

**Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama, A Study in  
Wajahat Ali's "The Domestic Crusaders"**

**الخوف من الإسلام : الأعلام ضد الأدب ، دراسة في مسرحية وجاهات علي  
"الصليبيون المحليون"**

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**Abstract**

In the new world, man comes to be alienated as a result to his ethnic and beliefs. Beliefs are varied due to the distinctions in the place or the way of living. Media comes to be one of the most important tools that explain and shape these beliefs and conceptions to the public opinion in any means that may match its goal and tendency. Absolute truth in media is a big lie. Consequently, honor and ethics stand naked on the shore of legitimacy. By directing the lights on the issues of certainty and reliability, it comes to be clear that media plays a great role in presenting the image of Islam to the public in a way that matches its ends. Accordingly, the black clouds still hover above the heads of Muslims all around the world.

Nevertheless, literature stands on the next shore to media by having different views and aims. Some writers like John Updike in his best selling novel Terrorist which have received positive reviews and Wajahat Ali in his two-acts play The Domestic Crusaders among other American fiction writers have responded to the 11 September attacks in a different conduct to what have been presented by media. These writers are trying their best to correct the disfigured image of Islam throughout their works. Hence, this study tries to illustrate the role of media in presenting the flawed image of Islam along with the literature that served as a counterpart to this progress of action in which Islam is the core of debate.

Wajahat Ali's play The Domestic Crusaders is the centre of discussion in this paper which is divided into two sections. The first section is establishing clearly the ideas that stand behind the term

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (102)**

"Islamophobia" as well as the role of media. The second section presents the touches of Islamophobia and the unsupportive role of media in Ali's play. The conclusion sums up the main findings.

Key Words: Islamophobia , Media , The 11 September Attacks , American Muslims , Misconception of Islam , Politics , Wajahat Ali , The Domestic Crusaders.

### **Section One**

#### **1.1. The Historical Development of Islamophobia**

In fact, the term "Phobia" can be defined as being "a mental or psychological disease" in which it comes to be widely known in the present time because of, among other fields, the political cataclysm. More specifically, this state of mind arouses the sense of fear for example the fear from heights or sea. The suffix "phobe" is denoting a person who suffers from a specific fear or aversion (Oxford Dictionary, 2000: 669). In light of this definition, the term "Islamophobia" comes to be identified as the fear from Islam and Muslims so that the hostility toward Islam and Muslims is a normal reaction to that fear. For this reason, Islamophobia affects all the aspects of the Muslims' lives.

Originally, the first known use of the term is the French word *islamophobie* which appeared in a book entitled *La politique musulmane dans l'Afrique Occidentale Française* by Alain Quellien, published in Paris in 1910 (Ezzerhouni, 2010 cited in Allan, 2010). The context was a criticism of the ways in which French colonial administrators viewed the cultures of the countries now known as Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The word then appeared in reviews of Quellien's book in academic journals, and in a biography of Mohammed by Alphonse Etienne Dinet (1861–1929), a French painter converted to Islam who lived for most of his adult life in southern Algeria. His book was completed in 1916 and when published two years later was dedicated to the memory of Muslim soldiers in the French army who had died in the First World War. In an English version of this book, the word *islamophobie* was translated as "feelings inimical to Islam", not as Islamophobia. (Vakil, 2008).

In English, this word appeared firstly in an article by Edward Said in 1985, where he referred in passing to the association between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and he criticized the writers who do not recognize that "hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand" with Anti-Semitism and "has stemmed

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (103)**

from the same source and been nourished at the same stream" (Said, 1985: 8-9). The next mention to this word was in the American journal *Insight* on 4 February 1991, to put the finger on the hostility of the government of the Soviet Union towards its own Muslim citizens. (The Runnymede Trust Report, 1997).

The word has increasingly been used since it comes to be known in the deliberations and publications of international organizations like: "The United Nations", "The Council of Europe", "The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights" and "The Organization of the Islamic Conference" (OIC). Today, the word Islamophobia is widely used in the UK by media and people as well (Malik, 2005). As a matter of fact, the word was more common word in Europe than in the United States. In 2007, it was used hundreds of times in the *Guardian* but only twenty-six occasions in the *New York Times* (Cesari, 2006). Nowadays, however, the term appears to be at least as common in the United States as in Britain, and it can readily be seen from a Google search. Gradually, 'Islamophobia' provides and draws the attention to a "normalized prejudice and unjustified discrimination." Undoubtedly this term will elicit the same unease and even backlash among some of those whose notion of normal comes to be different. (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008: 11)

The term Islamophobia spreads widely all over the world due to the use of media and the new tendency of the world toward Middle East. Nevertheless, the term "Islamophobia" has its negative aspects and senses towards Islam in a general sense. The term also may be expressed within different expressions like: "Anti-Muslim Racism", "Intolerance Against Muslims", "Anti-Muslim Prejudice", "Anti- Muslim Bigotry", "Hatred of Muslims", "Anti-Islamism", "Anti-Muslimism", "Muslimophobia", "Demonization of Islam" or "Demonization of Muslims" (Robin Richardson, 2012: 1). Using any expression from these terms definitely reflects the understanding and views of the user to the case in question as well as it may involve the drives that affect the user to choose this or that expression. Moreover, the diversity of the terms probably lead to discrimination in manifestations of the problem, for instance the expression "Anti-Muslim Racism" is denoting the hatred crimes or to the rudeness and verbal abuses in the community, while the term "Islamophobia" denotes discourse and mindsets in the media (Ibid.: 4). An extensive explanation to the term Islamophobia can be understood as being a reference to behaviors which convey anxiety, panic, or

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (104)**

opposition headed for Muslims in particular. The ecosystem of Islamophobia is, in fact, connected directly and essentially to different causes and drivers which are innate reflection of the nature of western societies and not necessarily the nature of Islam (Ibid.: 7).

In the due course of using this term in the United Kingdom, about 1980s and early 1990s, the term comes to be identified with the refusal of discrimination against the Muslims who are living in the West (Chris Allen, 2006: 1). In 1997, Tariq Modood, discussed the denotations of this term, Islamophobia, as being "misleading" in the sense that it is "more a form of racism than a form of religious intolerance ... in recognition of the fact that the target group, the Muslims, are identified in terms of their non-European descent, in terms of their not being white, and in terms of their perceived culture" (Modood 1997 b, quoted in Chris Allen, 2006: 2). But, Luostarinen disagreed with Tariq Modood in which he refuses the idea of Islamophobia as being "a form of religious intolerance". He goes further in discussing the connotations of this term to the extent of being an "enemy image" that is involved the option of brutality and even destruction. For Luostarinen, it is a matter of existence. (Luostarinen 1989 cited in Chris Allen, 2006: 20). Accordingly, Islamophobia stands for attitudes of brutality towards Islam and Muslim as being an enemy or a threat to the survival of the west.

Modood argues that Anti-Muslim Racism is similar to Anti-Semitism, Sectarianism and Factionalism in the sense that it marks certain people due to their "affiliation" not because of their "beliefs." But, it is important to realize that affiliation is far from being in match to the belief because it is not a matter of choosing. "No one chooses to be born into a Muslim family.... Similarly, no one chooses to be born into a society where to be a Muslim creates suspicion, hostility, or failure to get the job you applied for" (Modood, 2005 b).

To put the case in the right place, a Commission for British Muslims and Islamophobia in 2007 presented the most influential report on the condition of Muslims in Britain entitled: "Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All" and sometimes called "The Runnymede Trust Report." The opening pages of this report declares that, "Islamophobic discourse, sometimes blatant but frequently coded and subtle, is part of everyday life in modern Britain," the report goes on in saying that previous two decades the hate of Islam and Muslims comes to be "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous" (quoted in Chris Allen, 2007: 6). In this

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (105)**

manner, this report serves as a good documentation to the development of Islamophobia in the west.

Practically, many cases show clearly the sense of hostility toward Islam like: attacks on mosques, attacks Islamic centers and Muslim cemeteries, the abuse and violence against Muslims in education, employment, housing, and even in the delivery of goods and services, last but not least, the lack of respect in public institutions. There are many examples of aversion and hostility that were practiced with the Muslims. The fair example to this hostility is when a group of 20 youths spoke anti-Islamic comments on a Muslim man and beaten him. Another case is when a Muslim woman and her two children were obliged to leave their house after being attacked by a stone-throwing group. The case of wearing the veil or head dress (hijab) comes to be number one in the daily bothering cases as when a Muslim-female student was the sufferer of bullying at her school in which she had her hijab pulled off continuously. The cases come to be more obvious and accompanied with violence especially after the tragedy of 9/11 in the sense that the attacks on mosques and Muslim-cemeteries won the headlines in the newspapers. In 2004, for instance, a cemetery of about 40 Muslim graves were desecrated in Charlton South East of London. (Defining Islamophobia, 2012: 1)

The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "The Runnymede Trust", has also shed the light on this issue from a different perspective in which it comes to define the people who are Islamophobic have "closed views" about Islam. Islamophobic people see Islam as a "monolithic and static religion," in the sense that it viewed as a secluded and detached culture that comes to be substandard to the west. Besides, Islamophobic people believe that Islam is a threat to Western world. Due to this misunderstanding and cloudy views of Islam, people act accordingly and involve in cruel and vicious actions or even work in "libelous advertising campaigns" against Muslims. This poor understanding comes to be "normal" in the conditions of Islamophobic people and it is supported by the media. ([www.Runnymedetrust.org](http://www.Runnymedetrust.org)).

### **1.2. Islamophobia and Media**

Unquestionably, one of the main causes to the flourishing of Islamophobia is media. From the time when the Cold War comes to an end, a new course of media comes to the lights in which the attention of media turned to be watchful on Islam as a global question. This new attention of the media comes to be as a reaction to the wide swift spread

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (106)**

of Islam in the West. But, the West still has a flawed image about Islam because of the media and the lack of a full comprehension of Islam in general. Therefore, the West by means of this lack of full comprehension of Islam and the misunderstanding of Islamic tradition has created a new enemy from this disfigured image of Islam. Muslims generally thought to be terrorists. Such types of thoughts have grown about Islam due to the media of the West because the reporters who cover the issues of Muslim have little details about Islam. Hence, the media play a unhelpful contact in this field since it tends to war of words and some people in the West receive this flawed image of Islam rapidly (Haque and Hossain, 2006: 5).

A survey has been made on the internet included about 1,360 people done by Muslim Voice UK, Queens University in Belfast and the University of Liverpool in UK shows that many Muslims lay blame on media in creating fear from Islam by giving disfigured image about their religion. The survey has revealed that 40% of Muslims blamed anti-Islamic feelings presented by the media, whereas 74% of non-Muslims blamed the 9/11 attack in arousing that type of feeling ([www.Islamophobiawatch.com](http://www.Islamophobiawatch.com)).

Moreover, in 2005, the UNESCO arranged a debate on “Islam, Media and Public Opinion” in which more than 150 participants on behalf of the academic societies had contributed. In addition, the representatives from the media had contributed in this debate. The debate shed the light on the question of the place of Islam in western society. It is clear that there was mixing between the perception and a reality related to the religion itself or to its practice. The debate ended with a call by all the participants to use more tolerant terms and have an open mind in treating the different cultures or religions placed in western society (Haque and Hossain, 2006: 20).

However, it has been observed that many newspapers and journals still address the matter in question, Islamophobia, in a way that arouses the public antagonism against Muslims and Arab sentiment. The matter comes to be methodically spreading the sentiment of anti-Muslim, anti-Arab which leads to the arousal of discrimination. Problematizing the monolithic and hegemonic views of Islam is also the result of typical media which has been focusing on the immense academic studies, organizations, and campaigns (Suad Joseph, 2013: 1).

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (107)**

Mohammed A. Siddiqi, a professor at Western Illinois University, argues that most of the terms which are used in reporting Islamic issues in major US newspapers are offensive or hurtful labels such as "fundamentalist" which based on a wrong conception of Islam. The haphazard using of expressions for denoting any fanatical Muslim comes to be unsafe soil for the western mind. Moreover, the inability to separate between the cultural practices (tribal or regional) in origin and the Islamic traditions in other countries is clearly denoting for the shallow thinking and sweeping judgments delivered by the media. The problem lies in the media's selection of terms and expressions that describe Muslims like "fundamentalist", "extremist" or "terrorist". These terms are definitely distasteful and essentially anti-Islamic. The unbiased terms are not often used in media like "revivalist" or "progressives". Haque and Hossain sum up the matter in saying that "a negative image of Islam is becoming more inherent in the Western culture from inaccurate media coverage" (Haque and Hossain, 2006: 7-9).

As Chris Allen and Jorgen Nielsen noted some years ago in their report entitled "Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001":

"Images and stereotypes [of Muslims and Islam] are now so deeply embedded and also necessary to media coverage, that Islamophobia is almost a natural process ... the role and impact of the media become increasingly worrying, where accuracy and inaccuracy become increasingly blurred and where real Muslims and their stereotypical constructs become indistinguishably one ... what is concerning is that if 'Muslim' and 'Islam' continue to be skewed in this value loaded way, then they will become increasingly synonymous with media constructed Islamophobic stereotypes" (Allen & Nielsen, 2007: 13).

In his book, *Covering Islam* (1997), Edward Said discusses the role of media in creating clouds of doubt and suspicion in the sky of Islam. He argues that Islam comes to be disturbing news for the West in the sense that many events happened recently all over the world were connected, directly or not, to Islam. Therefore,

"the media have covered Islam: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it known. But this coverage is misleadingly full, and a great deal in this

## Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (108)

energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances Islam has licensed not only patent inaccuracy, but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural, and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free floating hostility" (quoted in Haque and Hossain, 2006: 9).

A fair example on Said's argument is the reaction of the American media after the explosion of a bombing car close to the Federal Building in Oklahoma in 1995 wherein one of the reporters quoted Robert Heibel, the former FBI director of counterterrorism, who said that "bombings are the tool of Islamic fundamentalism." This sentence, in fact, urged the media to take it up purposefully in describing that every Muslim is a charged bombing tool. As a result, The Wall Street Journal published on the next day an article which includes the analysis of what had happened. The analysts discussed the increasing of the Muslim populations in other regions of America that can support or providing shelter for the extremists to do their terrorist acts. In this perspective, all the Muslims in America depicted and wrongly accused of being potentially terrorists. Many questions rise in the middle of this debate like; why the Muslims in particular suffer such type of accusation and why any group that has fanatic activities can be call Muslims ([www.Islamonline.net](http://www.Islamonline.net)).

For that reason, Said points out that the "level of anti-Islamism" in the course of media comes to be intolerable since the Muslims, and specially the Arab, come to be the target in the Hollywood movies by being exposed as villains or terrorists, and even as violent barbarians who are preoccupied only with women and money (Said, 1997). Sajid supported Said's view by asking to give more attention to the film industry which tries, deliberately or not, to demonize the Arab and Muslims by portraying them as peace-haters or chaos-lovers and in this way the worldwide viewers will have disturbed images that are full with abhorrence and bigotry in their minds (Sajid, 2005: 13). All of the images that have delivered to the "Western consumer of news" are out realistic depiction in the sense that it focus mainly on the naïve characteristics of Arabs and Muslims as being hostile and ignorant. These disfigured images of Islam conveyed throughout the different branches of media that stands as a key tool to shape the reality in whatever mould that may match its goals (Said, 1997: xlviii). Said says that

"T.V., the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into the more and more standardized



## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (109)**

moulds. As far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the mysterious Orient" (Said, 1978: 27).

In fact, to control the messages that are conveyed by the media is a matter out of hands. Sometimes a positive image can lead the speculation into negative interpretations in the sense that the image can be translated in a different mould that is out of consideration. In this case, there isn't any opportunity for the firm facts to be presented. The truth is the chief casualty in times of war. Though the attack of September 11 comes to be known as "the most documented event in history", but interpretations and investigations go varied. The shock of September 11 made the major media spectacles tried hard to understand what had been happened. Consequently, arguments and analyses controlled the TV programming for the next few days without commercial break in attempt to figure it out, but the overall plan was how to respond and what to do aftermath (Douglas Kellner, 2003: 4).

The problem is that different phrases are used in the media create a sense of opposition toward all the people on the other side of the world. The war was depicted as a war between good and evil in the sense that America was going to "eradicate evil from the world," and "to smoke out and pursue ... evil doers, those barbaric people." Bush administration was involved also in creating that sense of dejection and hostility via calling for bin Laden "dead or alive," and depicting the war as a "crusade," but he was advised later on to drop that term since it clutched with insulting historical cases that hints to former wars between Christians and Muslims (Ibid.: 5). Similarly, the Pentagon was arranging "Operation Infinite Justice," and in Bush Administration the Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said that the administration's retaliation would be "sustained and broad and effective" in which the United States going to use all its resources (Ibid.: 9).

This new mainstream and the tendency of media give enough space to the extremist zealots and fanatic persons to speak to the nation and suggest an immediate military action. The T.V. channels paved the way to start the war by creating logos like "War on America", "America Under Attack", and other provocative catchphrases which suggest that America has no other option except indulging into an open military reaction. After few days, these catchphrases were changed into "America

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (110)**

Strikes Back” and “America’s New War” as if media predicating what decision will be taken, the military choice of course. On the contrary, the few "cooler heads", who appeared briefly here or there, were out of flavor and the general mood of the nation. The drums of war were beaten day and night with no even the breaks for the commercials for three days. This state of approach was driving America into "hysteria" and putting in minds that there will be a military reaction and war in few days to come (Ibid.:10).

The radio, on the other hand, took a great part in urging and motivating the sense of patriotism through calling for war and pay back. Muslims and Arabs in general were the target of the crusade this time. The listeners to the radio would recognize the hysteria that see the third World War is on the door due to the completely panic and war party lines (Ibid.: 10). But, the irony lies in time wherein the "World Conference Against Racism" has held just a week before the 11 September attack. Hence, the media was indulged in this matter, but the change on its tone comes to be definite. Media henceforth became the source of urging the sense of hostile and enmity as if it controls the way of thinking instead of the American people who were drugged into war perhaps unwillingly (Isal, 2001).

To shed the lights on the outcomes of the reports, surveys and debates in all media outlets; it will be clear that media plays an important and effective role in the continuing "drip-feed" of Islamophobia or even giving a negative representations of Islam or Muslims as being terrorists. Thus, the role of the media is critical and dangerous in determining and picturing Islam. The 2002 EUMC report summarized it in saying that

"the media continue to play a major role in the formulation and establishment of popular perceptions in the public sphere. So when certain media were identified as representing Muslims both negatively and stereotypically ... in a situation that was volatile, a greater willingness to be responsible and accountable would have been welcomed. However, some media sectors were responsible and accountable, while others sought to remain balanced and objective, and for this; those sources should be congratulated. So whilst no evidence exists to suggest that medias are influentially

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (111)**

causal, they also cannot be completely dismissed either" (pp.52-3 quoted in Chris Allen, 2010: 19).

### **1.3. Islamophobia and Politics**

The long dark shadows of 9/11 still hover on top of the general American attitudes in politics. In the previous decade, it has been noticed that the attention has been directed on Muslims in America as a result to the 11 September attack. This attack leads the public opinion to question the American Muslims' matter. Numerous opinions argue that there were old downbeat opinions toward American Muslims since they weren't an active part in the flourishing period of America. In the due course of events, voting in the elections comes to be a critical question for the American Muslims. Therefore, many scholars began working on the "voting behavior." For instance, the American Muslims voted crushingly for George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential election, but in 2004, they voted collectively for John Kerry. Such change in the voting behavior expresses the change in their "party identification" in the general policy-expectation framework (Kerem Ozan, 2015). The Member of Parliament Sadiq Khas says "Criminal laws such as the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Anti-Terrorism Crime Security Act 2001 have helped to create a climate of fear" (quoted in Chris Allen, 2010: 4).

The most important political challenging that faces the West is the correlation between Muslims and non-Muslims. Any act to demolish this correlation may affect positively or negatively on the society and this will be shown without a doubt in different phases. Unquestionably, the results that may come to surface in such situations of rising Islamophobia are leading to increase discrimination and marginalization of Muslims. The idea of correlation is taking place in "the non-recognition of Muslim identities and concerns, ... the best Muslim for us is the Muslim we cannot see" (Ramadan, 2009).

In the due course of the events, the first phase of Islamophobia comes to an end shadowed by the clouds of mistrust, confusion and perversion as the Runnymede Report declared in 1997 that Islamophobia reached the state of being "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous". It was the 11 September attacks that started the second phase of Islamophobia which is colored this time with harrowing and traumatic sentiments of the public toward Islam. What makes the matter worse is the Bush government that gives no choice to the American people; only to be patriotic. In 2007, the same observable fact turned to be "more natural, more normal ... more dangerous than ever before" (Allen &

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (112)**

Nielsen, 2007: 8-9). Then the matter of dualism on the part of Muslims comes to surface. Ziauddin Sardar discusses the dualism in the representation of the Muslims that was clearly demonstrated after 11 September in terms of 'either or'; the Muslims either "mainstream" or "extremist" and either "moderate" or "radical". According to Sardar, Muslims come to play two roles: "either as apologetics for Islam or terrorists in the name of Islam" (quoted in Allen & Nielsen, 2007: 8).

Douglas Kellner sheds the lights on the significance of the 11 September attacks in that the symbolism of the places that have been attacked is valuable for America. The World Trade Center represents the financial power of America while the Pentagon stands for the military supremacy of America. By being attacked, it gives the message that the intention was to destroy the financial and military powers of America and this is a hard hit for the American strategy and policy in general. What is more is that the 11 September strike comes to be regarded as being the most powerful attack on the most important American facilities inside the American soil (Douglas Kellner, 2003: 1-2). Besides, the attack was a mixture of different terror styles like hijacking , destroying building and killing people as much as possible. The effect of the attacks was a complete paralysis in the American economic system in which the Wall Street as well as many stock markets were closed for many days. The fear and death that were world wide spread were experienced by the American people inside their homeland as if the terrorists were delivering the message that the death can also be brought into the American soil (Ibid.: 3-4).

### **Section Two**

#### **2.1. Wajahat Ali**

**Wajahat Ali is a Pakistani-American Muslim lawyer in the San Francisco, Bay Area, California.** He studied at the University of California, Berkeley. He worked as an associate editor for Almuslim web site. Later on, He became a part of the Muslim Student Association in which he was in charge for the community outreach. Yet, after the attacks of September 11, he comes to be very active in organizing the activities for fellow Muslims, overwhelming the fears and fighting back the rumors ("American Struggle After September 11" Islamonline.net). Ali won the honor of being "An Influential Muslim American Artist" guaranteed by the State Department and due to his prolific journalism works, he also won the appreciation of "Muslim Leader of Tomorrow". He became the addressee of Muslim Public Affairs Council's prestige

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (113)**

recognition of 2009. In 2010, he received the Otto Award for Political Theater since he was an active writer. In the present time, Ali is busy in writing a T.V. show with Dave Eggers for HBO in an attempt to shed the light on the Muslim American in California ([www.The Domestic Crusaders.org](http://www.TheDomesticCrusaders.org)).

In 2001, he joined a fiction-writing class with Ishmael Reed, the well-known poet and essayist in Berkeley. Due to his professor Reed's encouragements, Ali has some attempts in writing fiction like his first short story, "The Ramadan Blues", which was published in *Powwow* {Da Capo Press, 2009} while his second short story, entitled "The Perpoose Story", was published in the *Anthology Voices of the Asian American Experience* {Winter, 2010}. Writing short stories wasn't the final purpose for his inspiration; he turned to movies in which his first movie "Ms. Judgments" was produced for the "Link T.V. Muslim American Film Competition" ([www.The Domestic Crusaders.org](http://www.TheDomesticCrusaders.org))

The next station in which Ali's train of thoughts has stopped was the theatre since that he was much involved in successful writing. The turn to theatre was backed up by his professor Ishmael Reed who wants to have a theatrical piece that deals clearly with internal lives of American Muslims, especially after the attacks of 11 September. In 2004, Ali was up to the challenge of producing such type of work. He gives the realm of literature a play entitled *The Domestic Crusaders* in which he presents the new conditions of marginalized American Muslims. The play attracts the attention of the sphere due to its mode of presentation. Started with a small cycle of staged readings at the Mehran Restaurant in Newark, California, then with Oakland Public Library sponsored events, the play became widely known (*The Domestic Crusaders*, 2010: iii) The play completed its Off Broadway first performance at the Nuyorican Poets Café. In the present time, the play moved to the realm of fame and became widely spread all over the world. ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com))

The idea behind Ali's play was to get into the household and life of a common Muslim American family. Ali is able to do that because he was involved with Muslims American activities and fully aware of this subject matter. The depiction of the play to the life of a normal American Muslim family comes to be close to that in *The Long Day's Journey* in which an Irish-American family was brought under the discussion; or similar to that monitoring of a Jewish American family in *Death of a Salesman*. But, Ali's play is somehow different in terms of not being as tragic as *Death of Salesman*, or the family is not as hollow as the Irish-

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (114)**

American family in Long Days Journey. Ali's play is, in fact, a convincing drama that is full of conflict, humor, prejudice, and multigenerational. At the time when Reed read Ali's script for the play, he was impressed by Ali's mastering of his characters and the verbal communications among them that were rich and meaningful ("American Struggle After September 11" Islamonline.net). Reed says that Ali's characters "can be found in every kitchen drama—the sort of play that concerns itself with food, dating, sibling rivalry, intergenerational conflict, humor, and pathos" (The Domestic Crusaders, 2010: ii).

Ali tries his best to be very direct in treating the idea of Islamophobia authentically. Thus, he tends to shed the light on a daily conversation inside a house without any filters. In addition to the domestic conversations, the public views are intervened cleverly by using the media intrusion in the life and talks of this family to arouse the discussion of racism and hypocrisies in the new world. Ali says that "I wanted to make the characters flawed because a lot of time when it comes to ethnic theater, and even Muslim theater, they want the characters to be propaganda pieces" ("American Struggle After September 11" Islamonline.net).

Dalia Mogahed, President Obama's Advisor on Faith, after reading the text was overwhelmed by the Ali's insightful treatment of "the tensions and triumphs of the Muslim American community [that] gives viewers a rare window into this often discussed but seldom heard member of the American mosaic. His debut play is destined to be a social and cultural phenomena." On the other hand, Newsweek's Lorraine Ali says "The Domestic Crusaders is exactly the sort of theater we need today. The gulf that separates cultures must be bridged and Art is one of our best hopes. I'll be supporting this all the way – please join me and Wajahat in building this bridge!" (The Domestic Crusaders, 2010).

### **2.2. The World of the Play**

The Domestic Crusaders is a two-acts play written by the celebrated Pakistani-American playwright Wajahat Ali who presented it in the honor of the anniversary of 11 September attacks in the Nuyorican Poets Café. The play comes to be a realistic impulse of the American life after the 11 September attacks. The play, in fact, has a touching story of one Pakistani family in America. The writer tries to engage the audience or the reader in the life of this family in different levels such as conflicts, love, fear or secrets to be in touch with the concrete core of the American condition in a moving and funny way.

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (115)**

The starting point of irony in this play is the title, "The Domestic Crusaders," which attracts the attention from the first sight. The title is suggestive in the sense that it seem to be ambivalent at the outset; the word "Crusaders" is understood as being invaders or outside people and crusading involved peoples of different religion and cultures engaged in a brutal struggle to invade another country. But, the word "Domestic" refers to the people who are living inside the country that is being invaded. So, how comes to the native people invade their own homeland? Ali defends the play's ironic title in the February, 2011 issue of American Theatre, by arguing that the title refers to long term of antagonism between Islam and the west. The "crusaders" have new different tendency of being hypocritical and idiosyncratic people. Thus, new techniques of fighting is needed in the sense that the old types of weapons are useless. Ali says "we see them fighting with stinging barb and wit and regrets and secrets-good old-fashioned drama and melodrama." ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

Rabea Chaudhry argues that The Domestic Crusaders is a colossal contribution to American Muslim literature in the sense that it enriched the realm with a new real representation of human lives in general. The play flirts with the critical focal point of Islamophobia that dwells in the main concern of public in a true and honest way by shedding the lights on the simple but deep conversations among the family members (2009, 12). The story is authentic and revelatory that depicts the new conditions of living for a Pakistani-American Muslim family and their sufferings in America especially after the 11 September. The play depicts clearly the post 11 September world in terms of wittiness and anxiety that clouded this family which is consisted of six members belong to three generations. Each member or "crusader" tries hard to affirm and sometimes enforce his/her opinion (Ibid.)

The play starts with Ghafur's 21st birthday who is the youngest son in the family. Ghafur studies medicine at the college in another city. The intricacy of the three generations of these characters grows deep due the new situations that they face. Salahuddin, the eldest son 27 years old, remains out of job whereas the father, Salman, in his late fifties gives a great effort to support his family in a world that comes to be so strange to be regarded as a home. On the other hand, the mother, Kalsoom 55 years old, fights for the patriarchal traditions that Fatima, the only daughter 24 years old, has no concern for. The grandfather, Hakim who is beaten down by age, sustains an esteem place in the family. Ali succeeded to

## Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (116)

detain the experiences of his characters in a simple and clear manner (Ibid.:13).

In his way home, Ghafur has been treated rudely by the security of the airport due to his way of dressing and the long beard he has recently raised. He went through an austere investigation with the FBI agents in addition to a cruel body scanning. Finally, he arrived home safe and received warmly by his mother. He explains his delay to his mother who was so worried about him.

Khulsoom: "Great, make them lock you up next time! You read – you should know better. The FBI probably has a file on you now!"

Ghafur: "They spend five minutes doing a body search.... The other passengers stroll on by, witnessing the Muslim-mammal zoo exhibit. I'm sure it made them safe, that I was being sanitized."

Khulsoom: "Didn't I tell you to shave your beard before you came? Who gave you the brilliant idea to keep a beard? And you wore the topi? ... Why don't you hold a sign saying, I'M AN EXTREMIST. ONE WAY TICKET TO ABU GHRAIB, PLEASE." (The Domestic Crusaders: I, iv: 38-41).

In such type of passing conversation, Ali wants to reflect the change in treating the Muslims after the 11 September in which they are not welcomed anymore. Any Muslim is thought to be a timed bomb that may explode at any minute. Moreover, the other people will feel safe to see the police questioning a Muslim. Islamophobia at this time is obvious, more dangerous and out of control.

One of the observable issues that Ali has mastered it undeniably and gives it enough room in his play is the voice of media. It comes to be one of the regular businesses for the characters in this play to listen to media and sometimes the voice of media interrupt the dialogue of these characters and attract their attentions to another critical issue. When the voice of media verbalized throughout the house sphere, the characters wily or not have to listen to it; as if it is a spell that hovers over their heads. The role is vital and central to the extent that the first Act starts with the voice of media and ends with it. It comes to be as an indication to the mind that the characters' lives are imprisoned to the power of media. All types of media were completely busy in shedding the light on the consequences of the attacks and how the government will pay back (Douglas Kellner, 2003: 4).

Radio: (Voice-over) "We now return to our in-depth coverage of 'the war against Extremism.' Joining us now for an NPR exclusive are world-



## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (117)**

renowned, respected academic experts on Islam and the Middle East." (The Domestic Crusaders: I, i: 5)

The TV: (Voice-over) "The president urged the nation today not to fear or doubt, even though the battle against extremism and evil will be long and painstaking, with unfortunate but inevitable sacrifices. According to the president, these sacrifices are necessary to ensure our freedom, and to help protect the liberties and values of all freedom-loving people against those dedicated to tyranny and hatred." (Ibid. : I, iv: 44)

CNN HEADLINES NEWS: (Voice-over) "The Soldiers of Peace, an Evangelical group with a loyal membership headed by Revered Edwards, spiritual counselor to the president, say they are ready to send over two thousands, as they call themselves, 'lovers of Christ' to help preach the gospel as soon as the army decides it is safe for American citizenship and missionaries to reside in Iraq." (Ibid. : I, v: 47)

Comments by the characters come after the voice of media dies out. They definitely blame media for the misunderstanding and mixing between Islam and terrorism because the reporters are not aware enough about the true nature of Islam. Thus, these characters try their best to point out some good points in their discussions, but their efforts go in vain in each time since there is no one listen to what they are trying to say.

Salman: "Tired OF THIS GODDAMN HEAT ... Goddamn media. Same nonsense every day! Blame Islam. Blame Muslims. Blame immigrants for everything! Tired of the daily propaganda!" (Ibid. : I, iii: 23).

Hakim: "Just like the British – typical colonizers, imperialists, just like the ferengi Europeans. Come in – rape, loots, destroy, turn brother against brother and countryman against countryman just for dawlat and power. Man never changes." (Ibid. : I, iv: 44)

Ghafur: "These extremists using those millions to teach their perverted version of Islam.... And look at this media – that's the same garbage they get day in, day out. And no Muslim does anything – we just sit and complain. Why don't we go out and tell them how it really is?" (Ibid. : I, v: 49)

The problem behind the misconception of Islam is created by the media in the minds of the public which comes to be the source of agony and bad treatment for these characters. Not only conversations and arguments, Ali uses cleverly life-snap shots for these bad treatments in

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (118)**

the play like the situation with Hakim, the grandfather, inside the supermarket: "Yesterday at the flea market, I was picking up my fruits – as usual. One white man was next to me. He was with his son – just a boy, probably eight or so. The boy looked up at me and asked, are you related to Osama bin Laden?" (Ibid. I, ii: 16). The boy thinks that every man with a beard is a terrorist, but Hakim wisely answered the boy: "He [Osama bin Laden] is a terrorist who doesn't know the first thing about the religion of Islam" (Ibid. : I, ii: 17).

In Act Two, the discussion among the characters varies and it becomes deeper. The characters are struggling to prove their points of view throughout discussions that do not exceeded the front door. One of these issues that are tackled in their discussions is the perception of gender and contentment. Fatima, the young daughter, stands for the new generation of women due to her attempts to identify herself away from the cultural demands for the feminine gender though she decided to wear the headscarf (hijab) herself. In the due course of the discussion with her mother, the audience will be aware of Fatima as being a strong character in the family. Yet, Fatima is also stands for "the general frustration" that clouded her generation and suppresses the power and desires that kept deeply in her heart. Fatima's mother, on the other hand, seems to be peacefully and happily symbolizing the traditional femininity that lies out of Fatima's interest and concern (Rabea Chaudhry, 2009: 14).

Fatima: "No one changes. In their heads they think they've changed. In my head, I think I changed – evolved into a better Muslima, a stronger woman, more liberated, more fearless, ready to fight and take on the world – but it's all pointless delusions in the head. You just take temporary vacations from yourself, time to time." (The Domestic Crusaders: II, i: 68)

The differences between Fatima's and her mother's characters is deep and full of thoughts regarding the issue of womanhood. These two images about woman are established accordingly to the environment in which they have born. The first image of woman tries to criticize the other's principles, while the second image seems to have seized the cultural milieu under the slogan of liberty. Nevertheless, the fundamental question of who is the happier is still out of being answered (Rabea Chaudhry, 2009: 14).

One more time, the dialogue among the characters is cut by the media that enforced in their life to the extent it became a new character in the play that has the power to control the minds and the discussion among

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (119)**

the other characters. Media is powerful element in shaping the event as they like to be. But, the reactions of the characters to this power come to be different in Act Two in the sense that the characters are no more able to listen to the media since it goes behind the bushes or try to disfigure the image of Muslim in general.

The TV: (Voice – over) "The president has asked the country – and the congress – to approve a further one hundred billion dollars in the ongoing fight against extremism." (The Domestic Crusaders: II, iii: 88)

Fatima: (Turns off the TV) "Okay ... I just don't even know what to say.... Do commentators on TV actually hear themselves when they talk? They must be insane. That's it. I won't watch the news anymore." (Ibid. :II, iii: 93)

In the due course of the events, Hakim stills the center of trust and comforting to the rest of the characters since he has a long experience in this life and witnessed different conditions and situations that might be more malicious to the current situation. Yet, he also asks different questions that stay close to the statue of humanity which comes to be standing naked in the face of the ethnical winds.

Hakim: "What do you or anyone on TV know of this? By talking about it, you think, they think, you can understand what it means to kill someone? ... Some say don't use violence, use peace. What happens when violence comes after you, and you just want to teach poetry and study law? What happens when you kill, and instead of earning your death, your friends are killed instead? Is that just? Is that fair? No one can know or understand until they have to face that reality." (Ibid. : II, iii: 101)

In spite of the fact that the events of the play occur in one night, but the stories that are told by each character widen the span of time in the play. The astonishing style of writing this play with a clear insight of the characters gives different dimensions for the story. Ali repeatedly uses a comical description of a Pakistani American family in which it helps him to control and cover each aspect for each character in an unembellished manner. Ali called this approach of presentation, in an interview with NBC, "the universal" (Rabea Chaudhry, 2009: 9).

This leads the critic Frederick J. Hoffman to write these opening words to The Journal of Muslim-American Literature (JML): "if literature is important to history, it is not because it serves as a social document or as a footnote to political or intellectual history, but primarily because it is a culmination, a genuine means of realizing the major issues

## **Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (120)**

of its time” (quoted in Joseph Rega, 2011). This comes to be with the intention of trying hard to shed the light on the truth of the developments before and after the 11 September attacks. Undoubtedly, this incident comes to be the most substantial moment of the 21st century. In fact, this incident comes to the cause for many military and political clashes between the west in general and the Islamic world (Joseph Rega, 2011).

Ghafur, near the end of the play, attracts the audience's attention to this fact with a historical dimension by saying: "The mighty Muslim Abbasids wiped out like trivial insects by the Mongolian hordes. All of Christian Europe devastated, crippled at every level by the Dark Ages, warfare, and the Black Plague" (The Domestic Crusaders: II, i: 70). But the last words comes from the father – Salman – who was suggestive and recapitulating to the whole dilemma. He gives the concluding statement for the ongoing situation of the American Muslims by saying that "When those two towers fell, we fell with them" (Ibid. : II, ii: 83).

In this play, Ali tries his best to attract the public attention to a serious problem which is the negative role of media in depicting the Muslim person as being savage and evil-doer. In fact, such an image goes hand by hand with the unawareness of some political leaders who agitate the public rage throughout their irresponsible speeches. It's unfair to think that every Muslim can be a terrorist or any terrorist can be a Muslim. Accurate labeling and correcting naming serve as a good means to correcting the misconception of Islam and pave the way to the truth.

### **Conclusion**

Wajahat Ali's mission is to make Muslims every bit as common as Irish-Americans, Jewish Americans, and others who once were seen as strangers on the American shores. For Ali, as a playwright, his first job is to provide a satisfying experience for the public and he does that via his literary works which take the spectacles into the living room of humble family. In his play, The Domestic Crusaders, Ali responds to the treatment of Muslims that have been received in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in 11 of September.

In truth, Ali's play is an incredible contribution to the American Muslim literature, and one that our communities will benefit from it for years to come. Ali's play appeals to a mass audience while staying true to its goal of providing a groundbreaking, honest and beautifully human portrayal of what it means to be an American Muslim family. The misrepresentation of Muslims found a good place in literature as being an pressing subject matter that needs to shed the light on. It is also described

## Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (121)

in many other fields such as political analyses, documentaries, film or memoirs. A number of novels and dramas were appeared to picture the consequences of the 9/11 attack on people, inside or outside the United States of America. Putting in mind the fact that mass media and literature have played a great role (positively or negatively) in serving the other to have a considerable knowledge, feelings and concern toward Muslims and their ideologies, yet the misrepresentation of Muslims still out of being mended.

### ملخص البحث

في العالم الجديد، أصبح الإنسان منعزلاً □□□ نتيجة لعرقه أو معتقداته الدينية. فالمعتقدات تختلف نتيجة لأختلاف أماكن العيش وأسلوب الحياة. وبما أن الإعلام من سمات العالم الجديد، أصبحت وسائل الإعلام تحاول شرح وتفسير هذه المعتقدات للرأي العام بما يناسب أهدافها وميولها. ولكن الحقيقة المطلقة في الإعلام هي أكبر كذبة؛ لهذا تقف عارية عن مفاهيم الشرف والأخلاق على ضفاف الشرعية. ويظهر للمتتبع عند تسليط الضوء على مواضيع الحقيقة والموثوقية إن الإعلام يلعب دوراً كبيراً في تقديم صورة الإسلام بالشكل الذي يناسب غاياتها؛ ولهذا لا تزال غيوم السواد تحوم على جميع المسلمين في أنحاء العالم.

على أي حال، يقف الأدب على الضفة الأخرى للإعلام ولديه آراء وأهداف مختلفة، وبعض الكتاب مثل جون ابداك في روايته الأكثر مبيعا (الأرهابي) التي حصلت على نقد أيجابي، وكذلك الكاتب وجاهات علي في مسرحيته ذات الفصلين (الصلبيون المحليون) ضمن العديد من الكتاب الأمريكيين الذين تعاملوا مع هجمات 11 أيلول بشكل مختلف عما قدم بالإعلام إذ حاول هؤلاء الكتاب بكل إمكانياتهم الفكرية لتصحيح صورة الأسلام المشوهة من خلال أعمالهم، لذلك تسعى هذه الدراسة لبيان دور الإعلام في تقديم الصورة المشوهة للأسلام مع دور الأدب الذي يعمل كمعارض لهذا الإجراء الذي يكون الأسلام فيه محور للنقاش.

مسرحية وجاهات علي (الصلبيون المحليون) هي محور النقاش في هذا البحث الذي يتألف من قسمين: القسم الأول يؤسس بوضوح الأفكار التي تقف وراء مصطلح "الخوف من الأسلام"، ودور الإعلام في ذلك. ويقدم القسم الثاني لمحات الخوف من

## Islamophobia : Media Vs. Drama ..... (122)

الأسلام ودور الإعلام غير المساند في مسرحية علي. اما الخلاصة فتجمع كل ما توصل اليه البحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخوف من الأسلام ، الإعلام ، هجمات 11 أيلول ، المسلمون الامريكيون ، الفكرة الخاطئة عن الأسلام ، السياسة ، وجهات علي ، (الصليبيون المحليون).

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