

A Book Reviewed***A Review on Saleem Dhobi's Politics of Ethnicity in American Literature*****Najia Khan**

Sociologist

Email : khannajia08@gmail.comDoi : <https://doi.org/10.3126/ppj.v3i01.59085>

The book, *Politics of Ethnicity in American Literature* Dr. Saleem Dhobi published by Motivation Funnel Pvt. Ltd in 2021 outlines the crux in the preface. It embodies the themes of cultural studies. There are four different chapters which portray ethnic groups that conflict against each other in the aftermath of 9/11. This book reflects on the multicultural principles that represent the United States of America before the 9/11. The foundation of cultural diversity is shaken at the juncture of ethnic conflicts in the post-9/11 situation. I have found this as the major argument in Dhobi's book that further reveals how cultural nuances dominate the human values and provoke people of different cultural groups to confront against each other.

This book has been written based on the literary contents produced in the aftermath of 9/11. There are three things that the writer has focused on in the book. The first the portrayal of minorities in the 9/11 fiction is questionable of stereotypes and misconceptions. The generalization about the minorities by the fiction writers has been critiqued in this book. The second thing the book deals with is diversity of ideologies that confront against each other. The writer has used analytical and critical approach to cope with the issues such as Islamism, terrorism, counterterrorism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, multiculturalism, and pluralism.

The third thing that the book prominently discusses is the scholarship on fictional writings that represent two cultures: Muslim culture and American culture which collide and clash against each other. In the outlook, the book is research-based as the references have been duly acknowledged. Therefore, it is useful for academicians and scholars who seek for knowledge on literary works.

There are four chapters that present the representation of Muslims one of the major ethnic groups that suffers media prejudice and fictional misrepresentation. The chapter critiques of the negative representation of Arabs and Muslims who become victims in the cultural conflict in the post-9/11 situation especially in the United States of America. The writer has picked up certain incidents as portrayed in the fictional works and has judged them through the lens of a grounded theory. He has quoted Evelyn Alsultany's views on the

media and fictional representation of Muslims to strengthen the arguments as developed in the book so far. The writer does not seem biased in analyzing the critical observations on the concurrent literary writings and criticisms. Instead, Dhobi has undertaken diverse incidents as discussed by the critics to support the major ideas in the book.

By bringing about the views of Kellner who blames the US and Western Media that manipulated the realities for the political purpose, the writer reflects on the hegemony of Western media in this chapter. Similarly, the writer cites some critics of the media especially Halil Ibrahim Yenigun who challenges the colonial discourse and relates the fictional and media of Muslims with the neocolonial mission of the United States of America. The writer is true as he attacks on media truths about media and Muslims that are constructed for a particular purpose. The media discourse has been analyzed in this chapter. In the view of the writer, media create truths by establishing discourses on the ethnic issues as perceived in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. To counter the attacks, the United States of America used both media and fiction writers to construct false images of both Muslims and Islam that the writer discusses in the second chapter.

The second chapter of the book elucidates the representation of religions especially Islam that gets into limelight in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The writer does not present any ungrounded statements in his book. Rather his extensive knowledge on religious representation works in critically observing the literary writings by western novelists and journalists who took the advantage of the clash that got intensified on the day of attacks on twin towers—the symbols of the American prowess.

Dhobi seems to be a bit confused as he has not been able to express his views analytically and critically. Rather the way he undertakes the issue of religion shows the penetration of his background. Therefore, he deliberately underscores Islam and its representation in the fictional works and journalistic writings and videos. Hence, the writer relates the representation of Muslims with their identity and focuses on the crisis only Muslims face in the aftermath. The writer should have mentioned the problems and biases that other ethnic minorities experienced in the American society. Overall, this chapter is simply an outline of critical perceptions of the writer regarding the representation and identity of Muslims and Islam.

In the third chapter, Dhobi deals with serious issues including jihadism, fundamentalism, terrorism and Islamophobia that become prominent in the United States after the attacks. To clarify the concept of jihad, the writer has cited different critics and theorists who have defined jihad in diverse contexts. How the west perceives jihad is different from the perspective of Muslims. The writer does not seem biased pertaining to the definitions as put forward by different critics and theorists.

However, the writer relates jihad with the struggle believers are expected to do for salvation. Muslims in general consider jihad as a means to defend religion. The writer does not seem biased. However, he relates jihadism with fundamentalism as it is the extreme version of Islam. The west is critical and intolerant of Islamic fundamentalism. The writer

has not taken any stance on this controversial issue. He has simply presented fundamentalism as it is perceived by the critics and theorists in this chapter. Although some critics whom the writer has cited in the book agree with the perspective Islamic fundamentalism is tolerable, the writer's viewpoint is not explicitly stated in the text.

Similarly, this chapter does raise the issue of terrorism and its related terms such as fundamentalism and fanaticism. The book clearly states that terrorism is the implication of fundamentalism and fanaticism. Overall, the chapter concludes with the message that radicalized people involve in terror and cause disasters against human values. However, the writer criticizes Islamophobia spread in the west. Because of this phobia, even innocent Muslims are discriminated and their fundamental rights are not protected in democratic nations like the United States of America. The writer's stance on this point is explicit. He further opposes the extremists who divide humanity for their vested interests when two ethnicities tussle against each other. This Islamophobia is the outcome of racism as perceived by the critics. Because of this Islamophobia, Muslims and Americans have stood in two different compartments after the attacks.

The fourth chapter of the book analyzes different literary texts and their criticisms in the light of multiculturalism that is disturbed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The writer has taken Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Amy Waldman's *The Submission* and John Updike's *Terrorist* to explore the significance of cultural issues such as conflict, diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism etc. How the fictional representation is done by Eastern and Western writers in the post-9/11 situation is critically evaluated by the writer in this chapter. The characters as constructed in the novels are critically judged so that the cultural conflicts between West and Middle East can be shown. The writer has succinctly presented the views of different critics and writers in order to explain the causes of ethnic conflicts.

The strengths of the book can be noted that Dhobi has expressed his both understanding and knowledge on Western literature developed in the post-9/11 situations. Meanwhile, his acute observation and critical perceptions have added the flavor to the analysis of the texts and contexts in the book. Because of the limitations, the writer seems to have looked at the ethnic conflict in a parochial perspective. He should have referenced from other ethnic groups which experienced challenges due to revival of the conflict in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. Overall, the book by Dhobi can contribute to widening the academic horizon of both writers and academicians at home and abroad.