

Discursive Representation of the Troubling Position of Islam in Anglophone Pakistani Fiction: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The present paper seeks to understand the complex representation of Islam in Pakistani English writings as a significant site of public discourse. Owing to the vital significance of Islam, one can rightly consider Islam as one of the most vital trajectories that constitutes Pakistan's historical and intellectual landscape. On the other hand, the contemporary Pakistani English writings, as they are shaped within the crucible of collective history and politics, have engaged with the place and position of Islam in the spheres of community (private) and state (public) simultaneously. By employing a comparative reading of Muhammad Hanif, Nadeem Aslam, and Uzma Aslam Khan as representative voices of contemporary Pakistani fiction, the article offers some critical angles to view their fictional and fictionalized worlds in terms of their representation of Islam. In so doing, my reading foregrounds the subtle distinction between Islam and Islamization by referring to the former as a belief system and cultural code whereas later is an institutionalized, often a more oppressive imposition of Islamic ideology on some people. The article analyzes how Islam has been contextualized in the creative and imaginative settings of these writers so as to conflate this vital distinction and this in turn, has some serious ontological and cognitive effects on the reading community. The paper concludes by underscoring the need to have a nuanced and contextualized understanding of Islam and its complex representation in the literary discourse produced by Anglophone Pakistani writers at both home and diaspora. In so doing, I attempt to highlight the need to appreciate the public imperative of Islam and its diverse expression in both community and state so as to deconstruct the dominant discursive representation in Anglophone Pakistani Literature.

Keywords: Islam, Islamization, polity, state and community, public imperative, representation

Introduction

Islam has been a significant and overarching historical trajectory that contributes to the larger fabric of the collective life of community and state in Pakistan (Talbot, Clements and Rais). Through emphasizing a fundamental difference between Muslims and Hindus of the Subcontinent, the Two-Nation Theory foregrounds religious ideology in the collective national history by giving “coherence, direction and meanings” (Rais 100) to Muslims’ struggle for independence and by justifying Muslims’ demand for a sovereign territorial configuration called Pakistan. However, in the subsequent years after 1947, the place of Islam in Pakistan especially its relationship with state affair became subject to a complex debate with conflicting interpretations. Acknowledging the relevance of religious idiom in the construction of a national collective called Pakistan, Cara Cilano (2013) refers to this debate about the role and position of Islam in Pakistan’s polity by referring to Ali Usman Qasmi for whom the problem was not the “admissibility of the role of Islam in Pakistan but the kind of Islam to be established” and implemented in Pakistan (89). Notwithstanding the inherent complexity of the debate, Islam has been an integral part as well as a necessary precondition to understanding the complex spheres of both public and private life in Pakistan.

Historical Trajectory of the Debate

The historical significance of Islam in the public discourse can be assessed by viewing it as an important site that has influenced the creative and intellectual imagination of writers and intellectuals in the immediate years following partition. Sadia Toor (2011) has highlighted some important contours of this ideological landscape by referring to a highly tense yet productive debate going on in the intellectual life of Pakistan after Independence. She contextualizes this debate in the constitutional history of Pakistan during 1950’s and 60’s when both the progressive and conservative-minded intellectuals/writers were reflecting on the role of intellectual and literary projects and the complex role of Islam in the construction and consolidation of the nation-state. Toor cites many liberal and traditional intellectuals (including M.D. Tasser, Hasan Askari and Faiz Ahmad Faiz) who, despite acknowledging the significance of religious idiom, argued and reflected on its role in carving an intellectual project of national integration.¹ Side by side with this intellectual debate, the political and constitutional forces in the nascent Pakistan also viewed religion – particularly Islam – as “a positive force and energy” provided it is “liberated from the religious orthodoxy” (Rais 191) by simultaneously being committed to liberal ideals of social justice and egalitarianism (Toor 52-79). In doing this, the early generation of Pakistani

intellectuals (conservative and progressive) demonstrated a more historically-grounded view of religious faith in theorizing their definition of what it means to be a national collective and what precisely is the role of Islam in the construction of this national collective.²

It is precisely this aspect of the debate that is the focus of my paper as I have tried to reflect on what is the place and position of Islam in Pakistan's polity and its concomitant relevance for the mainstream discourse in its intellectual and political derivatives? My special focus here is to see the complex representation of Islam in Pakistani English discourse, the one that has emerged in the form of the contemporary fiction by Anglophone Pakistani writers. Before posing some crucial questions regarding my terrain of inquiry, I want to highlight a significant distinction between Islam and Islamization – the former views Islam as faith and a cultural marker and the later connotes a more political and (often) institutionalized version of Islam with its rigid codification largely done by the state. I call this distinction between Islam and Islamization crucial by postulating that both these terms, despite their seemingly identical resonance, tend to be different from each other. The distinction, in my view, is based on the role and position of Islam in the life of individual and community above and beyond state and its intervention. Whereas Islam is largely acknowledged as part of one's subjective faith, a private matter of individuals as Jalal (2007) has viewed it, the same phenomenon of Islam is viewed with dubiety and disdain when it comes to its role in the public life. Thus Sara Suleri (1989), one of the earliest Pakistani English writers, reminds us of the "great romance between religion and the populace, the embrace that engendered Pakistan..." by making direct reference to Zia's Islamization (*Meatless* 16-17). The inherent connection of Islam with Pakistan's idea became tangled, even troubling, as Suleri in the same account refers to the political climate of post-1977 Pakistan by writing, "Islamization set in with a *vengeance*" (50 italics mine). By gesturing her disdain for the "men [who] would take" Islam "to the streets" by making it "vociferate" (16), Suleri's words indicate the incessant presence of a debate about the complex relation of Islam with the state of Pakistan by underscoring the two obvious factions – the liberal view that supports the exclusion of Islam from the affairs of state and public life (Ali, Alavi and Jalal) and the conservatives who were bent upon declaring Pakistan as an Islamic Republic with their insistence to reframe the constitution in line with Islamic injunctions.³

Debate in Context

Having discussed a brief background of Pakistan's political and intellectual history in relation to Islam, I now move on to certain specific aspects of the debate – namely the status and representation of Islam in Pakistani English fiction with an objective to question how the current generation of Anglophone Pakistani writers view and respond to this debate? How far does their imaginative and fictional representation of Islam correspond to or collide with the historical and cultural specifics of Pakistan's collective life? To what an extent, their writerly imagination concedes to the complex role of Islam in the life of community above and beyond state or its institutionalization? Most of all, how do their fictional accounts tend to unearth certain aspects of this debate by offering alternatives with which Islam's role can be redefined and renegotiated vis-à-vis newly emerging cultural and political realities? Another significant aspect of this debate can be to assess the impact of this representation of Islam on the cognitive and ontological schema of the interpretive community at both national and international level? In critiquing the representational claims of Pakistani English writers in terms of Islam, I will also try to reflect how far their stance of speaking from a secularist and modernist angle does or does not facilitate a more grounded understanding of the complex dynamics of the tension between tradition and modernity within communities living in and outside Pakistan? In asking these questions, my argument is primarily focused on the representational claims of Pakistani English discourse written in the aftermath of the complex historical juncture of Pakistani politics, especially Zia's rule and its Islamization.

I have selected three mainstream Pakistani English writers for their representation of Islam – including Nadeem Aslam (2004), Mohammed Hanif (2008) and Uzma Aslam Khan (2008). While Hanif's fiction represents Islam primarily in the domain of state (something that I call public life), Aslam is more concerned with the role and place of Islam in the life of community (mostly the diasporic community), and Khan's narrative world portrays Islam simultaneously at the level of state and what David Gilmartin has called the everyday life in Pakistan (521). Besides the thematic parallels in their writings, what connects these three writers with each other is that they all belong to what can be termed as the post-Zia generation of Pakistani English writers and seem to subscribe to an unambiguously secular vision of state and society. All of them, albeit with their mutual differences, mostly view Islam in relation to Islamization of Zia (post-1977 Pakistan) with the final effect that their writings tend to conflate the fundamental difference between Islam as part of one's subjective and cultural

identity and Islam as an externally-inserted institutionalized system. While there is nothing fallible in their absolute rejection of Zia's' Islamization, one finds a peculiar representation of Islam in their writings which seem to ignore the specific historical and cultural context of various religious laws and norms, culminating into a trivialized and conflationary discourse. I choose to call it trivialized because it mostly ignores the otherwise vital and constructive role of Islam in the life of community and its lived experiences and conflationary because in Aroosa Kanwal's view, it blurs the distinction between genuine religious beliefs and their truncated and largely out-of-context implementation under Zia and demonstrates the "limited (sometimes flawed) understanding of the Qur'an and Islam" on the part of these writers (182-83).

I continue my argument by contextualizing it in the concrete textual sites from the selected fiction by these writers which demonstrate that their terms of representation are partial, if not totally flawed, as they fail to encompass the complex working of religious idiom in the life of community and do not offer alternative ways to view Islam beyond its repressive and largely retrograde implementation by state. As an evidence to my critical stance, I refer to Hanif's novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* where one finds an almost blanket rejection of Zia's institutionalized Islam through its misogyny and militancy, and a simultaneous exclusion of Islam's vital place in the life of community. In Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the problem has assumed a different shade as his fictional world largely comes from an imagined diasporic community in England. However despite being far distant from Pakistan and making relatively little reference to the statist ideology of Zia, Aslam represents Islam as a set of inhuman and irrational beliefs and shibboleths, which are incompatible with a more rational and modern worldview. Since my focus is primarily on Islam and not merely on Islamization of Zia, Aslam appears a befitting choice owing to his peculiar reference to/of Islam in the presentation of a Pakistani community in his imagined diasporic setting. However, what is problematic in his representation is that it tends to underwrite a bunch of stereotypes about Islam with its alleged barbarity, primitivism, and rotten morality. Contrary to these two male writers, Uzma Aslam Khan, in *The Geometry of God*, represents Islam with some troubling paradoxes by sketching the predicament of a generation that she evocatively calls, "Zia Baby" [like a] "child who blows with a small wind and bats for both side" (87). Khan's characters are caught in a conflict between the mutually antagonistic pulls of conservatism and rationality and are presented with their attempt to resolve this tension lying in the intergenerational experience of Islam, in both, individual or collective lives.

Whether Islam is presented in its official and institutionalized form in national or international fronts, or in its more informal, largely performative observance by a community, the discursive representation of these three writers, tends to offer a truncated image of Islam with its simultaneous incapacity to become a progressive cultural practice. Fashioned in a peculiar way, the fictional characters in their writings offer an extremely reductive definition of Sharia based on what Masood Ashraf Raja (2011) has argued elsewhere as a “limit reading” based on “the most literalist and the most extreme interpretations of the concept” (“neoliberal” 27). For instance, with its rigid and inhuman set of practices and punishments, Hanif’s story of Blind Zainab and its similar resonance in Mahjabeen’s dread in Aslam’s *Maps*, for “amputation, stoning to death, flogging” (322) make Islam appear “austere, unforgiving, harsh, lacking in compassion for the human condition, a religion based on fear and not mercy” (Sardar “Shari’ah” 65 italics mine). Far from presenting Sharia as a “problem-solving methodology” (Sardar 67-76) that can offer a way out to the people (like Zainab, Mahjabeen and Chanda) from their individual crisis, this view subordinates Islamic laws to a mythical and frozen past by contriving an image of Islam which is “trivialized, ahistoricized and consigned to the dustbin of history” (Sardar Introduction 13).⁴

This is most evidenced in Hanif’s imagined world that does not show any healthy or positive image of religious faith or genuine sense of spirituality. Hence from a hypocrite and heartless Zia to an extremely myopic and literal Qazi, the text of *Exploding Mangoes* is filled with the images of a dreary religion that plays no role in building up a progressive cultural practice at both individual and collective level. Even the most private and solitary aspects of religious faith, such as rituals like prayers, supplication, and pilgrimage are not presented as genuine expression of religiosity but fake signs of Zia’s “God-mongering” (314). With all his “talk of piety and purdah” (125), Zia is presented by Hanif as a representative religious figure who attempts to hide his debauchery and corruption – be it his infatuation for the American Journalist or his illegitimate political bargains with Americans. The novel makes recurrent reference to Zia’s morning prayers with his voice choking and bursting into tears though no one, including the Imam and General Akther, know whether this emotional reaction is a sincere expression of his piety or the effects of the first lady’s tongue lashing last night (45). In an attempt to denigrate the performative side of religion, Hanif shows Zia going to Makkah to get rid of the constant fear of being killed by someone. Here the expression belies any spiritual or devotional resonance for the holy place of Kaaba – the House of Allah as Zia’s personal security officer Brigadier TM is inclined to see nothing extraordinary in it (196) and is virtually unable to

understand why Zia “threw tantrums...cried and...smashed his head against the black marble wall” of Kaaba as if he were a “twelve years old having a bad birthday” (195).

Apart from the subjective and private aspect of religious faith, Hanif’s narrative deliberately confuses the genuine spirit of religion by presenting Islam synonymous to the “accumulated misdeeds of a ruthless despot” (Jan 110). This can be clearly seen in his representation of Blind Zainab’s story that is an imaginative retelling of a real event of Safia Bibi raped and then trialed under Hadood laws.⁵ The text represents Pakistan metamorphosed into a brute and barbaric state, where an innocent blind woman was trialed and penalized under the charge of adultery. The episode “BLIND JUSTICE IN THE LAND OF THE PURE” evokes the image of a ruthless version of Islam in which a fictional Muslim Qazi – a Jurist in Makkah – dispenses justice by offering an extremely retrograde interpretation of the Zina Ordinance as promulgated by Zia (169). In a telephonic conversation with Zia, when he is asked about the legal position of a blind woman being raped, he replies that “the law doesn’t differentiate between those who can see and those who can’t” and since rape is a serious crime, so only “circumstantial evidence wouldn’t do” (175). In making such statement, the Qazi in Hanif’s text demonstrates his absolute ignorance of the divine spirit of Hadood laws, which, due to their stringent and almost-near-impossible protocol of evidence, cannot be implemented without employing the circumstantial evidence on the part of jurist. Ironically, this commonsensical wisdom is absolutely missing in the fictional character of Qazi who has not seen any “such case in his forty years life” as a Judge in Shraia Law (175), hence decrees the same parameters of evidence for rape as required in adultery. The conversation, at one hand, reflects the “ignorance and buffoonery” of both Zia and the Qazi and offers a “clear mockery of the loopholes” in the infamous Zina Ordinance (Kanwal 47). On the other hand, it highlights the image of a brutalized Pakistani culture under Zia where women and minorities were excluded as “the *Zoē* from the larger *nomos* of the state” (Raja “Neoliberal” 24), and became “bare life”, a life excluded from the body politic and, sometimes, a life worthy of being ended, without legal repercussions or, at the least, any kind of remorse” (25). In other words, with Zainab’s and a parallel story of the secretary general of Sweepers Association, Hanif’s narrative can be read as a metafictional expression of the repressive side of Zia’s Islamization, especially in terms of its treatment with women and minorities.

While one cannot deny the plight and predicament of these marginalized communities who became subject to the full force of law and were treated as “bare life” during Zia’s regime, the two episodes epitomize Hanif’s sense of despair and pessimism about the possibility of a more just and equitable socio-political order in Pakistan. What is most problematic in this representation is that it neither enables the readers to get a more material and context-bound understanding of the Islamic penal system nor does it offer a more reflexive and historically-concrete angle to understand how minorities were not allowed to constitute, both symbolically or materially, what Masood Ashraf Raja has termed the “Pakistani *nomos*” (“Neoliberal” 23). Hardly the readers are able to understand and differentiate the partial and even mistaken enforcement of these laws from their real sense and spirit in the total context of Islamic penal system. Instead, the conflationary narrational stance (in this and many other fictional accounts) uses Sharia law as a reductive trope for the alleged barbarity and primitivism of Islam, which is “reduced to a simple system of swift justice practiced through harsh punishments” in order to forestall and legitimize State’s power to kill and punish the non-beings like women and minorities (Raja 27). The persecution and ultimate execution of the secretary general at the end of the novel typifies Hanif’s “petulant cynicism” about the prospects of a righteous order (Said “Reflections” 183) by portraying a political culture with no room for those “who resist or love or act with any degree of integrity or courage,” hence presenting the “bleak vision of human possibility” (Aijaz Ahmad “Rushdie’s Shame” 1469). As a mere expression of Hanif’s own subjective anger and resentment, the story offers a vehement subversion to Zia and his rule without offering us a better insight into the far-reaching implications of the unitary consciousness of Zia’s Islamization for Pakistan’s present and future and finally culminates into a perspective of loss and lovelessness. Thus Ali Shigri insistence, at the end of the novel to see the world through “Colonel Shigri’s dead bulging eyes,” (290) epitomizes Hanif’s deliberate choice of giving a dead end to both life and story by underscoring his “belief in the universality of betrayal” and his denial of the possibility of “any community of actual praxis” (Ahmad “Rushdie’s Shame” 1471).

As stated before, the discursive representation of Islam by Anglophone Pakistani writers is predominantly focused on Zia’s Islamization that, in view of Jalal, is tantamount to “prostituting Islam” in the name of “proselytizing” it (Jalal *Self and Sovereignty* 424). Given that Islam was rigidly defined and imposed by Zia and his allies for their ulterior political gains, the mainstream English discourse on the subject of Pakistan is squarely critical about the statist ideology

of Islam that has miserably failed to “perform its redemptive functions” while simultaneously exercising its coercive power against people with dissenting voice (Raja Neoliberal 24). Hanif critiques the monolithic and rigid certitude of Zia’s Islam and its metamorphosis in the form of a subtle erasure of a variety of names used for the Divine God with just one word Allah that Zia approves “in the name of God, God was exiled from the land and replaced by the one and only Allah...” (44). Hence the Persian *Khuda* or Punjabi *Rab* or English God – all are replaced and substituted with the word Allah that Hanif views as a metaphor for the singular version of Zia’s Islam in Pakistan where “...all God’s names were slowly deleted from the national memory as if a wind has swept the land and blown them away” (44). The very word “deleted,” in view of Abbas, “insists on the agency behind this erasure... something systematic...executed through the control of language” (153) since many of the “erased alternatives are the local names of God, pervasive in utterance, poetry, music, Sufi practice and shrine culture, permeating the most mundane practices of daily life” (154).

However, in registering his anger for Zia’s monolithic version of Islam, Hanif fails to appreciate that Islam, with its multiple expressions and forms, continued and continues to be practiced by people in spite of and contrary to Zia’s indoctrination of a *Wahabi* Islam. The fact that “Islam with its scriptural component has led *myriad different* cultural lives, at different *times* and *locations*” (Ahmad 18 italics mine) points to the multiple genealogies of South Asian Muslim culture and its diverse patterns observed by the people. It also demonstrates that religious imperative continues to be valid and most relevant in a community beyond “political differences or potentially doctrinal issues” (Clements 156) underscoring that parallel to the statist version of Zia, which is resonated by an Arabic and authoritarian Allah, Islam is vibrantly present and integral to the collective life of community. That Zia’s attempt to delete the local and private manifestation of the divine and religious with one Allah could not altogether erase the palpable presence of these diverse names in the collective imagery and continue to be used as a means to legitimize individual and communal faith. One instance of this subjective faith can be seen in Zainab’s most private supplication, in her vision of a benevolent God that she continuously thanks and never complains to despite all the wrongs done to her by the people around (214). Yet another manifestation is Zia’s wife who registers her distance from Zia’s myopic interpretation of Zina law by questioning it vociferously, thereby unearthing a glaring flaw in the literalist explanation of the jurist and her husband’s blind subscription to it (176).

Historically, the conflict between the normative and syncretic dimensions of Islam during and after Zia suggests that instead of merely “conforming to a frozen culture” individuals actively participate in “making and living their culture through history” (Metcalf and Mamdani qtd. in Cilano 92). Hence the so-called *Wahabi* or Salafi Islam with its proverbial rigidity and orthodoxy still lacks firm roots in the wider religious landscape of Pakistan where we find more diverse and plural manifestation of religious faith and its largely uncontested observance in mainstream culture. That the various derivatives of Islamic faith including *Deoband*, *Brailvi*, *Shia* and *Sufi* Islam are still practiced and observed by a majority of Pakistanis point to the failure of Zia’s institutionalization of a monolithic Islam. Failing to acknowledge this will result in a square denial of individual agency in the making and unmaking of religious practices and beliefs by essentializing or homogenizing the syncretic possibilities within Islam.

Contrary to its diverse manifestation in everyday life of people, Islam, in the mainstream Anglophone Pakistani fiction, is presented as a doctrinal belief, a kind of dogma with its concomitant abuse, intolerance and orthodoxy. The result has been a squarely misleading discursive representation that continues to view Islam with an overwhelmingly Islamized angle of Zia with its exclusion of difference and denial of individual agency in practicing one’s faith. There are countless textual sites in the selected fiction of these writers where notions like Allah, Jihad and Shaheed are mentioned by stripping them out of their context and by mystifying their semiotic and semantic significance in Islamic epistemology. By way of correspondence and recurrence, Hanif’s text presents these words and concepts in a way that they not only lose their actual semantic resonance, but become convenient catchphrases to signify the militant and violent face of Islam and Pakistan in the backdrop of Afghan war and its aftermath. From a very subjective perception about a martyr in Islam in Ali Shigri who declares his late father Colonel Shigri as a “legend hanging from a ceiling fan of his room”(59) to a denigration of a more collective definition of martyrdom in Brig. T.M and other soldiers’ “flag-draped coffin” (79) or its more politicized angle in General Zia’s desire to inscribe the word Jihad on Army’s flag to please his American friend in CIA (105), Hanif continues to use these concepts as mistaken categories by denying their esoteric meanings. Moreover, by ignoring the material and ideological terrain of these concepts and practices, the text seems not to engage with the “confluence of material and symbolic currents that creates the ideal conditions” (Raja “neoliberal” 27) for the rise and emergence of a state-sponsored extremist ideology in Pakistan’s political history. Consequently, the novel loses its potential to offer more complex, albeit historically specific modes of imagining

and experiencing religion at both individual and collective level. Given the fact that Hanif prefers to fictionalize the actual history of Pakistan, the novel is expected to offer a more critical and historically concrete angle to the reader to understand “Pakistan’s failure to cement an inclusive national belonging around “Islam” as a *lived culture* (Cilano 91 italics mine). Instead it tends to subordinate the “autonomous forms of community” under the material pressure of state (Chatterjee 33) which eventually hinders the way to appreciate and acknowledge the status and role of Islam in the domain of community. Without understanding the historical dynamics of religion in the collective culture, an overwhelmingly unilateral representation of State Islam tends to overwhelm and dominate the plural and autonomous expressions of religion in the life of community and ultimately eclipses the possibility to view it as a progressive cultural practice to be followed by a majority, if not all, of its adherents. In other words, an over-exaggerated and inflated representation of Islamization makes the mainstream Pakistani English writings an infinite aftermath of Zia and his monolithic and unitary version of Islam as the only imagined and imaginable option for the people.⁶

Unlike Hanif’s representation of Zia’s institutionalized version of Islam, Nadeem Aslam, in *Maps of Lost Lovers*, presents Islam and its various rituals and practices in a relatively narrow domain of community and culture. In analyzing Aslam’s terms of representation, my argument is primarily oriented in understanding the peculiar angle that presents Islam in a predominantly coercive light with its inherent incapacity to build the life of individuals and community. For the people living in *Dasht-e-Tanhai*, which is Aslam’s imaginative town in *Maps* religion or tradition do not play any healthy and positive role in redeeming the personal or collective dilemmas faced by them. Instead, it is mostly religion, in its abused and highly degraded form that becomes the cause of peoples’ sufferings and crises as one character in the novel calls tradition as if it is shit on their shoes that they have brought with them in this country (129). Another character Surrya expresses similar outlook when she feels that some of the laws in Islam are so inherently misogynist as if “Allah forgot there were women...thinking only of men” (150). In the same novel, we come across the poor plight of Chanda who is victimized by oppressive religious and cultural norms which do not allow her a way to (re)marry the man of her choice. Being twice married and once divorced, Chanda is now bound with her second husband who disappears after abandoning her in misery. If for Aslam religion is inherently petrified and rigid with no change, the only recourse left for Chanda is to live with her lover Jugnu outside the pale of marriage, that, eventually becomes the cause

of her ultimate tragedy as she is murdered by her brothers in the pretext of honor killing. Nonetheless, the text presents her to be living in sin with Jugnu with whom she is not legally married. The only way Aslam could show religious order to be evolving and dynamic is if it could help Chanda out of her predicament by allowing her the right to annul her previous marriage by herself. However, contrary to such holistic representation of Islamic law regarding marriage, Aslam presents it as static and incompatible to resolve the contemporary problems of modern society. Moreover, in presenting the plight of Chanda, Aslam, like Hanif, tends to create a conflationary discourse between honor-killing and an altogether different case of living outside wedlock. Thus, readers remain uncertain whether Chanda is killed on the bases of marrying a person of her choice (honor killing) or on the grounds of violating the religious norm of cohabitation without contracting a legal marriage.

The cumulative effect of such skewed representation in Aslam's fictional world can be seen in the form of an ever-escalating tension between tradition and modernity, conservatism and progressivism, and most of all between the religious and secular elements which seldom negotiate with each other so as to create what Said and Pratt, in their separate analyses, have termed a "contact zone" (1991, 1994).⁷ Despite showing a potential tension between modernity and orthodoxy, Aslam's fiction seems to miss the generative potential of this tension by failing to create a space for "flexibility and negotiation" (Waterman "Memory"136) resulting in a more productive synthesis in the rigid certitudes of both religious and secular poles. The novel fictionalizes this outlook in the character of Shams – a godless communist whose vehemence for the divine or sacred is squarely opposite to his wife Kaukab who is a thorough obscurantist with a grudging acceptance of others and only obsessed with her own purity and piety. The result is an incessant clash and conflict between the couple which brings about absolute disintegration of family and frustrates the possibility of a more viable syncretism in the larger cultural order. On a related note, a dialogue is only possible if the representatives of tradition and modernity are positioned as equal subjects in an ongoing process of dialogue and negotiation, without making either abandon their core values in favor of a nihilist epiphany or a bizarre cultural hybridity insensitive to the specifics of culture.⁸ One can vividly see this nihilism in case of Shams' sporadic recollection of his Hindu-turned Muslim father Chakor, resulting into an absolute loss of faith in his own as well as his children's choices that clash with the traditional mindset of his wife Kaukab and the rest of their family. With an impulse to celebrate this loss of faith, Shams can be seen as an alter ego of Aslam whose secular disposition offers a crucial litmus test of Aslam's artistic

imagination that underwrites the obnoxious representation of Islam, largely based on what Sardar has called the “images of ignorance” (34).

Far from debunking the Orientalists’ mystification about Islam as inherently militant and misogynist, such representation creates a potential semantic gap, a deliberate omission that affectively produces a representational crisis in Aslam’s text. This can be vividly seen where many instances of divine and prophetic traditions are quoted either mistakenly or in fragments without understanding their specific context in the total worldview of Islamic epistemology. The partial or out-of-context knowledge of these writers and the influence of Orientalist scholarship in their perception of Islam creates narrative conditions which conflate the total essence and spirit of religion with its crooked practice/observance in a community, causing a potential ontological omission which makes it almost impossible for the readers to question, let alone deconstruct the terms of such discourse. Whether it is Hanif’s out-of-context reference to “‘horses’ getting ready for the war” against Russian infidels (*Exploding* 26) or camels presented as “ugly, vicious animal[s]” with “hooves and humps pornography” (*Our Lady* 45), the texts present these objects and signs as devoid of the sacred signification in the total value system of Islam. In a similar fashion, Aslam projects the brutal practice of exorcism by the exorcist living in Britain by equating, even confusing, it with the belief in “djins, witchcraft and spirits” (186) as part of Islamic faith. This exorcist with a “beard large enough for the peacock to nest in” (186) is shown to be beating a poor girl (in the pretext of lunacy) for “several days with the mother and father...directly above reading the Koran out loud” (185). At the end, the girl is found dead, with her “arms and legs broken by a cricket bat” and her “chest...caved in as though she has been jumped on repeatedly” (186) and this all is justified for taking the evil spirit out of her body. In the same way, the moral crime of pedophilia, when it is committed by a cleric in the mosque, is hushed by the community of believers who thinks that if the culprit is caught and punished, it would bring shame and disgrace to the very image of imam. At times, the prophetic and divine saying (oral or written) are quoted out of context showing a conspicuous disregard for the historical and temporal complexity of these traditions. Whether it is Islam’s alleged misogyny in discriminating women on the bases of their biological obligations (*Maps* 195) or Prophet’s saying about women being in great number in hell than men (*Maps* 199), or his declaration about “memory and free will as two Satans beguiling men” (*Geometry* 107), one finds repeated instances of such omission in the fictional account of these writers. By presenting virtually countless images of religious obscurantism with its concomitant hypocrisy and moral rot, the

Anglophone Pakistani fiction presents an extremely corrupt and dreary image of Islam and Muslims in its purportedly (meta)fictional world to the extent that one character in *Maps* is inclined “to break Allah’s laws” (195) and another “no longer wishes to be Muslim” (199) culminating in Kaukab’s children’s absolute rejection of religious faith by considering it the major cause of individual and collective sufferings.

Such aesthetic or intellectual stance is likely to rob a specific community of the infinite source of happiness, consolation and personal solace which it derives from its religious beliefs and spiritual experiences. Collectively, with their ridicule and irreverence, such writings are instrumental in damaging the spiritual essence of a community that makes it distinct, even superior against other cultures and in turn enables it to sustain the outrageous pressure of western materialism and modernity.⁹ With their blanket disregard for a genuine spiritual or religious experience, these writers are instrumental in making their readers an uneasy selector of the modern and material world at the expense of their religious and spiritual distinction. On the other hand, such out of context and fragmentary representation reinforces an extremely bizarre, even whimsical image of Islam as inherently irrational and orthodox – hence fails to appeal and attract the more rational and intelligent sections of society. It also results in dehistoricizing the hitherto mutable and evolving significance/interpretation of these written and oral traditions in Islamic belief system. On the other hand, viewing and assessing Islam’s viability from the standpoint of its distorted and disfigured observance by a community can hardly produce a progressive and egalitarian version of religious faith, nor does it enable us to develop a more critical and reflexive angle of understanding the vital significance of religious imperative in the everyday life. There is another complex angle to the above debate, especially in case of Aslam’s peculiar representation of Islam in his imaginative writing. Interestingly, here, I find some striking parallel between him and another diasporic writer Salman Rushdie in terms of their outlook about religion in general and Islam in particular. This particular angle to Islam, in Sardar’s words, is “an angle of arrack formed by the Orientalist view of Islam” which is neither “influenced nor attuned to the nuances of Muslim sensitivities” (“Other Side” 127). My reference to multiple textual sites in Aslam’s text which are largely “divorced from the texture of Muslim feelings” (Sardar 127) further illustrate my argument that Aslam’s manner of representation is akin to Salman Rushdie as both tend to write and represent Islam without realizing the parameters of personal freedom or artistic self-expression. Besides sharing a diasporic identity, both seem to have shared an irreverent skepticism about religion as an imagined alternative with its potential to

become a viable and progressive cultural paradigm in modern times. Largely overwhelmed with a secular and ultra-rational outlook, both Aslam and Rushdie tend to offer an almost blanket rejection of Islam as a heteronormative religion by insisting that it is useless trying to revert the wheel of time to imagine what life was like in an Arabian desert as a “modern nation-state cannot be built on ideas” emerged there some fourteen hundred years before (Rushdie “Struggle” 239). Conversely, Aslam’s *Maps* vividly demonstrates similar outlook in a conversation between Kaukab and her children Mahjabeen, Chiragh, and Ujala when they reject religion on account of its alleged barbarity and orthodoxy. Without acknowledging the divine logic behind certain rituals, Chiragh’s provocative painting that he names “The Uncut Self-Portrait” suggests that undergoing circumcision as a Muslim boy was “the first act of violence done to (him) in the name of religion” (320). Realizing that this has caused considerable disarray to his mother, he vindicates, in the same breath, his right of expression by ‘breaking away from *all* the bonds and ties’ and by insisting that he “cannot paint *with handcuffs on*” (321 italics mine). In a yet more revealing expression, Aslam stretches the limits of individual self-expression via Jugnu, who attempts to prove his rational and scientific bent superior to any divine or sacred explanation by declaring that he would be least inclined to trust the judgment of a Prophet whom he declared, rather insolently, an “illiterate merchant-turned-opportunistic-preacher” (38). Given that these words have been uttered by one of his most skeptical and radically modern characters—Jugnu spares Aslam from being implicated for outright blasphemy, nonetheless, such expressions are enough to offend, even provoke a reader with religious sensitivities. Not only this, but such textual sites, when read critically, lead one to question the parameters of intellectual and artistic freedom and what are the limits of creative expression and permissible margins of questioning orthodoxy that a creative writer should observe without feeling any censure or criticism superimposed on him from his reading community?¹⁰

Such questions are crucial to understand, though from hindsight, the dominant outlook of the imaginative and fictional apparatus of Anglophone Pakistani writers with their disregard for the religious sensitivities of people, which in turn, is likely to create a culture of intolerance and violence by dividing society on clashing religious or ideological lines. In his succinct analysis of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and the Iranian Fatwa against it, Sardar shares his experience of reading the purportedly blasphemous content of the text by feeling as though Rushdie has “plundered everything that [he] hold(s) dear and despoiled the inner sanctum of [his] identity” (Introduction 10). He further points out the most damaging ontological effect of writing such a text by calling it a

“civilizational suicide” that with its “irreverent deconstruction” constitutes a “Poetics of Incitement” (Raja, “Democratic” 454) by spoiling “what is of fundamental value to at least a billion people on the planet” (Introduction 12), but also justifies this act with reference to an absolutist secular angle no less damaging than religious absolutism. In a similar context, Raja has questioned Rushdie’s terms of representation by arguing that a text’s privilege to exist cannot be asserted at the cost of violating a reading community’s cultural and religious sensitivities. Denying the material nuances of a specific interpretive/reading community that is directly or indirectly addressed through a text is mistaken as Raja argues that “the right of the text” cannot be materialized without considering the “right of the reader” who ultimately gives meanings to it (“Democratic” 451).

Even from a purely aesthetic standpoint, any critical judgment about such texts is bound to consider or encompass the specific nuances and subjectivities of an interpretive community by defining and outlining the permissible margins of artistic freedom. Paradoxically, the peculiar representation that I am arguing here (in the context of Rushdie and Aslam) seems to speak from a postmodernist angle that emphasizes the self-referential and rhetorical function of a literary text more than the mimetic or realist dimensions of it. Consequently, whereas the mainstream discursive representation on the subject of Islam is likely to create a potential semantic gap between the real and imagined domain of Islam, it tends to vindicate its terms of representation under the guise of a more metafictional function that it performs than a realist one. This can be clearly seen in the aftermath of Rushdie affair when the Muslim world was clearly divided on the bases of two opposite responses towards Rushdie’s alleged blasphemy about Islam and the Prophet of Islam. In the backdrop of the heated controversy that the book invokes, Rushdie himself wrote a defense of his subjective representation by terming it an imaginative representation of the sacred within Islamic history. Insisting on his right of using names, events, and locales which share clear resonance with Muslim faith and its notion of the sacred, Rushdie makes a rather paradoxical claim not to “treat fiction as if it were fact” and calls it a “serious mistake of categories” (“good” 409). However his pronouncement becomes spurious when in the same breath, he refuses to be complicit with the interpretive view that treats his novel as a novel only. Instead he makes an appeal to stretch the limits of its fictionality by calling it an attempt “to see the world anew” (393) and by offering “a work of radical dissent [to Islam]... from imposed orthodoxies of *all types*” (395-96 italics original). Not only this but time and again, he defended his rights of self-expression by insisting that “blasphemy and heresy far

from being the greatest evil, are the methods by which human thought has made its most vital advances” (“Struggle” 215).

In the backdrop of such claims, Rushdie’s appeal to treat his novel more seriously than fiction jeopardizes his previous claim of insisting on his freedom from the real world and his use of real events and characters from Islamic faith as “only tangentially historical” (“Good” 409). At the same time, he vindicates his point of view as “a secular man’s reckoning with the religious spirit” (396) and his right to write about concerns which at their core are religious or sacred, including the nature of revelation, prophecy, and faith in general. Like his previous claim, this proposition, once again, is not without problems as it indicates the puzzling and largely controversial relation between his proclaimed fictionality and its corresponding facticity, particularly in the domain of Muslim faith and history. Thus, justifying his text and the real or alleged access it makes in the context of Muslim faith, enables one to understand, if not justify, the treatment and response to his fiction from those whose religious sensibilities are definitely hurt by seeing and reading this radically subversive novel with its obvious mockery and ridicule. On the other hand, Rushdie’s rather (co)incidental use of the names like Mahound, Jibreel Farishta, Salman Farsi, Ayesha, and Jahilia (for his imaginative town) along with his provocative title *Satanic Verses* with its obvious reference to pagan deities is problematic as it is “unthinkable in [the] cultural imaginary” of many Muslims, even offensive to their subjective sensibility (Raja “Dem” 449). What makes it most provocative is the fact that these names have a clear resonance of similar images/names in the history of Islamic faith, hence can be taken neither tangential nor rhetorical, but material and real with obvious or covert ideological formation.

Within Islamic world, however, Rushdie’s text continued to ignite opposite responses as Suleri, one important name in Anglophone Pakistani prose, wrote a vindication of Rushdie’s stance for its “freedom from facticity” combined with its phantasmagoric ability to offer a radical challenge to religious orthodoxy and obscurantism. Suleri presents a strong advocacy of Rushdie’s stance of writing by urging the “academy to appreciate what she calls the text’s denial of closure by preserving the “*delicate and brave parameters of this piece of fiction*”” (206 italics mine).

Such critical position tends to ignore that when one approaches a literary texts, (s)he receives it “within the immanent domain of [her] own culture and its attendant reading practices”, suggesting that both the “arrival” and reception of a

text is hardly made in some “transcendent mode” (Raja “Dem” 449). That said, the very representation of Islam in Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* is an affront to an average Muslim reader and his sense of sacred, and no amount of postmodernist juggling with the real can baffle an informed readers of Islam to identify and in turn, question the hitherto metafictional or rhetorical claims of Rushdie which do not obscure the text’s obvious and direct reference to Islam and its notion of sacred. On a related note, the postmodernist claim of differentiating the rhetorical function of a text from an ideological one does not make sense for a reader trained and informed by contemporary debates in the domain of literary theories where the rhetorical function is inevitably linked, let alone subordinate or non-existent, to the mimetic function. This is premised by Masood Ashraf Raja when he argues that “instead of masquerading as an object without a reference,” a book like Rushdie’s, “comes to its readers as already constituted in the world and is read [by them] within the material realities of their own material existence” (“Dem” 452). In a different context, the Marxist critic Eagleton has strongly rejected this postmodernist stance of phantasmagoria with its proclaimed self-referentiality and autonomy by arguing that all acts of writing or speech are “never innocent of authority,” (“Ideology” 82) hence, ideological and not merely rhetorical. On this premise, Rushdie’s vindication of an aesthetic or artistic license with a simultaneous reluctance to concede its ideological or political ends is fallible as it refuses to admit the historical and material consequences of such claim for a particular community (Sardar and Raja).

As discussed before, the discursive accounts (fiction and non-fiction both) by Anglophone Pakistani writers present Islam as a divisive project which in Said’s view is predominantly binaristic as it creates an unbridgeable cleavage between radical or moderate, extremist or modern versions without the possibility of a mutual interaction or negotiation (“Orientalism Reconsidered”).¹¹ Paradoxically, the contemporary scholarship on the subject of Islam seems to have done little in dissolving the binary in favor of a more ambivalent yet productive space that resists such either/or formulations. While I share Spivak’s skepticism about the essentialist formation of concepts (turning into neat categories) by emphasizing their more strategic and heuristic use, I argue that the mainstream discursive representation on the subject of Islam is invariably tilted in favor of an extremely polarized image of Islam. Here Islam is portrayed as strewn with conflicts and clashes between past and present, skepticism and certitude, and most of all reason and blind orthodoxy. The Muslim culture, as a result, is presented as subject to an internal conflict that manifests itself in the form of various kinds of Islam, rational, mystic or political with their mutually

incompatible sets of assumptions, hence failing to offer a more heuristic definition of what it means to be a cultural collective and what is the role of religion in the construction of such culture?

Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *The Geometry of God*, which is contextualized in the immediate and concrete context of Pakistan's history during Zia's martial law regime, seems to present the nature of this conflicting version of Islam that I have posited before. Thus, Aba stands for a rigid definition of Islam and Pakistan as contrived by Zia to legitimize his political control and his party is instrumental in imposing this myopic definition of a collective national identity on all people. Using Cilano's argument, one can, doubtlessly, identify a glaring paradox in Zia's mistaken or at least partial definition of a Pakistani Identity which was contrived on a static version of regional and religious orientations, giving way to an intolerant and bigoted view of Islam (108). In the narrative, the one who questions the legitimacy of this cultural and political identity/definition is Zahoor – a paleontologist who, along with his granddaughter Amal, searches for fossils in the mountain range of Marghla. With his ultra-rationalist outlook Zahoor eventually develops absolute differences turning into a violent clash with the political rhetoric of Aba and his allies – a kind of fictional representation of Zia and his coercive Islamization. As the novel progresses, Zahoor expresses his skepticism about the plausibility of a religious worldview to meet the modern challenges and in so doing, seems not to acknowledge the crucial significance of religious imperative in the collective imaginary of Pakistan.¹² With his subjective choice of not fasting in the month of Ramazan (Khan 157) or drinking wine in his friends' gathering (125) to a more scientific or rational outlook about human evolution, Zahoor is eventually distanced from his family including his son and son-in-law who reject his views by considering them contrary to their religious belief. The novel exhibits this conflict in the case of Amal who is taught the Urdu Alphabet Alif by Zahoor and her father simultaneously. While her father insists her to learn *Alif* for Allah, Zahoor teaches her to say *Alif* for *Aql* (literally reason), a conflict that Amal is unable to resolve during the course of the novel (6). Like her, Noman, the other important character of the novel is far apart and alienated from the political rhetoric of his father for whom there is "no marriage between faith and reason, only adultery" (101). That this mutual tension between faith and reason, instead of producing some viable synthesis between the two, results in the form of an intergenerational conflict that Amal and Noman experience, pointing to the larger conflict beyond the limited realm of fiction.

What problematizes Khan's representation of Islam is that it is predominantly informed by a secular liberal paradigm by seeing little or no room for a religious worldview, hence fails to serve a more compatible definition of cultural becoming in Pakistan. Thus, Zahoor subscribes to a rationalist and material explanation of reality as the only plausible option by declaring world "his Kaaba" (8). Likewise, in his absolute insistence on "a science of fluid moments" (7) he tends to ignore the spiritual and intuitive side of human life and creates confusion and chaos for those standing in between such absolutism. In his blanket rejection of Awa's stance, Zahoor seems to align with the view that, according to Awan, is skeptical about the plausibility of finding "solutions of world/worldly problems in religious discourse" (110). With his absolute reliance on the material and rational explanation of reality characterized by "fluke encounters" (11), he is unable to appreciate and conceive Islam's potential to become a progressive political discourse. Hence, despite all his openness and liberalism, he becomes instrumental in widening, if not creating, this polarization between reason and faith. On the other hand, Awa's dogged clinging to a literalist reading of the divine frustrates the possibility of negotiation and synthesis between him and Zahoor, making the rest "suffocating between beard and brass" (83) and a mere "slave to dead literalist" (162). The novel ends with an escalating tension between Zahoor and Awa with the final effect of producing an almost irreconcilable animosity between rationalist and religious orthodoxies and resulting in the failure of a collective cultural becoming.

Waterman comments on the complex relationship between these poles by arguing that "rather than view[ing] such discord in binary terms...these arguments can be better understood through a Bergsonian notion of time as becoming" ("Geological" 179). By referring to this idea of becoming (whether Muslim or human) Zahoor's attempts to relate present with past via his interest in evolution project is significant. However, what he fails to understand is that past is not a thing past but is "moving along with and operating in, the present..." (Waterman 181). In the same way, Awa, as the second important pair of this binary is ossified in a frozen past where he is "not illuminated" but merely "encumbered by history" (Khan 107). His constant denial to admit any reflection on human origin and evolution and his insistence on his reading as the only valid and viable reading (Khan 36) demonstrates his incapacity to appreciate that future is not a mere entity "yet to be traversed" but is present "as an open possibility" (Waterman 181). However, in the rigid certitude of reason and faith, the narrative offers a fissure through Junayd and Mehwish – Zahoor's blind granddaughter whose outlook may offer a possible synthesis to this divisive antagonism. With

his belief in the “science of fixed moments” (7) Junayd tries to introduce a new facet of sensibility in the rigid binaries between Zahoor and Aba which can be further developed by merging what the narrative has termed as *aqal-e-amli* and *aqal-e-nazri* – the Urdu connotation of reason and intuition respectively.

By way of implication, the reason of the contemporary crisis in the project of Islam is the absence of this vision and the possible solution to resolve this dilemma is to unite the rational and intuitive elements in a unique yet balanced fusion of reason and faith.¹³ However, this could not be achieved in the imaginative setting of Khan’s narrative in *Geometry* as Junayd dies in an attempt to save Zahoor from a bullet aimed to kill him. His death, nonetheless, reverberates as an act of sacrifice offered by mystic/intuitive Islam to the irreconcilable poles of Aba and Zahoor with their failure to realize that the clash between them is not the clash in reality but, in fact, a clash in perspective which is negotiable. Without clinging to a static notion about the complex puzzle of human evolution, Junayd and Mehwish offer a more holistic definition of cultural becoming by pointing to the myriad possibilities of life and reality.

If one takes Khan’s imaginary world a fictionalized representation of the actual political history, the novel raises certain troubling questions regarding Islam’s role in the collective imagery of Pakistan. Thus Zahoor’s death, at the end of the novel, allows a tiny minority of Aba and his cronies to hijack and baffle the majority of Pakistan’s polity with a truncated and bigoted version of Islam. As an enlightened intellectual Zahoor’s incapacity to acknowledge the vital role of religion in constituting an “alternative affective attachment to a national collective” (Cilano 111) results in the failure of intellectuals to contrive and promote what Rizvi has termed as a “participatory and egalitarian Islamic system” (qtd. in Cilano 107). The aftermath of this intellectual outlook that supported a largely secular version of polity and state can be seen in the form a vacuum which was filled by Aba in fictional Pakistan and simultaneously by Zia in real Pakistan. In this way, the mainstream intellectual discourse of which the Anglophone Pakistani fiction is an important derivative, has been instrumental in downplaying the public imperative of religion and its generative potential in the construction of a more plural and inclusive intellectual and political order. Likewise, in their attempt to reject and challenge Zia’s myopic definition, Pakistani English writers have failed to offer an alternative definition which can encompass a more comprehensive vision of collective national identity with its spiritual and material sides.

In the world of bifurcating divisions and mutual differences, the epistemological claim of finding solutions of worldly problems in and from religion(s) is not absolutely vacuous. What is intellectually pressing and worthwhile is to explore those structures of solidarities which unite and connect people, and religion offers the possibility of such negotiation provided its potential of ambiguity and inclusion is fully invested. That such futurist vision of Islam is possible, as Zia-uddin Sardar has argued convincingly, with an intellectual paradigm that emphasizes “the interconnection between the sacred and the profane, physics and metaphysics, thought and reality... (116).¹⁴ Instead of believing in a binary logic about cosmic reality, this view holds and unites faith and reason together by moving towards, what Gilmartin has called a more complex understandings of the relationship between ‘ideals and realities, between *din* (faith) and *dunya* (world)’ by viewing them not merely “conflicts to be resolved, but frameworks for the never-ending negotiations that sustain community... and make social life possible” (523). What is needed is to introduce a religious idiom and narrative that without being orthodox and monolithic creates conditions which facilitate the construction of community and culture on lines as Asad Badruddin says:

While religion comes from the same source, it is up to different countries and peoples on how to interpret it to enrich their lives. That is why the Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia is different from the one practiced in most of Pakistan. The role of religion (in all of its cultural, spiritual, non-denominational and ritual manifestations) will remain in society. What is important is for thinkers to *channel* it into a *force* that is creative and not destructive, inclusive and pluralistic, not one that imposes its will on the unwilling (qtd. in Waterman “Saudi” 256, italics mine).

That this imaginative alterity in various literary and intellectual projects can become an important site in reorienting and redirecting the collective imagination of people by demystifying the otherwise divisive categories and by reconstructing the religious idiom and thought in order to bring incremental changes in society. On a related note, what is different can never be celebrated at the cost of what is shared, and this shared in most parts of the world comes from those lasting cultural and religious values which are fast annihilating or declining in this postmodernist global world order. An intellectual project that is mindful of this dimension is likely to bridge the distance among people of different cultures and communities and enable them to accept and respect differences in order to create a more plural and inclusive social order. The blueprint of this social order can be sketched out in an inclusive and progressive discourse on and about the role of

religion in general and Islam in particular, with its openness to diversity, denial to closure and most of all willingness to embrace synthesis as a necessary condition for intellectual and cultural growth.

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Notes:

¹ Interestingly the only brand of intellectuals who were obviously radical and subversive towards the religious sentiments of the people were left-wing intellectuals. Consequently, this left-wing Marxist “social vision” was deemed “dangerous” not merely by the “conservatives and religious reactionaries but the majority of the Urdu literary and intellectual community, whose “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1977; Ahmad, 1993) was still defined by the “progressivism” of the pre-Independence period” (79). It was this particular brand of intellectuals who became the precursor of the current generation of Anglophone Pakistani intellectuals and writers.

² I would particularly refer to this development as it started immediately after Independence when Quaid-e-Azam established the Department of Islamic Reconstruction as a kind of Think-tank or advisory board for outlining policies for the government in modern Islamic context and made Muhammad Asad the head of this organization. Later on, many progressive intellectuals like Fazlurehman became part of similar initiatives during Ayub regime. For more details see the Journal by The Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan and Dawn EOS, Sunday September 30, 2018.

³ Needless to say, this group has considerably achieved this goal by making Objective Resolution as a preamble of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. Nonetheless, for those envisioning a more secular identity of Pakistan, the inclusion of Islam in the working of state has belied the modernist and secular vision of Pakistan and is viewed as discriminatory for many religious minorities within the country (Ispahani and Rehman).

⁴ In the same context, Sardar also argues that instead of a gradual introduction of Sharia which ensures to improve people's living conditions, a ruthless and sudden indoctrination of criminal laws without a prerequisite of introducing religious, spiritual and social reforms is a mistaken beginning and many postcolonial nations have witnessed the dire implication of such imposition for the people ("Sahri'ah" 67-76).

⁵ For further details of this case, see Charles Kennedy *Islamization of Laws and Economy, Case Studies on Pakistan. Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, The Islamic Foundation.*

⁶ In using this term, I acknowledge the interesting critique of Aijaz Ahmad who objects to the intellectual attitude of privileging colonialism as the primary "principle of structuration" in the history of colonized nations by exclaiming that "all that came before colonialism becomes its own prehistory and whatever comes after can only be lived as infinite aftermath" ("Literary Postcoloniality" 7).

⁷ In her keynote address to the Modern Language Association, Pratt explains her concept by referring to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power... (34). For more details see, Mary Lousie Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone, *Profession*:33-40

⁸ I would particularly refer to Aslam's recurrent reference to illicit sex and bodily pleasure, particularly the images of late night party of white men and women "smelling of alcohol, hair and clothing awry" (144) or Surrya and Shmas's secret meetings at Scandal Point (197-198), signifying their revolt against a culture that is "based on *segregation*, and on the *denial and contempt of human body*" (133 italics mine).

⁹ In saying this, I have in mind the subtle distinction that Chatterjee has made between east and west with their spiritual and material distinction by emphasizing that the spiritual essence of east are the means to overcome the onslaught of western modernity and dominance. For details see Chatterjee's *Empire and Nation*.

¹⁰ Here I refer to another instance of ridicule and insolence about Jesus Christ in Muahmmad's Hanif's second novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* where he compares the moribund state of a Christian sanitary worker Joseph and his clan with that of Christ in the following words:

He feels that finally they have pulled Yassoo down to their level, as if Yassoo wasn't the savior of all mankind, but a *janitor* who went round cleaning their streets, then sat in a corner drinking his Choorah chai from his Choorah cup until the day he quietly died and ascended to a Choorah heaven (121 italics mine).

¹¹ One indigenous expression of this outlook can be seen in Pakistani historian Mubarak Ali's collection of articles where he has divided Muslim culture and history into mutually antagonistic categories of *Ulema, Sufis and Intellectual* (Fiction House Lahore 1996).

¹² I have made a detailed analysis of this conflict about the rigid definition of Zia's Pakistan and Islam in my Ph.D thesis.

¹³ I have elsewhere analyzed the possible fusion of reason and intuition in Khan's narrative that could possibly enable Islam to come out of this polarization by using Iqbal's notion of *Aql* and *Ishq*. The idea was presented in the form of a paper in FCCU Humanities Conference in 2017 entitled *What Went Wrong with Political Islam?: The Dialectics of Tension between Militant and Mystic Islam in Uzma Aslam Khan's The Geometry of God*. The same argument in the form of an article is under the process of publication in a journal by a Public University in Pakistan.

¹⁴ In the similar connection, Sardar argued that the very phenomenon of specialized discipline is rather a late aspect of human civilization, as late as post-Enlightenment era of modern west. On the contrary, Muslim civilization with its polymathic view of knowledge has emphasized a more

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integrated view of knowledge – a view that has decisively influenced the intellectual development of modern west. For more details see Sardar’s “Reformist” 115).