



RESEARCH PAPER

A Critique of the Misuse of Religious Discourse in South-Asia in Aslam's *The Golden Legend*

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: June 18, 2021	Aslam in <i>The Golden Legend</i> (2017) has attempted to record the misuse of religious discourse and its impacts on personal and political levels focusing on South-Asia's most relevant country Pakistan. This research is qualitative where Guha's ideas of Dharma and Danda from his masterpiece <i>Dominance Without Hegemony</i> (1997) has been used to unlock the text. Guha argues that before the arrival of the masters in the subcontinent certain forces were being projected in society in order to keep the lower classes on periphery. Subaltern voices were shocked and mocked openly. Aslam has magnanimously recorded the situation of subalterns where these are still at periphery and are living in ghettos to face the existential crises they are suffering from. Pakistani fiction is wonderfully focusing on all those sections of society which are deliberately being marginalized. Aslam's liberal approach proposes love which can bind people irrespective of racial religious and sexual orientation. He overtly mocks at the idea of using religion in order to kick the masters off from the sub-continent. Aslam's acute picture shows that in this nation-state, subalterns are still facing threat because of the misuse of religious narrative and its ontology.
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Introduction

South-Asia is one of the largest continents for being "home to a quarter of the global population" (Talbot, 2017, p. iii). Historically it has been the center for geopolitics because Aryan, Muslims and British colonizers had invaded it respectively which begot pluralism. It is geographically and politically rich area which enjoys precious natural resources and profound diversity of myriad lingual manifestations, cultural practices, ethnic tribes and religious rituals but at the same time is "notable

for tolerance and co-existence" (Ollapally, 2008. p.1). But some discursively ignited clashes have marred the beauty of the whole land which have become a source of prolonged crises of the region — Afghanistan's fight with two superpowers, India's illegal occupation of Kashmir, conflicts in Pakistan's Northern Areas, Tamil Tigers sabotaging the whole structure of Sri Lanka, brutal, inhuman and horrific ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and growing strife in Nepal. These issues present plethora of untouched subjects which are attracting both literary and non-literary writers at home as well as abroad.

Religion has been one of the most powerful discourses or meta-narratives which direct human actions and behavior. It provides the sophisticated rules which can be the source of emancipation in this transitory life and the hereafter by providing a systematic structure to humans for leading their lives in a peaceful co-existence. But extremists start using it as a tool in order to maintain their own hegemony to blight the peace of the world for their own benefits. Pakistan is a country where religious sensibilities are being (mis)used in order to sabotage the social space. Ignorance, low literacy rate, poverty, geo-political or geo-economic games of imperial powers and metaphysical desire to achieve heaven are the main roots which work as the stimulus to energize people for destruction, death and barbarity.

Current generation of Pakistani fiction writers is rewriting the history of the globe by deconstructing official records of the big brother so that the silenced voices can also be heard. In this struggle these writers produce such reality as does not just remain the history but presents something which is "more than history without becoming false" (Waterman, 2015, p.157). They are documenting those events of national as well as international significance which have destabilized personal as well as political life at home and abroad like Bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 by America, so-called civilizing mission of the British in the Sub-Continent, Afghan Jihad, suppressive rules of military dictators and their politically motivated desire to Islamize the country, *Partitions* of 1947 and 1971, and the 9/11 crisis. This research aims to shed lights on how religion is being misused in South-Asian space by delimiting its focus on Pakistan as highlighted by a well-known Anglophone Pakistani literary writer Nadeem Aslam in his novel *The Golden Legend* (2017).

Since its beginning, Pakistan has been baffled with a question as to what extent religion can be the part of public or private affairs. Dictator Zia-ul-Haq left no stone unturned to export certain codes in the name of religion which destabilized the whole country from its foundations. Constitutions are formed keeping in view the religious doctrines but the real spirit of religion is hard to observe. Pakistani political elites are unable to take decisive actions against religiously-covered scholar-cum-clowns because of their usage of religiously motivated discourse that touches the sentiments of the masses by playing with the innermost feelings of their hearts. They have failed to uphold the principles of democracy, justice, personal freedom and equity as provided by all religions. People with long beards and small shalwars not being successful to acculturate, can die for their religion but are not ready to lead their lives according to the rules provided by it. Pakistan is a country where almost 90 % shops are named after theocratic titles like *Madina Milk Shop* and *Makka Shopping Mall* etc. but

neither milk or any other product is pure. Certain satanic figures like armed clerics of Lal Masjid and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F) having the persona of religion can sabotage the structure of even powerful governments. Incidents like Lal Masjid insurgency, the tragedy of Gojra and Josep Colony, Mischal Khan murder, throwing a Christian couple in Furnace, Faizabad Tragedy are the best instances of it.

In *The Golden Legend* (2017) Aslam has attempted to portray those mini-narratives which are deliberately erased from the official narratives injected by the so-called guardians of morality wandering in Pakistan. He has notified the probability of dangerous consequences upon personal and political lives of subaltern sections if politically motivated misuse of religion can become a practice in a society. At the same time in order to mitigate the intensity of this Kafkaesque situation he seems to be very optimistic in presenting relationship between two characters Imran a Muslims boy and Helen- a Christian girl, by suggesting that love can bind people without any religious, racial, gender and ethnic orientations. The main focus of this research is to highlight the injuries inflicted upon the subaltern classes by the (mis)using religious discourse.

Literature Review

Since the beginning of the world Religion has been a binding force which collects its heterogeneous followers under one roof infusing and strengthening an unprecedented solidarity being the “essential element of nationalism” (Aziz, 1967, p.96). Aziz argues that “nationalism” has been “thriven on religious background” which became the foundation of “modern national states” or nation-states serving like the “political church organizations” (p. 96). It is no denying the fact that it was the *religion* which served as the constitutive force in the creation of Pakistan by ushering in an identity which was both “Islamic and National” (Jalal, 2014 p.11). Islam and Hinduism along with Sikhism were the two major religions in the sub-continent.

Colonial policies which superseded Hindus over Muslims led the Muslims demand their separate state where they could live according to their culture propounded by Islam. Bakhsh (2017) records this tendency by arguing that exponents of a separate state used “Islam as a mobilizing tool for Muslim communities” and “as an attractive idea and convenient political slogan” (16). Pakistan was created in the name of Islam did not signify that non-Muslims would have no room in newly born democratic state because Jinnah, being the “sole spokesman” (Jalal, 1994, p.4) was well aware of the danger which can engulf Pakistan by narrow-minded parochial kind of orthodox religious scholars who would try hard (even are now trying) to “purify” it (Ispahani, 2015, p.4). Irrespective of any discrimination, he gave all the minorities their rights to be “the equal citizens” of the state (p.4). He advocated the birth of this state not just on religious basis but also on secular or humanist ideologies. This idea has been strengthened by Jalal (2014) who testifies:

Jinnah first asserted that India’s 90 million Muslims were not a minority but a nation. He made the claim with no reference to

any Islamic convention. Instead, Jinnah took his clues from the contemporary internationalist discourse on territorial nationalism and the doctrine of self-determination. (p.13)

After the demise of Quaid-e-Azam, the whole country became a play-ground for national as well as international politicians where they could fulfill their own personal whims experimenting their dirty politics. Even after the exclusion of (ex) master an unholy alliance between political and military elites with the help of bureaucratic officers covered under the rubric of religion pushed Pakistan into a cul-de-sac. Now the words like Pakistan, Islam or Muslim have “become a metaphor for barbarism and violence” (Kanwal, 2015, p.3). Researches have tried to dig deep the reasons of this socio-political decay but I argue that it is the dictator, General Zia who in his attempt to Islamize the whole nation, denying the cultural, lingual, ethnic and religious diversity has devastated the stratum of country. My argument has been strengthened by Muhammad Hanif who once expressed in an interview that “it is not the nation who buried Zia, it is Zia who buried the whole nation” (Saleem, 2015, p.209). An overview of Zia’s attempt to rule, hiding under pan-Islamic ideology is very pertinent to understand the crises Pakistan is suffering from.

General Zia took power by a military coup in 1977 and shattered the whole democratic and political fabric of the country by demolishing National Assembly and having the cabinet which could serve him the best by “embrac[ing] the hardline religious lobby as his constituency all over Pakistan” (Begum, 2017, p.140). Religio-political parties like Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) backed Zia in implementing barbaric precepts which choked the whole nation. Jaamt-i-Islami supervised by Molana Modudi became his right hand which supported him in every cruel action because he was the ardent lover of “conservative Islamic teaching of Syed Abul Ala’Mawdudi” and openly called himself as “rightest” (Begum, 2017, p.134). Maulana’s role in Pakistani movement is not an implicit record but Zia formed a force with Jammāt’s people to implement inhuman doctrines using the name of Islam and “boys” belonging to their families were “awarded with a large number of jobs in army” (Saleem, 2011, p.18) and conservative religious clerics were posted on “key positions within the state bureaucracy” (Jalal, 2014, p.249).

Zia’s policies destabilized the country from its foundations but women and minorities are the ones who suffered the most. He played with the status of women by making it “a central plank of his Islamization policies” (Jalal, 2014, p.249). Hadoood ordinance was introduced in 1979 which imposed strict ban on women’s contribution in all walks of life. They were caged inside the home because state sponsored so-called “sanctity of the char diwari, or the four walls of the home, was drummed into a populace susceptible to religious conservatism by Wahbi ideologies like Maulvi Israr Ahmad” (Jalal, 2014, p. 248-249). Situation of women who were the victim of sexual assaults was made more unfortunate by being imprisoned if any of them was unable to provide “four witnesses to the rape” just “to prove that the woman had been forced” (Naheed, 2017, p.122). His politically motivated attempt of foreign funded Islamization narrowed women ‘to the status of second class citizens’ and left ‘an mistakable Saudi imprints’ (Jalal, 2014, p.249). Many female activists who tried to defy

Zia were tortured brutally in public with severe punishments which is contrary to the basic doctrines of Islam that preach respect for females. Pakistan's slogan "*Pakistan Ka Matlab Kea, La Ilaha Ilal Allah*" was metamorphosed into "*Pakistan Ka Matlab Kea, Phaansi, Kore, Geneal Zia*" (Toor, 2011, p. 125).

Zia's inclination towards Wahabi version of Islam pushed other sects on periphery by forcing them to accept the narrow and metaphysical interpretations of religion. Because of Iranian revolution in 1979 and attack on Makka's great Mosque in the same year, Royal family ruling in Saudi Arabia started smelling some existential threats which could push their dynasty in blind alley. They exported Wahabism in Pakistan in order to hold a check on any move of shia community. The political maneuverings of Islam by Zia "empowered Sunni clergy" leaving the Shia community "very vulnerable" (Begum, 2017, p. 182). Zia imposed Zakat on every Muslim living in Pakistan which was contrary to the Shia's system of Khumus. Shia's representative, Mufti Jafar Hussain, left council and gathered the whole shia community to stage a protest by founding an organization Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria (TNFJ) against the Sunni law which was being forced upon them (Begum, 2017, p. 183). In order to curb the Shia's activism, Sunnis theocratic scholars formed an organization Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba (ASS) after staging two conferences. Backed by military dictator and funded by Arab counties it started attacking Shia community all over the Pakistan which have born countless casualties leaving deadly imprints on Pakistani polity (p. 184).

Theoretical Frame Work

Through various illustrations captured in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017), this research pinpoints the unjust treatment towards the subalterns of Pakistan following Guha's portrayal of oppressed class in the colonial as well as precolonial India in *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (1997). He attempted to record the power structure of both eras. He argues that in both periods subalterns were considered inert characters of society who were just to be exploited and serve as slaves with no room in social participations. He delineates that colonial state hegemonizes the masses especially subaltern sections because the master did not give them "any citizenship" (p. 20) denying rules of justice and law. Master was so blind with power that his tenure just produced "a series of inequalities" (p. 20) between him and the oppressed classes. Guha posits that this power relation between the ruler and the subject or between the master and the subaltern classes was the result of a systematic composition of power that came from the relationship of Dominance and Subordination. British Colonizers started their notorious mission with a slogan to spread civilization to Asian people who were according to them "Primitive" (Said, 1979, p. 119) or barbaric and had nothing to do with humanity. Inspired by Kipling's co-called *White Man Burden's* drama, colonial masters left no stone unturned to use force in order to yoke the natives with oppressive shackles. Guha argues that colonizers fulfilled their dream of ruling over the land and accumulating the wealth with the use of force because "there can be no colonialism without coercion" (Guha,

1997, p. 24). They achieved their vested goals with the help of explicit force which was used in a brutal way shattering the false cover of white civilization. He says that masters "used power of the sword effectively to cut through the maze of conflicting jurisdiction exercised by a moribund Mughal Emperor" (pp. 24,25) He quotes Warren Hastings who was of the view that sword was the most authentic "title the British had to sovereignty in India" (p. 25). This use of coercive tools to appropriate force for personal ends "gave way to an orderly control" (p.24) and the word conquest which was hostile to their civilization mission was changed with "the idiom of order" (p.25). This order was inflicted upon them "by the coercive apparatuses of the state" (p.25) which was manifest in form of the largest deadly army of the empire. Guha introduced the Indian term Danda that is used as the metaphor for coercive tools. Colonizers used Danda to keep the subaltern classes under control. It represents "power, authority and punishment" (p. 29). Danda instilled fear into the masses who were easily suppressed, oppressed, harnessed and subjugated. Danda was considered as the expressionist reality of divine law in the dealings of the state as it was helpful in emphasizing the intense modes of, "force and fear as the fundamental principles of politics" (p.29).

The other period of Indian history which Guha traced out is the pre-colonial period of Indian historiography. As the colonial master subjugated subaltern classes with the help of coercive tool i.e. Danda, the indigenous elites also suppressed the subaltern classes for their benefits to maintain hegemony by using "the idiom of Dharma" (p.34). Dharma, a Hindi word which means religion, was the strongest tool used by the elites to justify their inhumane actions inflicted upon the subaltern sections which meant "to protect, foster, support and promote the subordinate" (p.35). Guha quotes Kosambi who delineates about the pre-modern condition of India. He is of the view that elites promoted a new structure whose aim was to end up the divisions between the elites and the lower sections with "reconciliation of classes" (p. 35). "The special tool" which was used for this purpose was "universal Dharma"(35). This Drama was meant to bring equality, justice, freedom and human dignity. But "misleading outer covering of Dharma" (35) was used not for equity but for hegemonizing the subaltern classes to keep them under control. Guha delineates that Indian national elites also used religion to unite people for freedom movement. Religion was the greatest force which inspired people to demand freedom from colonizers but "the more the middle class united in nationalism inspired by dharma the more the exclusive aspects of Hindu dharma divided the nation" (p.36).

Results and Discussion

In *The Golden Legend* (2017), Aslam highlights the inhumane (mis)use of religion by the powerful elites in Pakistani context which is replete with countless problems like extremism, terrorism, females' degradation in private as well as public space, crises of minority groups and proxy wars played by certain extreme poles like Saudi-Arabia(America) and Iran(Russia). Aslam like other metropolitan writers enjoys the privilege of writing the stories of his homeland by living even abroad but situating his heart in the sub-continent. He has documented those neglected truths which have been silenced by the powerful elites by using the card of religion to maintain their hegemony. As Pakistan has undergone the ordeal experience of

colonization, Postcolonial Theoretical angles are apt to dig deep the hidden treasures of this beautiful piece of fiction. The notions of the founder of Subaltern Studies Ranajit Guha from his work *Dominance without Hegemony* (1997) have been used to unearth the text to give voice to the voiceless binaries. In this novel we see the appropriation of religion on personal (community) and political (state) levels just to achieve ulterior goals by those sections of society who have nothing to do with the essence of any religion. Aslam has focused on the sufferings of the subaltern classes due to the clashes of some barbaric codes enforced in the name of religion and as to how religion is being used and abused just to fulfill vested benefits which are hostile to any egalitarian society.

America's desire to become superpower like other imperialist powers had led Pakistan to wage a war against godless communists in Afghanistan, the price of which is still being paid by the whole country in the forms of radicalization, terrorism and extremism. America (mis)used the name of jihad, one of the main components of Islamic faith, for her personal benefits where she can be at the top of the world without sacrificing even a single soldier. CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) got a hard-core dictator of Pakistan agreed to get his nation die for religion to embrace martyrdom to go to paradise. Saudi-Arabia which is considered to be the supreme leader of the Muslim countries provided money to Pakistan which was used to purchase the weapons from America hence providing her financial benefits too. After 9 years Soviet nation fell and returned back after facing defeat. America's aim had been fulfilled and the Taliban which was produced to fight for faith to maintain America's supremacy and promote capitalist desires were no longer useful now.

9/11 is also one of the most decisive events in the history of modern civilization which was used by America as a pretext to wage a war on terror that does not provide anything except more terror and horrific situation in the world. Kanwal (2015) terms it as "an unfinished business of the cold war" (p.6) whose aftermaths have shaken the foundation of the Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other oil-rich states. After this incident, Pakistan helped America as it did in 1980s. America's distrust grew against Pakistan when Usama was killed in Pakistan by American and phrases like Pakistan being a *safe-haven to terrorists* or a *terrorist country* or *failed state* began to emerge on international stage. America's diplomat Ramond Davis driving a car in Lahore killed two citizens of Pakistan and was arrested at the spot. The killing of two boys ignited severe crises in Pakistan further exacerbating the situation between Pakistan and USA. USA got her man back but what happened to those who suffered in this geo-political game is the main interest of Aslam's novel. As he is not just a historian but a man of literature. He digs deep and unearths the story of suffering which has been intentionally removed from the stage because of the wish of the big brother. He has documented those neglected truths which are the essence to the story. He amalgamates historical events in his fiction to present a story "to fill in the gaps of genuine historical record" (Waterman, p. 56, 2015). Through this work Aslam has pinpointed the sufferings of the subaltern classes who became the victim of the geo-political game played by powerful elites.

In *The Golden Legend* (2017) two characters Massud and his wife Nargis decide to form a human chain with the help of students saving the sanctity of the books containing the sacred names as on vehicles there was a problem of "something coming into contact with uncleanness" (Aslam, 2017, p. 9). In this process of transportation, a vehicle of an American spy with mobile phone containing the photos of "numerous Pakistani military installation" (Aslam, 2017, p.17) stops near the human chain and showers bullets randomly killing two persons on two bikers, which according to him, were chasing him. Massud, saving a child from bullets is shot at his neck and dies later. The whole world of Nargis and the families of the dead boys sinks leaving no option except to accept the fate. American government needs its man to be freed at any cost and wants Nargis to "appear in court" to announce the pardon for American man as her own "free, definer and true wish" (Aslam, 2017, p. 63). On the other hand, the militant group residing in Zamana's Mosque wants the murderer's strict trial to be hanged so that America must learn a lesson from it. She is asked by them to be a true Muslim by following a genuine spirit of a universal Muslim brotherhood. The cleric tries to convince her by reminding her that you "face Mecca when you pray, not Washington" and "have mosque that is twice as old as the united states.....three times as old" (Aslam 2017, P.58-59). He asks her not to accept the money just "in the name of Islam, in the name of Pakistan which was [also] created in the name of Islam" (Aslam,2017, p.59). America takes the shelter of Islamic laws in which a murderer can be forgiven if he pays the Deeyet (blood money) to the relatives of the bereaved family. Once again America fulfills her wish under the rubric of religion as it did in 1980s by using Jihadi sentiments of the Muslims in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Human history is replete with numerous instances where oppressor can hegemonize weaker by appropriating the laws according to his own wishes. Lily's answers to her daughter about American spy is apt when he says "America is a powerful country" and "One way or the other it will get what it wants. I may be almost illiterate but I know that much" (Aslam, 2017, p. 42). Aslam highlights that corruption is rampant in Pakistani institutions where courts can be molded according to the wish of the Big Brother. In the text, the judge declares that the civil court has been changed into "a Sharia Court" (Aslam, 2017, p.342) where all representatives of the bereaved family sign his forgiveness in return of money or US citizenship. The US Ambassador is told about the news of her man's clearance with these words "the laws of Allah took precedence over the laws of humans; the American man was free" (Aslam, 2017, p. 342). In this geopolitical game, Nargis already in mournful condition is sandwiched between the two extremes, one (America) demanding her to forgive the man and second (militants) which wants to teach a lesson to America. Aslam's depiction of the plight of Nargis shows as to how powerful blocks can destabilize the life of a layman who has nothing to do with the interests of greater games played on greed and lust by appropriating religion.

Aslam's novel is embedded in Pakistan's socio-political and religious cauldron which is pushing it into a stone age. In Pakistan powerful theocratic scholars use mosque as God's Office where He denounces people for their bad prohibited acts. A molvi who enjoys the status of being a direct spokesman of Allah, (mis)uses Mosque's loudspeakers and ignites eruption in a community. Whatever he says is considered to

be the saying of Allah and if anyone dismisses or rebels against the narrative is declared blasphemous destined to be tormented here and also thereafter. In *Zamana*, at night, a voice comes from speaker, announcing people's acts, secrets and relationship which are considered to be immoral, false and sinful because these are the opposites to Mulla's version. This voice becomes constant source of trouble for people but is branded as the voice of Allah. As Aslam (2017) describes that "Someone had been entering the Mosque....revealing the secrets of citizens over the minarets' loudspeakers. People's immoral acts and corruptions.....it was being said that it was the voice of Allah" (pp.8-9). People, ignorant of understanding the misuse of sacred platform and the politics behind it, become fruited and act accordingly. The same night a young lady is brutally murdered by her brothers after the announcement of the loudspeakers which reveals her alleged secret relationship with a lover. With this incident Aslam fictionalizes the social tendencies of Pakistani citizens who blindly follow theoretic figures without recognizing their wish for supremacy.

In Pakistan there is not even a single instance that religious seminaries have produced any personality who has served for the collective welfare of the state. Illiterate religious scholars who are considered to spread peace and tolerance spread more hate and violence just for maintaining their hegemony. I strongly agree with Husain (2018) who quoting Misbah argues that "it is all the fault of the Mullah" (p. 322) that Muslim societies are deteriorating day by day. Hatred and violence using Dharma as a valid tool has radicalized the whole country. These narratives of violence permeate an ideology which spoils the essence of an individual's psyche. Aslam has highlighted certain false beliefs which have permeated into Pakistani society because of the lack of proper knowledge about the communities belonging to other religions. In the text, a boy refuses to take the glass just because Helen is Christian and "I am a Muslim and I can't accept a drink from your hand" (Aslam, 2017, p.24). The boy approaches with a sharp knife to put into Helen's body so that he can check the colour of the blood. Helen stops him but he insists to penetrate the sharp tip because his mother told him that Christians have black and dirty blood. Suddenly the telephone bell invests fear in him and he leaves. But the scene when he is leaving is heart-throbbing:

She was running towards the front door...She opened it and saw that he was about to disappear around the slight curve in the lane....she called out ...he arrived...she opened the safety pin ...and with it quickly stabbed the tip of her index finger and held the drop of blood towards him. It's red.... 'Look at it. You have seen now that it's not black. Look at it" (Aslam , 2017, pp.26-27).

Pakistan is replete with those actors who misuse religion for personal gains as in pre-colonial state, elites used Dharma for keeping the masses under control. Guha argues that in pre-modern India religion was the strongest factor for indigenous elites through which they suppressed subaltern classes. Wealth is the ultimate source to fulfill worldly desires. Quddus (2005) records the misuse of wealth by Hindu leaders

who started a campaign to accumulate “money and gold bricks” (p. 149) for ulterior agendas. The existence of some figures who “love money more than their gods” (p.151) have become the source of shame. Aslam has woven the story of a character which is an apt instance to understand this problem. Baber’s avarice of getting more money permeates indignation in him because of a mobile tower which is built in Lily’s house with royalty per year. He wants that tower in one of his own houses so that he can accumulate more money. He blames Helen for taking the engineers to her own home instead of Babur’s, taunting Lily by maneuvering religious sentiments with stagnant pride saying “you think you’ll climb that tower all the way to paradise?” (Aslam, 2017, p.47). When Lily goes to mosque to see Ayesha, which ignites extremists to announce their relationship through loudspeakers colorings them false, blasphemous and threat to the whole city, Babur gathers people together and leads them inside the house to “bring down that phone tower” (Aslam, 2017, p.139). Babur has nothing to do with religion nor does he follow it. His lynching on Lily’s house shows his greedy nature which just needs money and wealth. Nargis tries to stop him but he maintains, hiding his lust under the rubric of religion that “this is the matter of the dignity of Islam” (Aslam , 2017, 139). Babur does not defend religion or save the dignity of Islam, rather he uses it as a tool to fulfill his own personal greed which is totally contrary to the teachings of Islam. He also inspires the mob to burn the other homes of the Christians down except those owned by him. He declares the Christians of his own houses as their real brothers and argues about their decency and law-abiding nature. But when someone from the mob says the opposite he misquotes the verse of the holy Quran which he remembers just to save his own houses “And you will find that the nearest in love towards the believers are those who say, ‘we are Christians’ ” (Aslam, 2017, p.140). Babur is a man whose religion is just money so he worships his religion by misusing the verse of the holy Quran for his own personal benefits in order to save his home from destruction.

Waterman (2014) in his article Saudi Wahabi Imperialism in Pakistan: history legacy, contemporary representations and debates quotes Hegghammer who claims that Saudi Arabia is responsible for the rise of Muslims extremism (p.244). Zia being an ardent lover of Wabavi Ideology imported strict rules in the name of Shria which resulted in the “promotion of Sunni Wahabi Islam and demonization of Shia minority” (Waterman, 2014, p. 249). Shia community was marginalized but after the revolution of Imam Khomeini it attempted to rise to get rid of the horrible condition and some “started going to Qum for training in religion and weapons” (Ahmad, 2019, p. 162). Zia’s inclination towards Wahabi version of Islam pushed other sects on periphery by forcing them to accept the narrow and metaphysical interpretations of religion. Because of Iranian revolution in 1979 and attack on Makka’s great Mosque in the same year, Royal family in Saudi Arabia started smelling some existential threats which could push their dynasty in blind alley. They exported Wahabism in Pakistan in order to hold a check on any move of shia community in Pakistan. The political maneuverings of Islam by Zia “empowered Sunni clergy” leaving the Shia community “very vulnerable” (Begum, 2017, p.182). Zia imposed Zukat on every Muslim living in Pakistan which was contrary to the Shia’s system of Khumus. Shia’s representative, Mufti Jafar Hussain, left council and gathered the whole shia community to stage a

protest against the Sunni law which was being forced upon them by founding an organization Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria (TNFJ) (Begum, 2017.p. 183). In order to curb the Shia's activism, Sunnis theocratic scholars formed an organization Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba (ASS) after staging two conferences. Backed by military dictator and funded by Arab counties it started attacking Shia community all over the Pakistan which have born countless casualties leaving deadly imprints on Pakistani polity.

Conclusion

Aslam being an Anglophone writer enjoys the privilege to write the story of his homeland even living abroad. His divided life allows him to see as to how international audience see Pakistan. His multitalented craftsmanship has been the source of many achievements from various forms of the world. Because he himself has been the victim of extremist ideology that is the main reason that "debate between tolerant, humane tradition of Islam and religious extremism runs through all his novels" (Shamsie, 2017, 361). Aslam is among those writers whose narrative can be used to understand the socio-political and religious crises of Pakistan. Aslam suggests that Islam based on Sufi doctrines provides basic human dignity to all the citizens of a state irrespective of race, colour, and gender orientations. All the sufies rendered profound and relentless services to the world by preaching sophisticated precepts to peace to humanity. My idea has been empowered by Lieven (2012) who also posits that "Saints actually spread Islam" (p.134) in South Asia, but Islam which is imported for political basis openly denounces the sufi version. Pakistani religious scholars are trying to eradicate the extremist ideologies (Weiss, 2020, p.141) by spreading the message of love and peace because the stagnant draconian precepts are pushing Pakistani society into a cul-de-sac.

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