

## I. Introduction

### General Introduction

An American critic, novelist, and poet, John Updike was born in March 18, 1932, in Shillington, Pennsylvania. He is one of the contemporary literature's most enviable stylists and foremost literary figures of today's America. Culture and morality are the dominant domains of his literary writing. Besides, he meticulously touches and handles the theme such as mannerism, hopelessness and dissatisfaction of modern people, degradation of cultural and spiritual values, in a superb style. Sexuality and social reality also occupy a significant space in his literary creations. His reputation as a novelist rests on the firm foundation of his suburban settings, domestic themes reflections of ennui and wistfulness and particularly, his fictional locales on the eastern seaboard, in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. He possesses the most brilliant style of any writer today, and his novels offer scintillating examples of its range and inventiveness.

John Updike's one of the masterpieces, *Terrorist* explores the details of American life in the post 9/11 America characterized by moral laxness, spiritual poverty, lack of opportunity, excessive materialism and absolute hopelessness which propel many young people into the arms of radical Islam and consequently induce them to be suicide bombers. In addition to it, it implicitly portrays two cultures - hedonistic American culture and fundamental Islamic culture which later in the novel possess a sort of antagonism and become anathema to each other. Teresa Mulloy- the protagonist's mother is the representative of the hedonistic American culture, whereas Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy - the protagonist stands as the representative of the fundamental Islamic culture in the novel. This representation of cultures by the two characters can logically be inferred if we appropriately interpret and analyze the life-styles led by these characters which will be done in the third chapter of this research

work. And it is here where we can locate the clash of these two cultures. And, beyond all questions, this is the fundamental concern of my research work.

Updike's *Terrorist* was first published in 2006 thereby inviting many critical voices on it. Its success and fame as a novel can be assessed on the basis of its being "the best seller" in 2009 A.D. Behind the scene of such tremendous success of the novel, there lies the fact that it appropriately probes into the post 9/11 attack on American along with her people who were the eyes of the very terrorist attack. It has received so much of its honor as a popular novel because of the novelist's lyrical and baroque prose style, as well as his penchant for complex formal design as well.

Commenting on the novel, a renowned American critic, Cynthia D. Bertelsen in *National Catholic Reporter* states, "John Updike's terrorist receives more press than most of the books because of his literary celebrity and Pulitzer prizes and the astuteness with which he examines the details of American life" (2).

Similarly, in an article in *Washington Time*, a veteran American critic David Walsh writes:

Updike sets his 22<sup>nd</sup> novel in the city of New prospect, a fictionalized Paterson (Home to a large Arab-American Population), A depressed industrial town in Northern New Jersey. While Ahmad is ostensibly the central figure in the novel, he is strangely static and passive, stiffly reiterating at every opportunity his devotion to the 'true faith' and excoriating American moral laxness. (4)

Updike presents Ahmed - an 18 year old boy in Northern Jersey who is devoted to Islam as the most thoughtful and moral character unlike his mother who leads a life of a whore. He, as a sympathetic character, is made by Updike a vantage point from which the readers peep into the American materialism and morality. From this, it is clear that Updike has thought a lot about American society, the inner city and modern morality and culture. His

descriptions and complex characters compel readers to analyze the then American cultural and moral status while presenting the characters and the reality of the then American culture plays magically with the prose which is elegantly rich.

Commenting on the selection of the issue in the novel and its relevance, David Walsh, in the same article further comments:

The author has chosen not to imbue his portrait of a decrepit, hollowed out and rudderless community with any sense of protest. The often hostile tone the work assumes toward its human figures draws one on to the ineluctable conclusion that the fault for the mess lies with them, these scurrying selfish, odorous beings [. . .]. Apparently, they deserve the cluttered, uncultured, ugly American they get. (5)

Updike was highly influenced by the two contemporary American writers mainly J.D. Salinger and John Cheever especially in this style and approach. The narrator of his frequently anthologized story “A and P”, for instance, pays direct homage to Salinger's “Holden Canfield”, while such early pieces of marital life like “A Gift from the City” and “Snowing in Greenwich Village” evoke Cheever's elegant tales of spousal tension and middle class comfort. At the same time, Updike was every bit his own writer, even early one, looking for deeper inspiration not in his contemporaries but rather in the European modernists who immediately preceded him, chiefly James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Henry Green and Vladimir Nabokov. Specially, Updike's lyrical, baroque prose style, as well as his penchant for complex formal design, can be traced directly back to those modernist masters.

Besides this, Updike's style and subject matter employed in the novel have some similarities in the works of his Arab counterparts as well. Among them, Yasmina Khadra, Viken Berberian, Myriam Antaki and Slimane Benaissa are worth mentioning. Like Updike, Ms Khadra in her novel *This Attack* “traces the development and formations of suicide

bombers" (qtd. in Bertelsen 3). She suggests that poverty and simply falling in with a certain community or groups is enough for people to merge with the radicals. Like Ms. Khadra, a Lebanese-American author Viken Berberian in *The Cyclist*, "suggests that poverty and oppression give rise to suicide bombers" (qtd. in Bertelsen 3). Like Updike, Myriam Antaki, a Syrian novelist in her *Verses of Forgiveness* depicts three characters: a Catholic mother, a Jewish father and a Muslim son. Through their woundedness, and years apart, the father and son both become terrorists, one for the new Jewish state and the other for radical Islam" (qtd. in Bertelsen 3). In the same way, Algerian novelist and playwright Slimane Benaïssa, in his *The last Night of a Damned Soul* illuminates clearly how terrorists politicize Islam, making it into their own creation" (qtd. in Bertelsen 4). Like Mr. Updike, Mr. Benaïssa folds his story around Arab immigrants and, like Mr. Benaïssa, he uses the first person to tell the story of the narrator, Raouf, an immigrant and a software engineer in California's Silicon Valley. Through Raouf's meditations and musings, Mr. Benaïssa dredges up the issues of poverty and Muslim humiliation, making it clear that Islam as preached by the radical Islamists is not the Islam he knows.

The publication of the novel invited a number of critical voices on it at home and abroad. Eugene Goodheart, the editor of *Independent on Sunday* states, "Updike brilliantly portrays this lean, fastidious Muslim against a backdrop of American obesity and decadence [. . .]" (3). In other words, he means to say that Mr. Updike has presented the protagonist of the novel against the hedonistic and decadent American culture as a very honest and moral character. Likewise, an influential American critic Cynthia D. Bertelsen critiques on the novel saying "Mr. Updike hammers home the idea that for many young people, Islam offers a sense of meaning in a meaningless world and a sense of community and belonging" (2).

In an interview answering the questions posed by a journalist about the novel, Updike comments on the then American and their moral and religious decadence and says, "[. . .]

America has become a grotesque parody of itself, destroyed by its own affluence, bloated by over consumption hollowed out by its lack of moral and religious certainties and beliefs, and generally on its way to hell in a handcart" (1).

My fundamental focus in this research will be upon the clash in the novel that creates an open territory for the collision of hedonistic American culture and fundamental Islamic culture, which is demonstrated through the conflict between Teresa and Ahmad, two dominant characters of the novel who tacitly represent hedonistic American culture and fundamental Islamic culture respectively. This clash will be, beyond all questions, displayed by interpreting and analyzing the life-styles led by the major characters in the novel employing "Cultural Studies" as a fundamental theoretical tool. Besides, I will not focus on the methodological aspects of the novel including its structure and the point of view. And I will be using the terms 'Hedonism' and 'Fundamentalism' not as literary movements, but as beliefs. In this sense, Hedonism stands for the belief that goes for an excessive pleasure and counts pleasure as the highest good. Likewise, Fundamentalism stands for the belief that goes for a strict adherence to a certain doctrine or ism. In short, although these terms do not have opposite meanings, they stand as opposites and are anathema to each other.

This research work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter basically deals with an introductory aspect of the study. It incorporates the title classification, hypothesis elaboration, introduction to the novelist's background, his works and respective themes, various critics on the novelist and his works particularly *Terrorist*, various influences on the novelist-especially some European American and Arabian literatures' and the last but not the least its delimitation.

The second chapter is primarily meant to develop a theoretical modality which is to be effectively applied in the study in order to make the clash of cultures sail on the surface. It, therefore, provides a brief introduction of the tool drawing ideas from various available

sources. This part of the study defines the terminologies such as 'culture', cultural identity', cultural studies and 'cultural encounter' and presents an elaborated background of 'cultural studies' as a critical movement.

The third chapter of the study presents an analysis of the novel/text at a considerable length on the basis of the theoretical modality defined and developed in the second chapter. It consists of the necessary extracts from the text so as to prove the hypothesis of the study. And moreover, this chapter will serve as the core of my research work.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of the research work. Standing on the firm foundation of the analysis of the text done extensively in the third chapter it will conclude the explanations, elaborations and arguments put forward in the preceding chapters on the basis of the textual evidences and make the clash of cultures float on the surface.

## II. Cultural Studies

### Culture, Its Origin and Meaning

Culture, in its most generic sense, is a particular way of life. In other words, it is the totality of life that includes values, norms, customs, assumptions, religion, rituals, manners, and behaviors, beliefs and so on through which people act, behave and perceive the world around them.

As far as origin of it is concerned, the term 'culture' has been derived from the Latin word 'cultura', which means "to cultivate". When the concept first emerged in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, it connoted a process of cultivation or improvement as in agriculture or horticulture i.e. the betterment or the refinement of the individual. However, the meaning of culture cannot be drawn out easily as such since it can have different meanings in different contexts. Moreover, the meaning of culture has undergone massive change over the time.

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines culture as, "a way of life that includes the customs, beliefs, art and social organization of a particular country or group" (373). Mathew Arnold, the 19<sup>th</sup> century poet and critic defined culture, "the best that has been thought and known in the world" (436). Arnold had a very elitist view of culture. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, culture emerged as a concept central to anthropology encompassing all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. It is rather the set of shared attitudes, values, beliefs, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group. For German Sociologist Georg Simmel, culture refers to "the cultivations of individuals through the agency of external forms which have been objectified in the course of history" (3). Similarly E.B. Taylor, a renowned British anthropologist, defines, "culture or civilization is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" ( 1).

However, by mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the concept that lies at the core of cultural studies is very much the concept that is found in cultural anthropology. Raymond Williams, the British cultural theorist denotes “culture as the whole way of life, it entails recognition that all human beings live in a world that is created by human beings, and in which they find meaning” (236). Culture, as such, is the complex everyday world we all encounter and through which we all move. Culture begins at the point at which human surpasses whatever is simply given in their natural inheritance. The cultivation of natural world in agriculture and horticulture is, thus, a fundamental element of a culture. As such the two most important or general elements of culture may be the ability of human beings to construct and to build it.

With the emergence of postcolonial theory, culture had a most contested space. It bears witness to those unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. It forces us to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value often composed of incommensurable demands and practices produced in the act of social survival.

Edward Said, a renowned Palestinian cultural critic, is interested studying the relationship between the east and west. On the one hand, he sees 'the project of Orientalism' as matching with 'the scope of empire'. On the other hand, he focuses on culture representing as well as functioning as a form of hegemony. Said, in this connection, finds Mathew Arnold using culture as a powerful means of differentiation. Culture is an ideal for Arnold but Said argues, "culture with its superior position has the power to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, denote, interdict and validate" (9). Culture, for Said, is not only the positive doctrine of the best that is thought and known but also a differentially negative doctrine of all that is not best.

Thus, it can be said that culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Arnold



claims it. Then culture comes to be associated with the nation which differentiates from one another. Culture, in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative entity. Culture, in fact, is a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage on one another.

### **Cultural Studies**

Obviously, it is difficult to define cultural studies because it has no referent to which we can point. It is not a tightly coherent, unified movement with a fixed agenda but a loosely connected group of tendencies, issues and questions. Emerged during the 1960s, cultural studies is composed of elements of marxism, new historicism, feminism, gender studies: those fields that focus on social and cultural forces that either create community or cause division and alienation. In general, as stated by Andrew Edgar and peter Sedgwick, "the term cultural studies may be used broadly, to refer to all aspects of the study of culture and an such may be taken to encompass the diverse ways in which culture is understood and analyzed" (100).

Similarly, explaining cultural studies M.H. Abrams writes:

Cultural studies designates a recent and rapidly growing cross disciplinary enterprise for analyzing the conditions that effect the production, reception, and cultural significance of all types of institutions, practices, and products, among these, literature is accounted as merely one of many forms of cultural "signifying practices". A chief concern is to specify the functioning of the social, economic, and political forces and power structures that produce all forms of cultural phenomena and endow them with their social "meanings", their "truth" the modes of discourse in which they are discussed, and their relative value and status. (53)

Likewise, Graff and Bruce write:

Within cultural studies, the aim of cultural criticism is something more than preserving, transmitting and interpreting culture or cultures. The aim is rather, to bring together, in a common democratic space of discussion, diversities that had remained unequal largely because they had remained apart. (434-35)

In this sense, cultural studies means a refusal to the universals of culture and at the same time challenges the belief in essential undemanding qualities. Cultures are actually indeterminate sites of conflict that cannot be pinned down to a single totalized meaning. Cultural studies is highly an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that blurs the boundaries between itself and other subjects. As Lawrence Grossberg and other emphasize that the intellectual promise of cultural studies lies in its attempt to "cut across diverse social and political interests and address many of the struggles within the current scene" (1).

Cultural studies transcends the confines of a particular discipline such as literary criticism. It is rather politically engaged and at the same time denies the separation of 'high' or 'low' culture. Gwerin and other explain, "Cultural studies is committed to examining the entire range of a society's beliefs, institutions and communicative practices including arts" (241). It remains difficult to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified, academic discipline with clear cut topics, concepts and methods. But what is important here is the connections of 'cultural studies' to 'power' and 'politics'. Similarly, Chris Baker argues that culture "is a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice" (5) where knowledge is never an objective phenomenon but a matter of positionality.

Cultural studies in this sense is a discursive formation i.e. a cluster of 'ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about the forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society. Thus, a good deal of cultural studies is centered on question of representation that is on how the world is

socially constructed and represented to and by us. The central strand on cultural studies can be understood as the study of culture as the signifying practices of representation which requires us to explore the textual generation of meaning. It also demands investigation of the modes by which meaning is produced in a variety of contexts. Cultural representations and meaning have certain materiality since they are produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts. Cultural studies here takes linguistic turn because it is language that gives meaning to material objects and social practices that are brought into view by language and made intelligible to us in terms of production but not determined necessarily by that moment. The meaning of a text is produced in the interplay between text and reader, therefore, the moment of consumption is also a moment of meaningful production.

Such a discipline called cultural studies has the centrality of the Foucauldian concept of power. Baker writes, "Power is not simply the glue that holds the society together, or the coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another [ . . . ] but the processes that generate and enable any form of social action, relationship or order" (10). Such notion of power is similar to Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony", which is closely related to cultural studies which implies a situation where a 'historical block' of powerful groups exercise social authority and leadership over subordinate groups through the winning of consent.

These observations can perhaps be reduced to a single proposition that cultural studies refers to a multi stranded intellectual movement that places cultural analysis in the context of social formations, seeing society and culture as historical processes rather than frozen artifacts, emphasizing the inextricable relations between culture and power, and calling attention to social inequalities, thus, always making a committed call for democratization.

## **Cultural Identity**

Identity has become the central area of concern in cultural studies. Identities within the domain of cultural studies, are not perceived as things which exist independently. They are rather constructed within the contexts. In other words, identities are constituted and made rather than founded by representations.

Every identity that is proclaimed, is elaborated as a function of the other. It would be more precise to say that identity is a discourse of tradition. It is a production which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation. Hall argues that there are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, as Hall argues, "Our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which people provide us with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (111). One cannot speak for very long, with any exactness about one experience, one identity, without acknowledging its other side.

Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past identities are subject to continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past which is to be found, identities are names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past. Indian experience Indianness, Africanness, and other such identities are constituted out of the traumatic character of the colonial experience. The way in which these identities were subjected and positioned in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization. The dominant or superior culture has the power to influence or dominate the other.

Nevertheless, this idea of otherness as inner compulsion changes our conception of 'cultural identity'. In this perspective Hall writes, "Cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not universal and transcendental spirit inside us, on which history has made no mark" (113). Thus, identity is neither once-and-for-all nor is a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute return. But identity is not a mere phantasm either. It is something which has histories or past, which continually speaks to us. Identities are constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities, thus, are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or future, which are made, within the discourse of history and culture.

### **Cultural Encounter**

With the very beginning of colonialism people started moving from one cultural space to another. This movement actually broke the boundaries of cultures. These boundaries are continuously being criss-crossed as the world is turning more globalized. People's movement from one cultural space to another has caused the cultural encounter between and among the cultures. This cultural encounter can facilitate a pattern of mutual adjustment or reciprocal give-and-take by offering a space enough for coexistence. But all the time it is not necessary that cultural encounter promotes blending and merging perspectives. The meeting of cultures is likely to be marked by contestation, struggle and antagonism. Such an encounter takes place when one culture is introduced to another culture which is different from it. Cultural encounter, however, does not take a single mode rather it is a process and can be clarified on the various modes it takes. The various modes of cultural encounter are like acculturation, assimilation and so on.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is one of the prominent modes of cultural encounter in the context of shifting global tendencies. It refers to that process where diverse cultural traits and

complexities are modified because of the continuous contact by making the cultures and cultural hybridity and the multicultural society. Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different culture come into contact for a long time, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either one or both groups. The history of each society is characterized by a set of values, beliefs and practices. Cultural interactions stem from the prolonged contact between two or more sets of values norms which can be extremely different from one another, and such contacts as Dallmayr states, “it may extend “ from domestic contacts to global interactions”, and “between hegemonic western culture and developing non-western societies” (14).

This can result either in co-operation or competition between cultures. In the first case, exchange and mutual support can take place while in the second case, hostility and conflict may arise. The second alternative is most frequent one. Acculturation only seldom takes place as a bi-directional process. More often cultural modification concerns the changes a cultural group has to introduce in collective as well as individual behavior, in order to co-exist and interact with the norms and habits of a dominant social system. It usually applies to ethnic minorities, immigrants, and indigenous people expose to colonization, refugees which can be globally considered as acculturating groups. Because of the involuntary character of the acculturation process minorities are mostly forced to adapt to the cultural system they live in, in order to cope with the dominant environment and become active part in it.

People belonging to the acculturating minority maintain strong relationship within their group. They keep their own traditions, behaviors and values. They create a separate sub-culture, which is minimally influenced by the dominant group. In such situation the contacts between the two social systems are subsequently very restricted. Individuals originating from the acculturating group are not accepted as member of dominant culture. They are marginalized or segregated by the dominant group regardless of their wish to integrate and to

assimilate. However, acculturating individuals manage to acquire values and behaviors characterizing the dominant culture in which they live, at the same time preserving their own traditions and habits.

### **Assimilation**

Cultural encounter does not always entail merger or fusion, but may lead to partial adaptation or assimilation, through a process of cultural borrowing. This happens when the respective culture face each other on a more nearly equal or roughly comparable basis.

Assimilation, as Dallmayr states quoting Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, is "a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated by them in a common cultural life" (14). Assimilation is the process whereby individuals or groups once dissimilar becomes similar, share the same sentiments, values and goals and whereby attitudes of many persons are united and develop into a unified group. It results because of the functional relation of the diverse cultural elements.

Assimilation is closely affiliated to the process of acculturation within the acculturating group; individuals lose their ties with the original cultural background and acquire values, habits and behaviors from the dominant culture. It is usually applied to policies in some western or westernizing nations. In the western orbit, the most frequently discussed example of cultural assimilation is United States. In this case large numbers of immigrants from many parts of the world are progressively integrated into dominant social and political fabric. This is even true for the many post-colonial non-western societies like. India, Africa, Caribbean, Islands, etc. Like USA they too carry the 'melting-pot' rhetoric. But this rhetoric alone cannot truly depict the cultural clash among these societies, because it is difficult to find a homogenous cultural co-existence.

### III. Hedonistic American Culture Vs Fundamental Islamic Culture

#### Critical Synopsis of the Novel

John Updike's 22<sup>nd</sup> novel *Terrorist*, published in 2006, is one of his superb novels. Timely and topical, the novel is all about post 9/11 America. It explores the details of American life characterized by moral laxness, spiritual poverty, excessive materialism and absolute hopelessness in general and the conflict between cultures in particular.

This novel has been divided into five major chapters. The novel has Ahmad Mulloy, Teresa Mulloy, Shaikh Rahid, Jack Levy, Charlie Chehab and Joryleen Grant as major characters and a few other minor characters as Beth Levy, Hermione Fogel, Tylenol and the Head of the Department of Homeland Security. Ahmad is an 18 years teenager and high school student. He is the son of long absent Egyptian father and Irish- American mother, Teresa Mulloy. Teresa is a nurse's aide and amateur painter. She was earlier Catholic by her religion but left the church at the age of 16. She later turns secular. Ahmad's father, Omar Ashmay Mulloy was Egyptian by his origin and Islamic by his religion. He had come to America as an exchange student and married Teresa to gain American citizenship. There, he could not succeed himself economically. So, in his despaired situation, he left his family when Ahmad was only three and lost forever. Shaikh Rashid is the imam of the local mosque, a spiritual leader of Ahmad. Jack levy is seen as the guidance counselor at Ahmad's school who holds an affair with Ahmad's mother. Joryleen Grant is African American girl, the friend of Ahmad at school who tries to seduce him. Charlie Chehab is Ahmad's boss, a Lebanese, has a furniture shop at New Prospect. Beth is Jack's wife, an obese woman who is fond of eating and watching TV. Hermione is Beth's sister and works as a secretary for the Head of Homeland Security.

The novel takes place in the city of New Prospect, a depressed industrial town in the northern New Jersey which is a home to large Arab-American population and it is set against



the backdrop of September-11, 2001, the time when there was a terrorist attack on WTC's Twin Towers.

The story centers on Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy, the protagonist, though other characters like Teresa and Jack also play central role. The novel actually seeks to explore the worldview and motivation of religious fundamentalists (specifically within Islam), while at the same time dissects the morals and life ways of residents of decaying New Jersey suburb of New Prospect.

The plot of the novel begins with a brief monologue by Ahmad on the condition of American youths as represented by the student body mingling in the corridors of his high school. He fights with the older boy, named Tylonel who thinks Ahmad is flirting with his girlfriend, Joryleen. While Ahmad has sexual impulses toward the girl, he represses them, as God instructs. He finds solace at his mosque located in the abandoned dance studio and his study of the *Quran* under the guidance of his imam, Shaikh Rashid. Ahmad converts to Islam at the age of 11 simply because his feeling as an outsider all the time in the mainstream American culture, his mother's negligence towards him and his father's absence in his life. So, the imam not only becomes his spiritual teacher but also a surrogate father in a sense. He continuously feeds the fundamental Islamic ideas in Ahmad, as a result, he builds up a strong conviction in Islamic religion.

Supporting Ahmad at home is his rather negligent mother, Teresa Mulloy, a third generation Irish American woman, who raised as a Catholic, has abandoned her religious beliefs. Because of her religious infidelity, openness towards sexuality and her relationship with men; she has become one of the many objects of Ahmad's hatred although in her case she is accorded a dutiful love as well as. On the other hand, Ahmad idolizes his absent father, an Egyptian immigrant who abandoned him and his mother when Ahmad was 3 years old.

As Teresa is immoral in her manner, one of her suitors in the story is Ahmad's counselor, Jack Levy, who initially visits her to try and steer Ahmad towards college and away from his chosen career path of a truck driver. Levy is an American Jew who has abandoned practicing his religion, yet he maintains the stereotypical Jewish cynicism and depression.

Ahmad has strong penchant for a truck driver on the advice of his imam Shaikh Rashid because driving is a practical skill of good merit whereas the academic studies serves only to advance American secular beliefs. He is also afraid that academic studies will strengthen his occasional religious doubt. Trucking is also the path that leads Ahmad toward involvement in a terrorist plot directed against the American "infidels" – an attempt to blow up the Lincoln Tunnel under the Hudson River.

As induced by the beliefs of his imam and Anti-American thought of his boss, Charlie, Ahmad agrees to drive the truck into the tunnel and blow himself up. On the day of the planned attack, his accomplices are not at their planned meeting place. Ahmad avoids arrest by federal agents and continues his suicide mission alone. Driving the bomb-laden truck, he encounters Jack Levy on the side of the road before getting on the highway. Jack's sister-in-law Hermione has alerted him to Ahmad's involvement in a possible terrorist attack. Then Jack rides into Lincoln Tunnel with Ahmad while sitting in traffic tries to convince him not to go through the bombing. But Ahmad does not stop. Turning his deaf ears to Jack, he continues stepping forward with the same mission in his mind.

### **Hedonism**

Hedonism, in its simplest sense is a belief that pleasure is the most important thing in life. In other words, the idea that pleasure is the principal goal is hedonism. Very explicitly, it stresses on the idea that pleasure is the highest good in life.

As defined in *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, “The name of this philosophy has come from the ancient Greek word ‘hedone’ which indicates pleasure” (180). In ancient times, the philosophy of hedonism was promoted in various forms by Cyrenians and Epicureans. The Cyrenians tended to stress on the licentious and restricted pleasures to those of senses whereas the Epicureans while acknowledging the pleasure of sex, emphasize more on peace of mind and the absence of pain.

Modern philosophers such as Thomas Hobbs, Jeremy Bentham and Stuart Mills have also defended hedonism. Hedonism is now often categorized in different ways. Psychological hedonism contends that as a matter of scientific fact, pleasure is man’s only motivation. Utilitarian hedonism contends that a person’s conduct should have as its goal, the giving of pleasure to the greatest possible number of people. Egoistic hedonism restricts pleasure to that of a single person. Philosophical hedonism contends that moral conduct should seek the most pleasure with the least amount of pain. In any case, hedonism is not so much the doing of a specific act which grants pleasure as it is a way of life yielded by the viewpoint that there is nothing more worthy of pursuit in life than that which gives pleasure. To a hedonist, in general, whatever is considered pleasurable is morally good. It does not rely upon sources outside man to determine what is pleasurable and what is not. In humanism, “man is the measure of all things whereas pleasure is the means by which man measures everything in hedonism.

However, in my research work, I do not specify the idea to a particular section of hedonism. I would rather like to use hedonism in a very general sense relating to its idea of seeking pleasure whatever the way it is possible. Moreover, I will focus on the deceitful, dangerous and destructive aspects of this idea, that is thinking pleasure is simply good, the pursuit of it and acquisition through any possible means is harmful and destructive.

## **Hedonistic American Culture**

Culture, as it is known, is particular way of people's life including values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, customs, and rituals and so on. Culture is very important since people behave, act and perceive the world through the kind of culture they are living in. Culture plays a very important role because our identity is shaped by the very culture we adopt.

So far the culture of today's America is concerned; it is mainly characterized by secularism, irreligiosity, immorality and more specifically by hedonism. Though it was earlier imbued with Christian faith and morality, the country in the latter days turned secular and again irreligious and then utterly immoral. Finally, at present it has turned completely hedonistic. Hedonism, as it is known, is a belief that the pleasure is the highest good, so the purpose of life is only the pursuit of pleasure.

It is exactly difficult to trace the time when this pleasure seeking tendency grew up in America, but very tentatively this tendency in America grew up as it started acquiring affluences. This dates back to the aftermath of World War I. After that America came into power and started becoming affluent. Consequently, traditional life of people started changing rapidly. The country's affluence had been the sole reason for this developing tendency of seeking pleasure. As after the World War II the country turned to be the super power and the richest country of the world, this tendency increased considerably. As the time passed on, the country's affluence increased much higher than earlier. Then people sought for much liberty in their manners, behavior and activities. As the usual manner America has presently been a nation of tremendous prosperity. No other nation in the history of the world has acquired such material abundance nor enjoyed such a broad distribution of wealth among its people. The affluence of the American society has elevated pleasure intended activities. The entire sector of economy flourished to satisfy the spectrum of people's urges. Thus, America has become a hedonistic heaven.

George Barna and William Paul McKay, the social critics rightly state,

America has become the world's foremost champion of hedonism. This is the mind set in which the acquisition of pleasures and enjoyments is the highest priority in life. Responsibilities such as worship to a holy God, fulfillment of obligation, and personal improvement are deemed of secondary importance.

Having fun is all that counts. (139-140)

These lines indicate how American people give more priority to entertainment and self pleasure. Duties and responsibility for the family or society is the secondary matter for them.

The hedonistic belief depicts the obsession of Americans to obtain an excessive pleasurable entertainment. For this pornography gambling, obscenities, and open sex are usual now. Marriage is a failed institution. Extra-marital relationships are common, changing partners occurs as often as changing clothes. Traditional family life is old-fashioned and unusual in these days. Trust in neighbors and acquaintances are virtually unknown. 'Do what thou wilt' has becomes a guiding theme in America. Instant gratification is demanded and expected. People lack true moral responsibility, self-respect, social grace and common decency. People are badly spoiled by the hedonistic pleasures. Commenting on the present American life style Willam S. Banowsky says, "No nation in all of world history has ever been as hedonistic as the United States now is. Americans now spend more money on pleasurable pursuits of all types, than on religion ad education combined" (25).

The major factors that contribute to the popularity of hedonism can be its own national affluence, its irreligiosity, urban living, modern technology, excessive freedom and no sense of ethics. Americans appear to be descending into cultures lacking morality, spirituality, decency and virtues. Whenever most people think every man seeks only his own

pleasure, the structure of society begins to fall apart and people are left in a decadent world that is what has happened in America.

### **Fundamentalism**

Fundamentalism, in its most generic sense, refers to the strict adherence to certain beliefs, principles and theories. However, in particular it refers to the strong adherence to religious beliefs on its basic principles. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines fundamentalism “is the belief and practice of following very strictly the basic rules and teaching of any religion” (501). Similarly, fundamentalism defined in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is “a belief in strict adherence to a set of basic principles (often religious to nature), sometimes as a reaction to perceived doctrinal compromises with modern social and political life” (1357).

The term fundamentalism was originally coined to describe a narrowly defined set of beliefs that developed into a movement within the Protestant community of the United States in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and had its roots in the fundamentalist- modernist controversy of that time. The movement's purpose was to reaffirm orthodox Protestant Christianity and zealously defended it against the challenges of liberal theology, and other “isms” which it regarded as harmful to Christianity. And it was to defend those things that were fundamental to Christian beliefs. Since then the term has been generalized to mean strong adherence to any set of beliefs in the face of criticisms or unpopularity but has by and large retained religious connotations.

Fundamentalism today is commonly used as a pejorative term particularly when combined with other epithets as in the phrase “Muslim fundamentalist” and “right-wing /left-wing fundamentalists” etc. However, the pattern of conflict between fundamentalism and modernism in Protestant Christianity has parallels in other religious communities.

Fundamentalism is, therefore, a belief through which the adherents attempt to rescue religious

identity from absorption into modern culture, where this absorption appears to the enclave to have made irreversible progress in wider religious community, necessitating the assertion of separate identity based upon the fundamental of founding principles of the religion. This formation of separate identity is deemed necessary due to a perception that the religious community has surrendered its ability to define itself in religious terms. The fundamentals of the religion have been discarded and lost through compromise and inattention.

Therefore, fundamentalist movements claim to be founded upon the same religious principles as the larger group, but the fundamentalists more self-consciously attempt to build an entire approach to the modern world on strict fidelity to those principles, to preserve distinctness between the both of doctrine and of life.

### **Fundamental Islamic Culture**

To its origin, the term fundamentalism was mainly used by the Christians and the west. There is no word for fundamentalism in Arabic. It is a western construct used to describe the strict forms of religion beliefs. When it is applied to Islam it refers to the religious ideologies seen as advocating a return to the 'fundamentals' of Islam: the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* (Tradition of the prophet).

Islamic fundamentalism is not as distinct form of Islamism but a subset of the most conservative, orthodoxical element and the strictest form of Islam. However, it is misleading to use the term referring to all the Muslims. It is commonly applied to those Muslim individuals or groups, who are radical, militant and fanatical, i.e. those who preach violence and other aggressive means such as 'Jihads' (for Holy war) and terrorist acts in order to achieve their goals.

The term Islamic fundamentalism is often criticized. However Bernard Lewis, a leading historian of Islam, has had this to say against it:

The use of this term is established and must be accepted but it remains unfortunate and can be misleading "fundamentalist" is a Christian term. It seems to have come into use in the early years of this century, and denotes certain Protestant Churches and organizations, more particularly those that maintain the literal divine origin and inerrancy of the Bible [...]. The so called Muslim fundamentalists differ from other Muslims and indeed from Christian fundamentalists in their scholasticism and their legalism. (12)

As stated by Roberti Marin – Guzman, the professor of Middle East History and Arabic, at the university of Costa Rica:

Islamic fundamentalism mainly stems from the desire to return to the fundamentals of Islam, which include the Quran, the Sunna (the traditions of the prophet and the saying and deeds of Muhammad) and the Sharia (the Islamic law). The aims of Islamic fundamentalism are to rescue the core values of Islam to restore the Islamic state and to oppose anything that has penetrated Islamic society (Umma) as an innovation (bid'a). Bid'a refers to everything that is contrary to Islamic Principles. Fundamentalism follows the teachings of original Islam and makes no distinction between politics and religion. Due to this, in some cases, such as in Iran, fundamentalist leaders assume that the political guidance of the society must come from the 'Ulema' or religious leaders. (4)

Among many other reasons, one important reason is that Islamic fundamentalism stems also from a sense of displacement and alienation from the modern world. Furthermore, many Islamic countries today suffer in the extremely impoverished, unstable, and war-torn conditions. So, many Islamic extremists blame these conditions on western imperialism and culture. Similarly, the western presence in the Middle East planted the seeds for Islamic



fundamentalism in that region during Europe's colonial period that invaded every aspect of its region.

Next, along with the presence of US in the Middle East, many Muslims resent American culture. Many Islamic fundamentalists argue that their culture has been subsumed by American culture. Then they see the Westerns as unholy and decadent. They despise American immodesty and secularism.

Finally Islamic fundamentalism mainly attracts the young, the dispossessed and the unemployed, who suffer the effects of marginalization and extreme poverty. They resent the suffering, the shortages, and they blame and react violently against the secular governments of their own societies as tools of the west, as well as against the west itself, which they hold ultimately responsible for their economic and social ills. For them Islam is the perfect and the only solution. This has caused a continuous clash between the western culture and fundamental Islamic culture.

### **Teresa: Representative of Hedonistic American Culture**

While going through a thorough observation of the novel, we can see the character of Teresa Mulloy being a true representative of Hedonistic American culture who clearly designates the idea of hedonism rampant in American culture. And the result is often misleading and dangerous.

Teresa Ashmay Mulloy is an American woman of Irish origin. She is in her 40s. She works as a nurse's aide at the St. Francis Community Hospital and also a spare-time amateur painter. She was earlier Catholic by her religion, but left her religion at the age of 16. She later turns secular in her belief. He was married to an Egyptian exchange student Omar Ashmay Mulloy and gave birth to a son, Ahmad Mulloy, the protagonist. Her husband deserted her and her son, a three years child. Omar married her simply to have American citizenship even though she was immoral. He later disappeared because he could not succeed

himself economically. In his despaired situation, he left his family and lost forever in the mist. Now the responsibility comes to Teresa to grow up her child, but many times she fails to perform the essential responsibility, a mother should do for a child. She rather leads immoral life and she is interested only in attaining pleasure. The pleasures she receives, are mainly from the sexual intercourse and from her painting. As a mother she does not properly teach the good values, norms, customs and beliefs. She lets him grow the way he likes.

As far as her representation in the novel is concerned, Updike implicitly places her to represent the mainstream American culture, that is, highly hedonistic characterized by immorality sensuality, obscenity, pleasure seeking tendency and spiritual poverty.

Teresa, in the novel, is presented as a female character that can best represent the hedonistic culture that has gone astray with various wrongs such as immorality, sensuality, excessive materialism and pursuit of pleasure, the aspects of hedonistic culture.

Having close observation into the novel, we can notice hedonism rampant in the novel. In the very beginning, Ahmad observes the scene at his school:

All day along, at central high school, girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair. Their bare bellies, adorned with shining novel studs and low-down purple tattoos, ask, what else is there to see? Boys strut and saunter along and look dead-eyed, indicating with their edgy killer gestures and careless scornful laughs at this world is all there is – a noisy varnished hall. (3)

His observation clearly reveals the glimpses of atmosphere prevalent in America and usual appearance of youths seen there. Then Ahmad also observes the workers, officials and teachers at the school:

They are men and women like any others, full of lust and fear and infatuation with things that can be bought. Infidels, they think safety lies in accumulation

of things of this world, and in the corrupting diversions of the television set.

They are slaves to images, false ones of happiness and affluence. (4)

This narration truly reflects the hedonistic life-style led by the people at Ahmad's school which is the metonymy for the whole America.

In the novel, Teresa typically represents the life style prevalent in America. She is from the very beginning found to be a woman who is immoral and an irresponsible mother. The narrator introduces her as, "She is nurse's aide at the saint Francis community Hospital and a spare time painter who sees her son often far less than one hour in twenty-four" (9). And her immoral character was revealed when Ahmad introduces his parents to Jack Levy. He says, "My father well knew that marrying an American citizen, however trashy and immoral she was, would gain him American citizenship [. . .]" (35). As a sensual woman of the hedonistic society she keeps on changing her sex partner time and again. We come to know through the narration, "Ahmad's mother, after one boy friend has let her down and before the next has shown up [. . .]" (42). One of the latest boyfriends (sex partner) is Ahmad's school's guidance counselor, Jack Levy himself.

In the novel, Jack, on the one hand, tries to bring Ahmad back to his study career without letting him go astray anywhere. So, in the course of offering guidance, he builds a close connection with Teresa. In a conversation with her he comments on her, "I see single moms as terrific, Terry they're all that's holding our society together" (89). By this he implies that Teresa as a single mother is dangerous since she is having sexual affair with many like him. As they are very close, they have extra-marital affair and have frequent sexual intercourse even ignoring the presence of Ahmad nearby. This is a typical portrayal of hedonistic American culture. Ahmad senses that his mother and Levy shamelessly, without any fear, start having sexual intercourse in front of him. The only thing they desire is the sexual gratification. The following lines vividly capture the moment:

Now he is aware of, too close to his head, the man's belly, its warmth carrying out with it a smell, several smells- a compounded extract of sweat and alcohol, Jewishness and Godlessness an unclean scent stirred up by the consultation with Ahmad's mother, the embarrassing mother he tries to hide, to keep to himself. The two adult voices had intertwined flirtatiously, disgustingly, two aged infidel animals warming to each other in the other room. (94)

In an event of a sexual intercourse Jack and Teresa talk about the pleasure they get in sex. Teresa says, "Jack, this is what life is all about" (158). She implies that life is all about for pleasure and the way sex is. Then she inquires how pleased Levy was after making love with her. She again forces him to tell the taste of her vagina. She asks, "Tell me about my cunt, Jack" (160). He replies, "Especially there. You're sweet. You're my sugar plum" (160). This shows that their only goal is the pleasure of sex. After her husband has deserted she has had sex with a number of people. So, in a narration she is described as, "She was wild one, a rule breaker. Terrible" (164). That means she breaks off every social, ethical and religious rule which makes her a true representative of the hedonistic culture of America.

The narrator in the novel comments:

His mother is, he sees now, looking back, a typical American, lacking strong convictions and the courage and comfort they bring. She is a victim of the American religion for freedom, freedom above all, though freedom to do what to what purpose is left up in the air, the perfect symbol of American freedom. (167)

These lines exhibit that Teresa is the true representative of the existing American culture. No matter what result be she just wants freedom, and has become an ideal symbol of American culture.

Along the same narration, "Ahmad sees his mother as an aging woman still in her heart a girl, playing at art and love for she is alive lately with a preoccupation in which her son detects a new lover, [. . .]" (168).

In the same chapter, the narrator draws Ahmad's speculation further, "Ahmad does not hate his mother; she is too scattered to hate, too distracted by her pursuit of happiness" (169). It shows that she is not even likely to be criticized because Ahmad thinks she has crossed all the limits that criticism is suitable for her. Ahmad feels, "She looked and acted younger than a mother should" (170). Again he regards his mother as "a mistake that his father made but that he never would" (170).

Thus, from the aforementioned textual evidences, we can conclude that Teresa Mulloy, one of the principal characters of the novel typically represents the contemporary hedonistic culture of America, the culture that is characterized by immorality, sensuality, obscenity and mainly pleasure seeking tendency. Consequently, her pursuit of pleasure has caused the family disintegration, moral decadence of the society and cultural degeneration of the whole nation.

### **Ahmad: A Representative of Fundamental Islamic Culture**

Probing into the novel we can clearly notice Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy, the protagonist, as a true representative of the home grown Islamic fundamentalism. Here, he is portrayed not only carrying the strict form of Islamic ideologies but also as a strong mouthpiece of the basic principles of Islamism.

Ahmad is an 18 year old Muslim teenager. He is also a high school student. He is the son of a long absent Egyptian father and red-haired Irish American mother, Teresa Mulloy. His father had come to America as an exchange student and married his mother in spite of her being immoral in order to get American citizenship. But he deserted both the mother and the child and disappeared forever. His father's desertion and his mother's irresponsibility towards

him pushed him to the arms of the imam of local mosque who turns to be the surrogate father to him. The local imam named Shaikh Rashid turns to be his spiritual leader from his 11 year's age who instills in him the fundamental Islamic ideas and the boy strictly leads a very spiritual life 'Straight path', and finally he is impressed to be the suicide bomber. By that he wants to destroy the world of infidels, or unbelievers.

Through a closer observation and analysis we can notice his character to be the representative of the home grown fundamental Islamic culture. In the very start of the novel, we come to know that Ahmad has been strictly spiritual. At this time he is 18 year old teenager and has completed his school graduation. His true identity is revealed when he talks to his guidance counselor, Jack Levy at school. He says:

I am the product of a white American mother and Egyptian exchange student; they met while both studied at New Prospect campus of the State University of New Jersey. My mother, who has since become a nurse's aide, at the time, was seeking credits toward an art degree. She paints and designs jewelry in her spare time, with some success, through not enough to support us. (34-35)

Then, he identifies his father “My father. His name was-is; I very much feel he is still alive. Omar Ashmay, and hers is Teresa Mulloy, she is Irish American. They married well before I was born” (35).

Again he says:

My father well knew that marrying an American citizen, however trashy and immoral she was would gain him American citizenship, and so it did, but not American know-how, nor the network of acquaintance that leads to American prosperity. Having despaired of ever earning more than a menial living by the time I was three he decamped. (35)

Furthermore, his identity becomes clear when he tells Jack, "I am not a foreigner. I have never been abroad" (35).

Ahmad's identity revealed above shows that he is in the space of hybridity, the person who is likely to be the instrumental of fundamentalist agenda. This space is a fragile space and it can be bended or pulled to any other space of culture.

In the course of Levy's inquiry, Ahmad also discloses that he is at present, guided by his teacher. He tells Jack, "My teacher is not here. He is at the mosque. Shaikh Rashid, the imam. We study together the sacred *Quran*" (37). In another narration, Shaikh Rashid is seen to be Ahmad's surrogate father for the fatherless boy.

Shaikh Rashid is so furiously absolute in his doctrines because God has secretly fled from behind his pale Yemeni eyes. Ahmad in his fatherless years with his blithely faithless mother has grown accustomed to being God's sole custodian, the one to whom God is an invisible but palpable companion. God is ever with him. As it says in the ninth Sura, "*Ye have no patron or helper save God.*" God is another person close beside him, a Siamese twin attached in every part, inside and out, and to whom he can turn at every moment in prayer. God is his happiness. (39-40)

As taught by the imam, Ahmad thinks, "Allah is sublime beyond all particulars. There is no God but he, the living, the self-subsistent; he is the light by which the sun looks black" (7). Therefore, he feels that his 'only guidance' after his high school graduation, says the third Sura, "is the guidance of Allah" (18).

According to the suggestion given by his mentor, Shaikh Rashid after his graduation he chooses to be a trucker rather than to continue his studies. He has felt extreme resentment against western academia that teaches bad philosophy. So he says to Jack, "The college track exposed me to corrupting influences bad philosophy and bad literature" (38).

Ahmad continuously learns the strict and rigid Islamic ideas from his teacher and gradually forms resentment against all the faithless people. His resentment increases to a greater extent. So, in an interaction with Joryleen Grant, he states, "My teacher at the mosque says that all unbelievers are our enemies. The prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed" (68).

As he starts working as a trucker for a furnishing store run by a Lebanese family, his boss Charlie Chehab ignites his resentment further. Moreover, his teacher regularly checks his faith in Allah. At a time he responds to him, "Sir, I am not aware that it has. I still feel God beside me, as close as the vein in my neck, cherishing me as only, he can (232-33)." This clearly reveals that Ahmad is firm in his faith in Islamism.

Ahmad is gradually prepared to be an Islamic fundamentalist who could die for 'Jihad'. So, one day his teacher inquires him about his willingness to die for 'Jihad' as he was told by Charlie. At this moment, he says, "Yes" without questioning. This tendency in Ahmad reflects that he is a blind supporter of Islamic ideas. Then his teacher induces him further saying, "There is a way. It would involve a Shahid whose love of god is unqualified, and who impatiently thirsts for the glory of paradise. Are you such a one, Ahmad?"(234).

Shaikh Rashid fills every idea and feeling in his heart the spirit of blasting suicide bombs. Yet he keeps on checking Ahmad's devotion for this mission but no where he is seen undetermined. Rashid still tries to convince him strongly. When Ahmad inquires about the presence of Charlie when he has to carry bomb in the truck, Rashid convinces him saying, "Ahmad, I am sure he will be. He is brave soldier in our cause, the cause of the true God, and god never deserts those who wage war on His behalf. Allahu Akabar!" (271)

Urging him once again Rashid says, "But most important is the Holy Quran. If your spirits were to weaken in the long night ahead of you. Open it, and let the holy God speak to you through His last, perfect prophet" (272).



Before the day of his mission, there is a narration which states, "Ahmad will be God's servant. Tomorrow, the day which is almost upon him. Inches from his eyes, god is describing his rain, which causeth gardens to spring forth" (724). This indicates the devotedness of Ahmad towards the God. Ahmad finally wants to sacrifice his life thinking, "*God giveth you life, then causeth you to die*" (280).

The final narration that is in the novel clearly reveals what Ahmad's act of terrorist attack could bring about. It could be that Middle East people would be happy and the tyrants of the west would be fearful. Then he straightly sets out to complete his mission.

In this way, the entire plot's narration mainly focuses on how people get influenced by the fundamentalist ideas of Islam and what they can do to their enemies (faithless Americans). They will, in fact, blindly support the religious ideas of Islam and are ready to die for it. Thus, the protagonist of the novel through the above mentioned evidences, without any doubt, represents the fundamental Islamic culture.

### **Hedonistic American Culture Vs fundamental Islamic Culture: A Sturdy Clash**

John Updike's *Terrorist* is one of the most remarkable, timely and topical novels in the present day world of fiction. The tremendous success of the novel does not simply lie on the surface of the story as a thriller, but the writer's dexterity in presenting the underlying conflict of two cultures namely the hedonistic American culture and the fundamental Islamic culture grown within America itself. The clash between these cultures is shown to have resulted due to the substantial disparity between them.

In the novel, the clash between these two cultures turns to be the formula of the whole narrative. To display the sturdy clash, the novelist has cast the characters to represent these two forms of cultures prevalent in America. The two major characters representing the aforementioned opposing cultures are: Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy and Teresa Mulloy, the protagonist and his mother respectively. As mentioned and analyzed previously, Ahmad

embodies the fundamental Islamic culture and his mother Teresa, the hedonistic American culture. These two characters wrestle both explicitly and implicitly along with the support of other characters in the novel.

To explore and analyze the conflicts of these two cultures in the novel, it is, first of all, worth referring Samuel P. Huntington's observation and analysis of ongoing cultural conflicts between Islam and the west which can help illustrate and explain the clash depicted in the novel. Regarding the conflict between them Huntington states:

A comparable mix of factors has increased the conflict between Islam and the West in the late twentieth century. First, Muslim population growth has generated large numbers of unemployed and disaffected young people who become recruits to Islamist causes, exert pressure on neighboring societies and migrate to the west [ . . . ] Fifth, the increasing contact between and intermingling of Muslims and Westerners stimulate in each a new sense of their own identity and how it differs from that of the other. So, the causes of renewed conflict between Islam and the west lie in fundamental questions of power and culture. (211-212)

Likewise, Barry Buzan, a leading scholar of the West saw many reasons why a societal cold war was emerging "between the West and Islam." He states:

This development is partly to do with secular versus religious values, partly to do with the historical rivalry between Christendom and Islam, partly to do with jealousy of Western power, partly to do with resentments over western domination of the post-colonial political structuring of the Middle East and partly to do with the bitterness and humiliation of the invidious comparison between the accomplishments and Western civilizations in the last two centuries. (39)

Again Huntington states:

Muslims, instead, stress the differences between their civilization and western civilization, the superiority of their culture, and the need to maintain the integrity of that culture against Western onslaught. Muslims fear and resent western power and the threat which this poses to their society and beliefs. They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent and immoral. They also see it as seductive, and hence stress all the more the need to resist its impact on their way of life. [...] In Muslim eyes Western secularism, religiosity, and hence immorality are worse evils than the Western Christianity that produced them. (213-214)

He adds:

These images of the west as arrogant materialistic, repressive, brutal and decadent are held not only by fundamentalist imams but also by those whom many in the west would consider their natural allies and supporters. (214-215)

Analyzing “The Root of Muslim Rage” Bernard Lewis, a leading scholar of Islam concludes:

It should now be clear that we are facing a mood and movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations that perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. (13)

The observations and analyses made by Huntington, Lewis and Buzan mentioned above focus on the antagonism between the west and Islam in general. They have clearly mentioned root and the result of this rivalry between the Western culture and Islamic culture. However, my research work mainly focuses on the clash between hedonistic American

culture fundamental Islamic culture which is an important aspect of the broader conflict ongoing between Islamic culture and western culture. The difference lies only on the level of extremity seen in these two cultures. The extreme forms of these two cultures are: hedonism on the one hand and the fundamentalism on the other. Consequently, the intensity of the clash is very high.

Now, let me explore the clash of the cultures mentioned in my research, through the text which can prove that the novel designates the underlying current of the conflict between the two cultures. In the novel, Ahmad, who represents the fundamental Islamic culture, in the very beginning of the novel resents Americans as “Devils, the devils seek to take away my God” (3). His statement implies that his culture imbued with spirituality gets threatened in the face of the mainstream hedonistic culture of America. He criticizes the American way of life looking at the officials and teachers at his school. He comments on them saying:

Some get divorces; some live with others unmarried. Their lives away from the school are disorderly and wanton and self indulgent. They are paid to instill virtue and democratic values by the state government and that Satanic further down, in Washington, but the values they believe are Godless. (4)

In the same chapter, in an interaction with Jack Levy, Ahmad restates Rashid’s statement, “He said the college track exposed me to corrupting influences- bad philosophy and bad literature. Western culture is Godless” (4). Further he adds, “And because it has no God, it is obsessed with sex and luxury goods. Look at television, Mr. Levy, how it’s always using sex to sell things you don’t need” (38). These statements clearly show the existing clash between the two cultures in which one is strictly spiritual and another materialistic and morally lax. In the same interaction, when Jack inquires Ahmad’s resentment, he states, “I, of course do not hate all Americans. But the American way is way of infidels. It is headed for a

terrible doom” (39). His statement shows that his resentment is not for a particular person but toward the whole way of life Americans have.

Then, Levy tries to convince him, “that a bright boy like you, in a diverse and tolerant society like this one, needs to confront a variety of viewpoints?” (39). This statement implies that Americans are better and more tolerant than the Muslims. The conflict is implicitly revealed through the statement. Similarly, at the end of chapter I, the Head of the Homeland Security interacts with his assistant, Hermione. At that time, he muses on about terrorists and says, “Those people out there [...] why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What’s to hate?” “They hate the light, Hermione replies” (48). They are talking about the hatred shown by the extremists, but in fact they themselves are expressing the hatred against. This kind of one another’s hatred causes the clash between the two cultures.

Likewise, in the beginning of Chapter II, Ahmad and Joryleen interact about going to the mosque. Joryleen says, “You come to my church”. “I could go to your mosque with you.” “That would not do. We could not sit together, and you could not attend without a course of instruction, and demonstration of sincerity” (69). Ahmad’s statement reveals that two cultures cannot exist in harmony at the same place since they can clash each other otherwise.

One of the most important clashes between Ahmad and Teresa who represent two cultures can be seen in an interaction between Teresa and Levy about Ahmad in Chapter II.

Teresa states:

I’d pick him up at the mosque after school in the winter months. I must say, this imam of his almost never came out say hello. He hated shaking my hand, I could tell. He never showed the slightest interest converting me. If Ahmad had gone the other way, if he had turned against God racket all the way, the way I

did, I would have let that happen too. Religion to me is all matter of attitude.

(81)

Her statement shows that Americans are liberal in religion whereas, the Islamists are not. This too clearly reveals the conflict of the two cultures.

Again she says, “If Ahmad believes in God so much, let God take care of him. Your life isn’t something to be ‘controlled’. We don’t control our breathing, our digestion, our heartbeat. Life is something to be lived. Let it happen” (91). Teresa’s above statements clearly display her attitude towards life i.e. the need of freedom living at present fulfilling the desires of the heart which opposes Ahmad’s idea of the life that should have moral decency and devotion to God.

In the same Chapter in the course of their interaction, Teresa resents to what Ahmad is doing. She states:

He did this Allah thing all by himself, with no help from me. Less than help, really – I resented that he cared so much about a father who didn’t squat for him. For us. But I guess a boy need a father, and if he doesn’t have one he’ll invent one. (117)

Through these statements she clearly expresses her resentment against Ahmad’s desire to devote himself to Islam and his search for the father who stands for his root i.e. Islam. So, he finds Shaikh Rashid, the local imam as his surrogate father who fortifies in him the strict faith of Islam. Here, too, the representatives of the two cultures clash with each other.

Somewhere in Chapter III, Teresa and Ahmad interact about the movies in which they tussle with each other. Teresa asks, “Would you like some money for a movie?” Ahmad replies, “I have money, and I just saw a couple of movies, one with Tom Cruise and one with

Malt Damon. They were both about professional assassins. Shaikh Rashid is right – movies are sinful and stupid. They are foretastes of Hell” (144).

This interaction clearly shows the strong conflict between their preference for and resentment against modern entertainment. The mother asks her son to entertain the life by going to the movies but the son despises. This is without any doubt, the ongoing conflicts between these representative characters of two opposing cultures. In the same interaction, Teresa asks Ahmad. “Oh how holy we’re getting to be! Don’t boys your age usually have any girl friends? Ahmad replies, “Mom, I’m not gay, if that’s what you’re implying” (144). The dispute between them again shows the same striking clash.

One of the sturdiest clashes between Islamic fundamentalism and hedonistic culture of America can be seen in chapter III. When Charlie Chehab and Shaikh Rashid point out:

No encompassing structure of divine law that brings men rich and poor to bow down shoulder to shoulder, no code of self-sacrifice, no exalted submission such as lies at the heart of Islam, its very name. Instead, there is a clashing diversity of private self-seeking whose catchwords are ‘seize the day’ and Devil take the hindmost and God helps those who help themselves which translate to ‘ there is no God, no Day of Judgment; help yourself. (168)

While inducing Ahmad, Shaikh Rashid in Chapter IV asks:

Did you not witness, in the cities you visited, poverty and misery that led you to question. His mercy, and inequalities of wealth and power that cast doubt on its Justice? Did you not discover that the world, it is American portion, emits a stench of waste and greed, of sensuality and futility of the despair and lassitude that some ignorance of inspired wisdom of the Prophet. (233)

Rashid's statements mentioned here show the eternal hostility of Islamic fundamentalism against the contemporary American culture characterized by excessive hedonism.

As Ahmad is strongly convinced to die for 'Jihad '(the holy war), the narrator presents Ahmad's last speculation of America before he sets out for the terrorist attack as:

He sees shabbiness in the streets, the fast food trash and broken plastic toys, the unpainted steps and porches still dark from the morning's dampness, the windows cracked and not repaired [...]. Women's voices rise from back rooms in merciless complaint against children who were born uninvited [...] . Those born here for generation after generation embrace dirt and laziness as a protest, a protest of slaves that now persists as a lust for degradation, defying that injunction of all religions to keep clean. (281)

Ahmad's speculation above shows extreme contempt for the American way of life characterized by lust, immorality, and passion for pleasure, lack of spirituality-all the aspects of prevalent hedonistic culture.

Therefore, at last, he firmly decides to destroy the hedonistic way of American life for the sake of the believers and for the sake of his God, Allah. When Jack Levy tries to stop him and says, "I can't believe you're seriously intending to kill hundreds of innocent people" (294). Ahmad retorts:

Who says unbelief is innocent? Unbelievers say that: God says, in the Quran, 'Be ruthless to unbelievers'. Burn them; crush them, because they have forgotten God. They think to be themselves sufficient. They love this present life more than the next. (294)

This is the climax of the clash observed in the novel between the two cultures. The statement of Ahmad mentioned above, beyond all questions, not only displays the idea of



Islamic fundamentalism but also proves that he is the true representative of fundamental Islamic culture which is hostile to the American mainstream contemporary culture which is basically hedonistic represented by Teresa Mulloy, the mother of the protagonist. Due to the ongoing clash of these two opposing cultures the nation is bound to stay ever with the fears of terrorists that this novel brilliantly uncovers.

To sum up, Updike's *Terrorist* evidently projects the underlying current of conflict between two cultures, the mainstream hedonistic culture and the minority fundamental Islamic culture seen in the contemporary America especially in post 9/11 America. This luminously shows through the representation of characters into two opposing poles of culture mainly by the protagonist Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy and his mother, Teresa Mulloy. The novel is the stage where these two characters dance and fight so as to unveil the sturdy clash which is covert in the novel.

#### IV. Conclusion

John Updike's one of the master pieces *Terrorist* is timely and topical novel that discusses terrorism in general and terrorism in America in particular. However, by exploring the details of American life during post 9/11 America, the novel unearths the underlying sturdy clash between the two cultures: fundamental Islamic culture and hedonistic culture in America represented by the characters Ahmad Ashmay Mulloy, the protagonist and Teresa Mulloy his mother respectively.

As it is thoroughly interpreted and analyzed in the preceding chapters of this research work, hedonism is a belief that pleasure is the highest good. So, the idea emphasizes on the pursuit of pleasure as the final goal of life to achieve through whatever means it is possible. This belief has heavily influenced the contemporary life of America and the culture as a whole.

In the novel, Teresa Mulloy, the protagonist's mother represents the mainstream hedonistic culture of America who sets her life's goal to gratify her desire for pleasure. Her character represents the American who leads immoral life and lacks spiritual faith, moral decency, honesty and responsibility of life. She sleeps with a number of men to gratify her desires. She neither maintains moral decency within her family nor in the society. Similarly, she has no spiritual faith in her life though she is originally Catholic by her religion. She has lost her faith for the sake of pleasure. In addition, as a mother she does not perform her responsibility to look after her child and instills any value in him. She just lets him go the way he likes. Her manner, tendency, attitude and her life style as a whole make her a true representative of the hedonistic culture prevalent in America.

On the other hand, Islam is a growing minority culture in America and its fundamentalist sect is a threat to America, which is thoroughly dealt with in the novel. The Islamic culture that follows the strict form of Islam is conservative, dogmatic and

orthodoxical form of Islam. It is hostile and intolerant towards American hedonism. That is why; it is also called the Islamic extremism or Islamic fundamentalism. Ahmad, the protagonist represents the fundamental Islamic culture in America. He, a typical representative of fundamental Islamic culture, absorbs the very strict form of Islamic beliefs and leads the life accordingly. He blindly adheres to those beliefs and despises the beliefs that contradict his beliefs.

The novel, on its superficial ordinariness, moves round the conflict between these two representative characters, Ahamad and Teresa. However, it is merely an external clash the underlying current of conflict is, in fact, between the mainstream American culture i.e. highly hedonistic and the emerging fundamental Islamic culture in America. The clash is led by these two cultures in America. It is developing in a perennial antagonism and disunity between them. Such a logical conclusion can be reached on the basis of the excavation, interpretation and through analysis of the characters' representation in the preceding chapter. In addition to it, the employment of my theoretical tool cultural studies provided the researcher with a crystal clear idea and immense support to make the cultural clash of the novel sail on the surface of its narrative.

In a nutshell, John Updike's *Terrorist* displays a sturdy conflict between Ahmad Aahmay Muylloy, the protagonist and Teresa Mulloy, his mother throughout the novel. This conflict, beyond all questions, is an externalization of the underlying cultural clash between the fundamental Islamic culture and hedonistic American culture in America represented by these two characters respectively.

### Works cited

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Hartcourt, 2001.
- Arnold, Mathew. *Culture and Anarchy*. London: Oxford University Press, 1869.
- Baker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: SAGE, 2000.
- Banowsky, William S. *It's a Play Boy World*. NJ: Spire Books, 1969.
- Barna, George and William Paul McKay. *Vital Signs: Emerging Trends and the Future of American Christianity*. Westchester: Crossway Books, 1984.
- Bazan, Barry. "Asia: Skepticism About Optimism". *National Interest*. Spring, 1995. 39.
- Bertelsen, Cynthia D. "Novelist train their sights on Islamic terrorism". *National Catholic Reporter*. Kansas City: Oct 6, 2006. Vol. 42, Iss. 43; 6 A, 2 pgs. <<http://proquest.umi.com/>>
- Dallmayr, Fred. *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-cultural Encounter*. New Delhi: Rawat Publicatons, 2001.
- Edgar, Andrew, and Peter Sedgwick, eds. *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2004.
- Goodheart, Eugene. "The Good Terrorist". *Independent on Sunday*. Winter 2007. Vol. 42, iss.6, 8 pgs. <<http://proquest.umi.com/>>
- Graff, Gerald, and Bruce Robins. "Cultural Criticism". *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and Literary Studies*. eds. Stephen Greenblat and Giles Gunn. New York: MLA, 1992.
- Grossbeerg, Lawrence, et. al. eds. *Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Gurien, Wilfren L. et. al. eds. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York: OUP, 1999.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*.

- Ed. Padmini Mongia. Delhi: OUP, 1997. 110 – 21.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*.  
New Delhi: Viking, 1997.
- Levine, Donald (ed). "Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms". Chicago: Chicago  
University Press, 1997. 6.
- Lewis, Bernard. *Islam and the West*. New York: OUP, 1993.
- Marin-Guzman, Roberto. "Fanaticism: A Major Obstacle in the Muslim-Christian  
Dialogue. The Case of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Fundamentalism". *Arab Studies  
Quarterly*. Costa Rica: Association of Arab-American University Graduates,  
Summer 2003. Vol. 25, Iss. 3, 33 pgs. <<http://web.ebscohost.com/>>
- Mautner, Thomas. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. Ed. London: Blackwell, 1996.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. New Delhi: OUP, 2009.
- Said, Edward W. *The World, The Text and the Critic*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.  
... *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- Sansom, Ian. "Doing Devil's Work". *The Spectator*. London: Aug 19, 2006. Vol. 53,  
iss. 9, 6 pgs. <<http://proquest.umi.com/>>
- The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. Vol. 7. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.,  
2003.
- Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture*. London: J. Murray, 1811.
- Updike, John. *Terrorist*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2007.
- Walsh, David. "America through a Radical's eyes, not Rabbit's". *Washington Times*.  
WDC: Aug 25, 2006. <<http://web.ebscohost.com/>>
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*. London: Blackwell, 1958.