

**Islamophobia and the Geopolitical Strategies:
An Analysis of Select Post 9/11 Novels**

**Thesis Submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the Award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Islamophobia and the Geopolitical Strategies: An Analysis of Select Post 9/11 Novels** submitted by **Abdu Latheef Kampuravan** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research, carried out by him under my supervision, and that it has not been previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

Malappuram

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DECLARATION

I, Abdu Latheef Kampuravan, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **Islamophobia and the Geopolitical Strategies: An Analysis of Select Post 9/11 Novels**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research, carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Zainul Abid Kotta, Professor of English & Principal, Govt. College Malappuram, and that it has not been previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title. The contents of the thesis are undergone plagiarism check using **iThenticate** software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Islamophobia, Geopolitics, and the Ideology of Imagination

Islamophobia

Recognizing the growing threat of religious hatred and the emergency of the situation, the UNO started observing March 15, as International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It is a global reminder to fight the ill practice of prejudice, discrimination, and violence directed against Muslims. According to the UNO, Islamophobia is fear, prejudice and hatred that lead to intolerance and hostility in the form of threat, harassment, physical violence towards Muslims and non-Muslims both in off line and online world. (International).

The term Islamophobia is rather recent but the phenomenon is not. The origin of the neologism Islamophobia is a matter of debate among scholars. Allen Chris, the author of *Islamophobia*, says that the term was used for the first time by French writers Etienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, in their *L'Orient vu de l'Occident*, referring to fear of Islam (Allen 05). People like Caroline Fourest and Fiammetta Venner claim that the term was first used by Khomeini's Iran, after the revolution, when some women objected to wearing *hijab*, they termed it as Islamophobia, to denote fear of Islam by Muslims. It appears that even this theory, attributing the origin of the word to Khomeini's Iran, looks Islamophobic, as there was no equivalent word or phrase in Persian (Quellec). Had it been from Iran, there

should have a Persian term for it. Then there is another source, a PhD thesis by Alain Quellien titled *Muslim Politics in French West Africa*, published in Paris in 1910, quoted to have used the term in the modern sense of the word, “prejudice against Islam widespread among peoples of Western and Christian civilization” (Quellec). According to Oxford English Dictionary, the term was first appeared in print in 1991 in *Insight*, an American periodical (Allen 05). Whatever may be the etymology and various denotations it was used for, generally Islamophobia can be described as fear by non-Muslims towards Islam and Muslims. (Allen 06). To conclude, despite diverse sources that helped development of the term, it is Runnymede Trust Report of 1997, titled *Islamophobia a Challenge for us All*, that brought such currency and acceptance for the word Islamophobia, and that too in the current denotation.

“Islamophobia refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam... (and) to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities” (Runnymede 10), (and the term is) the “shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims.” (1). Scholars like John L. Esposito even called recent surge of Islamophobia, “modern epidemic” (Lean 10) and others like Nathan Lean visualised this recent growth as “Islamophobia industry” (10). For Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Islamophobia is fear, hate and prejudice against Muslims and anything represent Muslims, and it can include discrimination against Muslims in any walk of life. (oic.org). Just being critical of Islam or Muslims cannot be identified Islamophobia, as modern world encourages, differences of opinion and

viewpoints, criticising others' beliefs and values, healthy dialogues on ideologies, beliefs and perspectives. After all, democracy is all about the space for others' voices. At the same time, it is not easy to give an empirical line to bifurcate healthy criticism of Muslims from Islamophobia, as overlapping is always possible.

According to Chris Allen, Islamophobia has three components: Ideology foregrounding meaning about Islam and Muslims, *modus operandi*, through which the ideology perpetuates that meaning, and exclusionary practices that discriminate Muslims in various realms of life. (189). According to Prof. S. Sayyid from the University of Leeds, in certain cases, "Islamophobia is a form of racialized governmentality. It is more than prejudice or ignorance; it is a series of interventions and classifications that affect the well-being of populations designated as Muslim." (19).

Saying thus about the nomenclature, let us look at the phenomenon in some detail. Islamophobia is nothing new as it was prevalent among diverse nations and cultures that had to address the vigour and power of Islam, both as a religion and as a political entity. Islamophobia in the current world can be seen as "rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and warfare." (Weller 8, quoted by Allen 25). This fear of Islam/Muslim can be out of two reasons: fear of unknown and fear of 'not what of ours'. The exponential growth of mass media and widespread use of Internet made it possible that information on anything in the universe is available and accessible to anyone in the current world. Yet, misunderstanding and misconception prevail in no less degree, compared to olden

days. There are a lot of people who believe that Muslims are heretics, misogynists and women oppressors, sexual perverts, unhygienic, undemocratic, anti-modern, anti-education, and in short barbaric. Such perspectives may not be described completely as baseless. Lifestyle and customs, that are not Islamic, but practiced by at least some Muslim communities, might have contributed in the formulation of some of these perspectives. But a principal reason could be ignorance about the fact that Muslims have a well-defined doctrine, concerning everything of their physical and metaphysical life. Islam provides a very clear framework, related to personal, familial and social life of a believer, and individuals are strictly ordered to follow those rules. Those rules guide a believer practically in everything. So, Muslims are much concerned about each step in their daily life to be in line with the teachings of Qur'an and the Prophet. Love of the prophet is a necessary component of their belief; hence, it is quite natural they get hurt when their prophet is rebuked or put to cheap mockery. A system, thus putting everyone into well margined frame work, may not be comprehensible to people of other beliefs or who follow a liberal and open-minded system of thought. Many do not know that Muslims have a well-defined concept of a single God, who is having neither beginning nor end, begot none and was not begotten, that they believe Muhammad is the last of a chain of prophets beginning from Adam, that they believe in all other prophets like Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, et.al., that they have to pray five times a day compulsorily, that they must wash their body if they engage in sex, that it was prohibited for them to have extra marital sex, that their women have half share of their parents wealth, that it is their men's religious duty to look after the family, that they are obligated to look

after their parents and so on. This ignorance about Muslims and their beliefs could have resulted in fear of the 'barbarian'.

The second type of fear or consternation could be the result of understanding that in many aspects, Muslims have better and strong standpoint compared to 'our' belief. The expeditious growth of Muslim power, during the time of the Prophet and the Rashidun caliphate, made Christians, the most powerful religious group of the time, anxious. The entire Arabian Peninsula came under Muslims, within ten years of Hijrah, the historic journey of Prophet to Medina. The following three decades from 632-661, under the Rashidun Caliphate, saw the rapid expansion of the Muslim political dominion to Northern Africa, Central Asia and Caucasus. Within a century of the start of Islam (during Umayyad Caliphate), the dominion expanded to South Asia and even to South East Europe. A religion that originated in a politically unimportant place in Arabia became one of the most dominant political powers that controlled a vast geographical area in three continents. The gravity of this expansion will be understood, when we juxtapose the fact that it took more than three centuries for Christianity to make any commendable political influence. It is only in AD 301, Christianity became the official state religion of a nation (Kingdom of Armenia), for the first time in the history. It took around four centuries, after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, for Christianity to have any influence in political matters (Emperor Theodosius of Roman Empire was compelled to repent Massacre of Thessalonica in AD 390, because the Bishop ordered him to repent). Later, there came power dynasties like Abbasid who extended their caliphate, farther to other parts of the globe.

It is quite natural that when a new power comes, existing powers view it with worry and anxiety. In the case of Muslim emergence, this happened mostly among Christians and Jews. One of the possible methods to defend their faith and political authority was to convince their people about the heretic nature of the new faith and the barbarism of its followers. So, there began to appear writings in which the beliefs of 'new' people were demonized, and their followers were portrayed uncultured, sexual perverts, cruel and devilish. Consequently, half-truths and false portrayals about Islam and Muslim appeared. Christian reformists like Martin Luther (1483-1546) found Islam threatening to the Christianity, especially, when Ottoman Empire appeared in Vienna. Besides the fact that Muslim/Turk force was mightier, there was something else more alarming: large scale conversion to Islam. This made Luther think that Muslims should be fought tooth and nail to protect their beliefs. Since he was a reformist, he was equally for fighting Turks in the battlefield as well as confronting with ideology. The crusades, which spread over a long period, from eleventh to fourteenth century, were both political and religious. Various European Christian kings united under the banner of Church to fight the heathens.

When Europe started circumnavigation in search of new places, new treasures, new business, they had to fight Muslims also along with many other native communities. As Europeans considered civilizing the heathens as a holy task, and, destroying people in new found lands were justifiable on both political and religious grounds. The animosity was fierce, when the major threat for the European colonial powers was from Muslim community and Muslim rulers. In India, besides Mughal Empire, regional Muslim powers like Nawab of Bengal, Tipu Sultan of

Mysore, Nizam of Hyderabad etc. posed major challenges to the colonial powers. The driving force behind European colonial spread was not solely economic or political. It was religious as well. That is why missionaries followed the military expeditions. The encounters with Muslims across Asia and Africa also added to the already existing Islamophobia and consequent polemical literature.

Islam is quite often seen as monolithic in the sense that, Muslims, wherever they are, follow same belief, turning to Ka'aba situated in Saudi Arabia during prayers, grow beard, wear *hijab* etc. In other words, it is believed all Muslims have uniform world views and ideologies. This view can be seen true partially but not fully. All Muslims follow basic principles like belief in one God, five times compulsory prayer, performing hajj, giving *zakat* (compulsory donation to the poor), fasting in the month of Ramadan etc. But it does not mean that there is no difference among them concerning political issues. For example, Majority of Muslims do not have positive opinion about extremist or radical groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, Taliban, etc. and they do not subscribe to the view of legitimizing suicide bombings and terrorist attacks against the innocent lives (Wike). But when we attribute monolithic nature to any group, it is very easy to point the entire group responsible for a terror act of a few members. Hence the hate and disgust supposed to be aimed at only those who are responsible, is channelized at any or all member/s of that religion.

Solidarity among followers of a particular religion or ideology is not anything new. There are other groups like Communists, Jews or Christians who have strong linkage and they express the solidarity in multiple ways. But the brotherhood and solidarity among Muslims may be something unique, as it is cemented with the

teachings of Qur'an and *Sunnah* (teachings of the Prophet). It is the part of their religious belief and despite their different ethnicity, nationality and race, they are obliged to help each other and feel the pain when one of them is suffering. At multiple occasions Qur'an addresses all believers as single *Ummah* (community) and the teachings of Prophet says that Muslim community is just like a single body, in which all other body parts suffer, when any organ gets hurt. So, it is not surprising that Muslims all over the world feel the pain when they see Palestinians were murdered and their houses got bulldozed.

Islamophobia can be manifested in multiple ways: it can be in legislation, in the shops, in advertisements, in movies or public speeches, in the streets, in mass media, or nations' policies, or in literature. While the repercussions of some of these are short lived, others leave long lasting and deep-rooted footprints and invite consequent actions against Muslims.

Islamophobia in Literature: Early Instances

“Ethnic stereotypes and caricatures corrupt the imagination, narrow our vision and blur reality”, says Jack G. Shaheen in his analysis of stereotypes of Arabs in western TV (Shaheen. TV Arab.03). Islamophobia or any type of racism to that matter may not be limited to discrimination in physical life alone. On the contrary it will be spread across all the walks of cultural, economic, social, political, academic, and literary life. Literature can be generally described as imagination, reflection of reality and aspiration of future of a society. Further literature often played the role of a powerful weapon to establish one's authority, supremacy and superiority while portraying the 'other' as inferior, weak, undesirable both in values, ideology, power

and genealogy. It is now a well-recognized fact that the European colonialism produced a large quantity of literature and art which portrayed the colonized people as the embodiments of all negative values.

The amount of Islamophobic literature is not that negligible. Since Islam started its spread from Madina to neighbouring Christian dominated regions, fear of Muslims also began to emerge among non-Muslim communities. That is why, as early as 8th century (within a century of Prophet Muhammad's demise), St' John of Damascus had written the *Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Orthodox). Since then, at various occasions, stories about Muslims, portraying them most often in derogatory terms, had been appearing in non-English languages. A twelfth century English priest, astronomer and translator, Robert of Ketton (1110 – 1160) also known in Latin as Rodbertus Ketenensis was active in Spain by virtue of being a diplomat. He translated many Arabic works into Latin and some of his works were with specific aim of defaming Islam. *Chronica Mendosa Saracenorum* (Lying and Ridiculous Chronicle of the Saracens) was history of early Muslim caliphs and *Lex Mahumet pseudo prophete* (Law of the False Prophet Muhammad) was a Quran translation into Latin, perhaps the first Quran translation into a western language. He was a part of *Toledan Collection* of Peter the Venerable, a project of translation of Arabic texts into Latin with an aim of encouraging conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Robert followed a loose style of literal translation distorting quite often the original message of the text. The depth of this misrepresentation of Quran will be understood only when we take into consideration the fact that until 18th century this was the only authentic Quran available to the Western readership. Peter the Venerable himself

had attempted Islamophobic writings in his *Writings Against the Saracens* translated by Irvn M. Resnick, in which he portrays the prophet of Islam as an idolater, an imposter, a power monger who used false prophet hood to get the kingship.

A continuation of Islamophobia can be seen in the writings of Ricold of Monte Croce, an Italian Dominican friar. He was a Christian missionary who wrote travelogues, and his two works highly polemic are *Liber Peregrinationis* (Book of Travels-1288-91) stories of missionary travels to Middle Eastern countries including Baghdad and *Contra legem Sarraccenorum* (Against the laws/Religion of the Saracens- 1300) a partial translation of Quran to German. Almost during the same period Alexandre du Pont believed to have written his *Roman de Mahomet* (1258), a French verse adaptation of Gautier de Compiègne's *Otia de Machomet*. The work is a polemic portrayal of the life of Prophet of Islam. It is at around 1300 AD the medieval English romance *The King of Tars*, of unknown authorship, appeared. It tells the story of the Muslim King of Damascus converting to Christianity, and prompting his kingdom to become Christian. The story portrays again Muslims as idolaters, and the princess of the King of Tars saw multitude of idols including that of the prophet Muhammed. This chivalric romance achieved the goal of defaming Islamic faith and establishing Christianity over Islam. In 1543 Theodore Bibliander, a Swiss theologian, published *Machumetis Saracenorum Principiseiusque Successorum Vitae ac Doctrinae psequae Alcoran* (The lives and Teaching of Muḥammad, Leader of the Saracens, and of his Successors, and the Qur'an itself), which is a distorted translation of the Holy Qur'an. The title itself points to the polemical nature of the work. It was purposefully designed to defame Muslims and

create Islamophobia among the audience. This translation was so erroneous as it was based on Robert of Ketton's earlier distorted translation, consequently it played a very important role in creating misunderstanding about the Qur'an among the Western readership, because a considerable standard English Translation appeared only in 1649.

A sixteenth century Italian poet, Torquato Tasso wrote *Gerusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered 1591), an epic poem that portrayed the great war between Christian and Muslim forces over Jerusalem during the first Crusade. The poem was full of Islamophobic portrayals, and it was presented as it was based on historic sources.

When English developed as the language of literature by the late Middle English Period, there appeared many English plays as well, which can be categorized Islamophobic. Even Chaucer has highly Islamophobic tale in his Canterbury tales. The Man of Law's tale is presenting an ugly picture of Syria and its ruler. Turk Plays that had portrayed Muslims as substandard people, written by authors like Philip Massinger and Robert Daborne were so popular among the 17th century English audience. The colonial period gave birth to a series of literary products like travelogues, spy stories, captivity stories, plays, letters from the spies, etc. in which along with other colonized people, Muslims also were misrepresented and stigmatized.

Islamophobia in Literature: The Contemporary Scene

Twentieth century gave birth to innumerable notable authors who lavishly contributed to Islamophobia in literature. *Life of Mohammed* (1900) published in

New York is a polemical biography written by Rev. George Bush, and the book has even a portrait attributed to the prophet. The portrait is definitely unfounded, as Muslims were prohibited from making images or portraits and consequently there was no portrait of the prophet available. Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul has two travelogues related to Muslim world: *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998). Both books are highly critical of Muslims and their culture, and presented many negative characters to belittle Islam. Of course, Salman Rushdie and his *The Satanic Verses* (1988) cannot escape this list.

A surge of recent fiction and movies that can be described as Islamophobic was visible. Post Cold War period necessitated a target for the US hegemony to challenge and Muslim world was the easy answer. The US authorities “...had to identify an enemy type that was powerful enough to justify retention of a large military establishment... this led to a focus on rising Third World powers equipped with modern weapons...such as Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and North Korea” (Klare.155-156). More over 9/11 terrorist attacks gave birth to innumerable popular literary works. Hence, hundreds of fiction and nonfiction works entered the market encouraging the readers to develop prejudice against Islam and Muslims. Socio political books like *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (2011) by Samuel P. Huntington, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (2010) by George Friedman, and fiction works by authors like John Updike (*Terrorist 2006*), Michel Houellebecq (*Submission 2015*), Amy Waldman (*The Submission 2011*) are some of them. Simultaneously hundreds of movies, majority

of which were from the Hollywood, came along the same path. Among others detective fiction also played a key role in distorting images of Muslims as incompetent, uncultured and criminal minded people. Detective fiction is one of the key areas of focus of this research.

Islamophobia and other Popular Art Forms (Movies, TV and the Media)

Twentieth century witnessed exponential growth of mass media which influences the perspectives, outlooks, opinions, tastes, likes and dislikes of people. There will not be any dispute over the power of the media in advocating the people's opinions. Nothing in a person's life, from what one thinks, buys, wears, eats, the kind of people one likes and dislikes, to who does one vote for, is not spared from the media influence one is exposed to. It is quite natural, if a certain group of people is presented in such a powerful mass media continuously as embodiments of negative and undesirable qualities, such people will be the target of the hate and dislike of the majority of people. The media is highly successful in pressing the people both to 'what to think' and 'what to think about'. The scenario is really alarming, when we take into consideration, the fact that millions of people make a sense of their world from what they see in the screen and they formulate their thoughts and actions based on that sense. Hollywood has been playing a remarkable role in formulating thoughts and opinions of millions of viewers worldwide, because it is the leading exporter of screen images to all parts of the globe. Though Hollywood is exceedingly advanced in its technology and methods, it has been on the wrong side in its relying on racial and ethnic stereotypes, as Jack Shaheen put it,

Arabs are “the most maligned group in the history of Hollywood.” (Shaheen Reel 03).

The most traditional of mass media is newspaper, which still holds a commendable importance even in this era of netizens. In a world where small and large media firms resort to the news agencies for their data and input, there is no wonder when most of these media have Islamophobic reports in same tone and taste. These media, whether they are print, online, TV or any other means, play vital role in shaping the mindscape of their readers, who are ranging from the ordinary lay man to the policy makers of nations. Once people are negatively influenced by incessant stereotyping of Muslims, it is quite natural that people’s perspectives and approaches to Muslims and Muslim countries will be prejudiced. The focus of this research is to find out how much such prejudice, born out of exposure to Islamophobia, played crucial roles in shaping geopolitical strategies towards Muslim countries and regions.

While discussing about the convergence of ‘creative’ writing like novels and stories, and ‘factual’ writings appear in newspapers and TV, Hubbard and others stated that, ”... the two became entwined within a reformulated cultural geography. Recognizing that both imaginative fiction and seemingly factual reportage have the ability to shape the cultural politics of everyday life, a trio of explorations into 'new' cultural geographies.” (132). In other words, the division line between ‘fiction’ and ‘factual’ is so narrow that, they converge each other, and easily can be manipulated to achieve racial issues like Islamophobia, and “entwining of the political economy and cultural economy” (219) happens so fast but so unnoticed.

As stated earlier, manifestation of Islamophobia is not limited to one or two spheres; rather it is spread all over the political, economic, cultural and literary life. With the advent of telecommunication technologies, news media got overwhelming role in human life. So, the items appear in the print and electronic media have an immeasurable impact on the people. It may not be exaggerating to say that in modern times the influence of the media is such that they can create a war out of nothing. Media campaigns are so powerful in shaping public opinion, from which even the courts or governments may not be able escape. It is this super power of the media compels ruling powers to keep overt and covert strong bondage with the media enterprises or else their governments may end up in troubled waters. Sometimes media are very clever in activating the already latent opinions and attitudes. Media support for any candidate or party proved to play a vital role in political elections in most countries. Knowing such, it is very easy to understand that misrepresentation, demonizing and stigmatizing Muslims in the media definitely will contribute in generating negative image of Muslims.

There are TV shows, serials, cartoons, panel discussions, in addition to the daily news headlines, where select vocabulary is chosen to describe 'Muslim terror'. Actually, the very usage 'Muslim terrorist' or 'Muslim terrorist attack', etc. should not have used, as terror committed by a negligible minority should not have affiliated to any religion or ideology. Such affiliations are wrong on two grounds: on the one hand, placing such a handful of criminal minds in the sphere of the large community of which they claimed to be a part of, will bestow them legitimacy and thus encouragement to commit more such atrocities, and accusing the entire community, of

which the lion share is totally ignorant and innocent of the crime in question, in addition not to support such inhuman violence, is totally against modern concept of justice, on the other. A criminal act committed by a handful of misguided and criminal minded people was attributed to the entire community to which they belong. It is a kind of jungle raj, where the entire tribe or clan has to pay for the crime of one member. It is paradoxical to see that, while modern civilization claims to have far advanced from the jungle raj in all its principles of justice, democracy and equality, it still holds the principle of 'group responsible for one member of the group.' Besides, criminal minds are everywhere and in all communities. There is no dispute about the fact that Hollywood is a powerful entertaining business that has grown to be the most effective teacher and authoritative creator of commonly shared attitudes and perspectives of more or less the entire world. (Shaheen-10). Hollywood produced hundreds of movies in which Muslim characters or Arabs appear. It is a pity that lion share of those Hollywood movies is Islamophobic and contributed in creating the worst image of all Muslims and Arabs.

Like the Arab saying *repetition teaches even a donkey*, continuous portrayal of Muslims as undesirable, inhuman, subhuman and sexual perverts helped building the desired Muslims image in the western psyche. There are plenty of 9/11 movies telling the story of terrorist attack on American soil. These movies don't stop there, but they perpetuate the Muslim community and their religion inherently related to terrorism.

The Crown, a UK television historical drama series aired by Netflix and created by Peter Morgan, *Bodyguard*, a UK political thriller television series created by Jed Mercurio for BBC, and *Homeland*, a US espionage thriller television series

developed by Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa have enough examples of stereotyped and misrepresented Muslims. Hollywood movies like *The Dictator* (2012) directed by Larry Charles,

Islamophobia in the Wake of 9/11: A Global Surge

Muslims present a very paradoxical picture in the present world. On the one hand they exhibit a number of coordinates that bring them to the creamy layer of the international social setup, but on the other, they may be the most destabilized of all the communities. The following facts will help us to have an overall picture of the current Muslim community. Muslims constitute 24.7 percent of the world population as per a 2021 survey (Country meters), that makes them the second largest religious group on the Earth. There are twenty-seven countries with Islam as their state religion. Muslims constitute more than half of the population of 50 out of 195 UN member states. Many Muslim countries are rich with fossil fuels, have attractive GDP and enjoy a considerable high standard of living. Together, Muslim majority countries have control over 20% of the total land area in the world. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the present world (Lipka). There are at least eight Muslim countries who had woman head of state until this day and three (Kosovo, Tunisia and Bangladesh) of them still have woman heads of state.

It may be ironic that, a community of this huge size, with a lot of wealth and land at their disposal, and had a rich culture and heritage, faces the worst type of existential problem. In Myanmar over a million Muslims were banished and in China the entire Uygur community was imprisoned in detention centres. Palestine presents one of the most pathetic scenarios, where millions are turned to refugees

who are scattered in several countries. Those, who still live in Palestine, are always under attack and threat of annihilation. In countries like Yemen, Syria, Libya, terrible civil wars have been going on and millions were made either refugees or migrants. National and International war players are active in all these countries. Iraq and Afghanistan were devastated by recent wars, and both countries have rickety governments in power now.

The World Trade Centre attack in 2001, popularly known as 9/11, was unprecedented, and the consequent 'war on terror' resulted in unimaginable repercussions. The wide spread anti-terrorist campaign in the international media suddenly changed to an anti-Muslim campaign. Already existing fear of Muslims and subsequent Islamophobic behaviour escalated in post September 11 world. The situation was paranoiac to Muslims around the world and in many parts of the world they felt that they were under threat. Anything related to them from their food habit to dressing, from going to mosque to abstinence from alcohol and pork, from not accepting bank interest to *zakat* (compulsory donation) became a topic of heated debate in mass media, among policy makers and even on the social media platforms. There were innumerable occasions when Muslims and their beliefs were subjected to mockery. They are often portrayed as bearers of bombs.

Hate crimes against Muslims all over the world spiked. Even the nomenclature of a crime changed from 'terrorist' to 'hate crime', based on the religion of the culprit. An FBI statistics say that there was 1617% increase in hate crimes against Muslims in the USA after September 11 attacks (Alfonseca). In the aftermath of 9/11, manifestation Islamophobia took different shapes. It ranges from

public bullying, to verbal and physical attack, from rallying against construction of a mosque to framing legal measures like *Patriot Act* imposing restrictions on Muslim life. It seems that the US President Barack Hussein Obama, a US born Christian, could not escape this Islamophobia, may be because of his middle name. He was accused of secretly practicing Islam or being a closet Muslim.

As per official statistics of the French government, around twenty-five thousand investigations carried out against Muslims, more than seven hundred Muslim organizations have been closed and fifty million dollars has been confiscated from Muslim individuals and organizations only during 2017-2022. (Freschi 27). This has been achieved through enforcing new laws such as Systematic Obstruction Policy and Anti-Separatism Bill of 2020. Many Muslims had to face discrimination under Anti-Terrorism Act in Sweden. Despite anti-discrimination laws, there were many recent cases of Islamophobia in Australia and the country witnessed a hike in anti-Muslim public rallies like *Reclaim Australia* by far-right groups. Canada also witnessed escalation in hate crimes against Muslims, where there were 287 Islamophobic attacks Just in a period of five years from 2015-2019. Canadian law Bill 62 of 2017 prevents any one wearing face veils (usually it is Muslim women who wear face veil) from receiving government services (Martin, CBC News 22). This changed scenario, where Muslims were targeted, was not limited to the West, but was present in other parts of the world.

All these recent resurgences of Islamophobia was a direct upshot of the War on Terror. In some cases, Islamophobia took a very dangerous turn. According to American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), some seven hundred seventy-nine Muslim

men and boys were imprisoned in Guantanamo detention centre without any formal charge or trial of whom nine died of physical torture. (Shamsi). After many years, all of them, with an exception of 39, were acquitted. An affidavit, submitted by Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, chief of Staff under Secretary of State Colin Powell during 2002 -05, to the US district court of Columbia, admitted that most of the US leaders knew that majority of the detainees were innocent. (Wilkerson 5).

Another reason for the widespread feeling of insecurity and vulnerability among Muslims was the constant interferences in Muslim countries by the Western powers under the military and political leadership of the US. This was too high during the post-cold war period. Afghanistan was almost destabilized and put into rubbles first by the USSR invasion and later by the US invasion. When Arab Spring broke out in Egypt, and Mohamed Morsi was elected president, Israel and the West were worried that the new government will not be adhering to the peace treaty it had with Egypt. Soon political intrigues followed, the military ousted him from power, and the military leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi became the President. When an elected government was toppled by the military there was no international interference to protect democracy. Similarly, Syria became a ghost country with hundreds of thousands got killed and millions became refugees. Many countries like, the US, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Russia, Saudi Arabia participate directly in Syrian war. This (civil)war, now more than decade old, already has death toll of more than three hundred thousand and over six million people turned refugees. (UN Human Rights report 06). The available information about a 2012 CIA classified programme, named Timber Sycamore, makes many believe that ISIL (ISIS), which had engaged

in a blood bath in the name Islamic Caliphate, was a CIA initiative (Wikipedia Timber-Sycamore). Besides, Amnesty International reports that the ISIS (ISIL) had a possession of vast array of weapons manufactured by twenty-five countries. (Amnesty.org). Another nation that was rattled by waves of Arab Spring was Libya. The country is still in chaos and different militias, fighting each other, control different parts of the country.

Manifestation of Islamophobia takes many forms and its impact might be fatal in certain cases. Islamophobia manifested by literature, Movies, electronic and print media could have more lasting impact in the readers' psyche. The approach of people, who were influenced by biased images of Muslims, might be of animosity and aversion. That is how Islamophobia in literature gets connected to geopolitical strategies, which is the core area of this research.

Geopolitics and Islamophobia

Geopolitics and geopolitical strategies are terms not much associated or familiar to the academia of literature hence it required special discussion. As mentioned by *The Geopolitics Reader*, the twentieth century is the century of geopolitics, as coining of the term happened at the beginning of the century, and since then it is commonly used for denote global conflict and change, and the struggles over power and space that have dominated this century offers the problematic of geopolitics. (Tuathail i). Geopolitics is a fully developed branch of knowledge that has been dealing with analysis of geographical influences on power relations in international relations. It is believed that "Geopolitics developed as an adjunct to statecraft and has focused primarily on states and on their use of force

against each other.” (Kearns.1599). Like in the case of Islamophobia, the academic discipline of geopolitics may be comparatively modern, but the existence of geopolitics and geopolitical strategies can be traced back to the early human history. According the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the term geopolitics was coined by Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist, in the beginning of 20th century. (Deudney). As a branch of social science, its scope is wide and a variety of areas like influence of geographical features such as climate, arable land, proximity to sea, topography etc. on supremacy or subordination of a nation; technological advancement in transportation, harbours, destructive weapons etc. on security of nations; natural resources and demography in deciding the behaviour of other nations, and so on so forth come under its purview. But in contemporary discourse the term is widely used synonymous with international politics. According to Hooshang Amirahmadi, Geopolitics is the intersection of geography, power, and foreign policy, and its focuses are the states, peoples, borders, resources, environments, trade routes, and human traffic. (1). Since this study is focusing only on the inter-link between Islamophobia in literature and geopolitical strategies, a detailed study of Geopolitics is neither required nor possible. So, this research is taking the layman’s understanding of the term geopolitics as policy of one nation to other nation/s, and consideration of who is friend or foe.

It is very rudimentary understanding that the attitude, feelings, viewpoints, and consequent way of behaving of a group people to any other group (nation) will be determined by the understanding of the latter in all its magnitude. It might cover the culture, food habits, dress code, religion, other beliefs, political philosophy,

wealth, technology, military power, and natural resources of the target group, and above all the possibility to gain from interaction with them. The alliance or antagonism is based on the understanding of all those factors. If a group is misunderstood, or found undesirable from one's cultural and religious stand point, the relation with such a group will be of antagonistic though there is superficial alliance.

Though the USA did not colonize any Muslim country, its policies towards Muslim countries, after it became a super power in the post-World War II era, were of total support to the dictatorial regimes in the oil rich nations. There are various occasions when the USA protected Israel when international community tried to control it from committing human rights violations and war crimes. Besides, they extend Israel billions of dollars military aid every year. Only in a period of five decades (1972 -2022) the USA vetoed fifty-three times UN resolutions critical of Israel. Such is the blanket protection and support the USA extends towards Israeli aggression, occupation, human rights violation and war crimes (Newton &UN.org).

According to Amirahmadi, former director of the Centre for Middle East Studies at Rutgers University, the Middle East is experiencing third wave of western geopolitical strategies. The first wave started with the collapse of Ottoman Empire, resulted in the birth of a number of nation states, shifted to a second wave in post-colonial era after World War II. The second wave was recognizing Middle East countries as source of fossil fuel energy and consequently the relation of the West was friendly, but exploitative. The third wave, started with direct intervention in the countries like Iraq and Afghanistan resulted in "failed states, humiliated peoples,

crippled economies, extreme inequality and poverty, devastated environments, plundered resources, conflicted geographies, foreign intrusions, and violent radicalism.” (2).

One of the key features of the post 1980 world is its annihilation of space and time, and the consequent evolving of a global culture. Phil Hubbard and others rightly stated that, “the key actors in this process are the Western news, film and broadcasting corporations that dominate the world's media.” (219). The West tried to universalize their culture and any indigenous resistance was considered reactionary. Muslims constitute a major share of those ‘reactionary’, as many of the cultural tools the West promote were considered prohibited by their religious belief. Semi nakedness of women, uncontrolled mingling of sexes, free sex, living together without being married are some of them. Hence, the West has every reason to look at the Muslim countries as reactionary and required western intervention. The result was that western common psyche was fully convinced of the ‘right’ in the continuous western interference in Muslim countries that resulted in damages for both human life and infrastructure. Representation of Muslim characters by western authors as requiring westernisation, takes a new connotation in this regard, and this research is trying to problematise the same in the light of geopolitical strategies of western countries.

Incessant portrayals of any class or group of people in literature and other artistic creations can imprint the desired image of that group, and the image thus created naturally affects responses towards those groups. Globalisation has practically made it impossible for any nation or community to exist alone, without

interwoven relations and interdependence among nations. People have to depend on each other in almost all segments of life like economy, technology, employment, education, health care, banking, business, knowledge sharing etc. hence, policies of dominant nations towards less powerful nations will have great impacts over those communities and their proximity towards future developments. When the more power nations have inimical relations towards less powerful nations, the impediments thus resulting will be immeasurable besides causing crippling impacts on their future. As mentioned earlier, geopolitical strategies of nations are based on their understanding of other people, if they are desirable or undesirable. Thus, when the policy makers of western and European nations were convinced that Muslim nations are undesirable as a community, and a threat to the western values, the policies thus originate from such convictions will be harmful to Muslims as a community and Muslim majority nations as players of international affairs.

All geopolitical theories unanimously opine that geopolitical strategies are related to international superiority and control of the heartland. In modern times there are additional factors like superiority of armaments, technological superiority, and ownership of energy resources like fossil fuels, possession of human resources and labour force, etc. that play equal or more important role of the control of the heartland. Hence, geopolitical strategies of powerful nations will be in such a way that they have always access to and control of energy sources most of which are geographically situated in middle eastern nations. Besides, powerful nations ensure that no other nation becomes more powerful, either economically or militarily, to threaten their superiority. To put into practice these big goals, they might resort to

various methods, like creating unrest and sectarianism in developing nations, creating fear of certain people, creating false image of certain people that they are a threat to the civilisation, and so on. Islamophobia latent in literature, especially in popular detective fiction, can be seen as a part of deep-rooted policies.

The Politics of Detective Fiction

Detective fiction is comparatively a newer sub-genre of fiction, which itself has a short history of three centuries. Detective fiction has relatively a short history of less than two centuries. The core of detective stories is crime and its investigation by formal or informal agents. Necessary ingredients of detective story are a crime, usually murder, so many suspects each of whom has possibilities to be the culprit, a number of arguments in favour of each of the suspects, and finally the least expected of them comes to be the culprit. As we know it today, the system of police force and crime investigation has come up only in the first half of the 19th century. That could stand for the late birth of this sub-genre of fiction. Detective fiction is following a pattern of crime, investigation and its conclusion, leading to unmasking the mystery behind the crime, which may lead to the punishment of the criminal. 20th century has witnessed a surge in detective fiction and many of the best sellers were from this genre. Though the current world of netizens is so fast that, worries popped out about reading habit of books being extinct, the number of copies sold of many novels tells us a different story. Of all the story books, it might be the detective stories that young readers got infatuated the most with, as they provide all elements like action, suspense, love, fight, use of latest technology, mystery, etc. to satisfy their thrilling mind. So, it is natural that the impression such detective stories create about a place,

a nation, a culture and a people will have inexplicable impact. A simple fact about Sherlock Holmes, the fictitious detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, will surprise anyone to see how much is the realistic feeling imparted by such stories in the reader's mind. The fictitious address of Sherlock Holmes, 221 B Baker Street, London, used to get innumerable letters from the fans despite the fact that the character himself, let alone his address, has no existence save in the story book. Detective characters like James Bond created by Ian Fleming, Hercule Poirot created by Agatha Christie, etc. also were successful in implanting a 'real' like feeling in the mindscape of millions of readers worldwide.

As it is common, the two terms 'detective fiction' and 'mystery' are used interchangeably in this thesis. So whatever slight difference exists between these two terms was not meant here.

As it was mentioned above, Islamophobia in literature is nothing new, and their number is very large. It spread across genres, and periods. So, to narrow down a very large area of resource, this research has focused on detective fiction (mysteries). Mystery is a genre that always attracted readership of all types of people irrespective of their age, ethnicity, religion and nationality. Ever since the beginning of the early 19th century, when detective stories began to appear continuously, interest in mystery fiction never dwindled. In modern times many mystery fiction works were sold in millions of copies, which in turn testify to their popularity. When Islamophobia finds its way through such popular works of fiction, it is beyond guessing how much will be their influence on the millions of readers.

It is shocking to find that there is no recorded (accessible on the web) study at all of Islamophobia in detective fiction, let alone these particular authors or works. A genre of fiction, that is so popular and attracts millions of readers worldwide, has not attracted the attention of the academia. As mentioned in Literature Review of this thesis, Islamophobia latent in various spheres of creative art was not excluded by the analysts and researchers. There appeared many articles and books studying presence of Islamophobia in various fiction, media, movies, etc. But even those academics do not appear to have noticed such a vibrant and potential genre like detective fiction. It is interesting to note that despite the large size of Muslim population and Muslim countries, the number of detective novels that have Muslim detectives, or happening in Muslim countries is very negligible. This fact also encouraged this research to choose the novels below for this study.

Works under Focus

This research is concentrating primarily on literature, but cultural initiatives like movies and mass media also are taken into consideration because, in modern world all these play almost same role in influencing the viewpoints, formulation of concepts and shaping one's strategies to others. The novels explored here fall into a common fold as they share some characteristics in general. Besides being detective stories, all these novels were authored by either Westerners (European or American) or migrants who have settled in the West. All these stories, with the exception of *The Language of Secrets* and *The Widows of Malabar Hill*, happen in Muslim countries, and most of the key characters are Muslims. All of them were produced after 2001 September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, and these novels took

liberty to portray in minute detail the societies and countries concerned, which happens to be from the perspective of an Islamophobe. Though they try to present some good characters on the way, the total impression the readers imbibe is about the uncivilized and undesirable Muslims and their rotten nations.

The novels, this research tried to probe into, are 1) *Murder under the Bridge: A Palestine Mystery*, 2) *Murder under the Fig Tree: A Palestine Mystery* both by Kate Jessica Raphael, 3) *The Collaborator of Bethlehem*, 4) *A Grave in Gaza* both by Matt Beynon Rees, 5) *Finding Nouf* (published in UK as *The Night of Mi'raj*) by Zoe Ferraris, 6) *Language of Secrets* by Ausma Zehanat Khan, 7) *Prayers for the Assassin: Killer Against Killer, the Hunt is on* by Robert Ferrigno, and 8) *The Widows Malabar Hill* by Sujata Massey (here onwards all novels are mentioned without sub titles).

Murder under the Bridge (2015) and *Murder under the Fig Tree* (2017) are popular Palestinian mysteries by American novelist Kate Jessica Raphael. Both novels happen in occupied Palestine, where within a limited jurisdiction of Palestine Authority (PA), police woman Rania is investigating crimes. Both these novels attracted positive reviews glorifying their novelty in characters and venue, their ability to bring readers through the not much explored streets and valleys of occupied Palestine and above all their presenting a young Palestinian woman cop who encounters and confronts Israeli corruption. The reviews are true, but they are not the only truth about these novels. They also successfully imprint the already established negative images of Muslims and Palestine perpetrated by the visual

media and international media establishments who subscribe lenience towards the cause of Israel.

The former is about the mysterious murder of Nadya, an emigrant domestic worker, employed with a settler family in Israel, whose body was found in the border of Israel and West Bank. With the assistance of Chloe, an American computer analyst who is on a one-year peace mission in Palestine, Rania, the only woman Palestinian cop, finally uncovers the rotten inner circle of Israeli military. The girl was murdered by a high-ranking Israeli military officer to cover up his involvement in a highly inhuman massacre of unarmed Palestinian women and children a few years ago. For any ordinary reader the novel is unconventional as it showcases crime scene associated to an Israeli military officer which was dug out by an ordinary Palestine police woman. But careful reading between the lines tells us that, the novel provides necessary ambience to the reader to conveniently believe that Palestinians were wrong in not accepting Israel and trying to get its citizenship, and thus securing their life and property.

Murder under the Fig Tree also presents Rania, who was jailed by Israeli authorities, involving herself in another murder investigation of a Palestinian young boy, which was attributed to the Israeli military viciousness. But Rania's investigation found the underground Palestinian gay society and unveiled the real culprit. Daoud, the Palestinian gay was murdered by Yusuf, brother of Daoud's gay lover Elias. He used the gun of an Israeli soldier; hence it was commonly believed to be a murder by Israeli army. Both the novels provide ample examples to understand a common western perspective of one of the most burning issues of the post WWII

world. Both the novels contribute to the argument of this study that Islamophobia latent in literary works influence the geopolitical strategies of the Western countries towards Muslim countries. The purview of this research is limited to the portrayal of Muslim characters and Muslim nations in the works under study and how they could have contributed to the misunderstanding of Muslim nations and regions.

Zoe Ferraris is an American novelist married to a Saudi, and she spent a few months in Saudi Arabia. She has three novels to her credit with Saudi Arabia as setting, of which the first one is included in this study. Both *Finding Nouf* (2008) (published in the UK as *The Night of Mi'raj*) and *City of Veils* (2010) are murder investigations by a pair of self-styled sleuths: Katya Hijazi, a PhD in Molecular Biology and Nayir Ash-Sharqi, a desert guide. The first novel tells the story of Nouf, a sixteen-year-old girl found dead in the desert and her family is not enthusiastic to investigate the case. This made the duo delve into the depth of the mystery and ended up in discovering the horrible truth that Nouf was impregnated by her adopted brother Othman, and kidnapped and left to die in desert by her sibling Abir. The novel is struggling to present Saudi Arabia a very appalling place for women, a place where the system is highly corrupted, male chauvinism at its zenith, and rich families live a mysterious life of gothic stories. This novel utilized all possible opportunities to portray modern Saudi Arabia, what the westerners believe, a dark state of the Middle Ages.

The Collaborator of Bethlehem (2007) and *A Grave in Gaza* (2009) are two of the Palestine Quartet by Welsh- English crime novelist Matt Beynon Rees. Rees was in Jerusalem for two decades by virtue of being a journalist. He presents crime

scenes and an amateur investigator Omar Yussef, from Bethlehem, another part of occupied Palestine. Rees tried to portray a different picture of Palestine by keeping away from the usual alternative of terrorist or victim Palestinian. His novels practically do not bring forth any Israeli character at all. But Rees cannot escape from what is so common and taken-for-granted western perspective of Palestine! His hero Omar Yussef finds the very essence of Palestine problem in resistant forces, as if it is high time for the Palestine to realize and accept that there is no meaning in fighting Israel, and it is advisable for them to be happy with whatever little they have! It is told that there were Indians who believed that it is impossible to fight Britain, and that Indians are incapable of ruling themselves! This can be understood as a sort of *Stockholm syndrome*. Rees used his hero Omar Yussef to publish all the western views on Palestine-Israel conflict.

The Collaborator of Bethlehem tells the story of how Louai Abdel Rehman, a member of Martyrs Brigade, was assassinated supposedly by the Israeli soldiers, and how George Sabah, an innocent young Christian, was scapegoated for a collaborator. After Louai, two more people were met with similar tragedy in Abdel Rahman family: Dima, the wife the diseased was murdered and Yunis his younger brother became a suicide bomber. Omar Yussef, a history teacher for the past two decades, was so disturbed at this turn of events because George is one of his best students, and he started an investigative journey to dig out the truth by doing whatever he can to save his former pupil. Though he failed to protect him, Omar was successful in exposing corrupt gunmen gang, and bringing back harmony among the people in the village. But throughout the novel the Palestine problem was

presented from a western/Israeli standpoint. It is not surprising Jewish Book Council had a very inspiring and compelling review of Rees' Palestine mysteries (Tropp). Omar Yussef is against all types of Palestinian resistance, and he firmly advocates the view that, as long as Palestinians can live peacefully, why should they worry about a nation for their own? What is wrong with being ruled by Israel? The readers are encouraged to subscribe this outlook of passivity and acceptance, forgetting the fact that human history has no shortage of annals of freedom struggles sacrificing human life and comfort zones.

The next of the series *A Grave in Gaza* is continuing the adventures of Omar Yussef. Here also he carries on his severe criticism, and scorn of the resistance groups. The only difference here is, this time, the target of his scorn is Hamas, a Nationalist cum military organisation, not people in Bethlehem. Omar has not changed much when it comes with his sneer of his countrymen. Gaza was portrayed as a police republic with full of gun men, and a banana republic, which has even lost its soul. Both novels help in implanting the very negative and depreciating images of both Palestine and its people. Palestinians were portrayed as a bunch of people easily swayed by emotions, and were gullible. They find a solace in their belief of victimization, and they are incapable of good governance, a charge the colonial powers always levelled against the colonized peoples!

Prayers for the Assassin (2006) is first of 'Assassin trilogy' by Robert Ferrigno, an American author of crime novels and speculative fiction. This cannot be classified as detective novel, from the strict sense of the term, but it has all necessary elements of a detective story, like a perfectly performed crime, wrongly

accused suspect, dim-witted police system, a detective, who is superior in observation and deduction, and establishment of identity of the criminal. What is special with *Prayers for the Assassin* is, it is set in a future Muslim America of 2040. It tells the story of power crisis in future American Islamic Republic, where different political and religious factions are competing and plotting for power. The novel speculates the changes that might happen to America, the most powerful country of modern times, if it became Islamic republic! Changes are a lot: cheer leaders are sword wearing men, National games have special break time for noon prayers, land marks and place names are replaced by important Muslim names. The novel indirectly warns the current generation of readers on how dangerous it would be, if by any chance, America, or any western country to that matter, became a Muslim country, and talks about the disgraceful circumstances it will have to undergo. The novel is contributing much to the hypothesis of this research that Islamophobia is prevalent in literature and the same may affect negatively the geopolitical strategies of any country towards Muslim countries.

The Language of Secrets (2016) is the second novel in Rachel Getty and Esa Khattak series by Ausma Zehanat Khan. She is a UK born American- Canadian to parents who migrated from India to Pakistan and later to the UK. The novel was instigated by a terrorist plot to attack Canadian Parliament in 2006 by a group, later named "Toronto 18". It tells the story of obliterating a terrorist plot to bomb in a very populous area in Toronto, to avenge millions of people killed in Iraq by the coalition forces including Canada. Mohsin Dar, an undercover agent of Canadian secret police, who was sneaked into the terrorist group, was murdered. So, the

INSET, secret agency, asks Khattak, the head of community policing for help. Investigation by Khattak and his junior Rachel Getty, who appeared before the group as a potential convert to Islam, revealed that Ashkouri, the charismatic and charming leader of the group, has planned everything for a mass killing by bomb, and for his safety he took Rukshanda, sister of Khattak ostensibly in love. After his effort for many days, Khattak and his team understand, just before the evening for the planned bombing, that Ashkouri has placed the bomb already and not only his sister, but the Canadian Muslims also are in danger. Finally, at the encounter in the forest camp, Rachel and Khattak murder the gang members and save his sister and other innocent members of the group. The story happens in Canada, but the members of the terrorist group are from Muslim countries. They were portrayed as disillusioned youngsters who have no capacity for matured thinking or living as family.

The Widows of Malabar Hill by Sujata Massey, published in 2018, tells the story of Perveen Mistry, the first Muslim woman lawyer of colonial India. She had got a strange case of a Muslim rich man who passed away recently, and left a huge estate along with his four widows and children. His manager has brought a legal document, in which all the widows willingly donate their entire properties to some orphanages. This legal document made Perveen suspicious, and that suspicion led her to the mysterious inner lives of Muslim women, the exploitations they have been prone to, and the crimes there happen, that are kept away from the outside world. Legal interest and inquisitiveness of a young lady advocate made Perveen a voluntary sleuth without any support from official investigating agencies.

Theoretical support

This study is not primarily an application of any specific theory to literary works, in the sense that, the researcher is not analysing the texts under study, through the lens of a particular critical theory, but, at the same time, the research is developing its arguments, utilising whenever useful, perspectives suggested by Post Colonialism, in the broad sense of the term. Postcolonialism is an umbrella term that can cover theoretical terms like Orientalism, Hybridity, Subaltern studies, etc. Since the most of the texts in focus are stories about Muslim countries, the Orientalist reading might help in developing some of the arguments here.

With the advent of *Orientalism*, by Edward Said there came a new approach of reading and interpreting literary texts, produced by the colonizers, and subsequently an entire branch of knowledge, called Postcolonial Studies took birth. Postcolonial Studies made it possible to analyse literary texts from the standpoint of the colonized, with an understanding of the hidden agenda in presenting every belief and cultural practice of the western world as universal. Orientalism can be defined as simplistic, stereotypical and demeaning portrayals of Arabs and other Eastern people, their religion, culture, beliefs, practices, etc. as a part of establishing the West as superior and the best. Said opined that Orientalist discourse moves from imaginative representations (fantasies) of the East to actual administrative manifestations. So, it moves from discourse to real events. (Nayar 161).

As Islam is the religion that shaped the community, with which the West has to engage in incessant dialogue, Islamophobia is better studied from this terrain of Orientalism. There are umpteen numbers of written books that can be attributed to

presenting, encouraging and establishing Islamophobia, which belong to different genres, from biography to drama. Study of literary texts based on Orientalism is at least half a century old, whereas, post-colonial reading of texts began to appear some three decades ago, and academia began to show interest in study of Islamophobia in literature even later.

The definition, Said gave to Orientalism as "...a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts..." (Said Orientalism 17), is directing this research, in the sense that, geopolitical awareness about the people and the countries in these novels, helps to develop negative approach towards them. As Said quoted Giambattista Vico, that "men make their own history, they can know what they have made, and extend it to the geographical and cultural entities" (11), we can understand that denominations of 'Muslim' countries and 'Western' countries are man-made. Further, Said says that pure imaginative writings like literature can be as political as writings on economic policies of a government: meaning that literature is not devoid of any political interest. What Said categorically stated about the impossibility of detachment of a scholar from the societal values in which he is a part of, (15), is equally applicable to the authors and men of letters: that is, a writer cannot be completely detached in his stories and novels from the perspectives, values and beliefs of his class and time. It is here the researcher's reading of the novels in focus, as having a bearing (conscious or unconscious) of Islamophobia in the light of the surge of the same in the contemporary western world, gets guidelines from Orientalism. The distinction between what is 'political' and 'non-political' with

regards to writing, is not easy, as politics in imaginary writing is most often covert and latent.

Texts exist in context (historical approach) as much as they exist in out of context (New Criticism), but the author is always the product, primarily of his time and secondarily of his predecessors' time. What Emerson said about the influence of the mind of the Past, (in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed) on the scholar, (3) is true about the authors with regards to the influence of the previous authors. Though not in the same sense, Eliot also emphasized the influence on authors by previous books. One of the premises, this research footing on, is that the authors, under study, were influenced by other Islamophobic writings and perspectives, and the same got an important role in shaping of characters and events in their detective stories. What Said observed about the influence of politics and other predominant theories on individual authors, "... dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires – British, French, American-in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced..." (Said Orientalism 19), is equally applicable to detective story tellers alike.

The importance of *strategic location*, a term contributed by Said, of a writer in his/her detective story, is very important. Most of the novels, under analysis, have authors as narrative voices: the narrator is not a character, but omnipresent throughout the story that is capable of informing the reader not only about everything happens in the story but their implications as well. The narrator assumes authentic knowledge of the country where the story happens and provides details of

the people and their culture, wherever applicable. This gives the author the opportunity to authoritatively present his/her views, and thus an easy but stealthy access to the mindscape of the reader.

It is interesting to note the lack of studies connecting Islamophobia to ethnic or race studies. As we know, Critical Race Theory is based on the premise that race is basically a social construct, rather than physiological. There is a parallel between the arguments of Feminism and Race Theory: while Feminism claims that gender is a social construct, Race theory claims that race is a social construct. It means that discrimination, belittling, stereotyping of women or non-white people is basically the result of Male chauvinism, in the first case, and white supremacy in the latter's case. Since being a Muslim is more a matter of ethnicity than anything else, it should come under the purview of ethnic studies. Unfortunately, Islamophobic studies were not counted under this emerging branch of knowledge. If there is fear of Muslims and their religion, and consequent discrimination towards them exist in the physical reality and the same is reflected in literature, all these happen not because they belong to any specific race, but because all Muslims, despite of their regional and national varieties, share some common traits, in their individual and social behaviour; hence, Ethnic studies definitely can cover this discrimination under its purview. This research is utilizing the perspectives and scope of Ethnic and Race studies in addition to Orientalism.

The relation between knowledge and power was well defined by Foucault and since the second half of the 20th century their inter relation and interdependence was undisputedly accepted. All the novelists studied in this research are from the

‘powerful’ West, and the subject of their writings are portrayals of the less powerful East, especially Muslims. As Foucault said, “...the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information” (Foucault Power 52), is true in creative writings also. Those who have power creates knowledge, and they decide what is knowable and by whom, and also that the same people decide the facts, as they have other powers like political, economic, and academic.

One of the arguments of this research is that anything related to Muslims is highly politicized, because of, as put forward by Edward Said, “... the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West, ... (and) the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, and its effects upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large.” (Said Orientalism 28). This research finds it true to verbatim, as out of the eight novels it studies, four are Palestine based. Besides this research gets its momentum by resorting to Said’s word that his *Orientalism* “...offers a marvellous instance of the interrelations between society, history, and textuality for students of literature and criticism.” (26).

In his detailed analysis of *homo sacer* and his status in the (out of) society, Giorgio Agamben said that "to ban' someone is to say that anyone may harm him" and "whoever is banned from his city on pain of death must be considered as dead"(69). Actually, he was quoting thinkers like Desiderio Cavalca to establish the fact that since antiquity the ‘outlaw’ is always is one thrown out of the societal protection and he is one who acquires the status of ‘wolf man’ liable to be killed. One of the paradoxes of our time is the unintelligible disparity between the hyper

consciousnesses of 'rights' on the one hand and zero feelings towards mass destruction on the other. Our consciousness of rights is not limited to 'human rights', but also extended to 'animal rights' and further extended to environmental rights (environmental protection). That is why almost all nations have innumerable powerful laws to protect rights of human beings in general, women rights, juvenile rights, animal rights, laws to protect environment, declaration of some species as 'protected' and it reached even the extreme of levying ships millions of dollars for polluting the ocean on the way of their voyage! None of this elevation of modern civilisation prevented it from being 'uncivilized nomads' who made *homo saceres* who are devoid of all social protection and are to be annihilated. The modern version of the *homo sacer* is the terrorist (individual or small groups) and 'rogue nations' (if it is an entire community or nation). Whatever Agamben said about the status of 'werewolf' in ancient societies is equally applicable to these modern 'werewolves'. Once an individual or a group of individuals or even an entire community was named 'terrorist' (modern day 'werewolf') immediately they become devoid of all sanctity of humankind and are thrown out of protection all law-and-order system. That is why brutal murders of individuals who were named 'terrorist' did not evoke any consciousness of anyone including those who call themselves 'rights group'. That is why, Guantanamo detainees, none of them were prosecuted but released sooner or later, were open to all types physical and mental tortures, yet no 'law' came to protect them. That is why, when countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, Iran, Syria, Libya were attacked and torpedoed the entire nation fabric, no outcry was there against the destruction both people and properties, because they were 'rogue nations' or modern day 'werewolves'. This happen with

such an easiness in modern times because various political authorities along with international media successfully made a modern version of 'werewolf'. The most common forms of modern 'werewolffing' are branding as terrorist and 'antinational'. Twentieth century witnessed emergence of a number of new nation states, and feeling of nationalism based on geographically boundaried states became wide spread. A natural consequence was the creation of difference between 'national' and 'antinational'. Most of the modern nations have very strict laws to define 'anti-nationals' and such laws inflict severe punishment to anyone who is branded as 'anti-national'. When an individual or a group got branded either 'terrorist' or 'anti-national' they are easy preys to any aggression from the part of all those who are neither 'terrorist' nor 'ant-national', because the plight of modern day 'were wolves' is much worse than the werewolves of the tribal communities.

Further, Agamben's analysis of bio-politics, as "the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power" (76) also helps in this research to understand how and why even the 'private' religious beliefs and practices of individuals become a matter of public concern or rather the concern of the state. According to him "in bourgeois democracy, bare life leads to a primacy of the private over the public and of individual liberties over collective obligations." (77). When human private life is so engrossed with political life, it is inevitable that power sources define 'us' and 'them'; and whoever is categorised as 'them' or 'other, destined to bear the burden of undesirable werewolf. Unfortunately, people from countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya and Palestine are the poor werewolves of our time. Hence international media or agencies like the UNO, do not

feel the burden of protecting human rights or right to exist, to that matter, of people from those 'rogue states', as their life is unworthy of being lived. What Hannah Arendt wrote about the refugees from Nazi Germany becomes true in the case of modern day 'werewolves' (both terrorists and anti-nationals). According to her, "The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were...confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships -- except that they were still human"(81), and the horror of such 'losing of rights' were the plights of Palestinian Muslims, Guantanamo detainees and millions of Iraqi children, women and old men. Talking about occupied Palestine (four novels studied in this research are about Palestine), the observation made by French political theorist Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès about the rights of citizens dividing into active and passive. According to him, "All inhabitants of a country must enjoy the rights of passive citizens (but) all are not active citizens...those who would not at all contribute to the public establishment must have no active influence on public matters... (consequently) those condemned to a punishment either restricting personal freedom or bringing disgrace . . . will not be citizens" (83-84), hence for a state like Israel, Palestinians are not 'active' citizens and consequently have no 'active' rights!

According to Agamben, modern bio-politics constantly redefines who is inside and who is outside of the realm of rights (84), and accordingly, *homo sacer* also is redefined. That is why for the West, Jews were *homo sacer* for a long period of time, but when Nazi Germany attempted ethnic cleansing on them, status of Jews

were elevated, they were removed from *homo sacer* status and the entire West supported establishing Israel, a state for Jews. When communists made their dominant presence in the international politics in the post-World War II world, *homo sacer* of the West was redefined, and communists were attributed all negative qualities so that they were portrayed as enemy of humanity. The West again modified their *homo sacer* after the end of Cold War, and it was the turn of Muslims. The western countries who helped Afghani Mujahideen fighters both in terms of money, weapons and technology to defend their nation against then USSR, during 1980s, changed their *homo sacer* from communists to Muslims, once the USSR collapsed. Within a few years same Afghani fighters became terrorists, as their status was redefined from ‘active’ citizens to *homo sacres*, and because they have “lost the quality of legal good that their very existence no longer has any value, either for the person leading such a life or for society”(88); and Karl Binding, 20th century German jurist, finds that there is no reason, “...not to authorize the killing of these men, who are nothing but the frightening reverse image”(88- quote from Binding). It is this verdict of authorizing to kill we have seen in extra judicial killings happened in multiple countries, bombing of even residential areas killing thousands including women and children and ‘pre-emptive’ assassinations in countries like Palestine. We should repeat what Agamben said about these murders, that is, “The concept of ‘life unworthy of being lived’ is clearly not an ethical one... rather, (it is) a political concept in which what is at issue is the extreme metamorphosis of sacred life.” (90).

Literature review and point of departure

Study of Islamophobia in general and research into manifestation of Islamophobia through literary works is nothing new. In fact, recent surge of academic interest in Islamophobic studies made it to develop itself into a specific 'area' of studies. As Brian Klug opined, Islamophobic studies "functions as an organizing principle for scholarship and research" (Klug 2) Though Islamophobia has been existing for centuries, it is only in 1990s, as an academic topic it got wide attention in public and political discourse. Since September 2001, there was an escalation of Islamophobic incidents throughout the world. Literature and other creative articulations like movies also were not exempted from expressing Islamophobia in increased volume. Consequently, there was a surge in the academic discourse on Islamophobia and there is no scarcity for publications on Islamophobia in literature.

The University of California even has a journal called *Islamophobia Studies Journal* specifically for this purpose. Similarly, it is more than a decade now that the University of California has started organizing Annual International Islamophobia Studies Conference. For the last few years there has been a Transatlantic Islamophobia Studies Conference in Paris. Armin Muftik published the Islamophobia studies bibliography that enumerates more than 200 books, 60 edited volumes and more than 800 articles in books or journals. The Carter Centre, USA has come with a book titled, *Countering the Islamophobia Industry: Toward more Effective Strategies*. Judith Tinnes authored *Bibliography: Muslims and the West* (published by JSTOR), a bibliography of publications on relation between Muslims

and the West in the context of recent terrorism. It covers hundreds of sources published until September 2015. Besides there are PhD theses exploring Islamophobia in literature in general, or in specific authors, specific works, works of a specific period and so on.

The emergence of Postcolonial literary theories including Orientalism definitely encouraged a wide range of research into the popular fiction and nonfiction works to find manifestations of misrepresentation and othering of colonized people. In addition, feminist literary theories encouraged analysis of literary works from a feminist point of view to find out how women were marginalized, misrepresented and how literature was used as a powerful tool to retain the already existing male dominance in every walk of life. Similarly, there are several studies in which othering and estrangement of Muslims in literature was analysed. Besides being unnecessary, enumerating all such works and studies here will be a heavy burden to the limited space of this thesis. But the following are some of them and found very important with reference to the focus of this research

Racism and Islamophobia: A Critique of Selected American Literary Texts, is a PhD thesis by Humaira Riaz, that studies latent Islamophobia in novels of Lorain Adams (*Harbor* 2004), John Updike (*Terrorist* 2006) and Don DeLillo (*Falling Man* 2007). John L. Esposito had a different approach in his book *The Islamic Threat- Myth or Reality?* towards Islamophobia studies. In this book he is analyzing the facts that might have led to the widespread Islamophobia, especially in the aftermaths of September 11 terror attacks. His study could doubtlessly establish that the Islamic threat is myth and there are more serious threats to the

West than Muslim terrorist. Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, also explores the subject Islamophobia almost in the same line of thought in his 2011 book *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists?* There will not be a better book that helps to understand the history of Islamophobia in the west, than *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe - Perception of Other*, edited by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto. In her PhD thesis titled *Body and Soul: Turning Turk in Early Modern Barbary Captivity Narratives*, Marion Ann Keady also does a similar academic service of exploring the Islamophobia (Turk phobia) expressed in 17th & 18th century captivity narratives. Moreover, there are authors and researchers like, Peter Gottschalk, Gabriel Greenberg (*Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* 2008), Maheen Haider (*The Racialization of the Muslim Body and Space in Hollywood* 2020), etc. who contributed a lot to understand and interpret Islamophobia in literature and media. Like that *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* by Evelyn Alsultany, 2012 book published by New York University Press provides detailed analysis of role of media in perpetuating Islamophobia. An analysis (CfMM 2020) of the news reporting by the most important western news agencies like Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France-Press (AFP), etc for the last two decades show that more than 60% of news reporting related to Muslims and Islam is negative. Similarly American media gives much higher coverage for terrorist attacks when the suspect or the perpetrator is Muslim, than similar attacks committed by people of other religions. Already there are plenty of studies focusing on Islamophobia expressed in movies. Jack Shaheen's study of Hollywood movies and Muslim representation, documented in his book

Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People (2012) stands out of the queue. Shaheen points out that, out of a thousand Hollywood movies ranging for a period of hundred years from 1896 to 2000, in which Arab/Muslim characters appear, a big majority (936- 93%) portrays Muslims as sub humans, who are sinister, untrustworthy and greedy for power and pleasure and depict Arab countries as places dwelled by people who are cruel, savage and exotic. Besides, research exploring Islamophobia in specific authors and specific literary works also is in currency. One of the focuses of the post September 11 literary research is Islamophobia and representation of Muslims.

Though Islamophobia in literature has been much explored and still being probed, there are two things this research wishes to bring out: 1) Islamophobia in detective fiction; though a very popular genre, yet appeared to be a less explored area in my understanding, and 2) underlying connection between and Islamophobia in literature and geopolitical strategies of the western countries towards Muslim countries. The scope of this research can be verified by what Hubbard Phil and others said about the importance of ‘thinking geographically’, “...because it provides an enriched view and understanding of past and present thought.” (Hubbard 238). Connecting literature and geopolitics is, in a way an extension of thinking geographically. Since the number of fictions that can be attributed to have Islamophobic approach is very large and studies about them are not scarce, the scope of this research is narrowed down to post 9/11 detective fiction.

Thesis statement/Hypothesis

Since literature, in all form has wide reach to all segments of society, it is

highly influential in formulating the concepts, ideas, beliefs, and image of oneself and others. This fact can be further extended, that, Islamophobia expressed in literature, definitely will influence shaping the approach of the readers towards communities and nations. When policy makers are influenced by Islamophobic narratives and wrong representations, they are led to wrong assumptions and prejudices, and the same will reflect in their geopolitical strategies. This study aims to establish this fact that literature is one of the tools used knowingly or unknowingly for spreading Islamophobia, and such literary works influence readers, and when policy makers are influenced by such literature, they become prey to wrong conclusions and prejudices, which in turn will reflect in their geopolitical strategies that in turn water more such Islamophobic literature.

Organisation of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five main chapters including introduction and conclusion, and a 6th chapter on Recommendation was included as per the University directions. Chapter one is Introduction that details about the background of this research, its rationale and relevance. The chapter logically presents interplay between Islamophobia in literature and geopolitical strategies, the current scenario of Muslims, why they feel threatened and the current scenario was tried to understand by juxtaposing to the past. Since this research is focused on the contribution to and impact of Islamophobia latent in literary texts and cultural manifestations like cinema and mass media in formulating geopolitical strategies of western countries (non-Muslim) towards Muslim countries, it necessitates a very good understanding of Islamophobia in its all aspects. Similarly, geopolitics is an

area not directly related to literature, hence it requires a special dealing. So, Islamophobia, geopolitics and Orientalism were briefly described in this chapter. The chapter also covers areas like, literature review, theoretical support and research hypothesis.

The following three chapters present the analysis of the novels under study from three different standpoints, to find out manifestation of Islamophobia latent in them, and their geopolitical implications. Chapter 2 is presenting analysis of how western women (West and White) writers deal with topic of the orient, contribution to Islamophobia, methods of manifesting the same in their novels and above all how much such Islamophobia latent in their works might be related to the formulation of geopolitical strategies on the one hand and justify the western approaches to Muslim countries, on the other. Of the six authors the research is focussing, Kate Jessica Raphael and Zoe Ferraris are white women authors. Chapter 3 takes the perspectives further and focuses on the novels of Western men (Male & White). Matt Beynon Rees and Robert Ferrigno are white males. Chapter 4 further extends this critique by analysing the novels by Ausma Zehanat Khan and Sujata Massey, who are non-Europeans.

Each of these core chapters is analysing how the select literary works are contributing to Islamophobia and in turn how that Islamophobia is instrumental in shaping geopolitical strategies to Muslim countries. Each author was given special analysis. All possible overt and covert manifestations of Islamophobia in each novel was analysed in a detailed manner, and such Islamophobic occurrences were presented grouping them from a geopolitical perspective. Hence the presentation is

logical and it makes easy to comprehend the argument of the thesis. Establishing the connection between Islamophobia present in the literary works and the geopolitical strategies of the West to Muslim countries may not be that easy, nor may it not be digestible to everyone but a person, with critical thinking, might be able to connect them both.

Chapter 5 is establishing the research hypothesis that Islamophobia is latent in abundance in all the novels under study and the same effect policy makers as well as the general mass. Further the policy makers are influenced by the negative images of Muslims, and thus, the approaches to individual Muslims and policies related to Muslim countries reflect that detest thus produced, and national and international policies cannot escape such a gripping influence.

Chapter 2

Fiction as (Mis)Representation:

Islamophobia in the White Women's Writings

Those who tell the stories rule the world is a Native American proverb that tells us about the power of narratives. Ever since human beings have started living in groups, they had stories. It is believed that long before the development of written language, ancient human beings narrated stories in cave drawings. Cave drawings helped us to understand ancient civilisations of a period long before the birth of formal recording of history. Love of stories and narratives is universal to human beings, for stories quench their thirst for curiosity and appeal to their imagination. All these speak for the relevance of stories in human life. The three detective novels analysed in this chapter are very popular and each one of them has been in the best seller list, and consequently, highly powerful to influence the understanding about the Muslim societies and perspectives of the readership towards them.

Similarly, we know that narratives are present in every age, in every place, in every society and it can be international, trans-historical, trans-cultural, and that is why Roland Barthes remarked that human beings are 'narrating animals' (251). As Kerby defined, narratives are the telling of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed (39). Regarding the potential of narratives, Nigel Rapport stated that, it "... provides a way of temporally experiencing the world by the way it records and recounts, defines, frames, orders, structures, shapes,

schematizes and connects events.” (Rapport et al., 297). Thus, we know that narratives have power to shape reality and ‘create’ reality, and when reality is created, if it is with prejudiced notions, the negative result will have long lasting impacts on the readership, which in turn will reflect in their thoughts, approaches and policies.

Since one of the most remarkable manifestations of Islamophobia is through stereotyping, some insights into the problem of stereotyping are necessary. Stereotyping is commonly understood as attributing identical features to all members of a category or class, or “relatively rigid and oversimplified conceptions of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labelled with the group characteristics.” (Wrightsman quoted in Rapport.356). Gordon Allport rightly observed that origin of stereotypes was hearsay and rumour not induction from proven fact, and from a simple projection of one’s own values and expectations onto the environing world (Allport 356), and that is why stereotyping is always looked as pejorative, yet it continues against various segments of people. Given stereotyping's vital role in fostering Islamophobia, this research specifically examines instances in the novels where Muslim characters embody features historically attributed to Muslims by anti-Muslim forces.

Though all novels come under the purview of this research are rich with Islamophobic references both covert and overt, the depth, style and the focus are different from author to author. So, for the sake of convenience and logical coherence, the authors were grouped as western women, western men and non-westerners. Out of the six authors, two are American women (western and white):

Kate Jessica Raphael and Zoe Ferraris. This chapter aims at meticulous analysis of three novels, namely *Murder under the Bridge* (MUB), *Murder under the Fig Tree* (MUF), by Raphael and *Finding Nouf* (published in UK as *The Night of Mi'raj*, here onwards referred as *Finding Nouf*) by Zoe Ferraris. Palestine is the centre of stories as crimes in both Raphael novels happen there, and Saudi Arabia is the focus of Ferraris novel.

Murder under the Bridge tells the story of Nadya, a migrant domestic worker from Uzbekistan who was murdered and left in the border between Palestine and Israel. The murder was accused on Fareed, a Palestinian youth who was in love with Nadya, and was proved later that he had dragged the body of Nadya after her death. Israeli army arrested him and acquired a confession of the murder from him. Rania, the only police woman in Palestine was given the investigation charge initially, but once her bosses understood the Israeli involvement in the murder, the case was withdrawn from her. But she kept on with her investigation in her own way with the help of Chloe, an American social worker in Palestine and Chloe's friend, Avi an Israeli Jew. Their investigation gradually unearthed the truth that Nadya was murdered by Israel Wilensky, a former colonel in Israeli air force, because she had access to a secret paper that tells about his involvement in murdering unarmed Palestinian women and children a few years ago.

Murder under the Fig Tree is a sequel to *Murder under the Bridge*, and the major characters are same, and the story happens after a few months of the events in the first novel. It tells the story of the murder of Daoud, a young Palestinian gay in Azzawiya village. It was believed that he was murdered by Israeli soldiers, as he had

heated arguments earlier with soldiers. At the same time, Rania, the Palestinian police woman was in Israeli prison on no apparent charge. It is suggested that a highly influential Israeli officer, Colonel Israel Wilensky, whose crime was exposed by her in the first novel, is behind her arrest. Chloe, now back home, immediately flew to Israel to help Rania get out of prison. Chloe sought help from Benny Lazar, the Israeli police officer, who assured her release on one condition that she should investigate Daoud murder. Benny was not fully convinced that soldiers killed Daoud, but at the same time, the forensic evidence told that Daoud was killed by bullets, usually used by Israelis. The soldier, whose gun was used for the murder, was even arrested by Israel. Though initially Rania was not ready to take the investigation charge, the fact that she lost her job, made her rethink, and started her investigation. She realized that there were many figures she could not tally with. Her investigation led her to a strange world of gays in Palestine. Daoud was a gay who was in love with two guys: Elias from his own village and Ron Benyamin, an Israeli soldier ever since they attended together a camp in Germany. Yusuf, brother of Elias didn't like this relation, and once he felt that his brother was spoiled by Daoud, and in a unpremeditated moment he shot him with the gun he took from their rendezvous. Since the gun belonged to Ron, the Israeli soldier, everybody thought that Daoud was murdered by Israel.

Both Raphael novels can be described as iconoclasts as they dared to present a Palestinian woman, with very limited power at her disposal, investigating into crimes involving powerful Israeli figures. On the surface, both novels are impartial, as they placed high ranking Israeli officers as culprits. Besides, the 'weak'

Palestinian police woman Rania was given the lead role of investigator and she even proved that she was powerful to infiltrate, though in a limited way, the fearsome system of Israel. However, beneath this engaging and seemingly progressive narrative lies a subtle yet problematic implication: the portrayal of Palestinian life and the Israel-Palestine relationship may leave readers with a misleading sense of realism. The danger is that the fictionalized world, while thrilling and innovative, might be mistaken for an accurate reflection of the actual political and social dynamics—thus promoting a distorted sense of reality. For example, Starhawk, best-selling author of *The Spiral Dance* commented “Kate Raphael writes great women characters and does a fantastic job of portraying the realities of Palestinian life as background to a gripping story.” (Amazone). A common reader, who knows the scarcity of Palestine detective stories, and the rarity of Palestinian sleuth, definitely will find Raphael’s Palestine mysteries highly interesting and appreciable. Moreover, these novels are instrumental to this research as they concurrently illustrate Palestinian life, culture, and interactions with Israeli entities, while simultaneously contributing to a favourable depiction of the Israeli occupation that legitimizes Western pro-Israel foreign policy. Both these novels have abundant Islamophobic statements, remarks and description which might be instrumental in shaping geopolitical strategies towards Palestine and other Muslim countries.

Finding Nouf tells the story of murder of Saudi teenager by her sister, out of jealousy. Nouf was missing for a few days and Nayir, a desert expert helped her family, the Shrawis, to find her, who was believed to have run away to the desert. After her body was found in the desert, autopsy concluded that she had been

drowned in desert flash flood and the case was closed. Later Nayir understood that though the family bribed the coroner's office to close the case, they have certain doubts, and Othman, her adopted brother, along with his fiancée Katya, is doing a sort of private investigation. Nayir also joined the team. Katya and Nayir became so close that they dug out many evidences leading to Nouf's murderer. Nouf was pregnant, and it was discovered that she was planning to escape her family and Saudi way of life, and wanted to settle in America. Though she had been engaged to Qazi, she arranged an American to help her settle in the US. Further investigation led Nayir - Katya team to realize that Nouf was in love with Othman and got pregnant from him, but it was not Othman who killed her. It was her sister Abir who kidnapped her from her rendezvous and left her to die in the desert, as Abir was in love with Qazi whom Nouf was betrothed to.

Like in Raphael stories, Ferraris' novel also creates umpteen numbers of opportunities to present Saudis (Muslims) as people of queer beliefs and behaviours. Their system of criminal investigation was portrayed so corrupted that any murder can be turned to just an accidental death. The society was portrayed so rigid with regards to the male -female relations. Here also Muslims were shown a path to escape their current 'pathetic' situation: to go to the US or become modern by following western values.

Islamophobic references and inferred suggestions in these novels are of four distinct categories:

1. Presenting Israel as quite a normal nation like any other, which is not bad as sometimes portrayed by the media, and even if any mistake happens from the

Israeli side, it could be rectified by utilising its powerful law and order system,

2. Life in Palestine is not that bad as often presented by the UN and other agencies, it is quite opposite, as they are rich, have good comfortable life, and even travel restrictions Israel imposed are not much of a problem, (1 & 2 applicable only to Raphael novels)
3. Muslims (Palestine & Saudi) are culturally bad, have corrupted internal system and most often they are the cause of their misery, and
4. Option/s before Muslims (Palestine & Saudi) is to be at par with modern world by rising to the expectation of the West and Israel.

I. NORMALISING ISRAEL AND SIMPLIFYING ITS OCCUPATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

What Edward Said categorically stated about the inability of a scholar to be absolutely impartial is equally applicable to creative writers as well. When we apply his remarks, “No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position...” (Orientalism.15), we can find that authors also are in a similar impasse from which they cannot escape. Conscious or unconscious, their perspectives might be influenced by the dominant perceptions of the society they live in. Naturally someone who lives in a post 9/11 America or Europe might have developed some wrong notions about Muslims in general, and those notions definitely might have been shaped by the torrents of anti- Muslim rhetoric appeared in popular media.

While mentioning Foucault's laughter with regards to reading a passage from Argentinean novelist Jorge Luis Borges about Chinese encyclopaedia, Derek Gregory stated that Western order "...has become so commonplace that it has become axiomatic, so much part of our established order of things that it is easy to forget that this order has been established (and)... it is a fabrication..." (Gregory 3). Just like what Gregory said, we can say that, as far as most of the world population is concerned (especially those who were born after 1970s), Israel Occupation of Palestine is "so commonplace" and it is easy to forget that the present Israel is not what the UNO ratified or the world leaders of post-World War II envisaged. What the world considered as occupation gradually became not 'occupation', and what the world earlier considered as freedom struggle, gradually became 'terrorism'. Most of the youngsters of our time honestly believe that stone throwing Palestinians are the root cause of Israel- Palestine problem, *not* Israel that confiscated their land, that is continuously extending settler colonies to Palestinian villages, and that destroys their olive plantations, because they are totally ignorant of the historical facts about Palestine and the formation of Israel, and they know only what they find in popular media, movies and literature.

A critical analysis of both Raphael novels will expose many occasions where Israel policy of ever-expanding occupation and settlers' approaches to native Palestinians were presented in quite normalized tone. The uncritical reader just passes through such pages as if they are normal and there is nothing special about them. Rania sets out to begin her investigation about the stolen car, that later lead her to the murder case, and had to stop on the way as the road had been blocked for

more than two hours. The scene was presented as if it is a pastime: “Men sat on the hoods and stood in clusters smoking... to the right...men, women perched as comfortably as possible...” (Raphael MUB 4). The story finds nothing terrible about the fact that millions of Palestinians are at the mercy of Israel. In the same chapter, Abu Anwar, an old Palestinian farmer was passing his family’s olive plantation to avoid Israeli border police, and there was a large sewage pipe coming from Elkana settlement colonies. The sewage disposal is open to the Palestinian villages, but in the narration this inhuman deed is presented as normal: “... he had to pay close attention to the exposed sewage pipe, pouring waste from the settlement of Elkana into Azzawiya...” (9).

It is estimated that more than a million olive trees of Palestinians are destroyed by Israel since its occupation, (Chelala) and the same process is continuing even today. As far as Palestine is concerned Olive trees are both life and culture. The novel mentions it in such a casual way that a reader of this novel feels nothing special about that ruthless act. The tone of the narrative is that there is nothing to be done about all these things. It is not sure if a twenty first century reader understands the complicated nature of Palestine daily life, where each ordinary step in daily life might be interrupted and blocked by the Israeli authorities. Besides, Israeli cruelties to Palestinians are justified as they were done out of necessity and to protect Israeli life. The issue of curtailing even freedom of movement on the way of the mission of protecting Israeli life, does not raise any question. When Rania asked the soldier about the prolonged road block, his answer testifies to this fact:

“Do you know how much longer it (road block-bracket mine) will be?” she asked. “We need to get to work”. “Work? What work?”... “I am a teacher” she said. “Well you might as well go home”... “Why so long?” (She asked) “You see that car?”... “There might be a bomb in it” (6).

The soldier had no worries about Palestinians who could not go for their work, because such things are just normal. Any inhuman and undemocratic action was justified in the name of safety of Israel. This normalisation continues by equalizing murders of Palestinians by the occupying Israeli army or Jewish settlers with the normal murders happen in any society; “Most deaths in this area were not mysteries. People were killed by the army, or by Israeli settlers, or they were collaborators, or a family feud exploded in unfortunate violence” (23).

It is well known that a clear distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘political’ knowledge is impossible (Said, *Orientalism* 14), as any knowledge becomes political at one or another stage. Hence, a seemingly harmless casual remark by a character may take a political stance at a later stage when read by readers of different cultures and backgrounds. So, we find that apolitical statements made by characters might take a political stance and the instances extracted below are illustrating this fact. A major incident related to the still expanding Israel occupancy of Palestine lands is the confiscation of olive plantation of Abu Shaadi, a character in the novel. Perhaps Palestine could be the only place in the modern world, where people live in constant fear of losing one’s house and land any time to the occupying force. Abu Shaadi received a very short notice of the confiscation of his olive plantation that he has inherited from his grandfather. He asked help from volunteer organizations and a

handful of people including Chloe and Avi came there, when the bulldozers arrived with the accompaniment of Israeli military. The story presents them in such a casual way that the reader never catches the horror of the situation. The description was mixed up with Chloe's lesbian attraction towards another activist Tina, and casual conversations of other members of the volunteer group. Chloe requested media presence expecting that it might help to compel Israel authorities to withdraw, but response from media was cold, since uprooting olive trees, setting fire to olive trees and confiscation of Palestine lands, etc. were so common that it bears no news value: "She had called every contact she had the night before, and some of them had said, they would try to make it, but uprooting trees was not news any more. One TV reporter had told her to call him if there was any violence" (52). The most terrible part of this episode is when the Israeli army and bulldozers withdrew to come back after two days, in the face of the protest from NGO activists and the foreign sympathizers including Chloe. They reasoned with the officer, "You are obligated to give a three-day notice of confiscation of land...(Shimon said) The captain was getting in his jeep, and so were the soldiers. A slow cheer rose from the collected body, as the bulldozers swung around..." (59). So, when the bulldozers went back, all of them including Abu Shaadi and his two sons were so happy that they celebrated the momentary victory. It is a cruel joke. The family was so happy as the occupying of their land was postponed for just two days and then they will lose it forever. The reader, along with the narrator feels good of the Israeli occupying force, that they are not that bad, because they follow certain laws. Only when we read between lines it occurs to us that it makes no difference if it was one day notice or three days-notice. The reader is made to forget that the Palestinian is losing his

property for ever to an occupying nation and this happening in modern times where people believe in human rights, national sovereignty, and above all the UNO.

The most notable example from the novel to normalize the occupancy of Palestinian land is cleverly put in the conversation between Rania and her mother-in-law. When Um Bassam, her mother-in-law narrated her the incident of Khalid, her seven years old son, calling a big rooster pecking one of the little chicks, the 'yahudi' Rania objected. She said, "That is not good. 'Jew' does not mean a bully. It is like saying 'terrorist' means 'Palestinian'" (211). The novel continues this casual domestic scene, but adding politics and political philosophy. "They both laughed at that. Certainly no one used *irhabi*, terrorist, to refer to the Israeli settlers who shot at Palestinians in the fields (212). Thus, even the Palestinians are accustomed to tag *terrorist* with Palestinians only, even if they have only stones and no guns, and in contrast the Jewish settlers have guns and they shoot natives, but they are only self-defenders. The episode comes to the climax when Um Bassam said: "Years ago,... we were friends with the Yahud... Before the Intifada. The settlers from the Elkana used to come at the stores. Some of them even invited to their houses." "You didn't go?" "Of course we did..." (212). The reader is completely baffled at this unnatural and unlikely tale, that after seven hundred thousand Palestinians were forcefully kicked out of their home land, the remaining Palestinians were in good relation with those foreign settlers. So, the suggestion is that if things became worse for Palestinians it is because of them and their bad deeds like Intifada, and that Israel is just trying to protect themselves from these barbarians. The reader is familiar with this reasoning because whenever the media are inquisitive of the murders,

bulldozing and bombing of Palestinians, this argument was the response by the Israeli and US leaders. Knowingly or unknowingly the narrative subscribes to the usual Israeli theory of *self-defence*.

‘To err is human and to forgive divine’ is a popular saying (Pope 14), but the saying does not justify evil deeds done repeatedly. Since 1948 there are tens of thousands of reports about Israel atrocities against Palestinians, though pro-Israel International media, quite often, snub such news, and the unbiased readers will have a basic general understanding of what could be happening in those lands which claimed by both Israel and Palestine. In addition to media reports and accusations by Palestinian organizations and human rights activists, recent studies like *Rise and Kill First* by Ronen Bergman, an Israeli journalist substantiate those charges. “Since World War II, Israel has assassinated more people than any other country in the Western world” (Bergman 12). Human rights violations, illegal occupation, targeted killings, kidnapping of Palestinians, unwarranted house searches and arrests, imprisonment without proper trial, and using lethal weapons against unarmed protesters are some of the common deeds Israel is usually accused of, and on all such occasions Israeli authorities and its allied forces either denied or justified them in the name of self-defence. Raphael novels portray a number of scenes and narrate anecdotes in which Israeli atrocities were casually referred to as activities to protect itself and done out of necessity.

Israel is portrayed as law abiding

Raphael presented some occasions that endorse Israel as a law-abiding country and one that respects international voice. After accidentally finding the dead

body of Nadya on his way to home plantation, Abu Anwar was trying to identify her, and he thought she could be a Japanese as she resembles the image of girls he had seen in a picture of bombing of Hiroshima. The occasion brought to his mind a thought about bomb and what happens if Israel becomes a nuclear power: “If the Israelis get hold of this weapon, we are truly finished. But now he heard that they had the weapon. Yet he and his family were still there, Allah be praised.” (Raphael. MUB.11). Thus, even Abu Anwar understands that his (Palestinians’) fear was groundless and Israel is not as bad as he thought. Another instance is Jenin Camp Massacre 2002. The actual incident was an Israeli military attack on Jenin refugee camp in West Bank, killing hundreds of unarmed civilians along with some members of the resistance groups. The novel portrays only one incident in which Colonel Wilensky was accused of murdering innocent people and “... there was a small-scale international outcry about that. In response the Israeli Knesset had a convened a commission. That commission had investigated Colonel Wilensky and his troops and concluded that there had been no wrong doing.” (166).

This episode appears to serve both overt and covert purposes. As far as the crime story is concerned this episode flashes light to the past of Wilensky, and it is this clue that helped Rania and others to pinpoint the murderer on him. At the same time this ‘pure’ knowledge becomes ‘political’ as we know that literature does not convey message through words and lines alone, but powerful messages can be hidden between lines as well. A reading between the lines of this episode tells that the novel wants the reader to understand that Israel is not a nation that ignores or tramples legal procedure, but it values international opinion, is concerned about the

life of Palestinians, and above all, when someone makes a mistake, it has all legal mechanisms to rectify such wrong doings. Both international organizations like Human Rights Watch and Palestine accuse Israel of not abiding by the international rules and Geneva Convention, as there are innumerable UN resolutions Israel did not adhere to. It is when placed against this factual background, this episode becomes political. This eye washing continues when we were told that at least five Palestinian victims of Jenin incident got compensation. What else a nation can do? The bottom line is, Israel is not violating any human rights, if some people commit mistakes, such problems are addressed as per law, and if Palestinians have any concern, they can approach corrective forces like Parliament, enquiry commission etc. Though we know that ‘fact is fact and fiction is fiction’, when real characters, nations, incidents appear in fiction, they may take the value of ‘facts’, and thus it becomes problematic when such factious ‘facts’ are found opposite to real facts. The story of compensation to Palestine victims and Attorney to help victims, repeatedly appeared in *Murder under the Fig Tree*, “...last year, she had met a young man in the Jenin refugee camp who had gotten a big settlement from the Israeli army after he was shot” (Raphael.MUF.97). Thorough research will bring us to the conclusion that there is no such instance of Israel paying compensation to the Palestinians for the atrocities its military did. Rania said on multiple occasions that she was looking into the facts about Daoud murder, only because “... If she could prove the army killed Daoud, his family might get a settlement too.” (97). She repeats the same argument on another occasion (100) when she discusses the case with her boss Mustafa. Repeated reference of this kind will result in what cognitive psychologists

call “illusory truth effect” one that makes readers believe that what is repeated is true.

Chloe was kidnapped by Wilensky at the airport when she was about to be deported, and he brought her to an abandoned military barrack. Rania and Avi reached there to save her. Since Rania was anxious about the people she might encounter, she kept Bassam’s gun with her, the only weapon their family has. It is illegal for Palestinians to keep a gun. She forced open the barrack door using the gun and saved Chloe from Wilensky. After everything went well, Rania was driven back home by Avi, but he ensured that Palestinians are unarmed, “Give me the gun, he said as he stopped the car above Azzawiya bridge. “Why? It was my husband’s”... she handed him the gun.” (Raphel MUB 316).

Even Avi, portrayed as a good Israeli, who empathized with their struggle and helped them on many occasions, does not want Rania to keep a gun. His reason was her house might be searched by Israeli soldiers, and if they found it, the entire family might end up in the prison, which is true. But the political message to Rania (Palestinians) is that, the desirable method for her is not the way of weapons, but to utilize Israeli law and its judiciary, because Israel is a country of justice, democracy, and above all rule of law. Against the machine guns held ready always by the Israeli soldiers, Palestinians must resort to the complaint box and wait.

Murder under the Bridge presented four important Israeli characters: Avi Levav, Benny Lazar, Nir Gelenter and Colonel Israel Wilensky. They can be pooled into three groups based on their degree of goodness. Avi is a human rights activist who helped Palestinians on multiple occasions. He is the embodiment of goodness.

He has shown a weakness in his stand for justice, only at the end of the story, when he realised that his father, a senior Air force officer in reserve, had a share, though unknowingly, in the crime of Wilensky. Benny Lazer, the Israeli police officer also is good in a limited sense of the word. The reader does not find any grudge against him, as whatever he did was as a part of his official duty. Though he was satisfied with Fareed as scapegoat for Nadya murder he considered Rania as a fellow officer and he shared information with her. Nir Gelenter, deputy minister of defence is basically good but has some personal weaknesses like sex. So, he bought Nadya from the agent and kept in his house as domestic helper cum baby sitter. He hushed information about the background of Nadya, her connection with Wilensky, and her having fake passport. That mistake can be excused as an attempt to cover up his illegal deed of buying Nadya from human traffickers, considering that any one may do the same in such situations. As Aristotle described his ideal tragic hero, as a good man, not virtuous or too bad, but always having lenience towards goodness, Nir Gelenter has lenience towards goodness. That is why he was ready to join team Rania to question Wilensky at the last scene, once he was almost convinced that it was his close friend who killed the girl. It is a fact that after Wilensky admitted his crime, Gelenter came forward to protect him and others, to cover the collateral damage. So, the reader may not find fault with him as his wrong deed was excusable. The last one of the four is the murderer Wilensky. He was accused of many evil deeds: killing unarmed Palestinians, influencing his team members to lie and Palestinian victims not to present before Knesset commission, becoming a part of human trafficking by buying Nadya for his sexual need, misusing Air force flight to fly into Israel unnoticed and unregistered to make an alibi and finally murdering

Nadya. Despite a series of crimes from his side the novel presents him as a man who is neither 'good' nor 'bad'. When he and Chloe were alone in the secret military building, he had chance to kill Chloe, yet he not only did not kill her but also told her that he was not a murderer and he had no aim to kill her. He just wanted the secret letter. Later when Rania and Avi forced open the door to save Chloe, he could have killed them all, as all of them were at point blank of his M16, and could have accused Rania, the Palestinian holding a gun, as the perpetrator. No one would have doubted him, as her presence there was completely illegal. Her mistakes are many: entered Israel without any ID, that too possessing a gun, and entered premises of the International Airport, a protected zone. Thus, the reader was convinced that whatever mistakes happened from his side are only the result of momentary weakness that any man might succumb to, besides that, his other crimes were to cover up his earlier deed. Thus, the final impression the novel has extended is again *to err is human, but just by erring, one may not necessarily be evil*. In short, all characters representing Israel are either good or ordinary men who have momentary weakness.

In addition, *Murder under the Fig Tree* presented a few more characters like Ron Benyamin and Lior (both from Israel army). Ron has been in love with Daoud and Lior is a friend of both Daoud and Ron. Both these characters present a very kind and humane profile. Lior used to allow Daoud to use his apartment as his rendezvous, because he is that considerate to a Palestinian. After Lior had a conversation with Rania and team, Chloe asked him to help Rania to cross the border because she had no permit and he was so happy to help them: "Okay...I better

look like I'm arresting you then, (then)... He reached for her right arm." (Raphael MUF 161). Again, Ron is such an innocent lover of Daoud that he even forgot his gun at their hideout.

Presenting Israel a normal country like any other and Israeli military with full of good men; will do the service of propaganda machine. It is a fact that Israel is an occupant nation that has not been in existence until 1948, and the country was established in a geographical area, until then was called Palestine. It is also a fact that the establishing the new nation displaced around seven million Palestinians who became refugees in different parts of the globe. Since then, remaining Palestinians have been living under occupying forces. The impact of this type of propagandist portrayals will reflect in shaping attitude towards both Israel and Palestine which in turn will reflect in geopolitical strategies as well.

The very core of *Murder under the Fig Tree* is the murder of Daoud, generally believed to be done by Israeli army, but proved later to be done by his gay lover's brother, a Palestinian teacher. The kernel story of the novel itself is conveying the message that many crimes, especially murders attributed to Israel, actually, are the result of internal feud in the Palestinian society. Here again fiction *creates* facts, as the above impression does not match the data available with Trading Economics (Palestine - Intentional Homicides), which says that homicide rate in Palestine is less than one per lakh. Investigation conducted by Rania found the reason for the murder was not political, but it was the brotherly worry of Yusuf about his brother Elias being spoiled by gay influence of Daoud, and possibility of migrating to the USA. Thus, the reader is encouraged to believe that many incidents

of similar nature could have the same end: Israel usually was accounted for by Palestine, but a Rania type investigation might prove otherwise. Whenever there was any murder attributed to Israeli army and the same led to a controversy in international media, Israel officially usually disowns the responsibility. Usually, such cases remain unresolved and gradually forgotten as new cases piled over the old ones. Though it is not appreciated to check fiction against facts, the core focus of this research, that is influence of fiction (*fiction*) in geopolitical strategies (*facts*) necessitates to find interlinks between them, hence the data from Amnesty International might be of some relevance. According to them, during 2022, on an average 15-25 Palestinians were killed by Israel monthly. All these become oblique and blurred to the reader of Palestine Mysteries by Kate Raphael.

Torture of Palestinians are mitigated

Again, *fiction* and *facts* come at cross roads when we discuss the physical tortures Palestinians are subjected to. There are authentic reports about physical and mental torture in Israel jails (Fidh 01). Many prisoners reported that they had been beaten, placed heavy sand bag on the head, or placed in crouching post and put to sleep deprivation for days, put to verbal abuse and intentional humiliation. In the novel, prison days of Rania pass by without much horror other than some disciplinary actions for not observing prison rules. Chapter four and five detailed her prison days: she has been provided with all basic amenities and timely food including morning coffee, but later she had been put to physical torture because she exhibited a Palestine flag there using her socks and underwear sent by Bassam. Once the jail officers had asked her to remove it, she declined to do. A group of soldiers

rushed to her cell, shot tear gas and they manhandled her. Yet this scene does not arise any sympathy in the reader towards Rania, as her law-breaking misbehaviour was presented in such a way. She did not undergo any major physical torture until she displayed Palestinian flag in her cell. It is this irony that arouses a question; is it not this detailed narration of Rania's jail days serves an important purpose of redrawing the image of brutal Israel jail to an ordinary one like in any other country? It becomes *political* when we see that two chapters devoted to narrate Rania's simple but silly way of protest by displaying a symbolic Palestine flag in her cell and the tortures followed mitigate the impact of first-hand horror experiences detailed by thousands of Palestinian victims available to the reader through various news media.

Another occasion, where the Israeli cause got justified, was when Rania had an argument with Tali, the jail officer. Tali said that her grandfather's brother was beheaded by the Arabs in 1929, so it was the Palestinians who murder Jews. During the conversation, though Rania expressed her optimism:

She tried to believe with all her heart that her family and the rest of their people would get their land back some day. But she was not a fool. The evidence of her eyes told her that the Israelis were building more and more every day. (Raphael MUF 55).

The passage is suggestive of two things: Jews suffered a lot at the hands of Palestinians, and that all sensible people like Rania knew that independent Palestine is never going to materialise. So, it is better to accept partial self-rule that Israel allows, and not to fight the heavily armed Israel. On another occasion this political

controversy of Palestine- Israel issue appeared while the NGO members were protesting confiscating Abu Shaadi's olive plantation. Itai, one of the NGO members stated, "...now it is not practical any more to talk about *two states*" (emphasize added) (Raphael MUB 54). At the very beginning of *Murder under the Bridge*, when Mustafa assigned her to investigate the stolen car, Rania's response was, "An Israeli car on an Israeli road. Why should the Palestinian police care about that?" (Raphael MUB 2). There is no Palestinian who accepts the geographical claim of Israel; instead, they believe only in a Palestine where Muslims, Jews and Christians live together.

Both of Raphael's novels are presenting an Israel that is concerned about the safety and peace of Palestine and not violating human rights as it was accused of. When Benny Lazar visited Rania in jail, he proposed her to investigate Daoud murder case and in return he would secure her release from jail. Initially Rania did not accept the proposal, as she was afraid of becoming a collaborator, and she believed that Benny wanted her to come with some Palestinians responsible for Daoud murder, so that Benny could save their soldiers from this case. For this reply Benny reciprocated, "The West Bank is a tinderbox right now. If some group in the village wanted this kid dead, there will be others who knew it. If his family finds out, it could set off a wave of reprisal killings. We can't risk that" (77). His intension is clear, he wants to *save* Palestine from a civil war.

In the geopolitical perspectives, presenting Israel like this, devoid of all negative qualities it has been accused of, has a crucial role to play. International voice is raised against occupation and human rights violation of Israel only because

people believe that Palestine, just like Israel, had a right to exist. The UN mandate also was to establish a Jewish Israel, Muslim Palestine and an international Jerusalem. That is part of history, but that history would be familiar only to those who were born in 1970s or earlier. In the present world the percentage of people who are either 80 or above is less than two. For people born after 1990s, who constitute 63 % of the current world population, Israel is the reality and Palestinians are just terrorists who pose threat to peaceful existence of Israel. This young generation is a major source in policy making in international relations. So, the decrease in international support for Palestine cause in the recent decades (For instance the USA, Germany, the European Union, Sweden, France etc. either reduced or completely suspended their contributions to UNRWA, the UN agency for relief works in Palestine- List of Countries), literary portrayal of Israel and Palestine might have contributed their share. This type of portrayal of Israel-Palestine relation will encourage in drafting anti- Palestine policies by various governments and NGOs reducing the sympathy different governments have towards victimised Palestine already had.

II. PRESENTING LIFE IN PALESTINE AS COSY

There are two opposing views about Palestine from the background of Palestine-Israel conflict: that Palestinians are one of the most unfortunate people in the modern times as their land was given by western colonial powers to Jews, by UN mandate, and they have been subjected to continuous existential problems; and they are the root cause of their troubles, because they didn't listen to the advice and didn't accept international verdicts about claims of Muslims and Jews for the same

land. Since, general western psyche believed that former British mandate Palestine could have been divided between the two claimants, and that it was Palestine who had rejected this division plan suggested by the UNO, their bend of mind is pro-Israel. Throughout the decades-old conflicts, most of the western countries had been with Israel, though they tried to control Israel from using heavy weapons against unarmed civilians. A big share of the western population, born after the end of Cold War in 1990, are familiar only with the pro-Israel policies of western governments and the main stream media. That generation might be unaware of the historic background of Palestine –Israel conflict, the history of well-planned Jewish migration called Alia and injustice behind giving land of one people to another people. In addition to all movies and media reports that portray Israel as victims of Palestine terror, fictions like the novels mentioned here also contribute to perpetuate those wrong notions.

Advent of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, gave ample opportunities for the young generation to formulate their opinions and campaign for a cause without much efforts. During the Arab Spring, world had witnessed how instant and fast the protests were organized where thousands of young people gathered for rallies without any call for from established leaders or organizations. A possible argument at this juncture may be that, during the second decade of 21st century where more than half of the world population is depending social media for getting information, the biases of mainstream mass media might not be that effective. But the surge of false news and unprecedented censorship (Brown and Younes) over social media platforms during the post 2023 Hamas-Israel conflict

answers this argument. Even social media providers like Meta censor contents that are disturbing to Israel, despite the Genuity of the content. The result was so shocking to the level that the president of the USA raised doubts about the number of Palestinian civilians killed in Israel bombings. (Washington Post).

The establishment of Israel and exodus of more than seven hundred thousand Palestinians from their homeland in 1948 has been a haunting subject in the western psyche. It was often suggested that, one of the main reasons for western countries to support the formulation of a Jewish nation was their sympathy towards suffering Jews, especially during the holocaust. But helping them turned to be inflicting immeasurable pain on another community, as Palestinians had to run away from Israeli settlers and military. The western media and movies portrayed Palestinians as undesirable people and their life was pictured with fewer difficulties despite Israel occupying Palestine. This media trend can be seen from the days of Nakba, the largest exodus in 20th century to the present-day Israel war on Gaza. For example, the New York times main title of 16 May 1948 was, 'Jews in Grave Danger in All Moslem Lands' when more than seven hundred thousand Palestinians were forced out of their natural homes. In addition to this, there are several pro-Israeli agencies and organisations that spread propagandist messages and news. Raphael novels perform both the tasks of presenting Palestinians themselves as the cause of their problems on the one hand, and portraying Palestinian life as comfortable as that of any other third world country.

Palestinians are financially sound

Through the detailed description of Palestinian domestic life, Raphael novels

establish that Palestinian life is not that miserable as often believed to be under the occupying Israel. After Chloe reached back in Palestine, she passes Ramallah with her lesbian friend and she felt the place so good, “In Ramallah on a good day, you could forget that Palestine was an occupied country” (Raphael MUF 23). This is the same Ramallah where the owner of a house becomes stranger to that house: “...you become a stranger in your places and to your places at the same time.” (Barghouti 110), but for Chloe it is just a romantic place!

The reader has been brought on multiple occasions into the in-house life of Palestinian families of Rania, Jaber, Mustafa, Daoud, etc. It is surprising that none of the Palestinian characters has any economic problem. Rania and Bassam are living in moderate luxury. At the beginning of *Murder under the Bridge*, Rania approached a pooling taxi bent to Azzawiya, but the driver was still waiting for more passengers, so Rania said: “I am in a hurry, I can pay the rest of the fares.” (Raphael MUB 3). It shows that money is not a problem for her. Throughout the story, there are numerous occasions for the reader to understand that there is no poverty among Palestinians. Rania and Bassam had a reasonable big house and Bassam’s mother is staying in separate house, in good comfort of enough food, clothing, TV and other requirements. Rania had warm water shower. Bassam’s brothers have their own houses, and the family owns olive groves and two dry goods stores (3). When Rania visited her family in Bethlehem, we found them doing quite well without any economic problems. Chapter twenty-seven of *Murder under the Fig Tree* gives detailed narration about Palestinian wedding parties. Everything had a touch of richness and no poverty was visible. Most of the guests came by cars and

there was rich food. Both the police officer Mustafa and Bassam are rich enough to own luxurious cars. When Mustafa came to meet Rania after her release from Israeli jail, “He parked his silver Mercedes in her yard, next to Bassam’s BMW” (98). Here again, the focus of this research led to a fact check which tells us that average monthly salary of Palestine police officers is only \$1000 and cost of living in Palestine is very high. Palestinian territories were ranked 40 among the most expensive countries in 2020 by CEOWORLD magazine (Papadopoulos 1). The geopolitics of these portrayals of rich Palestinians will be digested in the light of the Roger Cohen report in New York Times about the paradox of Israelis having luxurious cars while their Palestinian counterparts having donkey carts and the counter propaganda from the Israeli social media pages to prove that Palestinians drive luxury cars. According to a 2017 report of Washington Post (Eglash), what is a junk car in Israel is a luxury for a Palestinian. His report says that there are thousands of junk cars meant to be scrap, but passes to the West Bank and Palestinians use them as *luxurious* cars. There have been always attempts by Israeli media and pro-Israel western media to misguide the world that the plight of Palestinians was not deplorable as claimed by pro-Palestine voices or rights groups (Hilton).

Even a total scanning of Raphael novels will not give the reader a single Palestinian struggling to meet both ends. Abu Anwar, the Palestinian farmer who happened to be the first person saw the dead body of Nadya, also is living in good comfort. He has farms, enough agriculture and there is no reference to any poverty at all. Whenever the reader enters any Palestinian house, it is always tea and food

that welcomes him. Chloe, the American is very much familiar with all types of Palestinian food now, as she had been provided enough by her Palestinian friends. Rania's office has its own small pantry, and anyone can have tea and snacks any time. Ahlam, mother of Fareed, the murder case accused, is always busy with preparing rich and delicious food. Her family also lives in all comforts and the only difficulty they face is Israeli army. Even Abu Shaadi, whose olive trees had been destroyed by the army, had only one problem, and that was the Israeli confiscation of his land. He and his family are quite comfortable otherwise. In short, the readers have been presented with a picture of daily Palestinian life that is far away from the reality. When Rania visited Mohammed, one of the Jenin Camp massacre victims, she didn't find much poverty there. Of course, their house was shabby and shattered by bullets, but they don't live in poverty. Mohammed with his amputated leg is in his leisure world, watching TV and sipping drink. The family offered customary welcome to Rania with tea and snacks. In short none of the characters in the story reflects the abject poverty and struggle of daily life which is inevitable part of Palestine reality.

Water and electricity are two basic human needs but are very rare in Palestine. None of the Raphael characters finds any problem with water or electricity. As works of fiction, the main focus of these novels is, of course, not detailing Palestinian life, but crime investigation. Still when we approach these novels as imparting ideas to readers about both Palestine and Israel, the geopolitical implications come out because we realise that the paradoxical predicament of

luxurious life of the Jewish settlements and the poverty of the Palestinian life escaped these narratives.

Another Palestinian family Chloe had chance to have close contact with was Reem, Mustafa's sister. Reem's elder son is an English teacher, elder daughter is studying in America and she is living happily with her husband and younger children in their rich home. She had problem only with permission to cross the border. At the hospital in Israel, they met Dr. Rahman from Gaza. Readers will definitely be surprised to see a Gazan doctor working in Israel, and it seems that narrator was aware of this possible surprise, because Reem asked him, "Is it hard to get the permits?" and his answer was, "No. I have worked here for a long time." Further Tina asked him, "Aren't you needed in Gaza?" he replied, "There are plenty of doctors in Gaza." (Raphael MUF147). The impression created is that Palestine has enough doctors to export, but the *fact* is, medical facilities in Palestine are bare minimum and physicians' ratio for thousand people is 0.8.

Daoud's house also presented similar picture of living in comfort. Their house is big with many rooms, enough space to receive visitors and have enough food to give them all. Daoud had three brothers and two of them already have their own houses. Daoud and his friends are enjoying club life, and though they are just students, they have no worries for money. If any character from Raphael has any difficulty in life, it is related to freedom of movement and never monetary constraints. Altogether, the novels ignore the poverty and hardships of daily life but, on the contrary, they present just the opposite. That is where these portrayals

become problematic because the international reading community will be influenced by these and the opinions of such influenced readers will be far away from reality.

Freedom of movement for Palestinians in the occupied territories is a daily challenge and crossing border to Israel is nearly impossible besides being a worse experience. After first Intifada of 1991, it is mandatory that every Palestinian to have personal exit permit to enter Israel. Going to Jerusalem and Israeli cities is inevitable for Palestinians as their export –import was completely controlled by Israel. Besides, many Palestinians must go to Israel for employment. So, Palestinians spent hours every week at the road blocks and check points, which make their life such a terrible experience. There are more than five hundred dirt road blocks, around a hundred fixed check points and around three hundred flying checkpoints in West Bank alone (Palestinian freedom). They have to face both physical obstacles like road blocks and check points and administrative restrictions like permits and prohibited roads. Both Raphael novels have number of occasions where the characters were passing through check points or held at road blocks. But those episodes present Palestinians as successfully evading and managing those huddles, despite all restrictions. In Nadya murder case, Rania and other Palestinians were portrayed blocked by Israeli military as a part of police investigation of the stolen car found abandoned on the road. After two hours, road block was removed and Rania and others went along with their travel. Though it is a terrible experience, the impression readers get is that the road block is just a safety measure that happens everywhere in the world, especially when a terrorist movement is suspected, and there is nothing out of normal in it. But the reality is just the opposite; Palestinians

sacrifice many hours and sometimes days like this and there is no end for this dark comedy. Both Raphael novels presented Rania crossing the border many times in her attempt to collect evidence related to Nadya murder. She went to Elkana Settlements, Jerusalem, and even Tel Aviv, but most of those trips were either in the company of Israeli police officer Benny or Chloe the American. She went herself alone to Elkana settlement despite the military checkpoint to meet Malkah. Here again the entry was portrayed so easy; “She flashed here police ID at him and walked by without waiting for his okay. “Hey” he yelled after her, but when she kept walking, he didn’t pursue” (Raphael MUB 155). On another occasion, she went to Beit Hanina in Israel to meet Shira Zohari, the Israeli attorney, that too without much hassle of military check. Next time it was to Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion Airport, and she got cleared of the checkpoint in simple way; “... the soldier motioned to her roll her window down. She obeyed. ‘You are going to Ramle?’ ‘yes... to visit my cousins’ ... ‘Good trip’ the soldier said...and seconds later they clear of the checkpoint” (301-302). All these episodes portray easy mobility of Palestinians through Israeli checkpoints. Similarly in next story, her trip to Ariel Israeli settlement to see Benny Lazer was without any trouble; when the soldier asked for documents she simply said “I am going to see Benny Lazar, at the police station, she said in Hebrew. ‘B’seder,’ okay, the soldier said” (Raphael MUF 120). Rania went to Adloyada gay club in Tel Aviv to get more information about Daoud and his friends, but being a Palestinian, going to Tel Aviv is not that easy. Even Chloe got surprised to hear her decision to go there, as she had to reach first Jerusalem to join Tina and Chloe, and “... there were at least half a dozen checkpoints between here and there” (150). The readers were given again the impression that Israeli

checkpoints are so simple to evade and Rania could go there with Tina and Chloe without many hurdles. The story wanted her to cross the border, hence forgot about the complications, and a critical reading could see that this also contributes to the presentation of corrupted picture about Palestine, which in turn become helpful for Israeli rhetoric.

Adloyada gay club is in Tel Aviv, but all the performers are from Ramallah, and they commute regularly to enjoy gay life. The novel presents the journey of those gays to Israel as hassle free. Daoud had no permit to travel, but could travel on daily basis just by wedging in between other travellers or bribing Israeli soldiers or offering them oral sex. The reality is far from this, where Palestinians have to wait hours, undergoing all types of humiliation to get permission to enter Israel. This is where these descriptions become *political* and becoming tools in geopolitics: presenting concocted version of reality. Both novels present instances of Palestinians crossing to Israel without any document or exit pass. Thus, the story presents a very positive, ordinary picture of the daily life of Palestine, which, in reality is full of horrors.

A careful look into some *facts* regarding Palestine will make the reader understand the gravity of negative impact this type of portrayals delivers. One third of the Palestinian population lives in refugee camps and more than 1.5 million individuals live in 58 refugee camps scattered in different geographical areas (unrwa.org). According the UNO, conditions of those camps are generally very poor because there is very high population density and inadequacy of basic infrastructure facilities. The stress Palestinians face in daily life is something that an outsider

cannot even comprehend. They have to struggle against two enemies at the same time: on the one side, there are troubles caused by Israeli settlers and army, on the other they have to fight poverty. The latter becomes so challenging in the face of restrictions placed by the Israeli laws. Their freedom of movement is very limited; hence lion share of their working time goes wasted waiting at checkpoints. Finding a job for a Palestinian in Israel is not that easy, though the latter accommodates Palestinian labour in a very limited quantity. Electricity is not a luxury but a scarcity in Palestine. It is only few hours a day Palestinians have uninterrupted electricity. Since electric production facilities of Palestine is almost zero, it depends on Israel almost fully for its electricity requirement. Quite often electricity becomes a political weapon as well for Israel to punish Palestine. Pure water is a costly and rare commodity not only in the camps but also in the entire Palestine. By as early as 2004 Israel has taken 85% of pure water from the West Bank aquifers (UNCTAD report 08) and to add to the misery, Palestinians were denied their right to use water from Jordan River and Yarmouk River. Annual per capita availability of water in Palestine is only 238 cubic meters, whereas it is 1959 cubic meters in Israel (09). Geological studies have confirmed that Palestine is rich with oil and gas reserves, but Israeli occupation poses a stumbling block from tapping the natural resources. (18). According to World Bank, roughly 30% of Palestinians are below poverty line (worldbank.org). It is when we juxtapose the comfortable life portrayed by the novels against these facts, the politics in narration becomes a topic of study and that makes this study relevant.

III. MUSLIMS (PALESTINE/SAUDI) ARE UNDESIRABLE AND THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CURRENT PROBLEMS

Both Raphael and Ferraris presented a number of occasions directly and indirectly pointing that Muslims (Palestine/Saudi) have some problems in their beliefs, culture, practices, and social setup; and they themselves are the actual causes for their problems. They possess many negative qualities that do not meet the expectation of a modern society. They are people of emotional imbalance, misogyny, religious fundamentalism, and above all they live in a dream world.

Their culture is bad

There is no better example to show how much is the dislike towards the Muslim culture and their way of life, than the meeting between Chloe and Um Malik, the land lady of Tina. When Um Malik told her, "If you need anything, anything at all, you just tell me. I'm like your mother" (Raphael, MUF 24), Chloe's feeling was, "Not in the least... She couldn't even imagine what Ruth Rubin would think of being compared to a hijab-wearing, Arab woman with a giant mole on her nose" (24). A very loving and caring expression from Um Malik resulted in generating a racist and Islamophobic remark from Chloe.

Chloe has been staying with Palestinians for months, yet, very rarely she shared their food, because their food was not meeting her standard. It is really surprising that neither Raphael nor Ferraris made any mention to art and culture of the people, their stories speak about. Two possible inferences here are: either there is lack of arts in both cultures or a deliberate attempt to ignore them. Since art has

sufficiently flourished in both Palestine and Saudi Arabia, this research attributes better possibility to the latter. Raphael mentions even about the kids-play of Rania's young boy Khalid, but her camera never turned to cultural life of Palestine. There are lot of artists, social workers and there is enough social life, but none of them appear in the story. Palestinian homes are always ready to receive an unannounced guest with food and sweets but this practice was mentioned in the story as a disturbance. Chloe quite often finds it annoying to accept invitation for tea or food. Nayir Sharqi was introduced as a desert expert, by virtue of being an assistant to Archaeologists but there is no reference further to this great branch of knowledge or contribution of Saudis to that area. For the last half a century, Saudi authorities and researchers significantly contributed to the knowledge of Saudi archaeology, but the story took this as an opportunity to mention gender discrimination, "The archaeology digs were almost completely male; it was rare to meet a woman in the desert" (Ferraris 87).

Their system is corrupted and they are people of political feud

Corruption is everywhere in the modern world, and it is not specific to any culture or religion or nationality. It is the selfish and biased mindset that encourages corruption and violation of rules of justice. According to international ranking of corruption, conducted by Transparency International, two-thirds of countries scored below fifty points in a scale of hundred (Corruption Perceptions). Both Raphael and Ferraris presented the political system and the communities of the nations concerned are highly corrupted. Though at the beginning itself Nayir has his own doubts about the possibility of murder in Nouf case, Dr. Abdulla Maamoon was not ready to look

into various possibilities of murder. Consequently, Nayir suspected that the coroner's office was bribed, when Katya told him, "You're here to pick up the body,'... 'so pick up the body and forget about the rest. The case is closed; they've decided it was an accidental death" (Ferraris 21), his speculations were confirmed. This was later authenticated when Othman told him, "The truth is, my brothers asked the examiner's office to classify it that way, for the family's sake... (Nayir asked) They paid for a cover-up? (Othman replied) 'Tahsin did'" (42). Later, when Nayir became almost certain of Othman's role in Nouf's murder, he was thinking about the legal way to proceed, but he was hesitant because, "...what hope did he have of stirring up justice from a system so easily corrupted by the rich?" (322). Towards the end of the story, Katya informed Nayir that her department was going to reopen the case but then both of them were not that optimistic because "The Shrawis are powerful; they might try to cover it up again..." (351). Like as mentioned earlier *fiction* and *facts* come at cross roads again as interaction with people who have been in Saudi for years and a web search do not validate this picture of corrupt law and order system, as crimes in Saudi are handled by very strict authorities, and influencing the system is out of question in a case like homicide.

Zakat, compulsory donation, is one of the five pillars of Islam and there is very clear guideline to handle the wealth, thus collected. In a country like Saudi Arabia, it is completely under the government, and possibility of giving Zakat to private agencies or organizations is out of question. This is where Bertolt Brecht's comment about the function of literature 'to shape the reality in addition to reflect it' becomes relevant. *Finding Nouf* says that the Shrawi family established "Shrawi

business, the First Muslim International Cooperative, a network of charitable organizations whose income flowed from the ancient principle of zakat” (32), and continued to say that in due course of time the family itself became rich: “Over the years, the Shrawi Cooperative had become so renowned, the family so respected, that the donors began to heap money on the Shrawis themselves, which allowed them to *live very well.*” (emphasis added) (32).

Nayir tells the reader about the gay men and their fate in Saudi, “According to Nayir’s friend Azim, there were plenty of gays in the Corniche district, but they were discreet, and the authorities tended to leave them alone, “When the police wanted to capture gay criminals and make an example of them, *they went after foreign men* (emphasis added)” (181). Besides snubbing homicide case, this adds to the corruption and kinship bias in police.

Murder under the Fig Tree refers to the changes occurred after Hamas was elected in Gaza, and points that they even disturb the voluntary organisation of where Tina works:

I work at a counselling centre for women whose husbands beat them. In the past, the PA was pretty uninterested in what we did... But, in the last month, since the government has been reorganized, men from the Ministry of Interior have been in several times...We are afraid they will want to interfere with our work. (136)

The Fatah- Hamas conflicts appeared in the story, and it gave an impression of corrupted Palestinians who fight for power, “There was fighting in Gaza between

men loyal to Fatah and those belonging to Hamas. The Hamas men ...now wanted those well-paid jobs... She hated that Palestinians ... (who) fight each other” (189). Studies about Hamas-Fatah conflict, known as Battle of Gaza (2007) pointed that the battle mentioned was the result of a secret politico-military plan jointly planned by US-Israel-EU intelligence agencies to push aside Hamas who won the election 2006, from power (Rose). The impression the narrator gives the reader is that all these disturbances and factionalism among Palestinians are the result of their corruption and rotten system.

They are misogynists

One manifestation of Islamophobia is portrayals of Muslim men as polygamous and abusive, and Muslim women as caged in hijab, secluded and forced into marriage, and thus perhaps the most pitiable people on earth. There are thinkers who believe that such portrayals keep a project of globalizing the West's hegemonic culture which in turn artificially creates a desire among Muslims “to emulate the dominant Western culture”. Such feminist universalist assumptions homogenize Muslim women and Islamic traditions and tend to establish Western cultural hegemony (Liela Ahmad.163 and Hasan.50).

The Muslim culture was described misogynist by both the authors. In the episode of land confiscation of Abu Shaadi, after the soldiers returned considering protest, Abus Shaadi and his sons shook hands in their elation with all men present there, but not to any woman. Chloe felt ignored, feeling as if her efforts in this issue are not valued: “None of them said anything to Chloe. It was like she hadn’t even been there when the action was planned, like she hadn’t spent three solid hours on

the phone to the press...” (Raphael MUB 59). Katya Hijazi in *Finding Nouf* also shared a similar feeling, that she could not get the recognition from the society: “They did not even acknowledge women presence. She always found it degrading when men ignored her, when they wouldn’t meet her eye, and when they acted as if she were a prostitute just for opening her mouth.” (Ferraris 150). Correspondingly Bassam and his family were portrayed as pressing Rania too much to have more kids. Rania was angry when her son Khalid mentioned about having a sibling to play with. This topic of more kids and Rania objecting to it appeared on multiple occasions: ““You shouldn’t get his hopes up about having a brother,” she said...“I know. But I don’t understand what you’re waiting for. I want to have more kids.”” (Raphael MUF314), And when she said her boss Mustafa about rejoining her duty, he said: “It’s too soon. You need to rest, spend some time with your family... “Perhaps another child.”... Bassam had been bugging her for three years about having a baby,... Had he been talking all over Salfit in her absence... about having another baby?” (100).

Ferraris’ novel says that Saudis cannot even think of a working woman as wife. When Nayir Sharqi refers to Othman’s fiancée Katya Hijazi, the narrator says, “He had not guessed that she might have a job, ... He must really love her, he thought, to tolerate her having a job” (Ferraris 43-44). This remark is to be placed in the light of facts like, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in Saudi is the largest women university in the world, and as of 2020 Saudi women constitute 33% of native work force (Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia). Similarly, Ahmad, Katya’s driver and escort, says that his job is “protecting young virgins from wily men”

(Ferraris 61) and he is happy in that job. The episode implies to the lack of freedom for women to drive or go alone. An interesting episode of Katya crying in her dream feeling so disappointed about the mistreatment of women in the society tells the reader how bad the situation is. In the dream, while she was about to eat cookies, her mother appeared and warned not to eat much because:

“A man doesn’t like a fat woman, she said, not until she’s had a few children, because otherwise he’ll think she eats too much. She’ll eat everything, the belching wench, she’ll even eat the food for the children, and they’ll be skinny, retarded, and a shame to their father. Then what kind of mother will she be? In the dream, Katya began to cry.” (151)

On the one hand the society was portrayed as misogynist, and on the other the institution of marriage was described as cumbersome mechanism. Nayir Ash-Sharqi is in grief as he believes marriage will be impossible to him: “His deepest fear was that he’d never marry...Nayir was left with the depressing sense that the world of women was one that he would never be allowed to enter.” (87-88). This difficulty of male-female relation brings in uncontrollable lust and voyeuristic behaviour to Nayir. After Katya received the sunglasses ordered by Nouf, from the shop she was thanking him before leaving, “ ‘Thank you, Nayir, I can walk myself to work from here.’ He was so surprised to hear her say his name that his goodbye came too late, after she’d turned away. Confused and embarrassed, he went back to his Jeep” (172). Just his name was pronounced by a woman is so tickling. Later at the American origami shop he was uncomfortable but interested to see Juliet the sales girl: “Nayir’s first shock was seeing a woman so close; his second was seeing a

woman unveiled, wearing tight clothes and apparently no undergarments.” (174).

Treatment of women in Muslim society has been a hot subject and used to criticise them for many centuries. All these instances encourage the following beliefs: Role of women in public life never got recognised in Muslim society, women are looked primarily as kids making machines, and women are suppressed in Saudi society so they try to escape and become sexual perverts.

There is domestic violence

Both the authors turn their camera to domestic life and domestic violence against women. The topic was presented with generalisation that the readers were made to believe that domestic violence was common in the respective societies.

When Katya went early morning to her lab to avoid anyone noticing her investigation on specimen of Nouf case, Salwa, her boss believed that her presence so early in the morning could be to avoid domestic violence: “The *only reason* (emphasis-added) women come here early is to escape their husbands or fathers.” (Ferraris 65). Later Katya had to go through laboratory analysis of, “...traces for a spousal abuse case. A wife had killed her husband by setting his bed on fire. Katya knew little about the wife, but she suspected that this was like *most* (italics-mine) husband-abuse cases: the woman had feared for her life” (196).

When we look into Raphael, one of the common responsibilities of Rania was to deal with complaints related to domestic violence, and she was exasperated with such cases, both due to their large number and having no solution at all. Captain Mustafa gave her new task after withdrawing her from Nadya murder case, “Please go to see Um Nader in Hares. Her husband is beating her *again* (italics-

mine)” (Raphael MUB 193). A half page description of this scene was more than enough to imprint the violent Palestinian homes. In addition, there is an extended portrayal of the silent rivalry between Rania and her mother and sister-in-law. Rania was reluctant to stay with Um Bassam, her mother-in-law or Zeina, her sister-in-law. When Bassam was taking Khaled, their young son, to stay with Zeina, fearing that Israelis would harm him, Rania suggested she also could join them, “I am going to take Khaled to my sister’s in Jericho.” He said. “Let me come with you.” “No, it’s better you stay here.” He was right of course. His sister Zeina did not like her...”(191).

Palestinians are stubborn, non-cooperative and have wrong politics

There are many episodes in both Raphael stories where Palestinians were pictured as foolishly stubborn and destroyers of even new generation by tying them tight to the enmity towards Israel and supporters of Israel. These portrayals achieve a great goal of holding Palestinians responsible for the Israeli atrocities on the one hand, and for the failure of peace process on the other. One of the accusations against Palestine from Israel and the West is that it doesn’t accept constructive steps that lead to the peace process, and Raphael novels contribute to this accusation. When Benny Lazar suggested Rania that he could secure her release from jail, in return she had to investigate Daoud murder case, her foolish response was “I would rather rot in this jail for the rest of my life than help you.” (Raphael MUF76). Their stubbornness and foolish fighting spirit is what gave them more trouble, and each Intifada made them loss more land. Reem, captain Mustafa’s sister, told Chloe about the border line, “This is not the Green Line...Last year, they moved it two kilometres

inside. Before the Intifada, we never had to stop at all.” (139). Similarly, Avi mentioned Chloe about the loss their inflexibility causes them, “Five settlers reported that stones hit their cars... The army ordered five hundred trees to be cut down in each of the four villages...” (173). The novel says that the events in the story happen after Hamas was elected and there are enough references to make the reader feels that it was only their obstinacy made them vote for Hamas and so they loss friends and support. Bassam reports to Rania:, “The Americans have frozen some bank accounts... (and) there may not be enough money to pay salaries next month” , and hitherto considerate Israelis like Banny Lazar, are no longer their friends because, “ the days when I ate lunch with Palestinian policemen are over.”(69).

Fareed, the Palestinian youth suspected of Nadya murder, was missing, and the Israeli military wanted to take him into custody. They do not believe his father when he said Fareed was not at the house, and he did not know where he was, consequently the house was ransacked by the Israeli military. “Fifteen soldiers stormed into the house... They were thorough and violent... They ripped the curtains from the windows...tossed food from the refrigerator...smashed Ahlam’s lovely China plates...their orders were to do a certain amount of damage to show the family the price of *non-cooperation.*” (italics –mine) (123). The readers understand that the army might not have behaved violently had Fareed presented himself. Thus, the responsibility for Israeli violence fell on Palestinians and their non-cooperation.

Another problem with the Palestinians is the way they bring up their children. They always teach their children to hate Israel. Novel suggests that the

daily life of Palestinians is full of words and deeds to promote this negative thought. Khaled, the young boy of Rania, is happy to play the game Jesh and Shabab (Army and Boys), representing the Palestinian boys throw stones at Israeli soldiers and they shoot in return. As a young growing boy, his mind is full of hate at Israelis. There were martyr posters on the wall of Fareed's room. Palestinian social life is making the young ones natural hate mongers and consequent terrorist, and they young generation was never allowed to learn culture of acceptance and coexistence. Fareed was trying to remember his father's lessons on how to face Israel, because "he had grown up on the stories of his father's interrogations, and those of his father's friends You didn't take anything they offered, because that let them know you were weak..." (147). This hate has been passed from generation to generation. Rania herself was a stone thrower and "...had been in prison during the First Intifada" (5). Khaled, her young son, was gifted with a catapult, as it is common weapon any Palestinian has to be expert with. In short, the young people never give the army peace of mind, and anyone can expect that "young men from the village nearby must be engaging in their favourite pastime: throwing stones at the army" (6). Daoud says: "All the boys in his circle... had actually joined the militant resistance, picked up guns, blown themselves up, taking an Israeli settler or soldier or two with them." (30-31).

They are fundamentalists

Many characters and incidents in both the authors portray Muslim as fundamentalists, and quite often the butt of ridicule. While they are on the move, Ahmad, Katya's driver, is so meticulous about his prayer time that he prays even at

roadside, as if there was something wrong for him to wait until he reaches a mosque. Saudi is a country with sufficient mosques for any traveller to pray. But Ahmad is carrying always his sprayer mat. Similarly, her father does not allow her to rent a taxi, though “there were taxis for women, with nice immigrant drivers” (Ferraris 61). The narrator of Ferraris novel even comments that the core problem of Saudis (Muslims) is their fundamentalism and non-willingness to change according to the time, and Nayir felt sympathy for “...women like Nouf who felt trapped by their lives, by the prescriptions of modesty and domesticity that might have suited the Prophet’s wives but that didn’t suit the women of this world...” (346). Both Katya and Rania go out always in burqa or jilbab and they are so worried to travel with men. In Katya’s case, Nayir was the only exception she travelled, and that too was for the investigation purpose. Rania travelled with Benny, but she had been constantly haunted by the worry about other people seeing her with Benny.

Their fundamentalism can even make them go against a brother. Issa threatened to kill Daoud, his brother, because Daoud was a gay and had male lovers whom he met with from their secret place. According to the story, gays and homosexuals have no place in that society and that was why Daoud was planning to migrate to America.

Raphael presented a good contrast between Rania the fundamentalist and Rania the liberated. During her early days, she was very religious and was a strict practicing Muslim. Then she was much engaged in resistance activities, was a good in using sling against soldiers and active during First Intifada. But later she got liberated of her traditional believes and lost interest in religion. Thereafter, she never

performs compulsory prayers, besides she even drinks alcohol. One day she unknowingly reached inside the Al Aqsa mosque and tried to pray, but “she barely remembered how to do it” (351). Once Rania lost interest in religion (351), her focus is shifted from throwing stones at Israelis, participating protests and glorifying martyrs to fighting for justice, though it is to save an Israeli soldier from jail, and is capable of fighting against all odds. Her power is attributed to her renouncing of religion.

In short, Palestinians and Saudis (Muslims) are held responsible by way of their culture, behaviour, negative approach, stubborn nature, and destructive mind, for the disturbing situation they were put in. The readers will come to conclude that if they are undesirable people like this, then they deserve no better treatment from other nations and they had to bear with this. Raphael novels succeed in creating a mindset to accept Israeli cruelties towards the Palestinians and silence of the international community, especially of the West, towards such injustice and occupation. Ferraris’ novel also contributed in the area of building a bleak picture of Muslims as not meeting the expectation of the modern times.

IV. REDEMPTION THROUGH THE WEST

All these novels present options for Muslims to save themselves from the pitiable condition: that is, to follow western civilisation and western countries. The suggestion of success of those people who compromise and accept the West (in Palestine Mysteries, the West is represented by Israel and the USA) and the difficulties and challenges faced by those people who are stubborn to fight against the West is presented through a series of incidents and characters. When the dead

body Nadya Kim was found in Palestinian territory, Rania had an argument with her superior officers Abu Ziyad and Captain Mustafa, both of whom believe honestly that it is always better to surrender to Israeli power, despite the fact that they are Palestinian police officers. (Raphael, MUB 26). Raphael presented the scene in such a way that both of them appeared to be people of wisdom, and, Rania a fundamentalist. Another occasion is when, in a quite natural way, the story refers to Oslo accords (63), an agreement Palestine and Israel entered in 1995, and the narrator described in detail about the classification of control of different places in Palestine as Areas A, B & C. Readers are given a feeling of normalisation of Israeli occupation of Palestine, and even Rania was encouraged to accept the western solution, as if it is the only possible solution. Raphael becomes more conspicuous when Jaber says that "... Palestinians should accept Israeli citizenship ... (with Israeli citizenship) they can live anywhere they want, have Israeli passports and go where they want in the world (77). Further, Oslo Accords, that most of Palestinians looked at as deceit, are promoted on another occasion when Benny said, "... we used to eat lunch together, during the Oslo years. I ate at his house. I know his wife" (85), as if the agreement was so beneficial for both parties. The ultimate result was that Palestinians lost control over most of their lands, as Israel never followed legal boundaries as per the agreement. The narrator presents this option of surrendering complete Palestinian identity to Israel and accepting the Israeli occupation, as simple, viable and only possible option! The 'one state' solution, that has been already in the air for decades, and got momentum by the beginning of 21st century, was highly promoted by the novel. If a reader feels that the narrator has a special interest in promoting this idea of westernization of Muslims, there are ample

instances to establish that fact. Further, when the investigation progresses, Rania travels a lot in the company of Benny, and became friends, and the earlier suggestions of accepting Israel becomes more vivid. They even go for shopping while they were at Eilat, Israel. Rania- Benny duo succeeds in multiple ways to progress with murder investigation, and the readers get the suggestion that when Palestinians are willing to yield to the power of Israel, they become happy and achieve a lot in their life. All non-Palestinian readers will find it acceptable as Rania (representative of Palestine) and Benny (representative of Israel) practically showed that cooperation and recognizing each other was possible and successful, but for those who know the political background of Israeli occupation, Palestinian exodus, Nakba, and decades of fight against Israeli occupation, etc. will understand the connotation of Rania-Benny duo and their long journey together. This definitely bears geopolitical implications, that is, international readers will conclude that Israeli claims about the nature of conflicts between them and the theory of killing Palestinians in the name of right to self-defence, are true. This standpoint is further extended when Jabir, father of Fareed, the teenager wrongly accused of murder, says “many of our young men are in prison, may be Fareed has to take his turn”, and Chloe’s interpretation to that remarks, “Jaber could only mean that he thought Fareed might be guilty” (141). When Jaber was interpreted like this, the usual Israeli response to international outcries over Israel atrocities against Palestinians, that is, they target only criminals and antisocial, was reinforced and ratified.

Raphael presents three types of Palestinian officers: one is stubborn like Rania and the second is like Captain Mustafa, who neither is stubborn nor

collaborating with Israel but feels helpless, and the third is like Abu Ziad, who is collaborating and compromising with Israel and the West. Abu Ziad type may go even to fight against their fellow people to appease Israeli authorities and thus save their self-interest. Abu Ziad had no tension like that of Rania as he is working closely with Israeli authorities, and he never had the weaknesses like self-esteem or nationalism, hence before taking any step, he ensures the approval of Israelis. Though not as submissive as Abu Ziad, Mustafa also is practical in not disobeying Israeli authorities. It was these two opposing attitudes created a drift between Rania and other officers. Often in Muslim countries, people who go along with the Western/ European ideals, and those who do not comply with them, are in constant fight. Thus, Raphael suggests that the root cause of Muslim countries are their drifts and unwillingness to accept western civilisation and culture. As a part of his submissiveness to Israel, Mustafa advised Rania to leave the murder investigation, “You need to leave this investigation alone, or you will soon be in prison yourself.” (157). The story presents submissive characters rewarded with peace of mind and security, whereas characters who are stubborn have to face consequences and may end up in Israeli jail. Thus, those who have been prone to Israeli cruelties were portrayed as criminals who deserve punishments, not freedom fighters who resist foreign occupation or fighting to protect their birthright of free land. Gradually, may be out of compulsion, Rania underwent some compromises like travelling alone with a male Israeli police officer, abandoning here hijab and forgetting her compulsory prayers, and that gave her access to more power, resources and protection. Rania had a long fight with her husband Bassam over compromising with Israel and the result was that even their child’s life got under threat. All these suggest that the best way

for Palestinians is not to fight Israel, rather accept its strength and yield to it. This logic is not something new in colonial history. During British colonisation, many people advised the colonised to accept Britain, as they are more powerful, technologically advanced and have better governing system. People like Indians never accepted that logic, instead they fought tooth and nail, and the result was independent India.

When Rania needed to enter Israel to speak to Fareed who has been detained in an Israeli prison (257), she disguised as an international tourist and she could easily get through Israeli check points. All she needed to do was take a different name, remove Muslim dress, speak standard American accent and appear bold. So, the same person has two different experiences: when she was a strictly practicing Muslim and objecting Israel and the West she had to face numerous difficulties, whereas, the same person found an easy way and hassle-free life when she was ready to yield and compromise.

In *Murder under the Fig Tree* Raphael presented the issue of Hamas got elected in Gaza, as if it is the sole reason for the problems of Palestinians. Democracy was presented, always, by the West as the best form of government and the final stage of human civilisation, but when the same democracy elected Hamas, the resistance group, the greatness of democracy could not help Palestinians, instead, the election brought many Palestinians to Israeli jails. So, it is not enough that Palestinians follow the West, but they should follow the west the way the West wanted it to be! Raphael continues to tell the readers about the ordeal Palestinians have to face as long as they do not follow the West. Readers may find it as a threat

when Benny remarked, “There are lots of Palestinians locked up who didn’t commit any crime” (Raphael, MUF 69).

The benevolent USA is making continuous presence in *Murder under the Fig Tree*, as Rania, the heroine of the earlier Mystery, herself is in the Israeli prison. Chloe is taking leading roles in saving Rania and proving the murder case of Daoud. After she had been deported by Israel, Chloe is travelling back to Israel only to save Rania from Israeli prison. She had to face a number of teething troubles on her way, and it was with much cunningness she could pass through Israeli checkpoints. When Chloe reached her earlier home-stay, Um Malik, the landlady welcomed her, “Oh, Amreeka... I love American people. Welcome, welcome.” (24), and shows that the USA is welcomed by the Palestinians as it is the only people who help and protect them! Chloe could easily pass through checkpoints, by the magical words “States”. The security officer asked her, “Where are you from?” “The States,” (59) was her answer, and it made all the difference. The novel shows the Palestinians that the only way for them to have dignity is to be either Western or to be with the West. Another set of people who helped Rania was Avi, the Israeli and his wife. They extended their support in terms of influence, recommendation, lending car and entering places where Rania could not enter. A very important geopolitical move the novels take is when presenting Chloe, on the one hand, as benevolent American who does whatever possible to protect Palestinians and try to mitigate the troubles they face, and on the other hand, showing Palestinians who do not fight Israel having peace of mind and trouble-free life. It serves dual purpose of providing hope about benevolent West and warning against fighting Israel, who has been fully backed by

the West ever since its inception. The warning to Palestinians becomes more threatening, when the narrator tells, “Israel did not have the death penalty, but it carried out plenty of executions” (84). Later, to the surprise of everyone, Rania was back home, released without no apparent reason, but the readers were told that “ she already suspected that, if it were not for the American (Chloe), she would still be in prison” (102), suggesting that only the US (Chloe) could give them protection and safety. The narrative played a very cunning trick, when Rania, even after months of torturing by Israeli military, made positive remark, “If the army wants to kill someone, they don’t do it secretly” (122) whitewashing the army of thousands of murders they have committed against Palestinians.

Another pro-West/Israel rhetoric Raphael novels presented is a group of influential Israeli Jews like Avi, his wife Maya, and a few human rights activists who appeared on multiple occasions to help Rania and other Palestinians. It created an impression that, besides the West, another hope for Palestinians are the Israelis like Avi who proved that they are ready take any risk to help Palestinians. Amnesty International reports the depth of Israeli occupation on Palestine, and according to them, more than one hundred thousand hectors of Palestine land is occupied by Israel after 1967, more than fifty thousand houses or constructions were destroyed, more than six lakh Jews were settled in those places, hence more than five million Palestinians are suffering daily by Israeli restriction on daily life. It seems that, this obnoxious side of the story was purposefully ignored by the narrative, and presented instead a few Israelis who sympathise with Palestinians.

On another occasion, the narrative made Palestinians think that their voting of Hamas to power was a great mistake, because the US has frozen financial aids to Palestine (189), after Hamas got elected. The suggestion is that if Palestinians had fully followed the Western nations, they would not have to face this tough situation. When Reem, Captain Mustafa's sister got hospital appointment, there was no one to help her but Chloe and Avi. Chloe had to take extra risk to bring her to the hospital, despite the fact they had no permit and it was Chloe who acted mother to young Amali during medical emergency. Again, benevolent West was presented to look into the well-being of Muslims. Similarly, when all of them caught panic because Rania's child Khaled was kidnapped, "The American's presence was comforting or as comforting as anything could be, given that she wanted to chew her fingernails off their cuticles. Bassam shook Chloe's hand warmly" (337). All these occasions point to one direction, that is, the only hope for Muslims in need is the West, represented by either the USA or good Israelis.

The only factor that makes Zoe Ferraris' heroes Nayir Sharqi and Katya Hijazi better than all other characters in the story is their distancing from Islamic culture and following western civilization, instead. Besides being alcoholic, Nayir is a non-practicing Muslim. Katya observes Islamic modesty neither in her dress nor in her dealing with males. Nouf, the girl who was found dead, was on her way to escape to the US, as Saudi Arabia is not a place for peace of mind. She had been in constant relation with Eric Scarsberry, an American who offered her all assistance including his own residence to stay until she gets settled to escape to the USA. Though she had all material comforts at her parents' house, she preferred the USA

because that is the only place of freedom she could think of. Saudi Arabia, a country where one-third of the native workforce is women, is portrayed as a place where working women is a rarity. It is a country never suitable for women, as they have no freedom of movement, no job, always behind purdah, and above all men ignore them. Cases of domestic violence are plenty that made Katya specialise in that area. It is a place where system of justice got easily manipulated, “...what hope did he have of stirring up justice from a system so easily corrupted by the rich?” (322). Hence, the novel presented migrating to the West as the option. When Muslims are ready to evade from observing their strict religious rules, Muslims can be good, creative, skilled and admirable. Katya represents this image and Nouf became a martyr in her attempt to escape the cruel system.

There is an occasion when both Raphael and Ferraris join in advising Muslims (Palestinians and Saudis): while Raphael teaches them that their hope is in the West, Ferraris informs them that they are not accepted in Saudi Arabia (Ferraris 73). Thus, both authors tell them that their hope is not in themselves or other Muslim countries, but in America and other west backed countries. Both the authors seem to suggest the readers that the only hope for the Muslims to escape their suffering is throwing away their strict Muslim rules and follow the West, that was represented by Chloe in Raphael and Katya-Nayir-Eric Scarsberry trio in Ferraris.

Conclusion

With reference to the latent interconnections between politics and objective scholarship, Edward Said stated that, “Britain, France, and recently the United States are imperial powers, their political societies impart to their civil societies a sense of

urgency, a direct political infusion as it were, where and whenever matters pertaining to their imperial interests abroad are concerned” (Orientalism 16), and the same is true when it comes to detective fiction where the Western countries and their policies were justified while Muslims were portrayed undesirable and responsible for the disruptions that happen in those countries. Both the authors analysed here are western women who, it seems, could not keep at (completely) neutral distance, as we cannot “...disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances” (Said, Orientalism 17).

This in-depth analysis helps us to conclude two things. Number one. All these three novels under study are rich with multifaceted Islamophobia, manifested through characters, their remarks, their deeds, their approaches and narrative itself. Number two. Such Islamophobia influences readers in forming their opinions about Muslims, Muslim countries and their religion. Both Raphael and Ferraris portrayed Muslims as people who follow strange beliefs, and are never ready to compromise in front of the modern lifestyles. Muslims are too much conscious about their daily prayers, too sensitive about food and beverages, too reactionary and old-fashioned when it comes to women, and above all they are misogynists and fundamentalists. Interestingly, these have been the charges put by post crusade anti-Islamic thinkers against Muslims and these narratives become reinforcing agents in this regard.

Any meticulous student of post-World War I history knows that Israel was established with the help of a series of political and military intrigues jointly operated by Zionists and UK-US authorities. The UNO declared establishment of a new Jewish nation in Palestine by trifurcating the region: Jewish Israel, Muslim

Palestine, and Jerusalem under international authority. But, in reality, only one segment of UNO resolution 181, that is, an independent Jewish state, came into being in 1948, by incorporating major share of geographical area hitherto called Palestine. Major share of the Palestine was annexed by Israel, Millions of Palestinians were exiled, and the proposed UN-controlled Jerusalem was never materialised. Consequently, Palestinians (and the world) viewed Israel as an imposter coloniser and, in return, Israel handled them as a threat to their very existence. Since then, there has been constant violence in the region that resulted in great amount of destruction of both human life and properties. In all such instances, Israel, along with pro-Israel western media, claimed that whatever destructions and murders they did was for her safety. This stand was substantiated by Raphael novels, portraying Palestinians as militant, stubborn, religious fanatics, and political terrorists.

The geopolitical implication of portraying Palestinians as terrorists, instead of freedom fighters, is that pro-Israel policies and consequent assistance, in monetary, military, diplomatic, propagandic forms, by the US and other western countries, are justified, and more such assistance is demanded by the reading public, as Israel is fighting against multiple terrorists. Hamas in Gaza is portrayed a terrorist outfit and a big threat, though, it is only a local resistance organization, with a few thousands of semi-trained soldiers and a few hundreds of rockets that can make only limited damage. Its size and prominence are negligible compared to the huge army and weaponry of Israel.

Both Ferraris and Raphael present a number occasions where Muslims practice a culture that is absolutely unacceptable to the modern West. In both authors, there are instances of gays suffering because of unnecessary stigmatisation. In all these three novels, women were portrayed as living a life under complete restrictions, and they are totally devoid of freedom. All three novels present two types of Muslim women: one is strictly religious and the other is non practicing Muslims (modern). Only moderns, who dare to throw away their strict religion, became successful, and the other group is presented as facing innumerable problems and getting destroyed by those troubles. This reinforces the traditional accusation that religion is the root cause for all the problems of Muslim women.

Another geopolitical implication is regarding the usual claim of the West that their interference in Muslim countries, whether it is in Afghanistan or Iraq or Syria, is to save the people from the cruel and undemocratic political leaders on the one hand, and, to protect them from the clutches of the clergy who confine them in the centuries old system of the religion on the other, was further reinforced by these novels. Hence the readers are convinced that the Western policies towards the Muslim countries are just and required.

Another area where these novels contribute is in presenting the benevolent West. There is American/European characters in these stories, and their roles are helping the Muslims. Chloe in Raphael does this role of helping Rania, materially, by way of political influence, mental support and even fighting the enemy. So, she becomes the representative of the USA that helps Muslims. It conveniently forgets the fact that it was the same USA that backed Israel for all its cruelties against

Palestine civilians by providing absolute political protection from the UNO resolutions. It is found that the USA has used veto power 42 times to protect Israel. Besides, there is financial assistance of at least US\$1Billion annually ever since its inception, which was raised to US\$2.7 billion since 1999. Most of the time, this financial assistance got materialised in way of weapons distribution. All these facts were ignored and covered when the benevolent Chloe appears. It is same like the impact of series of Hollywood movies in which American heroes are being presented as saviours of humanity from all types of threats either extraterrestrial or dark forces who want to rule the world.

The depiction of Palestinians as inherently stubborn, violent, and unwilling to engage in peace processes can erode sympathy for their cause and make it easier to justify policies that disadvantage them. As we have seen above, the portrayal of cozy Palestine results in losing sympathy and preventing necessary help. The best example is post Oct 2023 Israeli invasion of Gaza, when more than fifty thousand Palestinians were killed and the entire Gaza strip was under military blockade without water, electricity and food. Thousands of trucks with humanitarian aid were denied permission to enter Gaza, simultaneously areal bombing continued including on temporary shelters, yet none of the western countries stopped arms export to Israel or put pressure to open entry to humanitarian aids. The worst was that western countries were reluctant to send humanitarian aids to starving population even after rights groups reported that hundreds of children died of starvation.

In short, these novels do a great service to glorify the US and other western/western backed nations, vilify Muslims and Muslim countries, and thus

justify the geopolitical strategies of the West towards Muslim countries. As we know, the generation that witnessed bifurcation of Palestine that resulted in foundation of Israel and erasure of Palestine is almost extinct. It is only less than 10% of the current world population who are above 65 years, who was expected to have at least read anything about the immediate aftermath of the establishment of Israel, and have read about the great tragedy of exodus, Nakba. Most of the current global population shaped their understanding of the world politics from media reports, movies and fiction. The portrayal of these novels of Israeli occupation of Palestine as "normal" and even justifiable can contribute to a lessening of international pressure on Israel to end their occupation. That is what is scene during the 2023 Gaza war where even after Israel killed more than 28000 civilian women (UN Women) and over 18000 children (Hussain) none of the western countries who supplied financial and military assistance to Israel stopped or even put a control over their weapons export to Israel. Here we find the much-celebrated humanism, exported from the west to the entire world, of which human rights is the very foundation, becomes dump and inactive, because the Palestinians, who pose 'threat' to Israel, are not qualified to enjoy the protection of principles of humanism! One latest example will be Minister Gallant called the Gazans 'human animals' when he declared complete siege on Gaza, blocking all flow of food, water, medical facilities and electricity. (Israeli defence)

Likewise, the depiction of Palestinians as inherently stubborn, violent, and unwilling to engage in peace processes definitely erode sympathy for their cause and make it easier to justify policies that disadvantage them. A good example could be

of the statements of Euro-American leaders' assertion of Israel's right to self-defence, whenever Israel conducts military attacks on any neighbouring Muslim community in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria or even Iraq. If Palestinians are seen as the primary obstacle to peace, there is less incentive to hold Israel accountable for its actions, which is exactly the world has witnessed during 2023 Gaza war. All criminal acts by Israel, including genocide (Bouranova), did not result in effective Anti-Israel policies from most of the western countries.

The reinforcement of stereotypes in these novels, about Muslims as fundamentalist, misogynist, and backward can contribute to a broader climate of prejudice that influence policy decisions. Policymakers who hold these views, even unconsciously, may be more likely to support discriminatory or hostile policies towards Muslim communities and nations. It is crucial to emphasize that the influence of literature is often indirect. These novels may not be the *sole* cause of specific geopolitical policies, but they contribute to the complex web of cultural narratives that shape how people view the world. By subtly reinforcing Islamophobic tropes, they can create a more receptive audience for policies that are biased against Muslims.

Chapter 3

Fictioning Fear: Islamophobia and the Geopolitics of Anxiety in White Male Literature

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today”, says Robert McKee (3), story consultant and professor of University of Southern California. Stories have been shaping human thoughts and aspirations and quite often defined who and what. As mentioned earlier, modern world is rich with innumerable platforms for storytelling and more people come with more stories that influence all types of people manipulating them in defining themselves and others. It is interesting to analyse the attitudes of western men and women towards Muslims and matters concerning them, separately and surprising to realise how much similar and diverse their perspectives are. According to Edward Said, the strategic location or the position of a writer in his text with regards to the material he writes about is very important, as the narrative voice he adopts, the tone of his characters, the comments made by them, the kinds of images, motives and themes that circulate in his text, etc. will be in tune with that position (Orientalism 23). This research analyses texts not only to find Islamophobia, but also to understand the strategic position their authors have assumed. Among the eight novels studied under this research, three are authored by two western men (white and male); an American and a British. This chapter attempts a meticulous analysis of *The Collaborator of Bethlehem* (here onwards referred to as *The Collaborator*), *A Grave in Gaza* (here

onwards referred to as *A Grave*) both by Matt Beynon Rees and *Prayers for the Assassin* (here onwards referred to as *Prayers*) by Robert Ferrigno.

Palestine is the centre of both Rees novels as the investigation by Omar Yussef, a school teacher turned informal detective, is happening in different parts of Palestine. In *The collaborator* Omar Yussef investigates, out of his interest and thirst for justice, the arrest and later murder of George Saba, a Palestinian Christian, migrated to Chile, but now stays at his parents' home in Bethlehem. He was accused of being a collaborator with Israel for the murder of Louai Abdel Rahman, a senior member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a coalition of Palestinian resistant groups in West Bank. The unofficial investigation by Omar Yussef unmasked the political intrigues and power struggles and constant cheatings that happen among the various armed groups and other power sources. Omar was successful in finding out that George was a scapegoat and the actual collaborators were within the resistant groups, many of whose leaders are working with Israel while pretending to be protecting the interests of Palestine.

A Grave in Gaza is a sequel to *The Collaborator* and Omer's continuous adventures in Gaza, a place more rotten from the political point of view. Omar and his superior UN officer arrive at Gaza to inspect the UN schools, but got entangled with the arrest of Masharawi, a part time UN school teacher. Omar and Zeidan dug out the actual reason for the arrest and understood that it is only the tip of the iceberg, a series of political intrigues and power struggles among various Palestinian organizations.

Prayers for the Assassin is unveiling a high level conspiracy of some Islamic fundamentalists to make America an Islamic republic. Hassan Muhammad, who was referred as Old One in the story, is a Muslim terrorist and the mastermind behind all evils in the story. He successfully installed and detonated three nuclear bombs, in which millions of Muslims, Christians and Jews have lost lives, in such a way that everybody believed it as a Zionist conspiracy. Old One succeeded in making half of America a Muslim republic and making Islam the dominating culture of the West. But Sarah and Rakkim could unearth the scheme and tell the world about the drama played by Old One.

All three novels discussed here are abundant in Islamophobic statements, events, descriptions and interpretations by the characters. But this chapter is focusing only the type of Islamophobia that have some sort of geopolitical implications. Basically, Islamophobic occurrences in these novels appear in two ways: labelling Muslims as undesirable, and whitewashing Israel policies of regression and apartheid. For the sake of convenience, such Islamophobic occurrences are grouped in this research under four different titles:

- 1) Muslims are undesirable as their believes, practices and attitudes are very strange and not matching with that of modern standards,
- 2) Muslims are incapable of governing, their leaders and governments are highly corrupted, and democracy has nothing to do with them,
- 3) Muslims are a threat to the Western values and system, and

- 4) Pro-Israel rhetoric, where the real situation in the Palestine is hidden and resistance against Israel is presented as detrimental and unreasonable (point 4 is applicable only to Matt Rees novels).

I. MUSLIMS ARE PORTRAYED AS UNDESIRABLE PEOPLE

All the three novels have sufficient number of characters, incidents and references that bring the readers to the conclusion that as a religious group, the adherence of Islamic faith have some inherent weaknesses that make them not only the most undesirable people on the Earth but also the most dangerous one. Their beliefs, practices, food habits, religious ceremonies, prayer habits, customs, and above all religious fanaticism were suggested as contributing in shaping this unwelcome picture.

They have strange beliefs

It is a usual joke about Muslim terrorists that they do crime because they believe in rewards they would get after they got martyred. One such reward is 72 virgin ladies in the heaven. The prologue of *Prayers for the Assassin* itself makes this remark about Jason, a soldier who is facing death while fighting for the nation,; “Dying for the faith meant he got all kinds of virgin brides in paradise. Jason wasn’t one to argue with Allah, but he kind of hoped at least one or two of them had some experience, because he sure didn’t have much” (8). What a sarcastic comment! Jason was assured by his superiors of all comforts in the afterlife, and when he is facing death, he is wondering about the practical difficulty of managing so many inexperienced virgins! George Sabah, Palestinian Christian accused of collaboration,

says that they “don’t believe like the Muslims do that anyone who has killed just now goes up to claim his bliss with seventy two black- eyed virgins” (Rees, *The Collaborator* 93). People in the new Islamic Republic of America are so crazy with prayers, that they even have prayer break during Super Bowl and all people hurriedly perform their prayers just to the satisfaction of the religious police: “The fans in Khomeini Stadium had performed their ablutions by rote, awkwardly prostrating themselves, heels splayed, foreheads not even touching the ground” (Ferrigno 9).

In Rees, we find Abu Jamal, leader of Saladin Brigades, performing additional prayers, and Omar Yusef knows, “The extra prayers signalled preparation for an imminent mission and, perhaps, death.” (Rees, *A Grave*.195). This adds to several strange beliefs Muslims supposed to have.

There is moral policing among them

The new Muslim regime believes that everyone must be compelled by physical force to ensure prayers and observance of religious etiquette in dressing, food, etc. So, there is Black Robes, a police wing only for enforcing and ensuring religiously accepted behaviours and practices in the country. The religious police beat women in public for not keeping modesty, “The Black Robes whipped their long, flexible canes across the backs of three women seated there...” (Ferrigno 13-14). Sarah was beaten by Black Robe at the computer café for no specific reason, “The cane slammed onto her shoulder, and she groaned, bit her lips shut” (67). Even universities were not spared from the moral policing, “Four professors at the university have been dismissed this year. Insufficiently Islamic” (206). In Southern

California, the old Golden Gate bridge was not only named after an Afghan warlord, but was also “decorated with the skulls of homosexuals purged after the transition” (320).

After Ibn Aziz became the head of Black Robes, his measures were even harder. He had burned monasteries and brutally handled Catholics. According to him,

“Catholics eat swine. They drown themselves in alcohol. They keep dogs in their homes so when they walk among us we must brush against the hairs of the beasts” (210).

He honestly believes that it is his religious duty to purge the country of all such filth. Most of the members of Revolutionary Council of Gaza are drunkards and even keep hipflasks with scotch, but they won't drink in public as they are afraid of fundamentalists. Prof. Maki says that when he is inside his luxurious apartment, he is no longer in Gazastan, and he can resort to alcohol and women without any botheration. Zeydan commented that when Cree asked for scotch at the hotel lobby after he was badly hit by the Saladin men, “Fortunately, there were no Islamists present” (Rees. A Grave.78), hence he was served scotch.

They are religious fanatics

A fanatic is someone with zeal to go to any extreme for the cause of his belief, whether political or religious. Religious fanaticism is not unfamiliar to the modern world and both authors have presented sufficient examples of Muslim fanaticism. Muslims in these novels are even closed to new ideas to such a degree

that they object many books. Ferrigno provides extreme instances of Muslim fanaticism. The new republic is so fanatic that they have changed everything of the old America: famous beverage is 'Jihad Cola', most of the leaders are now either black Americans or migrants from African countries, stadium is named after Khomeini, a well trained special elite troops of assassins were named Fedayeen, and people wear Arafat kaffiyeh, aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan was renamed Osama bin Laden. Even taxi is called 'Saladin cab' and there are medallions picturing Osama and Zarqawi. The new republic has General Masood Bridge, a memorial for Afghan war lord and King Fahd High School for Saudi king. In new America, each city has a special Zone where religious rules are not strictly implemented. The new system lacks two most important characteristic features of modern life: freedom and individuality, "... the Zone, a safety valve for a population whose previous cultural tradition had been based on *extreme notions of freedom, and individuality* (emphasis added)..." (16). Rakkim criticized Redbeard for banning Coco Cola in the new republic and making drinking it a big crime. Similarly, birth control measures are dealt with sever measures, "possession of contraband. Two years hard labor, no parole" (39). New government has destroyed all the memorials of old regime, "Blowing up the four faces (of former US presidents) on the mountain had been one of the first projects of the new Muslim republic...the Black Robes had insisted, calling it idolatry, and honouring *kaffirs* from a nation that no longer existed." (249). They are so engrossed in prayers that Angelina was awake praying at midnight "It was almost 2 A.M., but Angelina was wide-awake" (21). While Sarah and Rakkim were at the shopping mall, "wrist alarms buzzed around them, alerting the faithful that they had fifteen minutes before afternoon prayers"

(308). So, infatuation with prayer is that deep to make everything was connected in one way or another to prayer and reminder of prayer. To show this mad infatuation with prayer, each chapter in the story was given prayer related subtitles like ‘After late-evening prayers.’”

Old One is the mastermind behind the nuclear attacks that resulted in the destruction of former US. The three nuclear bombs took a toll of twenty million people’s life, but he was least bothered,

I’ve done whatever has been necessary to defend the faith. To spread the faith...Twenty million...died to restore the caliphate...The faithful who perished in Mecca are already in Paradise. The others...they are smouldering in hell. (302).

His fanaticism made him blind to the naked cruelty and inhumanity of such a ruthless act.

There are online services by Mullahs (religious experts) to guide believers. Their question- answer session is so funny. When a woman asks if she could listen to music, Mulla answered that it “...is quite clear that music is forbidden, (and)...the sin is as great whether you listen to music in solitude or with another.” (177). Besides, the new Islamic republic of America is highly impractical that they allot more fund to mosques and religious schools than to improving infrastructural development. They are against any new and innovative thought, so they never develop. It is because of this Sarah wants a change, “I want to go back to freedom to

travel, to study and explore, to share information, to improve on what we have. I want to go back to making mistakes and trying again” (214).

Every walk of life in the new republic was affected by religious fanaticism: business and advertisement were no exception. Human face cannot appear in the Ads, “Islam didn’t approve of representations of the human face or form, so signs in the new republic were forced to use a simple photo of the product, counting on vibrant colours and elaborate typefaces to get their message across” (Ferrigno 222). Though churches were allowed in a limited way they cannot have crosses on their top as it is “... something strictly forbidden in the capital.” (241). Similarly, Disneyland, one of the most remarkable landmarks of modern life, that had a whole Disney empire of films, television and cartoons, became a wasteland because such amusements were not allowed in the new republic.

Both novels of Rees presented religious fanaticism in different forms. George Saba says “... here in Palestine change is always for the worse. Christian villages are overrun by new Muslim residents... it becomes a bad place for Christians...” (Rees. Collaborator. 93). Fanaticism takes a cruel face in the form of suicide bombers. Bethlehem radio reports about a suicide bomber killing eight Israeli occupiers. Even the radio announcer was so excited to read the news, “the gravity in his voice could not quite disguise the excitement” (185). The novel details about the suicide bomber (martyr) and the driving forces behind. Jihad Awdeh told Omar that Yunis accepted the proposal to carry out an operation (be a suicide bomber) against Israelis to escape his disgust and disappointment. When Omar asked him how come Yunis a suicide bomber, Jihad’s response was, “Self-disgust I

suppose, you might say... disgusted with himself and his father... No family business, no future..." (254-55). When Omar and the UN officers entered al-Azhar University of Gaza, what they saw was "the door was entirely covered in posters. Most were decorated with the fervent, apprehensive faces of suicide bombers preparing to depart on their missions." (Rees. *A Grave* 29). Likewise, Salwa says that since her husband was accused of collaboration, she was worried about her son Naji Masharawi, "... the sons of collaborators-they're so desperate to make amends for their family's damaged reputation that they volunteer for suicide missions against the Israelis." (53).

Religious fanaticism was portrayed in their approach to knowledge and creative writing. Sarah was cornered for writing the book *The Zionist Attack?* about the conspiracy behind the transition and she was sure that the Muslim community is not going to appreciate it. That is why, she did all her research for this book in absolute secrecy, and finally went absconding from the public. Similarly, when his granddaughter says about her reading a book on "...ancient Egypt, with the pictures of the pyramids and the Egyptian Gods" Omar Yussef commented that "I'm quite sure I wouldn't be allowed to bring such a book to Gaza. Hamas would object to its paganism." (57). While Omar and Sami were waiting the murderers of Cree for a meeting, Sami said that the owner of the restaurant is well known to Saladin Brigades as it was they who "...sent his son to blow himself up." (181). So, the restaurant owner was such a religious fanatic to make his own son a suicide bomber, and this mentality is nothing special or limited to him, but common from Old One of Ferrigno to Abdel Rehman of Rees.

When General Hussein was murdered by rival gangs, he was portrayed as a martyr and “the people threw their arms in the air and chanted that they would sacrifice for Hussein.” (174). It doesn’t end there, but transferred to young generation and the result is unending row of fanatics in the world. When Omar and Sami were going to meet Abu Jamal, the head of Saladin Brigades Raffa, Omar has been stoned, “A boy of about three stood on the roof of the store, throwing tiny stones at Omar Yussef... Another stone tapped the hood of the car. The boy...was resentful and ... He’s working on his arm for the battles to come.” (193).

They are misogynists

Their attitude to women is the most retrograde and reactionary. Women were devoid of most of the rights: usually they were discouraged from driving, going to secular schools, having bank accounts, that is why there is a specific mentioning of Angelina, house keeper of the Security Chief Redbeard as one who “could drive, had gone to a secular school, and had her own bank account.” (21). Women cannot be outside home without male accompaniment or permission. When Sarah was in the internet cafe, “like all the women in the café, she wore a clearly visible plastic card around her neck from her father or husband granting her permission to be outside the house.” (64). There are separate internet browsing centres for women, “...where the site access was rigorously screened and even potentially inappropriate Web addresses were blocked...” (64). Though women were not banned from western education, they are not encouraged, “Have you gone to college? Have you drunk deep from that filthy water?” (67) was the question Black Robe asked Sarah at the internet cafe. Most of the men in the new republic have more than one wife and

many children. Sarah was offered as a third wife to the son of the Saudi ambassador. The groom already had two wives who live in the KSA and Sarah would be his third wife who would be staying in the Republic. Nick, son of Jill, a former Hollywood queen has three wives and ten children. Spider the computer wizard has more than one wife and a number of children that even Rakkim got surprised. General Maurice Kidd, the head of Fedayeen “had four wives and twenty-seven children.” (209). Pernell, an ex-Fedayeen instructor “has got four wives and he keeps them all busy.” (250). Pernell has a funny way of justifying his polygamy,

One wife thinks she owns you. You have two or three or four, they all know they can be replaced with a quick ‘I divorce thee’. Three times and it’s back on the street... her only hope is to keep the man of the house pleased. (252).

Old One has many wives and innumerable kids. Besides, women were not expected to do anything other than serving husband and begetting children, and Pernell says “Woman with brains, that’s just asking for trouble.” (252).

According to these narratives Islam is not only curbing freedom for women, but they have to face a cruel system of suppression also. After the transition, there developed a new job of hunting humans, “... specialists in returning errant wives and daughters.” (36). When Sarah was hiding, bounty hunters were given tasks to find out her, and one of them successfully located her and tried to rape her.

The worst form of their misogyny was displayed in their criteria to choose a wife. Colarusso suggests a second wife to Rakkim describing their attractions, “...they’re homely as an old boot, but Mary Ellen is a fine cook and has the hips for

pounding out babies.” (228). The criteria are cooking skill and potential to deliver many kids. The new republic has a funny way of legalizing prostitution which is called Rented wife. Anyone can have sex with any woman considering her as wife, and once he is finished, he can divorce her. When Sarah and Rakkim went to meet Fancy, she was prostituting with a business man and once he finished, “the businessman ran a comb through his hair and slipped his comb back into his jacket (he said) I divorce thee. I divorce thee. I divorce thee.” (257).

Rees also presented a similar opinion about hip size of women. When Omar Yussef and the UN team reached their hotel, the receptionist had a friendly chat with them and she said that her father is not happy with her because,

A woman with good, wide hips brings a dowry of seven camels, because she will bear many children. I am small and I have narrow hips. So even though I have my degree in Business Administration, my father complains he will receive only one camel for me. (Rees, *A Grave* 20)

Again, on another occasion, when Omar flirted with her using the same joke, he said, “Perhaps I would have the traditional four wives: three with big hips, and you to be my favourite” (121). She responded, “...you wouldn’t need a small woman like me. You could pay the dowry for a wife with big hips who would bring you many children.” (120). The quality of women was weighed primarily using sexual scale, not her education or skills. Further, dowry (compulsory wealth man has to give to the woman) was described as something the woman’s father receives. So, girls become a means of income earning.

They are very cruel

Redbeard and other Muslim leaders are zoo sadists and his carpets are, “Rough, goat-wool tribal prayer rugs from Afghanistan and Pakistan covered the floor, Redbeard preferring their muted natural dyes.” (22). The leaders of the new regime are highly mysterious and dangerous. Above all they are unscrupulous. They are capable of any cruelty even to their own men. Old One killed his aid who brought the evidence against Sarah, “The brother who found the note pad didn’t know what the faint impression meant, but the Old One had him executed anyway” (31). Ibrahim, the eldest son of Old One “...had personally killed five people, one a younger sibling with a habit of bragging to blue-eyed rent-wives...” (30). Old One destroyed Macmillan, the FBI chief who fabricated the confession of Zionists, and the same was broadcasted internationally that resulted in the transition of America to Islamic republic. After studying the rehearsal video of confession, Katherine said, “... I never believed that Macmillan slipped in the shower and broke his neck...” (339). Similarly, Ibn Aziz ordered to kill the informant who gave tips about the hiding place of Spider, by force eating currency notes, just because the information was a bit late. Later, Ibn Aziz used his men to kidnap and murder Angelina, and while Redbeard narrated this incident, “the men who stole her from outside her mosque are dead. Killed by the man who sent them before I could find them.” (317). Ibn Aziz is so malicious to kill all those men who faithfully served him just to cover up his tracks.

Successful Fedayeen had to undergo a very rigorous set of training. According to Rakkim only ten to fifteen percentage can come out of the training

successfully. Ibn Aziz had to see how inhuman the condition Fedayeen trainees were put in when he visited General Kidd, and he got really shocked. They have been put in the open field for three months without any shelter or dress or even a bath. Then Old One says: “Assassins and shadow warriors are linked. Both are elite units of the Fedayeen, fiercely independent...and both ultimately betrayed by their leaders.”(303). The inhuman treatment and laborious training made them “dangerous, too resistant to control, mad with blood lust”, hence, “assassins average nineteen missions before they are terminated.” (304). There were many attempts against Redbeard’s life. His brother James Dougan, the first head of State Security and his most trusted officers were brutally murdered by Old One. Redbeard was fortunate to escape then, but later he also had been targeted many times, “there was an attempt on my life last month. They died. I didn’t. That’s all.”(37) was his response, when Rakkim asked him about a fresh scar on his cheek.

Rees portrayed the entire system both in Bethlehem and Gaza as a very cruel one. Most of his men in authority, either in resistant groups or the government, are very cruel with no scruples. Most of the time, jails are meant for innocent victims and not for criminals. When Omar asked Zeydan how he could keep George Saba, an innocent man in jail, his reply was “the jail is in Bethlehem, Palestine. It’s not in Copenhagen or Amsterdam! I hope that answers your question.” (Rees, *The Collaborator* 56). They feel no guilt in putting innocent lives behind bars. After Louai Abdel Rahman was murdered, their family business was confiscated by the Martyrs Brigades. They didn’t even consider that Louai has sacrificed his life for this group. Similarly, Ramiz, elder son of Omar, who is flourishing with his mobile

phone business, was threatened of confiscation of his shop by Martyrs Brigades. According to Charles Halloun, the financial expert, “these days they come to the house of the owner with a contract and say, ‘Sign it over to us or we’ll kill you’ and take the business anyway.” (83). Jihad Awdeh arranged the murders of his own superior Hussein Tamari, a party member Louai Abdel Rahman and the Christian George Saba. In turn Khamis Zeydan murdered Jihad. George’s father Habib Saba does not want Omar to proceed with his attempt to save George because “they will kill George, and then they will come and kill me and his family and destroy our house... If you force them to cover their tracks...” (115). The resistance group leaders have no scruples when it comes to causing troubles to others. They used George Saba’s residence to shoot the Israeli army, and in return the army would shell the house and destroy it completely. The worst scenario is the murder of Dima Abdel Rahman, who has been cut throat by her brother-in-law Yunis, as advised by his father. Likewise, when Omar asked Jihad “Do you kill for money?”, his answer was, “I kill for money when it’s strictly a matter of business...” Marwan Natsha, the defence attorney for George says that, “defence attorneys are supposed to consider the state and its security first”, (Rees, *The Collaborator* 106) meaning that his power to protect George Saba is very minimal, as they want someone to be punished for being a collaborator, so that Israel won’t get more collaborators in future. The innocence of George does not worry them at all.

Martyrs Brigades have installed a time bomb in the UN School to kill Omar Yussef, and the bomb killed Mr. Christopher Steadman, the School Principal. As set of people, these groups are capable of any amount of cruelty either to individuals or

to an entire group of people. Like the Old One in Ferrigno, here in Rees, Martyrs Brigades is so cruel and unsympathetic even to their own people. Abdel Rahman family is almost ceased to exist, after Louai was murdered, Yunis became a suicide bomber for the Brigade and Dima also was assassinated. All these murders were somehow connected to the Brigade, and they are happy to do that, because for people like them anyone is just a pawn to be used and thrown on the way.

When Omar Yussef and the UN officer Magnus Wallender were entering Gaza check point, the Palestinian officer in the checkpoint asked a few official questions and Omar answered him that it was twenty years since he visited Gaza, and added that both he and Gaza changed a lot since then. Sarcastically the officer commented, “At least you still have your mind...unlike Gaza” (Rees, A Grave 2). The officer implicates that Gaza had lost even its soul, the very essence of a people, just by electing Hamaz. The suggestion is that once Islamic forces came into power entire system becomes dirty.

According to James Cree, the UN security officer Colonel al-Fara, chief of Gaza Preventive Security “...has tortured more prisoners than you’ve pickled herring...” (7). Eyad Masharawi, the university professor had been brutally tortured by the Palestinian leadership: “...he was without food and water for over twenty-four hours, ... bent forward with your hands tied behind your back and your heels off the ground... they beat the soles of his feet and put on his head a dirty sack that smells of vomit ...” (51). It is the same group which kidnapped Wallender, and finally kept him in a tunnel. They were very cruel to both UN officers and Omar who tried to interfere. Some people are so nasty and cruel and they even take revenge on the

dead, by vandalising graves, many graves of the British soldiers who were killed in World War 1. The caretaker of the British graveyard said, “I feel as though these people who desecrated the graves wanted to kill them a second time.” (109). Later we find that James Cree, the UN security officer was killed in a roadside bomb, planted by another group of militants. When Omar and Zeydan reached at the crime scene it was so shocking that, instead of feeling shocked, the young men surrounded there were shouting angry words at rescuers, as if killing one UN officer was not enough for them. When Omar entered the morgue to identify Cree’s body, he saw a number of folders for documents, related to various types of unnatural deaths, and all files were thick with cases, because cruelty has no limit there and cruelty became the order of the day. Omar said to the pathologist that he had been there only three days, “and since then one of my colleagues has been kidnapped, another is in jail under torture, and now this one has been killed” (129). It was really terrifying when Bassam Odwan’s body was shown by the pathologist, because he has been cruelly tortured, his genitals had been cut and finger tips had been sliced. The doctor further told Omar that he receives a lot of mutilated bodies brought from the prison. In short, the state itself is the embodiment of all cruelties. Next day Omar had to witness the brutal murder of General Moussa Hussein: “One of the gunmen stood behind him, lifted his Kalashnikov and shot him through the neck” (151). Omar had to witness the fierce murder of Masharawi, who was thrown out of a jeep, and shot dead on the open road (190).

Later, when Omar Yussef was on his way to meet the people who killed Cree, Prof. Maki arranged someone to kill Omar in the crowd. Luckily Sami got

knowledge of this conspiracy and could save him. Even a university professor has rotten to the core to kill an aged school teacher. Omar and Sami learned that Khaled al Banna and Walid Bahloul were paid to blow up the UN car and to kill Cree by Yasser Salah, brother of Fathi Salah. Both Rees' stories present leaders, exactly, like Old One and Redbeard, Muslim leaders in Ferrigno. All these leaders are selfish, very cruel and fanatic to do anything to achieve their goals. Murder and bloodshed are part of their routine. When Abu Jamal and his team of Saladin Brigades raided the Salah house for retaliation, they killed almost everybody present there including Zaki Salah, their old father, brutally.

They are intellectually weak

Regarding the application of Orientalism in literary studies Edward Said stated, "For students of literature and criticism, Orientalism offers a marvellous instance of the interrelations between society, history, and textuality" (Said. Orientalism 26). This research is making use of that 'marvellous instances' from both Ferrigno and Rees who presented many Muslim characters as intellectually weak and inherently foolish. Just like Said referred to Arthur James Balfour talking to House of Commons about their superiority to the Egyptians, only because they "... know the civilization of Egypt better than ...the civilization of any other country... we know more about it" (33) these western novelists accept an air of superiority over their Muslim characters, because they know them. That knowledge includes the intellectual backwardness of Muslims as well. Rakkim and Redbeard unanimously agree that the Bible belt (the name given to Christian half of America) produces better cola as they have the formula, and they regret that it is high time for

their scientists to invent something similar After the transition, the country became a “technological backwater” (55). Marian told Rakkim that she and Sarah “...were going to write about the intellectual deterioration of our society since the transition” (73). She lamented the negative journey the country had taken, since it became an Islamic republic, “Now, every year we have fewer graduates in engineering and mathematics. Our manufacturing plants are outdated, our farm productivity falling, and patent applications are only forty percent of what they were in the old regime.” (73). The transition made the former US a third world country that has no technological development. It had energy crisis and very slow internet, “Satellites dropping from the sky. The power grid decaying...the former United States had been reduced to a third-world backwater whose principal exports were foodstuffs and mineral” (263). The Old One’s goal of building a nation that is intellectually far advanced remains an unfulfilled dream as long as the Muslim fundamentalists hold the rein of the country, and the pity is that a Muslim country can only be a Muslim fundamentalist country. Sarah says that they “... can build a nation that reveres innovation and intellectual inquiry.” (215) only after destroying all religious fanatics and fundamentalist like Old One.

Ferrigno gives many occasions to compare Muslim republic and Christian America and highlights the superiority of the latter in terms of development in science, technology and economy. This inferiority of Muslims is visible even within the republic when Catholic dominating regions like Southern California were put to compare with the rest:

With their natural resources and hardscrabble work ethic, this part of the nation had flourished... things were different here. The buildings soared and the cars were better kept, many of them French and Japanese imports with fuel-cell technology and vector engines...unlike the capital, there was an excitement here, an eager rhythm, a sense that anything was possible. (230)

Rakkim and Sarah had an interesting discussion on the life of the new republic and while Sarah was mesmerised at the liveliness of the Christian part of the country, Rakkim told her that “Colarusso once told me if I was Catholic on a Saturday night, I’d never want to be a Muslim again’ (230). Similarly, Rees’ hero Omar Yussef registers his very negative observation on Tamari, the local chief of Martyrs Brigades, “The top of Tamari’s head narrowed to a third of the width of his neck. The tapering, in-bread head seemed to Omar Yussef to be a declaration that his brain was not the source of his swagger” (Rees, *The Collaborator* 33). Again “Omar Yussef, thought immediately of Saddam Hussein, “when he saw the hat worn by another Martyrs Brigades leader Jihad Awdeh. Saddam is the embodiment of all evils and Jihad Awdeh is reminding him. When Omar and UN team reached Gaza, Wallender was looking for newspapers, but, “Meisoun here tells me they don’t have the English-language newspapers in Gaza” (Rees, *A Grave* 36) as Palestinians are neither educated nor open to western knowledge.

The smuggled rocket is at the core of the problems in *A Grave* in Gaza, and it is reported that the missile is coming from North Korea via Iran. Muslims in this country are incapable of developing one such missile by themselves, as they are intellectually weak. The best they can do is to emulate a model from other countries.

Their legal system is horrible

Undesirability of Muslims as a community has its share in their law-and-order system. Both authors portrayed various instances where legal system is highly corrupted and it is never a match to the modern western system. The detective Derrick Brummel is so angry for trying a catholic kid he has arrested for stealing a ring from a Muslim business man under Sharia law. As per Sharia law his hand will be chopped off. In the early days of the Republic the Sharia law was applicable only for Muslims, but gradually the religious authorities extended the jurisdiction under various pretexts. Rakkim explained one way of such extension, “If the businessman said he intended to donate the ring to his mosque, he might have a case. It’s a stretch, but that’s one interpretation of the statutes” (Ferrigno 130). Homosexuals got terrible punishments and their skulls were exhibited as a warning to the public, “...the old Golden Gate Bridge renamed for an Afghan warlord and decorated with the skulls of homosexuals purged after the transition” (320). When Redbeard tried to justify the Old One’s lie about Zionist conspiracy by saying that the old regime was so bad, Sarah responded, “I know they didn’t burn fornicators and witches. They didn’t stone girls to death for running away from husbands. They didn’t cut off the hands of thieves.” (339). After the transition to Islamic republic, many unbelievers were stoned to death, and the clerics were happy to promote the barbarian form of punishment. They were against James, the State security chief and “the right-wing clerics had called for James’s ouster for his refusal to stone unbelievers, denouncing the brothers as converts in name only, soft on doctrine, soft on sin.” (177).

George Saba, the scapegoat of Louai Abdel Rahman murder, was arrested by the police, kept in prison without any trial for days, and finally a mock court judged him guilty of being a collaborator. Then without waiting for official hanging, he was lynched to death by Martyrs Brigades and that was acceptable both to the people and the system.

In short, there are plenty of reasons to make Muslims undesirable people, from their beliefs to cruelty to humanity. A reader might reach the conclusion that Muslims are not a people to be befriended and it is very dangerous to be close to them. Consequently, western atrocities towards Muslims and Muslim countries are not only justified but desired by the readers, as necessary to protect the modern civilization from the clutches of these barbarians.

II. MUSLIMS ARE POLITICALLY INEFFECTUAL, MORALLY COMPROMISED, AND INCAPABLE OF MEANINGFUL LEADERSHIP

In his article *Orientalism Reconsidered* Edward Said, while describing the Western attitude to the East and Muslims, stated that Islam/Muslims “... cannot represent themselves, they must therefore be represented by others who know more about Islam than Islam knows about itself.” (Said, *Reconsidered*. 258), and it is from this conviction of the West that they proceed to portray Muslims, their lives, leaders and nations. They make assertions about this people and the same becomes credible “...by virtue of his being Western, white, non-Muslim” (258), and it is this portrayal that is problematised in this chapter, as both the writers analysed here are Western, White non-Muslim. Again, Said’s remarks on the historicism of the West

“...historicism meant that the one human history uniting humanity either culminated ...was observed from the vantage point of Europe, or the West” (258), are applicable here, that is, liberal democracy of the west becomes less liberal and their views presented are less democratic.

Another Islamophobic portrayal these novels displayed was negative imaging of Muslim leaders and the governments of Muslim countries. Such portrayals definitely carry geopolitical implications. Once the world was convinced that Muslims are incapable of good governance, the colonial mindset of ‘educating’ the East can work successfully and direct and indirect intervention in Muslim/Middle Eastern countries even after the supposed end of colonialism, might be well accepted. All the three novels present Muslim leaders, organizations and their governments incapable, corrupted and they are no match for modern society. The Islamic Republic of America is an absolute failure when compared to the pre-transition America. Their failures and undesirability of Muslim leaders and their governments are presented through various symbols and images that can be grouped as shown below:

Their governance is very poor

All the three novels present governments or authorities by Muslims as utter failures. After Islamic Republic of America came into existence with Damon Kingsley as the President, the former glorious USA has become a third world country in which a major share of the population lives in almost poverty. The old luxurious America became a thing of past. Just twenty years of Muslim rule turned the only super power of the late twentieth century into a very poor country, and

China replaced the USA as the only super power. While Rakkim was returning from Redbeard's house, he is driving through "the freeway (that) was potholed, the roadway buckled in places..." (41). Readers have a feeling that the place in the story is some part of an underdeveloped African country. Similarly, "the Reservoir District was a blue-collar section of the city, mostly Catholics and lapsed Muslims, a mix of shabby houses and low-rent businesses" and "an ancient Lexus perched on blocks in the front yard of one house, tires flat, rusting quietly in the drizzle" (59). Luxurious cars became rare on the road and Islamic Republic does not export anything much. Along with other factors, this underdeveloped status contributed to the unpopularity of the country among non Muslims and the less fanatic Muslims. That is why, there are many who escape the country secretly. After his term with Fedayeen, Rakkim helped such people, "He used the Badlands to ferry people out of the country, Jews and homosexuals and runaway fundamentalists, all of them desperate for the relative safety of Canada..."(42).

A very important area of failed governance is in their focus on education. The leaders of both Islamic Republic of America and Rees' Palestine, had the centre of their attention on Military power and political intrigues, and not on the education of the people. When Rakkim visited Sarah's college, he got shocked to see the depth of neglect that the education institutions suffer from,

...the waxed wood floors of the buildings were cracked and uneven, the classrooms cramped, the desks and chairs mismatched... the furniture shoddy, the walls patched. The faculty computers were ancient, without satellite uplinks and only limited Internet access... (53)

He was familiar only with Fedayeen training facilities that are state-of-the-art. It is because education is never a priority of these Muslim leaders. This is another reason, why the former USA became a third world country and a technological backwater after transition. University professors have to resort to private internet cafes for fast browsing. Both governments in Rees novels show very minimal attention to education, consequently education is not a priority in the society. The young ones learn throwing stones at Israelis than attending school. During his entire stay in Gaza Omar's encounter with people from education sector was only when he went to Al-Azhar University and Masharawi family, and that too was to see the corrupted education system. There was nothing promising to develop a future generation capable of shaping a better nation.

New York, one of the richest cities of the twentieth century, has changed to a dirty place in the Islamic republic. When Rakkim was going to meet the rendezvous of Spider, he had to pass the dirtiest area, "...this part of downtown was poorly lit... The maze of alleys gave way to gravel footpaths, then a succession of worn stone steps... they scuttled through a long, corrugated-metal pipe strewn with garbage, broken eggs crunching underfoot, and ...stink of rotting vegetables..." (97). When Rakkim was visiting Ballard to see the hiding place of Sarah, he had seen another dirty face of the new America, very poor public transport, "The monorail operated at a huge loss, but the exact cost to the city was a state secret. The buses were dirty and sluggish, the freeways decaying..." (147). Many bridges and huge transportation facilities got damaged, out of negligence by the government, and the blames for such incidents were attributed to imaginary terrorists. When General Masood Bridge

across San Francisco Bay got collapsed, Sarah commented: “Another bridge collapse blamed on terrorists. The usual excuse for years of official neglect.” (240).

The role of media was redefined in the new republic, and they report only such news that are favourable to the authorities. Ibn Aziz openly told General Kidd that he used to influence media in his favour, so that the world has no suspicion about the untimely death of his boss Oxley. Some eighteen thousand people died of acute respiratory disease previous year, but it never appeared in any media. When Professor Marian Warriq was murdered at her residence, it never appeared in the news, despite her eminent position in the academic world, because Rakkim advised police officer to hush the news. The powerful and the influential can decide what should be reported by the media. Media independence becomes just a dream in Muslim society according to these stories.

Rees novels present two different Muslim governments: Palestine Authority in Bethlehem and Hamas in Gaza. Though neither of them are autonomous governments, both of them have some power over the daily rule of law in their respective jurisdictions. Within this limited power, their leaders are corrupted to the core, and they are master model of failed governance. In both Bethlehem and Gaza, law and order was controlled and decided more by armed militants, than by official police force. Neither government show any creative step to develop the country or enhance the quality of life of their people. The first page of the story *A Grave* details how much stinking Gaza appeared to Omar and Wallender when they entered Gaza, “The air was pale and stinking and every surface was repugnant” (Rees, *A Grave* 4) and Omar derogatively commented that it was “The scent of Gaza” (4). According

to Khamis Zeydan, Gaza should be sunk in the sea along with its corrupt leaders (7). The supreme authority in Gaza is Revolutionary Council, but their job is not to supervise the development and peace in the country but to decide who to be (not) killed next time (25). The influential people are nomads as Khamis Zeydan puts it: “All the top Martyrs Brigades guys are Ta’amra. They’re thugs and they run the place as a family racket.” (Rees, *The Collaborator* 48). On another occasion, he said that “we were all terrorists, the people who now govern you...” (49).

One of the most important investments of any modern-day government is in education sector, but none of the three governments appear in these stories pay any attention to improve the future generation. The only reference to education in *The Collaborator* is the UN school where Omar Yussef teaches. The role of Palestine government there is zero, and they could not even ensure safety there. That is why there was a bomb explosion which killed the director and principal Christopher Steadman, inside the class room. Education was represented by Al-Azhar University Gaza in *A Grave in Gaza* that also presented a very dismal picture, where politics is more important than education. Prof. Adnan Maki owes his position as the head of the university not to any academic credit but his involvement in politics (15). According to Salwa, her husband discovered that University was selling degrees to influential militia men (14). Academic freedom was not a concept they are familiar with, consequently when Prof. Masharawi put a question in his internal examination for his students about the corruption in the government, he was booked by the authorities. Universities in the Islamic republic of America spend their time in glorifying the transition of old regime to an Islamic one and the divine hand in that

historic move. None of these institutes promote free thinking or research, hence, the countries remain backwaters of knowledge.

Kafka's remarks about Josef. K's trial 'the proceedings gradually merge into the judgment' (Kafka.110) becomes literally true in the trial scene of George Saba that presents a very ugly concept of judiciary, and the proceedings were not just absurd or unreal, rather they are more than real. Many atrocities happen in occupied Palestine are more real and horrible than the horror in Kafka or Harold Pinter. The head judge announced the court was in session and the prosecutor presented the case in two or three sentences without presenting any evidence against the accused, but stated that the accused had admitted the guilt. The most horrible scene of the procedure was the defence attorney's role, "The accused pleads guilty, Your Honor" (113) was his only remark. An effective and impartial Judiciary is the inevitable part of any successful modern government, but Palestine is missing that vital organ. That is why Omar made sarcastic comment, "We can't govern, this place is governed according to the rules of the Middle Ages" (Rees, A Grave 154).

Anytime, gunfire can be heard in Gaza, and that too not from the Israeli soldiers but from the various local fighting groups. When Omar and Wallender were returning to their hotel, "Omar Yussef heard gunfire as the UN Suburban pulled down...The guns sounded close..." (Rees. A Grave 19). According to Zeydan, "gunfire is the music of the Palestinians", and when Wallender asked if Gaza was a police state, his answer was it was a banana republic (22). It is such a dangerous law-less place that it is better not interfere in anything other than one's job, and "even the Israelis consider Gaza adequate punishment for a bad guy" (23).

Muslim leaders are corrupt, incapable and gluttonous

Most of the Muslim leaders in all these three novels are gluttonous, for power, sex and food. They will go to any extent to achieve those goals. None of them finds any ideals preventing them from resorting to dirty games to grab power. At the early stage of the story itself, Ferrigno presented a highly authoritative Redbeard, whose office has a sofa, in which no one can sit. Redbeard, as the head of State Security, has all luxuries and protection. He lives in utmost luxurious comfort, enjoying even banned drinks. Similarly Old One, the mastermind behind the terrorist plot, has his "... redoubt on the top ten floors of the ninety-story high-rise dubbed Colossus by the newspapers" (Ferrigno 31). Old One has proved insatiable in all three appetites, mentioned above. He cannot be satisfied until the whole world became under his power. His power mongering brought the USA into second civil war that resulted in the official death toll of nine million people (107). He had sex with many women including wives of his men who served him faithfully, and enjoys all types of food and beverages. In his sequel Ferrigno portrays Old One always on the move around the globe in luxurious cruiser. His craze for power and fanaticism prompted him to live longer and consequently to undergo a multitude of organ transplantations: "Steroids and genetic infusions kept him vital, organ transplants kept pace with the passing years" (79), He arranged murders of many other Muslim leaders and quite often Darwin was his assassin. Darwin killed many, including a three-star Army General and even a powerful ayatollah at his own mosque. He is such power crazy, that he did not trust even his elder son Ibrahim, "The Old One took a risk in ceding a measure of power to him. Without a degree of

autonomy...(because) too much power would ignite the boy's ambition. That was why, the Old One kept his own network of spies..." (Ferrigno 79). Besides, Military and Fedayeen, the two wings of the armed forces show their loyalty to different power sources: The army is loyal to the president, the militarily superior Fedayeen to the Old One.

Craze for power made most of them so selfish that they plot against each other. They are just like underworld thugs, who can befriend or vex anyone anytime if it is for their vested interest. Old One arranged murder of James Dougan and Redbeard, but succeeded in killing only the former. He either destroys other men in power or makes them his aids. Both Oxley, head of Black Robes and General Maurice Kidd, head of Fedayeen, are his aids. Oxley murdered his predecessor to become the chief, and was murdered by his successor Ibn Aziz. Despite all objections and unpopularity among the army, General Kidd became chief, by destroying his boss General Sincliar. But now Redbeard is plotting with him to finish Ibn Aziz. Old One even kept track of his own son Ibrahim, lest he should turn against him. After his meeting with Rakkim and Sarah, Old One left them free, but implanted a tracking chip in Sarah's body. Likewise, "Redbeard and the Old One have been playing against each other for twenty years" (205). Similarly, Redbeard kept watch on Sarah by putting one of his own tracking devices in the watch he gave her, but a technician helped her remove it, "it was Russian (and he) paid me a thousand dollars for it..." (173). After assuming the headship, Ibn Aziz "...had disappeared dozens of Oxley's loyalists, used his contacts in the media to sugar-coat his ascension to power..." (208). Ibn Aziz is against Redbeard as the latter could not

control the wrong ways of his niece Sarah. Later Ibn Aziz visited General Kidd to obtain his support against Redbeard and assistance in tracing Sarah. Rees leaders also are fighting each other; police chief Khamis Zeydan is supposed to have a hand in Hussein Tamari's murder. Though Hussein Tamari and Jihad Awdeh are topmost leaders of Martyrs Brigades the latter did not like the former and was happy to leak information that the suicide bomber used chemicals from Tamari's factory and Israelis murdered Tamari using a Missile. Later Jihad Awdeh was shot dead, directly by Zeidan. In the novel *A Grave in Gaza*, Masharawi was killed by Saladin Brigade, and Prof. Adnan Maki arranged the murder of Omar Yussef, but himself was killed by General Hussein. Another leader Lieutenant Fathi Salah's murder was arranged by his own brother Yasser Salah who in turn was murdered by Abu Jabir. Bassam Odwan was brutally killed in custody by General Hussein, and, in return Hussein was murdered by Saladin Brigades Gaza wing. This is a never-ending list, as they never improve from the base level of mafia culture. Bethlehem police chief Khamis Zeydan has Sami Jaffari, a gunman from Bethlehem who was deported by Israel as a private security in Gaza for his safety during his official trips. According to Sami, General Hussein and Colonel al-Fara are in constant power struggle, and in revolutionary council meeting, "General Hussein accused Colonel al-Fara of corruption. He called for an official investigation of al-Fara. But General Hussein is corrupt, too..." (Rees, *A Grave*.146-147). After Abu Jamal learnt that his brother Odhwan was murdered on false charge and Yasser Salah was behind it, he made an assault on Salah's house and literally obliterated every one of them, including Salah's old father. (204-205).

During the fasting month, Mullah Oxley and his high-ranking officers in Black Robes "...had been eating and drinking all night. It was almost dawn now, and still they continued" (48). Oxley also is a sexual pervert: "...in private he was a drunkard and a pedophile. Little girls, little boys, it made no difference to Oxley, as long as there was innocence to be sucked out of them" (48). Oxley also wanted Redbeard to be killed, "It will take politics as well as Allah to rid us of Redbeard" (50), Oxley told Ibn Aziz just before he was murdered. Oxley was so cruel even to offer a cold-blooded murder of his best man in front of all his deputies, "I will reward you with a quick and painless death for your service" (51), but Ibn Aziz is in no way different from his Mullah, and he is equally power crazy and cruel. So, he killed Oxley in front of other Black Robes chiefs. Prof. Maki of Al Azhar University is a drunkard and an expert in high quality whiskies. He has no feeling for common Palestinians, and believes that he should be extended VIP treatment by Israelis (Rees. A Grave 33-34). He is such crooked and naive to hatch a plot against Eyad Masharawi, which ended in latter's murder.

Like majority of the Hollywood Arabs, most of these leaders are sexual perverts. Redbeard had a little fancy towards Katherine, his sister-in-law, and now both of them reveal their attraction to each other. Old One frequently visits casino, even at this age, and enjoys the company of young girls. Jihad Awdeh was so happy to speak about the buttock of the murdered girl Dima Abdel Rahman: "The police had covered her body by the time I got there, but the guards let me have a look. A lot of the guys got an eyeful" (186). Even dead body of woman is enough to rouse his interest. Though Omar is the protagonist of the story, he is not devoid of lust,

typical of Muslim leaders in these stories. When his neighbour Leila Salman came to his home, his thoughts were about, “she had a fulsome, motherly roundness that made Omar Yussef wonder what it would be like to touch her, to hold her. He often played with what might ensue if she were to enter his bedroom...” (123). When he went to Gaza, he met Umm Rateb, secretary to University President, and had a kick on her. The pathetic situation at the house of Masharawi did not prevent him from sexual desires. Women also are no different, when it comes to sexual perversion. Umm Rateb is meeting Omar for the first time in her life, yet she “smiled, showing big teeth along the wide mouth, and looked a long time at Omar Yussef with an expression of amused curiosity.” (Rees, *A Grave* 12). Meisoun, the unmarried young receptionist at Sands Hotel is always flirtatious to Sami and Omar. Prof. Maki is not only keeping an Asian girl for his private needs, but he is also an expert in sexual matters: “...if you read the surveys, you’d see that Swedish women have the smallest breasts, on average, in the whole world...Now Gazan women: under their robes they carry enormous breasts, big and heavy and full...” (66). He doesn’t care becoming a pimp as he offered his Asian maid to Omar. The latter refused saying, “she’s too skinny for me” (68). Khaled says that whenever there is an escalation in Israel –Palestine fight, it will more affect the leaders as “the chiefs can’t go to Tel Aviv to fuck their Russian whores” (186).

Though alcohol is forbidden in Islam, all leaders both in Ferrigno and Rees including Old One are drunkards and keep personal collection of rare brands of alcohols. Old One is a frequenter in Las Vegas casino for alcohol and money laundering. He had white chicks at casinos whom he liked to entertain with. Khalid

Ibn Aziz, who replaced head of Black Robs after murdering Oxley "...rarely bathed, lest his own nudity led to impure thoughts." (49). Prof. Maki had a personal collection of rare alcoholic drinks and he figuratively declared that inside of his house did not belong to Gaza. When Cree woke up after he was pistol whipped to unconscious, he asked for scotch, and the revolutionary council members present there were so happy to give him alcohol at the hotel lobby itself, as they have been carrying hipflasks with scotch. When Omar visited Hussein, he was so proud to show them his rare collection of brandy (Rees, A Grave 93).

Bribery and corruption are everywhere in the Islamic republic, and no one can have a peaceful life without paying bribes. Bribery was protected by euphemism of gifts, as Spider put it, "you don't even pay off the police. You give gifts to the officers. Birthday presents for their wives and sweethearts, graduation gifts for their children. Generous gifts, but no bribes." (100). Spider told Rakkim that when he hacked congressional budget code and he could understand that how much corrupted the money flow was. "The money is going to the army and the religious authorities...Fedayeen, of course. No one outside the Select Committee knows." (103). Saladin Brigades Gaza and Saladin Brigades Rafah are similar in name but they fight each other for the profit from arms smuggling. Rafah branch suspects Gaza branch of taking more money by way of smuggling weapons, and that led to fight between them (Rees. A Grave 184). In Gaza they have developed even a special name for the bribe, 'secret handshake', and according to Khamis Zeydan "the secret hand shake usually has ten thousand dollars in it, at least." (83). Both General Hussein and Zeydan were in Arafat's staff, and Hussein was dirty, corrupt

and cruel even then (83). According to Zeydan, Gaza is full of nasty gourmands (86) and Omar remarked that Palestine leaders are either brutal gunmen or corrupt policemen, and top level government officers cared only for their status as VIPs (119). Armed groups concentrate more on making money than on resisting Israel, and make more troubles by attacking Israel and kill Israelis to get more money from the President (147).

The worst part of the story is that even the UN got corrupted because of the dirty politics in Palestine. According to Prof. Maki, the UN is more concerned with peace negotiations than securing justice to the murdered Cree, and “the UN will close its eyes to this...and pay a pension to the poor man’s family, if he has one.” (221). That is why Omar concluded, “Why should it only be Palestinians who’re corrupted by Gaza?”(221)

Rees’ Muslim leaders in Palestine match the vilely nature of Ferrigno leaders. Khamis Zeydan, the Bethlehem police chief, is chronic drunkard, chain smoker and womanizer. Omer Yussef the sleuth had been a drunkard until recent days, and had a very bleak past behind him. Leaders of the resistant groups are no better. They backbite each other to get power and ensure their position even at the cost of ordinary people and the national interest. They collaborate with Israeli military for material benefit as well as to destroy their political rivals. In Gaza there is always power game going on between various armed groups like Saladin Brigade of Gaza, Saladin Brigade of Raffa, Military intelligence, Preventive Security and different individuals in revolutionary council. According to Khamis Zeydan “in Palestine, there’s no such thing as a good detective” (Rees, Collaborator 51),

because everybody is corrupted and “there’s no place for honesty in our police force.” (47).

Like Ferrigno leaders, Rees leaders also are gluttonous for power and wealth. They fight each other in secret, none of them was inspired by any principle either religious or national, but selfish goals. Sami doesn’t like them as he found “Those bastards never really finish talking...” (144) After George Saba was lynched to death in the public, Jihad Awdeh moved his family to safe residential area to avoid Israeli retaliation so that he can make human shield using innocent villagers against Israeli military. When Omar Yussef visited Hussein Tamari, Martyrs Brigades chief, he “... saw the row of expensive cars parked on the roadside. They belonged to the Martyrs Brigades.” (99). In a country where most of the population are very poor, all the luxury cars have been owned by leaders. PLO leaders have built large mansions in Tel el-Hawa and Omar saw new and shiny Audi sedans parked, when he went to meet Colonel Al-Fara (Rees. A Grave 42-43). This meeting with Al- Fara proved two things about the colonel: he is very cruel and despotic and can target any of his country men, who ever might appearing to be a threat to their corruptive underworld. He is weak inside, even before Omar, a Palestinian without any official powers, that is why Colonel, who didn’t even recognise their right to meet the prisoner, later agreed Masharawi’s wife to visit him in jail (47-48). Prof. Maki is living in absolute luxury, “the floors were a milky brown marble polished to shine like the surface of a summer lake... there was a brilliant chandelier so large that the last Shah might have thought it ostentatious” (62). He owned a luxurious apartment in Paris. General Hussein is living like a knight, in an apartment block of six floors.

He has separate floors for separate business-like reception, kids, wife, and entertainment. According to the narrator a mansion of that size could be procured only through years of corruption (87).

The Palestinian leadership is the embodiment of inability. They are selfish, inhuman and malicious that Omar accuses them: “You people on the Revolutionary Council, you kill one another and then you hold a meeting and you make peace until the next time you decide to murder each other”(153). Their incapability was summarised by Zeydan when he satirically narrated the expected farce at Revolutionary Council after Hussein was murdered; every one of them will say how shocked they were at his murder, and this two hour show may be followed by a suggestion for the arrest of the murderers, though each one of them knows the murderer and they are happy that now one name is less in the list of competitor (158). Even Kahled, an ordinary gunman knows how poor their leaders are, “We have people here with hard hearts and we have others here with shit for brains...But this guy’s... head is hard and a dirty piece of shit throbs where his heart ought to be” (184).

Law and order in their society is poor

The USA of pre-transition period was noted for the rule of law and its unbiased law and order system, but the new Islamic republic is highly corrupted that law enforcing officers are the most heinous lawbreakers. Black Robes beat women in public for ensuring modesty, but some people live in all voluptuous pleasures including extramarital sex. No hands of law reach Old One the master mind of all evils. Darwin, the assassin murdered a series of people both ordinary and important

personalities, yet he was never touched by any law. The entire Ferrigno story has no reference to the judicial court in the Islamic Republic. Transparency is almost did not exist at all, “Any examination of the legal authority of the Black Robes could lead to trouble, and no publisher would dare print an exposé of the finances of the congressional leaders or the army high command” (81-82). As a fact the country is more in the hands of underworld dons like Old One, Darwin, Spider, than in the hands of legal authority like the President. Spider is an expert hacker who could penetrate even into official systems.

Anyone can take law into one’s hands in the new republic: Anthony Jr. and his team attacked Rakkim in the public, something unheard of former USA. When Rakkim and Sarah met Fancy (Fatima) at the prostitution centre she was worried that they came for money, as drug traffickers and underworld mafia are very common, and people expect no help from the authorities. When Rakkim and Mardi opened Blue Moon club, there came goons to collect protection money, but Rakkim manhandled them. Goons are on the loose and poor people are open to their mercy just like in any underdeveloped African or Latin American country. Rakkim met Harriet, a lady don of private kill squads, on the street. When Rakkim had fight with them the public in the street had no wonder, as if it is happening in one of the Latin American countries where drug mafia often had street war. Most of the time killer squads are “probably on one of the heavy-duty amphetamine variants. The kill squads functioned best on lab courage...anything to amp them up and diminish any moral overrides for the dirty work.” (144).

There are certain areas in the new republic where hands of law do not reach. “Badlands at the foot of the Cascade Mountains”(172) is one of them and that is a favourite point of smugglers and other outlaws, and according to Rakkim even police avoided Badlands. It is through this Badlands Rakkim and Sarah led Darwin to trap him with werewolves who take pleasure in killing humans. Thus, the former USA had a return journey from modern times of science and technology to the Middle Ages of werewolves and thugs, just because it became an Islamic republic.

In Rees novels, both Bethlehem and Gaza present picture of a mafia state, where gun men have more decisive power than officials. Martyrs Brigades decided that George Sabah was the collaborator, so, the official police had no choice but to arrest him. Later when the trial started, even the head judge was afraid of Martyrs Brigades. Omar knows this head judge who was actually “...spilling scandalous details of the legal system’s powerlessness in the face of the Martyrs Brigades gangsters and their cohorts in the government” (Rees, *The Collaborator*,112), but felt no prick of conscience to award George, capital punishment without any solid proof. A police station was over powered by the gunmen, broke into the jail room and took the prisoner out of the station. The official police could do anything to protect their prisoner from Martyrs Brigades men. Later without waiting for the official execution, George was lynched to death by Martyrs Brigades, “As Jihad Awdeh hauled him up the steps by his scalp, blood rolled across George’s forehead and he bawled in pain... Then there was a single shot...”(164), and the same day even his house was obliterated.

In Gaza, Eyad Masharawi was arrested from his house without any court orders or even informing the family about the reason of his arrest. According to Salwa, “the policemen insulted him...I was upstairs. As I came down, I saw them taking Eyad through the door... in handcuffs and one of them...pushing his neck down.” (Rees, *A Grave* 16). When Omar Yussef offered to prove his innocence, Bassam Odwan, a considerably influential figure in Gazan power structure, said: “Do you think proof is part of the equation? They did not need proof to put me in this hole. Or to hang me by my wrists in front of an air conditioning unit all day yesterday.” (97). He even added a funny remark that if life, death and justice are in the hands of God in other part of the world, it is not like that in Gaza (98). He openly admitted that he surrendered to the police only because he was worried about his large family being obliterated if he escaped, as he knows that it is always muscle power not justice that rules the land.

They are undemocratic (Hereditary right to power and favouritism)

Muslims were portrayed undemocratic in all the three novels. There is not any mention of electing leaders, but one comes to a position either by inheritance or by eliminating the current one. Individuals come to power by hook or crook, but by all means, not elected. Ferrigno presents at least four power sources in the new republic. The president of the nation has been in the chair for more than two decades, Redbeard has been the chief of State Security ever since the murder of then chief, his brother James Dougan. Oxley has been chief of Black Robs after he murdered his predecessor, and Ibn Aziz became the new chief when he was only twenty-six years old by murdering Oxley, and General Kidd has been the head of

Fedayeen for eleven years, ever since the death of his predecessor. It looks a pure jungle raj, where the cleverer one destroys the current leader and becomes the head. Thus, the system never encourages democratic election and no one is worried about the democracy. Old One tells Rakkim that he is not worried about Rakkim becoming a leader as, “you are not descended from the Prophet...so you will never ascend to my place”(303). So the power comes definitely in way of kinship, not by votes.

Rees novels present Palestinian leaders both in the resistance groups and in the legal authority. There is no mention about democratic election, and the only leaders appear in his stories are members of revolutionary council, who were never elected but earned their positions by way of influence. In his Gaza story, there are two power groups in Revolutionary council, one led by Colonel Jihad Awdeh and the other by Hussein Tamari, and Bethlehem story presents Tamari and Zeydan, both came into position by way of might not by way of election.

As democracy was not a brand the Muslim world of Ferrigno’s new America fond of, nepotism and kinship favouritism naturally prevailed there. Being related to Redbeard, Rakkim and Sarah got all favours from the system that helped them grow big in such a short period. Sarah is only in her late twenties, but she is already a professor in a National University. Rakkim himself is not white American but “almost Moorish” (9). Almost all high-ranking offices were monopolized by Arab origin Conventional Muslims who are either from Africa or Middle East. Old One is an African migrant, Oxley is also from Africa, Major Kidd, the head of Fedayeen is a Somalian and Khalid-ibn-Aziz, the current leader of religious police also is a migrant Muslim. So, their Arab favouritism helped all these Arabs and Arab

speaking Africans to get better positions over white Americans. This fact is emphasized in the story when Dr. Barrie, Sarah's Catholic colleague says, "I tell my husband, if I was a Muslim, I would be department head, and if I was an Arab, I would be president of the university." (57). So, this favouritism and partiality was normal and taken for granted.

Palestinian governments in Rees novels also present favouritism. Prof Maki became the head of Gaza university only because of his political connections, and Abdel Rahman's household could run successfully their auto shop as long as Louai had been in the police, but once he was murdered, supposedly by the Israelis, the family lost 'high connection' and consequently the favour, hence the business was taken over by the Martyrs Brigades.

III. MUSLIMS ARE A THREAT TO THE WEST, ITS VALUES AND SAFETY

According to Fukuyama school of thought, the ideological evolution of human beings has reached an end point by universal acceptance of the western liberal form of government (Fukuyama 16). Both Hegel and Marx believed in an end point of evolution of human societies when mankind achieved a form of society that satisfied its most fundamental longings (Fukuyama Xii). It is commonly accepted that "... mankind has progressed through a series of primitive stages of consciousness... such as tribal, slave owning, theocratic, and finally democratic egalitarian societies..." (Fukuyama 115,) and, Fukuyama concluded that in thus evolved liberal democratic state, all prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied, where there are no fights over 'big' issues. The easiest and

common conclusion thus derived is that human beings have no better form of government than liberal democracy. This conclusion posits another conclusion that any force that threatens this 'final best form of government' is a threat to not only to the West but also to the entire humanity, and any source of such threat is to be annihilated for the best interest of the human civilisation. It is when viewing from this premise, the 'anti-democratic' nature of Muslims becomes that 'great threat' and it necessitates the civilising mission in Muslim countries, like the one performed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. When the West 'knows' that liberal democracy is the ultimate point where human journey should 'end', the situation leads to the worst paradox, that is, it looks at other forms (whether Islamic, Communist or any other form) as undesirable, and, therefore to be defeated, and the 'liberality' of liberal democracy disappears.

Since this research is highlighting the Islamophobia inherent in the democratizing and civilizing missions of the West, it is desirable to consider a little further the background of political notions of Muslim communities. Caliphate was the form of government Muslims were familiar with. The caliph is a representative of the prophet himself. When the state of Medina was established, Prophet was both its political and religious leader. At the death of the prophet, people elected Aboobacker, as their leader and he was called khaleefa, that means 'representative' as he led them on behalf of the prophet. Caliph has not been entitled to any salary or any special right over the public property. Whenever there is any property or bounty from battle fields to be shared among the members of the community, Caliph gets only a share equal to that of any other ordinary citizen in the country. Thus, Caliph

was not an authority of making laws or interfering with people's lives, but was an authority to ensure that the life of people and the governance of the region under his dominion are in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. But history says that, this puritan statehood continued only a brief period, and, what followed was hereditary kingship, that gives no room for democracy.

The establishment of the United States of America, as a constitutional republic, in 18th century encouraged many western countries to follow a similar system, and within a century democracy of some sort became established norm of governance in the West. The post-World War II Europe witnessed transition of almost all countries, with the exception of Eastern European countries and the Soviet republic, to democratic system of government. By the end of 1980s, Eastern Europe and other Soviet satellite states also moved towards democracy. In addition, most of the newly independent countries also adopted democratic system. The Muslim world was far away from this heavy flow towards democracy, as most of the Muslim countries born out of former Ottoman caliphate followed family rule called by various names like kingdom, sultanate or sheikhdom. The historical background for this reverse journey of Muslim countries when the entire world was craving for better form of democracy was lying in the fact that when colonial powers like Britain and France withdrew from those regions they handed power to regional warlords. The result was, none of the Middle East Muslim countries, with an exception of post revolutionary Iran, adopted a democratic form of government. The family rule in most of the Muslim countries doesn't connote that Muslims as a community is against democracy, and this fact was proved by the wide popular

support for the Arab Spring, the popular uprising started in Tunisia in 2010 and travelled through many Middle East countries, causing regime changes.

The issue of Muslim (countries) threat to the West becomes problematic when we analyse this accusation in the light of available counter readings from (geo)political analysts. According to Michael T. Klare, post-cold war US met with a vacuum for a potential enemy that suits the mammoth defence budget, and this vacuum was filled with a new set of 'rogue states', "To protect the mammoth defence establishment, US military officials began seeking a new kind of enemy within days of the Berlin wall's collapse." (Klare,155). Interestingly, this anticipated 'threat' to the West, takes material shape when series of media reports appear narrating reports about nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction ostensibly from 'intelligence' sources. An example he sighted is article written by Chris Hedges in The New York Times about Iran is becoming a nuclear power in five years, in which 'authentic' information was given referring to 'official sources' but ironically all those sources are unnamed! (Hedges). This research finds that the geopolitical strategies of the US- Israel-European countries towards Muslim nations are guided by two forces: motive for political supremacy and Islamophobia; and the Islamophobia was converted to 'facts' by establishing them utilising various agencies like declarations and speeches by state leaders, media reports and creative arts like movies and literature. It is at this juncture, seemingly harmless portrayal of characters, their actions, conversations, events and narrator voice become problematic. Analysis below tries to bring out these underlying Islamophobic elements and their geopolitical implications.

Despite the aforesaid historical reason for the aversion towards democracy in the Muslim countries, the western thinkers portrayed Muslims and Islam as against democracy, and even a threat to the liberal democracy of the west. Consequently 'antidemocratic' also was added to the Islamophobic narrations. As a matter of fact, it was not Islam or Muslims who are against democracy, but the powerful wealthy elites, who had been handed power by the colonial masters, were against democratisation of these countries. Similarly there are many junctures where Muslims and the West are totally on two different roads. Islamophobia portrays Muslims as standing against all western values and ideals. Some of the accusations are; Muslims do not consider equality between man and woman, and they don't subscribe to the concept of gender equality and woman liberation. Besides Muslims are totally against alcohol, whereas it is an integral part of modern west. Capitalism worships whoever could successfully make money, whereas Muslims do not follow neither this nor western banking system. Muslims are dogmatic in areas like food, dress, art & literature where the West allows complete individual freedom. All three novels discussed here present the respective governments and the social setup completely undemocratic, following autocracy and posing potential threat to the western values and ways of life.

At the very beginning of the novel Ferrigno presents the visible changes in the new Islamic Republic of America. The old Capitol was replaced by two large skyscrapers that turned to be new power centre, accompanied by the Grand Caliph Mosque. The American president is less powerful where religious authorities have more power in decision making.

The new Republic is almost stinking both physically and metaphorically. A well set up modern country that had been a world superpower, became one of the worst countries after transition. Its government is least capable as it is filled with a bunch of incapable men who are religious fanatics, undemocratic, uneducated and above all fighting each other. So, the country became worse than a least developed African nation with its damaged roads, stinking streets, snail speed internet, shaggy buildings, producing almost nothing and ultimately without any flavour of a modern nation. When Rakkim went to meet Spider he "... scuttled through a long, corrugated-metal pipe strewn with garbage, broken eggs crunching underfoot, and he knew by the growing stink of rotting vegetables..." (97). Internally, it is rotten with corruption and shadow war among the power mongers. Instead of well learned technocrats and statesmen, priests like Grand Mullah possess all powers.

African Arabs and Muslim migrants dominate

The novel warns the audience about the takeover by the African Arabs, once any country became Muslim. Whatever qualities attributed to the western civilisation, either individualism, political plurality, egalitarianism, democracy, pure research or innovation, were found destroyed by the Islamic civilisation in the story. Muslim dominance and its presence spread everywhere like sunlight was portrayed as a precarious presence in the world. All major characters in the new Republic are none-whites and Muslim emigrants. Old One himself is from either Pakistan or Afghanistan. Rakkim, the hero was portrayed as "...his features angular, almost Moorish, an advantage since the transition" (Ferrigno10). Major Kidd is from Somalia, both Oxley and Ibn Aziz, heads of religious police are African Arabs.

One of the most important warnings the story gives to the Western society is about the recent surge of Muslim migration to Europe and the US. The novel encourages the readers to believe that Muslim migration to the West is neither accidental nor beneficial to the West, rather it is well planned and part of conquering the West! Ferrigno says that so many Muslims from other countries have migrated to the US, after transition, with religious aims. When Rakkim went to see Prof. Marian, there was her personal security who "... looked like a club boxer or one of the Mongolian Muslims who had immigrated after the transition, wanting to be part of the great experiment" (71). One of the crucial steps Old One took to achieve his goal of Islamization of the West was to open the paths for the heavy flow of Muslim migrants to the western countries. For this he had an ingenious plan:

Starting in the early 1970s, he had begun making large donations to politicians and journalists. Men who shaped the debate on immigration. Hardworking Muslims were deemed the answer, and the floodgates opened wide. Young Muslims from North Africa and Turkey, fertile and faithful. The slow-motion conquest of Europe, the nearly bloodless transformation into an Islamic continent, had been perhaps his greatest victory. (Ferrigno 265)

A similar but more serious threat to the western world is from the celebrities who declare their conversion to new religion at a most notable moment like Oscar receiving ceremony. Ferrigno narrates many incidents of celebrities declaring faith in Islam in public, and such people were waiting for the most suitable occasion to ensure utmost publicity. The novel presented some of such public religious conversions, pre-planned by Old One to instigate a chain reaction. He had

manipulated even the Christian priesthood, “Forty years ago, he had seeded his men among the priesthood, ... A dozen of them rising slowly up the church hierarchy. One had now become Pope Pius XIII. When the Old One gave the sign, the pope would make a public declaration of faith.” (265-66). President Damon Kingsley took his oath holding Qur’an in his one hand, Jill Stanton, the most famous actress declared her faith at an Oscar receiving ceremony, “Jill Stanton...the woman considered the most beautiful and talented actress of her generation... proclamation of faith while accepting her second Academy Award would have been enough to interest tens of millions of Americans in the truth of Islam.” (157). Later Sarah’s research revealed that all such celebrities were either in the pay role of the Old One or were trained by him for this purpose. “Sarah had cited a Best Actress winner who’d shared her newfound faith during her acceptance speech at the Oscars,...starting a cascade effect that had led to millions of new converts within weeks.” (23). The story said that the current Pope is actually a Muslim trained by Old One and was placed among the ranks of priests, gradually stepped up to the highest rank and he is waiting a nod from Old One to declare his conversion. James Dougan, Sarah’s father also declared his conversion while receiving his gold medals in Beijing Olympics. All these incidents are warning to the western people about the celebrities converting to Islam.

Interference from Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia was highlighted as another threat. It points that rich Muslim countries export their ideology by spending huge amount on artists, thinkers, university professors and researchers; “the transformation had been more calculated, initiated by decades of Saudi stipends to

American decision makers, and, even more important, a series of high-profile public conversions” (23). This becomes problematic when we take into consideration the western accusation against countries like Saudi and Iran of exporting Islam. The novel is very overt in repeating the oft repeated accusation and that too in the form of an academic research of Sarah, a university professor. Both public and private life alike are affected badly, when Muslims take over a country: Qur’an verses and religious instructions appear everywhere, when Rakkim searched Sarah’s office, he found “a thick handbook from the administration cataloguing in voluminous detail the proper codes of conduct”(54) and Bill of Rights, one of the fundamental pillars of American constitution became extinct! After the takeover, the former USA was converted to a country of ‘no rights’; the state can interfere both in private and public life.

Another threat to the west is the intruding nature of Islam. When Muslims got power in the USA, they began to impose their religious fanatic point of view everywhere, including academia. “four professors at the university have been dismissed this year. Insufficiently Islamic”(206) is enough to see its octopus hands. It means that they may not spare even academics where only knowledge and search for knowledge do matter. The story is warning the readers about the misconception of moderate Islam. Whether it is Redbeard or Oxley or Ibn Aziz or General Kidd, all are fighting one another and there is no difference among them when it comes to disturbing people.

The book Sarah was writing, but could not finish due to security reasons, and was dug out by Spider from her computer, was a warning about a possible

conspiracy by some Muslim fanatics to topple over the USA. It looks that this book was primarily meant for Ferrigno readers and not Sarah's readers. The modern reader will be properly warned about possible threats from the Muslim world to the West. That is how this novel becomes a thing with utmost geopolitical implications.

They do not allow individual freedom of food, dress, finance and art & literature

Hollywood, Disneyland, Silicon Valley, pubs and bars, etc. defined the culture of the nation before the transition. Beverages, both alcoholic and non alcoholic are part of the Western life. Similarly, pork, dance and gambling also make their daily life colourful. The new Republic destroyed Disney, and IT sector was almost gone back to the very basic. Instead of Hollywood movies there are didactic performances like morality plays of the Middle Ages, and that too quite often presented in holograms and devoid of human actors. There is very limited number of places where strict restrictions were exempted, for the sake of moderate Muslims and remaining Christians. Pork and gambling are allowed only in Christian corners but no dance bars are permitted. As a rule, music is not permitted in the New Republic. The gravity of this rule will be measured only when we understand how much deep-rooted music and dance is in the western psyche. The reply of the Imam in the call-in-show to a question on listening to music in solitude was, "... no, my daughter, the sin is as great whether you listen to music in solitude or with another..." (Ferrigno 117). Even advertising has undergone a dramatic shift in the Islamic Republic. Human beings cannot be portrayed in Advertisements, and holograms were used instead. Since Southern California didn't convert to Islam, "...

unlike the capital, there was an excitement here, an eager rhythm, a sense that anything was possible.” (230). They do not permit catholic churches in the capital, especially, with cross exhibited that made Sarah “note how many Catholic churches there were, many of them even with crosses on top, something strictly forbidden in the capital” (241).

Former terrorists like Osama and Zarqawi are now heroes, and there are war medals in their names (157). The novel sets the example of Jill Santon, the most attractive Hollywood heroine in the pre-transition America, to realise how much destructive the negative influence of Muslim is. After her conversion, she withdrew from the Hollywood and became an house wife. Her youngest son Nick is a Fedayeen colonel and has three wives and ten children. Jill Santon is just spending hours at home, cherishing memories of good old days.

It is very important to note that there are people who converted and remain Muslims, but they present sorry figures, and there are others who also converted first, but later left from the fold of Islam, hence regained their vigour, power and skills. Sarah, Rakkim and Katherine, belong to the latter group, and consequently, are still free and capable of free thinking.

They allow zero female freedom

The new Republic does not allow women to appear in public without fully covering their body. Unlike in the olden times, modern western women are so particular about the choice of their dress. They prefer semi exposed dressing and hate fully covered style, which was considered to be restricting their freedom. Black

Robes, the religious police in the Republic, interferes with the freedom of individuals. They do not allow women to be in the public if it was not with permission from her 'male custodian' either father or husband, or should have a male accompaniment. They don't allow women to sing in public, nor even browse the internet. Individual freedom of women is almost nil. Women's dress is completely controlled by law, and no woman is allowed to have 'modern' dress. Women were beaten in public, if any standard of modesty was violated, "The Black Robes whipped their long, flexible canes across the backs of three women seated there." (Ferrigno 13). They have no freedom of choice when it comes to divorce. Hence many women desert their husbands, and there are special trained men to catch them back.

It is ridiculous to see roles like cheer girls, occupied by women in pre-transition period, were transferred to men, and Rakkim could see "Music blared as the cheerleaders strutted down the sidelines-all men, of course-knees high, swords flashing overhead." (10).

They are a safety hazard

Both Ferrigno and Rees novels warn the readers that Muslims are a threat to the safety of the West. Ferrigno's villain Old One is planning to conquer the entire western world to bring it under Muslim rule, and he has already planted seeds of terror in multiple areas. Similarly, the unlimited Muslim migration to the western countries changes the demography of the West, and there are other steps he has planned and executed in various parts of the globe. He planted nuclear bombs in China, the USA, and Makkah. Though China mission failed, other two worked

successfully according to his plan. He had programmed Fedayeen warriors as such to do any Himalayan task like,

A coup in Ghana? Muslims massacred in Rio? Russian Spetznats airlifted into Quebec? (Ferrigno 301).

The entire Jewish plot of nuclear attack of the former USA, which was the base of transition from the USA to Islamic Republic of America, was a well-rehearsed drama. The confession of the Mossad perpetrators was studio recorded and they were trained thoroughly by FBI chief Lorne Macmillan, a rehearsal copy of which was leaked to James, brother of Redbeard. Muslim terrorists are that dirty who may stoop to any low level to achieve their goal. All these cruel and inhuman portrayals of Islam and Muslims ease the justification of imbalanced unipolar geopolitical strategies.

Western people are warned by both novels about the possible Muslim takeover, of the West by using various means. Countries like Saudi Arabia interfere with internal affairs of even powerful western countries like America. The West is urged to be cautious of innumerable ingenious methods, adopted by Islamists to Islamise the West, like stipends to academics, columnists, think tanks, and pre-planned public conversions of famous personalities like film stars, musicians and sports stars. (24)

Ultimately the real danger Muslims pose to the West is depriving them of the freedom they enjoy now, as Sarah remarked,

Look around you, Uncle ... people are scared. Afraid they're going to do the wrong thing, say the wrong thing, think the wrong thing. Yes, the Americans were drunk on freedom. Yes, they lacked shame, but they did glorious things too with that freedom. Breakthroughs in science and medicine. Inquiries into the mysteries of the universe. Wonderful things... (Ferrigno 339)

Similarly, Islam is portrayed inherently backward when it comes to science and technology. After America became an Islamic republic, it became stagnant in terms of scientific researches and technological innovations, that is why Sarah said: "We were going to write about the intellectual deterioration of our society since the transition"(73). The warning is clear, Muslim dominance in society naturally result in intellectual deterioration.

In Rees novels also Muslims were presented as physical threat to the West. Even the UNO was not spared from their cruelty. In *The Collaborator*, UN school was bombed and its chief officer was killed. In *A Grave* the UN officer James Cree was murdered in bomb explosion, UN teacher was wrongly arrested and later murdered, UN officer Magnus Wallender was kidnapped and tortured, and the worst was the UN peace keeping officers have been threatened with death if they enter Gaza. All these show that Muslims are a real threat to the West and its values. Even western education was corrupted in Palestine. Azhar University of Prof. Makki is notorious for all types of corruptions and foul plays. Hamaz and other 'terrorist' groups are making missiles, using technology smuggled from countries like North Korea (Rees, *A Grave* 99), and they used those weapons to attack Israel and western interests.

IV. PRO-ISRAEL RHETORIC

Both Rees' novels present pro-Israel rhetoric to effectively persuade the readers to believe that, on the one hand, situation in Palestine is not as bad as described by international media or claimed by Palestine agencies, and on the other hand, the best option for Palestinians is to recognize Israel and live under its power without making any resistance. Despite the fact that, for the last eight decades, resistance has been an inevitable part of daily life of Palestinians, neither *The Collaborator* nor *A grave in Gaza* has any reference to any incident of freedom struggle or resistance, rather they showcase a series of bloody fights between various Palestinian factions in the name of sex, power and money.

Besides, many claims Israel and pro-Israel media have been making, since the inception of Israel, have been confirmed and ratified by these stories. One of such claims is that Palestinians are making improvised weapons like Missiles, and Israel is under perpetual threat from such weapons. Rees repeats the same when Omar has a detailed conversation with Odwan, "We had arranged to receive a prototype missile...smuggled through one of the tunnels under the Egyptian border...We wanted to improve on the Qassam (missiles)... (that) was based on a prototype North Korean missile that was smuggled... with the help of Hizballah in Lebanon..."(99). Another such claim was that all Israeli military actions against Palestinians were because of their offence against Israel. *The Collaborator* has multiple scenes where Israel was provoked by Armed groups. Tamari and others used Geroge Saba's rooftop to fire across the border, so that Israel might bulldoze the house which actually their intention was. Rees went too far when there is a

denial of the internationally viral video of British soldier urinating on Iraqis, “The photos showed a British soldier urinating on an Iraqi prisoner. Omar Yussef had read about the photo, after it turned out that it was a fake.” (109). It is surprising to see this reference, in the story as there is no logical space for it. It is plain to understand that there is not even a single country that openly supports Palestinians by supplying weapons, and even if a country wanted to, it is a herculean task as all entries to Palestine are under complete control of Israel.

Palestine freedom fight is myth

Both Rees’ novels present a series of incidents where gunmen are involved in fighting, but none of these fights was for the general interest of Palestine, instead they are for their personal interests. Though all the Palestinian fighting groups are heavily armed, paradoxically none of those arms was aimed at Israel or fight for Palestine independence. The Collaborator presents various leaders of Martyrs Brigades like Hussein Tamari, Colonel Awdah, police officer Khamis Zeidan, judges, but none of them has independence of Palestine as their top priority. Each one is engaged in a game where he can ensure his position and authority, and not to lose his power. In *A Grave* there are leaders like Prof. Adnan Maki, Lieutenant Fathi Salah, his brother Yasser Salah, Abu Jabir, Colonel al-Fara, etc. all of whom show the same culture of power politics. The arrest scene of Eyad Masharawi, raid at his house, raid at General Hussein, etc. were presented with all possible horrors, and surprisingly enough neither novel has any reference of Israeli military operation in occupied Palestine, though it is an everyday job.

There are a number of occasions, where top level Palestine leaders attend high level meetings, but none of such meetings have even a single reference about fighting against Israeli occupation or expediting Palestine independence. Whenever people like Hussein Tamari, Colonel Awdah, Khamis Zeidan, etc. meet, they discuss how to outsmart and destroy their internal rivals and to secure their influence. Similarly, leaders in Gaza like Prof. Adnan Maki, Lieutenant Fathi Salah, his brother Yasser Salah, Abu Jabir, Colonel al-Fara, etc. also are concentrating absolutely on internal power struggle and not on fighting the occupation. Thus, both novels tell the readers that even Palestinians do not find neither Israel as an occupier nor the cause of their problems, rather the cause of all their problems are the ever fighting and never uniting fighting groups whose only concern is power and wealth.

Both of Rees' novels focus even minute details of Palestine life, but they have no reference about decades long freedom struggle of Palestine and atrocities by the occupying force. This will have geopolitical implications, as the international reading community will be forced to believe that if ever Palestinians have any problem, Israel has nothing to do with that, instead, Palestinian fighting groups are the only cause for their pathetic situation. Besides, the claim of Israeli authorities for all these years, that whatever force they have used against Palestine was only to protect itself from the highly dangerous and scrupulous Palestinian terrorists, was also ratified by these novels.

Palestine poverty is a myth

In both novels of Rees all Palestinians are leading moderately good life, just like in any third world country. There is not even a single reference to poverty of

Palestinians. They have enough food, clothing, shelter and transportation. It is really unbelievable that these stories that spent many pages to portray domestic life of Palestinians, forgot to mention the utter poverty, lack of pure water, scarcity of transport facilities, non availability of medical help, unemployment, restrictions of physical movement from one place to another and rarity of continuous electricity. Though most of the time Gaza has blackout, while Omar was walking through Gaza city he enjoyed “windows glimmered with fluorescent light.” (Rees, *A Grave* 70)! Omar Yussef has good house, his son Rameez is running a mobile phone business, Ala is doing computer sales in New York, Zuheir is studying in UK and the family has enough bank balance. Palestine leaders, in Bethlehem, like Khamis Zeidan, Al Ferrah, and other factions were living in luxury. In *A Grave*, all Palestinian leaders like Prof. Makki, General Hussein, Bassam Odwan, present a very luxurious domestic life. Omar’s granddaughter is designing a website in Bethlehem, while all these hardships are going on (57-58). He is angry at his students for writing about victimised Arabs, “...he couldn’t stand to listen to them when they rolled through the political clichés of the poor, victimized Arab nation, subjugated by everyone from the Crusaders and the Mongols to the Turks and the British, all the way to the Intifada” (Rees, *Collaborator* 22). He finds Palestinians equally responsible for their plight, as if all colonised nations were equally responsible for the cruelties of colonial powers. Similarly, Omar Yussef said that, “we were all terrorists, the people who now govern you” (58) pointing that the Palestinian leadership is full of former terrorists, as if Israeli occupation is legal and resisting occupation is terrorism, a rhetoric always Israeli authorities came forward with. Both novels tell us that neither

the ordinary Palestinian, nor the armed groups, has any trouble for getting weapons or access to money.

Israeli atrocities are justified

Arrest scene of Prof. Eyad was described in every detail, giving the brutal nature of Palestinian authorities. No human rights were observed and as long as someone became the target of the Gunmen, they have no rights, except the right to death! This horror scenes became problematic when we juxtapose this against the lack of any scene of Israeli military operation.

Both novels present many occasions where Israeli forces interfere with Palestine life, but interestingly each time sufficient justification was provided to the readers; that is, terrorist activities from Palestine side. In *The Collaborator* the first incident of violence is the gun battle during night, from George's terrace, but that firing was started by the Martyrs Brigades. Next violence is murder of Louai Abdel Rahman by Israeli snipers, but he was wanted for murdering Jewish settlers. The night operation of bulldozers near Omar's house (117) was to prevent Palestinian terrorists to moving men and weapons. Thus, none of these Israeli military interventions were without a valid reason. The casualties caused by these military operations were presented in a tone of necessity and acceptance. Though George's house being shelled to rubbles by Israeli tanks, his wife was shot dead and his father was martyred (170), the narrator doesn't find it as Israeli cruelties, but described them as inevitable military actions in the face of Palestinian terrorist's activities. This is more than to convince readers that the usual Israeli and pro-Israeli western claims that Israel is using force only for its protection and self-defence is true.

Conscious efforts to defame Palestine resistance groups can be seen on many occasions in both Rees stories. After reading them, the impression any ordinary reader develops is that: 1) Palestinians are victims of cruelties of their own people who have arms and power and they use that power to establish their authority over poor Palestinians; 2) it is this craze for power that resulted in the internal fights between and among various Armed groups, and bloodshed is quite often the result of such power feud; and 3) Israeli military was often compelled to interfere to protect themselves from these gunmen. In short, the actual problem of an ordinary Palestinian is not Israeli occupation but feuds between fighting groups. It appears that there is a conscious effort to ignore the fact that all these resistance groups and their fights are the result of Israeli colonisation of Palestine, and to ratify a very common rhetoric by Israel and pro-Israel western media that whatever force used against Palestine was necessary to protect itself from the mad gunmen of Palestine. Rees novels present the same argument and help reinforcing the Israel narrative about Palestine crisis. Omar Yussef and his father were on exile, during 1948 Arab-Israel war, and the narrator presented the great exodus as simple as that. His father taught him to accept the exile as he said, "All gone. So, forget about it. Don't listen to the people who think we can return." (Rees. *The Collaborator* 39). Thus, the reader is presented a very simplistic view of the compelled expulsion of over seven million people. Omar firmly believed that Arab leaders are good-for- nothing gang men, and he taught in his history class,

... the so called Arab heroes were really just gangs. They went about robbing villagers of their food and killing those who resisted, and all the time no one

could take them on, because these killers were portrayed as the brave men standing up against the Zionist... They ended up killing more Palestinians than Jewish Farmers... (Rees. *The Collaborator* 73).

When their house was flooded with sewage as a result of Israeli tank operation, both Omar and his wife Maryam hurried to fight the emergency with the help of their neighbours, but none of them had any bad words against the army as they usually hurl at resistance groups. On another occasion, Israeli army destroyed the house of George Saba, killing his wife and father, along with some fighters and policemen. The narrative is so calm about this brutal attack and very forcefully justified this heinous crime by making Palestinians the real cause for the destruction, "The Martyrs Brigades were shooting from inside the building. The only way for the Israeli soldiers to penetrate these thick, old walls is with a tank shell" (170). After all these murders, Israeli military conducted a raid in the apartment near to Omar at 2.am, yet the narrative found nothing terrible, and the description is devoid of any anger or frustration. The reader gets the heroic impression of the Israeli army. They can enter any building any time they wish, can kill anyone, order anyone anything, and can go back safely after all these atrocities; the embodiment of power that demands awe and respect.

It is a fact that freedom of movement is very limited as far as Palestinians are concerned, but the Rees' novels say that, such restrictions are applicable only to uniformed officers, "... it's simply less hassle to pass through the Israeli checkpoint into Gaza without a uniform" (*A Grave* 21), as if the ordinary people are free to

move. The novels succeed in covering up the facts and constructing another corrupted version of the same.

Both Rees novels appear to work, knowingly or unknowingly, on a few prejudices like, freedom fight in Palestine is a myth and what is happening there is only battle between various gun men gangs; Palestine armed groups are least interested in Palestine, on the contrary their fight is for power, money and sex; Israel atrocities are out of absolute necessity; and Palestine Authority is equally incapable and corrupt in keeping law and order. Hence, international sympathy should go with the ordinary Palestinians whose life is miserable not because of Israel, but because of armed groups, and in general, Palestinians are rich whose only problem is the gun men and the Israelis these gunmen invite!

Conclusion

This analysis helped us to see that various characters, their activities, their statements, and on many occasions the narrative itself of all these novels express Islamophobia. There are innumerable examples of manifestations of Islamophobia in these writers, and if dug further and we might find more instances. Differences can be found in Islamophobia latent in these narratives, but still, they keep some common traits. All of them agree that Muslims follow undesirable cultural practices, theirs is a rotten civilisation, they are militant when it comes to religious matters, they turn their back to modernisation, they are undemocratic, their governance is a failure, and hence they need to be civilized.

Geopolitical implications

All the four segments of Islamophobic portrayals detailed above have great value with reference to the geopolitical strategies of both western and Muslim countries. Geopolitical strategies are primarily the result of understanding of who are one's friends and enemies and vision of the great goal one is planning to achieve. So, the negative picture of a certain community or a nation will definitely have bearings on geostrategies, as that distorted picture determines the friend and enemy. Whether the geostrategies are prescriptive, analytical or predictive they consider the understanding of the other and if that understanding is biased or erroneous, policies shaped thus will have negative and unhealthy results, perhaps even long-lasting ones. Each country will shape their geostrategies in such a way that the policies ultimately prevent enemies from growing and posing threat to one's interest and thus helping to establish one as powerful or the most powerful nation.

When Muslims are portrayed as undesirable and dangerous people both by print and electronic media along with movies and fiction works, international readership will make a very negative picture about them. It is just like the saying 'give a dog a bad name and hang it'. Once the 'dangerous' Muslim was created it is easy to destroy him. Consequently, any number of human rights violations against innocent women, children and old men who have nothing to do with the people who disturb the west, are left unnoticed and ignored. A very good example for the impact of false portrayals and the support of international community for the destructions of such 'bad' people will be the case of Iraq. In 2002 Iraq was accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by the US authorities. Iraq was invaded by the

US lead western force, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was hanged, a new Iraqi government was installed, the country was divided among various power groups and finally it became a destabilised country where poverty, starvation, street fights and street bombs became the order of the day. The shocking part of this story is that the accusation of Iraq possessing WMD was found as baseless and it was nothing other than just an invented rationale to place before the American public, in particular, and, the world in general, and that too was cooked up by US politicians and intelligence agencies. All these came out to the public eye in authentic Select committee report of the US Senate in 2008 (Senate Report,20). Just like this, if a nation or people were vilified, it is very easy to target them and policy makers will definitely be influenced by such narratives.

We found that these novels urge the Muslim world that the only hope for them to be in peace with the West and be modern, is to accept the western values and practices along with their products. Old One is enjoying all western facilities along with his militant Islam. Redbeard and Rakkim also do the same. They even keep secretly Coca Cola of the former America, as there is no better drink in the Muslim America. If the new regime wanted to be superpower like former America, they have to go back to those technologies most of which was obliterated or hidden underground during the nuclear explosion. So, the suggestion that, even America, the apostles of modern technology and advanced warfare, becomes nothing one they follow Islam, because the crust of the strength is not American people, but their civilisation, that was free and not pertaining to any religion.

Since these novels promote the thought that Islamic civilisation is a failure besides being the root cause for all human problems, a counter suggestion is hidden between the lines, that is, the only hope for humanity, if they want to be progressive and developed, is to throw away Islam. This line of thought necessitates interventions in Muslims countries to civilise them, just like what happened during colonial period, where European colonial powers willingly shouldered 'white men's burden' and intervened in non-European nations to civilise them.

Similarly, Rees novels try to arbitrarily impose an authenticity to a fiction work, by claiming in its preface that "All the crimes in this book are based on real events in Bethlehem. Though identities and some circumstances have been changed, the killers really killed this way, and those who died are dead just the same" (Rees, *The Collaborator* vi). The novels tell the world that there is nothing like 'Palestine freedom struggle' instead there is only gun battle between various terrorist organizations who have freedom of Palestine as their last priority.

All these novels portray two types of Muslims: one is stubborn and highly fanatic, and the other one is non-practicing and accepting western culture. The latter is represented by people like Omar, Khamis Zaidan, Rakkim and Sarah who are always powerful, intelligent and successful, whereas the former group was represented by converted American Muslims and leaders of Palestine resistant organizations, who are always weak but dangerous. Portraying Muslims as vile and dangerous will prepare the international community to accept anti-Muslim witch hunt like Guantanamo, Iraq War and sanctions against Muslim countries. Similarly, the discussion of 9/11 terror attacks in these novels ensures the continuity of such

attitudes and consequent anti Muslim policies among the future generations also. A very detailed discussion on the implications of these Islamophobic occurrences in these narratives is not attempted here as chapter five of this Dissertation is fully devoted for that purpose.

A few examples can be sighted here from recent international political development. Libya was portrayed in the western media always a problem state and labelled a rogue state since 1994 by the USA, because Muammar Qaddafi was critical of the USA policies and double standards especially regarding Israel. Qaddafi was always in support the of Palestine and was against the settler colonialism of Israel. Then 9/11 terror attack and 'war on terror' that followed made same Qaddafi a USA ally to fight Islamist terrorists. Then again when the popular Arab Spring rising sprouted the USA stood against their new ally Qaddafi and helped the rebels by air strikes against pro Qaddafi army. The geopolitical policies of the USA and other western countries towards Libya was shaped by their perspectives towards Israel (a pet child of the west who has all rights to exercise any human rights violations in the name of self-defence) and Palestine (who are viewed as a threat to the pet child Israel). These direct and indirect interventions in Libya were justified by the western psyche as they view Libyans are uncivilized and incapable set of people.

Another example can be Palestine itself. When the UNO adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 it included millions of Palestinians also. But none of the influential governments in the UNO did anything to protect the right of the Palestinians to live in their lands when Israel exiled those

millions. The great exodus in modern history (Nakhaba) never disturbed western nations who portray themselves as the champions of human rights and democracy, such was the negative portrayals of the Muslims/ non-western people in the west. Even at this age of instant news and social media where everybody has access to information about any event in any part of the globe, the western psyche, which is very much concerned about human rights violations (an example could be the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident journalist at Turkey in 2018), is finding that unarmed Palestinians are on the wrong side where as the fully armed Israeli army is on the right side!

Chapter 4

Mis-reflected Reality: An Analysis of Islamophobic

Contents in Khan and Massey

This chapter is analysing Islamophobia and its geopolitical undercurrents in the select novels by non-western writers: *The Language of Secrets* by Ausma Zehanat Khan, a Canadian-American citizen of Pakistani origin and *The Widows of Malabar Hill* by Sujata Massey, a British, born to Indian- German parents. Like chapters two and three, this chapter also analyses types of Islamophobias with geopolitical propositions.

Bertolt Brecht was attributed with the saying, art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it, and this research finds that shaping *reality* with a specific purpose also there within the powers of fiction. Azar Nafisi emphasizes this fact, when she said "fiction is a powerful tool to shape opinions and attitudes" (14). While describing the highly complicated psychological disorder of the protagonist, Richard Powers, in her novel *The Echo Maker* states about the function of human consciousness: "Consciousness works by telling a story, one that is whole, continuous, and stable. When that story breaks, consciousness rewrites it. Each revised draft claims to be the original." (Powers 183). What Powers said about human consciousness is equally true about our perspectives about the world around, too. What we hear and read, whether it is from media or fiction, influences our understanding about ourselves and the world around us, and each reading experience revises our earlier draft. Thus, readers who traverse through works of fiction, that

are Islamophobic and partisan in nature, will develop a distorted and corrupted outlook about Muslims and Islamic countries. Describing the power of stories, Bennet and Nicholas said that not only disagreements and quarrels but wars also are often the result of conflicting stories, may be about the rights to a piece of land. For instance, the reason for the first Gulf War (1991) was the difference in the story about who owned or should own a particular piece of Kuwait, and for the second Gulf War (2003), the reason was the story about the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Bennet 52). Since this analysis is benefited from the post-colonial theories, it is trying to understand the depth of influence of the misrepresentations on reader's mind, as Ali Behdad insisted that post-colonialism must be "on the side of memory." (6).

The Language of Secrets tells the story of a terrorist organisation working in the local mosque in Illinois, under the leadership of a young and charismatic Ashkouri, who is planning for a gigantic terrorist attack in the eve of the new year, and the obliteration of the plot by an adventurous but not trusted detective Esa Khattak, head of Community Policing Section, Canada. The plot of the novel was inspired by a real event which is popularly known as Toronto18, a group of 18 terrorists who planned multiple attacks in Toronto in 2006. While the novel is trying to look into the Muslim community, their fanaticism and enmity to the West, it utilises available opportunities to justify Western rhetoric about Muslims. The novel keeps a direct link to September 11 terrorist attacks and aftermath, as "Toronto 18" was inspired by Al Qaeda movement. Since most of the novels under this study are directly or indirectly inspired by 9/11 and War on Terror followed, the research

takes into consideration what Derek Gregory said about it, “...that it (9/11) had a complex genealogy that reached back into the colonial past and, it was used by regimes in Washington, London, and Tel Aviv to advance a grisly colonial present (and future)” (13).

The Widows of Malabar Hill is about the first woman lawyer in British India, and her adventurous journey to protect three illiterate Muslim women from being exploited and harmed by their late husband’s secretary. Her journey is passing through paths of crime, investigation, intrigues, power craze, jealousy and love. The story presents Muslim culture as well as Muslim households from multiple angles, and adds a lot to the already existing Islamophobic narratives.

For the sake of logical analysis, Islamophobia that bears geopolitical implications, latent in these novels, are organized under the following heads:

- 1) Muslims are undesirable people as they follow a religion, many practices of which are unacceptable to the Western (modern) standard,
- 2) Muslims are incapable both in personal and professional life, (so they need to be helped & polished), and
- 3) They are a threat to the West, and Westernisation is the only possible hope for Muslims to make themselves acceptable in the modern world.

Each of this category is analysed in all possible details, and then in the conclusion their geopolitical implications are looked into.

“Colonialism was always as much about making other people’s geographies as it was about making other people’s histories”, says British geographer Derek Gregory, and it seems that this process of making other people’s history is still on the move, but this time it is by the neo-colonial powers. Neo-colonialism utilises more covert but powerful means to make history, and popular literature is one among them. When continuous media reports appear about ‘Muslim terrorist’ attacks, followed by portrayals of Muslim characters in literature and movies, it helps to create current history of ‘dangerous’ Muslims. The following observations, based on the novels under study, help us to substantiate this stand.

I. PORTRAYING MUSLIMS AS DISAGREEABLE

Maureen T. Reddy once wrote about the paradox in the experience of whites and non-whites, with regard to whiteness and heterosexuality, as the superiority of whites and heterosexuals is invisible for the whites and heterosexuals, because it is the norm and normalcy for them, whereas it is hyper visible for others (non-whites or gays or lesbians), because for them neither it is normal nor it is the norm. In other words, those who are benefited by the norm may not even recognize the existence of white and/or heterosexual supremacy, whereas those who are not benefited but hurt instead by this supremacy definitely feel it always. (1). Similarly, Islamophobia hurts only one sect of people and naturally for them Islamophobia, in any form on any occasion, either in physical world or in representation in creative world, is hyper visible, whereas those who benefit from Islamophobia will not even recognize its existence in and around them. While studying Critical Social Theorist Axel Honneth, Christopher Zurn categorically stated:

Struggles for recognition revolve centrally around the meanings, symbols, concepts and values that collectively make up a particular society...

Consequently, a struggle against...distorted recognition is often... a struggle to revalue contemporary meanings, interpretations, and values... (Zurn.5).

This research is an attempt to materialise the struggle against distorted recognition.

While analysing ideology in detective fiction, Bennet and Royle stated:

Literary texts do not simply... reflect the ideology of their particular time and place. Rather, they are sites of conflict and difference, places where values and preconceptions, beliefs and prejudices, knowledge and social structures are represented... (177).

Both Ausma Zehanat Khan and Sujata Messey present multiple Muslim characters and all of them were portrayed in such a way that they appear people with many negative qualities. The reason for this undesirability is their religion, and cultural practices. Beliefs and prejudices, along with values and preconceptions, are in play in both the novels, and this analysis is trying to light a torch to those foggy arenas. We have pinpointed in chapters two and three that in all the novels analysed there, Muslims were portrayed undesirable and dangerous from various point of views. These two non-Western writers also made use of almost all those aspects, in these novels we study. Sujata Massey does not give much focus for portrayals of Muslims as a religious group, but Ausma takes all opportunities to discuss the topic. In Ausma, we have both Esa Khattak, the sleuth and a number of terrorists headed by Ashkouri, and, though there is a difference in degree, all of them keep certain level

of religious fanaticism. Unlike modern Western people, all of them permit religion to play a vital role in their daily life.

As pointed out by Lesley Gissane, Muslims are in a broader struggle for social cohesion in all Western countries, and that struggle was escalated by 9/11 terror attacks and the war on terror followed (42), Esa Khattak is in that constant struggle for recognition and cohesion. He has been constantly put under threat, by his superiors as well as public, in the name of his Muslim identity, and ironically his own community also finds him unacceptable, as he is not a 'complete Muslim' to their standard. His superior officers like Killiam, Coale and Laine never miss a chance to humiliate him. Regarding the terrorist plot, which he is investigating, he was denied accurate information, "because they had never fully trusted him. Because they had always thought his loyalties might be torn" (Khan 276). Many sees "Muslims in the West as a group who complicate boundaries of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, class, and secularity." (Gissane 43), and this phenomenon was easily recognised in the analysis of *The Language of Secrets*.

There is religious fanaticism (Prayer and other strange beliefs)

One of the key areas where Muslims as a religious group was analysed in both authors is their prayer and related practices. They are too much engrossed in daily prayers, and that too five times a day. In addition to compulsory prayers, there are a lot of religious classes for which they spend commendable time. Their fanaticism grown to such a degree that they foolishly believe prayer is the solution for everything. Mohsin Dar believed that prayer is the solution even against a gigantic military power like Soviet Russia. In his article, he

“...praised the simplicity of mujahideen worship, evoking the image of a solitary figure praying at the summit of a mountain fastness. This was the weapon that won the war. So Mohsin had believed.” (Khan14).

When Perveen went to meet the widows at Farid house, the first sentence uttered by Amina, a twelve-year-old girl was “do you wish to pray?” (Massey 77), means that even young kids were given too much botheration about prayers.

As Derek Gregory opined, while describing Foucault’s laughter with regards to taxonomy of animals in a Chinese encyclopaedia, that, “...it is not the spaces but the spacings...” (Gregory 2) that makes problem. It is the spacing of characters, and their thoughts and deeds that makes them ‘bad’ human beings. Based on colonial interference with the Eastern world, Joseph Conrad distinguished geography into three: Geography Fabulous, Geography Militant and Geography Triumphant as each is succeeded by the next; but we can see that Geography Fabulous, “which mapped a world of monsters and marvels and (it is a) period of speculation which had nothing to do with the pursuit of truth” (5), continues even in this technologically advanced era. Wrong portrayals happen everywhere, against the less powerful groups, whether they are women, blacks, minorities or Muslims. There are many occasions in these novels where strange beliefs of Muslims were portrayed, and one such event happens, as a part of murder investigation, Esa and his assistant Rachel went to find out Mohsin’s private locker. After looking different numbers, when they came to the locker numbered 114, Esa declared that locker No.114 definitely belongs to Mohsin because he, “... had a taste for symbolism... there are one hundred and fourteen chapters in the Qur’an.” (Khan 60). Similarly in Massey, we find fanatic beliefs

appear at the core, when Perveen Mistry tried to meet the widows of Omar Farid, who was told that “Purdahnashins don’t speak with men” (Massey 19), that is, Muslim women whose husbands died keep themselves behind walls, and will not communicate with men, even for legal emergencies. The horror of seclusion of women in Muslim household is unimaginable. When Perveen went to meet the widows at their residence, she could not see any feminine sandals, because the family’s women didn’t go out, besides, there is zenana in the house, a separate section meant only for women, that had a separate entrance too. (Massey 63&75). It is not only Omar Farid, but all Muslims are like that, when it comes to seclusion of women, that is why, Lady Hobson disappointedly remarked about a ladies-only-party arranged by Lady Lloyed; that is, only two ladies turned out to the party though the host arranged separate passageway shielded for women to come and only lady servants to serve the party (57). Similarly, polygamy is so common among Muslims of Massey, that is why Perveen “felt squeamish about polygamy, which was still practiced by many Muslims...” (Massey 20). Despite Jamshedji’s verdict about late Omar Farid’s character, his Will and Testament says that he didn’t practice justice, among his wives: Razia-begum, the first wife got four acres of land that holds two mill buildings, Sakina Chivne got a diamond and emerald jewellery set comprised of earrings, a necklace, and bangles, and Mumtaz, third wife, only two sitars and one veena. (Massey 20-21).

It looks that Massey’s Omar Farid is a repetition of Ferrigno villain Old One, when it comes to sexual perversion:

Farid died when he was only forty-five, and by then he had three wives. It is interesting to see the rationale for Farid's second marriage, because he had only daughter from first wife and, "... no son—he needed someone to work inside the mills. (20).

It points that male children are favoured to female children, a common charge against the faith of Islam.

Political Islam, or in other words Islamic fundamentalism, has been a topic of heat debate for the last few decades. John L. Esposito opined: "On one hand, many Muslims have become more observant regarding the practice of their faith (prayer, fasting, dress, and family). On the other, Islam has re-emerged as an alternative to the perceived failure of secular ideologies such as nationalism, capitalism, and socialism" (Esposito, Political 2). In fact, religion is an inevitable part of any Muslim, in both his personal and public life. The western aggression in the Muslim countries naturally generated anti-west psyche among Muslims, but that natural response of the affected people was portrayed as extremism and fundamentalism, and this western outcry appeared in Khan, multiple times. While referring to poetry session, by Ashkouri, in terrorist Halaqa (religious gathering), the narrator asks: "Did the poet mean Jerusalem, the eternal homeland, the longest exile of contemporary history?" (Khan86). The suggestion is that Muslims are a fanatic lot, always longing for great historic losses to be repossessed. Likewise, the two common claims of Jihadists are that they defend religion, and they fight the west because they pollute Muslims and Muslim countries. As a matter of fact, except a handful of people (considering two billion plus Muslims) no one subscribes to the

fundamentalist views of jihad against West, still, *The Language of Secrets* took extra pain for character portrayals of those terrorists. Each one of them is selfish: Ashkouri wanted to avenge his family who lost their life in Iraq war, ironically enough, he is not going to sacrifice himself, instead inspire others to offer themselves death. Din Somali believes that he must retaliate against the West, because there are Muslims killed worldwide, in contrast, Grace and Ruksh are in the team only to materialise their love. The paradox is that, none of them like the other: Paula does not like anyone except her idol Ashkouri, in turn Ashkouri does not love anyone but himself and pretends to love others, Grace cares only for her lover Din, and Jamshed cares only for terrorising the country. As Esposito remarked, “Islam is often equated with holy war and hatred, fanaticism and violence, intolerance and oppression of women” (The Islamic Threat 3), Khan attributed almost all these epithets to her characters.

After 9/11 attacks, a common question that dominated public discussion was, “why do they hate US?” (Bush 76) and all the public discourses were trying to find the ‘answer’ among ‘them’ not among ‘us’. (Gregory 22). One of the answers, found by think-tanks and columnists, was the disillusioned and failed political Islam, and Ashkouri in the novel represents that class. In his halaqa he outrages against the enslavement of Muslims worldwide: “Everywhere, prisons are filled with our captives, our chaste women are raped... are these things not terrorism?” (Khan 98). Thus, public discourse by the politicians, media and intelligentsia about the troublesome Muslims was reinforced by fiction, as well.

One of the most problematic areas of all these novels is the weaving of real individuals, places and incidents along with fictional characters and events. One such instant is the quoting from the Syrian poet Adonis (Ali Esber), on multiple occasions, to such an extent that readers may misread him as a terrorist tool. Religious fanaticism was extended to Muslim writers as well. Ashkouri quotes from various sources to arouse national feeling among his followers, and one such poet is Adonis. "Do you come from mud and crime?" was a line from his poem *A Grave for New York*. Anyone who reads the novel gets a very bad impression about the living poet, as he was quoted multiple times in relation with Ashkouri, the terrorist mastermind. Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali also appears in chapter 14, where his lines were quoted by Esa Khattak. Another example is mixing real events with fiction, when Rachel searched the public computer at the mosque she found, "numerous sites on the history of Somalia. A long selection of news articles on the 2002 invasion of Iraq. Some on ISIS. Some on Syria..." (Khan, 160). Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, a name synonymous with multiple political movements in Egypt, including the expulsion of Hosni Mubarak, also got reference. When Ashkouri quoted a line from the Kashmiri poet "If you subtract the night from the day, the new moon will blossom over the square" (Khan 173) immediately brings Khattak to think about Tahrir Square in Cairo, the centre of Arab Spring. References like this to problems of Muslim countries like Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Somalia also plays similar role, as these are the countries that were accused of promoting "Muslim" terrorism. Palestine freedom struggle also was brought to the focus by the narrator, as Ashkouri's terrorist gibbering talks about Palestine, "O homeland, O heartache, When shall we meet?" (189). The novel takes extra care to explain *Nakba*, the great

catastrophe Palestinians refer to the forced exile of millions of their forefathers in 1948, when Israel was forcefully established in Palestine, “It was the Arabic word for “catastrophe.” A catastrophe taken to heart by an undivided Muslim world—a match to light a tinder box” (16). Altogether, entire Muslim countries and their problems were tied to a single post of terrorism. It becomes political when we compare this with the rhetoric western media voice out always, that is, terrorists have a common ground of enmity towards the West, and they share common sympathy towards the Muslim poor people who suffer because of Western interference. What readers are encouraged to believe that, like Ashkouri and other team members got terrorist intoxication, it is possible and natural other Muslims (as suggested by media and public discourse) also are prone to be terrorists, hence required special care when dealing with Muslims. Many Western countries implemented broad surveillance programs targeting Muslim communities, leading to heightened scrutiny, racial profiling, and erosion of civil liberties. Esa has this special duty and he knew that “... surveillance of the Canadian Muslim community would remain a cornerstone of his work.” (Khan 28). The U.S. government marked people of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Arab descent, and Muslims broadly, as presumed national security threats and targeted their communities for mass surveillance. Special Registration requirement for Muslims in the USA, implemented in 2002, was a part of the mass surveillance. This weaving of real with fiction goes beyond limits when Esa tells Andy Dar that Mohsin, his murdered son, might be “an Abu Nidal or Mohammed Atta getting drunk at a strip club” (Khan 223) referring to the terrorists behind September 11 attacks. Esa asked about the gang members in the club, “What did the gang member look like? ...White? Black?

Arab? (Rachel's reply was) I think he was Somali" (234), as the coloured people, especially, when they are Muslims are a double possibility to be a national threat.

Andy Dar, father of murdered Mohsin, is portrayed as a fanatic of different type. He uses every opportunity to accuse the authority in the name of racism. It is the result of paranoia. He uses his image as influential public speaker to threaten and disturb the system. A critical reading between the lines helps us to understand the impact of figures like Andy Dar; that is, those who point out to the racism and discriminatory nature of western system will be easily sidelined and snubbed by portraying them as paranoiac. Readers never feel respect to Andy Dar, though he deserves pity as the father who had to suffer the murder of his only son at a summer camp, because he was portrayed as a public disturbance that creates hurdles in front of the hardworking law enforcing agencies.

One of the accusations of Islamophobic narratives was that there are a lot of Muslim terrorists in the world; hence it makes them a terrorist community. This argument was highlighted with overt and covert ways by utilising popular fiction also. Khan's novel validates such claim when the narrator comments about the hero:

He knew... what his community was. The lone wolves, the well-armed gunmen, the rabid mobs, the blistering flags, the overturned tanks, the rocket launchers, the blood-doomed faces, the cries in the street, the slogans of death chanted by those with nothing to lose... the angry clerics cheering their forces onward. (Khan 136).

They are fundamentals in dressing and they keep moral policing

Muslims dress has always been a subject of criticism, may be because there is no other group is as meticulous and strict with their dress code. It seems that both authors have been a prey to the never-ending ridicule towards Muslim dressing. When Rachel went to the mosque, ostensibly as a new convert, she had very bad experiences from Muslims in the mosque as far as her dress is concerned. Paula Kyriakou, the receptionist, had worn "...headscarf wound tightly about her skull, sealing off her cheeks and forehead..." (Khan 68) and she is particular about the new converts to dress like that. The infatuation of Muslims with their dressing, especially dressing of women, appeared to be a botheration for others, and Rachel felt annoyed when Paula tied the scarf "... around Rachel's face, tight enough that it bit into Rachel's chin and forehead", and advised her very rudely to wear scarf not after entering the mosque but before it. Altogether their botheration on dressing is irritating, and that is why Rachel found the experience "restrictive" and "hostile" (Khan 69). Mohsin and his wife Alia Dar had a constant quarrel in the name of wearing hijab. In Massey's story all three widows are so particular about observing mourning dress after the demise of their husband, and had observed strict hijab even inside the house when he was alive.

Paula, a lady member of Ashkouri team, represents a different type of fanaticism. She is always self-styled religious police, who is much bothered about the ways others pray, dress, behave and even stand in a row, during congregation. In the mosque "she shoved some of the women forward, pulled others a step or two back ... (and shouted) Don't forget the etiquette of prayer in the useless drama of the

earthly life.” (Khan 122-123). When Rachel cried aloud “Good God, that hurts!”, as she got hurt by the wooden plank, the sensorial Paula came out, “you shouldn’t take the Lord’s name in vain. Not over something so minor.” (125). At her first entry to Masjid un-Nur, she was scolded by Paula for wearing blue and white scarf with logo of a hockey team, “when you pray to God, you should not be distracted by the presence of worldly idols.” (69). One may ask, if there actually is a censoring presence in mosques like this, and the possible answer is negative, but this Paula can add to the already existing prejudices about mosques and those who attend mosques.

Post 9/11 media reported multiple incidents of Muslim individuals exposed to physical bullying in the name of their dress. Very soon, Muslim dress like turban, salwar kameez and kurta became something that attracts hate, and the novel makes continuous attempts to concentrate on the dress of the characters like Ashkouri and other members of his team, as if dress has something to do with their being terrorists. When Khattak went to the mosque to question the possible suspects in Mohsin murder, he began with the old man Jamshed, who “wore loose-fitting shalwar kameez, covered by a thick cardigan and a Pashtun shawl” (Khan 113). The teenager in the terrorist group Dinaase appeared wearing “...the Palestinian scarf, the kaffiyeh, wrapped around his neck several times.” (Khan 118).

Their world view is faulty

Another aspect where Muslims are portrayed fanatics is related to their world view. It is a very common charge against Muslims that, they view the world in binary: us vs. them or Darul Aman vs Darul Harb. Here, Muslim countries are termed Darul Aman, a place of safety for Muslims, and any other country that is not

Islamic or engaged in conflict with Muslims is Darul Harb, and such countries are considered to be at war with Muslims. It is this dualistic world view that misguides many terrorists to attack other countries, and unfortunately this perspective was reinforced in the novel, when narrator says, “Mohsin’s view of the world had been naive: friends versus enemies, ummah versus outsiders, the pain of the now measured against the sweet reward of the afterlife...” (Khan 15). When Esa was recruited to Community Policing, and it is known that his primary job is to spy the Muslim community, Mohsin said:

The ummah, man, the ummah. We belong to it... This had been Mohsin’s favorite refrain. He believed in the Islamic nation, a supranational community whose faith transcended language, sect, ethnicity, and borders, tied together by a spiritual commonality. (Khan14).

Ideological Stand of Muslims are problematic

Though not in same degree, both novels take ideological stand when they describe Muslims and their life. There are occasions, when the narrative voice takes up the position of powerful advisor or assumes a Mr. know all. Chapter 15 of *The Language of Secrets*, spent pages to reflect the inner conflicts in world Muslim psyche, and thus insists the same popular media rhetoric of ‘Muslim terrorist’ is true, and the narrator advised Muslims,

There was the damage they did to themselves, lost in the fog of an all pervasive ignorance. Of history—their own history, their scripture, their

traditions, their prophetic example—taken, twisted, besmirched, betrayed.
(Khan 136).

All Muslim characters in Khan are connected to the terrorist group, and this validates a claim usually the Western media propagate about terrorism. It is about this purported fear Edward Said observed: “The media, the government, the geopolitical strategists and the academic experts are all in concert: Islam is a threat to western civilisation...”(Said Covering,136), and the falsity John Esposito tried to expose in his *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, by providing statistical data on terrorist attacks in the western world and the religion of those responsible for those attacks. It becomes problematic when not even a single Muslim character in the novel is absolutely cleared of the possibility of being a part of a terrorist attack, at least by mental support. Such narratives try to tell that Muslim sympathy is always with terrorists, who supposedly defend their religion, and not with the west, which is easy prey of this terror. Khan’s sleuth Esa himself is not trusted by his superiors, as they are afraid that he might have a soft corner towards the terrorists! The narrator did not stop there, but continued to generalise that all Muslims are more or less alike, because all of them recite nationalist and brotherhood rhymes like, “crimson coffee is the morning cup. These Lebanese children are wreaths on bits of firebomb debris. A lexicon learned each day by every member of Esa’s faith” (Khan 137).

A common ground where *The Language of Secrets* and *Prayers for the Assassin* (analysed in chapter three) meet is in the case of migrant Muslims. While the former has all Muslim characters from migrant community from countries like Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the latter had most of the major

characters from Afro-Asian Muslim countries. When we think about this demography, there is nothing wrong about it, but it becomes problematic when we juxtapose these portrayals with the recent outcry “The Muslims are coming” (Esposito, Threat 212) from both Europe and America, and the recent anti-immigration laws in many western countries, including executive order 13769 of US president, banning citizens of some select Muslim countries entering the USA. Since the last two decades there erupted “sparkling debate, controversy, fear and even hatred” (Khader) between some 25 million Muslims in the West and the white people. Consequently, there arose a number of culturally oriented anti-Muslim organisations, NGOs, foundations, and research institutes who “...engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at the delegitimization and denigration of Muslim immigration, such as spreading falsified notions and conspiracy theories...exerting political pressure for anti-Muslim measures... (and campaigning against) Islam in the public sphere (such as) mosques and Muslim educational institutes...” (Perocco, 30). As mentioned earlier, geopolitical strategies are the result of one’s understanding of who is friend and who is foe, and if that understanding is faulty the strategies thus formulated also will be wrong. Readers of these novels get enforced images of non-white Muslim terrorism, and the commonplace logic of ‘whites cannot be terrorist’ along with ‘Muslims are prone to be terrorists’ is re-established, and thus accelerates public support for anti-Muslim policies both against individuals and nations. This coloured portrayal continues, when the story brings Grace and Din (both of Somali origin) to the underground club *Gori*, meant for Somalis. The club is the embodiment of all evils, including goons. Racism takes its share in different forms in the narrative, though not necessary for the development of the plot.

It is interesting to see the political stand the novel *The Language* takes, when the narrative says: “It wasn’t enough to say that the same faith that had produced Hassan Ashkouri had also produced Esa Khattak, good and evil sketched out in broad strokes.” (260). It does not stop there, but a long musing from Rachel continues to justify the Western interferences in Muslim countries. This goes with the rhetoric of the former US president George W. Bush, “Ours is a war not against the Muslim faith, but...against individuals who absolutely hate what America stands for” (The President’s Quotes on Islam). Unfortunately, what the world could witness was not the destruction of militants, but deaths of thousands of Afghanis and Iraqis and death of half a million Iraqi children. (Razing the Truth). Islamophobia and geopolitics come together, when Islamophobia in literature got entwined with political stands and public arguments, and thus validate the Islamophobic stance by those western policy makers, knowingly or unknowingly the narratives do that job.

There is misogyny among Muslims and their women are very ‘Poor’

It is a label that Muslims, in general, are misogynist, as they are reluctant to allow women all rights allowed to men, and, their women are weak as well as incompetent in comparison with their western counterparts. This labelling is aggravated by these novels. All Muslim male characters like Ashkouri, Jamshed Ali, Muhsin Dar, Andy Dar, Esa Khattak, etc. from Khan are, misogynists, this way or that, who find women as tools to achieve their goals. Esa never considers his sisters equal to him, or capable of handling things on their own. That is why, even Rachel said: “If you don’t mind me saying, sir, they sound like fully competent women to me. It doesn’t seem like they need a minder” (Khan192). Ruksh, Paula, and even

Misbah, Esa's younger sister, are too credulous and weak. All these women characters set their final goals to win a man's heart. They lack worldly wisdom and self-efficiency, and naturally require someone from western world, like Rachel, to help them. During their domestic talk, Jamshedji remarked to his daughter Perveen: "Our beloved Fort is becoming overcrowded with all types. But a woman should never approach a man on the street" (Massey.17), because women are 'weak' and 'vulnerable'. But, "to say there is an Islamic specificity regarding sexism, or that Muslim women are more oppressed than other women, is groundless", says European network against Racism. (Debunking Myths 4).

Muslims are cruel

Since colonial period, a large portion of North Africans were described as 'Berbers' indirectly suggesting derogation. Since then, Africans bear many negative images in the western world. In their discourse Africa was a monolithic "dark continent," where people are beggars, disease stricken, dangerous and uncivilized. Media and movies played a great role in shaping this negative image, and the same is reproduced in Khan. It is a known fact that the relation between cinematic stereotypes and common perceptions of a certain group is reciprocal, as stereotypes both reflect and shape common prejudices. There is underground club for Somalis, frequently visited by Somali groups. According to Grace, "they're Goonies" (Khan 210) and they are very cruel, and they threatened Din in the presence of Rachel. Muslim men in these novels are not only misogynists but cruel also. Ashkouri, the most important one, uses his physical charm to attract women including Rukshanda, and brought her to the winter camp, not because of his love, but "if he was identified

in connection with the Nakba plot...he'd need a hostage to fight his way out," (259). He is preaching about the glories of martyrdom, but throws others into that dream: "Ashkouri had sacrificed younger men to that end, and in that he followed the pattern of jihadist commanders... The young were sent to die, their mentors exempt from the same..." (259). The narrative here made a generalisation, though it was not necessary. Major male characters are cruel and sadists. Ashkouri has no worries about the fate the woman who loved against all odds, he not only used her as a hostage, but was ready to even murder her. Andy Dar is more conscious about his reputation and viewership, than getting justice to his murdered son. Jamshed Ali is so pious in the mosque, but he never felt sorry for bringing those innocent women to their wily plot, and moreover he was so cruel to attempt murder Esa. As Rachel observed, none of them have "not much suicidal inclination" (Khan 259). They were so selfish to protect themselves, but 'offer' death to their followers, so "the young were sent to die, their mentors exempt from the same prescribed sacrifice" (260). Omar Farid had three wives, and he kept first wife busy with waqaf muthawalli (in charge of religious assets), so that he can be with other wives. When Perveen met Razia the first wife, her response was "I think he wanted me to be busy, to have something" (92), and he kept the second wife busy when he got the third!

Muslim women (even if converted) are very weak in terms of individuality, self-esteem and independence. Paula Kyriakou is the best example who became infatuated with her dressing, wearing scarf, observing prayers and appeasing her men, as if she believed that her only redemption can be attained by appeasing Ashkouri. Her religiosity crosses the border of individual, but tries to interfere with

others including Ashkouri, that made Jamshed remark, “Paula? They’re grown-ups. You don’t need to police them” (Khan 262). All widows in Massey display themselves very sorry figures, in the sense that, they are illiterate, and have no idea about outside world, as they never go out. They do not know to read the document Mukri has produced or agreement for the new Waqaf. These three illiterate widows are juxtaposed against the foreign educated Perveen Mistry who came to help them from their messy situation. Though he is only a family agent, Mukri sahib is all-dominating-male in the family, and he threatens all the women and children of Omar Farid, using his world knowledge against the ignorance of the women.

The widows of late Farid have an urge to move to the large world outside their house, but many elements like their ignorance of the outside world, lack of education and experience, prevent them. During Perveen’s interview with them, it was Amina, the young girl who expressed that, “I would like to go and live somewhere else, like you said.” (Massey 98), but gradually we understood that it is the common feeling shared by all women there. The most important block is their religious practice, that has a crippling impact, and prevents women from having independence. After the demise of Omar Farid, their house is like a tight security prison, where they have no freedom of movement or thought, and their ignorance and poor upbringing made them so meek that they are ready to accept any humiliation or threat from Mukri. The tragedy goes to the worst end, when Razia, the first wife, became the murderer of Mukri. It is because of the nasty setup of Muslim household the “the widows had lived a life at the mercy of men who were supposed to serve them.” (186-87).

II. MUSLIMS ARE INCAPABLE, NECESSITATING WESTERN INTERFERENCE

Bouamama suggested that Contemporary Islamophobia is not only clever, sneaky and shrewd, but also successful in bagging certain respectability because it presents itself as a defence of strong values like democracy, women's rights, freedom of expression and respect for minorities (26). What Edward Said remarked about Orientalism, "the Orientalist is principally a kind of agent of such comprehensive visions" (Said, *Orientalism*.190), can be ascribed to the Islamophobic narrative, which is actually an agent of limited vision, but claiming to have panoptical vision, and it presents a corrupted version of the characters and their behaviour. Referring to the observation of Hannah Arendt that the counterpart of the bureaucracy is the imperial agent, Said called Orientalism a bureaucratic institution and people like T. E. Lawrence its imperial agents (191) and it can be extended to modern Islamophobic narratives. Islamophobia takes the form of an institution, based on corrupted vision about Muslims, and the literary pieces, movies, media reports, documentaries and panel discussions are its agents. It is from this stand point, this research approaches the portrayals of Muslims in these novels. Unlike in novels analysed in previous chapters, there is no Muslim leader or government portrayed in these two novels. But there are dominant Muslim characters like Omar Farid, Faisal Mukri, Ashkouri, etc. What Bouamama pointed can be inferred better by analysing the Muslim portrayal in both Khan and Massey. The chief Muslim character in Massey, Omar Farid, is an embodiment of incapability as a man of the house. He has given everything in his possession, including wives and children to

his house agent Mukri, who is an arch villain. According to the novel, his religion has major share in his incapability, because, he never allowed his womenfolk to have any contact with outside world, has built separate 'women only' areas inside his own home, and never encouraged them to educate. His kids got limited education at home, not outside, hence, one of the most important benefits of education- enabling for successful interaction with outside world- was missing. All these contributed to make his household, not only an utter failure, but also a place of crime. What Perveen felt about them was clear in her analogy comparing them with large moth hitting the window "he makes me think of someone going after those secluded women. They're utterly trapped." (216). As per his Testament, Faisal Mukri could decide the fate of his family, "...it was within Mr. Mukri's rights as the household agent to arrange marriages for any of the females in the family —the daughters as well as the widows." (Massey 190). It is ultimately Farid's inability and religious fanaticism shaped the tragic fate of his household which turned out to be a breeding ground for jealousy (310): his wives fight each other, two of the women have secret affairs with house agent, Sakina, the second wife became both a murderer and child kidnapper, children are under trauma of seclusion and threat, and so on. Massey presented an interesting episode of Razia, taking revenge on Mukri, that narrated us a different person, a Razia with talents, ingenuity, and smartness. Within a short span of time, after Perveen's briefing, she could analyse the situation herself, and other family members were put in; and a possible solution for the problem, that is removing Mukri, and successful method of execution of that plan. All these happened within half an hour. Reading between lines helps us to understand that it was only Omar Farid and his religious fanaticism that curtailed the

innate powers of his household, and once they realized that they are no longer under that religious grip they could think freely and act wisely.

Ashkouri hails from Iraq, and his country was described as “the attack on Sunni worshippers had followed the bombing of Shia neighbourhoods and sites of worship, in a cycle of sectarian violence that had spread throughout the country” (Khan.39). This sectarian violence in Muslim countries speaks volumes about poor governance and incapability of Muslims. As commonly known, Post Cold War geopolitics was moving around the new potential threat from the Muslim countries and Muslim fundamentalists, and the western counter moves to contain them. The continuous Western/European interference in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. were justified on many grounds, one of such rationale was their despotic leaders and poor governance, and the western conviction that such countries demand western interference. According to the narrative the violence in Iraq was “...prefaced by those who claimed a divine right to power and the equally divine monopoly of a shared, multifarious faith.” (Khan 179). One key argument of this study is that, these popular novels covertly supplement the western Islamophobic narratives of the failed Muslim nations, and thus justifying western interference in the name of democracy, human rights and women rights. Interestingly, Khan’s novel moves a little further to more direct stance, presented either through third person narrator or Esa’s musings. There is even a deliberate attempt to justify the big death toll happened during the US invasion of Iraq, “Iraq’s hundred thousand civilian dead had been caught in the cross fire of a sectarian slaughter” (179), ignoring the millions who died as a result of Western sanctions against Iraq since 1991.

They are gluttonous for power & sex

In his study on Islamophobia and Hollywood, Jack Shaheen answered the question, 'what is an Arab', "Arabs are brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women." (Shaheen Reel 1). We have already found the characters of Rees and Ferrigno match this Hollywood answer, and dominant characters in Khan Massey also present more or less similar portraits who are infatuated with sex and power. Ashkouri, the terrorist leader, is enjoying both power and sex. Though he has no political power, he is equally powerful, as he is overbearing both male and female members. He gets enough sexual pleasure also from both Rukshanda and Paula. Jamshed Ali, the second in hand, also has enough power over other young members. The most important power they enjoy is to execute their terrorist plan, using other members, the pleasure getting from that is multifaceted: on the one hand, they have the satisfaction of becoming the crusaders for their religion, and on the other, theirs is the pleasure of any military or political leader who leads a battle. According to Neuberg Fiske, "social power has been conceptualized in terms of the ability to control or influence another's thoughts, feelings, or behaviours in meaningful ways." (3). Though Esa Khattak is the hero, he himself is not devoid of sexual perversion, as he has soft corners to both to junior officer Rachel and Public prosecutor Sehr Ghilzai. Similarly, late Omar Farid enjoyed both social power and sexual extravaganza. He controlled the entire life of all the members of family from their food to their thoughts and feelings. He went from woman to woman, and married one, just after he had been diagnosed with cancer. Besides, it never occurred to him rational, to discuss with any of his wives,

regarding his estate, or kids' education or their future, instead, he authoritatively bestowed everything into the corrupted hands of Faisal Mukri. Power and sexual perversion are not limited to Muslim men only but their female counterparts also. Sakina and Mumtaz, two younger wives of Farid, are planning to confiscate family property by kicking out others, and have already started sharing bed with Faisal, the house agent. Altogether, these novels add to the *bad Muslims* (*The Reel Bad Arabs* by Jack G Shaheen) projected by the celluloid screens.

Rudyard Kipling and other western thinkers wrote much about the white men's burden to civilize the coloured people. Kipling wrote,

...this is the road that the White Men tread/
When they go to clean a land/
Iron underfoot.../Our **chosen star** (emphasis added) for guide/
Oh, well for the world... (Said, *Orientalism*.180).

Civilizing mission of the superior west is still not yet accomplished, and the Islamophobia of modern times feels that these people need to be improvised more. One of the reasons for western intervention in the Muslim countries like Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, etc. was that those people need western help, not only against their autocratic rulers but also to bring them to modern standards. (Bush 65). These novels validate those claims about power crazy, sexual perverts who value no modern secular concepts like democracy, individual freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of food and dress, and consequently intervention in those countries got justified, exactly colonisation justified in the name civilizing mission guided by 'chosen star'.

Colonial western thinking is that, when Muslims are having problems like this, it is the west that must help them, by interfering in their countries, an extension of the “white men’s burden” theory of Rudyard Kipling generation. In Massey, it is Perveen, who is not western but western educated, is doing this by helping the widows to purge themselves of all the bad stains of their religious restrictions. She brings these ladies and thus the community from the darkness of ignorance to the lights of western education and freedom. Similarly, in Khan, that civilising mission was performed by Esa and Rachel, who help them in two ways: the less affected ones are saved to teach western civilisation, and those irrecoverably damaged by fundamentalism were sent to death.

III. REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS AS A THREAT TO THE WEST AND THE SOLUTION IS WESTERNISATION

Kurzman once raised a very fundamental question about the disparity between the potential of Muslim terrorism and the actual terrorist attacks by Muslims. His doubt was, “why don’t we see terrorist attacks everywhere, every day?”, considering that there are more than two billion Muslims in the world, many of whom supposedly hate the West (7). What he pointed is the hyperbolic nature of appearance of Muslim terrorists in popular media, movies and fiction; same is the question that comes to the reader when we read Khan, in which, a terrorism is the centre of the plot. Both Khan and Massey present ‘problems’ Muslims face, and suggest ‘solution’ that is to accept Western civilization or westernise and civilize.

Esa Khattak has a long interview with Andy Dar, in which the sleuth represents the west, and Andy Dar the Islamic fundamentalism. Esa tries all his

skills to teach Andy that the problem with people like his is their emotionality and sensitive responses without waiting for understanding the real situation. Andy was accusing the government and its machinery for the problems Canadian Muslims face, and portrayed it as the partisan nature of the western governments. He had used his popularity in TV shows to criticise Canadian (western) government and still finding fault with the west for all their problems. It was then Esa came with his (and that of the West) reply, “I’m afraid you have it wrong” (Khan 221). Andy Dar is a miniature of Muslim world, one who is finding fault for one’s own flows in other’s deeds and accusing outsiders for wrong reasons, whereas, Esa is a miniature of the West, that asks Muslims to purge themselves of their flows. and follow the west for solution. Esa makes him understand that the real problem is within the community, their fundamentalism, their irrational enmity, and their reluctance towards modernisation. At the end of the novel, Rukshanda and Paula are saved (because they still can be improvised), and Ashkouri, Grace, Din, Jamshed are destroyed one way or other, as they have been corrupted beyond redemption.

This portrayal causes raise our brows, as we are aware that the same is the western rhetoric, when it fights Muslims all over the world in the name of terrorism. Proponents of clash of civilisations have drawn a clear battlefield for post-Cold War west, and it can be found that narratives like this are on the same track. Massey has her Muslim characters uneducated, kept away from the benefits of western civilisation, barred from freedom of movement, expression, education, and freedom to own property, and Perveen, the non-western but western educated brought them help. It is here what Kurzman remarked becomes important, “the media’s

fascination with terrorism coincides with terrorists' interest in the media. Media-savvy terrorists such as Bin Ladin admit that they use news coverage for recruitment." (16), that is the reciprocity of cause and effect with regards to Islamophobia in the fiction and the nurturing detest of the West.

Islamophobia taught the western audience that Muslims are a threat to its existence, both physically and ideologically, and everything related to them from their appearance to their beliefs and practices undermine western (modern) civilisation. So, they are afraid of their neighbours or a passerby who have beard or worn hijab.

Conclusion

In a 2014 interview, John L Esposito said that according to the western academia, religion was a past legacy that is not only irrelevant but also an obstacle to modernisation, and they believed that, since Muslims are very much tied to their religion, they have to choose between Mecca or mechanization (Esposito Interview). It suggests that modernisation stands just on the other side of religion, and as long as religion is present, modernisation is an impossibility. It further stretches to say that, since Muslims are very particular about observing religion in all walks of life, they cannot be modernised, hence, they might pose a threat to the modern world in its economical, sociological, political and ideological stance.

We have seen that both these novels contributed their share to establish the Islamophobic portrayals of Muslims. As suggested earlier, the focus of this research is not Islamophobia as such, but Islamophobic presentations that contribute to

geopolitical strategies. Considering the focal area, it could be pointed out that, in comparison with the western authors analysed in previous chapters, these non-western authors are less Islamophobic in its width and depth. At the same time, it is true that both these authors enjoyed the ‘best seller’ position, and their portrayals might sway the reader’s attitudes. Knowingly or unknowingly, Khan has given wide publicity and eternalised the follies of an “ill-equipped and poorly trained” (Khan 307) group of youngsters including teenagers, who were, actually, lured by the counter terrorism agencies, to place a bomb in Toronto. As Kurzman pointed out the help of international news agencies in spreading the news of an unimportant attack that could have died out locally, “they bring the perpetrators’ message to vast audiences; without these audiences, the terror would only be felt locally” (15), something simple and silly that could have forgotten as local crime, is eternalised by creating a best seller detective story, that might entertain generations. So, the impact is more than that of the real terrorist attack.

There are deliberate attempts from the narrative to justify the severe partisan steps taken by many western countries in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. For example, Bill C-36(Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act) and Bill C-51 (Combating Terrorism Act) of Canada were often criticised as harmful to civil liberties as they provide unlimited powers for police forces, are justified. The novel has direct reference to these, “Killiam was hinting at... the Anti-Terrorism Act, ... encroachment on civil liberties—the hammering home of Bill C-51, the new legislation with its unchecked surveillance powers ... He feared what they were becoming...” (Kahan 17).

Similarly, the narratives try to justify the oft quoted argument behind the rise of Muslim terrorists that they wanted to punish the western powers for the “humiliation” they caused to the Muslim world:

There was a lot of negative talk ... of grievances: Palestine, Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq... There was concerted talk about the need for action—the need for a dramatic, decisive response... To end the humiliation of Muslims worldwide. (31).

It is a commonsense doubt that how could people like Ossama Bin Laden or Mulla Omer or Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who got no credible credentials, got large number of followers, if we can trust the intelligence agencies? This was indirectly answered by the narrative, where Esa asks about the credentials of Ashkouri, “do these people need credentials? A few lines in Arabic are usually enough to win over a congregation. That and a bit of messianic charisma, and you have the makings of real trouble.” (33).

A common notion developed in post 9/11 world is that most of the terrorism activities are done by Muslims, and that too by people from certain African and Asian countries. Besides, wide media coverage for terrorist attacks created a false impression that terrorist attacks caused large number of deaths. A statistical analysis of global terrorism data does not support neither of these views. As per ‘Our World in Data’ website, terrorism caused only 0.05% of global deaths, whereas transport accidents caused in 2.3% of global deaths, that is estimated to 1.3 million deaths in 2019. (Bastian). Similarly, even Guantanamo detainees list does not authenticate the claim about people from ‘certain’ countries as easily becoming terrorist, as ...Out of

779 detainees, 29% were from Afghanistan, 17% from Saudi, 15%, from Yemen, 9% from Pakistan, 3% from Algeria, and almost all of these were released without a formal charge. (List 1). Khan's novel validates the common false notions that, almost all 'Muslim' terrorists belong to certain countries, Somalia (Dinaase Abdi and members of Dixon City Bloods), Iraq (Ashkouri) and Pakistan/Pashtun origin (Jamshed Ali). Besides, there is a direct assertion from Esa, the sleuth, "... if the gang member was of Somali background —if he was a Somali Muslim, he might be plugged in to Ashkouri's network." (Khan 235). The investigator has no doubt about this possibility, and this assertion straight away enters the reader's perception as well.

Khan's story is directly attempting to legitimize and rationalise Islamophobic policies of Western countries towards Muslims and Muslim majority countries- by providing ample rationale. Community policing in Canada was a new phenomenon after 9/11 for the surveillance of the 'dangerous' Muslim community. It focussed on mass surveillance of Muslim communities, transformed Mosques into spaces of surveillance, created a community of informants, and targeted political activism. The novel portrays a scenario that authenticates the supposition that Muslims are dangerous, and it reveals how racial narratives of "radicalized extremist" Muslims have provided legitimacy for sweeping surveillance at the hands of intelligence services under the guise of the war on terror (Basema Al-Alami).

Massey presented Muslims of early 20th century India as a community rotten to the core, that necessitates western interference. Omar Farid and his secluded family is the representatives of uneducated, ill-treated, secluded Muslims. A

historical awareness tells us that this portrayal is a sort of one sided picturisation. It is during the early decades of 20th century, India contributed great leaders like Muhammed Ali, Shaukat Ali, Allama Muhammed Iqbal, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Abul Kalam Azad, etc. It was in 1875, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan established the earlier form of Aligarh Muslim University. When the West has distancing attitude towards Muslims, a common rationale presented is undesirability of Muslims as a community that observes strict religious practices, most of which are in contradiction with western practices.

Both these novels presented Muslims as religious fanatics, misogynists, people who are more emotional than intellectual, reactionary, and as a community turning face away from modernisation. Similarly, when western nations have geopolitical strategies of interference in Muslims countries, their stated rationale was always, either to protect the world from their threat or to protect democracy, human rights in general and women rights in particular. Both these novels amplified those claims by presenting convincing stories.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Entangled Discourses: The Interplay between Islamophobic Representations and Geopolitical Strategies

When Paul De Man stated “what we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality”, he was placing literature, at the centre of political or ‘ideological’ discourse. He further emphasized that literary criticism and theory is a “powerful tool in exposing ideological aberrations.”(De Man 11). This research has made use of that potential of literary criticism to analyse the latent ‘ideology’ in these novels under study. This research also is motivated by observations made by Bennett and Royle, that

in capitalist society, literature itself is an ‘ideological form’, both produced by and producing ideology. The task of the critic would be to look beyond the unity that the literary text strives to present and forcefully to explore the contradictions embedded within it. (Bennett.187).

Here, an attempt is made, to look beyond the unity of text, exploring the latent Islamophobia, and trying to figure out the reciprocity of influence between the Islamophobia thus created and geopolitical strategies of general west towards Arab-Muslim nations

As stated earlier, the hypothesis of this research was based on four interlinked viewpoints. They are:

- 1) Islamophobia had its manifestation both in overt and covert modes in literary texts, and as one of the most popular forms of fiction, detective novels are very successful carriers of such Islamophobia,
- 2) Islamophobia thus communicated, through popular literature, might influence the perspectives of readers towards particular nations and Muslim communities,
- 3) since politicians and policy makers are not resistant to negative influences, wrong notions shaped by Islamophobia in literature and other cultural transactions, might reflect in their policies, many of which, might have long lasting impacts, and finally,
- 4) relation between Islamophobia in literature and geopolitical strategies is one of reciprocity: on the one hand literary portrayals imprint false and corrupted images of the Muslim 'other' in the minds of policy makers, and in return, national policies towards Muslim "other" and their countries, wrongly established images of undesirable Muslims created and spread by partisan media etc. pave way for more Islamophobic portrayals in popular literature.

To prove this hypothesis, this research made in-depth analysis of eight detective novels, published after Sept/11 (2001). Out of the eight novels, two are authored by Kate Jessica Raphael, one by Zoe Ferraris (both white women), two are by Matt Beynon Rees, another one by Robert Ferrigno (both white men), one each by Ausma Zehanat Khan and Sujata Massey (both non-western but settled in the West). Since the research has been constructed on a premise that there might be

differences in perspectives of western and non-western people towards Muslims; and among westerners themselves, there might be variations between male and female authors; the novels under study have been divided into three groups. Group one constitutes western women, group two western men, and group three non-western authors.

Analysis of works by Jessica Raphael and Zoe Ferraris, in chapter two, found that the Islamophobia latent in their novels come under four categories. They are 1) portraying Muslims (Palestinians and Saudis) as undesirable people, 2) suggesting Muslims to accept Westernization as the only available option for acceptance, 3) establishing Israel having a very positive and humanitarian face, and 4) presenting a very comfortable Palestine, having no big issues like the rights groups claim the Palestinians suffer from.

Chapter three analysed two novels by Matt Beynon Rees, and one by Robert Ferrigno, and it resulted in exposing Islamophobia latent in both authors. Such Islamophobic references were categorized into four: 1) Muslims are undesirable as a community, 2) they are incapable of governing themselves, besides being corrupted, 3) they are a threat to the western society and values, and 4) Rees novels presented pro-Israel rhetoric, hence weakening Palestine's stand in Palestine-Israel conflict.

Chapter four also moved in a similar pattern, through two novels of Ausma Zehanat Khan and Sujata Massey. Islamophobia in their novels is less fierce, but still contributes to the already established Orientalist perspectives. This research identified Islamophobia in their novels appear under three categories: 1) Muslims are

undesirable, 2) Muslims are incapable, and they required western intervention, and 3) Westernization is the only hope for Muslims to make themselves accepted.

All these texts do three things: 1) they not only represent the *real* world, but also become the part of the same world, thus adding more to the *reality*, 2) help readers to move from these texts to series of other texts both factual and fictional, and 3) pass the fundamental will of the author to the readers.

Most of the Islamophobic references that have geopolitical implications found in each set of writers, can be grouped together. They are briefly summarised as follows:

1) Muslims are undesirable. All eight novels presented Muslim characters as embodiment of many objectionable features. This undesirability originates from their religious and cultural practices, or behavioural issues. In all these novels, all practicing Muslims are bad characters, and all good characters are either non-Muslims or non-practising Muslims.

In Raphael, Muslim characters are presented as an undesirable set of people with so many unacceptable practices and beliefs: their food is not of standard and hygienic; and criminalism is in their blood since childhood (Rania's young son is playing fighting Yahud /Jew); they are very cruel by nature and even murdering another Muslim is not a 'big' deal (Daoud was murdered by brother murder); they are corrupted to the core (fight for power between Hamas and Fatah fractions); they are misogynists who don't even recognise the very existence of women (both Rania and Chloe felt ignored); they consider women as child making machines (Rania had

been under constant pressure for more children); and their homes are full of domestic violence (Rania had to deal with a number of women complaints about domestic violence). In Zoe Ferraris, Saudi society is so misogynistic that no man will accept a working woman for wife, though women are educated, brilliant and capable of doing things. Women are not recognized (that is why Katya is so disappointed), and even eating enough food is a nightmare for Saudi women as they are afraid of bad images that create (Katya is having bad dreams about her mother rebuking her for eating). Freedom of movement is a dream for women both in Raphael's Palestine and Ferraris' Saudi Arabia. In Ferrigno's Islamic America, women suffer more restrictions, and they are not permitted to go out, except with male accompaniment or with written consent, publicly exhibited. Besides, Ferrigno's women are discouraged from modern education. Women of Rees are only puppets in the hands of Muslim men. Dima Abdel Rehman was married immediately after her schooling, but she does not meet her husband except for a few secret hours in a week. She lost her husband within a year, and she was killed within a few days after her husband. Muslim women in Rees are just domestic labourers and child bearing machines. Muslim women in Khan and Massey also are very weak and devoid of independence. Widows of Omar Farid are illiterate, have no idea about the outside world, and are at the mercy of Mukri, the estate trustee.

Objectification of women also is common among Muslims in these novels.

Many references to women hip size, the comfort of having many wives, considering as devoted works force for cooking and kids making etc. also is common.

Palestinians in Raphael and Rees novels are patriarchal and their women's role in

society is limited to domestic life. Ferraris' Saudi women are meant only to make men's life comfortable, that is, why Nouf wanted to escape to the US. Ferrigno's Islamic America presented very weak women, whose only job is to cook and deliver babies. Khan's Muslim women are struggling to appease their men, even if, it is joining terrorist plots. Massey's Muslim women are so helpless, and are always at the mercy of the men around.

Corruption is portrayed as part and parcel of Muslim life. All major Muslim characters in all eight novels are corrupted. All leaders of Muslim America, like Old One and Ibn Aziz, are corrupted to the core. Palestinian leaders, presented by both Raphael and Rees, are fully corrupted. Even resistant leaders are interested only in making money and gaining power. Ferrari's Saudi Arabia has a corrupted system, where, even medical doctors accept bribery. While some of them are involved in financial corruption, others are more active in power feuds. Even Ashkouri of Khan is interested in making money, getting power, but not making sacrifices while encouraging others to be suicide bombers.

Religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are necessary parts of the existence of Muslim characters in these novels. Despite the education, and development of modern world, they still live in the age-old system. Daily prayer is an infatuation for many of these characters. They cannot accept the minorities like gays, that is, why Daoud was murdered in Raphael story. They are capable of doing any degree of cruelty in the name of religion, believing to get seventy-two blue eyed houris in heaven. Jason in Ferrigno, Ashkouri in Khan, Abdel Rehman and other suicide bombers in Rees, are examples of such people. In Ferrigno's Islamic Republic, even

advertisements with human face are banned, and there is no Hollywood, or coca cola.

Muslim characters in these novels are portrayed as very cruel minded, capable of any amount of cruelty. Ferrigno's Old One caused deaths of two million people in New York nuclear bomb explosion, Rees's resistant leaders are so happy to kill, sometimes even their own people, Raphael's Palestine is capable of murders, in Ferraris' Saudi, murders are not rare, Khan's Muslim terrorist planned mass murder, though the plot was spoiled later, and even in Massey's Indian Muslim families, murders and kidnappings are not rare.

2) Muslim characters are consistently represented as politically ineffectual, morally compromised, and incapable of meaningful leadership, in these novels. In Raphael novels, there are important characters like police officers Mustafa and Abu Ziad, Planter Abu Shaadi, Bassam, but none of them show any efficiency, either in performing their duties or even in their domestic life. Ferrigno's Muslim leaders are good for nothing men, interested only in religious fanaticism and suppressing women. That is why, the number one country before the conversion, became a third world country within two decades, after the conversion. Khan's terrorists are poor guys, who cannot execute a plot, and Massey's Omar Farid is an absolute failure, both as business man and as individual, who has to lead a large family of four wives. Rees's resistant leaders, both in Bethlehem and Gaza, are blockheads, who have no education and no vision, and according to his hero Omar Yussef, those leaders were nomads, a few decades ago. Saudis of Ferraris also were portrayed as below average, except Katya and Nayir, her heroes, both of whom have western alliances.

3) Western values were portrayed as the gateway to Redemption for Muslims. All these texts construct a binary, where Muslim identity is equated with failure, and its Westernized counterpart is framed, as the only viable model for progress and moral coherence. Raphael's Rania was a weak woman, during her early days, when she was strictly following religion. But later, she changed her perspectives, began to work with Israelis, and became willing to throw away strict religious rules. Then she became a successful investigator, who turned to be so efficient that even Israeli officers have to be cautious of her investigation. Both her stories advanced pro-western rhetoric by presenting Chloe, the American, as the embodiment of humanitarian help, and other necessary occasional assistance to Rania, by virtue of her being from the 'States'. Whenever there was a controversial issue related to Israeli authority, both of her superior officers, Abu Ziyad and Captain Mustafa, advised her to surrender to the Israelis, and not fight them, as it is wisdom. Besides, there are Israeli human rights activists like Avi to help Palestinians. The fact is, despite this US/West assistance and Avi type rights protection activists, according to Amnesty International, more than one hundred thousand hectares of Palestine land is occupied by Israel after 1967, more than fifty thousand houses or constructions were destroyed, more than six lakh Jews were settled in those places, hence, more than five million Palestinians are suffering daily by Israeli restriction on daily life. Ferraris' heroes Nayir Sharqi and Katya Hijazi are far better than her other Muslim characters, because they are far away from Muslim culture and nearer to western practices.

Ferrigno and Rees also boldly suggest that Muslims should follow the West to have a better future. Omar Yussef, Rees' hero always rebukes his countrymen for

being a practicing Muslim, and he is so proud to be a non-practicing Muslim. That makes him a man with special human perspectives and superior intelligence.

Ferrigno's heroes Rakkim and Sarah are struggling to shed their new bestowed religion, because within a short period of time, they understood that converting to Islam was a wrong choice. Now, their task is to convince their countrymen that the conversion was a wrong choice, and that destroyed their once beautiful and great America.

Stories by Raphael and Rees take clear political stand with regards to Israel-Palestine conflict. They support Oslo Accords, a series of agreements that are commonly understood as pro-Israel. They suggest Palestinians to eradicate their thought of a separate nation, or in other words, what is called two-states solution. According to the stories, Palestine state is never going to happen. Again, they advise Palestinians to accept Israel, and Rees's hero Omar Yussef is even angry at Palestinians, for not accepting Israel. Raphael advises them to fight against the land confiscation, by way protest and legal fight, where the country with all its judiciary and executive power, order to expand settlements to more new areas. Despite the reality that majority of Israelis advocate expansion of settlements by confiscating more Palestinian lands, neither Raphael nor Rees present any vilely Israeli character. All of them are very good, and some of them possess natural human weaknesses of sex and money. Even murderer Wilensky is an Aristotelian tragic hero, who is always having lenience towards goodness. Hamas ascension to power in Gaza election becomes a problem for all four Palestine centred novels. The fact that there

was a fair election in Gaza, only cannot make them happy, it should not be Hamas who won the election.

4) Constructing the civilized coloniser. Depiction of Israel in both Rees and Raphael aligns with a broader ideological attempt to humanize the colonizer oppressor. Israel Occupation of Palestine is 'so commonplace' that for most of the global population in 21st century, Israel is only a nation, suffering from the threat of Palestinian terrorists, and most of them do not know that the present Israel is not what the UNO ratified as per resolution 181. The settler colonialism completely controls the daily life of Palestine. They have no freedom of movement, and their access to outside world is very limited. Palestinian Authority does not have even powers of an Indian state. Palestinians are under constant threat of forced evacuation, displacement and confiscation of land. Their life is a long wait and humiliation at military checkpoints. They are always under land, sea and air blockade. Any moment, they might be prey to physical assault, either by Israeli military or settlers. Palestinians have to struggle to get medical help, food and fuel, because of Israeli restrictions. They are prone to legal discrimination, and can be under administrative detention, even for decades. Their access to justice, education, and even getting a building permit are near impossible. Night raids, arrests, bombardments, and murders are an everyday reality. Their economic activities are always at the mercy of Israelis to the extent that they cannot even fish in the Mediterranean.

Despite all these realities, paradoxically, these novels do a blame reversal tactics by presenting Palestinians themselves, as the cause for their problems. There

is no Israeli officer showing cruelty, but all officers in the stories are law abiding gentle people. On the contrary, resistance groups are very cruel and have no scruple, who even dare to kill their own people. Both the authors hint that the real problem Palestinians face is not Israeli threat, but threat from resistance groups or 'gun men' as Omar Yussef described them. Raphael went to the extent of making her Palestine characters voice that, before the Intifada, the relation between settlers and Palestinian natives are so cordial, that they even visited each other's houses. Besides, she added an episode of Palestinians getting compensation from Israeli government, for their military cruelties. The fact is that there is not even a single incident of Israel compensating Palestinian loss. Rees' novels have different tactics to whitewash Israel: juxtaposing the cruelties of Palestinian resistance groups against the minimal presence of the Israeli military. Israeli military killing Palestinians in raids is routine in the occupied Palestine, but, we do not find any such raid in Rees novels. Rees Palestinians never find any poverty, restriction in freedom of movement, problem to do business, or access to education, or even access to the outside world. Instead, they face only one problem, that is, the threat from the 'gun men' or the resistant fighters.

This whitewashing will help Israel cover her cruelties in a world where occupation is never accepted to the international psyche, and awareness on human rights and inclusivity is at the highest.

5) Cozy and comfortable Palestine: Rees and Raphael construct a fictional Palestine that appears relatively untroubled, resembling any other developing society, rather than a region under military occupation and apartheid. All

Palestinians in their novels are financially sound, and do not find any difficulty to live. The fact is that Palestine was ranked 40 among the most expensive countries in 2020 by CEOWORLD magazine, and to meet both ends is really challenging due to high price levels. But in these stories, they have enough money, luxurious cars, large houses, luxurious food, and so on. Major share of Palestine population is living in refugee camps, but all characters in their novels have their own houses. Pure water and electricity are two unaffordable luxuries in Palestine, but the readers get the opposite impression. Raphael goes one step ahead, by presenting the abundance of medical doctors in Palestine to the level that many Palestine doctors are working in Israel. Rees presented both his 'gun men' and ordinary Palestinians with abundant money. Internet is so common in Bethlehem, according to Rees. When the suffering Palestinians are presented as living a very comfortable life, the result will be the erosion of international sympathy towards Palestinians.

6) To make things worse, Muslim characters in these novels are portrayed as potential threat to the West. Muslim characters of Ferrigno, Rees, Khan, Ferraris are portrayed as direct threat to the Western society, culture, ideals, and system of democracy. Political thinker Fukuyama suggested that "... mankind has progressed through a series of primitive stages of consciousness... such as tribal, slave owning, theocratic, and finally democratic egalitarian societies..." (115), and he concluded that in thus evolved liberal democratic state, all prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied. In other words, mankind has reached the end of his long civilisational journey, when western liberal democracy was accepted as the best form of government. It means that, whoever is against this liberal democracy, is a

threat to not only to the West but also to the entire humanity. Ferrigno's Islamic Republic of America practices not democracy but theocracy. Black Robes (religious police) have more power than even that of the President, and that president himself has been in power for two decades, without any elections. Rees's Palestinians do not believe in any form of democracy, rather they resort to the policy of 'might is right'.

Nothing prevents Khan's terrorists from installing bombs that can kill thousands of innocents. Ferrigno's terrorist leader Old One does not find any fault in using, even nuclear bombs that killed two million people, as long he believed that it was necessary to make Islam as the dominant power. Corruption is everywhere in all these novels. Palestinian society portrayed by both Raphael and Rees are full of corruption. Ferraris' Saudi characters and system of Saudi Arabia also are highly corrupted. Most of these Muslim characters in all these novels engage in crimes and bloodshed.

All these bad features made Muslims all over the world a legitimate target of the process of 'purging' in various ways. The following types of geopolitical strategies are directly or indirectly influenced by the partisan and Islamophobic thoughts.

Geopolitical strategies/geostrategies are primarily focused on 1) national impulses, 2) strength and limitations of the country's resources, 3) scope of the country's goals, 4) international political geography of the time and 5) the technological factors that affect military, political, economic, and cultural engagement. Literature's influence comes more or less in all these spheres.

These strategies are basically aimed at 1) define the country with reference to its neighbours and the globe at large, 2) to strengthen the country's power in terms of economy and military, 3) to define the country's allies and foes, and 4) to protect from possible threats. When a specific group of people is established, through continuous false imaging, using all possible media- both factual reporting and imaginative- as undesirable and a threat, the military and economic policies of the country will reflect animosity towards such undesirable and dangerous sects and countries. This is what happened in the case of the USA and its allies as far as dealing with Muslims and Muslim majority countries are concerned. Post 9/11 has witnessed a surge of laws. segregating Muslims in various countries, across the globe.

Geopolitical strategies where islamophobia might reflect are found in four types:

- 1) Anti-immigrant laws,
- 2) double standard with regards to human rights, genocide, and Geneva convention, etc.,
- 3) policies of animosity towards countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, etc., and
- 4) Anti Muslim laws within the countries

1) Anti-immigrant laws

Post 9/11 has witnessed a wave of anti-immigration policies and laws emerged across Western countries, many of which were explicitly or implicitly

aimed at Muslim individuals or communities. These policies were framed in the language of national security, counterterrorism, or immigration reform, but in practice, they disproportionately targeted Muslims. A few of them are mentioned below.

According to NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) a 2002 US law, male visitors from more than sixteen Muslim majority countries were to report regularly to the authorities, besides providing finger prints and other biological credentials. USA Patriot Act 2001 gave extra power to the attorney to detain, arrest and deport non-citizens, without judicial review. A new department called U.S. Department of Homeland Security was formed in 2002 to counter Islamic extremism. The Executive Order 13769 of 2017 had imposed travel ban for Muslims from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen to America. Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 of the UK, that gave power to authorities for detention of suspected foreign nationals, was targeted mostly against Muslims. UK Prevent Strategy of 2003 was meant to encourage health workers and educators to report Muslims ‘suspected’ of radicalisation. British authorities used this new situation to strip citizenships to many Muslims who had dual citizenships. Australia Anti-Terrorism Act of 2005 allowed preventive detention and heavy surveillance against Muslims. Canada enforced Security Certificates System to detain and deport non-citizens, often targeted against Muslims.

2) Double standard with regards to human rights, genocide, and Geneva convention:

Geneva Conventions of 1949 are meant to protect people during armed

conflict, especially, those who do not participate in hostilities. It is to protect civilians, health workers, volunteers, prisoners of war, media people, hospitals and sick people. As of now, all the UN recognized countries, including member states and observers, have signed to all four Geneva conventions. But since 1948, the establishment of Israel, Palestinian civilians, including women and children, were prone to military treatment by Israel, yet, no global power prevented Israel from violating Geneva conventions. As of July 2024, around ten thousand Palestinians, including minors and women, were in Israeli detention, most of them were without any legal charge. (Hussain, A Nation). Since 1967, Israel arrested one million Palestinians, that means one in every five Palestinians has been in Israeli Prison. Yet, neither the UN nor western countries took any effective measures to protect the human rights of Palestinians. In contrast, the USA has used its veto power in the UN, at least fifty times, to protect Israel from being reprimanded for her crime against humanity. If the resolution is against countries like Iran, Syria, Iraq or Libya, there will not be any veto either from the US or from any western power.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) 2025 report is 'concerned' about countries, including India, about atrocities against Muslims and religious freedom. But that same US has no 'concerns' about the sharp increase of Islamophobic incidents in the USA. According to Council on American-Islamic Relations, there are more than eight thousand complaints lodged with American authorities, and the trend shows an average 7.5% increase. (Fatal 6). Similarly, such reports have no concern about the more than 17000 children killed in Gaza by Israel. (Annual Report). It is because of the pre-supposition that Muslims

are threat to the western society and values, and they have criminal behaviour, and physical atrocities towards such people are found required, natural and even necessary.

According to the UNO, more than 70% of Palestini education institutions were completely destroyed by Israel during 2023 -2025 period. (Report 2) But, there were no materialised actions from any of the global power, who acts as the 'saviours' of human rights. Like Agamben pointed, once a sect is 'homo sacer', then they have no human rights, instead annihilation of such sects is what required, and that is what is happening in Palestine.

During 2024-25, Israel bombing campaign resulted in the mass killings of women and children and destructions of schools, hospitals, and even temporary shelters. More than two hundred journalists and hundreds of health workers lost life either by Israeli shootings or bombing. But, these atrocities never caused any outcry in western media or among western rights groups, who are otherwise very concerned about human rights.

3) Policies of animosity towards countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen:

When the USA invaded Afghanistan in 2001, toppling the elected government, the entire western countries either supported the US or kept neutrality. It never occurred to them that it is a violation of the UN charter to invade a country, in the name of a handful of terrorists, whom the govt. never supported officially. It never occurred to the western countries that the UN article no.2(4) protects

Afghanistan from being invaded. At the same time, the same Article was used against Saddam Hussain, when he invaded Kuwait. The UN resolution 660,661 and 662 were to protect Kuwait and use military force against Iraq. We can see two different countries are invaded by foreign nations, and contradictory approaches from the global powers. Yemen and Syria display another paradoxical scenario. In Syria, all western powers extent support, including military intervention, to Anti Assad popular forces, because the people are fighting against an autocratic regime of suppression, and helping such people is the duty of the democratic west. Whereas, in Yemen, the same western powers are with the Yemeni government, and they are against Ansar Allah, the popular movement who is holding substantial portion of the country, and people under their control, by virtue of being the most popular group in the country. Iran is the only Middle East country, excluding Israel, that conducts transparent election at regular intervals without any fail. But, most of the western powers consider Iran as a theocratic country and a suppressive regime that needs to be toppled, just like the US backed coup in 1953. Whereas, all the Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, UAE have autocratic and non-democratic governments, yet, the western powers support them, and they have no worries about democracy and human rights in those countries. Egypt presents an interesting episode in this regard. When Hosni Mubarak has been in power from 1981 to 2011, using the pretext of single candidate referendum, all western powers were supporting his non democratic government. After the popular uprising, called Egyptian revolution 2011, the country witnessed the democratic election, for the first time in the history of the country, and Mohamed Morsi was elected the President. But, just after a year, the elected president was dethroned, and

the military leader, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took the power. The western powers did not have any worry, when an elected govt. was dethroned by the military.

According to Human Rights Watch, North Korea is one of the most repressive countries even in 2025. But no western or European country did anything to 'save' the people of Korea, like they do in the Middle East. It might be either because Koreans are not 'homo sacer' or interference in Korea does not guarantee any financial benefits for the global powers.

4) **Anti Muslim laws:**

Post 9/11 has witnessed many countries passed special laws to target Muslims in the respective countries, and it seems that "Islamophobia is being institutionalized and legalized more and more." (Ali). For example, the 2004 French Law on Secularity and Conspicuous Religious Symbols, banned Islamic headscarves and other religious symbols in public schools, and this was specifically aimed at Muslim girls, who were seen, not fully integrated into French secular values. Burqa Ban of 2010 in France, enforced as part of ensuring public safety, also was aimed at only Muslim women, because only Muslim women cover their face as a part of keeping their modesty in public. France started shutting down mosques, accusing them of connection to radical organizations. Again, Separatism Law of 2021 was to enforce more state control on Muslim organizations. Chinese suppression of Uyghur Muslim minority was justified in the light of post 9/11 scenario and 'war on terror', and, over a million Uyghurs were detained in 'vocational training centres', and they were prone to forced sterilization, forced assimilation by banning of Islamic names, halal food, fasting during Ramadan, and surveillance of mosques. 2017 De-

Extremification Laws of China, outlawed long beards and veils. Islamgesetz (Islam Law Amendment, 2015) of Australia banned foreign funding, only for Muslim organizations. In Germany, many mosques and Muslim organizations were closed. In the UK, Prevent Strategy of 2006 made medical practitioners and educators legally to report signs of ‘radicalization’, and the result was that many, including children, targeted even for minor religious expressions. Russian federation banned many Islamic books as ‘extremist’. In 2005 Denmark banned headscarves for business and legal professionals. In short, these cases reveal a pattern: across the Globe, anti-Muslim laws, often manifest as face-covering bans, religious uniform restrictions, and integrationist policies that disproportionately affect Muslims.

All these laws and restrictions were meant for the citizens of those countries or people who live in the respective countries. So, there is difficulty to connect them directly to the geopolitical strategies. But, at a closer look, we can find that these laws are enforced in the name of ‘safety’, ‘internal security’, ‘protecting secular values, or ‘to kurb external threats’. These discriminatory laws are stretched towards the Muslims who hail from Muslim majority countries, and, hence they are also related to geopolitics.

Degree of Islamophobia

Though a comparison and contrast among different writers was not the focus of this research, the grouping of eight novels was done under the supposition that there might be differences in the approach of Western and non- Western people towards Muslims, and there could be differences among the Westerners themselves between male and female writers. It is interesting to see that the textual analysis of

all these novels revealed that all of them are rich in Islamophobia but the degree of Islamophobia expressed in all these writers are not same. Both non-western authors Ausma Zehanat Khan and Sujata Massey have presented characters like Hassan Ashkouri, Mohsin Dar, Omar Farid, Faisal Mukri, etc. who are having undesirable qualities like misogyny, sexual perversion, and being anti-modern, but none of them, even the mastermind behind the terror plot, Ashkouri, is a threat to the world. The degree of Islamophobia is mild.

Western female writers Kate Jessica Raphael and Zoe Ferraris lavishly presented Islamophobic characters and incidents. Their characters like Rania, Chloe, Jaber Haddad, the Shrawi family, and references to Palestinian and Saudi societies, gave them ample opportunities to authenticate many long-lasting negative images. Their presentation is more severe and higher in degree than the presentations of non-western writers.

Of all these, western male writers (Matt Rees and Robert Ferrigno) are fiercer in creating an image of highly dangerous Muslim, by creating characters like the Old One, Red Beard, General Kidd, Omar Yussef, Khamis Zeydan, Hussein Tamari, Jihad Awdeh, Prof. Adnan Maki, Yasser Salah, etc. These characters are embodiments of undesirable qualities, and some of them are arch villains and threat to the peaceful world.

Recommendations and scope for further research are discussed in chapter 6, under the title 'Recommendations'.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this research wishes to present the following recommendations and scope for further research.

1. Sensitisation about othering various less powerful and less fortunate segments of society, in literary portrayals, should be part of curriculum both at Secondary and Tertiary levels.
2. Policy makers should show more transparency and clarity in geopolitical strategies, and false notions about certain people should not manipulate the policies towards such people or countries of such people.
3. Since this research focussed only in select eight novels, the spectrum of this study is very limited. Hence, further research about Islamophobia present in more popular artforms like movies and social media posts, etc., and the influence of mass media in perpetuating Islamophobia, might broaden the spectrum of this study.
4. Since geopolitics and geopolitical strategies are not much familiar area for literature researcher, an Inter disciplinary approach, incorporating experts from the field might help to get more insights into intricacies of geopolitical strategies and the interplay of Islamophobia and geopolitical strategies.
5. Since the manifestation and creation of Islamophobia might not have a monolithic face, there should further research in literature of different regions and different languages.

6. Islamophobia is understood to have a long root. So the contribution of Crusades and European-Christian colonialism need to be explored deeper. Further enquiry can be done into the historical roots of Islamophobia.

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Appendix 1

Synopsis of the Thesis

Islamophobia and the Geopolitical Strategies: An Analysis of Select Post 9/11 Novels

Key words: Islamophobia, Geopolitics, Othering of Muslims, Muslim Representation, Post 9/11 literature, Orientalism,

Overview and Aim of the Study

This thesis investigates the dynamic relationship between Islamophobia, as reflected in post-9/11 detective fiction, and geopolitical strategies. Through the analysis of eight novels by diverse authors—Western and non-Western alike—it explores how Islamophobic narratives are embedded in fiction, and how these narratives influence or reflect global political attitudes and policies toward Muslim communities.

The study utilizes postcolonial theory, Orientalism, Critical Race Studies, and Discourse Analysis, etc. to scrutinize how literature functions, not merely as a cultural product but as a strategic tool capable of reinforcing ideologies. It draws upon geopolitical theories by Derek Gregory, Halford Mackinder, Giorgio Agamben, and others to interpret how the selected fiction aligns with or enables Western hegemonic goals in global politics.

The central hypothesis of this research proposes a reciprocal relationship between Islamophobia, popular literature, and geopolitics, wherein overt and covert

Islamophobic representations in genres such as detective fiction shape public and policy-level perceptions of Muslim communities and nations, and these perceptions, in turn, inform geopolitical strategies that further reinforce Islamophobic narratives in literary and cultural production. Thus, fiction becomes a medium where stereotypes are normalized, fears are cultivated, and interventionist agenda are justified.

Chapter 1: Introduction – Islamophobia, Geopolitics, and the Ideology of Imagination

The first chapter lays the theoretical and historical foundation of the study. It explores the deep roots of Islamophobia—from medieval polemics to colonial encounters—and its persistence in modern media and literature. The post 9/11 context is emphasized as a pivotal moment in which Islamophobia became institutionalized, through security policies, legal frameworks, and cultural narratives, particularly in the West.

The chapter also introduces the geopolitical lens, citing thinkers like Rudolf Kjellén, Hooshang Amirahmadi, et.al. to discuss the strategic significance of geography in political power plays. It argues that Islamophobic portrayals in literature are not coincidental but function as part of a larger ideological ecosystem that supports interventions in Muslim majority regions.

Detective fiction, often overlooked in scholarly discussions of geopolitics, is identified as a powerful genre for carrying Islamophobic discourse. These novels, under the guise of entertainment and suspense, construct stereotypes that feed into

national anxieties and foreign policy narratives. Theoretical frameworks from Edward Said's Orientalism, Foucault's discourse theory, and postcolonial criticism guided the analysis throughout.

Chapter 2: Fiction as (Mis)Representation – Islamophobia in White Women's Narratives

This chapter critically analyses three novels—Kate Jessica Raphael's *Murder Under the Bridge* and *Murder Under the Fig Tree*, and Zoë Ferraris's *Finding Nouf*—to examine how white female authors construct Islamophobic narratives within a liberal, seemingly sympathetic framework.

While these works present nuanced Muslim characters and settings, they nonetheless perpetuate four recurrent tropes:

1. Normalizing Israel and minimizing its occupation;
2. Romanticizing Palestinian life while omitting real hardship;
3. Blaming Muslims' suffering on their own culture, particularly patriarchal norms;
4. Promoting Westernization as the only path to salvation.

Palestinian women like Rania and Saudi detective like Nayir are portrayed as capable, only when they adopt Western values. Meanwhile, Israeli characters—even if flawed—are presented with empathy or redemption arcs. These narratives sanitize Israeli aggression and depict Muslim societies as inherently dysfunctional, thus subtly supporting Western geopolitical interests.

Chapter 3: Fictioning Fear- Islamophobia and the Geopolitics of Anxiety in White Male Literature

This chapter turns to the works of Matt Beynon Rees (*The Collaborator of Bethlehem, A Grave in Gaza*) and Robert Ferrigno (*Prayers for the Assassin*), focusing on how white male authors construct Muslims as violent, irrational, and incapable of self-governance.

Rees's depiction of Palestine centres on internal decay, corruption, and factionalism, entirely sidestepping the reality of Israeli occupation. His characters enjoy relative affluence, implying that Palestinian suffering is exaggerated or self-inflicted. Ferrigno imagines a dystopian America, ruled by Islamic law, portraying Muslims as totalitarian threats, and suggesting that only secular, Western values offer hope.

These works draw stark binaries: pro-Western Muslims are rational and redeemable, while devout or culturally rooted Muslims are dangerous. This binary echoes post 9/11 neoconservative discourse, and reinforces the notion that Islam must be reformed—or subdued—to coexist with the modern world. In effect, these novels contribute to ideological world-making, providing a cultural rationale for real-world policies such as wars, occupations, and surveillance campaigns.

Chapter 4: Mis-reflected Reality-An Analysis of Islamophobic Contents in Khan and Massey

The fourth chapter compliments the narrative by examining two non-Western authors—Ausma Zehanat Khan (*The Language of Secrets*) and Sujata

Massey (*The Widows of Malabar Hill*). While both authors are of South Asian descent and may appear to offer insider perspectives, their novels also reproduce Islamophobic stereotypes.

Muslim men are depicted as patriarchal, corrupt, or emotionally unstable, while Muslim societies are shown as incapable of reform without external (Western) intervention. In Massey's work, a Western-educated woman heroically navigates an oppressive Muslim household, reinforcing colonial "civilizing" tropes. Khan's novel ties Muslim characters to terrorism, subtly justifying Canadian security policies like Bill C-51.

Though these authors may not overtly intend to serve geopolitical agendas, their narratives still validate surveillance, intervention, and Western superiority. By embedding real-life events into their plots, they blur the line between fiction and history, allowing Islamophobic messages to seep into popular consciousness under the guise of literary realism.

Chapter 5: Conclusion – Entangled Discourses- The Interplay between Islamophobic Representations and Geopolitical Strategies

The final chapter synthesizes the literary analyses and reiterates the thesis' central argument: Islamophobia in literature and geopolitical strategy are not isolated phenomena, but interdependent forces. Fiction, especially detective fiction, is not a neutral space; it operates as a soft power, shaping how societies perceive the "Other" and legitimizing policy decisions.

Drawing on theorists like Foucault and Bakhtin, the chapter argues that fiction contributes to the construction of political reality. Novels offer more than entertainment—they provide ideological templates that influence public opinion and, indirectly, policy formation.

All the novels analysed—whether by white women, white men, or writers of colour—collectively present Muslims as undesirable, incapable, and threatening. These portrayals help sustain Orientalist binaries and geopolitical binaries of the civilized West vs. the backward Muslim world.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

The study acknowledges that literature alone cannot account for global Islamophobia or interventionist policies. However, it stresses that literature participates in a broader ideological ecosystem. Stories shape minds, and minds shape policies.

To address this, the thesis recommends:

- Interdisciplinary research bridging literature, politics, and media studies.
- Focused critique of visual media, which often amplifies Islamophobia more directly.
- Critical pedagogy that teaches readers to question the ideological undertones in fiction.

By exposing how seemingly apolitical genres like detective fiction can reproduce and normalize Islamophobic worldviews, the thesis calls for ethical

storytelling and more conscious literary engagement. Breaking the cycle of prejudice requires awareness, critique, and the recognition that fiction is never just fiction—it is a form of power.

Appendix 2

പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ സംക്ഷിപ്താവലോകനം

ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയും ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കൽ തന്ത്രങ്ങളും: തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത പോസ്റ്റ് 9/11 നോവലുകളുടെ വിശകലനം

മുഖ്യവാക്കുകൾ: ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയ, ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്സ്, മുസ്ലിം 'അദർ'നിർമ്മാണം, മുസ്ലിം പ്രതിനിധാനം, പോസ്റ്റ് 9/11 സാഹിത്യം, ഓറിയന്റലിസം

പഠനത്തിന്റെ അവലോകനവും ലക്ഷ്യവും

ഈ ഗവേഷണം തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ട പോസ്റ്റ് 9/11 കാലഘട്ടത്തിലെ ഡിറ്റക്റ്റീവ് ഫിക്ഷനുകളിൽ പ്രതിഫലിക്കുന്ന ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയും ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കൽ തന്ത്രങ്ങളും തമ്മിലുള്ള സജീവബന്ധം അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു. പാശ്ചാത്യവും പാശ്ചാത്യേതരവുമായ എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ എട്ട് നോവലുകളുടെ വിശകലനത്തിലൂടെ, ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിക് നാരേറ്റീവുകൾ സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ എങ്ങനെ പതിഞ്ഞുകിടക്കുന്നു എന്നും, അവ മുസ്ലിം സമൂഹങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ആഗോള രാഷ്ട്രീയ സമീപനങ്ങളെയും നയങ്ങളെയും എങ്ങനെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുകയോ പ്രതിഫലിപ്പിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്നും പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ പഠനം പോസ്റ്റ്കോളോണിയൽ സിദ്ധാന്തം, ഓറിയന്റലിസം, Critical Race Studies, Discourse Analysis എന്നിവ ഉപയോഗിച്ച് സാഹിത്യം

ഒരു സാംസ്കാരിക ഉൽപ്പന്നം മാത്രമല്ല, ആശയധാരകളെ
കുതിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒരു തന്ത്രപരമായ ഉപകരണവുമാണെന്ന്
വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു. Derek Gregory, Halford Mackinder, Giorgio Agamben
തുടങ്ങിയവരുടെ ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കൽ സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങൾ
ഉപയോഗിച്ച് തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഫിക്ഷനുകൾ എങ്ങനെ
പാശ്ചാത്യ ആധിപത്യ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങളുമായി
പൊരുത്തപ്പെടുന്നു എന്നും പഠനം വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ മുഖ്യ അനുമാനം ഇതാണ്: Islamophobia,
ജനപ്രിയ സാഹിത്യം, geopolitical strategies എന്നിവ തമ്മിൽ
പരസ്പര ആശ്രിതമായ ഒരു ബന്ധം നിലനിൽക്കുന്നു. ഡിറ്റക്റ്റീവ്
ഫിക്ഷൻ പോലുള്ള ജനപ്രിയ സാഹിത്യ ശൈലികളിൽ
പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെടുന്ന തുറന്നതും മറഞ്ഞതുമായ Islamophobic
അവതരണങ്ങൾ, മുസ്ലിം സമൂഹങ്ങളെയും രാജ്യങ്ങളെയും
കുറിച്ചുള്ള പൊതുജന ധാരണകളെയും നയനിർമ്മാണ
തലത്തിലുള്ള കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളെയും രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. ഇങ്ങനെ
രൂപപ്പെട്ട ധാരണകൾ പിന്നീട് geopolitical തന്ത്രങ്ങളെ
സ്വാധീനിക്കുകയും, അവ വീണ്ടും സാഹിത്യത്തിലും
സാംസ്കാരിക നിർമ്മിതികളിലും Islamophobic വിവരണങ്ങൾ
ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനും വഴിയൊരുക്കുന്നു. അതിനാൽ,
ഫിക്ഷൻ സ്റ്റീരിയോടൈപ്പുകൾ സാധാരണവൽക്കരിക്കുകയും,
ഭീതികൾ വളർത്തുകയും, ഇടപെടൽ സ്വഭാവമുള്ള രാഷ്ട്രീയ
അജണ്ടകൾക്ക് ന്യായീകരണം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു
പ്രധാന മാധ്യമമായി സാഹിത്യത്തെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു.

**അധ്യായം 1: ആമുഖം - ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയ, ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്സ്,
ഭാവനയുടെ ആശയധാര**

ആദ്യ അധ്യായം ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ സിദ്ധാന്തപരവും ചരിത്രപരവുമായ അടിത്തറ സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നു. മധ്യകാല മതവാദങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് കോളനിയൽ അനുഭവങ്ങളിലേക്കും ആധുനിക മാധ്യമങ്ങളിലേക്കും സാഹിത്യത്തിലേക്കും വ്യാപിച്ചുകിടക്കുന്ന ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയുടെ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള വേരുകളാണ് ഇവിടെ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നത്. 9/11 സംഭവത്തിന് ശേഷമുള്ള കാലഘട്ടം, സുരക്ഷാനയങ്ങൾ, നിയമപരമായ ഘടനകൾ, സാംസ്കാരിക നാരേറ്റീവുകൾ എന്നിവയിലൂടെ— പ്രത്യേകിച്ച് പാശ്ചാത്യ ലോകത്ത്—ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയ സ്ഥാപനവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ഒരു നിർണായക ഘട്ടമായി വിലയിരുത്തപ്പെടുന്നു.

Rudolf Kjellén, Hooshang Amirahmadi തുടങ്ങിയ ചിന്തകരെ ഉദ്ധരിച്ച്, രാഷ്ട്രീയ അധികാരത്തിൽ ഭൂമിശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ തന്ത്രപരമായ പ്രാധാന്യവും അധ്യായം വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു. സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിക് ചിത്രീകരണങ്ങൾ യാദൃശ്ചികമല്ല; മുസ്ലിം ഭൂരിപക്ഷ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലെ ഇടപെടലുകൾക്ക് പിന്തുണ നൽകുന്ന വലിയ ആശയധാരാ ഘടകത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാണെന്ന് അധ്യായം വാദിക്കുന്നു.

ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പഠനങ്ങളിൽ സാധാരണ അവഗണിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ഡിറ്റക്റ്റീവ് ഫിക്ഷൻ, ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിക് ഡിസ്കോഴ്സ് പ്രചരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ശക്തമായ genre ആയി തിരിച്ചറിയപ്പെടുന്നു. വിനോദത്തിന്റെയും സസ്പെൻസിന്റെയും മറവിൽ, ഈ നോവലുകൾ ദേശീയ

ആശങ്കകളെയും വിദേശനയ നാരോറ്റീവുകളെയും പോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്ന stereotype കൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. Edward Said ന്റെ Orientalism, Michel Foucault യുടെ discourse theory, postcolonial criticism എന്നിവയാണ് വിശകലനത്തിന് മാർഗ്ഗനിർദ്ദേശം നൽകുന്നത്.

അധ്യായം 2: ഫിക്ഷൻ എന്ന (തൊഴയ) പ്രതിനിധാനം - വൈറ്റ് സ്ത്രീകളുടെ നാരോറ്റീവുകളിലെ ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയ

ഈ അധ്യായം Kate Jessica Raphael ന്റെ *Murder Under the Bridge*, *Murder Under the Fig Tree* എന്നിവയും, Zoë Ferraris ന്റെ *Finding Nouf* എന്ന നോവലും വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ലിബറൽ എന്നും സഹാനുഭൂതിപരമെന്നുമുള്ള ചട്ടക്കൂടിനുള്ളിൽ എങ്ങനെ Islamophobic വിവരണങ്ങൾ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നു എന്നതാണ് ഇവിടെ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നത്.

ഈ കൃതികളിൽ ആവർത്തിച്ചു കാണപ്പെടുന്ന നാല് പ്രധാന ട്രോപ്പുകൾ:

1. ഇസ്രായേലിനെ സാധാരണവൽക്കരിക്കുകയും അധിനിവേശത്തെ ചെറുതാക്കി കാണിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യൽ
2. പാലസ്തീൻ ജീവിതത്തെ രോമാന്റിസൈസ് ചെയ്യുകയും യഥാർത്ഥ ദുരിതങ്ങൾ മറച്ചുവെക്കുകയും ചെയ്യൽ
3. മുസ്ലിംകളുടെ ദുരിതങ്ങൾക്ക് അവരുടെ സംസ്കാരത്താണ്, പ്രത്യേകിച്ച് പിതൃസത്തയെ, കുറ്റപ്പെടുത്തൽ
4. രക്ഷയ്ക്കുള്ള ഏക മാർഗ്ഗമായി പാശ്ചാത്യവൽക്കരണം അവതരിപ്പിക്കൽ

പാലസ്തീൻ സ്ത്രീയായ റാനിയയും സൗദി ഡിറ്റക്റ്റീവ് നയിറും പാശ്ചാത്യ മൂല്യങ്ങൾ സ്വീകരിക്കുമ്പോഴേ കഴിവുള്ളവരായി ചിത്രീകരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. മറുവശത്ത്, ഇസ്രായേലി കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ ദോഷങ്ങളുണ്ടെങ്കിലും സഹാനുഭൂതിയോടെയും മോചന സാധ്യതയോടെയും അവതരിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഇതുവഴി ഇസ്രായേലി അതിക്രമങ്ങൾ ശുദ്ധീകരിക്കപ്പെടുകയും, മുസ്ലിം സമൂഹങ്ങൾ സ്വഭാവതലത്തിൽ തന്നെ പരാജയപ്പെട്ടവയെന്ന നിലയിൽ ചിത്രീകരിക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

അധ്യായം 3: ഭീതിയുടെ ഫിക്ഷനെസേഷൻ - വൈറ്റ് പുരുഷ സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയും ആശങ്കയുടെ ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കും

ഈ അധ്യായം Matt Beynon Rees (*The Collaborator of Bethlehem, A Grave in Gaza*) യും Robert Ferrigno (*Prayers for the Assassin*) യും രചിച്ച കൃതികൾ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഇവിടെ മുസ്ലിംകൾ അക്രമാസക്തരും യുക്തിരഹിതരുമായും സ്വയം ഭരണത്തിനർഹതയില്ലാത്തവരായും ചിത്രീകരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു.

Rees പാലസ്തീനെ അഴിമതിയും ആഭ്യന്തര വിഘടനവും നിറഞ്ഞ പ്രദേശമായി കാണിക്കുന്നു; ഇസ്രായേലി അധിനിവേശത്തിന്റെ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം പൂർണ്ണമായും അവഗണിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഫെറിഗ്നോ ഒരു ഇസ്ലാമിക നിയമം ഭരിക്കുന്ന ഡിസ്റ്റോപ്യൻ അമേരിക്കയെ

സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു, മുസ്ലിംകളെ സമ്പൂർണ്ണാധിപത്യ ഭീഷണിയായി ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നു.

പാശ്ചാത്യ അനുകൂല മുസ്ലിംകൾ “ബുദ്ധിമാന്മാരും രക്ഷിക്കാവുന്നവരും” ആകുമ്പോൾ, മതപരമായി ഉറച്ച മുസ്ലിംകൾ അപകടകാരികളായി മാറുന്നു. ഈ ബൈനറി പോസ്റ്റ് 9/11 neoconservative discourse നെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുകയും യുദ്ധം, അധിനിവേശം, നിരീക്ഷണം തുടങ്ങിയ നയങ്ങൾക്ക് സാംസ്കാരിക ന്യായീകരണം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

അധ്യായം 4: തെറ്റായി പ്രതിഫലിച്ച യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം – Khan, Massey കൃതികളിലെ Islamophobic ഉള്ളടക്കങ്ങൾ

ഈ അധ്യായം Ausma Zehanat Khan (*The Language of Secrets*)യും Sujata Massey (*The Widows of Malabar Hill*) എന്നീ എഴുത്തുകാരെ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. ദക്ഷിണേഷ്യൻ പശ്ചാത്തലമുള്ള എഴുത്തുകാരായിട്ടും, ഇവരുടെ കൃതികൾ ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിക് stereotype കൾ പുനരാവർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

മുസ്ലിം പുരുഷന്മാർ പിതൃസത്താധിപതികളായും അഴിമതിയുള്ളവരായും മാനസികമായി അസ്ഥിരരായും ചിത്രീകരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. മുസ്ലിം സമൂഹങ്ങൾ പാശ്ചാത്യ ഇടപെടലില്ലാതെ പരിഷ്കരിക്കാനാവാത്തവയെന്ന നിലയിലാണ് അവതരിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്. ഖാൻറെ നോവൽ മുസ്ലിംകളെ ഭീകരവാദവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തി, കാനഡയിലെ Bill C-51 പോലുള്ള സുരക്ഷാനയങ്ങളെ ന്യായീകരിക്കുന്നു.

അധ്യായം 5: Conclusion – ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിക് പ്രതിനിധാനങ്ങളും ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കൽ തന്ത്രങ്ങളും തമ്മിലുള്ള പരസ്പരബന്ധം

ഈ അധ്യായം പഠനത്തിന്റെ മുഖ്യ വാദം വീണ്ടും ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നു: സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയും ജിയോപൊളിറ്റിക്കൽ തന്ത്രങ്ങളും പരസ്പരം ആശ്രയിച്ചുള്ള ശക്തികളാണ്. ഡിറ്റക്റ്റീവ് ഫിക്ഷൻ ഒരു നിഷ്കുഷ ഇടമല്ല; അത് “അദർ”നെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള സാമൂഹിക ധാരണകളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒരു സോഫ്റ്റ് പവർ ആയി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

ഘൂഷോയും ബക്തിനും പോലുള്ള സിദ്ധാന്തകാരന്മാരെ ആശ്രയിച്ച്, ഫിക്ഷൻ രാഷ്ട്രീയ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിൽ പങ്കാളിയാണെന്ന് അധ്യായം വാദിക്കുന്നു.

അധ്യായം 6: ശുപാർശകൾ

സാഹിത്യം മാത്രം ആഗോള ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയയ്ക്ക് കാരണമല്ലെങ്കിലും, അത് വലിയ ആശയധാരാ സംവിധാനത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാണെന്ന് പഠനം ഊന്നിപ്പറയുന്നു. അതിനാൽ താഴെപ്പറയുന്ന ശുപാർശകൾ മുന്നോട്ടുവെക്കുന്നു:

- * സാഹിത്യം, രാഷ്ട്രീയം, മാധ്യമപഠനം എന്നിവ ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന അന്തർവിഭാഗീയ ഗവേഷണം
- * ഇസ്ലാമോഫോബിയ ശക്തമായി പുനരുത്പാദിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ദൃശ്യ മാധ്യമങ്ങളിലേക്കുള്ള വിമർശന പഠനം

* സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ ആശയധാരകളെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യാൻ
പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വിമർശനാത്മക പാഠപദ്ധതി

ഫിക്ഷൻ വെറും ഫിക്ഷൻ മാത്രമല്ല—അത് അധികാരത്തിന്റെ
ഒരു രൂപമാണ് എന്ന തിരിച്ചറിവിലേക്കാണ് ഈ പഠനം നമ്മെ
നയിക്കുന്നത്.