief that an entire racial group is deficient or superior because of a set of moral, intellectual, or cultural trait that are thought to be indicated by the group’s biological origins. (126)

Jones focuses that racism leads to misguided belief which differentiates a racial group as superior from another and genetically transmitted traits are linked to social characteristics. A whole racial group’s intellectual, moral and traits are linked to biological origins.

Hence, ‘Race’ is any kind of traditional division of human kind both biologically and socially. This classification of human kind based on culture, history,

religion, and genetics has become a method of discrimination, unfair treatment and bias against someone or group of a person which is called racism. Thus, racism is the organized and institutionalized practice to exclude, deprive, embarrass and dehumanize those who come from different race. Race is not bad in itself but the notion of race is used to dehumanize, discriminate and deprive racially and culturally different people, it becomes racism.

Set in the 21st century America, Akhtar's *Disgraced* raises the issue of race, racism and racial discrimination especially between white American and Muslim American. Amir Kapoor, the protagonist of the play, is adequate to take the example of racial discrimination in which he is struggling for racial identity. The research deals with issues in the play such as how Amir is dominated and alienated, why he is suffering from racial identity. And why he change from sharp and aggressive critic to a sympathizer of Islam. Then, the researcher seeks to find the answer that Amir, a Pakistani Muslim by his roots and this identity of him is the reason of the subjugation to white supremacy. His identity crisis brings irrevocable changes in his life and his relationships. He belongs to nowhere among colleagues, friends and loves ones. Since his identity revelation in his workplace, to his series of conversation with friends and his wife, he finds nothing but racism. Moreover, the issue of anti Muslim sentiments, stereotype and negative assumption of Muslim community in America which is largely Islamophobic in nature are addressed in this research.

The racial discrimination is one of the characteristics in the history of America. This discrimination was common with black, Hispanic, Asians and Muslims. For Muslims, Americans are suspicious of their beliefs and motives, and they are widespread hostility toward Muslim's faith. At the same time, experiences of discrimination have not necessarily changed that much. Akhtar, therefore, cannot

remain deaf and dumb about dealing with racial issue taking race as a metaphor, a means of referring to the forces, events and forms of degradation, prejudices and human panic. Akthar said, “Everything I write is a combination of lived experience or observed experience. Times have changed in this country, certainly in Wisconsin. . . . I feel like there’s a lot more rage and a lot more suspicion of others, but growing up I never experienced that myself” (12). He personally saw this problem and wrote about issue that was already there, and had been stewing in society from a long time. Akthar has highlighted on the issue the world has gravitate after post 9/11 and it was significant to write on these issues of stereotype, race, racism and religion to address the problems faced by Muslim race in United States and the world.

After 9/11, Muslim people have been under an unremitting international attention. Over the past few years, we have seen, and sorrowfully still see, an increasing incident of hate crimes, denouncement of Islam. Eminent religious, political and public figures have criminalized Islam and Muslim race. He saw this as a problem. Akthar felt that it is very important for world to be aware of the hate crime Muslims are facing in every aspect of their lives was filled with struggle. *Disgraced* expresses the idea of how race and racism are rooted in American society and highlights the social, personal and moral inferiority of ethnic group of Muslim people and how they are victimized due to racism. It shows how people judge one another on their skin color, race and religion.

Racism focuses on mistreatment, a blind and pointless hatred, and prejudice for a group of people belonging to certain race, color and religion. This leads to racial discrimination which is often related to discrimination based on color where the word ‘discrimination’ denotes the denial of equality based on personal characteristics such as race and color. Discrimination is based on prejudice and stereotype where the

stereotype refers to forming an instant fixed idea of a group, usually based on false or incomplete information, and prejudice refers to prejudice based on ideas that are formed without any knowledge about others.

The play presents how racial discrimination and racial identity is rooted in American society. Amir who is living a contemporary version of American dream with hotshot job and life faces racial discrimination in workplace by Jews and blacks. His identity as American is questioned and the protagonist finds himself in complex situation due to which he is alienated. Amir in the play tells his nephew that the world outside the house is tough to them due to the racial differences. He says, "When you step out of your parent's house, you need to know that it's not neutral world out there" (83). Amir explains that discrimination is present everywhere and system is not neutral to them just because they are Muslim and asks Abe to be careful about everything he says and does. The play also addresses the issue of segregation of Muslims where they are victims just as black were in past. Amir says, "Were you were the last one to leave? Cause if were, I didn't see it. I still leave the office after you do! You think you're nigger here. I'm the nigger!! Me!!" (76) Amir explains that despite working hard and trying to fit in, he still is excluded and treated as outsider. By using the word "nigger", he compares his identity to the black who were marginalized and exploited by White American in the past.

Therefore, *Disgraced* deals with the various aspects of Muslim people who are dominated by white and black American. There is tussle between American culture and minor ethnic Muslim culture. There is social, personal and moral inferiority of ethnic group of Muslim people and their victimization due to racism. So, the play *Disgraced* shows the bias mentality and partial attitudes and how racism has segregated by demeaning Muslim race by tagging them a Terrorist tag. In, addition to

that, this study also investigates how “the otherness” makes Amir longing for his own culture and closeness to his roots. The researcher attempts to prove that due to racial discrimination and certain ethnic identity, Muslims are victimized and the racial tension forces them to accept their own cultural identity.

As regards to the method of intensive study of the play will be core point of this research. The wide range of materials pertaining to theory of racism, racial discrimination, and racial identity has been under theoretical tool to analyze the play. The theoretical insights forwarded by W. E. Dubois and Franz Fanon will be cited to examine the racial issues in the play.

Racism and Its Tenets

This section deals with the issues of racism and racial discrimination in general. Racism was born in some of the most miserable conditions of the American history. Racism has been a part of American society since 17th century where many of the Africans were discriminated and kept slaves. Since then there is a discrimination between whites and blacks where white are considered as superior and black are considered as inferior. This psyche of color and racial classification is still prevalent in American Society. Muslims like other ethnic minorities are new case of racial discrimination. The situation got intense after terrorist attack of 9/11 after which all Muslims were subjected and suspected as terrorist. They were victims of hate crime and racial discrimination. They are marginalized and considered to be less important than whites mainly on the basis of race, color and religion.

Racism refers to unequal power relations that grow from the socio-political domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices, for e.g. segregation, domination and prosecution. Racial discrimination is often based on the discrimination of color where the word discrimination denotes the

denial of equality based on personal characteristics such as race and color.

Discrimination is based on prejudice and stereotype, where the stereotype refers to forming instant fixed ideas of a group, usually based on false or incomplete information, and prejudice refers to the ideas that are formed without any knowledge about others. Various researchers have defined racism in various ways. *Webster Dictionary* defines racism as “the assumption that psych cultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decidedly from one another which is usually coupled with a belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and its right to domination over others.” Further, Gretchen Gerzina defines racism as:

An active or passive response to the specious belief that genetically transmitted traits are linked to social characteristic. . . . Racism at individual level involves a misguided personal belief that an entire racial group is deficient or superior because of a set of moral, intellectual or a cultural trait that are thought to be indicated by the group’s biological origin. (126)

Gerzina justifies that racism itself is a social construction. A child is not born a racist; rather it is a slowly learned social phenomenon through family, education, religion, law and media. It is difficult to grow up in a society without adopting the world views and biases of society. He becomes a “made” racist and subsequently perpetuate in the same society.

Racism is often used in a loose and unreflective way. It is used to describe the hostile and negative feelings of one ethnic group of people towards other. There is no biological basis for “distinguishing human group along the line of race. The social-historical categories are employed to differentiate among groups” (Winant 172).

Racism is misbehavior of a group of people on the basis of color. It is blinker hatred

or prejudice. In the same way, Alderfer defines racism as:

There are a set of interdependent meanings for racism which includes:

1) current behavioral patterns with intellectual justifications about why one racial group is superior to another, 2) members of one racial group with more power than another group using that power to demean, subvert or destroy members of another group. (217)

They state that the racism includes a wide range of behaviors and can also involve individuals or a collective system that unknowingly may encourage the suppression of another group. Likewise, Paul Gilroy, a black literary theorist, consistently argues that racial identities are historically constructed that are formed by slavery and colonization. He states that racism is not a natural phenomenon. Racial difference and racial identities is the product of the racial oppression. He says: “Race [is not] the eternal cause of racism [but is] its complex, unstable product. I should probably emphasize at this point that neither race nor racism are the exclusive historical property of the minorities who are their primary victims” (Gilroy 32).

Around the centuries, the basic concept of racism is dominated by the ‘genetic determinism’ or ‘biological determinism’, the theory that evinces the behavior of people and especially general behavioral characteristics of races. Racism, largely controlled by heritage, attributes the differences between the races to innate traits rather than social factors. This contemporary form of racism links itself to discourses such as patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia, gender differences, etc. This is an attempt to produce old racist wine in a somewhat new scientific bottle, although with certain novel twists: the barbaric determinism to swastika type. However, the use of new jargon has not diminished the gap between the meanings used in the past centuries to the present century. Still each ‘historical circumstances’ is shaping a

distinct form of racism, “Racist ideologies and practice have distinct meanings bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle” (Gilroy 248).

Racism is founded on the belief in one’s racial superiority over other. It encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and practices that define people on racial classifications. It involves a generalized lack of knowledge or experience as it applies to negative beliefs and attitudes. It uses the inflexible assumptions that differences are biologically determined and ‘therefore inherently unchangeable. It does not take place in a vacuum, but rather is enacted and reinforced through social, cultural, and institutional practices that endorse the hierarchical power of one group over another.

Racism always emerges from race, a concept confused with ethnicity and culture. Race, in particular, is the classification of human beings into distinguishable groups that are based on innate and immutable physical characteristics, e.g. skin color, hair texture, eye shape, etc. A child is taught to be racist via family, education, religion, the law, and the media. It is difficult to grow up in a society without adopting the world-views and biases of the society. He becomes a ‘made’ racist and subsequently perpetuate in the same society. According to Paul S. Reinsh, “Racism is based on the tendency toward adhering to add preferring the values and personal beliefs of one’s own group” (3). Racism is taught by our society that not all skin colors are same. We are taught that a person is different because of the color of his skin. Racism is the color of our mind not skin and based on negative attitude towards another group which involves everyday behaviors such as ignoring, ridiculing or treating people as less worthy of respect because of their race.

Racism is the belief of distinguishing human characteristics, often dealt with prejudice, that one group of human beings is inherently superior to another group of

human beings. It is the matter of discussion that 'Racism' springs from the term 'race', but the use of race for the biological, psychological, sociological, and economic differences among the human characteristics are taken into considerations that these qualities of one group make it either inferior or superior to each other. European supremacy over the globe for the last few centuries has given conducive milieu to purport that 'the white-skinned' beings are superior to the 'the black-skinned' or 'the brown-skinned' individuals.

Racism is a politically motivated and manipulated strategy to assert the hegemony and supremacy of one race over other. When racism takes an institutionalized form, it becomes a serious stumbling block. Racism is biased program to assert the superiority and hegemony of certain grouping of people. As claimed by Leo Robson, "Race is a wrong conception. It is fixed category which makes a person distinct and genealogically identifiable" (198). When the notion of race is used to dominate, exclude and oppress people of different socio-cultural and religious background, racism comes into practice. This sort of condition is perfectly applicable in the play.

Institutionalized racism lays the groundwork for the various discriminatory practices. Racism offers such a platform in which people belonging to the powerful race victimize vulnerable groups of people from different race. Racist practices collude with mushrooming discriminatory practices. When racism backed discrimination spread through in the society, the victims of such discriminatory practices are culturally traumatized. In Robson's words, "The psychic integrity of victims of discriminations provoked by racism is likely to be broken. Assaulted by racism-backed discrimination, they are prone to nightmare, anxiety attack, hallucinatory condition and sinister premonition of being chased by unknown person"

(30). This sort of condition is perfectly applicable universally in the society where inequality lingers rampantly.

As claimed by Robson, “Racism is a classification system used to categorize humans into large and distinct population or groups by anatomical, cultural, ethnic, genetic, geographical, historical, linguistic, and social affiliation” (45). People began to use the term to relate to observable physical traits. Such use promoted hierarchies favorable to differing ethnic groups. Social conceptions and groupings of races vary over time, involving folk classification.

Racism is often used in a loose and unreflective way. It is used to describe the hostile or negative feeling of one ethnic group to another. “Racism is misbehavior of a group of people in the basis of color” (172). When racist practice reach apex, the victim appear to be anonymous. In the state of anonymity, the victims of racism seek their identity. Their identity is solely based on the origin, culture and tradition of the victims. In this situation historical- cultural tradition and the ground reality at the present are often taken into consideration while exploring and affirming racial identity.

Racism is founded in the belief in one’s racial supremacy over other. It involves a generalized lack of knowledge or experience as it applies to negative determined. Therefore, it is inherently unchangeable. It divides human beings into categories that loom in our psyches. Racial differences create vast divide in our psychological understandings of who we are whom we should be. Constantine asserts:

Race is indeed pre-eminently socio- historical concept. Racial categories and meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. Racial meanings have varied tremendously over time and

between societies. Racism continues to tear at the soul of America.

Understanding the definition and the impact of racism is critical to all citizens of the country, from parents to educators to politicians. (22)

Constantine mentions about racial formations over time and how it get rooted in society. He further focuses about racism which is in soul of America and importance of understanding the meaning and consequences for every citizens. Some cultural critics like state the racism in different manners. Alibeli and Yaghi state:

In America, the social division along the color line crossed class, nationality, language and religious barriers. The simple face of whiteness meant the overall life fortunes and destiny of white people. White people enjoyed white latitude of opportunity personal freedom and though poor American immigrants were bottom at viciously exploited by rich white people. The bottom was reserved for Muslims, Blacks, and people of other color. (87)

Alibeli and Yaghi describe that White color is boon in America as people with this color line enjoy opportunities and freedom while poor immigrants like Muslims, Blacks and others are cruelly exploited by rich Whites.

There are multiple forms of racism with which Muslim American have to go through. Internalized racism which refers to the incorporation of racist policies and practices in the social and political institutions for e.g. federal, state and local governments, education etc. The other form of racism is ternalized racism which results from the psychological programming by which a racist society indoctrinates people of color to believe in white superiority. Victims of eternalized racism generally feel inferior to whites, less attractive, less capable and often wish they were white or looked whiter.

Similarly, Muslims like African American often experience double

consciousness or double vision, the awareness of belonging to two conflicting cultures: the Muslim culture, which grew from their roots and the American culture imposed by white Americans. W. E. B. Du Bois states:

It is peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One never feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it being torn asunder. (26)

Du Bois describes the double consciousness as a concept of more than one social identity, which makes it difficult to develop a sense of self. Du Bois believed that African Americans lived in a society that was oppressive and devalued them as equals. At the same time, the African-American culture encouraged equality and dignity. This type of double consciousness forced the race to view themselves from the perspective of both cultures, making it difficult for them to unify their African-American subculture with their overall American identity.

The psychology of race prejudice then involves the wrong mental attitudes which one race entertains for or against another, formed in advance without its foundation on either reason or fact. Racial domination has permeated the society with the position of superiority and inferiority. This domination has created a state of double consciousness in the mind of Muslims just as Negroes. W. E. B. Du Bois writes movingly of the resulting sense of duality for black people which can be seen in Muslim Americans:

Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?...
the Negro of a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with

second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (5)

Du Bois mentions about the problem faced by an individual of ethnic minority where they feel outsider and always disguise themselves from their real self due to the color of the skin. 'Color line' which is explained by Du Bois as not only the problem of the twentieth century is still relevant in today's scenario. There are burning issues like prejudice, racism between ethnic minorities, and the world today is witnessing 'Islam scare' which is replacing 'red scare' which is haunting and disgraceful.

Mement Uludag and John Molyneux argue that Islamophobia is certainly most important form of racism in today's world and it's an ideological weapon of divide and rule internationally. Oxford Dictionary defines Islamophobia as "Intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a political force, hostility towards Muslims", which means it is a perception, prejudice and dislike towards of Muslims on social and political level. Likewise, Chris Allen in Islamophobia writes:

Islamophobia is an ideology, similar in theory, function and purpose to racism and other similar phenomena, that sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam in the contemporary setting in similar ways to that which it has historically, although not necessarily as a continuum, subsequently pertaining, influencing and impacting upon social action, interaction, response and so on, shaping and determining understanding, perceptions and

attitudes in the social consensus – the shared languages and conceptual maps – that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other. (199)

Chris Allen has discussed about most contested topic ‘Islamophobia and has given new dimension and definition in current scenario. He defines Islamophobia as theory similar to racism where Islam is viewed with hatred, stereotype and prejudice. He adds that there is negative perception of Islam and Muslims which has been passed on historically and still existing in today’s world. This negative perception creates social understanding and misconception due to which Muslims are viewed as Other. There is a social construct, understanding and fear of Islamic doctrine and religion as a whole which create certain practices of exclusion and discrimination.

Racism today is still an active social and political medium to spread and promote differences, discrimination, hatred, stereotype, and prejudice in different forms in society. In relevant to the drama, there is racism and hatred of “the other” among Muslims in American society. Despite the fact that all Muslims are not terrorists, Islam and Muslim are facing prejudice and judged as extremist and source of violence in the play *Disgraced*. Akhtar focuses on the issues and problems that are faced by American Muslim in post 9/11 American society, he portrays vulnerabilities, social, psychological and political issues dealt by them, how they are separated as ‘the-other’ and as the result they are disgraced with their lives.

Racial Study of *Disgraced*

Racism is established in society, psyche, language and is widely debated everywhere in the world. It has its own history of its development and how it got deeply rooted in social, political and psychological level. Racist ideology had its underpinning in the history and how it evolved with the time and situation. Racist

ideology formed a prejudice against people of color, shape, and region and lately has evolved as discrimination against religion. In 16th, 17th and 18th centuries there racism was found in form of slave trade of black which was established by White British and Europeans. Racism has been used as weapon to rule by West to the rest in 19th and 20th centuries where they considered non west as child-like and not capable of self rule. Then, racism helped imperialist to control and bind workers.

After decolonization, racism took buzz as anti-immigrant and in form of cultural difference. Racism was seen in concept of 'We' and 'They' where White and Europeans divided and segregated in social, economic and political level. With the end of Cold war, racism took the form of Islamophobia where Muslims were considered threat and it was widespread by Media. The situation got even worse after the terrorist attack of 9/11 after which Muslims around the world were judged, doubted and called as Islamic Fundamentalist. Ayab Akthar's *Disgraced*, truthfully depicts the aftermath situation of Muslims in America who were victim of stereotype, racial slurs, discrimination, hatred and alienation.

The treatment of Muslims in America is brutal, depressing and humiliating. Muslims American face problem of stereotype such as equating all Muslims as terrorist, racial slur, deceitful attack on Islam, intolerance, brutality and unreasonable fear against Muslims. Julie Schonemann writes,

The stereotypical images of Arabs and Muslims in the United States have been persistent, and the main difference between the past and the present lies mainly in the means, reasons, degree, and content of these stereotypical images. For instance, in the past Arabs and Muslims were largely described as 'erotic,' 'primitive', 'ignorant', 'slave traders', and other insulting terms. After 9/11 terms such as 'terrorist',

‘fundamentalist’, and ‘blood-thirsty’, were more commonly ascribed to Arabs and Muslims. (11)

Muslims are victim of stereotypical images where they are pictured as uncivilized, fundamentalist, violent and terrorist by American which is widespread ideology and views. Hence, there is rise in number of hate crimes and violence lately. Further, Uludag and Molyneux state:

Muslims are stereotyped and discriminated against on the basis of their religion this will slide inevitably into discrimination on the basis of skin, color, appearance, name, etc. Just as anti immigrant racism claimed to focus on cultural difference but still built on all the old ideas of innate inferiority, so Islamophobia the cruder racism will lurk and come to the surface. (5)

Minorities are always deprived of opportunities and are the bottom due to their race, religion and in comparison to Whites. Muslims are experiencing harsh form of racism which will grow extensively with time. .

Muslims are referred as low human beings to degradation in relation to white standards. Islam and Muslims is stereotyped of myths and lies. The entire race is victim of demeaning, falsely objectified, manipulation and misinterpretation. The Quran and Islam are especially accused of spreading Jihadist thinking, beating of women etc. Islam is perceived and judged, and presented as hostile Muslims are segregated by Whites. Muslims like blacks are discriminated, hated and judged for being different and other than Whites. The identity of the Muslim was denied and they are presented in negative picture of Muslims was presented everywhere, so Muslims had to accept their position in the “white world” and reject their origins and identity, and often developed a feeling of shame and self-hatred. They live in a

country where they were always surrounded by doubts, judgment and hatred. Muslims are considered as villains and evils.

Ayab Akthar is largely known for depicting and presenting American Muslim perspective, life and struggles in his plays. In *Disgraced*, too, Akthar explores how Muslims are racial victims, their suffering and hardship, experience and relationship with White Americans. The protagonist, Amir and his nephew are victims of racism and Akthar tries to highlight on the issues like identity-less-ness, adopting common culture, exclusion, double consciousness and existential crisis. These Muslim characters discard their roots in order to blend in American society but realize that no matter how hard they try, they are excluded and remained that the veil they wear don't hide their real identity.

Du Bois who is proponent of Race- Conflict theory reveals the idea of 'double-consciousness'. In *The Soul of Black Folk*, he writes:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, —this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his doubles self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (3)

Both Amir and Abe tried to embrace double identity by accepting American culture by changing their identities and following American Dream just to fit in the American

Society. Abe is introduced as “22, of South-Asian origin. But as American as American gets. Vibrant and endearing. He’s wearing a kid Robot t-shirt under hoddie, skinny jeans, high tops” (10). The text reads:

ABE. You know how much easier things are for me since changed my name? The Quran says it’s okay to hide your religion if you have to. It’s called taqiya. It doesn’t mean you’re changing who you really are... (11)

ABE. You got lucky. You didn’t have to change your first name, Amir? Could be Christians, Jewish. Plus, you were born here. It’s different. (12)

Here, Abe is explaining why he has changed and adopted double identities, American outwardly and Muslim inwardly. He is just like another Muslim who with change in their name and identity wants to fit in American society.

The protagonist Amir undergoes innumerable suffering and faces discrimination and stereotype for belonging to a certain religious group. He finds himself excluded even though he is married to a white American and the situation gets worse when his identity is disclosed at his work. He figures out that no matter how far he goes from his roots, criticizing and abandoning his religion, his surroundings and even his wife and friends are seen judging him through the lenses of race and religion. He becomes a victim of racism, stereotype and hatred due to which he is disgraced. Healey writes,

Prejudice is the tendency of an individual to think about other groups in negative ways, to attach negative emotions to those groups, and to prejudge individuals on the basis of their group memberships. Usually, a prejudiced person views other groups in terms of stereotypes. For example, those who are prejudiced against Muslims may believe that

Muslims are dangerous. A prejudiced person expresses negative emotional responses to other groups like contempt, hatred, or disgust.

For example, a person who is prejudiced against Muslims may say “If I could, I would avoid contact with Muslims” or “to be safe, it is important to stay away from places where Muslims could be.” (86)

People are victim of prejudice and keep negative thought upon certain group of people on basis of race and religion. This inclination to doubt and prejudice is the cause of stereotype which is major problem in Akhtar’s play *Disgraced*. Amir is victim of such prejudice and stereotype which is mentioned in the beginning of the play,

EMILY. A man, a waiter, looking at you. Not seeing you. Not seeing you really are. Not until you started to deal with him. And the deftness with which you did that. You made him see the gap. Between what he was assuming about you and what you really are.

AMIR. Just sounds like plain, old fashioned prejudice to me.

EMILY. Okay. But I started to think about the Velazquez painting. And that same gap. And how people must have reacted when they first saw the painting. They think they’re looking at the picture of a Moor. An assistant.

AMIR. A slave. (5)

In the beginning of the play, Amir’s wife is seen painting Velazquez’s Portrait of Juan de Pareja where Juan de Pareja is Velazquez’s slave. Amir explains how he feels being judged by waiter and now thinks that his wife too has prejudice about him. When Amir feels bad for being judged by the waiter for being Muslim, his wife find muse from that situation and paint Amir in place of the Slave in the painting.

Amir reveals how he has changed his identity to fit in the workplace. After appearing in Imam's court case, Amir was doubted and questioned of his roots and religion in the work place. Amir says, "Stevens comes in. With Jack. Sits down. Asks me where my parents were born" (33). Amir has changed his name and identity as Hindu from India just to fit in the American society and achieve career goals. For which he gives up his identity, culture and religion and mimicry just to adapt and blend with the surrounding he lives. He does identity change as an Indian just to defend his living in his work place and in United States as well. Derek Walcott in *The Caribbean, Culture and Mimicry* writes:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called as itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage. . . . it is not question of harmonizing with the background but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (269)

He states that an act of mimicry is to camouflage and blend in the environment. A person hides his identity and mimics the surrounding just to defend himself and survive from racism. It is a strategy used by oppressed to conceal real identity behind the mask. When Amir is questioned about his real identity in his workplace, he discusses about the change in identity with Emily in following ways,

AMIR. Turns out, Steven's trying to ascertain if I misrepresented myself.

EMILY. It sounds like you did.

AMIR. He knew about my name change. Your birth name is not Kapoor, Steven says. It's Abdullah. Why did you change it?

EMILY. Didn't he already know?

AMIR. I never told them.

EMILY. They must have run a background check.

AMIR. I- uh- had my social changed. When I changed my name.

EMILY. You did?

AMIR. Is it legal?

AMIR. They do it all the time. For identity theft. Steven must have been digging around. He has it in for me. I knew I should never have gone to that hearing. (34)

Amir reveals how he opted mimicry for his safety and career and hid his identity as a Pakistani Muslim. Suddenly, after he showed up in court case of Imam, his identity has been questioned in office. He is now targeted by Jews boss who are judging him by his race rather than his credibility.

Leila Ahmed in *The Discourse of the Veil* mentions how Islam as a religion and its practices are misrepresented and misunderstood by the West. She writes:

The peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the western narrative of quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam. Western ideas about Islam derived from the tales of travelers and crusaders, augmented by the deductions of clerics from their readings of poorly understood Arabic texts became slightly less vague, and the travelers' interpretations of what they observed . (319)

Ahmed clarifies that the idea of Islam present in western world was derived by West who gave false narrative and misrepresented Islam. She also writes, 'As Franz Fanon was to say of later battle of veil, between French and Algerians, the Algerians affirmed the veil because "tradition demanded the rigid separation of the sexes" and 'the occupier was bent on unveiling Algeria' (Desai and Niar 332). Here Ahmed

clarifies how veil is a tradition among women in Islam in Muslim and how colonialist presented it and tried to remove this custom.

Ayab Akthar has tried to blend these misconceptions and misrepresentation of how Western women judge the custom of wearing veil in his play. In a conversation in mid section of the play,

AMIR. First of all, they're probably wearing headscarves. Not all veil.

It's not the same thing.

JORY. The is evil. You erase a face, you erase their individuality.

Nobody's making men erase their individuality. Why's it always come down to making the woman pay? Uh-uh. There is a point at which you just have to say no. (63)

Here, Akthar shows how the tradition is confused with patriarchy. The west is unaware of the culture and tradition and they carry on the false narratives passed by their ancestors.

In *The Soul of Black Folk*, Du Bois writes, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (7). Likely, the problem of this century is also color-line but of different form. Now, the problem which has caused differences and problems is racism based on religion which is a universal phenomenon.

In the play, there are number of incidents where some characters including Amir has been victim of racism based on religion. Amir realizes how Muslims including him are misjudged and are victim of stereotyping. Amir and Issac talks:

ISSAC. We might actually start getting a little too comfortable about our suspicions...

AMIR. So you do have suspicions?

ISSAC. I mean, not me, I'm just saying---

AMIR. Look. Hell. I don't blame you. (52)

Amir mentions about discrimination in airport and other public places where they are under strict security check. This made Amir feel discriminated to which he says that this racism and negative treatment to Muslims. He finds that his color of skin make him suspicious of terrorist in public places like airport. He also finds out that Isaac has similar thought of his race and he blames the racist ideology of west. This is how a white colored man thinks about non white of different religious background and this kind of racism is Universal.

Muslims in West and precisely America try to Americanize themselves to attain an identity. They hide their racial identity inside and put a veil or mask to be included in the surrounding but deep inside their real and true self will not get lost. Du Bois writes:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (2)

Amir and Abe both mention about the tribal feeling and closeness to their religion and claim it to be in their blood. They realize that changing their identity and having dual identities won't change their roots. Amir always discarded his roots and faith in Islam but in the end of the play and after series of events, he feels that he cannot abandon his religion and his own people. Amid cold and verbal fight with Isaac and Jory, Amir accepts his tribe and roots of Islam. The conversation goes:

AMIR. Even if you're one of those lapsed Muslims sipping your after-dinner scotch alongside your beautiful white American wife- and watching the news and seeing the folks in the Middle East dying for values you were taught were purer – and stricter- and truer. You can't help but feel just a little a bit of pride.

ISAAC. Did you feel pride on September 11th?

AMIR. If I am honest, yes. I was horrified by it, okay? Absolutely horrified.

EMILY. You don't really mean that, Amir.

JORY. Pride about what? About the towers coming down? About people getting killed?

AMIR. That we were finally winning.

JORY. We?

AMIR. Yeah.... I guess I forgot which we I was.

JORY. You are American...

AMIR. It's tribal, Jor. It is in the bones. You have no idea how I was brought up. You have to work real hard to root that shit out. (65)

Amir who is an American feels that he feels connected to people of Middle East who are fighting against the West with their religious ideology. Amir says that he

cannot go away from his root and upbringing. The pain and agony felt by Muslims around the globe is felt by him after he was racially discriminated and suspected as terrorist. So, although he was disgusted by the terrorist attack as an American but deep inside he had soft corner for Muslim fighting for their beliefs. Du Bois writes:

From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century,—from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism. (157)

Du Bois clearly states that double identity, double thoughts and double ideals cause a soul to suffer of painful consciousness. Hence, it cause mind of the soul to revolt and this can be relatable why Amir said he had pride moment after 9/11, and the reason why Abe questions the West intentions in the East and Middle East and realizes that even if cool name he gives to himself doesn't help him to fit in and have a single identity as an American. The surroundings and his roots won't allow him to go away from his identity.

Abe feels excluded and finds Muslim living a vulnerable life in America where the world outside their house is not neutral, they are under surveillance by CIA

and everyone is suspected to be a terrorist. Abe also expresses to Amir that he has come to know how Americans created Al – Qaeda and now how CIA forces them to work for them. These racism and mistreatment makes young boy like Abe that he doesn't belong to his so called land of equality and opportunity. Abe has a conversation with Amir where he says, 'You're not one of them! And you will never be' (86). Abe understands that no matter what they do, Muslims are always considered as other 'other' and this realization is common to both Amir and Abe. Fanon in *On National Culture* writes:

In order ensure his salvation and to escape from the supremacy of the white man's culture the native feels the need to turn backward toward his unknown roots and to lose himself at whatever cost his own barbarous people. Because he feels he is becoming estranged, that is to say because he feels that he is the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable, the native tears himself away from the swamp that may suck him down and accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may lose body and soul. The native finds that he is expected to answer for everything, and to all comers. He not only turns himself into the defender of his people's past; he is willing to be counted as one of them, and henceforth he is even capable of laughing at his past cowardice. (205)

Fanon mentions that native will always turn back to their own culture and roots in the end no matter if his own people are barbarous as native find himself alienated and haunted by foreign culture. He defends his own people and realizes his past mistakes for estranging own religion.

Similarly, Abe and Amir realize their roots in the end of the play. Amir realizes that he was always hiding his religion under a mask or veil; therefore, marrying a white woman, working in big institution and adopting American culture were all false identities. Also, Abe finds that migration to America for better life was a mistake. The conversation between Amir and Abe shows,

AMIR. If you don't take this seriously, you are going to get deported.

ABE. Maybe that wouldn't be the worst thing.

AMIR. To a country you haven't known since you were eight years old.

ABE. Maybe that's the problem. Maybe we never should've left.

Maybe we never should have come to this one.

AMIR. There is a reason your father came here, same reason my father did. They wanted to make a better life for themselves and their families.

ABE. A better life?

AMIR. And to do it honestly. Which isn't an option in Pakistan.

ABE. You don't have a better life. (85)

Abe is frustrated with the racial discrimination, stereotype and prejudice in America for Muslims. So, he clarifies that Muslims are not living a better life in America which was a motto to live in here. He is tired and horrified with the realities in America due to which he finds comfort to go back to his natives.

Leila Ahmed in *The Discourse of the Veil* writes, 'The idea that Other men, men in colonized societies or societies beyond the borders of the civilized West, oppressed women was to be used, in the rhetoric of colonialism, to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the culture of colonized peoples'

(321) .She shows how west colonized the soul and mind of native to eradicate their native culture. The natives were brain washed and made to adopt their culture instead. In the play, Abe mentions the he is disgraced after this realization in the conversation,

ABE. No! You don't have idea what it did to me. I mean if you can't make it with them?

For three hundred years they've been coming to our part of the world. Taking our land, drawing new borders, replacing our laws, making us be like them. Look like them, marry their women. They disgraced us. They disgraced us. And then they pretend they don't understand the rage we've got? (87)

Abe is outraged and feels that West cheated the entire Muslim race since long time. He realizes that the mimicry of the west, the adaptation of their identity, culture and ideology makes no difference to Muslims. In the end, they are discriminated and are victims of racism no matter how hard they try to fit in their surroundings. This has created outrage and anger in Muslims. Abe claims that the entire Muslim race including him is humiliated by the West.

Disgraced is the realistic play that explains race and racism on the basis of culture and religion. It shows how Muslims have understood their position in the White American society. They realize that America cannot be a safe haven for them so they want to return back to their roots to find solace and feeling of togetherness. In same way, racism and prejudice makes a lover of America to a criticizer and sympathizer fundamentalist ideas.

Conclusion: Realization of Natives

The core finding of this research is to explain how racism hunts the life of Muslims in American society. Racism is the mistreatment of a group of people based

on race, color, and religion; a blind and pointless hatred, envy, or prejudice obviously expressed in the form of intimidation or abuse, discrimination on offering jobs. Racial discrimination is often based on the discrimination of color where the word ‘discrimination’ denotes the denial of equality based on personal characteristics such as race and color. In Ayab Akthar’s *Disgraced*, it is noticeably clear how Muslims are discriminated and segregated by Americans in post 9/11 on the basis of their religious orientation. The fate of the principal character is consequence of the wrath of racism. On the other hand, all other Muslim characters face stereotype and prejudice as a suspect of terrorist. The research presents various aspects of racism in relation to Muslims and evaluates theories related to various forms of racism and racial identities. It paints US imperial power as heir to the European colonial legacy and also invests in the idea that America represents the transcendence of racial differences. It discusses different aspects of conflicting racial awareness and double consciousness, prejudice, stereotype, Islamophobia that Muslim have been facing aftermath 9/11. The protagonist hid his identity, alienates himself from his own identity and race and made continuous effort to be an American. Despite all his efforts, the stability of his life does not last long. Regarding the events, in the case Amir, he submits himself to his roots and accepts it as his real identity.

Racism still prevails in American society and this time it is discrimination on the basis of race and religion. The racist psyche still pervades even in modern American society. Akthar’s *Disgraced* allows readers to understand the effects of prejudice and stereotype in a life of a modern Muslim living in America and how his racial identity complicates his life and his identity as a Pakistani Muslim shifted his life and relationship in irrevocable way. As a result, the racism and stemming from

the fear of fundamentalism leads him from a lover of America to become more critical of US.

Akthar focuses on the idea of how Americans are suspicious of Muslim beliefs and how perceive motives of Muslims as hostile. The experience of racism in US haven't changed that much. Muslims are viewed as terrorist and the media coverage is also unfair due to which life of Muslims lives are complicated and they are victims of discrimination, racism and prejudice. White Americans still secretly inhabit colonial mindset which is prevailing as racial and ethnic prejudice. It also carries socio political theme such as Islamophobia and the self- identity of Muslim Americans. It also puts light on idea that there is juxtaposition between transnational religion and national identities and intense tension is brewed between race, color and set of values associated with Islam. The situation is similar to the suffering of oppressed during colonial regime. This tendency and psyche is still underway even in the postcolonial period. Stereotype, discrimination, suppression, inequality, xenophobia and cultural dispossession are the greatest problems to which the Muslims are prone. The White American has the tendency to dominate and discriminate the non white Muslims.

The white American is seen holding naïve understandings about Islam in the play. Emily is seen correcting Amir and is seen supporting the idea of collecting money for Mosque, the use of Veil by women in Islam as a choice they make, takes Islamic culture and tradition as her muse to create new art but in the end she claims, “My work was Naïve, Amir, I need to say this. I don't think I realized what I was doing. I mean... There's you. And there is what I wanted to see through you” (89), “I cared so much about my work. It made me blind. I was selfish” (90). She clarifies that she couldn't really understand what was really inside Amir, how he felt and what was the significance of his culture and religion in his upbringing and life. Likewise, Isaac

who is seen admiring Islamic culture calls Amir 'animal and jihadist' and tells Emily that Amir doesn't understand her and Amir's identity is just a slave of master's wife.

Eventually, Amir who calls Islam as backward religion, admits that he doesn't belong to Islam and even disagrees to help Imam in the beginning, after the events and the harsh reality of his real identity starts to help his own people and begin to accept his real identity as a Muslim. It was his racial identity which caused destruction in his personal and professional lives. Amir realizes that despite of having a standard lifestyle, admirable work and white American wife, he cannot change the views and thoughts of his friends and other that he is just a Muslim. His years of hard work, his status and American-ness he has adapted doesn't help to change views of people regarding him and at last he is just a Muslim, just like others- helpless and furious. It was all a phase of his life and at the end he finds solace and warmth among other Muslim keens, he realizes that he can never try to get the identity he desired, he is ridiculed of his identity and understands that he cannot run away from his race and religion.

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