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**COUNTER NARRATIVES OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN MOHSIN HAMID'S
THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST :
A NEW HISTORICIST READING**

□ K. Abarna SriPreethi*
Dr. S. Saira Banu**

ABSTRACT

The life of a Muslim in the western world has been a never-ending exertion with socially created stereotypes, bias, and prejudice. Adding more misery is the 9/11 attack on the United States of America. The dominant narrative following the attack portrayed Arabs and Muslims as predators waiting to destroy America. This narrative gradually induced Islamophobia that was prevalent among the Non-Muslim people of America. The attitude of the common populace towards the Arabs and Muslims changed drastically resulting in hatred and bigotry. The voice of the innocent Muslims in America who love America and pay allegiance to the nation was suppressed. The narrative which popularised the distinction between 'us' and 'them' constructed a clear divide between the Muslims and Non-Muslims in the United States of America. Therefore, it became the mandate of the literary writers to weave counter-narratives to the predominant argument through their fictional characters. Changez the protagonist of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is one such character who faces various challenges after the 9/11 attack, is trying to prove his innocence and also allegiance to the nation which gave him space and livelihood. This paper proposes to make a new historicist reading of the aforementioned novel to analyse the quandary of the Muslims in the post 9/11 America through Changez and also makes an attempt to interpret their alternative micro-narratives as opposed to the dominant narrative tailored by the government and the popular media.

Keywords : Post 9/11 America, New Historicist Reading, Dominant Narrative, Islamophobia, Counter-Narratives.

The dominant narrative of the 9/11 attack popularised by the media and the public speeches delivered by the then-president George W. Bush was successful in creating a clear divide between the Muslims and Non-Muslims. Muslims were viewed as potential terrorists and they had to encounter racial prejudice and ill-treatment in post 9/11 America. The narrative that all the 19 terrorists accused in the hijacking were Muslims living in America created doubts in the minds of Americans. They became skeptical about all the Arabs and Muslims living in America. The struggles included denial of entry into the United States of America after a foreign visit, loss of jobs and even resulted in the loss of relationships.

Adding to this, any attempt made by the Muslims

to prove their innocence was silenced and their narratives were cautiously evaded from the dominant narrative. However, literary writers seized the limited space provided in the literary arena to weave fictional narratives to voice the micro-narratives of the stereotyped Muslims. Changez, a fictional character created by Mohsin Hamid is one such character who tries to answer the allegations and prejudice against Muslims in America. The Muslim-American writer in his second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* advocates a strong case in support of his fellow Muslim brethren in America.

The fiction is structured as a conversation between Changez and a stranger in a coffee shop in America. The discourse takes the reader into the life and struggles of Changez in America. He was working in America and

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