

**ISLAM/MUSLIMS IN AMERICAN LITERARY
CONSCIOUSNESS: A CRITIQUE OF PEARL
ABRAHAM'S *AMERICAN TALIBAN* AND DON
DELILLO'S *FALLING MAN***

BY

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**Islam/Muslims in American Literary Consciousness: A
Critique of Pearl Abraham's *American Taliban* and Don
Delillo's *Falling Man***

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ABSTRACT

Title: Islam/Muslims in American Literary Consciousness: A Critique of Pearl Abraham's *American TALIBAN* and Don Delillo's *Falling Man*

Islamophobia has become a focal concept of debate in past few decades. The rise in Islamophobia has raised a question on the identity of the Muslims especially after the incident of 9/11. The purpose of present study is to explore divided American literary consciousness on the issue of Islamophobia by critically analyzing Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and Pearl Abraham's *American Taliban*. By using theoretical perspectives of Edward Said and Sara Mills, the researcher investigates the existence of the divided consciousness that exists because of diversity in literary writings. The main argument of the study is based on Said's claims that falsehood about Muslims and Islam is constantly propagated in the media in the name of objectivity, freedom, democracy liberalism and progress. In order to strengthen my theoretical framework, I have invoked the argument of Sara Mills to analyze how media and politicians are powerful enough to shape discourse which can be both an effect of power and an instrument. The purpose of the present study is to reveal representation of Muslim characters in the selected novels and to explore those discourses that influence the image of Islam and Muslims in the minds of Americans. The analysis of the selected texts reveal that Delillo's *Falling Man* try to reinforce the negative stigma associated with Muslims and Islam, while Abraham's *American Taliban* seems to be giving a voice to the voiceless by providing readers with a different version of reality. Abraham also seems to be reacting to the dominant truth by deconstructing the idea that Americans are innocent while Muslims are the only entity to blame. The researcher has reached to the conclusion that both types of narratives exist in post 9/11 literary domain and these narratives shape distinct versions regarding the image of Islam and Muslims.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There was never a misinterpretation that could not be revised, improved and overturned.

-Olivier Roy

The present study deals with contemporary American novels and how different American writers have responded to the event of 9/11 by portraying the image of Islam and Muslims in their literary works. Both Muslim and non-Muslim American writers have contributed to the post 9/11 fiction by discussing the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. This study, therefore has attempted to trace the extent to which contemporary American writers represent Muslims and Islam in their writings and the role played by media in shaping a particular discourse after the incident of 9/11. In this critical, inquiry I have attempted to reveal how American novelists position themselves in post 9/11 fiction. For this purpose, I have selected two works of fiction for analysis: *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo and *American Taliban* by Pearl Abraham. The study aims to explore selected works in the light of theoretical concepts proposed by Edward Said.

This chapter is designed to give a comprehensive account of the concept of Islamophobia and to give an idea about the theoretical framework on which my study is carried out. For investigating the behavior of Americans towards Islam and Muslims, the researcher endeavors to study the historical development of Islamophobia particularly in an American context. This chapter also shows how various historical events played their roles in the expansion of religious intolerance in American society. Thus, the purpose of the following chapter is to provide a comprehensive background of the complex phenomenon of Islamophobia which is going to be examined in this present study. To understand distinct American

perceptions about Islam and Muslims, the proposed study begins by introducing readers to the complex phenomenon of Islamophobia and its history. A brief introduction of the selected works and their authors is given to provide an overview to the readers. Moreover, this chapter also explains the objectives, delimitations, purpose, theoretical framework, and significance of the study.

Since the catastrophic event of 9/11, 'War on Terrorism' has become a dominant discourse as it was strongly emphasized by the Bush administration at that time. September 11 episode had profound implications not only for America but for the whole world. In the contemporary scenario, America has become the center of the imperialist power resultantly the Islamophobic paranoia of the American discourse has triggered a traumatic psyche in the world concerning the reception of Muslims and Islam. Hence, various writers have presented pigeonhole images of Islam and Muslims in their writings. However, some writers have not conformed to the idea of Islamophobia and dispensed the positive image of Muslims and Islam.

Islam and Muslims have often been portrayed in stereotypical ways by west. In addition to stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims, media also influenced the rest of the world to morally support America in eradicating terrorism (Yusof, Hassan & Osman 16). Resultantly, one can say that anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice in America was greatly associated with anti-Muslim media discourses (Ahmed & Matthes 231). As a result of this discrimination and prejudice against Muslims, a binary opposition was established between Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslims were termed as "them" and presented as a threat to "us". This binary opposition was the creation of mainstream media discourses that declared Muslims and Islam as a threat to American values of freedom and democracy (Ahmed & Matthes 222).

Within this context, a new literary genre was introduced with the name "9/11 fiction" resulting in a whole paradigm shift. In addition to affecting media, the event of 9/11 also showed its effects in literary sphere. As a result, many writers produced their literary works highlighting Americans as victims and innocent. Martin Randall, a renowned scholar and critic says "dominant discourse has sacralized the 9/11

attacks and... that this discourse has affected 9/11 literature” (Eikonsalo 79). Consequently, most of the 9/11 fiction focused on trauma and victimization. Most of the writers portrayed traumatized characters unable to cope with their existing realities as a result of horrifying attacks of 9/11. The dominant discourse portrayed Muslims as terrorists, fundamentalists and orthodox. As an example, one can mention John Updike’s *Terrorist* (2006) in which Islam and Muslims have been associated with terrorism. The plot of the novel revolves around Ahmed Asmawy and his Imam Sheikh Rashid. Imam used to guide Ahmed until he finds himself in a terrorist cell. Updike mainly highlights the idea that Muslim characters are not trustworthy and the other American characters always doubt their intentions and actions. He also shows that the skeptical behavior of the American characters proves to be true at the end. In this way, Updike along with other post 9/11 writers seem to highlight the fact that Muslims are not to be trusted and non-Muslim characters can be deceived by them if they do not keep their eyes open (Eikonsalo 84). This proves the effect of dominant discourse on post 9/11 writers who believed in only one version of reality i-e Muslims are violent, fundamentalist and terrorists.

Despite of media’s negative representations, a number of scholars called for re-assessment of negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in American society (Ahmed & Matthes 231). It is important to mention balanced voices who have tried to deconstruct the negative representation given to Muslims as fundamentalist and terrorists. There are a number of novels which can be considered as a form of resistance to the prevalent prejudiced rhetoric. One such example is *The Zero* by Jess Walter which can be considered as a response to dominant discourse against Islam and Muslims. The plot of the novel revolves around Remy Brian who is depicted as a traumatized character who faces difficulties in remembering whether certain actions actually happened or is it just his imagination. Remy’s duty is to investigate about March Selios, who has lost a piece of paper while traveling in the bus. Remy and his colleagues find that paper in the bus and start their investigations on the grounds that this piece of paper may have a relation with 9/11 attacks. Walter has attempted to deconstruct the idea that Americans are victims and innocent while Muslims are terrorists and violent. Another novel that falls under this category is

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid that narrates the experiences of a young Muslim protagonist, who works in New York city at the time of 9/11 attacks. A different version of the aftermath of 9/11 has been presented by Hamid in his work and it is well worth reading (Bounar 81). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* clearly challenges dominant western bigotries and complacencies to suggest an anti-imperial criticism of US response to 9/11.

The rising tension against Islam and Muslims is not a new phenomenon. Past researchers have produced an incredible increase in publications about Islam, Muslims, and their image in the West. The existing tension between the West and Islam was triggered by the tragic incident of 9/11. With the rise of global terror, the whole world witnessed a sudden and unexpected rise in Islamophobia, especially in American cultural production. To understand the concept of Islamophobia, it is essential to trace the history of this complex phenomenon. Islamophobia is a highly intricate topic to understand, especially for those who do not have prior knowledge of Islam. It has become a cause behind the coalition of western countries in the name of securing secularism and the American dream. The concept of Islamophobia was already there even before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. During the middle ages, Crusades contributed to early Islamophobia. This Christian-Muslim rivalry existed in the western world, produced negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims including ignorance, fundamentalism, primitiveness, and orthodoxy (Rabasa 22). The term Islamophobia is a controversial term that emerged in the late 1990s, although the detestation and prejudice against Muslims and Islam were present in American society for a long time. Some critics have argued that Islamophobia is a critical form of racism (Sayyid 3, Musharbash 8).

Islamophobia has been identified as a new form of racism in the contemporary world. The roots of this new form of racism can be located in American history where Islam was considered incongruous with whiteness. Common masses have adopted this mindset against Muslims and Islam with the help of media and social surroundings. In the seventeenth century, the English dominated half of the world and they were involved in human trafficking. They used to

transport slaves from Africa to American colonies; however, they were unaware of the existence of Muslims within the colonies (Gomez 671). The debates about immigration started in the late 1800s when the American President of that time Roosevelt made it clear that immigrants need to assimilate into American society by cutting themselves of their culture and language. Moreover, Roosevelt also declared that all the immigrants moving to America should get rid of their cultural identities and must adopt the culture and language of America (Hatem 282). In other terms, Roosevelt affirmed that those who wish to be a part of American society must blend in and must not deviate from expected standard norms.

This process of immigration continued in 1900s in the form of various waves. The Presence of Muslims was felt when Muslim immigrants entered United States in various waves. The first wave of immigration started in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in which the United States received very few Muslim slaves. This group included Arabic-speaking slaves from different parts of the Ottoman Empire. The second group of immigrants included more educated people from Pakistan and India, who entered the United States after 1950. After 1965, a large number of Muslim Immigrants entered in United States because of the change in the Immigration policy of America. This wave included immigrants from Asia and the Middle East and a large number of people were Muslims (kambez 27). Since the time of the early wave of immigration, Muslims have been facing prejudice.

This biased attitude of America against Islam and Muslims has always given rise to hate crimes and parochialism against Muslims in the Western world especially in America. On September 11, 2001, America was struck with the most horrifying terrorist attack in the history of the world. The 9/11 commission report directly accused Osama Bin Laden for being involved in terrorist attacks. Moreover, the US government gave an ultimatum to Taliban to hand over Osama Bin Laden to US and to shut down all al-Qaeda camps within 48 hours. However, Taliban refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden to US government without having any evidence of being involved in 9/11 attacks. As a result of this, the American sitting government

of that time initiated a military operation in Afghanistan with the target of capturing the mastermind behind this attack. Meanwhile, American president of that time, George Bush delivered a speech by promising the nation that the terrorism would be eradicated by the US. He also coined the phrase “War on Terror” to overthrow the Taliban regime. Bush also made it clear to the rest of the world that “you are with us or you are with the terrorists” ("The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days"). This narrative declared who the other group was and secondly it presented America as innocent and victim by creating a sense of national trauma caused by the other group.

Moreover President George Bush accused Saddam Hussain’s government for the 9/11 attacks. Peter Meyer in his article “The Iraq War” has discussed that Bush ordered American security agencies to find links of Iraq to the terrorist attacks. He also issued a statement that Iraq possesses Weapons of Mass Destruction which is a huge risk for the security of US and its allies. Peter also mentions that US government held Iraq responsible for funding terrorist organization, al-Qaeda. However, US officials could not find any solid proof of meaningful connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda. Even then, US government maintained a rationale for waging war against Iraq (4). The Bush administration also wanted Pakistan to help the US in eradicating terrorism and if not then it would be at risk. In response to the request of the US officials, Pakistan made its decision to cooperate with the US government. The president of that time, Pervaiz Musharaf and his top military command decided to accept demands of the US government.

After the terrorist attacks, two major opposing trends regarding Muslims and Islam emerged in the United States. One trend was of rise in hate crimes against Muslims and Islam and the other was that of supporting and understanding Muslims without being biased. On a positive note, there was realization that Islamophobia like racism is the sad and bitter reality of America. Although the incident of 9/11 triggered a loathsome attitude towards Muslims, yet after the terrorist attacks some British and German respondents supported the idea of teaching Islam at the school level and that Muslim schools should be funded by the government for their

financial needs (Borell 409). Moreover, several European politicians argued that all the strict laws are not against Muslims but against terrorists who are involved in defaming Islam and Muslims (Marranci 105). There was also a sense of recognition that Muslims are not as violent as they have been portrayed by an extremist segment of society and that's why more and more common masses are willing to vote for Muslim Americans.

The term Islamophobia was used in print media for the very first time in 1991. Runnymede Trust, one of the British Think tanks defines Islamophobia as “dread or Hatred of Islam” or “hostility towards Islam” (1). The commission was established to organize independent research on British Muslims and Islamophobia. The commission was set up under the chairmanship of Professor Gordon Conway. The final report was launched by the commission in November 1997. The main objective of the commission was to propose ways to counter racial discrimination in Britain (Runnymede n.d.). Islamophobia has been defined as a new form of racism and an ungrounded fear of Muslims and Islam (Marranci 105). Hence, Islamophobia has been defined in this report as a source of discrimination against Muslims and Islam in a diverse social, political and economic context. This definition of Islamophobia by Runnymede trust has identified eight various characteristics. One such characteristic is that Islam is a monolithic religion that is unresponsive to change (Runnymede Trust Report 2).

Many critics have argued that Islamophobia is a kind of racism (Musharbash 4). Identified as a new kind of racism, Todd H. Green raises a question in his book *The Fear of Islam* that can we consider Islamophobia as a form of racism? He further explains by saying that race is not a voluntary choice, but religious identity is a personal choice, an identity with which you are not born. Thus, the supposition is that one opts to embrace Islam and therefore one can reject this identification and as a result, one can avoid prejudice. On the contrary, victims of discrimination are targeted for something which is not in their control (29).

The reasons behind the discrimination and anti-Muslims sentiments are still unknown. One such reason for the extreme loathsome attitude of the West towards

Muslims is their growing population in European countries. Muslims have been living in European countries for a long time but this increase in their population was observed after the economic boom of 1960s. Muslims gradually started introducing their ways of life including their customs, traditions, and religious obligations in the West ("Muslim in Europe: The Construction of a "Problem" | Openmind"). Moreover, Muslims also started showing their conventional and conservative side in their religious practices. This resulted in a fear that the West will soon be deprived of its secular image.

Another reason behind the prejudiced and biased attitude of west is never-ending differences based on culture, values, and traditions. Some scholars have emphasized the role of culture in distinguishing people from each other. Huntington claims that there is a never-ending clash between Islam and the west. According to him, Islam is a monolithic religion that has a conflicting nature with the contemporary west (110). The new world order is based on various ideologies and among these ideologies; religion is the most important ideology. Hence, religion is seen as a key factor in the distinction of Muslim societies from the rest of the world. It is obvious that ideologies are sometimes skeptical but to associate fear and hatred to an ideology especially to a religion is a baseless notion. Another main reason for the stereotypical representation of Muslims and Islam is the role of media. This stereotypical representation of Muslims has not only brought into light the western policies of the war on terror but it has become part of everyday life.

Various scholars have also tried to trace out the reasons behind the obsession of America with Islam and Muslims. One such renowned scholar is Edward Said who is well known for his work on Orientalism. He observes the obsession of America with Arab others and this obsession is based on the fear of Islam (287). He claims that the west has unconquerable fear that Muslims will obliterate their civilization and will take charge of the whole world. According to Said, these discourses depict Muslims differently from "cultured", "superior" and "rationale" Europeans. While on the other hand Muslims are seen as "uncultured", "barbaric" and "inferior" (300). According to Elver, early inequity against Islam and Muslims

was based on Non-whiteness and otherness. He says that most of the strong feelings of White Europeans pervade American society. Foreigners should make an effort to assimilate if they truly want to be called Americans (7). This ethnic archetype of American Muslims has been discussed by many other renowned scholars such as Stocken, Jack Shaheen Nacon, and many others who have studied the stigmatization of Muslims and Islam deeply.

The incident of 9/11 had an everlasting impact not only on America but on the rest of the world as well. The fall of the twin towers gave rise to this segregation of Muslims in American society and a pre-assumption that Islam is dogmatic, conventional, fanatic and a violent religion. It is worth mentioning that academic writers and critics were soon attracted by 9/11 fiction approaching it with different perspectives and dimensions. The 9/11 fiction comprises the texts that are based on representing a belligerent and vicious image of Muslims and Islam.

9/11 fiction has produced remarkable texts from the western world and much of the focus of this fiction is the World Trade Center attacks. There has been much debate about the classification of post 9/11 literary works. Some scholars believe that post 9/11 literature should restrict to the feedback that represents the events of that day, while others argue that it includes its aftermaths as well. Many Muslim and non-Muslim writers across the globe attempted to depict the event and its aftermaths. Most of the post 9/11 works deal with the questions that why terrorists wanted to attack them and how this could have happened to them. Although the post 9/11 novels do not answer these questions fully yet they provide a platform for this kind of discussion.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze representation of Muslims and Islam in two different post 9/11 literary texts. Through characters, the point of view of authors has been brought forward to analyze divided American literary consciousness regarding the representation of Islam and Muslims. For this purpose, two American fictional novels have been selected. The first one is *American Taliban* written by American novelist Pearl Abraham and the other one is *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo.

Pearl Abraham is an American Essayist, novelist, and short-story writer. She was born in Jerusalem, one of the nine children of her parents. Abraham's great-grandfather was a famous cabalist there. Abraham being a part of the conventional Hasidic community started attending community college secretly. She found the love of her life at college, who was part Jewish, and then followed him to State University. They got married but the marriage only lasted for few months. She has also discussed the problems of a troubled relationship in her novel *Giving up America*. The novel revolves around a traditional Hasidic woman and a conventional Jewish who are trying to cope up in a secular world. Abraham also received her Masters' of fine arts in creative writing. Abraham writes about Hasidic communities with remarkable compassion and intimate knowledge. She is currently serving as an Associate professor in the English department at Western New England University. Abraham wrote four novels: *The Romance Reader*, *The Seventh Beggar*, *Giving up America* and the latest one is *American Taliban*. Her first novel *The Romance Reader* is about a Hasidic girl who tries to go against the norms of the Hasidic community and reads the forbidden book.

Abraham's bestseller novel *American Taliban* was published in 2010. This novel was also nominated for the 2010 Fiction awards. The themes of her novels include awakening, spirituality, and emotional evolution. In the novel *American Taliban*, Abraham has shown intolerance of America and its people against Muslims and Islam. This work is remarkable in the sense that it has tried to change the image of Muslims and Islam in the Western world. Abraham's *American Taliban* uses the real story of John Walker Lindh, an American citizen who was captured while fighting as Taliban in 2001 in Afghanistan. The novel has been published to reflect on the public trauma in the early days of the war on terror. Abraham uses the spiritual transformation of the character of John Jude Parish who is a wealthy American teenager. His American identity is challenged when he is captured while fighting for the Taliban. Abraham leaves the fate of John Jude Parish on readers and leaves her novel open-ended.

Abraham's novel *American Taliban* utilizes a true story of a US citizen turned into a Taliban. Abraham uses John's biography to look deeply into radical Islamic fundamentalism. Abraham's insight encourages the readers to observe deeply political and media narratives in American society. The novel revolves around a young surfer John Jude Parish who begins his journey and finds his destination in Islam. Abraham writes about a young privileged American who is from Washington D.C. He is a wealthy American growing up in a liberal family. John's parents are having a happy matrimonial life. John has been on a spiritual quest which leads him to come across jihad in Pakistan. He is hardly eighteen years old and reads about Sufism. John's personality is torn between his quest for truth and the expectations of his parents from him. He utilizes his time to study Sufi poetry during his bed rest when he breaks his leg while surfing. Through online chat sessions, John meets a young Muslim girl who spurs his interest in Islam and the Arabic language. John's interest in Sufi poetry ultimately leads him to Brooklyn where he finds Khalid who suggests him to go to Pakistan to study more about Islam. John's parents support him in his decision and provide him financial assistance to pursue his quest for truth. He goes to Pakistan where he finds himself submitting to Islam, offering salat, and encountering something extraordinary for the first time in life. John then moves to Afghanistan for the sake of jihad. When John's mother Barbara learns that John has been captured by American military in Afghanistan, she at first does not accept the fact that her son has been accused of having links with terrorist organizations. Barbara asserts that the state would not protect one of its citizens and she believes that her son is in extreme danger. John's father Bill tries to contact a renowned defense lawyer to prepare the case to save John. Barbara and Bill are obsessed by John Lindh who has been captured by the American military and appears for a very short time in the novel.

Instead of accusing their son, both Barbara and Bill show wrath against the Bush administration. Abraham shifts the focus from John Jude Parish to Barbara and Bill and introduces John Walker Lindh in the last parts of the novel. Abraham leaves the novel with an open ending not reaching a particular conclusion. Using certain

devices, Abraham represents American Taliban as a literary response to 9/11 fiction so that the readers must be more critical of the media and political discourses.

The other well-known author is Don DeLillo who is an American short story writer, playwright, and essay writer. He is one of the renowned masters of contemporary fiction whose novels about terrorism have spurred a great deal of criticism. DeLillo received worldwide recognition after the publication of this novel as the novel is based on American history and culture in the cold war era. DeLillo's characters are more willful in their ignorance and destructiveness. The themes of his novels and plays are escapism, despair, terrorism, and self-destruction. He is always interested in writing about paradoxes of postmodern culture.

As a writer, DeLillo is always concerned with representing the unrepresented in his literary texts. He is interested in narrating the unexplainable experience of bombs and terrorism. After the incident of 9/11, DeLillo published an essay "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September" in which he constructs two challenging narratives: capitalism and terrorism. Capitalism stands for technologically advanced world and terrorism stands for inhumane, barbarism and violence. This narrative clearly marks division between "Us v/s "them" which is also an important binary in his novel *Falling Man*. DeLillo produces literary works that aim at reflecting the aftermaths of terrorist attacks on the lives of common individuals. Being an American writer, he explicitly highlights the traumatic experience of Americans and accuses Islam and Muslims of this suffering of American citizens.

DeLillo published one of his critically acclaimed novels entitled *Falling Man* in 2007. The novel *Falling Man* revolves around an American national, who is one of the survivors of the 9/11 incident. Keith Neudecker, a middle aged American who tries to cope with the traumatic effects of the 9/11 episode. The majority of the novel deals with the life of the protagonist after the incident. The events of the novel center on the social and psychological life of some of the survivors of that incident. Keith is a lawyer, working in the World Trade Center at the time of the 9/11 episode. He somehow manages to escape from the Twin towers with minor injuries.

Keith tries to take shelter in the apartment of his estranged wife, Lianne. They both agreed to recommit to their failed marriage. Their son Justin is highly obsessed with Osama Bin Laden, whom he gives the name of Bill Lawton. Justin is scared of Bill Lawton and his parents soon realize this fact. Lianne is a freelance writer but she also guides a group of Alzheimer patients voluntarily. Her mother Nina is dating an art dealer named Martin. Keith after getting back to normal routine realizes that the briefcase that he took while escaping from the twin towers does not belong to him. He returns it to its owner named Florence. Keith and Florence soon get along with each other sharing their traumatic experience of the 9/11 incident. Nina, Martin and Lianne confer the impacts of the 9/11 attacks. Lianne seems to be worried about the future and her sense of insecurity increases in the novel as she lashes out at a neighbor for no particular reason. The other half of the novel deals with Muslim characters named Hammad and Mohammad Atta who are involved in the 9/11 attacks. The novel is an attempt by Delillo to associate Islam with violence, aggression and terrorism. Through the characters of Hammad and Mohammad Atta Delillo explicitly attempts to correlate Islam and Muslims with terrorism. Hammad undergoes a training program in Florida for his attack on World Trade Center. The narrative again shifts back to the lives of Lianne and Keith where Lianne is diagnosed with severe neurotic disorders. Keith is seen spending most of his time playing poker. He sometimes returns to New York City to spend time with Lianne and his son Justin. Delillo ends his novel by returning to the incident of 9/11 where Hammad is trying to cope with his difficulty of hijacking the first plane to attack the World Trade Center.

The selection of the writers and the literary works is primarily due to the themes and the background that have encouraged such writings. The construction of Muslims and Islam is used as a significant means in the selected literary texts through which Islamophobia was reproduced. What matters is that, the targeted individuals and their faith are constituted as inferior in direct contrast to the superior group, which is America in the present case. Abraham's *American Taliban* is selected to reveal hypocrisy of American media that distorts facts to promote prejudice and hatred against Muslims and Islam.

Since, the devastating event of 9/11 and its after-effects, issues of Islamophobia and terrorism have dominated American literature. Therefore, most of the 9/11 literary works deal with the traumatic experience of the victims of the attack. Through the series of interlinked themes and the debates conducted in theoretical chapters, the present study demonstrates the ways anti-Muslim and pro-Muslim ideologies function in western world.

1.1 Thesis Statement

The mainstream American literary consciousness is visibly marked by divided Islamophobic/neo-orientalist sentiments. However, there are distinct voices to be heard deviating from the mainstream discourse of hatred and parochialism. The following study mainly focuses on analyzing the representation of Islam and Muslims in the selected literary works. The research aims to compare two distinct views of America regarding Islam and Muslims.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this analytical research are:

1. To deeply analyze issues like religious antagonism and ethnic prejudice in the selected literary texts.
2. To study the representation of Islam and Muslims in the selected texts.
3. To compare and contrast image of Islam and Muslims in two different literary works by Abraham and Delillo.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do American writers depict religion and ethnicity in the selected novels?
2. How do Pearl Abraham and Don Delillo portray Muslims and Islam in their novels?

3. In what ways does Abraham's portrayal of Islam and Muslims stand in contrast with Delillo's representation of them?

1.4 Delimitations

The research work is delimited to only two selected novels by two distinct American writers. The novels that I have selected were published in 2007 and 2010. The selected writers are contemporary American authors and it is assumed that they reflect different thoughts regarding the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in their literary works. Thus, the endeavor is to trace similarities and differences in the representation of Islam and Muslims in the selected texts. As the research focuses on two literary texts, one is unable to have a large amount of data to work upon. Also, few of the principles have been discussed in the research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The proposed research focuses on tracing the representation of Islam and Muslims in the literary texts selected by the researcher. My study is a productive intervention in Islamophobia studies as it provides a completely different version of the aftermaths of 9/11 attacks. This dissertation aims to find out discourses behind the stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims in post 9/11 fiction. This study serves as a tool to approach divided American literary consciousness regarding the image of Islam and Muslims.

Therefore, the significance of this study is that it is crucial for understanding contemporary and cultural complexities binding the lives of Muslims, especially those living in America. This study has a lot of significance as it will contribute to the literary areas of study. The analysis of selected literary texts assists readers to disclose the position of Muslims and Islam in American society. The study allows readers to trace similarities and differences in the representation of Muslims and Islam in two literary texts by different authors. Another significance of this research is to provide a frame of reference to those researchers who are interested in this area.

Post 9/11 fiction has come to mean different things for individuals from different backgrounds and for students of literature it has opened up a whole new area of research. It is hoped that future students and researchers will be stimulated and motivated to conduct further research in this area to highlight the significance of cross-cultural harmony.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamophobia has become an important topic of discussion in the post 9/11 world. Its impacts have revolutionized literary productions and it has triggered several writers to examine the perpetual effects of prejudice and discrimination against Islam and Muslims. The main objective of the present section is to relate history, politics, culture and emerging interpretation of Islamophobia. The purpose of the following section is to provide a critical survey of the scholarly works already done on the issue of Islamophobia. Thus, a detailed and comprehensive study was required to develop a theoretical framework to interpret the selected American texts. The following literature review is organized according to the publication dates of the scholarly works to analyze the development in the phenomenon of Islamophobia in a better and comprehensive way. Firstly, it seeks to present the review of literature on the issue of the negative picture of Islam from the perspective of various theorists. Secondly, this chapter intends to add past researches done on both of the novels. Since the novels that I have selected were published in 2007 and 2010, not much research has been done on them. Thus the third part of the literature review will encompass not only the reviews about the novels but also a slight overview of the theoretical framework on which my study is carried out.

2.1 Islamophobia and its Causes

Misrepresentation of Islam is not a new phenomenon. Cultural differences and historical contexts have always given rise to anti-Islamic sentiments. Prejudice against Muslims has become normalized in the west because of terrorist attacks which have become a matter of concern for national security especially in the United States (Allen 279). One such reason behind Islamophobia is the incompatibility of Islam with the west, assuming Islam as inferior to the west. Many

decedents of European immigrants were raised with negative views about the traditions and culture of Islam.

Ideologies from 17th and 18th century America have influenced the relationship between Muslims and Americans in the 19th century. America was dominated by immigration in the late nineteenth century. Discrimination and prejudice against Asians and Blacks have been widespread in the history of America (Tobin et.al 07). From 1850 to 1930, almost one million immigrants migrated from India, China and Japan to the United States. American culture was highly threatened by the presence of Asian immigrants. American government of that time introduced laws to restrict the assimilation of Asian immigrants into Western society (Parshad 63). In 1872, Chinese immigrants were restricted to own property in the United States. In 1924, the first wave of Muslim migration was observed. In 1948, the creation of Israel compelled Palestinian immigrants to move to the United States. Muslim migrants from various countries like Egypt, Iraq and Pakistan moved to America to avail themselves economic opportunities (Tweed 17). Various movements were led to protect the rights of African-American Muslims. Each movement had a political purpose and the leaders of each movement manipulated the faith of Islam for their benefits (Jones 04).

In the twentieth century, America encountered certain movements such as the Black slavery movement and Islamic movements. A common mindset prevailed in the society to support discrimination and prejudice against Blacks and Muslims. Leaders like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X struggled to protect blacks and due to their efforts, Islam became a prominent religion in the United States. Malcolm preached that Islam is the religion of peace and equality. Islam has always been misperceived by western people and many spiritual leaders have misrepresented the true faith of Islam due to which Islam became a controversy in the twentieth century. Arab Muslims were quoted frequently in various discourses to present a violent image of Muslims globally. Muslims were associated with bloodshed and violence in American history and politics. Here, the question arises that why anti-Islamic discourse took over the whole world? The answer to this question is still an

enigma. The tragedy of Pearl Harbor in 1941 also played a vital role in raising racism in America. American propaganda against the Japanese made the similar worst conditions for American Japanese as the incident of 9/11 made the lives of American Muslims miserable. America has always produced prejudice against Asians, Blacks and Catholics.

However, modern Islamophobia has its unique factors. Puritans played a vital role in this context, as they started moving to America, they believed that they had a responsibility of spreading God's message to the whole world. In the modern world, they thought they had this moral obligation as chosen people. These historical roots played their role in shaping American views about Islam and Muslims. Americans started believing that they are the only hope for humanity (Barbir and Sha'ban 1421). The ideology of shaping other's destiny changed American attitude towards other nations. Americans started depicting Muslims as "other". Certain negative publications against Muslims and Islam gave rise to Islamophobia.

The United States of America had already witnessed Muslim controversy in the twentieth century which was at the peak just after the incident of 9/11. Although hostility was already present in American history, the terrorist attacks triggered that animosity against Muslims and Islam. American public became more conscious about words like fanaticism and fundamentalism. Literature was produced to reinforce negative stereotypes about Islam. Propaganda was done internationally to isolate Muslims in the backdrop of the 9/11 incident. This historical background is essential in understanding modern Islamophobia which was increased by the incident of 9/11.

2.2 Rise in Islamophobia and Post 9/11 Scenario

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the FBI reported that hate crimes against Muslims had increased 1600 percent. Pew Center for Research conducted a study that determined views of Americans regarding six other religions more optimistically as compared to Islam. In 2015, 1556 complaints were lodged by

Muslims related to discrimination based on employment, hate crimes and bullying (CAIR 2016). In 2016, Donald Trump anchored his presidential campaign in which he displayed hatred and fear for Islam and Muslims. Being a candidate, he tried to introduce many policies to restrict Muslims from entering in the United States. He also appointed Michael Flynn as national security advisor. Many politicians showed their reservation as Flynn was known for normalizing anti-Muslim sentiments in the US. In 2016, he also tweeted that the fear of Muslims is logical. The people who supported Trump started realizing that their fear for Muslims is not based on discrimination, rather it is lawful.

The incident of 9/11 caused a change in the temperament of Americans and they had a common perspective towards Islam and Muslims. Benedict has noticed this change even long before the terrorist attacks. He refers towards an unexpected and sudden change in American policy which proved an asylum for Islamophobia. American government introduced laws including the Act of 1921 & 1924 to impose a ban on immigration (125). Some scholars refer to the change in American policy after 9/11 as a boomerang (Parenti 10). A strong emotional and psychological behavior was developed in the form of racial discrimination in America. This wake of American policy compelled Islamic fundamentalist organizations to arm themselves against US forces. Soon after that Afghanistan became the centre of oppression (Saikal 95). These circumstances brought a change in the politics of the world. Various scholars including Boas attempted to define racism as a consequence of culture, norms and values (06). The marginalization of American Muslims is a disturbing phenomenon. Those who are having power in American society continue exploiting American Muslims. Social relations with Muslims are restricted due to stereotypical beliefs about Muslims and Islam.

2.3 Islamophobia and World's Perspective on Islam

Muslims have always been dealt with biased attitude in the whole world. According to Afridi, Muslims are prone to negative stereotyping and sinister profiling that associate Islam with irrationality and terrorism. Hate crimes have been

increasing against Muslims in America since the fall of the Twin towers. He argues that Muslims remain a threat, an enemy and an outsider in the American community. For American Muslims, the question of identity is also irresistible. Muslims in America have to face challenges as they become part of wider American society. They are trying to seek answers to the questions that whether American society is making things easy for them or they are raising the bar. Many Muslims are aware of this fact as their community grows so do their difficulties increase (09).

Various scholars view Islam and Muslims as incompatible with the West. Esposito puts forward certain questions on the inaptness of Islam and democracy. His research views Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to American society. He has also deeply studied the global history of Islam and its relationship with the West. His study brings forward Islam and the West as binaries in the present era (05). One such scholar is Huntington who has represented Islam as a dreadful religion in the contemporary era. The research done by Huntington clearly shows abhorrence against Muslims and Islam. Although he has confessed that detailed research is required to study the involvement of Muslims in various conflicts. Huntington has portrayed Muhammad (SAW) as a ruthless military commander. His one-sided perception of Islam and Muslims expresses western prejudice against Islam. He has completely ignored the positive side of Islam and its followers (263).

Scholars claim that it was not only the faith of Islam that came under attack after 9/11 (Halliday 892). Ahmed claims that a hazardous world was created to describe the connection between Islam and terrorism. He gave a detailed explanation of the misrepresentation of Islam from both Muslims and non-Muslims who utilize selective ideology of Islam for their purpose (01). He asserts that the contemporary situation has divided the world into two parts i-e “us and terrorists”. According to him, all Muslim countries came under suspicion since they were accused of having links with all extremist groups.

One more difficulty that Muslims encounter is that Islamophobia has certain ambiguities that restrict its clarity. According to Salaita, not all victims of Islamophobia are Muslims and fear of Muslims certainly inspires hatred of them in

some cases. We must take into account historically to accurately delineate a context for the hatred, Islamophobia, a useful descriptor for specific phenomenon such as dispensationalist demonization of Islam as a faith, is necessary a transnational utterance and precludes, unintentionally a localized analysis of discrete interethnic encounters. For example, Indonesians and Palestinians are Sunni Muslim communities for their geopolitical encounter with the United States and other western powers, as these encounters contributed to the stereotyping of Muslims (250).

The situation for Muslims became worse after the terrorist attacks on the World trade center. According to Morley, after the devastating event of the 9/11 some excessive literary writers tried to depict the horrors of the 9/11 attacks without considering the quality of their works. Some considerable writers like Ken Kalfus and Claire Messud published their novels in the same year. All such writers were biased in depicting the situation after the attacks and they completely forgot the presence of Muslims in America. Only Updike was successful in portraying the thoughts of Islamic fanatics. He attempted to reveal the minds of terrorists in front of readers and assists them to understand the psyche of those who were involved in terrorism (10).

Various scholars have made attempts to narrate the difficulties faced by American Muslims. According to Ghosh, it's complicated to be a Muslim in America; it simply means to bear arrows against your faith. He argues that Muslims cannot become fully Americans and they cannot have the same status as other non-Muslims are having in America. In America, not only in schools or offices but everywhere mainstream media and political leaders associate Islam with violence and terrorism. He asserts that political parties from France and Britain utter terrible things about Muslims and Islam. According to him, the most heated arguments take place over the mosque. The place of worship of Muslims is the easiest target for displaying animosity against Muslims. When different Muslim groups build formal mosques, they become more liable for Americans (03).

Awan observes that American cultural production was greatly influenced by the tragic incident of 9/11. He asserts that the war on terrorism was fought on many fronts, which included pages of pop fiction and a war of words on the screens throughout the world. He further states that the representation of the September 11 episode has become a motive behind global change which has presented America as a sufferer and defender of liberty. This narrative is not only the part of Hollywood movies but also present in pop fiction and photography (02).

Apart from Hollywood movies and popular American culture, Muslims encounter biased attitude in real-life situations. Rahim argues that even after nine years of these horrifying attacks, Muslims are still facing discrimination and hatred in European countries based on their faith and culture. There are reports from different European countries that Muslims have to face discrimination at their workplaces or they don't have enough access to employment opportunities. It is believed generally that intervention of America in Iraq or Afghanistan will only intensify hatred and discrimination against Muslims and Islam in America. The negative image of Muslims is turning into a phobia in America which is making people scared of Islam and Muslims. Many of the Americans are unaware of facts and this ignorance makes them liable to have fear against Muslims (239).

The issue of the negative picture of Islam has been explored in depth largely by theologians that have lent several approaches to the analysis of this issue. Hamid Dabashi claims that native informants have played their crucial role in producing anti-Muslim sentiments. Dabashi has taken Fanon's ideas to throw light on anti-Muslim racism. As Fanon has described the traumatic experience of colonized people, in the same way Dabashi has demonstrated that how comprador intellectuals have been used by imperial powers to misrepresent Muslims. Dabashi extends the ideas of Fanon by demonstrating the fact that imperial powers take advantage of native intellectuals to distort the image of their home country (41). Dabashi also examines the effects of cultural superiority on comprador intellectuals.

Various scholars have tried to explore the reasons behind the alienation of Muslims in American society. According to Elver, hatred and misunderstanding

about Islam and Muslims have increased during the past few decades as Islam is associated with terrorism and it has ruined the reputation of Islam in Western countries. It has always been a challenge to have an association with minority religion in America. Muslims have become a subject of marginalization in America even though America claims to give religious freedom and racial equality to its citizens. This is the reason that Muslims always feel a strong sense of alienation in American society and they feel helpless to overcome this situation (17).

It has been noticed that Islam has always been misperceived by people having political agenda. Ernest in his book *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance* asserts that the sudden rise in anti-Muslim sentiments in the west has associations with right-wing activists, whose attacks on Islam are often fully funded. These organizations claim that Islam is not a religion and Muslims have no rights in the western world. They use misinformation to spread that Muslims are treacherous and that autonomy must be protected by taking liberty away from Muslims. The political angle cannot be neglected in attacks on Islam that are also connected with criticism of President Obama. He further explains that a report draws attention to certain right-wing foundations that have been providing million dollars to sustain Islamophobia between 2001 and 2009. These professional networks are fully funded by certain websites and bloggers that systematically intensify anti-Islamic messages in a belligerent and intolerant tone (04).

The phenomenon of racism cannot be ignored in viewing Islamophobia. Garner and Selod claim that racial discrimination allows us to comprehend that regardless of origin, physical appearance and economic conditions, Muslims are degraded and dehumanized in their daily lives. This can be observed in the experiences of those whites who embrace Islam, who feel that their whiteness is being questioned because of their belonging and attachment to the new faith. They argue that we cannot view experiences of Muslims outside the racial paradigm until or unless Muslims are treated as humans. We cannot stop documenting their experiences with racism until they achieve their due status in society (09).

Apart from their status in society, the true spirit of Islam has always been misrepresented by so-called Muslim scholars. Cherkaoui explains that some Muslim radical groups have represented a false picture of Islam by positioning themselves as the accurate voice of Islam. Such groups have caused ambiguity in the minds of Americans that what are the actual teachings of Islam. He asserts that most of the media networks invite incompetent religious scholars on their talk shows for the sake of balance. The well-reputed and learned Islamic scholars are not invited on TV shows to represent true Islamic faith. This calls for a question that who speaks on the behalf of Islam in America? (28).

Various scholars accuse the west of bringing Islam into political and social discourse. Spellberg accuses the founding figures of America of giving so much importance to Islam especially when it was a non-existing religion in American society (15). According to her, the growing tension between Islam and America is due to hybridism and ambivalence. She also attempts at highlighting the interest of Americans in the Quran and Islam since the day America got freedom.

According to one of the reports, Islamophobia is a kind of xenophobia or prejudice based on religious animosity which aims to distort the image of Muslims in the United States. Almost 194 bills were introduced between 2010 and 2016 regarding Muslims, out of which 18 bills were anti-Muslims. Islamophobia is accidentally constructing homogenized Muslim others who must be examined as degraded and ostracized from Judo Christian communities. This othering of Muslims had a profound effect on the lives of the common masses. Those who are judged as radical Muslims are thought to be involved in barbaric acts and discriminatory behavior. Moreover, Islamophobia has given a lead to an unexpected change in foreign policy and augmentation of security apparatuses which has a deep impact on the lives of all Americans. Islamophobia has laid the foundation of an ideology that critically analyzes Muslims as a threat to the west (Elsheikh et al. 9).

The most recent study on Islamophobia is carried out by Najib and Hopkins. Their research focuses on various spaces and kinds of discrimination against Muslims in Paris and London. They try to explore the characteristics of the various

victims of Islamophobia through their study. Their findings claim that more victims of Islamophobia in Paris and London were young women who wear headscarf. They claim that discrimination against Muslims shows that they are not tolerated by these European societies. Their study reflects that what place is given to Muslims and why minority is perceived as a threat in these two European states (458).

2.4 Stereotypical Representation of Muslims

Along with the literary world, the world of media also responded to the devastating event of 9/11. Various filmmakers around the globe tried to depict the horrors of terrorist activities and their impact on the masses. One such filmmaker is Karan Johar, who is an Indian director. The name of the movie is *My Name is Khan* in which discrimination has been shown against Muslims who do not have any connection with terrorism. The film centers on the relationship between Muslims and the western world that has been changed due to terrorist activities. The protagonist of the film faces discrimination and prejudice just after the incident of 9/11. Another such film is *Khuda kay Liay* by Pakistani director Shoaib Mansoor in which he has attempted to portray problems faced by Muslims living in the US just after the incident of 9/11.

According to Shadid and Koningsveld, the term Muslim fundamentalism is used as a label to designate every movement with a religious Islamic signature. They argue that every violent movement is being associated with Islam. References can be made to events like the Rushdie affair, the Iranian revolution, the evolution in Afghanistan and the attack on the World Trade centre (189).

The fall of the Twin towers had a profound effect on Muslims all over the world. According to a study, the entire world never expected the horrifying event of 9/11. After these attacks conflict between Christianity and Islam could be noticed clearly and this conflict served as fuel to anti-Islamic sentiments in the Western world. Just after few days after the incident of 9/11, an Afghan taxi driver was attacked mercilessly. He was considered Osama Bin Laden, a man behind these attacks because of his beard and Muslim attire. Since then television programs and

literature about Islam have been published to debate Islamic fundamentalism (Abbas 05). According to Kumar, Post 9/11 media representation of Islam and Muslims was mostly negative, where Islam was judged within the context of religious fanaticism and clash of cultures (10).

Many scholars claimed that the media supported biased views of the Bush administration to promote a particular political agenda (Kellner 41). Media emphasized portraying Islam as a threat to American values of freedom, supremacy and democracy (Osuri & Banarjee 151). A change was observed in the pattern of media portrayal of Islam and Muslims after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Brown 06). Post 9/11 media representation of Islam and Muslims was mostly negative, where Islam was judged within the context of religious fanaticism and clash of cultures (Kumar 10).

Various scholars have thrown light on how western people were introduced to the radical side of Islam. Halil Ibrahim Yenigun argues that after the Gulf war and especially after the world trade center attack media started giving special coverage to Muslims in news. That's how the American public was exposed to the negative picture of Islam and Muslims. The Muslims were presented as suicide bombers, hijackers and irrational terrorists who wage war against democracy and civilization in the name of Jihad (64). He further throws light on the relationship between media and academia; he illustrates how academia affects media.

Literary representation has a deep effect on the image of Muslims and Islam around the globe. According to Akbarzada and Smith, Muslims from other parts of the world have occupied a foreign image in Australians. They consider Muslims as homegrown terrorists who are seeking refuge in the western world. Even the term "War on terror" has been misconceived by the western world. They have perceived it as a "War on Islam". Moreover, the term terrorism collapses with the perceived notion of "Them" and "Us". This has created a new fear among the West that "They" have infiltrated "Our" land (23). The image of Muslims as barbaric, social threat, violent and aggressive is regenerated against the backdrop of the "War on terrorism". The only solution to this problem is careful coverage of news regarding

Islam and Muslims. That is how the west can avoid stereotyping and can have a better representation of Islam and Muslims (37).

Ridouani tries to illustrate how Muslim Arabs have been represented in western media in his article “The Representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western Media”. He states that western media produces false assumptions about the principles of Islam and most of the news anchors attempt to distort the actual meaning of fundamentalism. It seems that the term fundamentalism is only associated with Islam and Muslims while mainstream media does not throw light on the association of fundamentalism with Christianity and particularly Christian Zionism. (03)

Many scholars attempted to study the impact of the 9/11 incident on the lives of American Muslims. Alsultany examined that after the incident of 9/11, many of the Pakistani Muslims voluntarily returned to Pakistan just because of the fear of being associated with terrorism. The policies of American government had a deep psychological impact on Muslims living in America. The American Muslims started censoring their behavior just to avoid ethnicity and racism. To protect themselves from any potential detriment, American Muslims started staying at homes and isolated themselves. They felt excluded from the process of national grieving because they were being considered responsible for the fall of the twin towers. Alsultany also focuses on the role played by media in representing Islam and Muslims. He examines that the newspapers emphasize the chaotic incidents and ignore the positive side of Muslims. Media constructed dichotomy of external Muslims v/s internal Muslims, presenting American Muslims as logical and civilized while external Muslims as fundamentalists and barbaric (161).

Knott and Poole claim that the publication of the “Runnymede Trust Report” increased the media’s interest in the representation of Muslims and Islam (03). This dichotomy produced by media has affected the lives of common American Muslims. Todd H. Green illustrates that how media plays its decisive role in portraying a negative image of Islam and Muslims. He further explains by relying heavily on the “Runnymede Trust Report” which has examined intolerance against Islam and

Muslims in the United Kingdom. Green also examines that media reflects assumptions and biases towards Islam and Muslims. Masses accept these false assumptions and unbiased representation of Muslims as reality. Green has presented a critique of the distorted image of Islam which has been presented in media (56). He has tried to present his proposal on the transformation of biased attitude and behavior towards Muslims and Islam.

Various scholars have argued that it is a need of time to decrease the growing tension between the West and Islam. Europe was alarmed by the presence of Muslims in Western societies as an emerging nation (Anidjar 03). The present study suggests revised literature for a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. Ahmed, Saifuddin and Mathes claim that their findings point out that media portrays Muslims and Islam as to be strongly linked with terrorism. This connection was strengthened after the historical terrorist event. Certain studies were made to identify the 9/11 event as a catalytic point when media and western society developed a discriminatory attitude towards Muslims and Islam. He explains it further by giving an example of the London attacks when British media started associating Islamic beliefs with terrorism. (231)

Amour claims that before the incident of 9/11, the name of Osama was neutral in western societies. It was only linked to the appearance of the name holder but after 9/11, the process of profiling Muslims abolished positive associations with the brand name. Muslims everywhere in the west have been associated with Osama with all its fanaticism and fundamentalism. The name Osama itself triggered emotions of mistrust and skepticism. The death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 unlocked a chance to rebrand the name Osama, although this process is time-consuming because images are resolute (72).

2.5 “Good Muslims” v/s “Bad Muslims”

The idea of “good” and “bad” Muslims is associated with the concept of “Clash of Civilization” (1996) by Huntington. Muslims were accused of confronting to culture rather than religion that has given a way to the idea of “good” and “bad”

Muslims. This idea was addressed because it has a resemblance with Black slavery in the United States. Vakil asserts that Islamophobia somehow contrasts with Neo-orientalism because it attempts to subjugate Muslims from the angle of “good” and “bad” Muslims. According to Vakil, wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia are the part of today’s neo-imperialism. After the cold war, most of the western countries were led by the US and they attempted to influence Muslim parts of the world. With the help of neo-orientalism discourse, the west attempts to reorder the world, dealing with uncivilized and weak states of the world, especially Muslim countries. A massive reaction to the incident of 9/11 assured the destruction of the cold war era (27). Various scholars like Mamdani deny that Muslims never had any history, an aspect which declared Muslims as “bad” (04).

In the past few years, Muslims in America have been fighting this paradox of “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims”. Haddad and Harb in their article “Post9/11: Making Islam an American Religion” examine that in the past few decades, Muslims in America have played a crucial role in American cultural production such as sports, music and TV programs. They assert that despite having a subaltern position in America; Muslims have tried to enter film making business having an intention to create a positive image of Muslims other than the stereotype representation of Muslims. Muslim comics also gained a reputable position in America. Before the incident of twin towers, Muslims were presented as bad guys in Hollywood movies. There are filmmakers in America who want to present a rather unbiased image of Muslims in their short documentaries. One such example is the movie *Islam in America: The Christian Truth* featuring Muslim leaders who are well known for their positive image of Muslims and Islam in America (602).

2.6 Review of the Related Literature on the Selected Novels

In the wake of the 9/11 incident, various scholars have made efforts to point out that how academia responds to terrorist attacks. Mishra in his article “The End of Innocence” critically analyzes various writers to examine how they have portrayed the 9/11 events. He states that writers like Delillo have been forced to re-

examine their works and to write according to the need of the hour. *A disorder peculiar to the country* by Kalfus is one of the works dealing with the catastrophic event of 9/11. Mishra also criticizes Delillo for observing the only emotional and psychological struggle of 9/11 survivors. Mishra claims that Delillo does not talk about their background or societies (04).

Instead of discussing the background of his characters, Delillo has transformed his characters into various dimensions. Kauffman claims that Delillo transforms his characters of *Falling Man* in three dimensions: including their psychology, background and growth. Hammad is unforgettable because he clandestinely develops qualms about jihad. He is aware of his transformation because he gives up his individuality for the sake of jihad. He knows that he is getting something larger and meaningful than his own life. His leader is Amir who has been called Mohammad Atta in the novel. Atta is a strict believer and with his powers of rhetoric, he disintegrates Hammad's confrontation. According to Kauffman, terrorists have manipulated Islam because jihad is not only about death but the highest jihad is jihad within oneself, a spiritual struggle to reach God. (355).

Delillo has also been criticized for displaying the inability of Muslims to adopt American culture and values. According to Pirnajmuddin and Borhan, Delillo focuses on the incompatibility of Muslims with American modernity. Muslims have been depicted as law offenders of the American lifestyle and their brutality is rooted not individually rather collectively. Delillo aptly describes the secret life of Muslim terrorists in New York where every Muslim cabdriver is called "Mohammad". The rooms in Delillo's *Falling Man* refer to prayer rooms in which Muslims congregate to share their personal experiences. According to them, Delillo mentions mosque, Dar al Ansar, and portable rooms at university to imply fear of Muslims for open spaces which ironically symbolizes their narrow mindedness. It seems that Muslims are in search of shelter from the corrupt West in enclosed spaces (02).

According to McDonald, Delillo's *Falling Man* has been divided into three major parts. One part comprises the details of terrorists, who plot to attack the towers. But this part has been given less space by Delillo as compared to other parts

of the novel. The first few pages of this part introduce us to the pre planning of the terrorists in Germany where they study various subjects and watch videos of jihad. The last pages of this part take the readers inside the plane where we see Hammad in deep ambiguity whether he is westernized or orientalized (04).

Some scholars have tried to critically analyze the characters of Delillo. According to Gheorghiu, Osama Bin Laden and Muhammad Atta are such characters that could be best distorted by authors like Delillo to produce a counter-narrative. Both these characters are depicted in the novel, yet Hammad has been given more focus, which is a more balanced character than Ahmed from Updike's *Terrorist*. Hammad is not the distorted image of Arab Muslim by western media. This bearded fundamentalist does not seem to be a barbaric type nor does he appear to be a fanatic. He is represented as an easily convincible character that is willing to embrace a cause which he even could not fully embrace in his final moments (59).

According to a study, Delillo views Muslims from three distinct dimensions in *Falling Man* that is physical, ideological and behavioral. He intentionally tries to prove that Muslims are filthiest. He also accuses Islam of being dogmatic and criticizes Islam that it does not let Muslims rectify themselves. Delillo also uses the phrase 'sword verses' to prove that violence is deeply rooted in Islam. He views Islamic rules and regulations as the cause of violent behavior of Muslims and accuses Quran of producing rigidity in Muslims (Alireza 10).

According to Saadoon and Othman, *Falling Man* is based on two major entities: Islamic fundamentalism and its American counterpart. Both of these entities judge each other according to ideological differences. They attempt to squelch each other for having a superior ideology. In *Falling Man*, America is typically representing occident and extremists are representing Orient. Hammad, the central Muslim character represents Orientals that reject occidental ideology (1541).

According to Riaz, *Falling Man* is set in ashes, destruction and its consequences. All the characters are revolving around the devastating incident of 9/11. Fear is the focal point of this novel. The novel focuses on the influence of the

9/11 on the lives of common people. According to Riaz, the technique of Delillo is entirely different from that of Updike and Adams. Delillo presents American characters as victims who are suffering psychologically after the devastating event of 9/11. Delillo presents his American characters under the stress of grief and threat (187).

According to Popescu, in the essay name “The Making of American Taliban”, Abraham states her intention to face a question that has been repeatedly asked by American masses that why would a wealthy and educated American commit to Jihad? Abraham’s interest lies in approaching the novel from a new dimension by describing the protagonist’s journey from secularism to Jihad, a task which was also undertaken by Jarett Kobek who also recreated 9/11 hijacker Mohammad Atta’s life. Abraham does not rewrite John Walker’s personal story rather John Jude Parish appears as an enhanced version of John Walker Lindh. John Walker has been introduced as a distinct character revealing that how the American people perceived him and how American media presented him after his capture. While on the other hand, John Jude Parish is immaculate and it is up to the readers that how they end up in his story (15).

This section also provides the theoretical foundation upon which the analysis of the selected novels is based. Islamophobia is an emerging and controversial topic in the field of literature. It was originated in the 1900s to draw attention to harmful and prejudiced actions directed at Muslims in western societies. Various researchers have used the term widely to identify causes, effects and dimensions of discrimination against Islam and Muslims. “Islamophobia is the fear of Islam or Muslims” (Abbas 28). For Stolz, “It is the rejection of Islam and Muslims based on discrimination and prejudice (548). Zuquete defines Islamophobia as “a mindset and a widespread discourse in which people make blind judgments about Islam as other” (323).

Said’s *Orientalism* is one of the best works about the western representation of the Islamic world. Said has opened a debate by throwing light on how the Arab Islamic world is viewed by the west. According to Said, Western media plays a vital

role in distorting the image of Islam. He claims that falsehood about Muslims and Islam is constantly propagated in the media, in the name of objectivity, freedom, democracy liberalism and progress (286).

The next chapter illustrates the development of theoretical framework and methodology to locate the working of Islamophobia in the selected American literary works.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is designed to explain various steps that are involved in studying the research problem. It gives a deep understanding of various concepts regarding Islamophobia to address the problem. The present study has adopted qualitative research which is used to understand the social world and its problems. Literary texts have been selected to investigate depiction of Islam and Muslims in American fictional narratives. The previous chapter was designed to review the literature to outline the gaps in the study. Hence, this chapter is designed to give a detailed discussion on the methodology that has been selected to study the argument. For this purpose, an analysis of the selected literary texts has been done. Qualitative research is used as a research design for the present study which is exploratory and interpretive in nature.

The present study is structured in the sense that it is well-grounded in theories. The present study has deeply analyzed the notion of Islamophobia to explore the representation of Muslim characters in the selected literary texts. Multiple meanings have been extracted from the texts. Cultural prejudice has also been exposed. Qualitative research has provided methodical insight into the main argument and assisted to connect ideas. An operational definition of the notion of Islamophobia has been devised which has helped in the analysis of the selected texts.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of theoretical framework is to support a particular theory that illustrates why a specific study tackles a particular problem. The theoretical framework helps a study in the development of its argument. The purpose of theory

is to challenge prior knowledge. A study develops its argument with the help of a theoretical framework. Since the purpose of the study is to reveal the image of Islam and Muslims in America, a comprehensive framework is required for interpretation. Forming a theoretical framework is like distributing and coordinating the diverse effect of various approaches (Layder 18). To analyze qualitative data, interpretative paradigm has been used.

Unlike other researches, this study is going to focus on both perspectives of American society towards Islam and Muslims. The research aim is to compare and contrast two distinctive viewpoints of Americans. Following objectives are targeted during the investigation of the particular issue,

1. To deeply analyze the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the works of Don DeLillo and Pearl Abraham.
2. To analyze divided American literary consciousness in the selected texts.
3. To study how issues like religious antagonism and ethnic prejudices have been incorporated in the texts.

To tackle the complex nature of the issue that is going to be studied concerning the selected texts, the researcher has formulated a theoretical framework that is based upon Said's arguments about the role of media in determining the image of Muslims.

As discussed earlier Islamophobia refers to the illogical fear of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia has become a significant discourse after the horrifying incident of 9/11. Most of the American media portrays Islam in terms of Islamic authoritarianism and Jihadism. Even American talk shows create Islamophobia among common masses representing Muslims as threatening, antagonistic and fundamentalists. American media defines the event of 9/11 within the context of global war on terror and religious fanaticism to evoke fear-inducing image of Muslims. Media provokes racism on the grounds of "Freedom of Speech". This prejudiced and pejorative attitude against Muslims has resulted in legalized racism

against Muslims especially in Hollywood movies. Islam has always been considered as violence prone religion by the western media.

Various literary works and scholars have reflected this complex phenomenon of Islamophobia in their works. One such renowned scholar is Edward William Said who is principal theorist in this study. Said is having an influential and prominent name in the field of postcolonial studies. He claims that Islam is viewed as inferior to Christianity and Judaism. Said in his book *Covering Islam* throws light on how western media distorts the image of Islam. The book enlightens the condition after the Crisis of Iranian hostage and the way western media views Islam. In the introduction to the revised edition of this book, Said expresses concern that malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West. Said argues that it is media that determines what westerners should and should not know about Islam and Muslims. He claims that falsehood about Muslims and Islam is constantly propagated in the media, in the name of objectivity, freedom, democracy liberalism and progress. He refers to the media having the ability as an invisible screen that controls what people should know and what should not. He explains further by saying that the same Western countries that learnt from Islam and Muslims are now producing negativity against Islam by using their mass media. The western media portrays Islam as an orthodox, extremist and anti-intellectual religion (285).

Said makes a crucial point by claiming that the western media does not want to aware people that Islam is a religion of moral values, ethics, knowledge, peace, equality, brotherhood and unity. The western media propagates false claims about Islam and Muslims in the name of liberty, objectivity and democracy. Said has made a crucial point regarding identity politics in Europe. He says, “The transference of a popular anti-Semitic animus from a Jewish to an Arab target was made smoothly since the figure was essentially the same” (286).

Said points out that “media images commands too much attention and can be exploited at times of crisis and insecurity of the kind that the post 9/11 period produced.” According to Said, media is of significant importance in the creation of

the enemy other. Media demonizes an enemy through stereotypes that exaggerate pre-existing perceptions and differences. In the history, American media took part in shameful transformation of Japanese Americans from citizens to enemies during Second World War. These media stereotypes play a significant role in shaping the ideology of common masses that what they believe about important international issues (287).

The study also includes another crucial argument of Edward Said from his essay "Islam through Western Eyes", in which he criticizes the western view of Islam. He claims that since the Middle Ages, west had a flawed view of Islam. Said accuses "imaginative geography dividing the world into two equal parts" for this misleading image of Islam. According to this imaginative division, the world is divided into the Orient, which is seen as distinct and inferior, and the Occident which is considered as intellectual and superior. As Said says "the general basis of orientalist thought is an imaginative geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger and different, one called the Orient, the other, also known as our world, called the occident or the West. Such divisions always take place when one society or culture thinks about another one, different from it (02). Although this division is unreal but it created cultural and social borders that reflect the western flawed view of Islam (02). Said further says, "insofar as Islam has always been seen as belonging to the Orient, its particular fate within the general structure of orientalism has been to be looked at with a very special hostility and fear" (02).

In order to strengthen my theoretical framework, I have invoked the argument of Sara Mills to analyze how media and politicians are powerful enough to shape discourse which can be both an effect of power and an instrument. Mills has published on Post-colonial theory and feminism and is the author of *Discourse* and *Michel Foucault*. She asserts that the people who are not in power cannot create a certain reality. In other words, those who are in position of authority are those who can speak the truth (Mills 58). Hence, the reality related to Muslims as violent was believed by a huge number of non-Muslims as it was created by the people who are in position of authority (Mills 58). She Further argues that "discourse can be a tool

of power but it can also act as a hindrance, a point of resistance, a stumbling block and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (Mills 55). It means that if there is no discourse, there will be no resistance. However, resistance does not mean that there is a victim or an oppressor. Instead, resistance, in this context means “a tool for power to be exercised” (Mills 40). The theoretical perspectives of Mills and Said are likely to be useful in reading my primary texts. While drawing a comparison between distinctive visions regarding the image of Islam and Muslims, the researcher specifically focuses on the issues of race and religion in the study.

3.2 Research Method

Research method is the procedure through which a researcher collects and analyzes data. The methodology is designed to give answers to the questions. It involves both the production and analysis of data. The present study has employed Catherine Belsey’s model of textual analysis which has been presented in her essay “Textual Analysis as a Research Method” included in Gabriele Griffin’s book *Research Methods for English Studies*(2005). The standpoint that meaning-making varies from theorist to theorist and is different in different contexts is the foundation of textual analysis. This approach is likely to be useful to me as my principal theorist Edward Said proposes counter-discourse to the prevalent mainstream discourse in academia. Textual analysis is largely dependent on cultural background of text, its production and consumption. It aims to reveal different interpretations of a text and assess how text is a product of various discourses. Keeping this in view, I would attempt to pull in different meanings while analyzing representation of Islam and Muslims in selected literary texts. Moreover, Belsey asserts “According to the theory of language I have invoked, there can be no final signified: no one true meaning can come to light.... Meaning is not anchored in anything outside signification itself.... meanings are always ultimately undecidable” (Belsey in Griffin 172). Belsey explains the following steps of textual analysis in her book:

1. Read the text and develop questions on your own.
2. Use secondary sources according to your own choice.

3. Inquire the relationship of history and culture to the text because the analysis of a text remains incomplete without past and future.
4. One should think about debating his own first impressions in order to think about other multiple meanings.
5. A text is made of multiple meanings so there cannot be final signified.

Belsey's argument goes well with my investigation and has provided room for multiple interpretations as my purpose is to reveal representation of Islam/Muslims in post 9/11 fiction. It has helped me in explaining how various elements contribute to the understanding of the text. The research is interpretive, which implies that it is largely dependent on the researcher's interpretation.

I have used the above mentioned theoretical perspective to examine how authors of both the selected texts, *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo and *American Taliban* by Pearl Abraham attempt to represent Islam and Muslims. Moreover, Belsey's model for textual analysis is likely to be useful in revealing new critical insight in the selected works of post 9/11 fiction. The theoretical perspectives and the research method that I have used in my research are likely to be useful in analyzing my primary texts, which is carried out in the next chapter. I have attempted to look for the answers of my controlling questions through the analysis of my selected texts in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 4

REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS/ISLAM IN SELECTED NOVELS

4.1 *Falling Man* and Muslims in Post 9/11 Era

Written in the backdrop of terrorist attacks on the World Trade center, Delillo's *Falling Man* excavates certain themes such as identity loss, terrorism, psychological trauma and estrangement. Belsey's assertion that "interpretation always involves extra-textual knowledge" invites one to explore political and cultural condition of the time when Delillo produced *Falling Man* (Belsey 160). The novel is set in burning center, smoke ashes and its consequences. Written in the background of the 9/11 incident, the novel *Falling Man* points out various themes like identity crisis, trauma, silence, hatred for Islam and estrangement. 9/11 attacks entirely transformed the inner American life and Delillo aims at displaying that change in his novel.

The plot of the novel revolves around the survivors of 9 /11. The incident of 9/11 causes them to come close to each other as they keep on talking about the after-effects of the incident on their lives. Keith's estranged wife Lianne faces identity loss. Being a psychologist, she assists Alzheimer patients in their recovery. These patients face loss of memory. Lianne helps these patients in recovering their memory by giving them written projects. She sees images of falling towers which symbolize post 9/11 trauma. She is interested in the performance of "Falling man" who is an artist and imitates the survivors of the Twin towers. Keith and Lianne's son Justin is obsessed with Osama Bin Laden whom he and his friends pronounce as "Bill Lawton". They keep on looking for him in the sky with the help of binoculars. Lianne's mother Nina is against her relationship with Keith. Nina is an artist and she is dating an art dealer named Martin. Nina is interested in life and God and she often discusses them. Keith finally renounces his marriage with Lianne and starts taking interest in poker tournaments. The other part of the novel revolves around the lives

of a group of hijackers who attacked the twin towers. Hammad, a Muslim Middle Eastern can be seen taking flight lessons. He is highly intimidated by his leader Amir Al Syed. The novel ends with a clear image of the plane crash and Keith is witnessing this entire incident. Delillo ends his novel with the prediction of another attack in near future.

Delillo has always been regarded as a writer of terrorism. His works reflect resistance against the horrifying effects of the fall of the twin towers. In one of his bestselling novels titled *White Noise*, he forecasts airborne toxic event that proved as an indicator for the international terror towards New York, Boston and Washington (Rich 07). Delillo's *Falling Man* depicts the change in the lives of Americans after the fall of the World Trade Centre. Delillo also criticizes America for its friendly immigration policy which allowed Muslims to enter the USA. Since, a text is a product of various discourses, as Belsey informs us, it was important to analyze social-political context of the novel, which is likely to aid me in understanding the meaning that the text offers (160).

4.1.1 *Falling Man* and the Dominant Discourse

Delillo attempts to grab the attention of readers by giving the title *Falling Man* to his book. The title has been taken from a real-life situation where an artist performs from the World trade centre. His name is David Janiak and he is called as "Falling man". After the fall of the twin towers, he begins to dress up in a suit and tie always hanging upside down from one of the towers of the World Trade Centre. He hangs himself to pay homage to those who jumped from the twin towers. The spectators do not get pleasure from the scene rather they yell at him since this act reminds them of the dreadful terrorist attacks. The narrator illustrates, "She'd heard of him, a performance artist known as Falling Man. He'd appeared several times in the last week, unannounced, in various parts of the city suspended from one or another structure, always upside down..." (Delillo 33). By using the title *Falling Man* for his novel, Delillo attempts to recreate the scene of falling people from various structures around New York City. The artist only appears twice in the novel,

but it leaves an everlasting impression on the masses and is symbolic of power of media to influence the minds of common masses (Said 285).

The first appearance of the artist David Janiak in the text is short-term but informative. Lianne says “he brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump” (Delillo 33). The performance by the falling man disturbs her so much that she returns to the station to wait for her mother. Lianne is representative of all those Americans who rejected the image of falling man after the 9/11 attacks. These images enabled the rhetoric of retaliation and vengeance that America may be wounded by terrorists but she is not defeated. By presenting the performance of David Janiak, Delillo attempts to construct national discourse of revenge and retaliation. It proves that media is an invisible screen that has a power to shape the ideology of common masses (Said 285).

4.1.2 The Portrayal of Muslim Characters in *Falling Man*

The main Muslim characters in the novel are Hammad and Mohamed el-Amir el-Sayed Atta who is called Amir in the novel. Although there are other Muslim characters in the novel, yet these two remain prominent throughout the novel. They are being associated with violence and terrorist activities. The critical analysis of Muslim characters discloses the purpose and meaning of the selected texts. This study will help us to examine these two characters in detail to analyze the depiction of Muslims as terrorists and violent.

4.1.2.1 Hammad as a Muslim Terrorist

Delillo’s novel does not only surround the survivors of the 9/11 attacks, there is a parallel story of a Muslim trainee Hammad who is on board to strike the towers of the World Trade Centre. Hammad can be viewed as a very complex and fragmented personality in the novel. He is skeptical about his ideas. He seems to be ambiguous about Islamic views regarding Jihad. “But does a man has to kill himself to count for something, be something, to find the way” (Delillo 175). The novel

presents different factors which influence the character of Hammad. He has a strong urge to get married and to lead a normal life. Hammad is someone who has a torn personality “He had to struggle against himself, first, and then against the injustice that haunted their lives” (Delillo 177). Here we can recall the claim of Edward Said that west has a flawed view of Islam and Muslims (02). This depiction sets the backdrop of the narrative.

Hammad is viewed as a Muslim terrorist who is having a beard. Earlier, he was having difficulty with growing beard, but later he felt comfortable with it. “The beard would look better if he trimmed it. But there were rules now and he was determined to follow them” (Delillo 58). Trimming symbolizes that Muslims are vigilant about cleanliness and basic hygiene as “cleanliness is next to Godliness”. Moreover, the narrative also reflects that Islam follows rules properly which symbolizes Islam as a structured religion. Beard has become an important binary in contrast to modernity. Delillo has depicted the beard as a symbol of terrorism and a Jihadist mindset. Delillo has presented his character as someone who does not care about his basic hygiene. He does not change clothes for weeks even. “He wore the same shirt and trousers every day into the following week and underwear as well. He shaved but did not dress or undress, often sleeping in his clothes” (Delillo 107). The narrator has attempted to show him as a barbaric fundamentalist who is not concerned about his dressing and basic hygiene which is an overgeneralization that all Muslims are unhygienic. Said’s claim about the western flawed view of Islam can be recalled here because labeling Hammad as an unhygienic character cannot make all Muslims filthy and unhygienic (02). The text constructs a negative image of all Muslims by depicting Hammad’s physical appearance.

Hammad follows the commands of his leader Amir blindly. Delillo has shown a heartless picture of Hammad who is willing to kill any innocent man without any reason. By showing such a character, Delillo has put an effort to inculcate a negative image of Muslims in the mind of readers that Muslims are so ruthless that they are always ready to take someone’s life without any reason. Delillo displays hatred of Muslims for Jews and Americans, “Islam is the world outside the prayer room as

well as the surah's in the Koran. Islam is the struggle against the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful and then the Americans" (Delillo 107). Here Delillo is trying to construct a threatening image of Islam by proving it as the only enemy of the United States. Islam appears as a binary here in contrast to Jews. Islam has been presented as a religion that is in a constant struggle against the enemy.

Hammad has an attraction for his roommate Leyla who is charming enough to attract any man. Hammad has been presented as a Muslim fundamentalist who is divided between his strong sexual desires and his religious obligations. Hammad dreams of having a contented married life with Leyla but he also knows that he cannot afford to bear harsh criticism of Amir who blames him for his involvement in physical relationships. Islam does not restrict its followers from marriage rather it favors the institution of marriage. However, Islam instructs Muslims to avoid extramarital affairs. These religious restrictions and boundaries are foraged by Delillo to justify the weak sexual desires of Muslim characters. Amir always criticizes Hammad for following the footsteps of non-Muslims. Hammad knew what Amir would say. "Eating all the time, pushing food in your face, slow to approach your prayers. There was more. Being with a shameless woman....What is the difference between you and all others, outside our space?" (Delillo 58).

Delillo presents Hammad as someone who is in dire need of structures. He is obsessed with patterns, rules and structures and Islam is a religion which follows rules and structures. He does not only want to change this world, but also wants to penetrate terror among Americans. Hammad has a narrative to follow i-e the narrative of Jihad. Therefore, he has been presented as a jihadist who glorifies the idea of death by relating it to paradise. Hammad starts believing that death is greater than life. It can be seen clearly in these lines:

He thought of the Shia boys on the battlefield in Shatt al Arab. He saw them coming out of trenches and redoubts and running across the mudflats toward enemy positions, mouths open in mortal cry. He took strength from this, seeing them cut down in waves by machine guns, boys in hundreds, then the

thousands, suicide brigades, wearing red bandannas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the doors to paradise. (Delillo 145)

The narrator also attempts to represent Hammad as a ruthless jihadist who is ready to take anyone's life in the name of jihad. He has been presented as a blind follower of Amir who is willing to take someone's life without being confirmed about the crime or guilt of that person. It helps us to recall Said's argument about western flawed view of Islam (02). Moreover, the orientalist picture of Hammad can be seen in following lines:

Hammad goes for hunting a man whose identity remains unclear. Being unsure what the act is all about, Hammad hits the guy three or four times and readily leaves the place. Afterwards, thinking over what he has done, Hammad hypothesizes that perhaps he was the guy paying an Albanian whore for sex or the guy not growing a beard. (Delillo 78)

Delillo represents the mind of Hammad in such a way that it seems to be an instrument to eloquent religious notions. "They sat around a table on day one and pledged to accept their duty, which was for each of them, in blood trust, to kill Americans" (Delillo 171). The whole scene depicts Muslims as trained terrorists and warriors. It supplicates the thoughts that these Muslims do not attack America suddenly rather this is something pre-planned. Delillo asserts that their faith drives them crazy for violence and bloodshed which is merely a flawed view of west about Islam (Said 02). The following lines reflect Hammad's mind as Jihadist:

The weight loss had come in Afghanistan, in a training camp, where Hammad had begun to understand that death is stronger than life. This is where the landscape consumed him, waterfalls frozen in space, a sky that never ended. It was all Islam, the rivers and streams. Pick up a stone and hold it in your fist, this is Islam. (Delillo 106)

The critique of the selected text reflects that Muslims are trained to die for a cause: the source of attaining God's happiness. Through the character of Hammad, an attempt has been made to prove that Islam glorifies the idea of death

through violence which is based on false assumptions. Hammad considers it a source to enter paradise and to attain God's closeness. The character of Hammad goes through the process of radicalization. The novel itself constructs Hammad's character in a way that ironically points out that Muslims are not born terrorists.

4.1.2.2 Amir el-Sayed Atta as a Ruthless Commander

Through Amir's character, Delillo justifies the idea of western hatred towards Islam and Muslims. Throughout the text, Muslims have been presented as terrorists involved in plotting and planning against the peace of the west. One such important Muslim character in the novel is Muhammad Atta who is the leader of Muslim jihadists. His full name is Mohamed el-Amir el-Sayed Atta" (Delillo 80). He has been described as the mastermind behind all the terrorist activities. Delillo illustrates, "He received certain sums of money wired to a Florida bank in his name, first and last, Mohamed Atta, because he was basically nobody from nowhere" (Delillo 127).

Amir has been represented as a trusted terrorist leader who can easily manipulate the minds of his Muslim fellows. Amir believes that the role of Hammad is to decide the fate of a superpower. Delillo portrays the character of Amir as a strong, confident and influential leader who can conveniently influence others with his powerful communication skills. He has strong contempt for Jews and Christians and he is transmitting the same animosity in the mind of Hammad. Delillo seems to claim that all Muslims hate Christians and Jews which is merely a flawed view of west about Islam not an absolute truth (Said 02). He strongly feels that they are surrounded by too many cultures around them and they are soon losing their history. He talks about changing the world by bringing change in one's self. Hammad thinks of Amir as a genius leader who can change the minds of people with the help of his powerful manipulative voice. He is regarded by other Muslims because he has performed Hajj. He wants his men to eliminate their fear of death. Delillo presents Amir as a fundamentalist Muslim, who considers suicide a way which has been chosen for them already as he says, "There is no sacred law that against what we are

going to do. This is not suicide in any meaning or interpretation of the world. It is only something long written. We are finding the way already chosen for us” (Delillo 175).

Amir has been described as a Muslim terrorist who prefers death to life “we are willing to die, they are not. This is our strength, to love death, to feel the claim of armed martyrdom” (Delillo 178). He has been depicted as someone willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of religion. By commenting in such a way Delillo is also trying to present a dichotomy between “them” and “us” which is highly occidental in nature. With his extraordinary power of rhetoric, Amir attempts to overcome the resistance of Hammad. The following lines reveal the strong character of Amir as a leader who brainwashes the minds of others:

The world changes first in the mind of the man who wants to change it...they were being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital market and foreign policies. This was Amir, his mind was in the upper skies, making sense of things, drawing things together. (Delillo 75)

Through the character of Amir, Delillo is trying to portray the inferiority complex and insecurities of orientals. During a discussion when Amir is asked about “Others”, he replies, “There are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others” (Delillo 59). Islam has been depicted as a primitive religion through its character which restricts its followers from seeking pleasures of life. Although Islamic faith criticizes idleness, extra marital affairs and gluttony, yet it does not mean that it is conventional and orthodox religion.

4.1.3 Americans as Victims of Terrorism

All the central characters of the novel are Americans. The minds of these characters are occupied with the fear of crash. John Updike also shares the common subject matter with Delillo. He also brings forward Muslims as a threat to the West

but Delillo's technique is entirely different from Updike and Adams. Delillo portrays American characters as victims of terrorism who had barely survived the horrific incident of 9/11. It appears that the lives of these American characters are under constant threat. Delillo has depicted the trauma that these characters went through by experiencing the fall of the twin towers. The minds of all the American characters are occupied with the fear of devastation.

The novel opens with a chaotic and destructive picture of the World Trade Centre where Keith is trying to escape the attack. "It was not a street any more, but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (Delillo 08). An entirely changed picture of America has been presented by the narrator after the attacks. Keith's mind can be read through the author's point of view "His mind is obsessed with a roar and buckling rumble of the fall" (Delillo 03).

4.1.3.1 Lianne's Trauma

Lianne's frustration is obvious when she is unable to bear music in neighborhood. Delillo describes Lianne's intolerance for Islamic mysticism. It can be symbolized as Americans are extremely scared of everything associated with Islam. "She gets annoyed of a certain kind of music, wailing music, lutes and tambourines, and chanting voices sometimes" (Delillo 67). Her phobia can be seen clearly in these lines. In Islam, Sufi music is considered a medium of communication between Allah and a man. The followers of Sufi music are lost in another world that directly connects them to the creator. By using words like "wailing", Delillo attempts to create a negative image in the minds of readers about Islamic values. Fear of music indicates insecurity of the West for Islam again creating a binary opposition between "them" and "us". The reaction of Lianne is symbolic of America's resistance to being overpowered by Muslims. Lianne's anxiety reaches a point that she even goes to Elena's flat to stop her from listening to this kind of music. She argues with Elena who considers music as a source of comfort and peace. Lianne is unable to comprehend the spiritual significance of Sufi music; rather this mystical music creates turmoil in her mind. She connects music to

the horrific event of 9/11 although it has nothing to do with the fall of the twin towers. Delillo indicates in the text that Lianne prefers jazz music to relieve her stress. She seems to be fond of jazz music which contributed to World War 2, after which America emerged as a superpower for the whole world. Delillo tries to divert the attention of the readers towards American hegemony by displaying Lianne's illogical behavior towards Islamic values and traditions.

4.1.4 Islam as a Threat to American Society

The debate in the text shifts to a critical inquiry of religion especially Islam which has always been criticized by America for having a "closed view" which restricts its followers from many things. Religion has been targeted in the text for its inability to be compatible with western concepts and views. Literary representations about Islam have offended Muslims for many decades. One such example is the Satanic verses of Salman Rushdi (1988) who is notorious for misrepresenting his religion with the help of his writings. Such vilification of Islam and Muslims has produced their extremist image in the contemporary world.

Delillo also displays disbelief of Americans in God especially after the incident of 9/11. Martin's religious and political thoughts are apparent in these lines "Forget God. These are the matters of history. This is politics and economics" (Delillo 47). Martin's argument is countered by Nina, as a representative of those Americans who blame Islam and Muslims for all the destruction and chaos in America. Nina is advocate of those western perceptions about Muslim world as "closed world, of choice, of necessity who haven't even advanced they haven't wanted to or tried to" (Delillo 47).

Lianne treats her Alzheimer patients by engaging them in writing activities. These activities involve sharing views about planes. Omer is one of the patients of Lianne and his fear is entirely different from that of others. He was scared to go outside even after many days of the 9/11 incident. This symbolizes problems faced by the Muslim community in America after the incident. This reflects the insecurity of Muslim community because American people associated them with terrorism.

Religion becomes a fundamental reason for abhorrence and antagonism in the text. The text focuses on the role of Islam as a religion in carrying out such a barbaric action as the 9/11 incident. Lianne's conversations with her patients are entirely based on faith. Lianne keeps on mentioning terrorist to the group of patients. The conversation symbolizes a lack of faith. Lianne wants patients to mention those who are responsible for this chaos and destruction. This situation signifies that the victim can accuse anyone. This also symbolizes that like patients of Alzheimer the text is attempting to accuse Islam and Muslims of the chaotic situation in American society.

It is obvious throughout the text that the incident of 9/11 has stimulated fear of Muslims and Islam in the west. Muslims suffer not because they are biologically a distinct race but their suffering is due to their faith. Historically, Christians have always been in a clash with Muslims. The primitive notions of racism have now taken the form of Islamophobia. The narrative gives references to the thirteen and fourteen century when Muslims were ruling a major part of the world. Martin says "these people, these jihadists, he thinks they have something common with the radicals of sixties and seventies" (Delillo 147). These lines signify the binary of "Us v/s them" in the text. History witnesses that since the expansion of the Ottoman Empire Islam was in contact with America. Since then Islam has been perceived as a threat to the Christian world.

The text also criticizes Islam for such a faith that has turned individuals into terrorists in the name of jihad. The concept of Jihad has been misinterpreted in the text. The text brings forth an image of Muslims as ruthless and barbaric murderers. "The highest Jihad which is to make blood flow, their blood and that of others" (Delillo 173). This symbolizes association of Muslims with bloodshed and violence. The use of terrorism by Muslims implies that Islam is a threat to western society (Esposito 47). This has been done intentionally to prove the belligerent demeanor of the Islamic faith. Delillo does not highlight the true spirit and meaning of Jihad which is not an absolute truth rather a flawed and pre conceived notion of West about Jihad (Said 03).

In Islam, Jihad means “to put effort”. It emphasizes to struggle or to strive. West has reduced the meaning of Jihad to two distinct extreme philosophies. One philosophy supports spiritualized meaning of Jihad and the other philosophy relies heavily on the literal meaning of Quranic verses. To comprehend the true spirit of Islam one has to understand the texture of the Quran. Moreover, sometimes translation from Arabic into English changes its meaning. Through characters, the text quotes verses that support the killing of innocent people which is merely an abstraction. The teachings of Islam stress its followers to make an effort for the sake of the creator in the best possible ways. Islam defines certain ways to attain God’s happiness by controlling one’s self. But the narrator attempts to prove Islam a violent religion. A scholar named Lumbard argues that it is a failure on the part of Muslim scholars that they have not been able to show the world that Islam is a religion of peace, brotherhood and security (05).

Delillo’s *Falling Man* not only criticizes Muslims but also their faith. Islamic faith stresses the temporary nature of this physical world. Through the character of Hammad, the readers are introduced to the Islamic concept of mortality, which is mocked in the text. “The people he looked at, they needed to be ashamed of their attachment to life, walking their dogs..... These people, what they had so precious we see as empty space” (Delillo 77). It signifies that Islam is such a faith that emphasizes not to be attracted by this physical world. The narrator attempts to invoke Jews and Christian readers to consider Islam as their enemy, the text gives benefit to the superpower. The novel not only displays hostility towards Islam but also reflects abhorrence for Jews who had always been viewed as enemies by Christians.

The novel depicts that Americans are scared of everything which is associated with Islam and Muslims. This fear can be observed in the character of Lianne. She is frustrated when she hears Sufi music in the neighborhood. She was hearing another set of traditions, Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin song perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition and she thought of knocking on the door and saying something (Delillo 67). This frustration shows her

intolerance towards anything associated with Islam. Lianne prefers Jazz music which is a symbol of western modernism. Sufi music has appeared as a binary to Jazz music in the text. Lianne's preference for Jazz music also depicts that the west considers Islam as a monolithic religion which is unable to compete with western modernism. Non-Muslims and Muslims emerge as another strong binary in the text. The arguments of Lianne's mother reflect the historical animosity of the west towards Islam. Through the arguments of Nina, the narrator attempts to show western hegemony. It is a fact that America has never shown resistance for Muslims to merge into society.

Moreover, Delillo attempts to present Islam as a hurdle for progressive and contemporary American society. It is highly contradictory that America claims to be a highly multi-cultural land, having multiple communities and ethnic groups. But in a multi-cultural land there is no tolerance for Islamic culture and ideology. Capitalism also seems to be a strong binary to Islam in the text. Consumerism has stolen the true spirit of American society. Consumerism has transformed American society into a materialistic and capitalist society. Islamic mysticism appears as a binary to American capitalism in the text. Delillo shows that mysticism causes disturbance for Muslims as they have to live in secular American society. A loss of moral and spiritual values can be observed in American society where materialistic things are given more importance than human beings. Islam is against materialism and capitalism and forbids its followers not to be carried away by worldly pleasures. A disconnect between US and the rest of the world has been shown by the narrative, "these old men who sit in beach chairs, veined white bodies and baseball caps, they control our world" (Delillo 173). It appears that Muslims are envious of American control and power over the whole world. Economic supremacy and cultural differences have widened this gap.

4.1.5 Mainstream Media Discourses

The role of media cannot be ignored in the stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims. The images presented by media reflect Americans as innocent and victims of terrorism. Media trials aim at incorporating specific ideologies to

defame Islam and Muslims (Said 265). Mainstream media discourses do not let common masses to forget about the incident of 9/11. It is only in two occasions, that the terrific effects of media narratives have been introduced in the novel. Lianne and her son, Justin appears to be media victim in the novel. Lianne says that, “people I know, they read poetry to ease the shock and pain, give them a kind of space, something beautiful in language”- “to bring comfort or composure. I don’t read poems. I read newspaper. I put my head in the pages and get angry and crazy” (Delillo 42). She feels that it is compulsory to read newspaper profiles of the dead and everything was printed. It also shows that those who are in power can create a certain reality (Mills 40). While watching the videotape of the hijacked planes several times she feels that “the second plane seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone’s into some other distance, out beyond the towers” (Delillo 134). Justin also displays increasingly odd behavior in the novel. After watching news on the television, he starts uttering monosyllabic codes which could be reference to media’s monologic mode of representation. This proves that those who are in power are those who can speak the truth (Mills 55). While scanning the skies with the help of binoculars, he refuses to accept that the towers actually came down after being hit because he is convinced that planes are coming back. His media saturated consciousness seems stuck in the horror of attacks. Lianne is also haunted by the appearance of performance artist named, David Janiak, also known as falling man. Dressed like a businessman, he jumps from high places only to be caught by harness and ends up suspended upside down. Upon seeing the photograph of this performance artist, narrator tells us that a hole is burned in Lianne’s mind and heart (Delillo 222). It brings to her mind the memory of her husband, his friends and all those who were inside the World Trade Center on September, 11. The mainstream media calls this scene as a threat to American peace and stability.

With the help of these two American characters, Delillo appears to suggest that the media coverage, during and after the attacks, added to their psychological strain and insecurities. He is also determined on reflecting that how the consumers of 9/11 trauma are only familiar with the use of pause and replay buttons. The novel

itself reflects the power of electronic and print media in producing prejudiced thoughts against Islam and Muslims in the minds of American readers. It also shows that those who are in power create a certain reality to affect the minds of common masses (Mills 55). The novel thus signifies the powerful impact of certain forces especially mainstream media discourses in misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims as violent, terrorist and fundamentalist (Said 265).

4.1.6 Racial Discrimination

Through racism, Delillo attempts to present Muslims as mysterious creatures. “Bill Lawton has a long beard. He wears a long robe” (Delillo 75). This indicates a mysterious portrayal of Muslims from an American perspective. Justin and his friends are obsessed with Osama Bin Laden and they create a malignant image of “Bill Lawton” in their minds. They are frustrated with their friend’s ruthless killing in the 9/11 incident. “He has the power to poison what we eat but only certain foods” (Delillo 75). Justin and his friends have a scary image of Bin Laden in their minds. Justin and his company stand for American youth who only have a distorted image of Muslims and Islam in their minds. This also raises questions on Muslim youth in America and calls for the scrutiny of Muslim immigrants.

We are introduced with the character of Hammad as “a rifleman in the Shatt Al Arab ... a soldier in Saddam’s army and they were the martyrs of Ayatollah, here to fall and die” (Delillo 77). The critique of the selected text reveals racist mindset of Americans towards Muslims who associate them with terrorism and violence. American government put an allegation of terrorism on Iraqi president Saddam Hussain and intentionally associated him with the terrorist organization Al-Qaida. This was done purposefully to justify the anti-Iraq war. These allegations changed American perception towards Muslims and Islam. Bush administration trialed Saddam Hussain, though he kept on denying these allegations till his death, yet much was broadcasted to present him as a terrorist. Bush administration was exposed by its unfair treatment towards innocent Iraqis.

Hammad lives in an area where training is given to militants. This area is surrounded by ammunition. The text foreshadows the consequences of his militant training. His identity has appeared as a terrorist who had come to America along with others to peruse militant training. “But in rooms they spoke about struggle. Everything here was twisted, hypocrite, the West corrupt of mind and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds” (Delillo 79). This indicates a conventional and stereotypical image of Muslim immigrants who come to acquire higher education but their ultimate goal is to destroy America in the name of terrorism. In the post 9/11 world, racism has taken a new form in the realm of religion. Racism in the form of the stereotypical image of Muslims and Islam in contemporary fiction helps us to comprehend that both phenomenon emerge out of one another.

The text of *Falling Man* serves as a sample of racism though the shift has been changed from Negrophobia to Islamophobia. “The beard would look good if...trimmed” (Delillo 83). This situation takes us back to an era of slavery where there was a focus on physiognomy. By discussing physical appearance of Muslim characters Delillo also takes us back to the era of slavery. Along with physiognomy, the focus has been shifted to cultural differences as well. In Islam, the beard is associated with strong faith and the Sunnah of Prophet (P.BU.H). American media and society have distorted Islamic values to such an extent that keeping a beard has become a symbol of threat to their peace and security. The tone of the text indicates that bearded Muslims have become a threat to American security and solidarity.

In the contemporary era, racism is hiding behind religious fanaticism. Hatred for Jews and blacks has been disappeared from the scenario and is redirected towards Islam and Muslims. Nina (Lianne’s mother) expresses her displeasure for wars while having a conversation with Martin. It indicates the author’s sympathetic behavior towards Americans for having anti-war sentiments in contrast to Muslim characters that have been represented as terrorists. The conversation between Nina and her lover Martin symbolizes that these wars fought in the name of Islam are still part of the memories of Western people. This conversation turns sarcastic and

indicates the dominance of Islam in American society. Characters like Nina and Martin symbolize “white shadows” that have inherent white superiority. “They strike a blow to this country’s dominance” (Delillo 46). According to these characters presence of Muslims in American society is a threat to their superiority and dominance. They also discussed God “Whose God would it be? God used to be an urban Jew. He’s back in the desert now” (Delillo 46). The presence of God in the desert signifies the presence of Islam in Arabian countries.

A close interpretation and analysis of all the above arguments prove that the text foregrounds religion as an instrument to astound their spirits. To equate Muslims and Islam with terrorism and violence is an unjust act. A close reading of *Falling Man* reveals that the novel is the representative of dominant discourse that all the Muslims are terrorists, fundamentalists and violent.

4.2 Abraham’s *American Taliban* as a Counter Narrative

To study another perspective of America regarding Islam and Muslims, the researcher has selected *American Taliban* by Pearl Abraham. The novel stretches from 2000 to 2002 from the coast of North Carolina to Peshawar, Pakistan, Afghanistan and back to Washington DC. The author of the novel uses the true story of John Walker Lindh, who was a White citizen. He was captured by American forces in Afghanistan while fighting for the Taliban. The character of John Walker Lindh is played by an eighteen years old American John Jude Parish who does surfing on the beaches of North Carolina. John is always encouraged by his parents for his wishes and desires. He is highly influenced by the ideas of great explorer Richard Burton and Bob Dylan. John’s world is open to new philosophies, religions and ideas. During surfing, he meets an accident and breaks his leg. During his recovery, he meets a young girl from Brooklyn in a chat room. She spurs his interest in Islam and Arab literature. John submits to Islam by embracing this strange experience of heart and soul. He encounters extraordinary experience by practicing salat and fasting. He then moves to Pakistan to study Arabic literature at Islamia university college Peshawar. He then moves to a training camp in the Northwest of

Pakistan on the eve of 9/11. He is captured by American forces from Northwest of Pakistan and is accused of serving the Taliban. He is being called a traitor and even his whiteness could not save him. Meanwhile, Barbara who is the mother of John tries to find her son, harasses politicians and accuses their aides of imitating Nazi functionaries. Abraham ends her novel with Barbara's realization to step into becoming that is parallel to her missing son. Abraham refrains from providing a resolution to the story. The character of John remains immaculate and Abraham leaves his destiny entirely on readers that how they end his story.

4.2.1 Significance of the Title

As the novel is divided into three sections, all three sections depict John's transformation from an American wealthy teenager to a pious and humble Muslim. The title reflects the journey of an American teenager from secularism to Islam. Abraham juxtaposes two contradictory narratives side by side to assign the title to her book. *American Taliban* becomes the headline of the news when John is captured by American military officials in Afghanistan. The title also signifies that the personal tragedy of John will break the bond between an individual and the state. This narrative of the broken contract between state and individual is the core theme of the novel.

4.2.2 Spiritual Journey of John Jude Parish

The central character of the novel is John Jude parish who is an eighteen years old teenager. Instead of being a troubled teenager, John is a curious character who has a quest for spirituality. He is a wealthy American who has grown up in a secular and liberal family. The narrator opens her novel by introducing John to readers "He was little John at home, Gator John on wheels, John Jude on his birth certificate" (Abraham 01). John's parents are in a happy matrimonial relationship. He attempts to negotiate his own identity and the expectations of his parents from him. John rejects the idea of the "American dream" although he knows that the proof of his extraordinary success in American society would have to come from

television, radio, newspapers and magazines. His parents expect him to be distinct, perfect and unique. The narrative explains, “What they looked for from their son was originality and intellectuality and a lifestyle shaped by the liberal humanist idea in which as Barbara liked to point out, he had been immersed from the instant of his inception” (Abraham 22).

John is surrounded and loved by his female friends Sylvia, Kathie and Jilly, who enjoy surfing with him on the outer banks of North Carolina. As it is described by the narrator, “He and Kathie & Co. were practically living on the beach” (Abraham 9). He enjoys his summer readings which include *The Tao*, *The Whitman*, *Emerson* and *Dylan*. John is encouraged by his parents to pursue anything that he finds intellectually interesting and stimulating “she (Barbara) and Bill had unwillingly agreed to let him defer Brown to allow him time to pursue his interests, scholarship included” (Abraham 9). Apparently, there are no obstacles on his path; he develops his fantasy in which he would ultimately become the superhero.

John refuses to follow a conventional and established path by American society. He challenges himself and aims at pursuing his interest. He has formulated his philosophy which Abraham explains as “Whitmanian all-embrace. He would be all-knowing, omnivorous, omniscient, omnificent” (Abraham 46). During surfing on the outer banks of North Carolina, John breaks his leg and this incident leads him to his spiritual quest. He finds more time to read about Islam and Sufism. During an online chatting session, he encounters Noor Bint e Khan who is a Muslim student from Brooklyn. Initially, he discusses his interest in Arabic, as Noor is also equally interested in Arabic literature. John’s discussion with Noor increases his interest in Islam and he starts searching about Islam on Google:

So, he googles the word Islam, the fastest-growing religion of the twenty-first century. One in five people in the world, he reads, considers himself Muslim. Fewer than 15 percent of Muslims are Arab. The majority of the population in fifty-one countries is Islamic. There are between 1.4 and 1.6 billion Muslims in the world and this number is increasing at a rate of 2.9 percent. (Abraham 46)

John is also appreciated by Sami when he started using the Arabic language, “Mr. Sami complimented him and threatened others: if you do not do something about it, this new all-American talib will soon surpass you” (Abraham 98). The critique of the text reveals that Muslims do not hold biased and prejudiced behavior against Americans which is also deconstructing the stereotypical image of Muslims as biased.

4.3 Representation of Islam and Muslims

When it comes to the depiction of Muslim characters, Abraham portrays some of them as innocent and harmless. When Noor invites John to her place, he becomes impressed by their hospitality and welcoming nature. Abraham attempts to change the stereotypical representation of Muslims as unwelcoming and rigid. The critique of Abraham’s novel reveals that our perceived knowledge about Islam and Muslims is not the absolute truth. The text exposes John was highly impressed by the intimacy between Noor’s family members “watching this intimate family scene, formally ritualistic but also private somehow, John was both enchanted and embarrassed” (Abraham 84). When John meets Noor’s family he feels as if he has entered into a fairytale “you have a wonderful family, John said. And you’re very beautiful. And I feel as if I’ve stumbled into a fairytale as a bumbling fool and emerged with a donkey’s head” (Abraham 85). The critique of the text reveals that Abraham does not show that conventional image of Muslims as violent, aggressive and fundamentalist. This rather gives readers a hint about Abraham’s attempt to provide us with a distinct picture of Muslims.

The novel *American Taliban* explicitly points out the role of media in creating a stereotypical representation of Muslims and Islam. The novel also uses scenes to recreate media coverage of post 9/11 times. The scenes in the novel tamper with the media narratives that were prevailing at that time. This reminds us of Jean Baudrillard who claims that “since reality is everywhere, it is infiltrated by fiction and images” (28). It is important to know that reality and images are inextricable, therefore imagination with the attack is imagination with the image. It

is fiction that surpasses fiction, an additional fiction. The text repeatedly represents a blurring of lines between “real” and “fiction”. In the text, Barbara comes to know about an American citizen named John Walker Lindh who has been captured by US military officials. By this point, John Jude had gone missing for a month. The scene reflects Barbara reading the morning newspaper which has featured the capture of John Walker Lindh. “An American named John. Naked. All bones and bleeding. But why were his hands twisted and bound between his legs?” (Abraham 223). For Barbara, the imagery of wounded American not only signifies the state’s brutal response to the incident of 9/11 but also signifies a striking resemblance to her lost son. The scene also reflects the indifferent attitude of the American state towards its people. This contract between the individual and the state has been violated here as the state disowns its own citizen. This is simply unexpected for Barbara. Abraham suggests that a nation that claims to be sufferer, innocent, victimized and traumatized by a foreign enemy, could not hold back such a shock.

Barbara seems to reconcile this realization of trauma with individual tragedy by imagining that the headlines of the newspaper “American Taliban” refer to her missing son. On the other hand, Bill does not seem to agree with her.

This isn’t John, he said.

Read it, Barbara heaved. It’s John.

Yes, but not our John, not John Jude.

It could be, she sputtered.

But it’s not.

It might be.

What do you mean? Bill asked. What are you talking about? (Abraham 223)

Barbara is sure that the body on the front page could or might belong to her own son John Jude. Through this, she reasserts that the state will disown its citizen. Thus, she thinks that her child and might be someone else's child is in danger.

Abraham warns readers not to accept any single media narrative since there is constant slippage between reality and images. She does not want readers to accept one fixed story about the narrative of "war on terror" rather she encourages readers to look for facts in every possible manner. As Said also refers to media as an "invisible screen" which controls the thinking and perception of common people (Said 265). This also means that history is subjective to bring forth Foucault's idea and we can create other realities and stories (Mills 55). It is evident from the scene where Bill and Barbara are watching media report about Qala-i-Jangi. This media coverage highlights the real event of the loss of a CIA agent, which did not happen until 25 November. By this intervention in the historical narrative that the text seems to replicate, Abraham suggests readers to be careful while accepting one single story from mainstream media.

The narrator also appears to be presenting a critique on the practices of mainstream media. The media coverage on Qala-i-Jangi confrontation assigns the role of the oppressor to Afghanistan and the role of victim to America. The mainstream media report only emphasizes the death of American CIA agent while ignoring all non-American causalities. It shows that media distorts the image of Islam and Muslims and it is media that decides what public should know and what should not (Said 24). By portraying the loss of American lives, the media manipulates the minds of the common public. For American media, the loss of single American life is more important than the lives of other non-Americans. The text normalizes the involvement of America in war affairs, like presenting usage of advanced military equipment against an unarmed and harmless number of people as America's "war on terror". It also shows that those who are in power create a certain reality which affects the minds of common masses (Mills 55). Barbara reacts critically towards American military forces, while Bill warns her to be careful in

accepting a single media narrative as he says, “this is only one story. There are surely ten unreported variations on this one” (Abraham 220).

Bill’s doubtful behavior towards mainstream media is obvious as he keeps on switching between various CNN channels that repeatedly show fall of the twin towers in slow motion. Bill and Barbara are really upset to see all this on television. The narrator describes their restlessness as a means of criticizing practices of mainstream media whose only purpose is to emotionally manipulate the American masses. By showing such scenes American media is reinforcing a hierarchy of suffering and oppression by showing after-effects of trauma caused by foreign forces while trauma caused by US military forces is easily ignored. This proves that those who are in authority are those who can speak the truth (Mills 55).

Major opposition which helps reveal the meaning within the novel is the opposition between Muslim and non-Muslim characters. Various Muslim characters have been introduced by Abraham in the novel. Although Muslims and Americans do not stand in a clash with each other yet the narrative points out binary in the text. Moreover, Abraham attempts to realize readers that Muslims occupy a little space in America and this space is threatened by the presence of a harmless American. Unlike other contemporary post 9/11 writers who attempt to present Islam and Muslims as a threat to American society, Abraham deconstructs this myth. It’s not Islam and Muslims who have become a threat to American security rather they themselves are threatened in American society. This reality is accepted by John that his presence is a threat for Muslims who are always associated with terrorism and fundamentalism. Bill replies to this as “I can understand that you are taking on their texts without adhering to their tenets” (Abraham 92).

John is disowned by the American government because of his association with the Taliban. John’s transformation into a Muslim character brings adversities and sufferings for him. Another important binary of the text is individual v/s state. The narrator shows that the bond between an individual and the state is broken by the state itself. It is the responsibility of a state to protect or to own its masses. The state disowns its individual and does not protect him in misery.

The novel also signifies a conflict between Eastern and western culture. When Barbara visits Brooklyn with John, she notices cultural differences “Barbara wasn’t paying much attention to the scholarship; she was noticing cultural things. Is this an all-boys school? I haven’t seen any woman” (Abraham 63). John also notices “some of the men smoked, but women did not” (Abraham 70). The text signifies that Eastern culture does not approve of women smoking. After moving to Peshawar, John does not see a single woman in his surroundings “In his e-mail to Noor, he mentioned the absence of women. Even here, he wrote, in this café designed for internet use, girls are rare” (Abraham 148). When Yusef mentions that he has promised his sister a ride, John is surprised to hear about a woman:

Do Muslim women pray? Do they attend classes? Do they even exist? He was living; it all seemed to him, in all-male world. In the bazaars and streets of Peshawar only the too-young and the very old variety of females appeared. Where were the women who would give birth to the next generation of students? Where were they hiding the beautiful women of Yusef’s tales? How did Benazir Bhutto, a woman became president of this country? (Abraham 154)

It is clear through these lines that there is a difference between Eastern and western culture. John notices these cultural differences while living in Peshawar. In Brooklyn, John encounters different Muslim characters. The narrator illustrates different reactions of different Muslims about an American who is trying to have an association with them and their religion. When Bill (John’s father) asks him about his experience of Sharia classes, he explains “As an American, I think I threaten them when I enter their school, the one place they can think of as totally theirs” (Abraham 92). Here, the novel shifts towards us v/s theirs narrative which attempts to be another binary of the text.

John rejects the secularism of his parents by defining himself in opposition to the expectations of his parents. America’s secular approach stands in contrast to John’s interest in sufism and quest for spirituality which serves another binary of the text. Being a mother Barbara wants to see him newfangled and ultra-modern like

other American teenagers “She liked seeing him in a suit, his hair combed, appearing in public as a mensch” (Abraham 35).

The critique of the text reveals that through the character of John, the narrative attempts to expose the shameful western history of destroying Afghanistan. The narrator illustrates: “As a westerner, John was beginning to agree, especially as a wealthy oil-guzzling American, he was awash in guilt, stood accused of swaths of shameful history, and not just guilt from the past, because it wasn’t over” (Abraham 157). It is clear through these lines that the narrative seems to be in guilt because of the shameful past of destroying the east. The text exposes east and west as major binaries of the text. The critique of the text exposes spirituality and secularism as the major binaries of the novel.

4.4 Reflecting through the Minds of Muslim characters

American Taliban is surrounded by certain Muslim characters and through these characters; Abraham has made an attempt to change the stereotypical representation of Muslims and Islam. These characters compel readers to have a positive view of Islam and Muslims. Unlike Delillo, Abraham attempts to present an unbiased image of Muslims through these characters.

4.4.1 Noor Bint e khan

Noor Bint e Khan is introduced as a Muslim character in the novel. Through characters like Noor, Abraham aims at showing a positive and unbiased image of Muslims and Islam in the novel. She introduces herself to John, “She presented herself in an organized manner, first introducing herself as the daughter of an Arab American family, who lives in Brooklyn, was named for Queen Noor, reads poetry, attends NYU” (Abraham 45). She tries to give satisfactory answers to John regarding his query about Quran. “Muhammad she wrote came into contact with the ancient mystics of the Middle East, including the essences, a Gnostic sect that was also a source for Jewish and Christian mysticism (Abraham 45). Abraham makes a

connection between Islam, Christianity and Jewish religion which reveals her intentions of making the Quran familiar to American readers.

Unlike writers like Adam and Updike, Abraham does not criticize Quran. Updike's novel "Terrorist" also makes use of Quranic verses without context to prove that Muslims are fundamentalists. He makes use of Quranic verses to benefit America. Noor also tells John that her father had to learn English to get a job as a cab driver as the narrative points out difficulties of the Muslim community in America "My dad took English classes when he moved here since he had to prove his knowledge in order to drive a cab, his first job in America" (Abraham 48). The author has pointed out the difficulties of Muslim Americans surviving in American society. Abraham also criticizes American society for having a materialistic and capitalistic approach. Capitalism is the backbone of the American economic and political system. On the other hand, Islam has its interpretation of capitalism. Quran supports and protects individual rights. In the past few years, Islamic Sharia has brought modification in capitalism for the betterment of the economic system (Sorman11). Capitalism serves as a binary against Islamic ideology. The narrative points out America's capitalism since capitalism forms economic hegemony of America. This can be analyzed when Noor tells John about the experience of her mother:

My mom says that in some ways she grew up with more freedom than I have here in America, in Brooklyn. At my age, she says, she and her friends were striving to become worthy souls. Her family is strictly Muslim, but still she claims there's more individuality there. Here, she says, everyone's the same, clones of each other. Americans, she says, all strive to earn lots of money, become millionaires, and so on. (Abraham 51)

This is highly contradictory that America claims to have personal freedom and liberty but in reality, it has lost individuality. The narrator criticizes America for monotony and boredom. Noor also condemns Naim for having a narrow-minded approach, which reflects that she is not biased towards her Muslim fellows. She sends an email to John and supports his interest in spirituality. She says:

Attar, in my opinion, you should feel free to approach your scholarship from any and all angles, and what better way than with an open mind toward all religions and all prophets and all cultures. Follow the words of our great Sheikh IbnArabi: I am capable of every form. (Abraham 55)

She does not force John to embrace Islam blindly rather she encourages her to study every religion, prophet and cultures which is symbolic of her open-minded approach. Unlike Delillo, Abraham does not believe in portraying Muslims as rigid and narrow-minded people who compel others to practice their religion. Noor beautifully explains teachings of Islam about the position of women in society and she also comments on the discriminatory attitude of the west towards Islam. She said, “Ideas of equality weren’t as blacks and whites as Americans believed. Islam only seems discriminatory to a westerner used to western freedom. Behind closed doors Muslim women are powerful” (Abraham 126).

When Noor comes to John’s place to greet them for his new apartment, she was having a brown pita wrapped in paper. She said, “It’s a Middle Eastern custom, she explained, bread and salt, for a new home” (Abraham 67). Through the character of Noor, Abraham is appreciating Middle Eastern customs and rituals. It also reflects that Muslims have been misconceived by western people. Muslims are rich in their cultures and traditions. The novel is an attempt to show a positive image of Muslims as kind and loving people.

Through the character of Noor, the narrator is commenting on the empowerment of Muslim women. West considers that Muslim women are being oppressed in the name of Islam which is a flawed or pre perceived knowledge of America about Islam and Muslims (Said02). They are not given their due status in society. The western notion about Muslim women is way too narrow. Through Noor, Abraham is also criticizing Western feminism:

Western-style feminism, Noor said, at least feminism would require our women to relinquish their special place in Muslim life. It’s true they might gain something but they’d lose more. At least that’s how my mom explains

it, but then she believes that Muslim life offers more freedom than anyone will have in America. Me, I'm in between. (Abraham 126)

4.4.2 Role of Khalid in John's Quest for Spirituality

Khalid also plays a significant role in the novel. He appears to be a modern Muslim who does not believe in extremism. He belongs to the Pathan community in Pakistan. He has been described by the narrator as "though Khalid's hair was dark, his eyes were light or lighter than others, he was taller, still in his height and lank, he resembled John and this sameness somehow encouraged their friendship" (Abraham 69). John feels more comfortable while sharing his experiences with Khalid. He was studying classical Arabic at Brooklyn because he wanted to pursue his higher education at Islamia College Peshawar. He also suggests John enroll himself in Islamia College Peshawar for the study of Arabic literature.

Khalid also tells John about the story of prophet's first revelation and submission. He helps him in his understanding of Islam and the pillars of Islam. Khalid has different political views. He supports Bush because he believes that Bush is a better politician. While supporting Bush he says that "Muslims are voting for Bush. We judge a person by his ideals, Khalid said. And a man who believes in something higher is more trustworthy" (Abraham 100).

Khalid introduces John to his brother Gabriel who explains the importance of salat in Islam. Gabriel does not compel John to embrace Islam rather he just explains everything about his faith "This literature, Gabriel continued, explains the salaah in some depth and provides an excellent grounding in the meaning and purpose of prayer. If you like, come back and we'll discuss it, perhaps you'll have questions which I can try to answer" (Abraham 105). This symbolizes that Muslims do not enforce others to practice their religion rather they just explain Islamic ideology and respect the opinion of others.

Unlike Delillo, Abraham does not criticize Islam rather she has attempted to present a different and new version of Islam to western readers. Sufism has been

appreciated by the author as Sufism connects everything. Sufism connects an individual to God but this approach has been associated with terrorism in *Falling Man*. Delillo brings forward enchanting Sufi music with fear of Americans. Unlike Delillo, Abraham does not portray Sufism as scary and disturbing.

The idea of Sufism was sown in the time of Adam, germed in the time of Noah, budded in the time of Abraham, began to develop in the time of Moses, reached maturity in the time of Jesus, and produced pure wine in the time of Muhammed. It's cool because it connects everything. Prophets, humans, religions, time. (Abraham 93)

The idea of Sufism has been connected to all religions of the world by Abraham. Through the novel *Falling Man* Delillo reflects his false assumptions about Islam as a radical religion, "But does a man has to kill himself in order to accomplish something in the world" (Delillo 174). America views Islam as a cynical religion. This whole idea is deconstructed by Abraham who does not view Islam as a fanatic religion. Through the character of Khalid, the narrative attempts to recreate a positive image of Islam "The professor, Khalid assured him is Muslim. Islam is the least dogmatic of the three religions though there are people who're trying to change that. It's the only religion that's interpreted legally lawyers" (Abraham 22). Here, the author has tried to present a neutral image of Islam which has always been misrepresented by the west. The narrator attempts to find similarities among three important religions of the world. This has been done intentionally by the author to present Islam similar to that of Christianity. "Islam, he knew was against premarital sex, but so were Christianity and Judaism, all traditional faiths" (Abraham 73). The narrator does not blame Islam for being too conservative and orthodox. The critique of the text reveals that it is an attempt to reject flawed notions about the ideology of Islam (Said 02).

Thus he recites five hundred times. Thus he feels himself transported, afloat. Thus he isn't here on his knees. He is elsewhere. He is on another place and another time, an ancient place, an older time. He is with Ibn'Arabi in Mecca and he feels older than himself. He is on wheels, griding, circling the Ka'ba,

perambulating, chanting, shouting with great joy, la illaha Allah, la illahail Allah, la allahail Allah. Thus, he understands that this is what it's for joy. Self-celebration (Abraham 129).

4.5 Conclusion

A critical interpretation of Abraham's *American Taliban* suggests that American literary consciousness is divided in its representation of Muslims and Islam. Unlike authors like Updike, Adam and DeLillo, Abraham seems to advocate the ideology of Islam. The narrative attempts to promote the image of Islam as a religion of peace, love and brotherhood rather than fundamentalist and orthodox religion. After analyzing the representation of Muslim characters in Abraham's *American Taliban*, one can wrap up by saying that this novel falls under the category of counter-narratives for the writer successfully depicts Muslim characters as innocent and harmless.

CHAPTER 5

CONNECTING THE SELECTED TEXTS TOGETHER

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

As discussed earlier, text plays a vital role in the reproduction of ideologies. The selected literary works were analyzed deeply to explore distinct American literary perceptions about Islam and Muslims. The two novels clearly draw the line between two main categories of characters: Muslims and Non-Muslims. Certain characters have been portrayed as neutral and unbiased. The narratives reflect the constant struggle of Muslim characters to fit into American society. It shows that Post 9/11 scenario has changed the position of Muslims in contemporary society. The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast selected novels to fulfill the purpose of this research.

5.2 Anti-Islamic Ideology v/s Pro Islamic Ideology

The selected novels reflect two different views about the Islamic faith. To explain anti-Islamic ideology, Delillo reflects through the minds of Muslim characters. Delillo's work is more concerned to show a connection between racism and Islamophobia with its special focus on the role of media. He not only criticizes Islam and Muslims for their cultural traditions and values but also points out ambivalence that criticizes their own culture and values. Delillo's novel commemorates the tragedy of 9/11. Through Muslim characters, the text re-enacts the plotting of terrorists in America. The incident of 9/11 has divided the world into two parts, "the Muslims and Anti-Muslims" which is again a strong binary. In *Falling Man*, the planes were hijacked by Muslim characters to destroy World Trade

Centre. However, Abraham sets her novel in Washington DC. Moreover, her novel serves as a counter discourse against the dominating discourse of American victimhood and innocence.

Islam and Quran have always been criticized by western electronic and print media. The criticism of its roots can be traced to the 17th century when Jefferson who is the founding figure of America, studied Quran and declared Islam as “oppressed free enquiry. Jefferson intended the inclusion of Muslims in new America and announced that neither Jews nor Muslims needed to be expelled from America (Spellburg 17). Delillo’s novel explores the contradiction in the idea of American pluralism by Jefferson that allowed Muslims to play a productive role in political discourse. American Political activists accuse Jefferson of the current situation of the country which is at risk by the inclusion of Muslims. Delillo also blames America for being too open to be exploited at the hands of Islam and Muslims. He accuses the west for allowing Muslim students to come to America to pursue higher studies which causes the security risk of America. While Abraham shows an entirely different picture in which Muslim students are completely harmless and they only intend to pursue their education. Noor and Khalid are the examples of such positive Muslim characters. The hospitality of Muslim characters has been shown by the narrative.

Delillo quotes the title “Revolt of Islam” which is one of the renowned poems of PB Shelley. The subject of the poem is about the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Muslims have been considered as primitive and orthodox. It calls for a new kind of racism in which Blacks have been replaced with Muslims because of their association with a religion that is considered primitive by the West.

5.3 Perceptions about Islam

Delillo’s novel is dominated by the theme of Islam as monolithic religion and its incompatibility has been proved by giving references from Quranic verses. This proves a biased understanding of Islamic ideology which is based on incomplete knowledge about the Islamic faith. Delillo quotes Quranic verses out of

their context to prove that Islam legitimizes the killing of innocent people in the name of Jihad. Various scholars have failed to understand the meaning of these verses when taken out of the context (Ahmed 09). Such a situation demands a complete understanding of the fundamental principles of Islam. Delillo quotes verses from Quran to accuse Islam as a militant religion that supports killing and bloodshed which is merely western flawed view of Islam “The highest Jihad which is to make blood flow, their blood and that of others” (Delillo 173). Delillo completely ignores the teachings of Islam about peace and brotherhood. Lack of proper context raises the question of the credibility of such interpretation.

However, Abraham does not seem to criticize the Islamic faith. Unlike Delillo, Abraham does not quote verses out of their context to justify Jihad. Abraham’s character Gabirol, explains Salat as one of the important pillars of Islam by providing substantial literature to John. This literature provides a clear and deep understanding of the meaning and purpose of prayer. John was in search of something extraordinary and prayer was a source of acquiring something extraordinary “He has been looking to know the extraordinary, he has been wanting to experience his own in the sea, on a wave. Maybe, for him, the extra ordinary will arrive in meditative, creative prayer” (Abraham 107).

Delillo attempts to portray the fundamentalist image of Islam and Muslims. He explains Islamic faith by “claim of being chosen, out there, in the wind and sky of Islam....the strongest claim of all, the highest Jihad” (Delillo 174). The narrator tries to prove that fundamentalism is an essential characteristic of Islam and Muslims are the chosen people. Misrepresentation of Islamic faith has been used as a tool that exposes the intention of the narrator. A militant image of Islam has been presented by Delillo by presenting characters like Amir and Hammad. The narrator fails to provide the true meaning of Jihad which means “to make an effort or to struggle”. Islam does not support the killing of innocent people rather it defines numerous ways to achieve the happiness of god, for example by giving alms to the poor, offering prayer five times regularly, showing tolerance etc. Muslim scholars

have not been able to make efforts to prove that Islam is a religion of peace and security (Lumbard 05).

Abraham presents not only a different but also a positive image of Islamic ideology. Khalid tells John about the story of the Prophet's revelation. The narrative explains it like, "The angel Gabriel commands him to recite. The Prophet resists at first, saying, I can't read. How shall I recite? The angel Gabriel grabs him and repeats the command, Recite. Three times this happens. Finally, the Prophet submits and recites" (Abraham 99).

Through the character of Khalid, Abraham narrates the story of the Prophet's submission. Khalid associates struggle and submission of Prophet to performance versus grace. John's response to this whole story is beyond expectations "You know I'm really really digging this, John said. This way of reading and interpreting. This way of understanding people and life. Struggle and submission as character defining. It's way too cool" (Abraham 100). This symbolizes that Islam is not a violent religion rather Islam believes in struggle and submission.

5.4 A Blending of Religion and Racism

The implications of racism cannot be ignored in the selected texts. Delillo deliberately assigns the name Mohamed to the leader of a terrorist group "His full name was Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir el Sayed Atta" (Delillo 80). This is an intentional act of using the name "Mohamed" to reinforce contempt of mainstream American media towards the respective name. Delillo also raises questions in the minds of Muslim characters about their religious faith "But does a man has to kill himself to accomplish something in the world" (Delillo 174). Islam allows its followers to investigate and research. It never discourages questioning. Islam believes in knowledge and contemplation. Delillo attempts to create doubts in the minds of readers regarding Islamic ideology which is not at all contradictory. Sufism has been presented in such a way as to create ambiguity in the minds of

readers. Lianne is scared of Sufi music “she turned and walked out, slamming the door behind her and hearing the dogs bark over the sound of a solo lute from Turkey or Egypt or Kurdistan” (Delillo 120).

Sufism has been misrepresented by the author to create fear and contempt for Islamic faith and ideology. In Islam, Sufism is a medium to connect to God. It refers to complete devotion to God. Sufism urges its followers to disconnect from the physical world to comprehend one’s existence in this world. *Falling Man* utilizes Sufism in opposition to a secular and logical understanding of the real world (Lumbard 68). Delillo’s novel reflects fondness of contemporary American society for Jazz music. Delillo puts Jazz music in contrast to Sufism which is symbolic of calmness, and mediation, serving as another important binary in the text. Lianne accuses Sufism of arousing fear in the minds of Americans at this chaotic moment.

However, Abraham does not agree with the idea of associating Sufism with extremism. She approaches Sufism with a different perspective which is quite positive. Abraham associates Sufism with every religion which is a source of comfort for readers. Abraham’s protagonist John has a deep interest in Sufism. John also mentions Sufi poet Idris Shah:

The seed of Sufism was sown in the time of Adam, germed in the time of Noah, budded in the time of Abraham, began to develop in the time of Moses, reached maturity in the time of Jesus, and produced pure wine in the time of Muhammed. It’s cool because it connects everything. Prophets, humans, religions, time. (Abraham 93)

The idea of Sufism has been well explained by John in these lines. It reflects the true essence of Sufism.

5.5 Overgeneralization of Muslims

Overgeneralization has been done by Delillo which reflects the biased attitude of the author based on historical religious antagonism. Ouis and Roald emphasize that Islam is seen as a violent religion. This is the result of

overgeneralization where religious interpretations by a specific extremist or violent group are assumed as a generalization for the whole Islamic community or for the religion of Islam (Ouis & Roald 36). This view pertains closely to the novel *Falling Man* where the narrator's purpose is to defame the Muslim community by giving benefit to American society. Delillo portrays his Muslim characters as ignorant and primitive which is an overgeneralization that all Muslims are backward and orthodox. These characters are portrayed in a sense which denotes an inferiority complex that they are unable to understand the progress of American society. Delillo's Hammad is confused about his environment and surroundings. He is obsessed with negative thoughts regarding American society. The critique exposes stereotypical representation of Muslim characters "They were all growing beards....Men came to the flat on Marienstrasse , come to visit, others to live, men in and out all the time, growing beards" (Delillo 79).

However, Abraham does not believe in the overgeneralization of Muslims. Abraham's Muslim characters are diverse in nature. Characters like Noor and Khalid support an American in his search for spirituality. Noor's father has been presented as a rigid character who initially does not like the presence of John at his home but later on, he invites him to attend a lecture on Sufism for his interest in Sufi poetry. He is such a character, who is trying to adjust to contemporary American society. The narrator illustrates, "And he dressed part Arab, part Western. Like the shariah's maulana, he wore the white Arab tunic and floppy white pants , but with a Western pin-striped jacket thrown over it and with a dash of Hollywood movie star, which both attracted and intimidated John" (Abraham 85).

These lines reflect Abraham's portrayal of Muslim characters is entirely different. Noor's father is dressed partly Western and partly Arab which symbolizes assimilation. Unlike Delillo, Abraham's characters are attempting to adjust themselves in modern American society. This critique also deconstructs the Western concept that Islam is incompatible with contemporary American society. Abraham also shows some characters who do not appreciate John when he tries to dress up like a Muslim by wearing shalwar kameez "The students pointed at John's clothes.

Either you're a Muslim or you're not. You can't pick and choose parts" (Abraham 96). This reflects that Abraham shows a variety of Muslim characters and they are not the same at all. They vary from person to person. Abraham depicts both types of Muslim characters and being a writer it is the responsibility of an author to show both sides to his/her readers. Unlike Delillo, she does not restrict herself to present the same type of Muslim characters. Moreover she also attempts at giving voice to the sufferings and miseries of Muslims. Jalal, who is one of the Muslim characters in the novel talks about the sufferings of Muslim Ummah, "for two hundred years, our ummah has been under attack. First the French invaded Egypt. Then the British took Egypt from the French. Then the Italians went for Libya. Then, after World War One, when it suited them, the French and English agree to carve, divide and subdivide our land" (Abraham 186). The text seems to point out the miseries and hardships faced by Muslims at the hands of the west. Jalal further pointed out "As a Westerner, you are as wet with colonial guilt as you stand here slick with soap" (Abraham 186). The critique of the text reveals that Abraham is trying to deconstruct the myth of American innocence and victimhood by pointing out colonialism.

Delillo's novel represents Muslims as ignorant, inferior and unhygienic creatures. The critique exposes beard as a symbol of terrorism and extremist ideology "they were all rowing beards. One of them even told his father to grow a beard. Men came to the flat on Marienstrasse, some to visit, others to live, men in and out all the time, growing beards" (Delillo 56). The concept of beard in the text is essentially rigid and biased. It becomes a source to mock Muslims. Initially, Hammad also feels uncomfortable while growing beard but later on he becomes habitual "beard would look better if he trimmed it" (Delillo 58).

5.6 Stereotypical Image of Muslims

Delillo attempts to revive the memories of the devastating event of 9/11 through his novel. Like other post 9/11 authors Delillo also depicts Muslims as a symbol of threat and violence. He also presents scenes in which an artist hangs

himself upside down to act the incident of 9/11. The narrator seems to advocate the power of media that creates a biased and prejudiced image of Islam and Muslims in the minds of the American masses. Said's argument about the power of media in the novel reflects the role of media which has been characterized by exaggerated discrimination and pugnacious animosity towards Muslims (11).

Abraham's *American Taliban* also utilizes various scenes which revive the media reports on the early days of the 9/11 incident. The text reflects media coverage on Qala-i-Jangi confrontation which depicts America as a victim and Afghanistan as an oppressor. The media also normalizes the involvement of America in war-related activities in the name of "war on terror". The media channels show the use of advanced military equipment for killing a large number of innocent and harmless people. Barbara reacts critically towards US forces "This is awful, she said. How can they?" (Abraham 220). Bill does not believe in accepting a single coherent story from media, "This is only one story. There are surely ten unreported variations on this one" (Abraham 220). Bill keeps on changing channels which reflects his skepticism towards mainstream media narratives. Through the characters of Bill and Barbara Abraham criticizes mainstream media narratives for emotionally manipulating the minds of common Americans by presenting America as a victim and sufferer. This proves that those who are in power can shape the ideology of common masses (Mills 550).

The narrator also reflects the story of John Walker Lindh, an American citizen who was captured by US forces in Afghanistan. Abraham utilizes John Jude Parish to recreate the story of John Walker Lindh who became centre of attraction for mainstream media upon his return to the United States. There were two different media narratives regarding the capture of John Walker Lindh: One narrative presented him as a villain and a traitor and a homegrown terrorist working for the Taliban, the other narrative presented him as an innocent American boy who was manipulated by terrorist organizations. This recalls Said's argument about the power of media to shape the ideology of common masses (Said 265). After his return to the US, Lindh was taken to the hospital for consuming morphine, where he was

interviewed without his consent. This interview was filmed by CNN journalist Robert Young Pelton. The next day his video was broadcasted in which he appeared as an unhygienic, bearded American who confessed his attachment with the Taliban. Abraham also seems to criticize media for showing images of twin towers in slow motion to enrage common masses. In the novel, when Barbara and Bill were watching television, the narrator explains:

And again the news offered no news: On CNN, a rerun of Larry King interviewing the widowed and the suffering. On CNN2, a rerun of Larry King interviewing a fatherless son. On CNN3, a rerun of Flight 11 flying toward the first tower, in slow motion. On CNN4, a rerun of the tower collapsing, in slow motion, and again the towers fell, again people jumped and died. On CNN5, a rerun of Larry King interviewing the motherless, fatherless, wifeless, a husbandless, childless, shameless--- disgusted. Bill pressed power and exiled CNN. (Abraham 225)

These lines reflect that the novel attempts to criticize mainstream media for showing images of the destructive event in slow motion. Bill and Barbara were waiting for the news from Afghanistan regarding their son but the media only covered one side of the story to enrage the common masses. In the novel, when Barbara and Bill watch this media coverage on television, they are divided into their perspectives whether their son is having an American or un-American identity. Bill shows a more pragmatic approach and considers John as a traitor who will soon be captured by US forces like Lindh. He approaches a reputable defense lawyer to prepare the case for the defense of his son. While on the other hand, Barbara views John as an American hero. This reflects powerful manipulation of media for changing perspectives of people regarding the identity of an American (Said 265). Media narratives question John's identity which has become a debate after he has gone missing.

Abraham also criticizes mainstream media for showing very little about John Walker Lindh. The narrative explains, "though CNN had been allowed into the compound to film, they showed very little, the helicopter in the air, the landing, a glimpse of Walker in his orange prison clothes, then moved on to other news, non-

news really” (Abraham 238). This reflects the biased behavior of mainstream media towards John Walker Lindh about whom media showed very little. Barbara also criticized media by saying this, “they were giving hours of coverage to this daily non sense, and mere seconds to this” (Abraham 238).

The novel attempts to criticize American politicians for their indifferent attitude towards the case of John. Barbara kept on contacting renowned American politicians for pleading the case of his son. As the narrative explains “remarking on the number of politicians at the party who were either losing or had lost their voices and therefore could not comment on her questions about the American Taliban, she offered a Freudian analysis: their penises were rising up into their throats” (Abraham 241). These lines depict the silence of American politicians on the issue of a young American caught in Afghanistan. Abraham seems to criticize the silence of American politicians who are unable to save a young American just because of his association with Islam. We can also say that Abraham seems to emphasize on power of media and politicians to shape public ideology.

Critique of these two literary works exposes the intentions of American authors towards the representation of Muslims and Islam in the contemporary era. Delillo emphasizes his preconceived notions about Muslims and Islam by associating them with violence, bloodshed and terrorism. Critical reading of *Falling Man* exposes the writer’s agenda to tarnish the image of Muslims and Islam globally. This misrepresentation of Muslim and Islam destabilizes the American myth of religious freedom in the twenty-first century. While, on the other hand, Abraham attempts to show a neutral rather positive side of Muslims and Islam. Bazian asserts that world suffers an immediate effect of terrorism and its effects while Islamophobia leaves an everlasting effect on the minds of people (04).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter is designed to present an integrated view of all the arguments in the preceding chapters. This chapter leads the thoughts and arguments to the conclusion. The study was not designed to locate the roots and causes of Islamophobia in the United States. It was designed to investigate divided visions of America towards Islam and Muslims. The present study also reflects how authors shape the ideology of the common masses by implying their specific agendas. The interaction of Muslim characters with other Non-Muslim characters helped the researcher to analyze the degree of fear regarding Islam and Muslims.

The selected novels were studied deeply to analyze the attitude of contemporary American society towards Islam and Muslims. The study used Said's critical insights as a theoretical framework and also relied on the reviewed literature for the analysis of the study. The discourse of Islamophobia is not new in Western societies that consider themselves flag holder of basic rights of all human beings irrespective of their caste, color, creed, religion and race. Islamophobia has changed its course according to the present situation of the world. Islamophobia has always marginalized Muslim groups or individuals especially after the horrific event of 9/11. The fall of the Soviet Union and the incident of 9/11 made the situation worse for the entire Muslim community. The whole notion of racism was changed and it made the situation difficult for Muslims because of their association with their faith.

Said's argument helped the researcher to analyze the image of Islam and Muslims in the selected literary texts. The present study attempts at revealing the minds of Muslim characters with the help of Said's critical perceptions. Hammad tries to contemplate American society but the western environment does not allow him to observe things around him. The present study also deconstructs the claim of America as innocent and victim. The characterization of Muslims is done in contrast to American characters that are portrayed as victims of terrorism. Lianne proves to

be a victim of terrorism because of her traumatic experience. Said's argument helped the researcher to understand problems and hurdles faced by Muslims due to their association with the Islamic faith. It not only explores the complexities faced by Muslim characters but also reveals the problems faced by an American teenager named John Jude Parish. John had to meet his tragic fate due to his interest in Islam and Sufism.

The novel *American Taliban* serves as a critique for the unfair treatment by the media in the case of John Jude. The critique of the novel reveals that *American Taliban* is a literary response to 9/11 fiction which encourages the readers to be more critical of political and mainstream media discourses. Abraham gives her readers the answer of the question how a layman can be dragged into extremism or fundamentalism. The character of John reveals how terrorism affects not only a person but also his family and friends. Abraham abruptly ended her story and left it up to readers to assume that John was killed shortly his capture in Afghanistan. Usually American novels do not represent Americans as terrorists but Abraham breaks this convention by presenting a non-Arab terrorist.

Said's argument that western media attempts to distort the image of Islam and Muslims has helped the researcher to locate the media's role in the representation of Muslims in selected novels. *Falling Man* elevates the role of media in reviving the tragedy of 9/11. The true ideology of Islam has been misrepresented by western media which helps to manipulate the minds of western masses about the image of Islam and Muslims. The critique of the selected texts reveals that those Muslim characters who attempt to assimilate into American society found acceptance. Delillo presents the character of Omer who is a traumatic patient in the novel and needs American sympathies. Muslim characters from *American Taliban* are also trying to assimilate into American society. Noor, her family and Khalid are the examples of assimilation. The tone of the narrative is encouraging assimilation for Muslim characters.

On the other hand, negative perceptions lead to developing a discriminatory and biased attitude of people. Delillo's *Falling Man* depicts that

Islamophobia proved more hazardous for the Muslim community in America. Delillo also shows the old American legacy of domination, power and control. The incident of 9/11 plunged Muslims and non-Muslims into a conflict. It is obvious that all religions do not support massacre and extremism but Islam has been presented as a religion that supports killing innocent people which is merely a false view of west about Islam (Said 02). The novel also depicts that Muslim extremists are brain washed by their influential leaders who push them for martyrdom by reinforcing Islamic ideology. It is shown that Muslim characters are divided between their physical world and the world after death. Delillo also juxtaposes existentialism against mysticism in the novel. The novel shows Islam and its followers have a desire to overthrow America. The same characterization of Muslims is done by John Updike in his novel *Terrorist* in which he presents several Muslim characters to show that Muslims can never be trusted. The other non-Muslim characters in the novel show lack of trust in Muslims which is proved to be true by the end of the text. The actions of Muslims were analyzed with their Islamic ideology. A clear opposition can be observed between Americans and Islamic values within these selected texts. The selected novels conformed to essence prior to existence (Kant 18)

The text of the novel *Falling Man* also implies agnostic beliefs which stand in contrast to the Islamic faith. Delillo deliberately compares the Islamic faith to Christianity in the text. This situation depicts Muslim and Islam as a threat to the supremacy of America. The perceptions of Muslim characters are judged in the light of their relationship to Islamic ideology and faith. By depicting the hatred of Muslim characters for America, the narrative reflects that Muslims are insecure about American progress and they want to challenge American supremacy.

After critically analyzing the representation of Muslim characters in the novel *American Taliban*, we can sum up by saying that the text falls under the category of the counter-narrative of the popular 9/11 discourse which depicts Muslim characters as violent and fundamentalists. Abraham deconstructs the myth of America's claim to be innocent and sufferer of terrorism. By portraying the majority of the Muslim

characters positively, Abraham challenges the dominant discourse. She seems to have a message which is related to power. As it is mentioned earlier that power is related to creation of truth and discourse and if power is exercised, one has to expect resistance (Mills 55). One such example of the counter-narrative is the novel *The Zero* by Jess Walter which has been explained in chapter 1. In this novel the writer goes against the dominant discourse by portraying Muslim characters as innocent and harmless. Abraham also breaks the tradition by giving voice to the “other” and providing readers with a diverse version of reality.

The study was designed to investigate the representation of Islam and Muslims in post 9/11 fiction. After critically analyzing *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo and *American Taliban* by Pearl Abraham, answers to the controlling questions of my study have become clear. The mainstream media and those who are in power have certain interests, so the images that are fed to common masses are designed to achieve a required response from the audience. This collection of images and information is what I refer to as “dominant narrative”. The main issue with this dominant discourse was that it created unfavorable conditions for Muslims especially those living in America. However, a number of scholars and critics called for unbiased and neutral representations of Muslims and Islam in literary domain. Some of the balanced voices include Jess Walter, Mohsin Hamid, H.M Naqvi and Ian McEwan who have tried to resist against this dominant course through their literary works. They have attempted to provide an alternative space from which the event of 9/11 and its responses can be critiqued and reconsidered. These balanced voices tend to offer the chances to imagine new potentials beyond the prescribed proclamations of dominant discourse.

6.1 Findings

Since the present study is interpretative and exploratory in nature, I have employed qualitative research methodology in it. Hence, the findings of this research are likely to be ungeneralizable. Keeping research questions in mind, it may be noted that selected texts display divided visions of America regarding the

representation of Muslims and Islam. The study concludes that certain philosophies and ideologies of Islam have been used by the narratives to prove that Islam is an outdated and violent religion. It has been shown that Islamic ideology does not let its followers adjust to contemporary American society which depicts the inability of Islam to compete with modernity. Delillo's Hammad contemplates his surroundings and equates this place to hell. Prejudice has been presented in the novels as a basic characteristic of Islamophobia. Physical appearances, language and clothes of Muslim characters have been targeted which proves the racist mindset of America. Barbara looks at the dressing of Moulana in a funny way in the novel *American Taliban*. Delillo also points out the unhygienic conditions of Hammad to prove that Muslims are unhygienic and filthy.

The critique of the selected texts reveal that Delillo's portrayal of Muslim characters is based on misinformation, and overgeneralization, while on the other hand Abraham rejects overgeneralization while depicting her Muslim characters. Delillo intensifies the situation through vivid descriptions of Americans as victims and innocent. Binaries explored in the selected texts enabled the researcher to reveal divided perceptions of America regarding Islam and Muslims.

The researcher has reached to the conclusion that the western media endeavors at whatever costs and power to legitimize the discrimination and give the sense of credibility. If the western media changes their minds towards Muslims, they will get a reciprocally mutual response from their public. These media representations have influenced the image of Islam and Muslims in Western world.

6.2 Recommendations

There is a dire need to discover and discuss balanced voices in the field of Islamophobia. It is high time to rectify stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims as there is not enough scholarship on the unbiased representation of Islam and Muslims in academia. A neutral and balanced representation of Islam and Muslims in literary domain can help to reduce antagonism and discrimination which have been haunting the lives of Muslims since the fall of Twin towers. There is a

pressing need to research in Islamophobia studies to resist the dominant narrative's powerful hold over the common masses. The true and actual ideology of Islam can only be explained well by Muslim scholars who can reduce animosity and hatred against the Islamic faith. I am hopeful that my recommendations prove to be useful in opening up new avenues of research on this topic.

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