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Portrayal of the Demonization of Islam and social stigma in Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*: an Overview

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Abstract:

Muslims' image within the West had been fully modified since the new millennium. This paper uses the matter analysis methodology to explore Leila Aboulela as an author with a complicated commitment to Islam who strives to counteract the biased perception of Islam and Muslims. Drawing on the views of Wail Hassan, the study focuses on Leila Aboulela's novel *The Kindness of Enemies* to look at the author's concern of Muslims' image in the west when the 9/11 coup de main and its impact on Muslims, significantly the immigrants. It argues that Aboulela uses Muslim Shamil as a figure to make fun the terrorist attacks that target innocent individuals underneath the pretext of Islam, and on the opposite hand, setting a decent example of the construct of jihad. The findings show that Aboulela's primary concern is to condemn terrorist operations against innocent people worldwide. For instance her views, the author uses 2 contrasted pictures, the historical story of Muslim Shamil, who embodies the right jihadist/resistance vis-à-vis with these questionable jihadists. The study additionally shows that those terrorist acts have considerably compact Muslims' lives and are the primary reason behind modern racism, islamophobia, and also the sense of loss among Muslim immigrants within the west.

Keywords: islamophobia, Muslim immigrants, Non-natives, terrorist, *The Kindness of Enemies*.

Leila Aboulela, born in 1964, is an acclaimed Arab-British novelist born in Cairo however raised in Sudan, a rustic that she regularly revisits in maximum of her literary oeuvre. As a success craftswoman, bestowed with superb innovative skills, Aboulela attracts the eye of critics and researchers from one of a kind elements of the sector who confirmed a eager hobby in her works, which specializes in a number of sociopolitical troubles like

identity, immigration, racism, Islamophobia, Islam, and assimilation. Such not unusual place recurrent issues in her works paved the way for Aboulela to come to be an international literary figure. What is bizarre approximately her, is that she will become a devoted Muslim novelist whose "fiction as an entire depicts the revel in of working towards Muslims in Scotland and England, from a story angle devoted to an Islamic global view..." (Hassan 2011, p. 180). In different words, she have become a "religious Muslim and display extra dedication to the lessons of Islam searching for internal peace" (Flicker, 2020). Hassan, (2015) in addition claims that Aboulela's work "embodies the slogan of the Islamist motion that emerged within side the mid- 1970s: Islam is the solution" (p. 183).

In this sense, she seems to pick realism as a approach to painting the battle of Muslims withinside the west. Aboulela brazenly admits this view whilst she said, "I do now no longer generally tend to test in writing, and I agree with that the truth of those demanding situations calls for us to be correct whilst describing them. This is specially due to the fact the faculty of realism has continually been dominant in relation to novels" (Flicker, 2020). According to Flicker, many critics assume that Aboulela seems to introduce a one of a kind photograph of Muslims through the lady characters in her novels who locate safe haven and treatment in faith, in preference to escaping it. Perhaps, that is why Mike Philips, a British critic considers Aboulela as one of the most vital writers in a brand new kind of English narrative fiction, contributing to an extensive variety of Islamic novels (Flicker, 2020).

This article applies the textual evaluation approach to observe Aboulela's novel, *The Kindness of Enemies*(2015). The textual evaluation approach is without a doubt an approach that may be implemented to research the content material and the messages contained in a specific text (Botan, 1999). By making use of this method,

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the researcher intends to explain the deeper concern and hidden messages of the chosen text. The look at argues that Aboulela has skillfully applied the historic Muslim determine of Imam Shamil as a metaphor to spotlight the converting picture of Muslims in Britain and to debunk the modern terrorist assaults which will be the primary cause of such distorted picture. It attracts on Wail Hassan and others' paintings to discover Leila Aboulela as a novelist whose paintings is engaged in Islam and spirituality and who's taken into consideration a sturdy Muslim voice that opts to reform the distorted picture of Muslims. Hassan (2011), for instance, describes Aboulela's fiction as a piece that "represents a linguistic and ideological departure from Arabic fiction, and a brand new measurement in Anglophone immigrant and postcolonial literature", thinking about Aboulela as an author "devoted to an Islamic global view". He similarly states that her works "adopt to provide an explanation for Islamic theology, shari'a, and rituals to Muslim and non-Muslim readers" (p. 192). In his view, Aboulela's paintings "represents historic traits for the reason that 1970s: the Islamic resurgence that has tried to fill the void left via way of means of the failure of Arab secular ideologies of modernity, and the increase of immigrant Muslim minorities" within side the west (p. 181).

However, the goal of this paper isn't always to delve into the illustration of Muslims within side the western media however as a substitute to textually examine how Aboulela has functioned her novel to depict the results of the converting photograph of Muslim immigrants in the ones groups. Interestingly, Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* appears to be very much worried about Muslims' state of affairs within side the west. Broadly speaking, however, maximum of Aboulela's novels try in a single manner or any other, to demonstrate the lifestyles of Muslims withinside the west after the 9/11 terrorist attack. At the equal time, she appears to propose Islamic spirituality to reap tranquility and peace in lifestyles.

In different phrases, Aboulela's works have "celebrated ethnic and cultural blending they've additionally promoted Islamic practices and endorsed Muslim immigrants' non secular freedom withinside the West" (Benguesmia, p. 31). Her current novel, *The Kindness of Enemies*, gives a sour critique of the modern state of affairs of Muslims within side the west in popular and Britain, in particular. Her perspectives are typically

illustrated via the principal characters, Natasha, Malak, and Oz, who seem to experience a regular lifestyle at the start of the tale, however, the entirety has been modified after Oz's arrest and imprisonment no matter his launch without charges. The converting instances of these characters started out with Oz's arrest whose tale is used as a scapegoat to touch upon the lives of Muslims there. Natasha's description of Oz's surprising arrest illustrates the awkwardness of the state of affairs as time stood nonetheless and every person is speechless. "Because the front door was open all of the time the police have been here ..., Natasha stated. 'It's a mistake', his mom repeats. They've blended him up with a person else, I'm sure" (p. 79). Obviously, Oz's tale has been cautiously functioned a good way to spotlight the photograph of Muslims within side the west, a terrorist that need to be 'monitored' (p. 147). Richardson (2002) pronounces that once 9/11 assaults on New York, the American and western media "recirculate the antique binaries" West and East, Christendom and Islam which talk to the "stereotypical Oriental Other" that gives filmic and literary representations of the Oriental culture (as noted in Khrisat, 2018, p. 59).

Mahmudul Hasan additionally notes that "Orientalist tendency continues a reductionist technique and particularly makes a specialty of caricaturing Islam and Muslims. Some extraordinary classical Orientalist texts ... offer distorted portrayals of Muslim societies ..." (2015, p. 89). Indeed, Oz's tale places Aboulela's perspectives in motion, even though he has been all at once arrested and launched with no charges, this incident, however, has destroyed his lifestyles. His destiny has been completely "ruined" and what's worse is that he turns into not able "to get out of this" (p. 185). "Oz turned into launched yesterday. ... He's now no longer speaking to me. He's now no longer leaving his room. He won't eat ... I don't recognise what to do. Can you return back over? Maybe he'll speak to you", stated his mom to Natasha (p. 219). Hence, Oz went right into a country of emotional ailment, refusing to speak to absolutely each person which includes his mom. More importantly, he comes to a decision to drop out of college and to travel to south Africa. His intellectual and mental ailment makes him not able to tolerate the converting state of affairs in Britain. Unfortunately, however, all the ones around him have grown to be capacity suspects, therefore, they need to undergo the burden, which includes his mom and Natasha.

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This is why his father in south Africa rejects the concept of presenting hand to his son in London. “They would possibly drag me into it after which what use might I be to him? Can you accept as true with it!” his father stated. “Yes, I ought to accept as true with it”, showed Malak, (p. 187), who's now, very a great deal aware about the converting state of affairs round her. As Wail Hassan notes, “prejudice and harassment via way of means of overall strangers towards training Muslims, identifiable via way of means of their ...” (p.194). He provides, “unpleasant incidents of racism and harassment of Muslims, specifically Muslim girls carrying hijab are depicted in maximum of Aboulela’s texts” (p.189). Racism and otherness towards Muslim immigrants is similarly illustrated via Natasha Hussein whose feedback at the police research of the theft of her residence confirms the problems of Muslims there. “... it has become greater than what I turned into saying; and I turned into now an impostor inquiring for attention, a difficult visitor taking on space. They had higher activities and worthier residents to protect” (p.108). Her feedback summed up the state of affairs of Muslims in Britain who became to be mere unwelcome guests. Unfortunately, Natasha whose “dignity” turned into “shaken” (p. 176), realizes that the police aren't always worried about her case. More importantly, their indifference displays their negligence for her as she is taken into consideration as an unwelcome ‘different’. As Benguesmia and Refice (2019) note, “western media have promoted the idealization of the western values of democracy, however portrayed Islam because the faith of violence, sexism, and defined it as adverse and unreasonable, and accused Muslims of terrorism” (p. 25).

Mahmoud Khalifa similarly notes, “the illustration of Islam withinside the west turned into constructed round a binary machine that endowed Islam with bad traits and the west with nice traits”. He provides, “west makes Islam one of the maximum recurrent photographs of the opposite in Europe and one of the maximum stereotyped and vilified religions ...” (p.1). Mahmudul Hasan additionally factors out that “Muslims had been made into items of exclusivity and of endured analysis” for the reason that assaults on New York and London, including that “their identification is hidden in the back of a smokescreen of uncertainty...”. For him, “each famous media and literature lay a good sized emphasis at the non secular association of the perpetrators of the notorious 9/11 and 7/7 horrors’. This, in keeping with him,

“rendered the Muslim citizens withinside the west as ‘exoticized others’ and ‘outsiders’ whose presence is stated to represent a risk to the western manner of lifestyles” (2015, p. 95).

The concept of racial prejudice has been similarly highlighted via Gaynor’s criticism towards her teacher, “Natasha placed her fat arse on my desk ... Black arse ... fats black arse ... ‘Black arse ... fat black arse ...”. However, Natasha’s response to Gaynor’s mind-set indicates her deep disappointment, “the phrases looped and steadied, they have become rhythmic. I woke up with humiliation ...”, she stated (pp. 113-114). Surprisingly, Gaynor didn’t take any motion towards any other staff, she made her criticism best towards Natasha, a lady of an exceptional colour and faith. Oz’s revelation to Natasha similarly displays his awkward enjoyment with the police and its impact on him. In his letter which he commenced with an apology, he informs her, “I’m sorry I behaved poorly that day you got here over. I wasn’t as much as speak me a great deal and to inform you the truth, it turned into due to the fact what came about psyched me out. The mobile user felt as small as a cabinet and ...” (pp. 298-99). Obviously, Aboulela appears to feature Oz’s voice as a watch witness to emphasise her antique factor that the lifestyles of any Muslim irrespective of his function can all at once flip upside down. What provides insult to harm and saddened Natasha even greater is being helpless: “Oz had dropped out” and the news “exceeded across the branch with remedy as though we have been nicely rid of him. One of our pleasant students”, Natasha stated. She continues, “I concealed myself within side the ladies’ and cried with anger, ashamed that, even now, I couldn’t rise up for him” (p. 323).

Such social and political environment led Muslim immigrants within side the west to cover their actual identities. That is to say, “many Muslims in Britain wanted that nobody knew they had been Muslims. They might extrade their names if they may and dissolve into the mainstream, for it turned into now no longer sufficient for them to overtly condemn 9/11 and 7/7, ...” (p. 6). They even feel ashamed of their mother and father who undergo the symptoms and symptoms of being immigrants. As Natasha pronounces,

Muslims I taught throughout the years couldn’t wait to bury their dark, badly dressed immigrant parents

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who never understood what was happening around them or even took an interest, ..., who obsessed with about halal meat and arranged marriages ... They grew up reptiles plotting to silence their parents' voices, to muffle their poor accents, their miseries, their shuffling feet their lives of toil and bafflement, ... (p. 7)

Ironically, Natasha herself has erased her father's identification. She is known as Natasha Wilson rather than Hussein (p. 324). It is ridiculous that she was "ashamed to be visible with him across the campus" while he visited her in London (p. 77). However, it's the social ecosystem that leads her to act awkwardly as she feels ashamed of status in public together with her father, who has crossed a protracted distance to peer his daughter. According to Sardar, "present day Orientalism proceeds to depend closely at the medieval photographs of Islam" showed through Butler (1988) that the "Orient has lengthily interested British artists as an imaginary realm of luxury, violence, and sensuality" (as mentioned in Khrisat, p. 59). Significantly, Oz's mother, Malak, a success actress who sincerely dedicated her efforts to serve and to delight the community, all at once realizes that she is the mere 'other'. She is not noted and checked out with contempt and doubt. She realizes at the cease of the day that she is a stranger, notwithstanding the offerings she has presented for the community. Her innocence and exact deeds did now no longer spare her. Her lifestyle has absolutely changed "from the constructive activist mum campaigning for the discharge of her son to the shadows of being beneath neath suspicion" (p. 226). In one in all her conversations with Natasha, Malak complains, "my dinner invites drying up, even the giving of roles dwindling ever so slowly without understanding precisely why. ..." (p. 226). Regretfully, Malak who formerly rejects any court cases through Muslims in Britain, in the long run reveals herself not noted and, like her son Oz, reviews a mental nation.

The communiqué among her and Natasha absolutely describes her contemporary-day nation while Natasha attempted difficult to assist her to conquer the state of affairs: "I assume you're unduly pessimistic, Natasha Said. However, Malak's response absolutely

summed up her new state of affairs, "all my lifestyles were highly constructive. I actually have long gone in advance with hundreds of energy, hundreds of goodwill, till now. I am stumped. I live up at night ..." (p. 226). Such a pessimistic response displays the poor effect of the state of affairs on her lifestyles. Her constructive view of lifestyles has totally vanished. Like lots of Aboulela's characters, Malak in the long run escapes to faith as she reveals solace in spirituality, attempting to conquer the unexpected shift in her lifestyles.

Hence, Natasha's workplace becomes examined. She additionally wondered about her dating with Oz, her pupil and whom she as soon as visited at home to research greater Imam Shamil, the situation of her instructional studies papers. Perhaps, that is why she admits that her "dignity [was] shaken and [her] stability broke" (p. 176). She overtly declares: I definitely become one of the fortunate ones. I became one of the ones who noticed the symptoms and symptoms early on within side the tricky methods of schoolchildren, within side the manner my mother, snow-white as she became, became disliked for being Russian. I noticed the writing on the wall and I am now no longer too proud to take a short-reduction to the exit. (p. 7) Unlike Malak, however, in preference to escaping to spirituality, Natasha appears to face up to religiosity from the start of her lifestyles there. However, as Khalifa notes, "this insistence that Muslim girls deny their spiritual identification if you want to in shape in, is a essential problem that those novelists increase and discuss" (p. 7). Yet, despite all she did to get in shape in, unluckily she in no way felt at domestic. Instead, she has been dealt with as the 'other'. Interestingly, her identification disaster in Britain provokes her emotions toward Sudan and the humans there as she feels domestic nostalgic. Such experience of loss become shared via way of means of the 3 characters, Natasha, Oz and Malak whose testimonies were skillfully yoked collectively to provide a clean photograph of Muslims' lives in Britain after 9/11.

The scenario of the 3 characters, for instance, becomes summed up in Natasha's phrases while she admits, "... it now took an aware attempt to stroll with my head held high. My voice has become softer, my critiques muted, my movements tentative. I thought earlier than I spoke, have become cautious of my college students and frequently bowed my head down" (p. 324). Thus, it's far ridiculous that despite the fact that she has modified her

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father's call if you want to get in shape, she in the end realizes that she might in no way belong. Unfortunately, even though she is an executed and a hit academician, Natasha struggles with a deep "experience of disconnect and duality approximately her identification and place. Born Natasha Hussein, she adjusted her call to Natasha Wilson to try and combo into an area wherein neither of her mother and father felt at domestic" (Carroll, 2016). In contrast, even though she grows up out of doors in Sudan, Natasha feels snug as quickly as she arrives and meets humans there. She at once feels a experience of belonging, as she remarks,

Chatting with them, we would skip from Russia to English to Arabic, and I relaxed without proving, explaining, or distinguishing myself. Nor squeeze to fit in, nor watch out of the corner of my eye the threats that my very existence could provoke in the wrong place in the wrong time among the wrong crowd. (p. 324)

Obviously, the very point out of the word 'to match in' sums up the complete concept of belonging. Like Malak, regardless of the accomplishments she completed, she feels strange. Both Malak and Natasha completed fame, fulfillment and served the general public to the best. However, by the point they sense that they may be a part of it, alas that network appears to reject them, hence, the feel of loss and humiliation had changed the feel of belonging and connection to that network. A element from the photograph of Muslims that Aboulela tried to highlight, some other primary concept in Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* is to set a terrific instance of Jihad as this idea has turn out to be synonymous with terrorism. In this regard, she delivered a stay photo of the ancient discern Imam Shamil who led the resistance towards the Russian emperor withinside the Caucasus early nineteenth century. According to her, Imam Shamil embodied the actual instance of jihad as his resistance is justified due to the fact that Imam Shamil and his humans got, in Slater's words, a "simply cause", (as mentioned in Alkodimi 2019, p.136) to guard their hometown towards the Russian invasion.

In contrast, the suicide bombers via way of means of al-Qaeda contributors and different militant businesses are taken into consideration anti-jihadists or terrorists. They misinterpreted the essence of Islam in trendy and the idea of jihad, in particular. According to Aboulela, those operations defamed the photograph of Islam and Muslims. This concept turned into made clean as early because the first few pages of Aboulela's novel. Malak's comments, "ever due to the fact that 9/11, jihad has turn out to be synonymous with terrorism" unveils the writer's dilemma, for Aboulela "jihad is an inner and religious conflict" (p. 9). Indeed, the false impression of jihad and the terrorist assaults beneathneath its call appears to be Aboulela's important obsession in *The Kindness of Enemies*. She believes that the actual jihad is to conflict to be spiritually linked to God in place of committing suicides. Aboulela accurately associated Islamophobia, racism and the distorted photograph of Muslims withinside the west, mentioned above, to the terrorist assaults via way of means of al-Qaeda contributors and different militant businesses. The writer succinctly however not directly places it that those are mere terrorists acts and don't have anything to do with Islam and Muslims. On the contrary, it affected Muslims the world over and had negatively impacted Muslims in trendy and Muslim immigrants, in particular. Sush's state of affairs turned into embodied in a man or woman in Kia Abdullah's *Life, Love and Assimilation* that recounts how the stigma infects their view of the world, pushing Muslims to the margins.

Interestingly, Aboulela cautiously applied the ancient tale of Imam Shamil who leads the resistance conflict in opposition to the Russian invasion on Caucasus as a metaphor to supply her perspectives at the real that means of jihad. That is to say, the tale of Imam Shamil has been functioned in this kind of manner to present a clean instance of this concept. According to the writer, jihad in Arabic method resistance which could be very tons exemplified in Imam Shamil. Through the metaphor of his figure, Aboulela strongly mocks the so-referred to as jihadists who goal harmless humans together with Muslims. She makes use of Imam Shamil to show off the false impression that means of this concept. For her jihad is resistance as opposed to killing harmless humans and children, which results in stereotyping Muslims as terrorists and which additionally gave upward thrust to the islamophobia phenomenon. As Dunia Alzubaidi notes, "With developing strain on UK professionals [like Natasha] to file symptoms and symptoms of spiritual

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extremism”, *The Kindness of Enemies* via way of means of Leila Aboulela is properly timed, “drawing a parallel among the jihad perpetrated via way of means of the Islamic State (ISIS) and a case of 19th-century Sufi jihad in Russia”. Speaking at Bare Lit Festival in London, Aboulela “contrasted the 2 forms of jihad” (Leila Aboulela, 2016).

According to Malak, that wealthy history does now no longer exist in the ones militant agencies who “are performing withinside the call of Islam and on the equal time don’t observe the concepts of submission and restraints?” (p.185). Those so-referred to as jihadists, consistent with Malak, are the actual danger in opposition to Muslims themselves. She, on the opposite hand, reconfirms, via the photo of Imam Shamil, the right instance of a jihadist.

Every fight Shamil fought was on the defence. He was protecting his villages against Russian attack. And surrender to the Russians would have meant the end of their traditional way of life, the end of Islam in Dagestan. The Russians were so brutal they often didn’t take prisoners of war (pp. 9-10)

Yet, Aboulela’s purpose appears to be in brief showed while Malak pronounces that “with the aid of using contrast Shamil’s generals had been scholarly and disciplined” (p.10). Indeed, Aboulela’s purpose has been discovered as early because the first few pages of her tale. She made it clear that her major difficulty is to debunk the cutting-edge terrorist assaults below Islam’s pretext. Such view is often carried over thru the principal characters. For instance, the recent argument, mentioned above, among Oz, Malak and Natasha, made it clear that there’s a false impression of the that means of jihad nowadays. Malak sums up the concept of the writer while she concludes the above dialogue with the aid of using saying, “This sort of jihad [Shamil’s] isn’t the same as the terrible crimes of al-Qaeda” (p.10). Using the metaphor of Imam Shamil, Aboulela tried to create attention amongst Muslims and non-Muslims approximately Islam and Muslims’ reality. In different words, she attempted to sentence the crook

assaults of al-Qaeda participants and people militant corporations who goal harmless civilians and make contact with themselves jihadists. Such ‘terrible’ assaults, in step with her, have best nourished the islamophobia phenomenon and other in the ones societies. Even alaven though the 2 portraits, exposing the photo of Muslims within side the west and the anti- terrorist voice had been integrated, the previous is used to serve the latter.

Aboulela made it clear that the phenomenon of islamophobia is the remaining final results of the terrorist assaults with the aid of using the ones who’ve misunderstood the idea of jihad in Islam. Such view is in addition emphasised on the quit of the tale thru Aboulela’s mouthpiece.

The Novel, first, condemns the unjust social device that perspectives Muslim immigrants as terrorists. In this sense, the writer sharply ridicules the growing terrible attitudes like islamophobia, discrimination and racism in opposition to Muslims as the ones ‘horrible’ acts, to apply the writer’s personal phrases are executed simplest via way of means of a handful of folks that neither constitute Islam nor Muslims. Thus, Aboulela strongly rejects any try that connects Islam to terrorism. Another message is directed to the ones militant businesses whom she made the butt of her criticism. She strictly blames them of violating the essence of jihad/resistance wherein she makes use of the parent of Imam Shamil as a metaphor to show off the real which means of it. The loss of life of Imam Shamil at al-Madinah after he executed Hajj is likewise symbolic as he died in the sacred place. In assessment, the ones terrorists face a shameful loss of life which may be a signal in their fee within side the eyes of God. In a nutshell, this novel confirms Aboulela’s Islamic perspectives, she makes use of her fiction as a medium to accurate the distorted picture of Muslims withinside the west. Instead of denying her “Muslim identity”, as her heroine does, she “reconcile it with Britishness and debunk the affiliation among Muslims and violence” (Hasan, p. 94).

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