INVESTIGATING THE DIFFEREND: A STUDY OF HETEROGENEOUS VOICES IN ANGLOPHONE SOUTH ASIAN FICTION

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ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: Investigating the Differend: A Study of Anglophone South Asian Fiction

This dissertation is a study of heterogeneity of conflicting religious, cultural, political, and social voices in Anglophone South Asian fiction. It is delimited to Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* (2011), Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), and Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel* (2001). This research project investigates how the Muslim difference is inscribed in fictional writings of local/home and diasporic Anglophone South Asian writers. This study claims that these writers employ the value system of secular rationalism and liberal humanism to analyze the largely faith-based ontology of the Muslims in South Asian and diasporic spaces. It also argues that these writings self-consciously undertake to explicate the nature of differences among incongruent religious and ideological groups with a view to effect their imaginative resolution. But these irreducible differences, termed as *differends* by French Philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, may not be settled to the satisfaction of all sides of the divide. This genre of fiction, then, in order to offer the possibility of an imaginary resolution of the disputes among ideological adversaries, inflicts wrongs on one of the parties to the conflict. This dissertation argues that when the fictional or fictionalized conflict is articulated by Anglophone South Asian writers, in which the Muslims constitute one of the parties to the conflict, the resolution turns them into 'victims' because of the rational secular and liberal humanist value judgment system brought to bear on the conflict. I intervene in the critical scholarship about this genre by exploring the dynamics and assumptions that contribute towards the perpetuation of the sense of injustice felt by the believing and practicing Muslims because of their representation in these writings. It is through both disrupting and confirming the Western and non-Muslim world's perception of the figure of the Muslim, raising Muslims' voice yet participating in the mechanisms that suppress it, overturning erstwhile stereotypes but proliferating new negative images about them, this genre of fiction problematizes and complicates contemporary production of knowledge about the Muslim difference.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my **mother and father (late)** who wanted me to be another kind of a doctor.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation studies Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* (2011), Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), and Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel* (2001) as part of Anglophone South Asian fiction. I seek to foreground how heterogeneous voices jostle for legitimacy and authenticity in these texts. This genre of fiction usually articulates the incongruent worldviews of the Muslims and those of their ideological opponents in the idiom of secular rationalism and liberal humanism. The consequent tension that arises because of this mode of representation between the seemingly antagonistic ideas about life and social relations results into an ideological impasse. Because of lack of availability of common criteria of judgement between the claims of the two or more parties the conflict starts to look like an irresolvable difference.

This kind of conflict is defined as differend by Jean Francois Lyotard in his book *The Differend: Phrases in dispute*. He defines *differend* as "a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that may not be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (*The Differend* xi). I have employed this concept of *differend* as theoretical framework to investigate how the uncontainable difference of a particular type of the Muslim is inscribed in the selected texts. In my research project, I have explored the ways in which these texts negotiate the tension between expressions of rational thought and notions of secularism on the one hand and the seemingly irrational and dogmatic behaviour and beliefs of the Muslims on the other.

Lyotard develops the concept of *differend* as an irresolvable conflict to highlight the limitations of the rationalist discourse.[1] His critique is triggered by revisionist historian Robert Faurison's use of rationalism that the latter employs to refute the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz. Lyotard foregrounds how rationalist epistemology erases from view the religiously motivated persecution and oppression suffered by the Jews.[2] Employing this insight to the study of the primary texts, I seek to explore whether the situation of the Muslims in post 9/11 worlds as they figure in the

selected texts bears any similarity to that experienced by the Jews in Nazi Germany.[3] This dissertation explores the possibility if the selected texts seek to establish any hierarchy amongst the Western secularist and rationalist worldview and the religious and theological conception of life held by the Muslims. This raises the question if the representation of the Muslims in the primary texts creates a differend like situation for the Muslims.

The Muslim *differend* might signal a condition of the Muslims where they are deprived of their right to articulate their concerns from the position of their faith: Islam. The *differend* might appear in two paradigmatic forms. In its first modulation, it might be the result of presentation of the difference between Muslim faith and other systems of thought that remains irresolvable because of the absence of a single system of judgment that may be invoked to resolve it. In its second form, it refers to appropriating, suppressing or silencing the voice of the Muslims. This dissertation studies the three primary Anglophone South Asian texts to investigate as to what extent they resist or support the processes of creating and representing two variations of the Muslim *differend*.

The area designated as South Asia "comprises the modern nation-states of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka" (Gopal, *Indian English* 12). Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva in *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* state that South Asia is usually considered to be synonymous with India but the region "[c]ustomarily…would include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka" (2-3). I have delimited my study to writers of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi origins from amongst these areas for two reasons. First, the fiction written by these writers constitutes the major part of Anglophone South Asian fiction. Second, their fiction usually takes up the Muslim difference as one of the major themes of their fictional and non-fictional writings. In making the selection of these texts and writers, my primary consideration is their common South Asian origin and the English medium of their fiction rather than their religion or ethnicity. The common denominator in these texts is their representation of the tension between faith-based ontology of the Muslims and putative secular and rational outlook of their ideological opponents. These are two primary heterogeneous voices that vie for legitimacy and supremacy in these texts. In the following paragraphs,

I explain these two voices and elaborate their significance for my dissertation.

First, it seems apt to explain the meanings and varied modulations of the terms 'secularism' and 'rationalism' as I employ them in this research project. In his essay, "Contemporary Secularism and secularity", collected in *Secularism and secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives* (2007), Barry A. Kosmin presents the various meanings of the term 'secularism'. In his view, this word "derives from the Latin, *saeculum*, which means both this age and this word" (5). He further explains that in the Middle Ages the word was also used to distinguish those priests "who worked out in the world of local parishes" from the "religious ones" who worked in the seclusion of the monasteries (5). Elaborating further the meaning of its derivative, secularization, he states that it "denoted the seizure of Catholic ecclesiastical properties by the state and their conversion to non-religious use" during the period of Reformation (5). In Kosmin's view, in all three instances "the secular indicates a distancing from the sacred, the eternal, and the otherworldly" (5). Kosmin's elaboration of the term 'secular' posits a clear distinction between the 'material' and non-material worlds. In other words, the 'secular' signifies a preoccupation with the phenomena of the world of matter.

Explaining the concept of secularism Neelam Srivastava, in her book, *Secularism in Indian Novel*, states that "Rationalist secularism indicates the prevalence of a scientific temper, a rationalization of the worldview of the individual, and the reduction of religious belief to affect" (18). Spivak, in her essay "Terrorism: A Speech after 9/11", states that secularism "is a faith in reason in itself and for itself,…an active and persistent practice, an accountability, of keeping the structures of agency clear of belief as faith" ("Terror" 106). Srivastava's and Spivak's definitions of secularism link it with the exercise of reason and stress to keep faith 'separate' from human agency. Rationalism or rationality is belief in reason as a source, justification, and test of knowledge. Paisley Livingston in his book, *Literature and Rationality: Ideas of Agency in Theory and Fiction* (1991), states that "[r]ationality…implies intentional agency" (17). In my dissertation, I analyze how these Western values of secularism and rationalism, implicitly or explicitly, come into conflict with the overtly religious modes of thought and behavior of the Muslims in three primary texts. This religiosity of the Muslims is reflected through their avowed allegiance to and practicing five articles of Islamic faith. I employ Abu Al'Ala Mawdudi's definition of the member of Muslim community given in

Towards Understanding Islam (1960) to define a Muslim:

> Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) has enjoined us to believe in five articles of faith: 1. Belief in one God Who has absolutely no associate with Him in His divinity; 2. Belief in God's Angels; 3. Belief in God's Books, and in the Holy Qur'an as His Last Book 4. Belief in God's Prophets, and in Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) as His Last and Final Messenger; and 5. Belief in life after death. These five articles make up the bedrock of Islam. One who believes in them enters the fold of Islam and becomes a member of the Muslim community. (74)

Mawdudi further claims that "But one does not become a complete Muslim by mere vocal profession alone. To become a complete Muslim one has to fully carry out in practice the instructions given by Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) as ordained by God" (74). The primary texts are populated by such Muslim characters whose identities are characterized by their allegiance to the basic creeds of Islam. They constitute one of the two parties of the ideological divide that separates them from the secular and rational adversaries. The whole project of these texts seems to have become the inscription of the tension that arises between the religious beliefs and world views of the Muslims and putative secularity and rationality of the Western or westernized characters. The dialectics of the texts unfolds and progresses in a way that evinces a desire to bridge the gap between these two positions.

The rationalist and secularist ethos of the primary texts, however, seem to prefer a segregation of the private and public spaces. The interpretative value judgements that underlie these texts seem to privilege a suppression of the religious self over its overt expressions. In *Constructing Pakistan: The Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim Identity 1857-1947*, Masood Ashraf Raja states that "[t]here [may] be no simple private public division of Muslim idea of culture and selfhood" (xvi). In other words, the cultural self of the Muslims also partakes of their religious self and hence keeps transgressing the public private distinction favoured by the rationalist and secularist conception of acceptable modes of thought and behavior. The world view held by secular rationalism, therefore, seems unaccommodating to the expression of and acting upon in public spaces the "primary proclamation" of Islamic faith: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger" (Malak 56). Amin Malak, in *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, states that Islam means "submission of oneself to the will of Allah... and the following of His path" (2). In his view, the loyalties of the Muslims

according to theology of Islam "supersede… loyalty to state, race, party, and, in very exceptional cases, even family" (84). The values of secularism and rationalism as defined and explained by Kosmin, Kumar, Spivak, and Livingstone seem to come into conflict with basic precepts of Muslim conception of life explicated by Mawdudi, Raja, and Malak.

Rational secular and liberal humanist vision of the world projected and favoured by the primary texts seems unaccommodating to the very existence of Allah and to the worldview that everything is ordained according to His will. This dispute in the selected texts between secularist and theological conceptions of life forms, what James Richards Williams in his PhD dissertation, *The Conflict of Presentations: A Critiques of Jean-Francois Lyotard's Philosophy of Differends* (1990), calls the "locus of heterogeneity". In Lyotardian terms, it is a *differend* which he defines as "the disputed point between two or more conflicting parties involved in a dispute that may not be equitably resolved…in fairness to all parties" (Williams 14). Aslam, Anam, and Tharoor seem to put into a dialogue the multiplicity of heterogeneous voices that collectively form a locus. The dynamics of this locus not only cause the events of the books to move forward but also provide an interpretative frame of reference. The overarching rationalist discourse along with its assumptions establishes and governs the hierarchization of these conflicting voices and the truths they claim to encode. Shazia Sadaf, in "Human Rights and Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Literature", states that the writings of Pakistani Anglophone writers are "divergent discourse" (141). This observation may be extended to all writings dealing with the Muslim difference and particularly to the primary texts of this research project.

In this dissertation, I explore what place is accorded to the Muslims and their beliefs and practices in this 'divergent discourse' and how it negotiates its difference with other discourses operating in the three novels selected for this study. Geoffrey Nash, in his book *Writing Muslim Identity* (2011), explores the ways in which Muslim identity is re/constructed by Anglophone South Asian and Euro-American fiction writers. He argues that in the fiction written by both Euro-American and Muslim local and diasporic authors, "[the] secularists' fears and anxieties remain directed against Islam as a religion" and that "the Muslim has a lot in common with a previous bogeyman, the Jew" (14). Steven Salaita, in *Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims and the Poverty of Liberal*

Thought-New Essays (2008), claims that in the West Islam as a religion is delineated as "strange and violent" and Muslim figures are not self-articulating narrators but are spoken for (152). These mute characters usually operate within what Timothy Brennan, in his book, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, calls "the requisites of metropolitan assumptions" about Islam (36). The Anglophone South Asian fiction writers evince sympathy with Western prevailing perspectives and attitudes (Brennan 39). Because of their education in (mostly) Western literature and social sciences "their identifications, the centres of their subjective universe lie" not in Islamic faith but in the rational secular world view they imbibe from this education" (Werbner 3). Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi, in *Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English* (2014), state that this type of self-representation "is still largely in the hands of a very few, a select elite, mostly an English-speaking and Western-educated group of Orientals" (4). After pointing out the risks of misrepresentation in self-representation, they ascribe its presence to "the colonial structures of power" which are embedded in global imbalance of power and supported by "institutional structures and hierarchies, system of knowledge, language and literature, and colonization of minds" (3). Kwame Anthony Appiah famously brands writers who succumb to these institutional global pressures as "comprador intelligentsia" (119). Ashish Nandy also points out the imbalance in any dialogue that takes place between the West and the East and states that it "is mediated by Western assumptions and Western frameworks" (145). This critique views these writings as an offshoot of paranoid Western discourse about the third world in general and about the Muslims in particular. It usually ignores the redeeming qualities of such project of writing which contains subversive potential during the very act of what Lau and Dwivedi call 'mis-representation'.

These observations seem also to make no distinction between representations of the Muslims and Islam offered by Euro-American writers and the fiction writers of the Muslim origin. I, however, maintain that these writings present a nuanced view of the Muslim faith. They clear a conceptual space within which the Muslims may voice their right to practise their religious and cultural rites by foregrounding a gulf that exists between the interpretations of Islam by the moderate and the extremist and fundamentalist Muslims. The discourse of this fiction operating in a rationalist and secularist Western tradition as noted by Nandy, however, marks a further distinction between Muslims' rights to interpret and practice their religion based on reason and

coercive imposition of its literality upon others, particularly upon those who find themselves in weaker or dependent positions within Muslim communities. This tension is more apparent in Aslam's and Anam's texts than in Tharoor's. Tharoor's text, however, presents only the voice of a secular Muslim, Professor Sarwar, and takes recourse in orientalist imagery to portray Ali, his wife, and the minor Muslim characters who take part in the riot in the novel. Thus, the tensions between Maya's secularism and Sohail's Islamism in *The Good Muslim,* the religious antagonism between Hindus and the Muslims of India in *Riot,* and the squabble between putatively secular Western characters and Ultra-religious Taliban guerrillas of Afghanistan in *The Vigil* are reflections of the difference that separates the Islamic faith from secular rationalist and liberal humanist worldview. All three novels bring into a fictional space a variety of heterogeneous enunciations articulated from dissenting ideological positions that seem to develop into an impasse and lack any common criteria that might be invoked to mediate between these claims. This position of lack of agreement between competing discourses is what I term as the *Muslim Differend.*

I investigate how this Muslim differend is inscribed as an unassimilable difference in Anam, Aslam, and Tharoor's novels selected for this study. In these texts, Muslims are made to articulate their position as 'victim' and the 'other' in contravention of the view of their fictional opposites whose discourse seeks to reduce them merely to the status of unpacifiable religious bigots. The seemingly uneven transaction between the 'divergent discourse' of the Muslims and demonizing rationalist and secularist world view of the non-Muslim characters drives the narratives of the novels forward. It, however, creates an impression that the articulatory process initiated by a desire to foreground the voice of the Muslims over others' commodifies the difference under economic and publication pressures. Graham Huggan (*The Postcolonial Exotic*), Sarah Brouillette (*Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*), and Benwell *et al.* (*Postcolonial Audience*) highlight the processes of commodification that result in parading the colonial difference as a commodity. In a quite similar manner, the presentation of the Muslim difference runs the risk of becoming a tool of its stifling and reappropriation by the dominant discourses of Western rationalism and secularism. This sort of representation of the Muslims with double effects testifies to the Muslim differend. It is this dual nature of the representation that remains the focus of this research project. After having sketched the basic contours of the thematics of Muslim

differend in the foregoing pages, I, now, propose to trace its inception and various configurations in Anglophone South Asian fiction in the next section of this introductory chapter.

1.1 Locating Tahmima Anam, Nadeem Aslam, and Shashi Tharoor in Anglophone South Asian Fiction Writing Tradition

The larger part of Anglophone South Asian fiction that engages with the Muslim difference and identity is produced by local/home and diasporic authors of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. I have, therefore, left out Anglophone fiction produced by writers with their origins in other South Asian nations: Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. I seek to locate my primary texts in the above-mentioned thematics of Anglophone South Asian fiction. Anam's and Aslam's works are designated as Muslim writings by the critics. Their fiction is also classified as 'Bangladeshi Writings in English' and 'Pakistani Writings in English' respectively. Tharoor's writings are placed under the category of 'Indian Writings in English'. All three of them, usually, write about their respective country of origin and its social, political, and cultural issues. English fiction produced by the writers of South Asian countries is also categorized and studied as 'Anglophone South Asian fiction'. In my dissertation, I place all the three primary texts under the category of Anglophone South Asian fiction and treat them as such.

I confine my discussion to the representation of the Muslim difference in three primary texts although the insights offered by Lau, Dwivedi, Appiah, Huggan, and Nandy are employed selectively to situate my study in the polemics about Anglophone South Asian fiction. Anglophone South Asian Muslim fictional writings start with Sake Dean Mahomet's *The Travels of Sake Mahomet, a Native of Patna in Bengal, through Several Parts of India, while in the Service of the Honourable, the East India Company, Written by Himself, in a Series of Letters to a Friend* (1794).[4] Mahomet's writing seeks to explain Indian way of life to his colonial masters. Being a Muslim, he feels the need to explain the misconceptions attached to his faith. His presentation of the Muslim way of life may be regarded as first attempt by an Indian Muslim to inscribe the Muslim difference in creative writing. At the same time, it speaks of his elite status within the Muslims of India. He states that "[t]he Mahometans are strict adherents to the tenets of

their religion, which does not, by any means, consist in that enthusiastic veneration for Mahomet so generally conceived" (Mahomet 69). Mahomet's description of the difference between Muslims' attachment to their tenets and their prophet, Muhammad, inaugurates a schism in the monolithic views of the Muslims held by others, in this case by his colonial masters who remain the target audience of his literary effort. Mahomet, at one place in his travelogue, "plays down… his Muslim identity…and subtly links himself with the 'clean […] and fine' Hindus" (Chambers, *British* 31).[5] It is clear that Mahomet tries to distance himself from the rigid conceptions of his Muslim identity and seeks to carve out a syncretic Muslim Indian identity which partakes of the cleanliness of the Hindus. These explanatory and to some degree apologetic articulations of Muslim identity by an Anglophone South Asian Muslim writer are the first steps towards privileging a secularist over the strict Muslim religious identity. Chambers compares Mahomet with Hanif Kureishi's Haroon Amir, an atheist character with visible revulsion for Muslim faith: "Mahomet may be seen as a precursor of the fictional Haroon Amir in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*" (31). Chambers' comparison between a late eighteenth century Muslim scholar educated in Western tradition and a non-believer fictional character born and educated in England is revealing. The significance of Mahomet's travelogue resides in its pioneering work of laying a foundation of an alternative conception of Muslim identity that seems to have become the nemesis of its rigid articulations offered by orthodox Muslim religious scholars.

The next important Anglophone fictional writing by a Muslim writer that deals with an important part of Muslim identity and their way of living is Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein's *Sultana's Dream* (1905). This story attacks the constricting Muslim concept of purdah (veil) and depicts a utopia, Ladyland, where the religion practiced by the inhabitants is 'love and truth'. This story seems to be a reformist one and criticizes the damaging patriarchal hold upon the lives of women by men through strict interpretations of the concept of veil. The publication of Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) is regarded as a significant point in Indian Muslim English writing in Indian subcontinent. This novel critiques the degenerate orthodoxy and complacency of the traditional Muslim families. After Ali, writers like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Taslima Nasreen, Monica Ali, Tahmima Anam, Adib Khan, Muhammad Hanif, HM Naqvi, Nadeem Aslam, Kamila Shamshie, Mohsin Hamid, Uzma Aslam Khan, Qaisara Shiraz, and many others are thought to be 'authentic' representatives of Muslim sensibilities in

the multicultural and globalized world of the twenty first century. Their 'Muslim narratives' are published and circulated across the globe as a result of West's increased appetite to know more about Muslim cultures after the events of 9/11.[6] All these writers register the Muslim difference in Anglophone fiction in their own particular way. Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam, in introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*, state that Pakistani English writing takes up a wide variety of themes. In their view, some of the issues dealt with in it are "Muslim and non-Muslim minority issues, censorship, human rights, terrorism, religious extremism, fundamentalism, belonging and identity conflicts" (2). This insight may be applied to the primary texts of this research project as many of these issues figure within their thematics as well.

This type of writing usually brings into a dialogue the limiting and orthodox views of the Muslims with the thoughts and actions of transgressive, heretic, blasphemous, skeptical, and secularist Muslims or non-Muslims. This representation of the Muslim societies or characters in the context of above mentioned thematics, however, engenders a mix response from the critics. Madeline Clements in her book, *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective: Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam, Shamsie* (2016), states that these writers "have pitched the reason, modernity, and secularity…against the evils of an irrational, encroaching [Islamic] religious extremism" (5). Geoffrey Nash in his book, *Writing Muslim Identity* (2012), claims that the writings of the local, diasporic, ethnically hybrid Muslim writers "appear to endorse invective against Islam and Muslims" (12). In his view, these texts present "two-dimensional versions of Islam and Muslim fundamentalists" (12). In Nash's view, instead of presenting the view of the Muslim societies and communities they write about these writers interpret their reality with a secular and rational lens. Clements view remains at a variance from Nash's as she approves of the way in which writers like Rushdie, Aslam, Shamsie, and Hamid present an alternative view of the Muslim culture and practices whereas Nash offers a negative optics of their presentation of the Muslim difference and identity. He holds that the writings about the Muslims are characterized by the frameworks of rationalism and secularism.

Spivak engages with the issue of secularism in conjunction with post 9/11 terrorism in her essay "Terror: A Speech After 9/11". In her view, interpreting the

realities of the world in a secularist tradition is to ignore them and the "sanitized secularists" involved in this practice are largely unaware of the sensibilities of the Muslims. They are "hysterical at the mention of religion…, are quite out of touch with the world's peoples and have buried their heads in the sand" (Spivak, "Terror" 102). Spivak's criticism directed mostly at the America's response to 9/11 yields a useful insight about representation of the Muslims in Western media and literary discourse before and after the terror attacks in America. It points out the similarity between the unnuanced approaches resorted to by both secular and democratic west on the one hand and by the narrow-minded and bigoted Muslims on the other. The portrayal of the fundamentalist as well as those of the rational and secular minded characters delineated in South Asian Anglophone fiction both complicates and cements the Western stereotypes about them. Although this type of writing seems to "promote a western secular agenda" (Nash 12)[7] yet it challenges some of the monolithic constructions of Muslim faith and culture. In the competing narratives of Islam and the West, the discourse of this genre of fiction seems to partake but only partially of the views of the West that considers itself as the guardian of values of "freedom of expression, democracy, separation of church and state, human rights, and, especially, women's rights" (12). Although Nash situates this discourse in the tradition which operates within "the paradigms and models mobilized in Western debate over Islam" (12) he seems to ignore its potential of inserting an alterity within this normative. Nash's critique of the writings of these Muslim writers often commended for their truthful portrayal of Muslim difference also brushes aside the significance of the dual social and psychic spaces they inhabit because of their cultural relations with the Muslims. There might be found a certain amount of truth in the claims that the Anglophone Muslim writers contribute towards the demonization of the Muslims and of Islam but a more nuanced analysis of these writings might also give credence to idea of their being the voice of the rational and non-violent Muslims.

I locate Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* and Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* in this category of Muslim writings. In my study, I analyze how these two 'Muslim' writers present the Muslim sensibilities and views from in/out/side. Their books create a fictional world in which fictional Muslim characters and the events they take part in (often bearing close similarities to real life of historical figures) are contextualized in some of the core creeds of Islamic faith. The interaction between these characters and

their differing attitudes towards the same happenings works to clarify some of the misconceptions of Anglophone readers. These books at the same time employ a humanistic idiom and a system of value judgement that questions the relevance and value of articles of Islamic faith in multicultural fictional world these texts create. When viewed through this lens the believing and practicing Muslims and their religious practices and thoughts, usually, assume negative dimensions. In Indian subcontinent the origins of the tradition of viewing the expressions of religiosity skeptically may be located in Urdu poetry which presents the figure of *zahid*-the pious one- as a suspect being. This figure is characterized by narrow-mindedness, orthodoxy, and inhumanism. He presents a foil to the liberalism, humanism, and loving nature of the persona of poet, usually, longing for *mae* (alcohol) or woman's love. Ruth Vanita, in her essay, "Different Speakers, Different Loves: Urban Women in Rekhti Poetry", collected in *Subalternity and Difference: Investigation from North to South* (2011), states that "one of the conventions in the *ghazal* is that the speaker is a lover who violates social conventions" (57). She further claims that this speaker engages in "sparring matches with the Zahid (pious man) and the Sheikh, a figure of social authority, often pointing out their hypocrisy" (58). Vanita further states that the opponent of Zahid, the poetic persona in Mir Taqi Mir, "goes so far as to declare that he has renounced Islam" (58). The pious man who assumes the role of 'other' of the lover of rekhti poetry is usually a narrow minded bigot and a literalist who interprets literally the Quran and the Sunnah and is averse to any expression of heresy, no matter how symbolic or harmless. The nemesis of this Muslim figure is, however, a heretic and a transgressive lover who confronts the right and authority of this scripturalist.

This heroic figure of Urdu poetry is, however, held responsible for corrupting the Muslim religion by introducing anti-Islam ideas and values into Muslim society by some Muslim scholars. Muslim reformers like Deputy Nazir and Altaf Hussain Hali point out the heretic and secularist tendencies of Urdu *ghazal* and poetry. Nazir calls it nothing "other than lovemaking and vulgarity" in *Fasana-i-mubtala*?, and Hali, in *Musaddas*, condemns it for leaving "the backdoor open not just for immorality but for heresy, as the prime figures in the *ghazal* moved in the direction of idolatry and adultery" (qtd. in Shingavi 143). Nazir and Hali's main objection to Urdu poetry is triggered by its potential to violate the strict Islamic injunctions about pre/extra/marital lovemaking and idol worshiping as the beloved is often invoked in terms used for a deity

by her/his lover. This transgressive lover often proffers him/her/self as a humane figure free of inhumane religious strictures. Ghalib, one of the prime poets of Urdu *ghazal*, assures his British colonial masters of his loyalty towards the Crown by highlighting his 'half-Muslimness' in these words: "I am only a half Muslim, and quite free from the rigidities of religion"(qtd. in Raja 16). This condition of being half-Muslim and freedom from religious rigidities is eulogized and legitimized against the Muslim orthodoxy and the notions of religious purity.

The anti-religious and anti-clerical sentiment of Urdu poetry noted by Ruth Vanita finds its first formal enunciation in the manifesto of Progressive Writers' Association established in 1935 by secular minded writers of united India. Before that what atheist writers of *Angare* magazine (1932) called 'Islamic orthodoxy' was critiqued in first ever collection of Urdu fiction written by South Asian Muslim writers. These pieces of fiction were written by Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Ahmed Ali, and Mahmud-uz-Zafar, the "secular Muslim intelligentsia" that was attracted towards Nehru's secularism (Shingavi 106). They were "entirely critical" of "the aristocratic and orthodox sections of North Indian Muslims" (107). They, despite being Muslims, "were engaged in a critique of Islamist orthodoxy even as Hindu minoritarianism threatened to exclude Muslim communities from the life of the Indian nation" (Gopal, *Literary Radicalism* 7). Gopal calls them "secular Muslim[s]" (*Literary Radicalism* 10) while Shingavi terms them "atheist Angare Coterie" (106). It is apparent from Gopal and Shingavi's terms used for the authors of *Angare* that their stories as well as political activism/passivism were engaged in a struggle against (Islamic) religious orthodoxy. They challenged it with the humanist, secularist, and atheistic notions of social life.

Angare coterie's themes and secular world view were denounced by orthodox *Ulemas* (Muslim clerics) as well as by ordinary Muslims. Mahmud uz-Zafar, however, defended *Angare's* critique of Islamic orthodoxy. He praised Sajjad Zaheer's stories that according to him criticize and satirize "the current Moslem conceptions, life and practices" (qtd. in Shingavi 117). Explaining further the main themes of Zaheer's stories, Zafar states that their "attack is directed primarily upon the average Moslem in this country-a burden that leads to a contortion and a cramping of the inquisitive or speculative mind and the vital vigours of body of both man and woman"(qtd. in Shingavi 117). This observation suggests that Zafar favours a scientific (rational) mind over

restrictive (cramping) force represented by Islamic religion. This confluence of atheistic, humanistic, rationalist, and secularist conceptions of life seem to govern the ethos of writings that succeed these stories. This type of writing scrutinizes what Zafar calls 'average Moslem[s]' of India and their religious practices.

Angare presents, to some extent, a caricatured interpretation of some of the foundational precepts of Islamic faith. One particular story in this collection, Sajjad Zaheer's *Jannat ki basharat* (A Vision of Heaven), depicts an ever-present figure of "a pious [zahid] *maulvi* who refuses to have sex with his young wife during Ramadan but has a pornographic fantasy with fairies in paradise" (qtd. in Shingavi 117). This story "portrays a sanctimonious cleric fondling a copy of the Koran in his sleep as he dreams of nubile houris in heaven" (Gopal, *Literary Radicalism* 32). The story evinces an irreverent and critical attitude towards not only religious orthodoxies but all of the manifestations of Islamic faith. The basic assumption within which the "secular humanist politics" of *Angare* project operated was: "once the clerisy has been exposed as corrupt and depraved it is supposed to be impossible to believe in the institutions that prop up religion…" (Shingavi 117-8). The same critical and skeptical irreverence towards foundational Muslim concepts according to Snehal Shinghavi has become the "paradigm of Urdu literature" (117).

Fauzia Afzal Khan in "Challenging Masculinist Postcolonialism in Pakistani Anglophone Literature" states that Pakistani male writers "reiterate orientalist clichés about Islam, Muslims, and Brown 'others' as essentially exotic" (195). In this regard Madeline Clements' comment about fiction written by Anglophone Muslim writers is quite revealing as it connects the thematics of Shinghavi and Khan. In her opinion, the fictions produced by Aslam, Rushdie, Hamid, and Shamsie descends from "a South Asian Muslim cultural tradition indebted to twentieth century authors published in Urdu and English, from Ahmed Ali and Saadat Hasan Manto to Qurratulain Hyder" (17). Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* and Anam's *The Good Muslim* criticize not just extremist and violent Muslims' disregard for others but some of the very basic precepts of Muslim faith. These texts reflect an attitude towards expressions of faith that seems to be influenced by this literary tradition pointed out by Clements. Aslam acknowledges the influence of this literary tradition on his fiction in an interview with Maya Jaggi, published in 2010 in online magazine, *Granta*, in these words: "It is influenced…by

Urdu before American, European or other "world" literature" (Aslam n. p). It may be noted that not only Aslam's but also Anam's text engages with literalist and restrictive interpretations of Islamic strictures. These two texts map their effects upon the psyche of Muslim characters and analyze how their behavior towards and interaction with their fellow humans is governed by these restrictive ideologies.

In view of the foregoing discussion, a thematic connection may be established amongst Anam and Aslam's texts, Urdu *ghazal*, and the tradition of fiction inaugurated by *Angare*. In this tradition an anticlerical and humanist vision of the world as mandated by the manifesto of Progressive Writers' Association for the fiction writers contests the expressions of (Muslim) faith and religiosity in a fictional world often referring to the extra-fictional events and characters. These 'Muslim perspectives' are either enunciated by secularist or humanist Muslim or Western/ized characters on Islam. Their views come into conflict with the purist notions of literalist Muslims that coexist within these fictional spaces. The fundamentalist clerics, violent jihadists, or the Muslims with restrictive and orthodox outlook on life are some of the forms these Muslims assume. Such a figure seems to have become a permanent part of this constructed world.

The presence of a demonic and cruel figure of Muslim may be found in a large number of Anglophone South Asian novels. Many critics believe that this stereotypical figure is a distorted image of the Islamist and devoid of the real Muslim sensibilities. Rushdie's *Shalimar* presents "a caricatured and demonic "Islamist" as its central antagonist" (Clements 23). In this novel, "Islam…and Islamic extremism in particular…comes to embody the irrationality, immorality and violence of religion in general" (Bradley and Tate 5). Robert Eaglestone maintains that Rushdie's *Shalimar* lacks the "sense of the world of the Islamist" and "the Islamist "truth" (qtd. in Clements 48). Sardar and Davies state that in Rushdie's fiction a believing Muslim does not receive "close, let alone sympathetic or empathetic attention" and while Rushdie claims to write about Islam he "censor[s] the majority of believing Muslims out of all his tales" (138). The reflection of 'Rushdie's Islamist' may also be detected in the portrayal of Sohail in *The Good Muslim* and of Casa in *The Wasted Vigil*. There exists a similarity between Aslam's and Rushdie's attitude towards Islamist characters and in some cases between their representations of Islam itself. Kavita Bhanot in her essay, "Love, Sex, and Desire vs. Islam in British Muslim Literature", edited in *Routledge Companion to*

Pakistani Anglophone Writing, states that in *The Wasted Vigil* Aslam like Rushdie "seems to have set out to vilify Muslims…primarily for white readers-confirming their worst fears" (211). Reviewing Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), in New York Times, Akash Kapur states that the book is "infused with an anger" and it yields "passages that read like an assault on the religion from which all the characters' unhappiness seems to originate" (n.p). Both of these "*enfants terrible*, Aslam and Rushdie, unfailingly, champion the unbeliever over the man of faith, self-inspiration over divine, and individual over collective experiences" (Clements 95). I analyze what ideological affinities Aslam and Anam's texts bear to this tradition (originated in Urdu *ghazal*, adopted as literary (and reformist) manifesto by Progressive Writers' Association, articulated by *Angare*) that seems to champion the 'unbeliever over the man of faith, self-inspiration over divine'.

There seems to be present an irreconcilable difference in this tradition between the values of Islamic religion based upon strict interpretation of Islamic faith and the Western values of rationality, secularity, liberalism, and humanism. Islam is often characterized by "intolerance, fundamentalism, fanaticism and patriarchal chauvinism" (Nash 9). The Western as well Muslim writers like Rushdie, Aslam, Anam, and Kureishi etc., termed as "native converts" by Nash, deem these values of Islam "to be inherent to Muslim belief and practice" (12). This constructed image of Islam, according to Nash, fills the gap created after the fall of communism in 1990s and provides the West with a new bogeyman to define itself against. So the "'West v the Rest' binary" of Cold War era transforms itself into "the West against the Muslim world" (4). Akbar S. Ahmed, in his book, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (2004), claims that clash between Islam and the West "is a straight fight between two approaches to the world, two opposed philosophies" (264). The philosophy of the West "is based in secular materialism" whereas that of Islam is based "in faith; one has rejected belief altogether, the other has placed it at the centre of its world-view" (264). The difference highlighted by Akbar S Ahmed between Western culture of postmodernism and Islamic faith and way of life is reflected in Aslam's re/presentation of conflict between the West and Islam in his third novel, *The Wasted Vigil*. This altercation between different ideologies may also be marked in taxonomical shades of Muslimness delineated by Anam's text.

The writings of Anglophone South Asian Hindu writers are in many ways

similar to those written by the Muslim writers so far as their treatment of the Muslim difference is concerned. Instead of dividing them into Muslim or Hindu writings, therefore, I treat them as a collective body of fiction. The point of contact between these writings that my dissertation engages with is their representation of the Muslim difference. The Muslim writings are usually regarded as critique of the Muslim orthodoxy and fundamentalism and not as the critique of all the Muslims or as a denunciation of their religion: Islam. On the other hand, the Anglophone fiction written by the Hindus seems to make no such distinction and considers Muslims and Islam as adulteration of the pure Hindu culture of India.

Priyamavada Gopal, in her book, *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration* (2009), states that in the dominant story of Indian (Hindu) nation the Muslims are "constitutively subaltern" (157). This process of subalternization of the Muslims, however, seems to have started simultaneously with literary articulations and configurations of Indian nation in the writings of teachers and students of the Hindu College of Calcutta, the 'Oxford of the East'. This college established in Bengal in 1817 started the process of 'nation formation' through imaginative literature. Jasodara Bagchi claims that this "institution of English/western learning" was established to uphold "orthodox Hindu hierarchies" (147-8). A brief glance at the project of Indian nation formation and the treatment of Muslim difference in early Indo-Anglian literary texts would help understand the transformations the figure of the Muslim has undergone.

Henry Vivian Derozio, the first Indian (of Eurasian birth) poet, and Assistant Headmaster of the Hindoo College of Calcutta, inaugurates the literary tradition of treating the Muslims of India as the other of the Hindu nation. He "valorized rationalism and skepticism" and expressed in his poetry a sense of "nascent nationalism, though the oppressors referred to are Muslim tyrants" where "Islamic rule was a period of medieval darkness…which had to be expunged from the idea of a reinvigorated Hindu India" (Gopal, *The Indian English* 18). In Muneeza Shamsie's view, "Rosinka Chaudhri traces the stirrings of a nascent Indian (but essentially Hindu) nationalism to Derozio through his use of oriental themes which glorify the Hindu past" (*Hybrid Tapestries* 9). In this configuration of the figure of the Muslim represented by Muslim Rule, the Medieval English idea of Dark Ages is displaced onto the period of the Muslims rule over India that establishes them the 'other' of the earliest literary enunciations of 'Indian nation'.

Soshee Chunder Dutt's *The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the 20th Century* (1845) and *Shunkur: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857*, Kylas Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* (1835), and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's second novel, *Anandamath* (1882), translated into English from Bengali, portray India in the avatar of (Hindu) 'Mother'. In Bankim's novel, *Anandamath*, the rebels fight against Mir Jafar, the Muslim ruler of Bengal, for the sake of Hindu Mother-Nation and also because they want "to uproot Muslims completely because they are the enemies of our Lord" (qtd. in Gopal, *Indian English* 33). The rallying cry for the rebels or children of Mother India, 'Bande Mataram' or 'Worship the Motherland' which is still considered India's national song is a part of this novel. In Muneeza Shamsie view this novel is "virulently anti-Muslim" (*Hybrid Tapestries*10).

In these earliest literary articulations of Indian/Hindu nation the arrival of the Muslims and Islamic rule is described as a foreign addition that pollutes the purity of Aryan or Hindu nation. The works of earliest Hindu writers and political leaders used "accounts of resistance to Mughal incursion [which] provided striking allegories for the struggle for political autonomy under British colonial rule" (Morey and Tickell, *Alternative Indias* xii-iii). Morey and Tickell insinuate towards the exclusivist nature of (Indian/Hindu) early nationalism as inscribed in literary production by claiming that "in Bankim's landmark novel *Anandamath*, both Muslims and the British are staged as the aggressors in a proto-national, *sanyassi* uprising" (*Alternative Indias* xii-iii). These accounts of Hindu resistance to Muslim oppression, however, are "falsified history, including unfactual or wildly exaggerated accounts of rape and pillaging of Hindu women and Hindu temples by Muslim rulers in the pre-colonial period" (A. Roy, *Algebra* 193). *Anandamath*'s role in providing a paradigm of Indian/Hindu nationalism is acknowledged by Arundhati Roy in her book, *Azadi: Freedom, Fascism, Fiction* (2020). She connects Hindu nationalism of late twentieth and early twenty first century with fascism. The popularity of Bankim's novel with the Hindus, in Roy's view, resides in its achievement of having "created a template for the ideal Hindu warrior, the fantasy Hindu warrior, who rises in rebellion against his degenerate Muslim oppressors" (35). The Hindu iconography of these early nationalist literary articulations, along with the representation of the role of Muslims as outsiders in these texts, started a process of Muslim alienation and demonization. It is reflected in the political and ideological conflicts between the Majority Hindus and minority Muslims during the Indian freedom

struggle. Paul Brians, in *Modern South Asian Literature* in English, states that "[i]n so far as India is defined as ancient Hindu India, it excludes or even opposes the Muslim minority within it" (83). The early literary articulations of Muslim difference may be read as discriminatory processes which initiate Muslim differend in the writings of non-Muslim writers of united India.

Despite their putative peaceful coexistence under Mughal and other Muslim rule as later invoked by Nehru, Azad, Gandhi, and other nationalists, the history of Hindu/Muslim relations in India is characterized by "[l]ong-simmering antagonism between the two groups" (Brians 99). Raja seems to corroborate Brians' view of the Hindu/Muslim relation when he states that "the Hindu-Muslim difference did not suddenly flare up at the time of the nationalist movement" (86). P. K. Datta, in *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World: A Critical Companion* (2003), also stresses the strained relation between the Hindus and Muslims of India. In his view, *Swadeshi* movement, dealt with by Tagore in his novel, "drew increasingly on the rhetoric and iconography of a revivalist Hindu nationalism that sought to define the nation in religious terms" and brought into motion Hindu "high-handedness and Hindu biases" and expedited the process of exclusion, alienation, and Jewishization of the Muslims of India (Datta 4). While the Hindu nationalist jargon pre and post-independence India seeks to project India as an all-embracing socio-political polity the public and social spaces remain saturated with biases against Muslims and other minorities.

Gandhian novels of great Indian trio, Mulk Raj Anan, Raja Rao, and R K Narayan may be viewed as partaking in the (Hindu) nationalist movement. They portray a picture of India that is proffered by Gandhi and Congress leaders in their speeches and writings that were part of the project of nation building. However, contrary to Gandhi's own assertion that he did not prefer any specific religion his "idioms drew on Sanskritic Hindu concepts such as 'Ram Rajya' (the utopian rule of Rama). He also "advocated 'purifying' Hindu religious practices, such as fasting, vegetarianism, and the singing of bhajans or devotional songs" (Gopal, *The Indian English* 49). Tabish Khair notes that Raja Rao took recourse in "Sanskritized (at times even high Brahminical) definitions and traditions" in his novels to give voice to subaltern realities (*Babu Fiction* 204). In his famous novel, *Kanthapura*, the enemies of the mother India include the only Muslim

character, Bade Khan, whereas 'India' and 'Hindu' emerge as largely synonymous terms in Rao's conception of India as presented in this novel. Arundhati Roy consistently engages with this theme of demonization of the Muslims in India. Her political essays corroborate Amir Mufti's assertion, presented in his book *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* regarding the similarity between the Jews of Nazi Germany and Muslims of India. She notices chilling "parallels between contemporary India and pre-war Germany" as in India the extremist Hindu organizations are "extort[ing] millions of [their] cadres to prepare for the Final Solution…." (*Algebra* 190-1). Roy's political activism and the second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), expose the political and social discrimination meted out by the Indian state and state-sponsored agents to the Muslim population of India.

In the foregoing pages, I have traced a brief history of the representation of the Muslims in Anglophone writings of Hindu writers. These writings seem to treat the Muslim difference within India as an outside impurity and operate within the discourse influenced largely by Indian nationalism that is Hindu and exclusivist in character but poses as secularist and inclusivist. Tharoor's *Riot* both partakes and challenges this tradition of Indo-Anglian writing that operates within the parameters of Indian nationalism. This normalizing and hegemonic nationalism seeks to assimilate the Muslim difference through projection of benign Hindu tolerance of Muslim orthodoxy and primitivism. Tharoor's fiction, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *The five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990), *Show Business* (1992), and *Riot* (2001), are all set in Indian spaces and involve (mostly) Indian characters. The themes of Indian culture, politics, Indian past and recent history, and relations among different communities of India figure in Tharoor's fiction and non-fiction alike. In his writings, he presents an idea of India similar to that enunciated by Nehru in his autobiography, *Discovery of India* (1946).[8] Although Shashi Tharoor like Gandhi, Nehru, and Azad advocates the inclusion of the Muslims in Indian nation, his view of them is that of a condescending and protective Hindu. Tharoor's first novel, *The Great Indian Novel*, rewrites great Hindu epic, *Mahabharata* (Great India) in which Gandhi appears as Gangaji/Bhishma and in the role of 'Father of the Nation'. In the novel, Karna (Jinnah) is presented as the ultimate villain who brings about the dismemberment of 'Mother India'. Tharoor's *Riot* suggests that the syncretic, secular, and tolerant culture of India is threatened by the rising tide of

Hindutva in Indian society. The book, however, proposes that the puritanical views of the extremist Hindus may be countered by the historical secularist resilience of the Indian nation. Although *Riot* along with Tharoor's non-fiction acknowledges the oppression faced by the Muslims of India, it evinces confidence in Indian nation's ability to settle *Muslim differend* through secularism and democracy.

The Good Muslim, *The Wasted Vigil*, and *Riot: A Novel* belong to this Anglophone South Asian literary tradition that I have sketched out in the foregoing pages. This category of fictional writings presents largely a skeptical view of the religious (Muslim) orthodoxy. All three texts project a vision of Multicultural and syncretic South Asia and contest the exclusivist claims of any religion, ethnicity, and culture upon this region. These texts place the fictional or fictionalized characters in situations that draw heterogeneous responses from them towards social, religious, political, and cultural problems of shared spaces. The presentation of these situations, responses to them, and authorial intervention in these narratives seem to favour a secular rationalist and liberal humanist view of life that denigrates and marginalizes the orthodox and extremist religious overtures of the Muslim characters. The three primary texts take up the theme of Muslim difference within South Asian spaces and asses the effects of its presence upon the lives of different characters who come into contact with it.

1.2 Situatedness of the Researcher

I am a believing and practicing Muslim. I firmly believe in the oneness of Allah (*Tawhid*), the finality of Prophet-hood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the truthfulness of the Qur'an as divine revelation, the existence of angels, and the Day of Judgement. It is from this position that I conduct my research. Viewing from this standpoint it seems credible that these texts seek to register Muslim difference as experienced by their authors. This experience is different from White Western writers' experience of it. They engage with many of the condemnatory assumptions of the Western mind about the Muslims. Their imagined view of Muslimness also remains at variance from that of the orthodox and extremist sections of Muslim population. Geoffrey Nash's view about these writers that they are "secular intellectual elites", living and publishing mostly in the West, who "adopt…anti-religious positions, attacking the Islamic beliefs, practices and cultures of the lands to which they notionally belong" (Nash 36) seems valid but it ignores the subversive and abrogative potential of such

representation of the Muslim difference.

In this research project, I explore how what view of the Muslim difference Anam, Tharoor, and Aslam offer in their respective texts. I also analyze their attitude towards key precepts of Islam as reflected in the primary texts selected for this study. My dissertation is a quest to understand why and how Muslims and their faith, Islam, have emerged as the 'victims' and 'other' of the discourses of secular rationalism and liberal humanism. I further explore whether Tharoor, Anam, and Aslam offer any possibility of acceptance of Muslim difference their faith registers in a globalized rational and secular fictional world of Anglophone South Asian fiction or whether they partake in these discourses and become the cause of othering and victimizing of the Muslims.

1.3 Thesis Statement

Anglophone South Asian fiction foregrounds a radical and absolute difference between values of secularism and rationalism on the one hand and the Muslim way of life on the other. In this genre of fiction, the Muslim faith is interpreted by employing Euro-American values of liberal humanism. This representation of Muslim difference seems to uphold the Western assumptions about the Muslims and Islam and appears to contribute towards the processes of their othering.

1.4 Research Questions

My research questions are as follow:

1. How do Nadeem Aslam, Tahmima Anam, and Shashi Tharoor delineate the differences between the Muslims and non-Muslims in the selected texts?

2. What are the possibilities of resolution of the Muslim *differend* offered by the selected texts?

3. How do the Muslims' anxieties and sense of in/justice play out in the selected texts?

1.5 Delimitation

This study is limited to the critical interpretation of Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*, Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, and Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel*.

It employs Jean Francois Lyotard's concept of Differend as theoretical framework for the critical analysis of the major themes and motifs of these primary texts. The study also selectively refers to other fictional and non-fictional writings of the primary writers as well as well the various interpretations of these texts offered by other critics to strengthen its stance. In a similar manner, it adopts an eclectic approach towards the main connotations of the idea of differend as articulated by Lyotard and explicated and employed by literary and critical writers.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The layout of my research project comprises six chapters. In Chapter One, I have introduced the main theme/s of the study and situated the writers and their selected texts in the larger framework of Anglophone South Asian fiction. I have teased out relevance of Lyotard's critique of rational discourse encapsulated in his theorization of the concept of *differend* for the interpretation of the primary texts. The body of Anglophone South Asian fiction is mainly formed by Indian English fiction and Pakistani English fiction, although writings of Bangladeshi and Sri-Lankan English writers constitute an important part of it. In this chapter, I have explicated the rationale and critical and theoretical context of my study. I have raised three research questions and tried to find answers to them through the analysis carried out in Chapter Four, Five, and Six.

I have summarized the reviewed literature in Chapter Two, entitled Literature Review, which provides the context and justification of this research project. In this chapter, I have situated my research in the context of prior scholarship and existing paradigms of study of this genre of fiction. It has helped me locate the gaps in previous research and relate, measure against, and authenticate my investigation with it. The reviewed literature furnishes me with appropriate research methodology/theoretical framework, research methods, as well as rationale for my study. I have explained the research methodology/theoretical framework/perspectives in Chapter Three of this study. In this chapter, I have also justified my choice of the concept of *differend* for the study of Anglophone South Asian fiction in general and for the three primary texts in particular.

Chapter Four discusses Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* and foregrounds the difference between Sohail's Islamism and Maya's humanist secularism. I posit that in

the text Anam seems to divide Muslims into good Muslims and bad Muslims. Ascribing Sohail's indifference towards his fellow human beings especially towards his son and mother to his act of 'leaning towards God', she seems to establish cause and effect relationship between Sohail's Islamism and his insensitiveness and indifference toward fellow human beings. In the novel, Maya, Rehana, and Sohail stand in for three kinds of Muslims. Maya represents the point of view of a non-practicing secular Muslim. Rehana stands in for a believing and practicing Muslim but averse to Sohail's devouting himself entirely to preaching Islam. Sohail, nicknamed Huzoor, presents an example of a 'bad Muslim' as compared with his mother and sister. Critique of Sohail's insensitive Islamism articulated through the narrative voice of Maya seeks to establish her as the mouth piece of Anam. It is through describing a gulf between these different categories of Muslims the novel both confirms and challenges some of the negativities attached with the figure of the Muslim.

Chapter Five discusses Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, a novel set mainly in Afghanistan. Aslam's novel explores the conflict between Islamist fundamentalism of (Muslim) terrorists and putative secular and rational values of American and Western characters in the context of America's ongoing War on Terror in Afghanistan. The events of the novel are presented through the consciousness of different characters which at times merges with an overarching voice that reflects the view point of the author. Within this ensemble cast Marcus, a British doctor who has converted to Islam to be able to marry an atheist Muslim and Westernized Afghan doctor, Qatrina, occupies a central position. Muslim terrorists whose ideology is sometimes conflated with the precepts of Islam are presented as stereotypical suicide bombers and irrational religious fanatics. The dissident voices of some Muslim and Russian characters challenge the presumptions and self-righteousness of these two ideological positions. The book narrates, alludes to, and analyses the acts of violence committed by (Muslim) terrorists and the military forces of Western countries which foreground an irresolvable conflict between them. I explore the ways in which this representation of Afghan reality privileges one ideological position over the other in its attempts to resolve the differend.

Chapter Six discusses Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel*. Here, I discuss the heterogeneous voices of different characters in the context of Hindu/Muslim conflict about the right of *Babri Masjid* to stand where it was built in the sixteenth century by a

Muslim ruler, Babur. This place is claimed by Hindus as the birthplace of Lord Ram, one of the main deities of Hinduism. The major voices that articulate their point of view present allegorically the cross section of Indian population. The dominant rational and secular voice is registered by Lakshman, the District Magistrate, Gurinder Singh, Superintendent of police in Zalilgarh, and Muhammad Sarwar, a secular Muslim and professor of Indian history. All three of them pitch for a peaceful coexistence between different communities of India, especially the Hindus and the Muslims. They, however, raise concerns about the rise of Hindutva, an extremist Hindu ideology, which claims India as a place of Hindus and considers Muslims as outsiders. This extremist Hindu version of the reality of Indian society and place of the Hindu and the Muslim in it is voiced by Ramcharan Gupta. *Riot* largely ignores the voice of an ordinary Indian/Pakistani Muslim (Sarwar being a member of elite and privileged Indian class) who could vociferate his/her own version of the discrimination faced by the poor or working Muslim population of India. I have examined in my dissertation how this exclusion works to the disadvantage of Indian Muslims and converts them into 'victims' through employment of normalizing rationalist and secularist discourses.

In last part of my dissertation, "Conclusion", I wrap up my argument. I spell out the significance of approaching the primary texts in this manner and through this particular lens by taking stock of discussion in all previous chapters. This section explains why my research is an addition to existing research and points towards, by raising other pertinent questions, the other possibilities of research in the area of Anglophone South Asian fiction studies. In this section, I make claims about the significance of this research in understanding the ongoing geopolitical and ideological conflict between Islam and the West (and the rest of the non-Muslim world). Thus, I offer a possibility, if not of the resolution of this conflict, but of an understanding that might pave the way for this resolution. My research then possesses a contemporary value. This section clarifies, above all, how Anglophone South Asian fiction committed to raise and articulate heterogeneous voices of South Asian peoples becomes, to some extent, an instrument of stifling some of these voices especially those of the believing and practicing Muslims. This section highlights the similarities and differences among the selected Anglophone South Asian writers and their texts and provides justification for studying them together.

1.7 Significance of the Study

My research project is significant as it studies the conflictual nature of heterogeneous South Asian phenomena by employing a theoretical framework/perspective that illumines the dimensions of religious, cultural, social, and political conflicts between different communities and their ideologies. It studies the writings of three Anglophone South Asian writers whose work has not been studied together before. It has brought the critical work on their writings together that opens up new areas of study about them. Far from being the mere fictions of imaginative minds the primary texts studied in this research project shed light upon the lived realities of thousands of millions of people who are homogenized under the single title of South Asians. My research critically analyzes these texts and investigates how these texts disrupt any homogenization of cultural, religious, and social diversity of South Asia. My research introduces the concept of *differend* in South Asian literary studies. It challenges the imposition of the secular and rational values upon South Asian realities which tend to interpret it through paradigms of Global and World literature. After having introduced the subject, scope, and rationale of my study, I deem it pertinent to present a critical survey of the existing scholarship on the concept of differend and its various manifestations in literary texts. I have reviewed the selected books, essays, and articles in the next section of this study.

ENDNOTES

[1]See Lyotard's essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Postmodernism" for his views on the inability of the rational system of thought.
[2]Robert Faurison in "*The Diary of Anne Frank* – Is It Authentic?" critically evaluates the claims made by the writer, a Holocaust survivor, to refute the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz.
[3]Arundhati Roy in *Azadi: Freedom. Fiction. Fascism*. Haymarket 2020, compares the conditions of the Indian Muslims with the Jews Nazi Germany.
[4]Amin Malak's book, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*. 2005, inaugurates this tradition of studying the texts produced by writers, with Muslim names, parentage, or ancestry, as Muslim narratives.
[5]See Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews With Contemporary Writers*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
[6]Graham Huggan develops this theme in *Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. Routledge, 2001.
[7]Kwame Anthony Appiah in *Cosmopolitan: Ethics in a world of Strangers* (Routledge, 2006) p. xiii recognizes the potential of elitist appropriation of this concept but still advocates it for the betterment of the whole planet.
[8]In *Discovery of India* (Meridian Books, London, 1946) Nehru states that "the history of India was witness of the toleration and even encouragement of minorities and of different racial groups". p 387

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to find out the gaps in the existing critical sources in/around my area of study and contextualize my study in it. Therefore, I have focused those secondary texts that take up the issue of difference of the marginalized figures. In *Writing the Literature Review: A Practical Guide* (2019), Sara Efrat Efron and Ruth Ravid provide a step by step guide for the writing of literature review for scholarly dissertations. In their view, literature review should present a comprehensive, critical, and accurate understanding of the current state of knowledge; compare different research studies and theories; reveal gaps in current literature; and indicate what needs to be done to advance what is already known about the topic of choice" (2).

In reviewing the literature on Muslim difference, I have been selective and critical rather than comprehensive because of the vast scholarship available on the selected topic. I have indicated how the resources under review relate to my study, pointed out the gaps, and contextualized them in the overall scheme of this dissertation. My dissertation investigates the Anglophone South Asian fiction as a site of contest for heterogeneous voices. I have studied the interplay of these contestations through the lens offered by Jean Francois Lyotard's theorization of the concept of *differed*. To unpack the relevance of this concept for the analysis of the three primary texts, I have traced its occurrence and its transformations in literary texts of various places. I have surveyed an assortment of critical essays, articles and books that bring together the themes that have points of contact with the concept of *differend*. The literature reviewed is largely thematic in nature. I have grouped my discussions into themes and reviewed the secondary sources under respective heads. These heads are as follow:

- Relationship between Literature and the *Differend*
- The *Differend* of Muslim Faith

- The Muslim *Differend* and the South Asian Secularism

In the main, I have divided this chapter into three parts. The first part consists of critical essays and books that employ Lyotard's concept of *differend* to study the nature of conflict between different ideas and systems of thought, as articulated in Euro-American texts. This section provides the justification for the use of this theoretical perspective to the study of primary texts selected for this study. It also relates the themes discussed in this scholarship with those, usually, employed to study Anglophone South Asian fiction. In the second part of this chapter, I have reviewed those critical works that deal with the theme of conflict that exists between Islam and the West in native South Asian and diasporic locations. The third part of this chapter consists of critical works of mostly Indian, local or diasporic writers that deal with the theme of conflict between Muslims and Hindus of India regarding territory, history, and authenticity. I have related these three parts with my area of research and been able to locate gaps in it that has helped me in contextualizing and analyzing my primary texts.

I have selected those secondary sources for reviewing that are relevant to theme/s I propose to investigate in this research project. As a researcher, I refrain from making any claims about the comprehensiveness of the literature reviewed. I am aware of the risks of missing out on something very significant or over-stressing others. I want, therefore, to clarify that I have focused by and large on the works written by contemporary critics/scholars whose writings bear upon the area/s of the present study, while reflecting their awareness of the previous scholarship on the same. The works and scholars have been selected from Western circles as well as from native South Asian locations to situate their works into a discussion of the main areas of the study. I have largely excluded the paradigms of Postcolonial Studies, Commonwealth Literature, Third World Literature, World Literature, and Orientalist studies although the concerns of these paradigms intersect each other in the background of my research project.

2.2 Relation between Literature and the *Differend*

In this section, I have focused on those books, essays, and articles that establish *differend* as a useful concept and paradigm for the study of literature. These resources explain the relationship between literature and *differend* and justify latter's suitability as a concept to be used regarding questions of politics, conflict, silence, and

in/justice at the site of literary representation. In fictional or fictionalized writings expressing the heterogeneous experiences of conflicting parties (characters) a singular event gives rise to multiple opportunities of concatenation: responses to the event. Any single linkage-an instance of concatenation- onto this event (phrase) would inevitably exclude all the other possibilities of linkages on to the event, thereby silencing or marginalizing certain voices that might be as legitimate as that which has been given the space to be articulated. Lyotard claims that the linkages of and onto the phrases is always a political act. Anglophone South Asian fiction, usually, represents the historical and contemporary local and international political events and interpersonal relations in fictional spaces, this linkage becomes a political act par excellence due to the personal non/affiliations of the writers and of their fictional characters to heterogeneous religious, ideological and cultural formations. This section of literature review traces the origin of the occurrence of *differend* in artistic and literary productions in its various forms, as elaborated by different critics, to tease out its relevance for the study of three novels, selected for this study.

Dylan Sawyer's *Lyotard, Literature and the Trauma of the differend* (2014), is the first full length book that unpacks the implications of the concept of *differend* for literature. In his book, Sawyer claims that writing and reading of literature has integral connection with *differend*. The book studies the occurrence of *differend* in literary texts from Homer's Odyssey to twentieth century texts of Michael Ondaatje and Safran Foer, among others, and avers that the primary function of literature is to foreground the occurrence of *differend* in it.[1] Sawyer attaches to the writing and reading of literature an obligatory, resistive, and representative task in these words "any examination of literature might prove to be an examination of *differends*" (Sawyer 7). But assuming the role of the representative of resistance or task of expressing the feeling of obligation of the writer who undertakes to give voice to certain wrongs is fraught with risks as the "literature of the *differend* " leaves behind "a certain inarticulation" and "Silence" which is the very condition of the production of literary representation" (Sawyer 7). In The Sawyer explores the 'philosophical foundations' and different aspects of the different and its connection with literature (7).

After explaining the meaning of the phrase, the victim, the inhuman, the sublime, the tribunal, the affect, he explicates the notion of *differend* with regard to

Homer's *Odyssey* and Michael Ondaatje's *Coming through Slaughter* (1976). The book accords a disruptive force to the literature which bears testimony to the occurrence of *differend*, embedded in its ability to challenge the meta-narratives of history, culture, and time and to voice that has been left unsaid in the very act of articulation. The unsaid is closely linked with the whole project of literature, both in the sense of conscious repression of some reality and also of that which is generated at the very moment of articulation or representation. Sawyer highlights the inevitable connection between literature and *differend* in these words: "Literature and the *differend* do not run in parallel but may, instead, be understood as *symbiotic*" (emphasis in original) (Sawyer 61). Literature in Sawyer's view has been site of occurrence as well as articulation of differends since its inception. He thus implicates the literature within the project of giving voice to the marginalised and silenced voices. Historically, in Sawyer's view, literature represents "the slow, unsure awakening of unheard voices and a diversifying of the means to better express them" (Sawyer 46). Sawyer claims that *differend* has been present in literatures of all eras and especially and more pronouncedly avant-garde literature. Thus literature is linked with voicing the silence and making a claim for justice to be dispensed to those who have been silenced. Literature in its constant and differential response to certain events works to circumspect the finality sought by established discourses of the social, cultural, political, and ideological teleological enterprises. The conservative forces, according to Sawyer, collude with each other to the "cicatrisation ['healing', meaning added] of the event" but the literary representation fights against any closure of the event and keeps the notion of judgement open.

Sawyer's definitions of *differend* are concerned with wrongs and the silence it induces in the victims of wrongs. This presence of wrong and silence which he calls *differend* is "housed within literature of all eras…" (105). Sawyer's reading of the *Odyssey* as an example of expression of literary *differend* provides useful insights for the study of literary texts of all times and spaces. Although Odysseus is considered a very resourceful person by the Western critics but according to Sawyer, Odysseus is a case of first Lyotardian 'victim' as he may not express what he witnesses in his unpresentable encounter with the sirens to his audience (Sawyer 110). This encounter with an event that takes away Odysseus' otherwise celebrated ability to deal with every situation makes him the first victim of a wrong and his problematic situation an example of literary *differend*.

Sawyer's discussion of Buddy Bolden in *Coming Through Slaughter* as one of the literary heirs of Odysseus further clarifies his concept of *differend* as expressive of wrong and silence. He advances the idea that Ondaatje's whole oeuvre presents the characters who are victims of silences, injustices, and wrongs. This is reflected in Ondaatje's narratives that are "fated for failure" and that are "often peopled with those that History has marginalised" (Sawyer 103). In Sawyer's estimation, then, Ondaatje's text reflects "double-bind that literature creates when it attempts to voice those who have been silenced" (Sawyer 134). Sawyer's book states that discussions about literature, along with art, is fundamental part of Lyotard's philosophical writings and political views. Lyotard, in Sawyer's view, favours avant-garde art which has the ability to bear witness to the *differend* "through a constant experimentation of form" and "to challenge the consensus of established modes of discourse and the ideas that they enshrine" (Sawyer 21). This silence and wrong are recognized by *differend* which demands their "redress, though importantly this does not make it a guarantor of reparation" (Sawyer 2). Sawyer states that the "literature of the *differend* operates as an act of heresy" and strives to present the unpresentable" (Sawyer 9). He claims that Lyotard's philosophy reacts against the injustices of the world and redresses "relevant political inequalities by stressing the need for an awareness of the damages that they commit" (Sawyer 18). Sawyer's book amplifies Lyotard's conception of wrong, silence, injustice and explicates how the *differend* may be a site of resistance to pose a challenge to the dominant discourse by pointing towards the implied silence and the wrong and injustice it intuits.

In my research dissertation, I have claimed that Anglophone South Asian fiction gives voice to heterogeneity of the area by inscribing conflicting voices within the bounds of a narrative which highlights wrongs and injustices suffered by certain communities or groups of people. In this fiction which deals with conflict between the Muslims on side and the rest of the rational and secular world on the other the Muslims, in my contention, suffer wrongs and bear injustices. Buddy Bolden's situation, as described by Ondaatje and interpreted by Sawyer bears close similarities with that inhabited by the Muslims in Anglophone South Asian fiction. As it tries to represent the injustices suffered by and silences imposed upon him, it places him on the very margins of his own history and lived reality.

The idea of *differend* is primarily concerned with disputes and conflicts. The primary texts enact the contestation between rationalist secular and theological conceptions of life and highlight the limits of representation. In order to achieve integrity of form and logic of rationalism certain perspectives (modes of linkages on to the event) in these texts are suppressed while others are privileged. This dualism in turn is reflected in the sharply divided responses of the critics to these works. On the one hand labels such as the 'comprador intelligentsia', new-Orientalist, and 'native informants' are thrown at the Anglophone South Asian writers, while on the other they are lauded for their objective portrayal of South Asian reality. The same insight may be applied to the primary texts depending on the ideological position of the interpreting subject. I, however, posit that the three primary texts highlight the wrongs and injustices suffered by marginalised (Muslim) communities and are motivated by a well-intentioned desire of representing the sufferings and plight of the oppressed. It is this concern that they share with Sawyer's estimation of work of literature as a site of registering the occurrence of differend.

Bill Readings' *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (1991) deals with Lyotard's concern with the politics of representation.[2] The book stresses the performative aspect of Lyotard's reading strategy which is an ethical practice according to Lyotard. Readings states that as the performative disrupts the teleology of the meta-narratives and instead foregrounds the contingent nature of the reading practice (literary criticism), in that sense it is an ethical practice. In his own estimation of this book it links "a selective series of phrases onto Lyotard's writings in order to trace the relation of his singular intellectual peregrinations to the problems of literary criticism" (Readings xix). Readings claims his book twists Lyotard's "writings towards a concern with rhetoricity and with reading" (xix). This selective linkage on to Lyotard's writings by 'twisting' the same provides Readings with the launching pad from where he establishes links of Lyotard's ideas, particularly the idea of differend, with literary criticism.

The book however seems to lay bare a pattern behind Lyotard's reading practice of arts and literature which links his critique of the meta-narratives to his reading practice. Lyotard's reading practice, instead of celebrating the representative and mimetic aspects of art and literature, Reading avers, questions the limits of representation itself. The art in this sense is not concerned with 'mimesis' or

'representation' but works as an *invention* rather than mimesis (xviii). The politics of representation resides in the fact that it presents the fictional events as knowledge and as socially agreed upon phenomenon. It tries to present as final episteme that which is a matter of rhetorical dispute. To unravel this politics of representation, Readings proposes that Lyotard's concept of phrases as unique and singular event might be helpful (xviii).

Explicating the intersection of art and politics Readings' book examines Lyotard's notion of the political nature of the literary and artistic representation. The politics of representation is an "apparatus… for the reduction of heterogeneous singularities to a unifying rule of representability within which all is recognizable" (xxi). Representation (literary and artistic) as the political "is necessarily complicit with the exclusionary politics that have oppressed women, workers, ethnic and sexual minorities, and others as yet unrecognizable" (xxi). This relation of the representation with the politics of exclusion resonates with Sawyer's understanding of Michael Ondaatje's oeuvre as being concerned with the plight of the marginalized groups (103).

The literary narratives are political in nature because they attempt to link events (phrases) in a logical and sequential order to establish a cause and effect relationship between them. This linking creates *differends* and therefore reveals the politics of literary representation. Explaining the relationship between grand narratives, (literary) narratives and *differend* Readings claims that "Grand narratives claim to totalize the field of narrative…, offer to suppress all *differends*" (Readings xxv). Politics, culture, and ideas of justice are interlinked in the formulation of grand narratives which function as homogenizing monoliths. Explaining further the terrorizing effect of domination of totalitarianism of culture and politics as addressed in Lyotard, Readings states that politics is "entirely a matter of knowledge, of cognition, a domination which is essentially totalitarian" (81). Modern democratic forms of government, then, are no less totalitarian in their functioning than the fascist ones as they try to be an expression of the will of the people. No less unjust are their ideas of justice which is assumed to be a knowable and representable embodied whole.

Readings' analysis of Lyotard's theory of representation connects embodied in/justice with the will and self-determination, social consensus of "We the people" which translates into law in democratic forms of government. Readings is surprised by this dispensation as in this way "democracy is being identified as totalitarian, when the

terms are usually opposed" (83). This unquestioned role of 'dispenser of justice' assumed by secular liberal democracies (America, England, and even India) is what is hinted by Readings in Lyotardian philosophical thought through this book. So injustice, repression, and totalitarianism are not limited to non-state terrorist individuals or groups, Readings avers through the study of Lyotard's politics of representation, but tools of governance employed by democracies.

Readings takes Lyotard's aphoristic pronouncement in *Just Gaming* (1985), co-authored with Jean-Loup Thébaud, that there is "no just society"(qtd. in Readings 83) to mean "that any society which claims to represent the law is immediately unjust, silences any possibility of opposition" (Readings 83). Democratic governments' (particularly of America and India) assertions of being 'secular' and a reflection of the will of the people and defender of the principals of, what they like to call, 'universal human rights', are totalitarian in nature. These assertions provide these governments with the authority to define in/justice according to their political agendas.

The conceptualization of literary representation not as a matter of 'knowledge' but a 'politics of judgement' through phrases (as events) has close relevance to the project of this study which investigates their heterogeneity. The three primary texts may be read as 'political judgements' upon the condition of South Asian reality. This judgemental aspect is revealed in their treatment of the Muslim difference as represented through a polemic between rational and secular discourse and 'repressive', 'barbarian', and 'inhuman' behavior of individuals and groups non-state terrorist groups. The book is relevant to the concerns of my study as it not only foregrounds ideas about the political nature of representation but also offers an apt perspective and the tools to investigate the rational and secular assumptions of the repressive states and state apparatuses. As my concern remains with investigation and analysis of politics of representation as revealed by the primary texts Readings' book offers useful insights to accomplish this inquiry.

François Ost's essay "Disputes and the Differend: Literary Strategies to Say the Unspeakable" (2015) explicates the meaning of Lyotard's concept of *differend* with the help of literary examples. The essay distinguishes conflict in *differend* from that found in legal disputes and claims that "a differend, unlike an ordinary legal dispute, is a disagreement in respect of which the parties do not share a common language or code which might be capable of resolving it" (357). Ost's essay connects this notion of the

differend with Lyotard's concept of victim and the silence it entails after the decision has been made or the plea rejected by the tribunal or court. The party to dispute that has been silenced is termed as 'victim' by Lyotard. Francois Ost undertakes to enumerate the various kinds of victims and answers the question, with literary examples, "how do voices of the victims speak?" (357). It furnishes examples from texts of different periods and presents an array of victims.

In Ost's typology, the first kind of voice of a victim or the victim is the one who may not defend himself; the second type of victim is the one "whose language is judged to be barbaric or animalistic"; the third one is "the rebellious speech of the victim who denounces the differend: the lament sung by the chorus of women expressing the 'other' of politics in Greek tragedy"; the fourth kind of voices of the victim are "the various discourses of the victims' 'spokesmen' who "stand up for them"; and the fifth kind of voice is the "inspired transpositions of the man of letters (who is sometimes himself the victim) as he re-enacts the trial on the literary stage before the tribunal of his readers" (Ost 358). These types of victims or types of their voices are part of literature, avers Ost, as they enact a trial before the readers. Literature according to Ost's essay has close connection with *differend*, a concept whose philosophical dimensions have been explored by Lyotard and whose sociological dimensions have been the subject of Luc Boltansky and Laurent Thevenot's writings.[3] Ost echoes Sawyer's estimation of literature (46) and assigns it a task of separating "litigation from the differend", by virtue of being at their watershed line and also by being "very sensitive to the various modulations of the voices of the plaintiffs" (Ost 359). He assigns literature with the responsibility of watching over the justice, a justice that is different from the one dispensed in the courts to the plaintiffs. The constant presence of *differend* in literature requires "a watcher… an insomniac watcher" who critiques shows attentiveness to silences (Ost 361-2). The work of fiction often revolves around conflicts with characters showing conflicting and often heterogeneous responses to the issues at hand. Ost's interpretation of the task assigned to the reader of the fictional work places him/her in position to a judge, presiding over the suit that the piece of literature enacts. But literature as opposed to ordinary laws and rules brings different set of rules to bear upon the conflict by being critical watcher (362).

Citing examples from writings of Balzac's (Colonel Chabert), JM Coetzee (Friday), Herman Melville (Billy Budd), Aeschylus (Cassandra), Shakespeare (king's fool), and many others he explains his notion of different types of victim. The marginalized condition of these characters bespeaks of their differend, Ost would have us believe. The conflict between Antigone and Creon that constitute the central theme of Sophocles' *Antigone* has been referred to as example of a differend as well. In Ost's view "[t]he conflict between two irreducible versions of justice" presented by these literary classics is still celebrated in contemporary writings in various forms (Ost 373). Mainly literary focus of Ost's essay links it directly with the main concerns of my research project: the study of irresolvable conflicts, nature of victims and their silencing, and the role played by fictional writings in challenging and perpetuating this victimization through suppressing or expressing of their voices. Of particular relevance is Ost's idea that a piece of literature works as a 'tribunal' that presides over the conflicts of characters and ideas. In my research project I have maintained that South Asian Anglophone fiction works as a tribunal between conflicting i.e. heterogeneous voices of the different characters locked in conflicts around history, religion, ideology, and culture. My study investigates how far the primary texts go to register the various modulations of the voices which Ost largely takes to mean silences to represent the Muslim differend through the enactment of fictional conflicts before the 'tribunal' of readers.

Marek Kwiek in "On the Tragic Differend: Dilemmas of Lyotard-Dilemmas of Postmodernity" (1997) presents a defense of the postmodernist thinkers and their thought by invoking Lyotard's notion of differend. Kwiek's essay divides its task into two part: first one is to "present briefly the Lyotardian project of the differend" and second one is to "present a particular application of the project to more than a literary conflict of two reasons from *Antigone* (that of Antigone and that of Creon, obviously)" (75-6). The essay equates tragedy and the tragic which is also present in literature of postmodern period (Kwiek 75). Kwiek claims that Lyotard's concept of *differend* testifies to the presence of the tragic. He seems to posit the tragic, the differend, and the irresolvable conflicts and contradictions as closely connected terms which might be used interchangeably.

The essay defends the postmodernist thought through the study of Sophocles' *Antigone*. In line with Francois Ost's view, in "Disputes and Differends: Literary

Strategies to say the Unspeakable" (2015), of *Antigone* as the irresolvable conflict, Kwiek contends that rules of judgement (Creon's treatment of her as a traitor) and those in which Antigone presents her defense to bury her dead brother are incommensurable (Kwiek 77). Kwiek holds that in this conflict of two different orders Antigone's claim rests on the "law of shadows" which makes it imperative to bury the dead whereas Creon's claim follows the "law of a 'bright day' which prohibits the burial of the traitors of the land (79). Creon's claim to justice rests on the premise of the law of the land which states that traitors may not be treated as citizens and therefore not eligible to get proper burial. On the face of it this seems to be a just punishment, perfectly in consonance with the civil law. Antigone's claim to give her brother a proper burial, on the other hand, is premised on the respect for the dead as enshrined in the divine law. This conflict is cited by Kwiek as "a classical case of a differend" as explained by Lyotard in his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Kwiek 80).

Kwiek connects this conception of differend with his view of the presence of tragic and tragedy in postmodern literature. In his view, Aristotle's notion of the tragic proposes that a tragic hero becomes a tragic figure because of his 'error of judgement' which points to the fact that he is not necessarily at fault in the strict sense of the word. In other words there is a *differend* between his tragic fate and the tragic error that he has committed. Antigone in this sense may be an epitome of the tragic whose difference from Aristotle's formulation lies only in her gender. Her *differend* may not be translated into litigation and justice may not be dispensed as she desires. Kwiek tries to justify his stance on the similarity between the tragic and the *differend* by invoking Scheler's conception of the tragic. The *differend* between Antigone's reasons and Creone's arise, in Kwiek's view, from the fact that they may not be judged "within a classical account of the humanistic whole" (83). His explanation draws parallels and contrasts in Antigone and Socrates' situation and posits that both of them "suffer wrong in the Lyotardian sense of the term" although Creon and his prosecutors "act in a just manner in every respect" (85). The fate of both Antigone and Socrates remains tragic (85). Both of them represent a conflict in their respective figure which according to Kwiek has "much in common with *le differend*" (85). In Kwiek's view, the concept of *differend* is fundamental to Lyotard's thought and offers useful insights to deal with the "entanglement of two orders: the private and the public, in all its dramaticality and irresolvability" (86). This irresolvable conflict between two orders, laws, spheres, and

language games etc. is also integral to Lyotard's conception of justice which is "neither a discovered norm nor an invented one, but always a horizon out of our reach" (Kwiek 88). In other words, Kwiek's essay seeks to establish a connection between Lyotard's conception of differend as a form of conflict and his idea justice that evades any finality.

Kwiek's essay deals with the irresolvability of ethnic, religious, cultural, political and social conflicts as un/re/presented in the form of tragic. In its discussion of one the most influential canonical texts (Sophocles' *Antigone*) of Western literature the essay opens the avenues for further application of Lyotard's concept of *differend* to other literary texts, a task that I have attempted to inaugurate in the study of three primary texts. The three primary texts also deal with the fictional conflictual situations which involve parties whose reasons may not be phrased (addressed) into a single genre of discourse (common law/set of rules). The essay also presents the tragic in the form of an irresolvable conflict and contradiction and hence relates with the main concerns of my study of Anglophone South Asian fiction which enacts the irresolvability of conflict between articles of Islamic faith and ideology of rationalism and secularism.

After studying Lyotard's oeuvre Anne Tomiche, in her essay "Lyotard And/On Literature" (2001), claims that despite the philosopher's lifelong association with visual arts and his acknowledgement of the difficulty of commenting on literature, a considerable body of work from his writings may be gleamed which engages with literary texts and writers. It is his main concern, claims Tomiche, which bespeaks for "emphasis that Lyotard has placed on the concepts of 'figure' and 'unpresentable', both of which name that which subverts articulated discourse and might be outside or beyond language" (Tomiche 149). Lyotard has written on Shakespeare, Mallarme, and Butor in *Discours, figure* (1971), Joyce and Kafka in *Lectures d'enfance* (1991), and Malraux in *Signed, Malraux* (1996) and *Soundproof Room* (1998), in Tomihe's view, "to develop 'philosophical' concepts… that have, in return, shed light on these literary texts" (149). Also included in this canon are Gertrude Stein, Beckett and others who are 'heir' to Flaubert and Mallarme. Tomiche believes that Becket and Stein's works may be quoted as examples of Flaubert's desire to write a "book on nothing" and Mallarme's conviction "that to write is to assert the absence of things rather than their presence" (150). Tomiche states that interest in these writers showcases Lyotard's conviction that literature's "stakes are less to create harmonious and beautiful forms than to distort and to give voice

to disharmony and excess" (150). Tomiche's position on Lyotard's writings about art and literature resonates with Sawyer's claim in *Lyotard Literature and the Trauma of Differend* (2014) that Lyotard is interested in avant-garde art(21) and Jacob M. Held's view in his essay "Expressing the Inexpressible"(2005) that Lyotard concerns himself with paradoxical nature of artistic and literary representation (79).

In Tomiche's estimation, Lyotard's writings on literature are mainly concerned with exploring the way 'how' events (phrases) happen rather than 'why' of them. Clearly this kind of literary and artistic articulation disrupts the smothering of differences enacted in meta-narratives of history, culture, and time through literary representation (and commentary on them) and philosophical texts and makes possible the articulation of the excluded and marginalized voices. Lyotard stresses, in Tomiche's view, the "transgressive power of such literature and on the way it questions linkages" (153). Kant, Wittgenstein, and Freud's philosophical concepts are employed by the philosopher to develop his own readings of the literary texts. Lyotard has engaged with these writers extensively in his book, *The Differend*, to develop his philosophy of phrase as event (a phrase happens, he claims) and how wrongs and injustices are perpetrated in the linkages of phrases- in presenting a seamless picture of otherwise discordant jumble of events. In this formulation, he invokes, what Gertrude Stein says about the nature of sentences in *How to write* (1931), to lay bare the politics of linkages of phrases on to each other (Tomiche 153). Tomiche's essay focusses on Lyotard's theory of phrases which postulate that the differend arises at the site of contesting linkages of a single phrase.

It also contends that in *The Differend* Lyotard questions the traditional formulation of Kant that 'rational is just'. In her view the 'Final Solution' of Jewish Question or *Shoah* and the gas chambers negate Kant's view (156). Lyotard believes that representation of, what he terms 'the paradigmatic situation of *differend*' in discourse of rationalism is not possible as the very occurrence of such event questions its limits. He instead assigns the philosopher and literary authors to institute new idioms to bear witness to this *differend* particularly and all the other *differends* in general. Tomiche's essay proposes that writers like Gertrude Stein fulfill the task conceptualized by Lyotard of bearing "witness to the differend" (157). Anne Tomiche further asserts that Lyotard's oeuvre is concerned with "differend between the inarticulation and articulation" (159).

The presence of silence, void, nothingness, non-articulated, and other non-operatives are what question the assumptions of discourse of Western rationality, logic, and sequential and teleological movement of the history and time. Lyotard eulogizes Joyce's Ulysses, as Tomiche would have us believe, and states that "Ulysses is one of the greatest works devoted to, consecrated to inoperativity" (159). Writers such as Joyce, Kafka, and Freud testify and bear witness "to the differend between articulation and inarticulation", Tomiche asserts in her essay after studying Lyotard's *Lectures de enfance* (159). The essay cites writings from a large number of writers to bring home the point that the significance of literature rests not in its ability to articulate but in its subversive power to challenge the very modes of representation.

Tomiche's essay bears direct relevance to my study of the presence, articulation, and resultant dynamics of *differend* in Anglophone South Asian fiction as it unpacks the significance and appropriateness of Lyotard's concept of *differend* for the study of literary texts. The presence of modalities of *differend* in canonical writers such as Shakespeare, Flaubert, Mallarme, Joyce, Kafka, Valery, Stein, and others and its associations with philosophical writings of Kant, Wittgenstein, and Freud, to mention but a few, testify to its aptness as a theoretical lens/perspective for the study of literary texts. The insights offered by Tomiche's essay with regard to the problematic nature of literary representation to study the expression of literary *differends* resonate with the concern of this study of Anglophone South Asian fiction. This fiction caught between articulation and inarticulation of disparate and heterogeneous voices of South Asian spaces not only bears witness to the *differends* but also seems to engender new ones through the very act of representation.

Jacob M. Held's essay, "Expressing the Inexpressible: Lyotard and the Differend" (2005), addresses the question of in/justice, wrongs and the difficulties in expressing them in literary or philosophical formulations. The basic argument of the essay revolves around the assumption that some sort of criteria to judge between two or more competing claims is necessary when adjudicating the conflicts. Held understands the paradoxical nature of the task of expressing wrongs which are inexpressible but concludes that Enlightenment rationality may be the best criteria to redress injustices and wrongs. Held offers this possibility despite the fact that Lyotard's *The Differend* pitches its argument against the rational discourse.

In Held's view only bearing witness "to a wrong does nothing to resolve it" (Held 77). The thing that contributes to the difficulty of expressing the wrongs and injustices and their consequent redressal, according to Held, is the absence of an overarching genre of discourse (ideal linkages of phrases) which may express the concerns of all the parties involved in a conflict. "There is no grand narrative, or discourse, into which the others may be translated" (Held 78). In the absence of such a regulating genre, views and concerns of the certain individuals and groups remain 'unexpressed'. This feeling of exclusion engenders the feeling of *differend* as the excluded or marginalized come to the realization "that the discourse, in which one is, does not afford the opportunity" to express one's wrongs/concerns/injustices suffered by the one (79). The subject who experiences the inability to express, and whose condition is exacerbated by the acute awareness of one's wrongs and injustices, becomes a victim in Lyotardian sense. Jacob M. Held claims that the task of the art and literature should be "to turn a victim into a plaintiff" (80). This is however a paradoxical task as attempting to express the *differend* requires a medium. Keeping in view very exclusionary nature of any medium/discourse, it is bound to wrong the party whose reality/version of events is not thought to be and recognized as legitimate.[4]

Held states that expressing and addressing the wrongs and injustices in Enlightenment rationality produces the paradoxical and cyclical condition which perpetuates the very wrongs and injustices it sets out to redress in the first place. To address the wrong in a dominant discourse is to disregard the inexpressible nature of the wrong and in essence to create a new, further set of circumstances in which the victim once again is not able to express him/herself and as a result becomes the victim of further wrongs and violence. This leads to c*ul de sac*: any attempt at resolution and any action creates a new *differend* and fosters further violence (Held 84). Taking a departure from Lyotardian postmodernist and deconstructionist approach to the problems of injustices, Held offers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's advocacy for "Utilizing the dominant discourse" which according to him harbors possibilities of expression(although in dominant discourse) and consequent restitution of the wrongs and injustices.[5] He highlights the prominent fault lines in the postmodernist critique of the meta-narratives as voiced by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (2001) to authenticate his choice of Enlightenment rationality as suitable criteria for the redressal of wrongs. In his view "Hardt and Negri recognize that a form of discursive liberation may be liberating for

academics but ultimately it does not free slaves" (Held 86). Held's essay then forecloses any possibility of resolving the *differends* involved in the conflict through postmodernism of Lyotard as he understands it. It is, he claims, an elitist 'discursive' approach brought to bear upon the ills of the world which lacks practical course of action and embroils the real life sufferings and oppressions into ineffectual theoretical discussions. In order to overcome this impasse Held offers Enlightenment rationality as panacea "if one is to attempt to solve the ills of the world" (Held 87). Held's solution to differend seems to contest Lyotard's views about differend as an irresolvable conflict and offers the solution that is the main target of Lyotard's critique: Enlightenment rationality.

Held's own position seems to be elitist and majoritarian as evinced in this essay. Rationality, in celebrating the secular, liberal humanist, and democratic values as core principles of peaceful coexistence and of what he calls 'just societal structure', however, runs the risk of even engendering new injustices/wrongs meted out to minority groups. The three primary texts grapple with this paradoxical task of expressing the Muslim differend. Their attempts to give voice to the silenced run the risk of further wronging the Muslims. As some of them evince a strong hold onto the religion and its traditional practices they are judged only by the corruption of their religion. The ultra visibility of barbaric, inhuman, irrational, and supposedly religious practices obfuscates their religion with these practices of the few and usually results in its unnuanced condemnation.

In "Postmodern Ethics and the Expression of Differends in the Novels of Jeanette Winterson", Chloe Taylor Merleau studies Jeanette Winterson's novels and explicates the relationship between Lyotard's concept of '*differend*', 'victim', and 'wrong'. Her essay presents different scenarios in which a suffering person becomes a victim and claims that such scenarios may be defined as *differends*. These might include discrimination faced by individuals or groups of individuals and communities for physical or biological inclinations. Merleau thus states that in *Le Differend*, Lyotard distinguishes victims from those who have faced the damage. In Merleau's estimation Lyotard believes that the victims are those who have suffered some wrong and have been silenced by the "consequent effacement of the violence done to them" (Merleau 84). A court or a tribunal may decide on the damage suffered by an individual and order a compensation for it. But if an individual suffers a damage without being able to express

it because he is “unable to speak in a language to which the judges will listen,…or because the judges are the ones who have done the damage… or because the testimony of the one damaged is deprived of authority for whatever reason” such a person becomes a victim (84). Lyotard, in Merleau’s view, uses violence done to the Jews at concentration camps, particularly at Auschwitz, as a paradigmatic instance of victimhood and state of a *differend* (84).

To further elaborate the concept of the Lyotardian victim and the wrong, she cites Judith Butler’s essay “Contingent Foundations” in which Butler notes that “subjects are constituted through exclusion” (qtd. in Merleau 85). She invokes Butler’s ideas of processes of exclusion, abjection, effacement, and subjection that confer or deny legitimacy and authority upon subjects to speak and qualify as ‘who’. Examples of victims include “the Muslims in Gulf War and women, the violence against both of which is erased from view” (qtd. in Merleau 85). So Winterson, avers Merleau, traces the *differends* (state of victimhood) of those who have been erased from history (86). She studies Winterson’s four novels, *The Passion*(1987), *Art and Lies*(1994), *Oranges are not the only Fruit*(1985) , and *Gut Symmetries* (1997) under the themes of ‘representing the vanished’, the violence of sex’, ‘cannibalism’, ‘invasion’, ‘identity’, ‘street rape’, and ‘domestic rape’. Merleau reads Winterson’s *Art and Lies* and claims that the ‘vanished of history’, ‘pre- or non-subjects’, ‘fowls’, ‘prostitutes’, and ‘criminalized poor’ are the victims in this novel. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, in which a girl, Jeanette, falls in love with another girl, Melanie, traces the predicament of the former caused by heterosexual norms of sexuality. In *The Passion*, a “cross-dressed non-virgin” orphan girl faces the ever present threat of rape by any one whose street rape is “de-criminalized” and “erased” (Merleau 99).

Merleau’s essay further elaborates the concept of the *differend*, victim, and the wrong that I have been developing in this literature review through expressions of Lyotardian philosophy of *differend* in literary writers. This essay relates the themes of oppressive heterosexual norms, assumptions of familial spaces as places of security and the ‘outside’ as places of threat (by invitation) to women, the stigmas attached to (illegal) immigration, choices of(cross) dressing, with the expressions of *differend* as theorized by Lyotard in *The Differend*. The essay also directly relates with the concern of my research project in its engagement with the mechanisms that appropriate the voices of the victims

of *differends* instead of allowing them to speak for themselves. The characters identified by Winterson as being victims, suffering wrongs, and epitomizing the *differend* bear some connections to the figure of the Muslim whose differend the three primary texts represent in their own different ways.

Teresa Ludden's essay, "Hearing the Silences in Thomas Bernhard's *Ja*: Difference, Narrative, and Lyotard's Concept of the Differend" (2010), explores the ways in which narrative strategy and the gaps within a text give evidence to the presence of silence/s in the novel. The essay employs "Lyotard's concept of the differend and Wittgenstein's notion of language-games" as theoretical frame of reference to study the representational schemata of the text which tells the story of "the relationship between the narrator's inner monologue and the female character, 'die Perserin' [Persian woman]" (Ludden 6). By detecting, what she calls 'incommensurability' that exists between the language of a white European male and the suffering, pain, and despair of a Persian woman, she claims to have opened the text "up to its own silences and failings" (Ludden 6). In Ludden's view the story of friendship between these two heterogeneous characters reveals "the ways in which silence and difference function in this text" (6). It addresses the questions about the processes of representation of uneven relationship between the two main characters, about the location of authority to speak, the difference "between the European and the non European", and the procedures of silencing at work in the text (6). The article claims that Bernhard's text presents "difference as a prominent theme" and raises questions if "the point of view of the excluded or marginal", may be made possible in the presence of the "excluding power of different language games" (6). This excluded marginal character is represented by silent Persian woman in *Ja*, claims Ludden.

In Ludden's view the "textual lacunae", present in Bernhard's text reveal that the speech of the foreign female character may not be represented within the framework of the text (Ludden 10). While noticing the absence of utilization of Lyotard's concept of differend in literary studies, she avers that her article highlights its suitability in bringing "the political impact of the functioning of silence" (Ludden 10). Ludden takes *differend* to be a "point of incommensurability", and a dispute between two parties that fail to agree on a common criteria for justice, and which uses a legal terminology in which the language used by one party to the dispute makes it impossible for the other to present its

wrongs or damages in the same language. The differend between worker's view of his/her work and employer's view of it, along with Auschwitz, is one of the paradigmatic examples, Lyotard offers in *The Differend.* Ludden finds the resonance of this uneven relation in "the relation between the dominant voice of the Austrian male narrator and the relatively silent Persian woman" as male narrator's monologue reduces the Persian women to a "silenced other" (Ludden 11). Ludden maintains that this relation implies a *differend,* not in its usual manifestation as a clash between two voices but by "underscoring of one language's absence" (Ludden 12). There is no non-partisan language with which the concerns of both characters may be presented simultaneously, maintains Ludden. The fact of Person woman's victimhood is indicated by her suicide, her abandonment by her Swiss partner, her "lack of access to narration" as the story of her "suffering and despair" is narrated not by herself but a white European male (12). Persian woman presents an instance of a radical difference whose sufferings, though signaled by the text, in Ludden's reading of the text, "may not be represented by, or translated into, a dominant language" (12). Ludden claims that there exists an unbridgeable difference between the "lived experiences" of the Austrian male and Persian Woman but while foregrounding the lived experience of the male narrator the same of the woman remains un-actualized in the text. By making us aware and by implying, and not articulating directly, the victimhood of the Persian woman, Bernhard's text, in Ludden's view "bears witness to an otherness to representation-a *differend*" (Ludden 18). Expanding the relation of dominance and subjugation present between the Austrian male and the Persian woman to whole European literary canon, Ludden claims that "there is something that a Persian woman may not say in mainstream European literature" (Ludden 19). Ludden's essay builds its argument around the possibility of representation of the suffering of a non-European into western literary canon. It concludes that the outsider status of Persian woman reduces her to the status of a victim as she lacks the means to articulate her own suffering in the discourse of her white European partner.

The importance and relevance of Ludden's essay lies in its reading strategy to locate the silences and what she calls 'textual lacunae' in the texts that apparently deal with the sufferings of the marginalised characters. It foregrounds the narrative strategies and the assumptions working behind the creation and consumption of the literary texts that engage with the radical difference, incommensurability, and relations of dominance

and subjugation. The character of Persian woman and the analysis of her silence and marginalization relate with the concern of my research project. The three primary texts highlight the sufferings and silences of the ordinary Muslims as they seek to reveal that their voice is usurped either by the religious fanatics or fundamentalist Muslims or by secular, rational, and sometimes non-practicing and non-believing Muslims who, usually, reflecting their authors' views, criticize the putative absolute and orthodox tendencies of Islam.

2.3 The *Differend* of Muslim Faith

In this section, I have reviewed those critical books that study the themes of Muslim identity as a mark of difference as reflected in the literary texts written by the Muslim fiction writers. These books of literary criticism claim to present the Muslim identities and their relation with Islam from the perspective of the 'Muslims'. They foreground the ways in which fiction written by Muslims seeks to inscribe the Muslim difference and engages with the monolithic assumptions of western academia about the Muslims. This section of Literature Review engages with these critical works and aims to explore the assumptions working behind their own critique of Muslim extremism with an eye to locate certain patterns behind these critical projects. In this section, I also remain mindful of the social and cultural conditions and status of the writers of these books about Muslim identity and its relation with Islam.

Amin Malak's book, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (2005), is the first full length study of the narratives produced by what he calls the 'Muslim' writers. He not only tries to present a view about "culture and civilization of Islam from *within*" through the reading of English texts produced by these 'Muslim' writers but also lays down the criteria for being Muslim. In this category he includes those that "have experienced Islam firsthand for an extended, formative period; they have been influenced by it to such a degree that it has represented a significant inspirational source for them; and they are producing their narratives in English" (Malak 2).[6] Malak analyses the importance of Islam as religion in the lives of Muslims through an identity debate between different Muslim scholars and delineates the contours of a Muslim identity. Malak claims that his book is an investigation of the manifestation of Islamic identity in its literary form, as distinct from the theological one articulated, by writers "whose roots are situated in the culture and civilization of Islam" (5). Malak defines a Muslim as "the

person who espouses the religion of Islam or is shaped by its cultural impact, irrespective of being secular, agnostic, or practicing believer" (5). After discussing the different variations of Muslim identity Malak undertakes to define connotations of the term Muslim and Muslim narratives as employed in the title of his book *Muslim Narratives*. He designates as Muslim narratives those:

> works produced by the person who believes firmly in the faith of Islam;…by the person who voluntarily and knowingly refers to herself, for whatever motives, as a "Muslim" when given a selection of identitarian choices; … by the *person* who is rooted formatively and emotionally in the culture and civilization of Islam. It is in the latter sense that I may justify, perhaps to the consternation or surprise of many readers, the inclusion of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in this discussion. (7)

His selection of writers as 'Muslims', then dictates his choice of narratives to be studied in line with this delimiting scope.

After setting up criteria for inclusion in Muslim narratives and bringing home the effectiveness of writing in English the tales of Muslim experience of their own civilization and culture, Malak undertakes studies of different Muslim narratives in separate chapters. In Malak's view Ahmed Ali's novel, *Twilight in Delhi*, marks the beginning of establishment of a Muslim literary tradition which, now, includes Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, M. G.Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*, Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments*, Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*, and Ahdaf Soueif 's *The Map of Love* etc. These works and writers "have given voice, with varying degrees of clarity and commitment, to the erstwhile unrepresented, underrepresented, or misrepresented Muslims" (Malak 12). These writings in Malak's view "subvert the binary paradigms of self/other, us/them, East/West" (12). In Malak's view, Ahmed Ali' *Twilight in Delhi* presents the perspective of marginalised Muslim culture and civilization (19) and explores the ways in which the British targeted particularly the Muslims of India for their role in the 1857 War of Independence.

The writings of the Muslim women writers like Attia Hosain, Zainab Alkali, Mena Abdullah, Fatima Mernissi, and Ahdaf Soueif inscribe, Malak claims, a distinctive female Muslim voice through the pride they take in "the culture of Islam" by engaging with the limiting stereotypes usually ascribed to them (13). Malak notes that the early Muslim narratives in English were produced mostly by Muslim women in which they

took up the issue of stereotyped secluded and servile image of Muslim Women. They, in his estimation, "subvert, or challenge the social dogmas of their time" (29). These women offered resistance to what Malak calls "patriarchal appropriation of Islamic precepts" and the issues raised by them are still the subject of Muslim (and non-Muslim) writings of the day (Malak 29). Malak's celebration of the project of resistance offered by these women writers largely revolves around their efforts to resist the imposition of strict seclusion and purdah and exposition of the absurdity of rationale of polygamy practiced in Muslim households.

Malak's book celebrates heretical and blasphemous treatment of the strictures of Islam in English Muslim writings. The justification of this transgressive attitude towards some articles of Muslim faith is reflected in his defense of Somali novelist Farah's novels, *Close Sesame, Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), and *Sardines* in which in his view "one may discern that the foundational frame of Farah's ethics is hinged on Islam" (48). In a similar manner Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* is rescued by Malak from its blasphemous import and invested with a secular political by delinking it from Qur'anic context which tells the story of Prophet Yusaf. In Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments* Malak notes "strong anticlerical statements", its protagonist Iqbal's "ignorance and revulsion of [Islam]", and a valorization of the "secularized Australian zeitgeist" (82) but defends this treatment on the ground that the critique of Islam enunciated in Khan's novel as a "discursive subtext…reveals the narrator's reductive assumptions about Islam and its enduring values" simultaneously (Malak 82). This celebration of Khan's text as a Muslim narrative is likely to remain questionable in the eyes of many Muslims but Malak's criteria make it possible for the text to be read a Muslim narrative.

In Malak's view, the relation of Muslim characters with Islam portrayed by Vassanji and Rushdie is a matter of culture and ethnicity rather than that of "a theological weltanschauung" (Malak 88). Sara Suleri, in *Rhetoric of English India,* [8] and Feroz Jassawala also include Rushdie's texts in Muslim narratives on cultural rather than theological grounds although Rushdie unequivocally declares in his essay 'In Good Faith' that he is not a Muslim. Malak, however, situates Rushdie and his *Satanic Verses* in the context of the orientalist tradition of portraying "Muhammad as an imposter" and unfamiliar as against Jesus who is innocent, holy, and familiar (to Western subject) (Malak 96). At the same time Malak seems to vindicate Sara Suleri's estimation of

Rushdie's critique of Islam, in *The Rhetoric of English India* an "act of archaic devotion" and "curious faith" as 'schooled' and 'sophisticated' nuance (qtd. in Malak 102). Concluding his book, Malak states that the Islam experienced by Muslim writers, he has studied in his book, is quite different from the orientalists both of past and present (Malak 152). He claims that Islam shows sophistication which is reflected in its tradition of "learning, metaphysics, and aesthetics", and myriad arts it has generated which are reflected in "calligraphy, music, architecture, painting, and arabesques" etc. (Malak 155). Malak's book lauds the narratives written by all these Muslim writers and the way they represent what he calls the Muslim reality.

Malak's book is significant in many regards for the project of this study. First, it provides the latter critics Madeline Clements and Geoffrey Nash and others with a working definition of a Muslim which seems controversial. Second, it sets a pattern of studying of what Malak calls 'Muslim Narratives'. This pattern assigns a recuperative power to the writings of Muslim writers and paves the way for a nuanced study of foundations of Islam. It also lays the foundation of a 'Muslim canon' within English fiction that might give voice to the concerns of 'unrepresented, underrepresented or misrepresented Muslims'. Although Malak criticizes postcolonial discourse for excluding religion from its discussion, performing 'sophisticated obscurantism' and 'theoretical speculation', and operating in a secular Euro-American tradition, his own projection of Islam may seem to have born out of the same assumptions to some readers. His vindication of Rushdie, Farah, and Adib Khan's extremely blasphemous attitude toward Islam and its basic precepts also might be questioned by some orthodox quarters of Islam. This appropriation of the Muslim voice might be interpreted as an act of committing wrongs against them through representation and usurpation of their voice.

Madeline Clements in *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective: Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam, Shamsie* (2016) discusses and traces the history of representation of the Muslims in fiction before and after 9/11. She surveys responses of the Euro-American literary writers to 9/11 and claims that they have been instrumental in perpetuating the binaristic divisions between the West and Islam. The fiction of Don DeLillo, Safran Foer, John Updike, Martin Amis, Sebastian Faulks, Ian McEwan, and Salman Rushdie, in Clements' opinion, juxtaposed conflicting values of Islam and the West "when describing imaginary terrorist threats or suspect Muslim subjects"

(Clements 6). These writers and many others used a "liberal, secular and democratic rhetoric" to refute the charges of Islamophobia against them and fostered a damning discourse on Islam, claims Clements.

In her own estimation, her book studies voices of South Asian Muslim writers from their own perspective. Clements states that many South Asians, particularly, Pakistani writers chose to write in English after the events of 9/11, 7/7, and Afghan and Iraq War to "explore the relationship between Muslims and the West" (Clements 8). She chooses for study and calls Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam and Shamsie global writers because of their orientation expressed in their choice of subject matter as well as setting which are "zones of conflict and contact" (Clements 9). Clements' book studies the writings of these writers that explore the manifestations of "globally implicated South Asian Muslim subjects" at the same time it claims that elite backgrounds of their writers affect their works in a number of ways. They are under pressure from their Western readers to express where they belong subjectively, in the core of their hearts either directly or through their characters (Clements 21). Dealing with the real life events the novels of these writers present a reality effect with regard to the social, political, and cultural phenomena of South Asia and the diasporic spaces where some of these are set, Clements maintains.

She justifies her inclusion of Aslam and Rushdie in Muslim writers despite their similar and quite "irreverent perspectives on the Prophet and Islam" (Clements 24). In the current scenario when multiculturalism has become a suspect category and Muslims are viewed with suspicion, in Clements' view, these writers resort to fiction to "expose where in the world Muslim loyalties lie" (9). In her view, "they might mute Muslim voices of dissent, and demonize or trivialize Islamic acts of resistance to neo-imperial (Western) hegemonies, in order to secure their entry into the "global" public sphere" (11). The writings of these Muslim South Asian writers deal with "historical, religious and cultural differences, actual and perceived" by setting their fiction in local and international geopolitical locations (12). Despite somewhat contradictory evaluation of their writings Clements, however, avers that the post-9/11 writings of these Muslim writers reflect a 'pan-Islamic' response to "the reductive and polarising perceptions of Muslims and Islam" after 9/11(16).

She devoutes a chapter to each of the four Muslim writers and sketches their

representation of the Muslims in them. In her view Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Rushdie satirizes Islamic fundamentalism of "devout Muslim characters" (34) have close connections with discourse of 'clash of civilizations' and 'axis of evil' (35). Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) portrays a positive picture of Mughal Emperor Akbar's court and Florence of his contemporary Niccolo Machiavelli and the Medici. In its setting of historic Hindustan, *Shalimar* and *The Enchantress* evince an admiration of what Clements calls, after Timothy Brennan, "gentler [and indigenised, Indian] Islam" (53). Although Rushdie according to Clements reinforces some stereotypes of the Muslims his critique is directed against "more extreme, devout or fundamental Islamic faith" (58).[7] Clements largely ignores discussion about responses of the Muslims to Rushdie's novels and designates his writings as part of Muslim narratives. In her estimation of Rushdie's novels they are instruments of registering Muslim voices at the global level although in the process they evince an ethos that falls back into Esat/West binarism held on to by western novelists like Amis, McEwan, and Delillo.

Hamid's *The Reluctant*' *Fundamentalist*", in Clements' view, unsettles "Western ways of seeing, exposing the legitimacy, humanity and ambiguous quotidian reality of South Asian Muslim ones" (65). In Clements view, Hamid does not choose any single identity valence for himself in this novel and thus makes more complex the idea of a unified South Asian identity (78). Nadeem Aslam's two Post-9/11 novels *Maps for the Lost Lovers* (2004) and *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) perform a humanitarian and ethical task which may be defined as "re-culturing" Islam (90). Islamic faith has been "un-cultured" by Western discourse which characterize it as Barbaric and also "by the brutal actions of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban" (Clements 90). In Clements' view Aslam is engaged in a task of "re-educating the Muslim world he believes Islamic scripturalists have 'un-cultured'" and tries to expand the perceptions of his intended Western readers about Islam (95). Aslam champions individual over the collective, dogmatic, and irrational beliefs of the Islamic fundamentalists and desires, through his 'democratic' novels (Clements 95). Aslam represents "Islamic figures of terror, from jihadist militants to immigrant housewives" and uses literature to condemn all kind of acts of terrorism ranging from "Bin Laden's acts of international terror" to "small scale September 11s' which occur in Muslim communities each day" (qtd. in Clements 95). Aslam shows these characters in "the iron grip of ideological and scriptural Islam" and as followers of

a “fanatical faith” which is “irrational and inhumane…unforgivably implicated in ‘barbaric’ practices like punitive ‘amputation’” (100). Aslam however tries to distance himself from such negative statements about Islam that portray it as a “warmongering and inherently barbaric” by presenting them as opinions of his characters. Clements, however, believes that Aslam’s negative portrayal of Islam and Muslim characters and practices is very difficult to ascribe to characters or the narrative consciousness (108). Clements here seems to suggest that these negative images of Islam reflected through statements of certain characters are then ascribable to Aslam’s own estimation of Islam. In the final verdict on Aslam’s *The Wasted Vigil,* Clements avers that it reduces the conflict in Afghanistan “to a simple clash of Eastern and Western cultures” as the book projects and represents an anti-Islamic ethos (109).

In chapter five, she studies Shamsie’s *Kartography* , *Broken Verses,* and *Burnt Shadows,* and claims that these novels contest the viewpoint of West (Rushdie included) about Islam as being “irrational, absolute and, unreformed” (134). Shamsie’s fiction through her female Muslim characters “set[s] an agenda for an alternative, critical, Asian- and Islam-inflected geopolitical consciousness which encompasses but does not rush to judge” the marginalised Muslim characters (154). She sums up her discussion by stating that in the fiction produced by Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam, and Shamsie, the discourse of ‘War on Terror’ remains one of book’s basic concerns. Registering responses to Western discourses, ranging from reconfirming Western stereotypes to deconstructing the same, and “de-centr[ing] Western perspectives and priorities…they[Rushdie, Aslam, Hamid, Shamsie] demonstrate an attempt to revise modern “knowledge” of the Islamic world” (156). Clements book revolves around the East/West or Islam/West clash as fictionalized by her chosen writers. Although the book tries to redeem the stance of these writers on Islam she points out the ambiguities in these writers’ perception about Islam. They try to straddle two opposing world views to showcase their own affiliations and affinities with Islam. They both resist cosmopolitan perspectives and demonize and trivialize Islam. Particularly Rushdie and Aslam’s attitude towards Islam and Prophet Muhammad remains, Clements states, somewhat euphemistically, ‘irreverent’. While Clements refrain from making any personal statement about Islam and the Prophet, her inclusion of Aslam and Rushdie in ‘South Asian Muslim writers’ remains problematic and follows the lead offered by Malak in his book on Muslim narratives.

Geoffrey Nash's *Writing Muslim Identity (2011)* brings to the fore the constructed nature of Muslim identity through (mainly but by no means only) Western discourses that single out Islam "as the western world's Other" for political and ideological reasons (Nash 5). Muslims, in Nash's view, have been made suspect objects through "a war of words and images [that] has been unleashed against them" (Nash 1). In the societies where they are in minority "they feel themselves vulnerable to what might be called a *Kulturkampf*, a 'cultural struggle' that takes its cue from Bismarck's policies directed in the name of secularism against the influence of the Catholic Church in Germany in the 1870s" (1). The motives of this "campaign against Muslims which began to appear in the western media after the success of the Iranian revolution" are political as they were in Bismarck's Germany (1). The above quoted lines summarize the whole project of Nash's book. The rest of the book expands his basic thesis that a cultural struggle is being organized and carried out through various discourses of the West.

Engaged in this struggle, Western filmmakers, novelists, and dramatists, literary writers, journalists, and many others highlight the crimes and extremities committed by the Muslims whereas similar unlawful acts committed by people belonging to other religions are ignored. Islam is singled out as the target of critique and blame for practices like "child brides, forced marriages or honour killings" while these practices remain prevalent in many other religions like Hinduism and Sikhism (Nash 3). This isolating of Islam and the Muslims for the vices prevalent also in non-Muslim and non-Islamic societies is part of the cultural struggle the West has been engaging in since European enlightenment. After the collapse of Communism the binary of 'West v the Rest' took a semantic shift and came to mean "the West against the Muslim world" (4) Nash would have us believe.

Nash describes how Islam is constructed as a threat to the West through Western media and literary discourses. Muslims are painted as "oddities or deviants from the norms of modern civilization-the 'barbarians at the gates'" and equated with "Communists and Nazis" (Nash 9). In Nash's view they fulfill the Western need of creating a "global threat" after the Cold War (10). Nash explicates how these views are absorbed and circulated by the writers who belong to the post-colonial and Muslim societies whose realities they profess to represent. In literary productions of local or diasporic Muslim writers Islam and Muslims often appear to be the target of invectives

despite the fact that these writers profess to "adopt a 'liberal' position" in their fiction(12). These writers present, as against their assertions of voicing equally the heterogeneous views of different characters, an outside view of Islam and the Muslims, "incorporate two-dimensional versions of Islam and Muslim fundamentalists", and "promote a western secular agenda" (12). Not only this but in their fiction the West(as a whole) comes to be defined by values of "freedom of expression, democracy, separation of church and state, human rights, and, especially, women's rights" which is contrasted with, "irrationality, intolerance, and fundamentalism of the Muslims" (12). This Western-inflected point of view about Islam and the Muslims, in Nash's view, "hardly reflect[s] the real practices of Muslims" (12). Nash's book claims that there exists a distinction between the real practices of the Muslims and their re/presentation in fiction by both Muslim and non-Muslim writers to assert that these writers largely interpret acts of Muslim faith and rituals in a secularist rational paradigm. Judged by these secularist criteria the Muslims and their practices assume a discomforting if not completely threatening posture.

In Nash's view, Islam as an 'other' of the secular west serves it in implementing its political, economic, and social agenda upon the rest of the world. Thus, Western secularism has assumed the dimensions of a religion in itself and pitches itself "against Islam as a religion" (14). The figure of the Muslim, returned in Western societies after 9/11 and through America's War on Terror is an "earlier type" and "has a lot in common with a previous bogeyman, the Jew" (14). Nash views publishing of *The Satanic Verses* and the completely opposite response of the West and Islam towards this book as a watershed moment in the relations between Muslims and the West. The book and, what later came to be known as the 'Rushdie Affair', in Nash's reckoning, confirmed "old antipathies" between the West and Islam" (23). Another important landmark, Nash claims, was reached in this relation after the events of the 9/11 which "scaled up the *Kulturkampf* against Islam exponentially" carried out in electronic and print media as well as in "plethora of fictional and non-fictional representations" (24). In his view, Farhana Sheikh, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Nadeem Aslam, Leila Aboulela "construct Islam and Muslims by employing recycled Orientalist tropes cast in the insider's voice" (26). These writers show an eagerness to connect with the literary discourse on Islam produced by writers like Martin Amis, Fay Weldon, and Jeanette Winterson after 9/11 (27).

Chapter three of Nash's book, "Fixing Muslim Masculinity, Saving Muslim Women: Azar Nafisi, Asne Seierstadt, Taslima Nasreen, Irshad Manji, Ayan Hirshi Ali", discusses how the west perceives always a negative and oppressive relationship between women and Islam. It analyses West's assumptions that somehow Islam is directly responsible for the "female subjugation by patriarchal" Islamic societies (50). The narratives of the women writers mentioned in the title of the chapter, usually focus on issues "as arranged marriage, polygamy, divorce, and sexual encounter", and seems to be defining (Muslim) women according to their sexuality alone…" (Nash 50). These re/presentations of Muslim women, states Nash, stem from Orientalist scholarship of 18th and 19th century Europe. They are touted as "exemplars and writers" of Muslim origin but in reality they make "high-profile contributions to the *Kulturkampf* against Islamic belief and practice" (64). In Nash's view, the writings of these so-called Muslim women writers advance the project of *Kulturkampf* of West against Islam. Their unqualified critique of the (putative) Islamic practices is "absorbed into an anti-Islamic discourse" (67). Nash maintains that writings of V. S. Naipaul, Naguib Mahfouz, Jamal Mahjoub, Shahrnush Parsipur" are a part of '*Kulturkampf* against Islam'. Nash's book claims that an oppressive monolithic identity is assigned to the Muslim characters that stand in metonymically for all the Muslims. In Western writings, the "[c]harges of fanaticism, obscurantism and violence…are laid at the feet of Islam, the religion, and the Muslims who are its followers" (Nash 116). Nash presents a very harsh view of the discourses that circulate among media and literary productions created both by Western and non-Western (Muslim) writers. He takes a departure from Clements and Malak's views about the role of Muslim narratives in inscribing a unique Muslim identity and equates them with West's *Kulturkampf* against Islam.

Nash's book relates with the theme/s of my research project as it studies the re/presentations of the Muslims by Western, other non-Muslims, and Muslim writers. It explicates the ways in which these re/presentations offer a differential view of Muslim subjectivity and pitch Muslim fanaticism and Western secularism and rationalism in a conflict that seems to favour the Western point of view. Muslims writers make Islam and its practices the subject of their study in their fictional and critical writings. While the West seems to engage in, what Nash calls, a *Kulturkampf*, a cultural struggle against Muslims and Islam, these writers seem to align their sympathies with the Western rational and secular view of the world. Nash states after 9/11 the discourse against

Muslims was ‘scaled up’ by Western literary and media machine. The Muslim writers too took part in this Kulturkampf. Nash’s book highlights how the voice of a practicing and believing Muslim is nonexistent in Muslim writers like Rushdie, Kureishi, Monica Ali, Aslam and others. The Muslims populating the pages of their fiction are usually fanatics, fundamentalists, and terrorists whose doppelgangers circulate among western media and literary discourses.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay, “Terror: A Speech After 9-11”, is born out of her conviction that it is “impossible to remain silent in the face of War on Terror” (“Terror” 80). She takes up the issues of nature of war, its relationship with terror and terrorism, the phenomenon of suicide bombing. She relates these issues with the Western concept of secularism to stress the need for adopting the idea of ‘Critical Secularism’ traceable in Edward Said’s writings as against the secularism that in itself has assumed the form of an ideology. She also discusses the need for “uncoercive rearrangement of desires” brought about by the University through teaching of Humanities and pitches it against the ‘coerced change’ which she considers is used by those who prepare young suicide bombers to kill the ‘unmarked people’ (82).

The essay raises some questions about the il/legality of claims of both terrorists and of the US officials and military commanders. In Spivak’s view American Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld’s justification for the treatment meted out to “detainees at Guantanamo Bay” is flawed. It is like “talking to ourselves, or to our clones abroad” (87). She notes the slipping of word ‘terror’ into ‘terrorism’ and draws parallels between the workings of War on Terror and acts of terrorism. She also points out the contradictions in the legitimizing discourse of War on Terror which works on the assumption: “When the soldier is not afraid to die, s/he is brave. When the terrorist is not afraid to die, s/he is a coward. The soldier kills, or is supposed to kill, designated persons. The terrorist kills, or may kill, just persons” (92).

She ascribes this legitimizing distinction between the killing of a soldier and that of a terrorist to secularists’ failure “to imagine our opponent as a human being, and to understand the significance of his or her action” (93). It is, however, not to justify the acts of terrorism perpetrated by the suicide bombers. She contrasts the training (brainwashing in parlance of War on Terror) for suicide bombing with the “uncoercive rearrangement of desires” (Spivak 82) carried out at the University and seems convinced

about the futility of the task of suicide bombers (97). She claims that most of the suicide bombers are 'young' and therefore, it is easy to "rearrange their desires by coercion" (93). Thus she ascribes the certainty of the failure of the task of the suicide bombers to their 'vulnerability' and the nature of what she calls "coercive rearrangement of desires" (93). This phrase works as a leitmotif and offers the corrective power enshrined in it as panacea for the sufferings caused through War on Terror.

The essay states that the violation of human rights by the terrorists and their backers provides a ruse for the continuing war in the name of 'peace' and at the same time keeps America and its allies out of its workings because of designating the terrorists as not being 'human beings', by liberal democratic states like America, Israel, and India. Spivak links the actions of America, Israel, and India with each other. She states that the conflict in Kashmir "emerged in the visuality of our everyday, in the context of the War on Terrorism" and that "in the Indian case, the state of Gujarat, where genocidal violence against Muslim citizens is condoned by state and police, never makes it into the visualization of international public culture" (Spivak 97) She directs her readers to read the factual account of the genocide of the Muslims in Gujarat carried out with the help of state apparatus in 2002. This account is given by Harsh Mander, an Indian civil servant, in his book *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India* (2015).

Spivak's essay reveals some contradictions of the western discourse of secularism and rationalism. While the suicide bombing is linked to faith (Islam) the acts of religious extremism and fundamentalism against Muslims perpetrated by Jewish and Hindus are justified by the discourse of secularism and reason. Spivak relates her 'musings' in response to War on Terror, as articulated in this essay with her critique of secularism and rationalism. In her view the "sanitized secularists" who are offended with the very name of the religion are far removed from the aspirations of the peoples of the world (Spivak 102, 105). The mantra of "tolerance" of Judeo-Christian secular religion makes invisible, "religion-culture language that governs [its] own idiom" (106). In Spivak's view, to speak in the parlance of narrative of War on Terror, about the terrorists motivated by (supposed Islamic) religious injunctions whose actions the West dismisses "as pathological, murderous, or aberrant", is to submit to the gender-race-and class-specific positions of the West (Spivak 109). The essay draws parallels between 'the coercive rearrangements of desires' effected by both parties involved in War on Terror.

This war is termed as "monstrous civilizing mission" (Spivak 84) by her. Without according any space to the discussion of motivation and reasons of the (Muslim) terrorist for taking recourse in suicide bombing she, however, ends up upholding the same narrative she undertakes to criticize. Although the essay links the Issue of Kashmir and genocide of Muslims of Gujarat in India with War on Terror it leaves out the parallels that exist between the situation of the Muslims of Kashmir and of India on the one hand and suicide bombers (freedom fighters in Taliban's or Al-Qaida's terminology) on the other. The essay effectively exposes the double standards working behind the (hyper) visuality of certain killings, genocides, terrorist activities and unvisuality of the others.

Spivak's solution to this situation sounds elitist and remains beyond the requirements of dynamics of reality. Rumsfeld, Farid Zakaria of Newsweek, Christopher Hitchens, and many others she excoriates in the essay who are at the helm of War of Terror have already been through the corridors of the 'University' and traversed the path of reading and teaching she offers as possible way of achieving change in behaviour . The only difference that may distinguish them from their peers at University is that their training remains largely in Law and Political science, as recognized by Spivak. What to do with the killings of innocent Afghans, Palestinians, and Indians and how to respond and compensate their loss of life, property, and everything they hold dear while the 'reading and teaching' is translated into actual practice, in lands thousands of miles separated from 'secular University' of America and Europe, the essay fails to elucidate. In this failure it reduces the voice of the innocent Afghans, Palestinians, and Indian Muslims to silence of *differend*.

Priyamavada Gopal's essay, "Of Capitalism and Critique: 'Af-Pak' Fiction in the Wake of 9/11", studies Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* and Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist* to highlight the ideology of capitalism behind the War on Terror. She terms this war as War *of* Terror in which more than one party, including NATO and the USA, deploys indefensible violence against civilians" (23). The essay proposes that Capitalism with its "sense of itself as post-ideological" (27) manages to remain invisible in Aslam and Hamid's novels. Aslam's novel presents a "conflict between communism and Islamism, on the one hand, and between the communist Soviet Union and the anti-communist USA on the other" and makes the capitalism altogether invisible (27). When the novel is read through this lens the conflict in Afghanistan is not

a conflict of material pursuits but a conflict between ideas. In this conflict "[b]eauty, humanity, freedom and open- endedness" represented by American and Westernized characters, are fighting against the "totalizing brutality of the 'isms' propagated by those who have religious and/or political claims to make" (27). Thus the tactics and methods, employed by America and its allies, in this conflict, are not attributable to any ideology, the West would have us believe, but a befitting response to a war time situation.

In Gopal's view, Aslam's novel largely attributes violence and excesses committed in this conflict to the violent nature of Islam and its adherents (24). Gopal's reading of Aslam's novel infers that as the novel focuses heavily "on the crude savageries of the Taliban as both *Islamist* and *Islamic*", it may be said that the novel subscribes to the reductive view of Islam (25).This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Afghan characters like Casa, Duniya, despite the novel being a story of Afghan reality, remain "the supporting cast" to "three white non-Afghan protagonists, Lara, Marcus and David" (25) This narrative strategy and arrangements of events and thoughts as monologues to be narrated reflect "determinate ideological" choice on the part of the writer. It is through the point of view of "three white non-Afghans" characters that most of the narrative is told (25). In Gopal's view, Casa's and Bihzad's, "every thought and feeling is crudely referred back to an authoritative set of external precepts" of Islam (26). In this presentation, adherents of Islam "are incapable of either critical reflection or breaking free"; they believe in "ludicrous scenarios", and their actions are motivated by their ideology and not triggered by the affective or psychic responses to situations (26). Casa has been sketched with extreme negative colours and has a 'tunnel-vision'. He refers "every idea and action back to the Koran or to the teachings of madrassa preachers" and shows himself to be completely incapable of imagining alternatives. He presents a foil to David, Lara and Marcus who live an affective and psychic life and despite occasional failings they have the ability to feel, self-reflect, and to rue mistakes and criticize themselves (26).

The essay points out Aslam's narrative alternates between elision and analysis. Gopal maintains that the acts of violence and savagery committed by Taliban are presented as "pornography of violence" whereas those killings carried out by Americans and their allies are only "alluded to" by Aslam (28). Moreover the violent acts of killings, torturing, and maiming the Afghans through drone attacks, aerial strikes, and

torture cells are not referred back to some ideology (capitalism, democracy, secularism). Thus, the book not only distorts the image of Islam and the Muslims but also widens the divide between the (Capitalist) West and Islam. Gopal concludes that "*Vigil* does little, ultimately, to rectify this existing problem of [distorted] representation" of Islam and the figure of the Muslim (Gopal 28). The essay criticizes Aslam's use of imagery of violence that comes from the media images of the Muslims circulated in the West. Gopal also analyses how effectively Capitalism eludes any critique in Aslam's novel despite being the real cause of the conflictual situation described in the novel.

The essay compares Aslam's view with Hamid's about the responsibility of destruction and privation of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It notes that while Aslam largely absolves the West and blames Islamism and communism for the destruction of these societies, Hamid holds the West, led by America, responsible for the destruction and poor condition of these two countries. The essay also detects the difference in solutions the two writers seem to offer to come out of this impasse. Gopal claims that Aslam's solution to the conflict suggests that a complete break from the ideological, which to him is represented by Islamism and communism and which is hardly distinguishable from Islam itself, "provides the only hope in a landscape that he renders in bleakly hopeless terms" (35). Hamid, on the other hand advocates "a turn to the cultural and civilizational" which "offers the resources for resistance" (35). Gopal concludes that "where Aslam's novel ends up reifying the ossified assumptions that underlie ideologies of 'civilizational clash', Hamid's tightly-controlled narrative poses questions that need to be asked" (36). In Gopal's estimation, Aslam's book relies on stereotypes constructed around the figure of Muslim by the Western media. The solution offered by *Vigil* fails to take, in Gopal's view, into account the role capitalism plays in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan that is subject of the novel. Aslam employs an exclusionary narratorial strategy and operates within the discourse picked up from media speak of international realpolitik.

2.4 The Muslim *Differend* and the South Asian Secularism

In this section, I have focused on critical texts that explore, uphold, critique, and problematize the forms of secularism in Indian subcontinent. I examine how anticolonial nationalism largely led by the Hindu elite comes to terms with the figure of the Muslim. This engagement with the Muslim difference is usually made with reference

'Muslim separatism' that resulted in the partition of United India into two separate countries in 1947: India and Pakistan. Thus the status of Pakistan with an Islamic identity from its very inception comes under persistent scrutiny and is perceived by the South Asian as well as Western secularists to be a threat to the secular world. A large part of South Asian Anglophone fiction takes up the theme of division of India and questions the creation of Pakistan as a separate state on the basis of a religion: Islam. This section of the Literature Review examines how the literary visualizations of united India with a putative syncretic and secularist past contribute to the negative imaginings of the Muslims and how they reify their image as a threatening other.

In *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (2007), Aamir R Mufti studies the minority status of the Muslims of postcolonial India. He says that the aim of his book is "to resituate certain aspects of the larger problematic of Jewishness within an extra-European, global frame" and to locate its "reappearance in the crisis of minority in colonial and postcolonial India" (*Enlightenment* Mufti 3). The marginalization suffered by Jews in Europe with respect to the dominant culture, in Mufti's view, might usefully be compared and affiliated "to colonial and postcolonial forms of alienation" in India with regard to the status of the Muslim minority…" (6-7). The similarity between the "fraught histories of European Jews and Indian Muslims" may be tapped to institute a critical practice, suggests Mufti (8). He detects similarities and parallelism between the Jewish Question of the Nazi Germany and the treatment of the European Jews by racist Nazis on the one hand and conditions of the Muslims in India on the other.

The book ascribes the occurrence of present situation of Indian Muslims to the failure of secularism in India. Part lyrical and part literary criticism Mufti's book holds that Nehruvian 'heroic' state secularism based as it was on "the principles of Enlightenment rationality and critique", breathed its last in 1992 and along with the collapse of *Babri Masjid* "the very structure of Indian citizenship" came crashing down (*Enlightenment* 2).[8] He states that at the centre of this crisis of secularism and particularly postcolonial secularism in India lies the "terrorized and terrifying" figure of the Muslim (2). In his view, the Jewish Question has a "set of paradigmatic narratives, conceptual frameworks, motifs, and formal relationships" which may be located within India by analyzing the minority status of the Muslims of India.

Exploring the sociological and cultural import of the terms like tolerance, emancipation, assimilation, state protectionism, exile and the others, inherent in the discourse of the minoritarianism, the book suggests that despite the supposed emancipation of the Jews, revealed through conferring of equal status upon them in many European countries "the Jews remained nevertheless excluded from large areas of social life" (Mufti 53). In a similar manner, the nationalist discourse of India before and after the partition where the majority Hindu stand point remains the standpoint of humanity offers "the treacherous promise of equality" to Muslims which is never materialized (Mufti 54-55).

The book studies Forster's *A Passage To India* and Nehru's *The Discovery of India* and states that the Muslim identity remains as an excess of "the language and culture of [Indian] nationalism" and its categories (131-2). In Indian nationalist discourse an ambivalent picture of the figure of the Muslim is worked out with a view to contain it within the structure of "a uniform and universal citizenship" which, however, evades this containment because of its heterogeneity (Mufti *Enlightenment,* 134). Mufti suggests that the ghettoization, minoritization, and "the vocabulary of the Jewish Question is ubiquitously present in Muslim citizenship in post-Ayodhya India" (139). He claims that Rushdie's "*The Moor's Last Sigh*, Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*, and Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay*" explore the "metaphorical possibilities of Jewishness" in postcolonial India (*Enlightenment* Mufti 245). In this formulation of the crisis faced by minorities of Postcolonial world in general and that of India in particular, especially Muslims, the minorities are exiled within their own nations. Because of their religion or ethnicity or other identity marker they are kept out of the national fold in many significant ways. In Mufti's view Indian 'secular' and "more 'resurgent' Hindu" nationalism "continues to be an attempt to normalize a normative Indian experience and identity through an ongoing effort to minoritize 'the Muslim'" (Mufti 260). Mufti unearths a consistent pattern behind the efforts at nation formation in Germany, England, and India through literary and non literary production. *Ivanhoe*, Fichte's lectures, and Nehru's *Discovery of India* are considered such efforts by Mufti.

Although many of Mufti's insights reflect the true predicament faced by the Muslims in India, his critique of the 'Jewishisation' and 'minoritization' of Indian Muslims operates largely in a secular paradigm. He questions the division of India on

religious bases but does not explore the causes of this partition. His cutoff date for the death of secularism, the demolition of *Babri Masjid* in 1992, remains arbitrary as the history of Hindu/Muslim relations in India is replete with accounts of such clashes and riots. The communal conflict in India was brought to fore in Hindi /Urdu controversy which started around the time of *Swadeshi* movement. He fails to consider the jewishisation, demonization, and minoritization of the Muslims started by the teachers and students of Hindu College of Calcutta. Mufti's book thus deals with some of the main concerns of my research project. It elaborates the jewishized and demonized status of the Indian Muslims. It insinuates towards the silence that is imposed upon the Muslims by the discourse of nationalist secularism of pre-and-post-independence-India.

Priya Kumar's book, *Limiting Secularism: The Ethics of Coexistence in Indian Literature and Film* (2008), has two points to make with reference to Indian secularism both of which are covered by the meanings of the term 'limiting. In its first variation, the world means to curb, to stop, to keep in check, meaning thereby that the secularism in India limits certain communities. The second configuration means to keep this limiting tendency of secularism in check to free the oppressed communities, particularly Muslims of India, from the yoke of rising *Hindutva*. Kumar links the rise of phenomenon of secularism in India with the rise of nationalism in pre-partitioned Indian, which, however, is increasingly becoming synonymous with Hindu discourse. Indian secularism, in Kumar's view, "is couched in Hindu nationalist language of democracy and authoritarianism, secularism and religious intolerance" (xiii). In its homogenizing of Indian nation as a monolith, it advances the agenda of Hindu Right which according to Kumar is "congruous with upper -caste Hindu beliefs and practices" (xiv). She defines the meaning of *Hindutva* as meaning literally "Hinduness," and more specifically Hindu rule or Hindu nation which "encapsulates the coercive and majoritarian manifesto of the *Sangh Parivar*", whose virulence is directed particularly towards Muslims who represent "the arch outsider, the enemy of the great Hindu nation" (Kumar xiv). Kumar believes that the fundamental principle of organizing the "Indian History", according to this Hindu Far Right, as enunciated in *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags,* is the myth that the Hindus have been struggling against the Muslims for one thousand years (P. Kumar xiv).

This estimation of the status of the Muslims in India is reflected in the derogatory terms employed by the Hindus to define them. In post-independence India,

Kumar states, Muslims are 'othered' because of their "prolific sexuality", "inherent conservativeness", "violent temperament", "victimization of all Muslim women" and that all Indian Muslims are, at heart, Pakistanis"(xiv). Invoking Jacques Derrida's concept of the 'stranger' she claims that Muslims are perceived to be non-autochthonous ('non-indigenous' meaning added), "intimate enemy" or the "stranger" in our midst" (Kumar xvi). Her project is to situate the discourse of the religious violence and the Hindu 'tolerance' of their minorities in the light of Derridean "ethic of living well together" and re-evaluate the scope of this particular brand of secularism in the actualization of the "vision of peaceful coexistence" it proposes as its main concern(xxi).

Kumar contests the traditional notion of secularism that keeps religion separate from social, political, and official matters of the state and avers that instead of being on the wane, majority religions are "diffused under the signature of knowledge, culture, ethics, and morals in modern "secular" nation-states (xxii). Assigning high place to literature, she states that it may 'figure the impossible' and "shows us how we might be able to access the other in the imagination, even if incompletely and imperfectly" (xiii). The book claims that "secular academic discourse has rarely, if at all, concerned itself with the issue of violence in its terrifying impact on people's lives and everyday worlds", and holds 'imaginative works' in high regard in their ability to inscribe the sufferings and their impact upon their lives (xxv-xxvi). The book points out the limitations of secularism in South Asian context which lacks the ability to "house the vision of multi-religious coexistence" because of the mostly faith-based reality of lives of masses (Kumar 1-2).

In the book, Kumar holds that reformed Protestantism works as the normative in the Western world to evaluate different other religions and those who fall outside the pale of this normative are considered fundamentalists. In the South Asian context, the otherness of the Muslims in India is marked by the hyper-visibility of their "strange beliefs and practices of worship" whereas the "majority religions" remain transparent because they function as normative in the society (31). Therefore, in India the very state apparatus and the official practices work to strengthen the "upper-caste Hindu idiom as secular" (32). The Muslims of India assume the status of outsiders, aliens, foreigners when compared to their Hindu counterparts (Kumar 57). These limiting epithets in Kumar's view, have been used by Hindu Right repeatedly to advance their claim that

India/Hindustan is the land of Hindus as they are the native residents of this land, Bharatvarsha, and Muslims and Christians are outsiders as their holy places lay outside Hindustan. This majoritarian idea of Hindu nationalism, claims Kumar, welcomes the outsiders, strangers, and/or foreigners only if they "conform to the dominant Brahminical Hindu culture" (Kumar 57-8). She holds that "Holocaust scholarship should also provide a paradigm for much recent thinking about the Partition" (Kumar 88). She studies different texts to highlight the animosities created and perpetuated by the partition of India in 1947. After this event the pressure on Muslims increases "conform to a blank humanity divorced of all identitarian claims and affiliations" (Kumar 109). They are deemed inferior to the majority Hindus as they are intolerant, rigid, fundamentalist and show off their religion in the public in contrast to the secular Hindus who are "inherently secular (read tolerant), inclusive, and open to change" (Kumar 113). In Kumar's view, this treatment of the Muslims is justified on the ground that they are the cause of partition of India.

She implicates literary critical and political discourse in the process of marginalization of minorities in India. She believes that the recent discussions by state authorities and "secular academic discourse" on "secularism and coexistence in India" in the context of the religious violence perpetrated by the Hindu Right, have not addressed the impact of violence on the lives of ordinary people (Kumar 123). A handy accomplice in this project has been Bollywood movies, a far more popular media than academic literary discourses. In Kumar's view Bombay Cinema is a primary site for the construction of a nation. As a result of this minoritization in all these discourses "the figure of the Indian Muslim comes to occupy a strange, liminal place in this drama between 'self' and 'other'" (Kumar 177-8). Muslims in India, thus, are regarded stranger vis-à-vis both Indian state and society. This constructed figure of the Muslim 'other' in Indian cinema confirms "the subject status of the ethnocentric (upper -caste) Hindu subject" and makes the containment of Muslim minority possible "within the dominant narratives" of the Indian nation (Kumar 180). Kumar concludes that Indian Muslims are considered, by the mainstream Hindu society, as the "intimate enemies" by establishing their links with the transnational figure of "Islamic terrorist" and the *jihadi* (emphasis in original) (Kumar 233).

Kumar holds that discrimination against the Muslims of India is deep-seated in Indian society and politics. It ghettoizes them, makes them not send their daughters to school, causes disappearance of their names from the voter's lists, and makes women feel so threatened as not to venture outside from the safety of their own neighborhood (234). Kumar's book addresses the many themes and concerns that form the part of discussion in my research dissertation. First, it equates the conditions of the Muslims with the Jews of Nazi Germany. My study explores the ways in which the rhetoric of secularism is employed in Anglophone South Asian fiction to come to terms with the Muslim difference. Second, it asserts that Indian state secularism is a mask that hides the state complicity in the oppression of Indian Muslims. Third, Kumar's book provides the instances of Jewishisation and demonization of the Indian Muslims in literary texts of Rushdie, Ghosh, Kesavan, as well as in Indian main stream cinema. The insights offered by Kumar's book provide helpful evidence to contextualize my study in the discussions about secularist discourse and the place of Muslims in a world governed by the edict like assumptions of this discourse.

Neelam Srivastava's *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* (2008) explores different aspects of Indian identity (mainly those of minority) with relation to secularism, syncretism of Indian cultural life, and different forms of secularism, its differing meaning, and different responses to it in Indian nationalist narrative. After independence from British rule religion, in Srivastava view, was supposedly relegated to the private sphere and "secularism, understood as non-sectarianism in the public sphere" became defining principle of Nehruvian state policy in India (Srivastava 4). She studies postcolonial novels in this book and charts the relationship between religion and the Indian state policy which shed light on the concept of secularism and its non/actualization in Indian society.

She claims that her "study delineates a 'secular' Indian canon in English" (1). She studies Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*(1981) and *Satanic Verses* (1988), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993), and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1996) and claims that these novels "mark out the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus" which resulted in "the rise to prominence of an alternative national ideology, Hindutva,

based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture" (2). At the same time, these novels advance the "secular and multicultural vision of the Indian nation-state", as portrayed by Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (6). Dividing secularism into 'rational' and 'radical', she aligns the former with "Nehru's relegation of religion to the private sphere" but "a radically secular perspective is enunciated from minority positions" which she considers is "akin to Saidian 'secular criticism'" (Srivastava 15-6). In Srivastava's view the discourse of the "rationalist or transcendent secularism" was reflected in discussions surrounding the nature of state secularism in Independent India (18). Radical secularism, she claims, "tries to take into account religious belief as a valid worldview not always already subordinated to the claims of reason" (24-5). Srivastava's book advocates the employment of Said's concept of 'secular criticism' in the study of literary texts because it is articulated from subaltern or minority positions. She upholds Mufti's idea that Indian state secularism is a "*majoritarian* secularism" (original italics), as it stipulated for the state (comprising majority Hindus) to tolerate the minority religions. Echoing Aamir Mufti and Priya Kumar's thought, Srivastava claims that the majoritarian secular nationalism turned a considerable number of Muslims into non-Indians(as Pakistanis) through partition and "today the propaganda of the Hindu right attempts to depict Indian Muslims as 'non-Indians' (40).

Srivastava invokes Bakhtin's concept of monologic and polyphonic novels, which he uses to study Tolstoy and Dostoevsky's novels respectively, to claim that Seth's and Rushdie's novels are "characterized by greater or lesser degree of polyphony" (Srivastava 45). Reading Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* belong to the 'secular canon', in her estimation. Both novels play out a dilemma "between modernization and tradition, or between rationalist secularism and a religious worldview" (Srivastava 61). Srivastava problematizes the very concept of the syncretic past of the Indian nation and culture. Re/constructing a syncretic vision of the religious life of India posits an idea of tolerance and coexistence which is majoritarian in nature. This syncretism is an elusive phenomenon and a view from the 'outside' as in India Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Dalit "communities would not conceptualize their relationship with the other communities as 'syncretic'. Intermarriage, for example, would be inconceivable for most members of these communities" (Srivastava 71-2) She invokes Fredric Jameson's idea of Third World literature as being the national allegory and concludes that "in the case of a number of these narrators, at least, Fredric Jameson's

famous definition of ‘national allegory’ holds true” (Srivastava 89). Jameson’s idea is reworked by Srivastava to establish links between secularist versions of Indian syncretic past and the nationalist impulse of what she calls ‘secular canon’ in Indian writing in English.[9]

Srivastava’s book analyses Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* and states that these texts present the event of nationalist movement in allegorical rendition of the great Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Tharoor’s novel in Srivastava’s reckoning rehearses the usual tropes of Indian nationalist movement with selected linguistic and religious traditions to “construct an organic ideology which may claim a national representativeness” (95). Although the intellectual subaltern voices in India challenge this monolithic idea of the syncretic Indian culture they, however, largely subscribe to the idea that secularism may offer the possibility of peaceful coexistence in India. Srivastava puts Rohinton Mistry and his text, *A Fine Balance* in this category and states that Mistry’s novel gives voice to “the perspective of the dispossessed, of a lower caste person, in other words of a subaltern” (Srivastava 91). But his critique of the homogenizing nationalist culture enunciated in his novels does not erode his confidence in the idea of India as a secular nation.

Although she criticizes the hegemonic and oppressive designs behind the secular overtures of Congress and its leaders it, however, seems to condone like the writers she studies that secularism may offer a possibility of peaceful coexistence in India. The book traces a difference between theory and praxis of secularism in India. Srivastava’s book hints at the occurrence of *differend* in Dostoyevsky’s texts when she highlights the irresolvability of the contrasting world views it presents. It also insinuates towards the presence of *differend* in Rushdie and Seth’s texts when she notices a conflict in them between a rationalist world view and religious world view. Her inclusion of Tharoor’s novel in the secular canon is particularly problematic as Tharoor’s novel rewrites a canonical text of Hindu mythology which portrays other religions as devious and demonic. In all of these cases Srivastava’s book relates with the concerns of my study.

In *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature* (2013), Rosemary Marangoly George studies how construction of a national tradition of Indian ‘national literature’ relegated to the margins those literary articulations in native Indian languages

which posed challenges to a unitary vision of Indian nation. She claims that deployment of English language in this project was bound up with the cultural and literary politics as practiced by the Indian literary and political elite. She examines how "national and the literary" converge to attain their ends by studying "the production of critical and fictional anthologies of 'Indian Literature' at three critical junctures" (George 7). These moments include "early 1940s as a prelude to national independence; from mid 1950s under aegis of the Sahitya Akademi; and in the 1990s as part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence" (7). She then goes on to study in separate chapters how this nexus of literary and political constituted a unitary and monolithic vision of Indian culture and nation state.

The book intervenes productively in the debate surrounding the choice of English as medium of presentation of Indian cultural and social reality. She examines, what she calls 'contradictions', in the entrenched and 'precarious position' (George 7) of the English language usage in/after the struggle for independence from British rule. The usage of English not only addressed itself to 'multiple audiences' but also "consolidated and re-presented" the Indian identities (8). The book also implicates the translation of texts in English from different Indian languages. She detects certain patterns behind choices made for selecting literary and non-literary production for translation and compilation. The two prominent features of this selection process are reflected in attitude of the texts and authors towards Hindu nationalist sentiments and caste divisions (which these texts and authors usually downplay). The use of English performed two main functions. One, by assuming the status of "mouthpiece of the modern Indian national discourse", it rendered "aspirations expressed in local/vernacular languages as parochial" (George 16). The second, because of being (putatively) neutral, English language "rendered opaque all hints that other Indian languages provided about caste, rank and religion…" (George 27).[10] The usage of English as medium of literary production and translation may be employed to normalize and smother all dissenting voices from peripheral positions, she claims.

The book studies the work of some foundational Indian writers who chose to write fiction in English and seeks to lay bare the motives behind their choice of medium and subject matter. She states that "Narayan's Malgudi functions as a cultural reproduction of a Utopian present(and future) India sketched from the point of view of

an Upper-caste Hindu intellectual" (George 9). Moreover, in Georg's view, Malgudi presents a "generic 'Indianness'" (George 58). Although praised as 'apolitical' by almost all the Indian and Western critics because of the closeted purview of his fiction his politics is revealed, in Marangoly George's view, in his normalizing Indianness in the perspective of Upper-caste Hindus and omitting all mention of the caste that defines everyday social reality for much of India and Indians. The text glosses over the inequities and oppressions that were part of life of oppressed communities of India. In a benign and protective Hindu vision the very concept of social justice, prosperity and peace is made out to be the result of strict caste-based system, a vision time and again championed by Gandhi to deny Dalits and the Muslims the very rights (equal to the Hindus) the independence movement strove for . This is the narrative taken up by Narayan in whose vision "Malgudi is the utopia of a benevolent Hinduism" (George 9). As Narayan seems to endorse Gandhian vision of caste-based society, Malgudi might be seen as upholding "linguistic, caste, and gender" divisions of Indian society entrenched in its self image of Indian nation.

The book sketches Mulk Raj Anand's problematic relationship with nationalist and caste concerns of the time. It draws a contrast between outward looking fiction of Mulk Raj Anand with Narayan's and states that his (Anand's) first novel "*Untouchables*…has always been read, like all of his work, as fiercely political, socialist in its leanings, and committed to the independence struggle" (George 9). Detailing a day from the life of Bhaka, an Untouchable latrine cleaner, the novel reflects upon the wider concerns of justice, equality, oppression and struggle for freedom. George contests this estimation of the novel and claims that although the novel might seem to contain disruptive and dissenting overtones with regard to caste and its justification in the high time of Indian nationalism, its collaborative force with homogenizing project is borne out by Anand's later claims that Gandhi himself edited the manuscript of the novel. She further notes that nationalist tendencies of the book are given primacy over the disruptive force the book might have had.

In a similar manner, George implicates establishment of Sahitya Akademi and pronounces that it was an effort to constitute a national literature through the curative power of English language (George 10). Under the tutelage of the head of the Indian state, Nehru, it did everything to uphold Nehruvian doctrine of 'unity in diversity' and

through its various projects/functions strove hard to present Indian people as "a nation sharing the same hopes and aspirations or writing the same story in different languages" (George 166). George examines how the nation serves as a lens that helps the selection of anthologies, stories and poems to be translated into English from various Indian languages. Although quite different in nature, these texts are made out to articulate a dominant fantasy of the Indian nation, propagated by the nexus of literary and political elite (178).[11] There seems to be a direct link between the aspirations of the state (India) and demand of marketplace, created by a certain historical perception about India in the West(which is the main market for the consumption of these anthologies). Reviewing *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature*, Dirk Wiemann identifies George's overt aim exposing the project of presenting Indian 'national literature' in a language which was alienated from much of the nation. According to Wiemann, George detects a nexus "between the English language and the political and cultural…" (Wiemann 386). George's book exposes many of the caveats in Indian nationalism which seeks to present its harmonious and benign façade and suppresses the voices that contest this hegemonizing view.

George's book explores themes that bear direct relevance with the main concerns of my study. For example George brings to the fore how nationalist movement relegated to margins the concerns of oppressed classes of India, particularly the Dalits. It also establishes that the upper-caste Hindus appropriated the nationalist movement for their own gains by portraying Indian nation synonymous with them. George states how the other religions, especially Islam, are made opaque by normative Hindu religion. These are the normative assumptions that work behind the world views of Anand, Rao, and Narayan, whose fictional town Malgudi represents a utopian Hindu city with Hindu social norms as the standards.

2.5 Conclusion

I have reviewed selected books, articles, and essays from the existing scholarship that critically engage with Lyotard's theorization of *differend* and its diverse literary articulations in Euro-American fictional texts of different times and spaces. I have also reviewed an assortment of secondary texts on Muslim narrative studies, and Anglophone South Asian fiction studies. This review of literature has helped me contextualize my analyses of the primary texts in these studies. The wide range of

scholarship available on themes and topics of this research project made the selection of critical sources hard for me. I might have missed some significant books and essays that could have been included in the reviewed literature. I, however, justify this choice as I have tried to review only those critical sources that stand adjacent to the areas and themes of my study. The books and essays on the theme/s of *differend/s* reviewed in the first part of this chapter do not discuss the texts or the writers I have selected, but these works are contiguous to the theoretical areas that remain relevant to my study. On the other hand, some books and essays reviewed in the second and third part of this chapter discuss some of the texts and writers but do not employ *differend* as a theme in their analyses of texts and writers. I have reviewed these critical resources as they touch on the neighboring theoretical areas of the theoretical perspective I have employed to study my primary texts. As indicated above, I have selected works on basis of themes and topics, rather than writers or the primary texts. Therefore, I have left out many critical essays and books that discuss my primary writers and texts but do not investigate the themes at hand. I have both reviewed and quoted from some books and essays only when it became indispensable to do so. At the end of review of each essay and book, I have pointed out its relevance to the concerns of my study and pointed out the gaps in it. The reviewed works, their relevance with my study, the gaps that I have found in these texts, and the area of investigation of my study have guided me in the selection of the theoretical framework, research methodology and methods that I have discussed in the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

[1] Sawyer notices in Odysseus confrontation as an event and an occasion for his silence to articulate his experience.
[2] Malpas in *Jean Francois Lyotard* claims that Bill Readings is one of the most incisive critic of Lyotard's work.
[3] See *On Justification: Economies of Worth* by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot .Translated by Catherine Porter(Princeton University Press 2006) for complete exposition of philosophical implications of Lyotard's concept of *Differend.*
[4] See David D Bien's *The Calais affair: Persecution, Toleration, and Heresy in 18th Century Toulouse*(1960) for detailed discussion of the event.
[5] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire: Twenty Years On* (Harvard University Press, 2001) for explanation of this idea.
[6] I have contested Malak's definition of the Muslim and Muslim narratives in my dissertation by claiming that Malak invents new categories of the Muslims based in the Western concepts of culture and ethnicity that contradicts the concept of *Shahadah*.
[7] Sara Suleri, married to a non-Muslim, employs the same Western rational discourse to defend Rushdie's right of freedom of expression.
[8] For details of this massacre see, Rana Ayub's *Gujrat Files: Anatomy of A Cover up* (Independent Publishing Platform 2016).
[9] See Sunil Khilnani's *Idea of India* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1997) for discussion of Indian politics and economy and role of democracy in India after fifty years independent life of India.
[10] Arundhati Roy in *The Doctor and the Saint: The Ambedkar-Gandhi Debate: Caste, Race and Annihilation of Caste* (Penguin India, 2017) explicates Ambedkar's and Gandhi's view about castes in India. The book highlights how Gandhi couched his preference for caste in words of benign upper-caste Hindu medium.
[11] Meenakshi Mukherjee in *Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of Indian Novel in English* (1978), *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (Oxford University Press, 2001) uses nationalist discourse in the critique of Indian writings in English.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed locates a gap in critical scholarship on Anglophone South Asian fiction. I have noticed that the critical scholarship on/about this genre of fiction engages with many themes and motifs. The available scholarship largely tends to endorse and celebrate, with some reservations, the representations of the Muslim difference in Anglophone South Asian fiction. The interpretative regime focusses on the ways how Islamist characters are motivated by literal interpretations of some injunctions of Muslim faith which govern their inhumanistic and unreasonable behavior. It, however, has not examined the tension between Muslim faith and the values of secularism, rationalism, and liberal humanism as an irresolvable conflict. Jean-Francois Lyotard's philosophy of *differend* expounded in his book, *The Differend: The Phrases in Dispute*, provides a suitable theoretical perspective for the analysis of such conflictual situations. I have employed this theorization to study the three texts of Anglophone South Asian fiction that in my contention deal with this dispute in various manners.

3.2 Importance of the Concept of *Differend* in Lyotard's Oeuvre

Jean Francois Lyotard is known for his theories of postmodernism expounded in his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979).[1] This book was commissioned by the Council of Universities of Provincial Government of Quebec. It is a report on "the ways in which different ways of knowing about and dealing with the world…are understood and valued in contemporary society" (Malpas 15). In literary studies, his critique of the meta-narratives or grand-narratives as presented in this book remains his most known philosophical idea. James Williams calls his idea of 'postmodern condition' to be Lyotard's "most famous idea" and his concept of '*differend*' and 'sublime' "the most just philosophical and political testimony" (2). He

also terms *The Postmodern Condition* as "the most superficial and well known of his works" (Williams 26). According to Sawyer, the concept of *differend* is "his self-proclaimed most philosophical work" (51). Simon Malpas terms *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* as "Lyotard's most philosophically rigorous book" (57). Francois Ost corroborates Malpas' estimation in his essay, "Disputes and the Differend: Literary Strategies to Say the Unspeakable" (76). In Malpas' view, critics like Geoffrey Bennington and James Williams claim that *The Postmodern Condition* and *Just Gaming,* "the two earlier texts [,] are little more than rehearsals of arguments that are fully developed in *The Differend*" (58). These statements show that the notion of differend is one of the most significant of Lyotard's ideas.

While *The Postmodern Condition* is a critique of grand narratives of Western society presented in its oft quoted sentence: "Postmodern is incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, xxiv), the concept of *differend* deals with wrongs and injustices meted out to those whose voice is suppressed in constituting those meta-narratives. The relationship between *differend* and grand narratives is explained by Bill Readings in these words: "Grand narratives claim to totalize the field of narrative so as to organize the succession of historical moments in terms of the projected revelation of a meaning. They, thus, offer to suppress all *differends,* to translate all narratives into themselves without loss, to make everything speak their language" (Readings, *Introducing Lyotard* xxv). Lyotard develops the philosophy of language that underlies his work on postmodernism most fully in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Here he analyses how injustices take place in the context of usages of language. In the book, he scrutinizes politics, arts, literature, philosophy, and other systems which use language as medium to support his ideas. Lyotard divides language into phrases and gives his own definition/s of the phrase as distinct from a linguist's definition of its being a 'group of words' which makes a part of a clause. He treats phrase as an 'event' or 'occurrence': "A phrase "happens"" (*The Differend* xii). Phrases in this formulation are unique events and not just the part of language. They indicate a social happening, an interaction, a political act, an act of thought etc. Their presence or occurrence in a signifying system reveals the politics of appropriation, processes of exclusion and inclusion, and the desire of meta-narratives to present themselves as innocuously seamless.

The response to or linking of phrases creates *differends*, irresolvable disputes.

This conception of phrase as event and occurrence and the resulting choices of selection of events and their sequence of linkage, in the context of conflicts between different parties, as narrated in Anglophone South Asian fiction have provided me with the governing framework for this study. Lyotard's concept of *differend*, which encompasses other related concepts of 'victim', 'wrong', 'silence'- as presented in this book- constitute the theoretical lens through which selected texts have been analyzed. An explanation of the main concepts has been sketched out in the remaining part of this chapter.

3.3 The *Differend*

The concept of *differend* investigates how certain political ends are pursued in art, literature, and philosophy in their respective endeavours to re/present events of social and cultural reality. In a situation where there is a conflict between the claims of truth and authenticity of two or more than two parties and a judgement is passed, one of the parties is 'silenced'. The party to dispute that is 'silenced' is termed as a victim by Lyotard and such a scenario is termed as *differend* by him. He maintains that *differend* is something other than litigation and describes it as:

> a case of conflict between (at least) two parties, that may not be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule). (*The Differend* xi)

The distinction between litigation and a *differend* remains central to Lyotard's philosophy of *differends*. The parties to disputes which may be settled in the courts or tribunals agree to a single "determinate rule of judgement" in a litigation. On the other hand, a *differend* "is a dispute between at-least two radically heterogeneous or incommensurable language games" and in which case no single 'rule of judgment' is available to settle that dispute (Readings, *Introducing Lyotard* 87). Whenever the judgement is made in a differend it is made according to the "rule [that] necessarily belongs to one language or the other. In litigation, the accuser and the accused speak the 'same language' as it were, recognize the same law" (87). In a differend they speak in a radically heterogeneous idiom (87). The language, language games, and the idiolects may collectively be called the different 'rules of judgement' acceptable to the parties to

the dispute/conflict that is *differend*. "A case of differend between two parties takes place when the "regulation" of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom" (*The Differend* 9). The discourse of the rule of judgement may be such that the victim's wrong may not be translated into its terms; the wrong may not be presentable as a wrong. By transcribing the heterogeneity of phrases which is at play in the social and in the commentary on the social, the tribunal also necessarily wrongs the other regimens and/or genres (Lyotard, *The Differend* 140).

I have taken up the above mentioned block quote, and the distinction between litigation and *differend* as the basic controlling motif of my study along with various modulations of *differend* as expounded by Lyotard and elaborated by the literary critics and commentators of the idea of *differend* for the interpretation of the primary texts. The incarceration of Jews in gas-chambers at Auschwitz by Hitler in 1940s[2] and the denial of this incarceration-*Shoah* or Holocaust- by revisionist historians, in Lyotard's theorization, serve as the paradigmatic example of a *differend*. Geoffrey Bennington, in his book, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (1988), states that for Lyotard Auschwitz serves as first example of "*differend*, wrong and victim" (144). In Bennington's view, Lyotard posits the differend not "in the relation of Jews and SS but in the claim made by revisionist historians (and particularly by Faurison) that the gas-chambers did not exist. Faurison claims that he was unable to find a single witness who could testify that he saw a gas-chamber with his own eyes (144). It is of significance to note that Lyotard stresses not on the actual committal of the crimes against Jews but how those crimes are denied discursively. This method is termed as the "more insidious version" of the *differend* by Bennington, which "would conclude, not badly that there is no gas-chamber, but simply that the plaintiff may not prove the existence of a gas-chamber (because all witnesses are victims and all victims are dead)" (Bennington 145).

Although Lyotard's argument revolves around the basic idea of a specific event related to Holocaust and Auschwitz and the way revisionist historian Faurison applies the rules of, what Lyotard calls 'cognitive regimen', to study this event, the concept of *differend* may equally beneficially be invoked in any kind of dispute. Another example of a situation involving a *differend* is the clash about ownership of land rights between aborigines and imperialists/colonial settlers in settler colonies. The settlers

claim the property in the name of the law of the land [for example European settlers of Australia] whereas aboriginal claims to the proprietorship rest on mythological past (Readings 87). The genre of discourse of law invoked by the imperialists is incommensurable with the genre of discourse of ancestral rights entrenched in and perpetuated by mythology of the aborigines. Each of these discourses has a specific line of argument corroborated only by the respective claims of truth and authenticity which negates the claims made by the other party. These two examples of *differend* are disputes "between at least two radically heterogeneous or incommensurable language games", or genres of discourse (Readings, *Introducing Lyotard* 87). The differend is triggered by "an undecidable dispute" and is an "aporetic stalemate" (Ophir 190). James Richard Williams in his PhD thesis, *The Conflict of Presentation: A Critique of Jean-Francois Lyotard's Philosophy of Differends* states that the concept of the differend defines "a social, legal, political, ontological, and linguistic difference or conflict that may neither be measured nor resolved" (J R. Williams 5). It is the "irreducible and originary difference, the difference at the basis of irresolvable legal, political and social conflicts" (J R. Williams 6). *The differend* thus may be understood as irresolvable difference because of lack of a regulating set of rules. In this dispute among different parties, for each of them "there corresponds a mode of presenting a universe, and one mode is not translatable into another" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 128).

The *differend* then may not be resolved by any common criteria between the parties to the conflict/dispute. James Williams, in his book, *Lyotard and the Political* (200), calls Lyotard a "thinker of the differend, or of an absolute difference between two sides of a conflict" (4). Muhammad Ramadani, in his introduction to Lyotard's early work on Algerian uprising against the French occupation, *La Guerre des Algeriens*, (*The War in Algeria*), claims that Lyotard's "aim was to testify to irresolvable difference" between the native Algerians and their foreign occupiers (Williams 9). Ramadani's detection of the presence of idea of differend in Lyotard's early writings as an irreducible difference showcases its importance in his oeuvre. It also justifies its selection as a suitable theoretical lens for the study of Muslim difference.

Further explication of the variations in meanings of notion of differend would vindicate its appropriateness for the study of conflicts involving the Muslims as a party to them. The word, *differend*, in Mclennan's opinion designates "a dispute or a lack of

agreement (2). Mclennan draws on Gerald Sfez's explanation of the concept of *differend* that has been divided into three interrelated modulations by him. In the first sense of the *differend* as elaborated by Sfez, the occurrence of a differend speaks of a situation where the parties to the dispute "do not speak the same language at all and do not share even a minimum of common ground" (qtd. in Mclennan 2). Mclennan further states that "the parties speak radically heterogeneous languages" because of lack of "a common reason or rationale" to facilitate the resolution of the conflict (2). In McLennan's view the invocation of "a third idiom" or a "higher-order rule" might result in "perpetuating and even compounding the dispute" (3). The second variation of the meaning of *differend* explains the meaning of a 'victim' and teases out its relation with the *differend*. In Sfez's estimation of the two terms, they are at times interchangeable in Lyotard's book (Mclennan 3). In this second variation, a *differend* designates a "case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 9). In the third variation of the *differend*, Lyotard theorizes it as "the unstable state and instant of language… [which] includes silence which is negative phrase" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 13). Mclennan states that this variation points towards an injustice done which obliges her [the writer, the philosopher] to search for an idiom that is capable of faithfully phrasing that which the feeling signals" (3). In my research project, I explore the relevance of the first two variations of the concept of differend with regard to the representation of Muslim difference in three primary texts. I leave out the third modulation of *differend* as it pertains to 'feelings' and falls in the domain of affect as against the other two that pertain to the difficulty of reaching at a solution. I explore how the primary texts bear witness to Muslim *differends* which emerge as a result of their engagement with the heterogeneity and incommensurability of South Asian social, cultural, religious, and political formations.

South Asian spaces embrace in their fold disparate religious, cultural, social, and political communities. The myths, narratives, and world views of these communities contradict each others'. Anglophone South Asian fiction deals with the conflicts that arise among these heterogeneous communities and their claims about the ownership of territory, history, and authenticity. In its depiction of the cultural, religious, social, and political difference, this fiction bears witness to differends between the heterogeneous claims of these communities. The main *differend* that is the concern of this study is irresolvable conflict between the rational and secular world view of the West and faith-

based epistemology of the Muslims and Islam.[3] This fiction works as a tribunal where the *differend* between these two opposing parties is enacted before the global readership as a legal dispute. These proceedings seem to be governed by rational and secular ethos which takes a skeptic view of the orthodox religious beliefs and practices of the Muslims.

In this manner of representation of the conflict, the situation of the Muslims may be compared with that of the victims of Auschwitz. Lyotard's critique of Faurison's denial of Holocaust is directed at the rational discourse and its limitations. Faurison's use of logical reasoning reveals that rational assumptions are at work behind his conclusion that as there is no one to give testimony to the presence of gas chambers, therefore, there are no gas chambers. In Lyotard's view, this reductive use of reason should be thwarted and its oppressive logicalism revealed to keep the differend from being smothered. James Williams believes that the "philosophy of the differend is concerned with resistance in the undermining the Ideas of reason" (capitals in original, 14). Malpas states that Lyotard detects in modern art "the capacity to present the fact that the unpresentable exists" and that certain voices "are silenced in culture" as it lays bare the fact that certain ideas "may not be formulated in rational discourse" (47).[4] These statements testify to the fact that reliance on rationality for the representation of certain realities may prove to be treacherous and a tool of repression.

The three primary texts seem to run the risk of over-reliance on rationalist conceptions of reality and justice. The conflicts that are enacted in these texts are between modernity and tradition; religious bigotry, extremism and secular tolerance; violence and peaceful co-existence; and territorial claims of the Hindus and the Muslims over a single piece of land. Their arbitration between opposing parties in the form of fictional representation engages with the Muslim differend that arises within these tensions. This differend is played out as conflicts between secular liberal meta-narratives of democracy, justice, humanism and secular state on one side and religious (Muslim) fundamentalism on the other. In this way, these partially texts resist the suppression of the specificity and singularity of the faith-based Muslim ontology within South Asian phenomena. The function of bearing witness to the occurrence of *differend* which Lyotard assigns to art, literature, and philosophy should be to "allow the event to be presented in its singularity, rather than suppressed in re-presentation" (85). The three

primary texts foreground the singularity of the Muslims with their belief in Allah as the sole creator of this world, Qur'an being the Holy word of Allah, Muhammad as being the true and last Prophet of Allah. Their desire to give voice to their sufferings and to challenge their demonization in western literary and media discourses might, however, prove to be counterproductive. In Lyotardian terms it may be said that "[t]he differend is reborn from the very resolution of supposed litigation" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 181). This might be the result of the singularity and strangeness of their religious beliefs and practices claiming legitimacy in a fictional world whose value judgement criteria seems to have been born out of secular conceptions of everyday life. The fictional world of the primary texts juxtaposes competing voices and at times may seem to prevent Muslims "from retaining [their] own autonomous way of speaking" (Malpas 75). But it also highlights their singularity and specificity by inscribing their voices as one party to the conflict.

The previously determined conceptions of justice and methods to arrive at resolution of conflicts are no longer valid in Lyotard's view. What the *differend* demands is not, then, "a re-trial, but an as yet unthinkable tribunal, a justice the nature of which has yet to be decided" (Readings, *Introducing Lyotard* 92). In the preface of the book, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Lyotard explains the meaning of differend and states that it "suggests…that a universal rule of judgement between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general" (*The Differend* xi). The three primary texts evince a desire to find a universal rule of judgement applicable to the conflict between orthodox Muslim faith and Islamic ideology and values of rationalism and secularism, the values that remain largely heterogeneous. The heterogeneity between them is more visible in their views on nature of human rights. Their difference in this regard suggests an impasse which might be termed as "the *differend* between the language of human rights" and the discourse of Islamic faith (Ophir 199). The latter is not recognized as the valid discourse by the former and treats it as such.

I explore in this study whether heterogeneous voices articulated from different ideological positions reify into an impasse as a result of their differential view of the world. The three primary texts bring into a fictional space a variety of characters expressing heterogeneous religious, social, ideological and political views. Along with these views, their reactions to terrorism/freedom struggle in Afghanistan in *The Vigil*, the

dispute between Hindus and Muslim over the site of *Babri Masjid* in India in *Riot*, and tension between secularism and Islamism of two main characters in *The Good Muslim* seem to constitute differends. A single resolution of any of these conflicts would be an act of totalitarianism and wrong one or the other party involved in the conflict. According to David Carroll, "Lyotard argues that totalitarianism is precisely any principle or system that prevents victims ... from testifying to the injustice they have experienced" (78).[5] *The Vigil*, *The Good Muslim*, and *Riot* endeavour to distance themselves from the emancipatory and liberating meta-narratives of secularism and human rights. Through their skeptical investigation of the American War on Terror in Afghanistan, Islamism in Bangladesh, and rising extremist Hindutva in India they vouch for the rights of the Muslims to hold their beliefs and practise their religion alongside other ways of life in a multicultural world. They seem to have cleared some space for the articulation of their marginal voices.

They, however, also present a skeptical view of the extremist and intolerant Muslim religiosity of 'terrorists' or 'fundamentalists'. Their task gives rise to a paradoxical situation with regard to representation of South Asian reality. Their critique of the Indian state-sponsored violence and oppression of the Muslims (*Riot*), the negative effects of Western imperialism in countries torn by war (*The Vigil*), and insensitive attitude of some of the Muslims with regard to their fellow beings (*The Good Muslim*) seems to employ the stereotypes generated by and circulated in western discourse. It is seen to have caught up in the debates about Muslim extremism and fundamentalism on the one hand and secularist rationalism on the other.

3.4 Damages/Plaintiff, Wrong/Victim

To understand fully Lyotard's concept of differend and its relevance for literary studies it is necessary to comprehend the allied concepts of 'damage', 'plaintiff' 'wrong', and 'victim'. Lyotard explains the difference between a plaintiff and a victim in these words:

> A plaintiff is someone who has incurred damages and who disposes of the means to prove it. One becomes a victim if one loses these means. One loses them…if the author of the damages turns out directly or indirectly to be one's judge. The latter has the authority to reject one's testimony as false or the ability to impede its publication… [.] In general the plaintiff becomes

> a victim when no presentation is possible of the wrong he or she says he or she has suffered. (8)

In a *differend*, the victim's wrongs may not be presented. A victim for Lyotard is not just someone who has been wronged, but someone who has also lost the power to present this wrong. Lyotard states "a wrong [tort] would be a damage [dommage] accompanied by the loss of means to prove the damage" and in it "there is added the impossibility of bringing it to the knowledge of others, and in particular to the knowledge of tribunal. (*The Differend* 5). The victim might be made silenced; his silence might be result of some threat or restriction; it might be the incredulity accorded to the claims of the victim; it might be that he is considered to be mad or he might be completely misunderstood or it might be that the regulation of the conflict is not carried out in the discourse he uses to present his claims to the tribunal.

The concepts of 'plaintiff' and 'damage' are related whereas 'wrong' and 'victim' are associated with each other. Damages are crimes against one for which he/she may approach a court or tribunal and seek compensation for. On the other hand, the concept of wrong and victim speak of the loss of ability to articulate one's suffering or to be heard by a court or tribunal. Kwiek sums up the connection between wrong and victim on the one hand and the plaintiff and damage on the other: "The pair of plaintiff/litigation is symmetrical with the pair of victim/differend" (Kwiek 78). Held describes a wrong as "inexpressible" and "impossible to prove" as in his opinion the "[w]rongs are felt, but the ability to express the nature of the injustice is lacking" (Held 79). Ophir agrees with Held's view about the impossibility of the expression of a wrong and states that in Lyotardian thought "a wrong occurs because one is incapable of proving, in the language of the tribunal, a damage one suffers…. The victim is the one whose complaint has been silenced; the victimizer is the one who has become deaf" (192). Thus the concept of differend, wrong, and victim are interconnected and any elaboration of the one also involves the other two. While differend stands in for the 'radical difference' it may also be termed as "a radical wrong" in which situation "the wronged party is divested of the means to even express that she has been wronged…. [.] [T]he victim is not only unable to articulate her point of view on an equal footing, but also finds herself in a situation which may compound the initial wrong" (Mclennan 7). This "deprivation of the means of proof is somehow a much greater wrong than deprivation of a just *measure* of compensation" (Dunn 201). In a nutshell, 'wrong' and

'differend' point toward the impossibility of representation of suffering or oppression in a meaningful and acceptable way.

Both these concepts refer to the silence that is imposed upon the victim. In Ashley Woodward's opinion, there are two dangers of silencing: one, "silencing by denying the witness a voice" and second "silencing the singularity of the event by translating the witness's testimony into well-articulated phrases and genres" (qtd. in Sawyer 52). Another dimension of silence is highlighted by Saumya Lal who claims that "silence embodies radical otherness" (7). My study investigates if these methods of 'silencing' operate in the selected texts in the delineation of the Muslims.

Another idea that is closely connected with *differend* is the nature of justice and injustice. The wrong suffered by a wronged party or the differend faced by it may also be defined as "an unlitigable injustice" (Ronell 68). Teressa Ludden corroborates this view of the interconnectedness of the differend and idea of in/justice in Lyotard's Philosophy by claiming that the idea of *differend* "is closely linked in Lyotard's thought to the question of social justice; it entails the difficult activity of thoroughly interrogating a particular discourse or meta-narrative without countering the meta-narrative with a new meta-narrative or model" (11). This formulation of the concept of *differend* also reverberates with the connection described between differend and meta-narratives by Bill Readings (*Introducing Lyotard* xxv). All encompassing meta-narratives tend to undermine the singularity of an event. They seek to smooth its edges and weave it into desired patterns through sequential elaboration of reality that employs the straight rule of straight and effect. In other words, investigating the acts of injustice perpetrated against an individual or a community in a discourse different from the one that gives meaning to their views about reality itself turns into an act of the same kind. My study engages with this dual nature of representation of Muslim differend in the selected texts.

3.5 The Phrase

Lyotard accords a wide scope to phrase and considers it basic category of analysis of social justice. For him a "phrase is not simply something that is said by someone, although it may be that. It is any case of transfer of information of any sort" (Malpas 63). It may be a piece of speech or writing but it might also be a laugh or a scream, an animal's cry or the 'shape' "presented by the tail of a cat" (*The Differend* 9).

Lyotard considers even ‘silence’ to be a form of phrase: “a refusal or inability to speak or respond means something” (Malpas 63). Held agrees with phrase’s definition as a speech act and states that Lyotard considers it “the basic element of language” (Held 77). But some critics consider a phrase to be equal to an ‘event’ or a happening. Readings defines it as “Lyotard’s most fully developed account of the ‘event’ as pure happening” (*Introducing Lyotard* 85). The linkage of Phrases gives rise to genres of discourse. These genres of discourse concatenate the phrase, a happening, in the sequence of other phrases to present a particular version of reality. A phrase, however, prevents hegemonic discourses from giving desired meanings to the event (85). This makes it clear that a phrase is synonymous with an event or a happening. Any representation of an event or happening takes something off its ‘purity’ or singularity. Representation as a body of interlinked phrases seems destined to be tied up in a paradoxical situation. Actualization of the processes of representation generates a particular version of reality that may or may not be acceptable to all involved in a contestation about some event/phrase. Abandoning the enterprise of representation altogether negates the possibility of any voicing of the in/justice that result from the occurrence of a phrase.

The process of communication as well as narration becomes possible only through linking of phrases on to each other. For Lyotard “it is necessary to link onto a phrase that happens (be it a silence, which is a phrase), there is no possibility of not linking onto it” but “how to link is contingent” (Lyotard, *The Differend* 29). I have employed this conception of phrase as ‘pure happening’ or ‘event’ in my research project. I regard the phenomena of ‘War on Terror’ and Hindu/Muslim conflicts and other ‘events’ around which there seems to be an irresolvable conflict in the selected primary texts as phrases (events, happenings). They comprise different phrases which are linked together by conscious choices of their respective authors. Because of the necessity of linking onto any given phrase with another phrase (even a silence) the question of what phrase to respond with is, in Lyotard’s view, always political. This is how he opens up a sense of politics in *The Differend: Phrases in Disputes*.

In this sense, Aslam, Anam, and Tharoor’s fictional/ized representations in primary texts are political. These texts are political in another sense; a large number of political events in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and other places form the background for the disputes between the characters and the ideological positions they

occupy. In these contested situations the actions and views of heterogeneous nature jostle for legitimacy and supremacy. Depending on the position one interprets their representation one might infer that certain "actions, phrases and linkages necessarily exclude some group or person and prevent him/her from expressing his/her concerns within the dominant discourse". (Held 85). Held further claims that this is the permanent condition of life and may not be avoided by any means (85). This conception of linking of phrases testifies to the circular nature of the representation. Phrases are un/articulated responses to some events in the real life but the choices that trigger a particular response or manner of response may actualize only a limited number of possibilities of linking, leaving out an unlimited number that may equally be valid responses.

As only a small number of particular linkages may be realized in the narratives, the excluded possibilities generate an impression of silencing. In the narratives, history, ethnography, anthropology, philosophy, cultural and religious discourse, and even mythologies which are heterogeneous and incommensurable genres of discourse are brought into the service of creating a seamless and comprehensible progression of events. Within this progression different versions of reality are locked in a conflict to suppress and hegemonize their adversaries. "[B]ecause several linkages are possible does that necessarily imply that there is a differend between them?-Yes it does, because only one of them may happen (be "actualized") at a time" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 29). Differend among these series of linkages is thus an inescapable eventuality in Lyotard's view. He further claims that "[a] genre of discourse determines what is at stake in linking phrases" (*The Differend* 84). The involvement of stakes in a particular linkage speaks of the political nature of the discourses. The question of the political at its most fundamental level, thus, arises everywhere: there is no decision, action, occurrence or text that is not, in some way, tied up with the *differend*, claims Lyotard.

The cultural, religious, social, and ideological heterogeneity imaginatively mapped in the primary texts necessitates linkages among phrases (both in the sense of communication among characters and in the sense of events or occurrences) belonging to conflicting genres of discourse. While the characters motivated by religious ideology invoke discourses of mythology and religious Scriptures for their truth claims, the rational and secular characters counter these claims with notions of scientific rationalism

and liberal secularism. In this altercation the privileging of one's claims over others' may "stifle the conversation" (Held 78) between the parties to the disputes.

The lived reality of South Asian territory is shaped and characterized by a complex of cultural, religious, social, ideological, and political ideas that simultaneously intersect, negate, and support each other at various levels. The exigencies of narrative concern or the desire to cater to the sensibilities of largely Western or westernized readership might run the risk of reducing this heterogeneity of South Asian social formations to single comprehensible whole. This risk has exacerbated in post-9/11 world where an increased overlapping of Western media and literary discourses and fictional representation of South Asian reality involving the Muslims is becoming ever more palpable. As a result, the complex of political, social, religious, cultural, and ideological ideas directly engaged with or indirectly constituting the background of these texts begins to lose its specificity through representations which realize an eclectic and at times arbitrary concatenation of phrases. In some instances one particular discourse seems to have completely dominated the other. "There is no genre whose hegemony over the others would be just" (*The Differend* 158)[6], warns Lyotard. Any effort that results in such hegemony becomes an instance of occurrence of a differend.

My research dissertation claims that *The Good Muslim*, *The Wasted Vigil,* and *Riot: A Novel* are political fictions reflecting the political views and positions of their respective writers through the characters whose identities are caught up in political events beyond their control. Their heterogeneous responses to crises partially rupture seamlessness and cohesiveness of western epistemological enterprise. Their "heterogeneity…makes consensus impossible"[7] (*The Differend* 55) and within this multiplicity of voices the Muslim difference emerges as an uncontainable episteme. The narratives, however, tend to acquire an 'internal' peace "[that] is bought at the price of perpetual differends on the outskirts" (Lyotard, *Differend* 151). The desire evinced by the novels to achieve an internal peace or resolution of the conflict through linking of homogeneous phrases might, however, reduce the *differend* between them to simple litigation. "There is no universal genre that will determine the one, right, authoritative linkage. It is in this sense that the contingency of linking always introduces a *differend,* a radical point of dispute as to the genre of linkage" (Readings 87).[8] The lack of consensus or 'absolute difference' that exists between the Muslims and Islam on the one hand and

rational secular characters and ideas on the other persists in the form of a *differend*. In other words, in the primary texts only one linkage may materialize at a time and the rest are suppressed. The result of this exclusive linkage and "suppressing other linkages is that the dispute involved is a *differend* rather than a litigation" (87).[9] Pragmatics of literary discourse of these texts seems to delineate the intolerant and unnuanced expressions of allegiance of the Muslims to Islamic ideology as markers of suspect behavior. It is this double-edged nature of representation that gives rise to Muslim *differend*.

The three primary texts operate as fictional tribunals where complainants try to vociferate the sufferings and injustices meted out to certain individuals or communities largely within the confines of rational and secular discourse. Lyotard assigns an ameliorating role to literature and maintains that "it is literature that primarily occupies this critical position of the watcher [over differends]" (Ost 362).[10] It may perform this task by getting rid of "the present systems of rationality" (Malpas 120). A major concern of this dissertation is to explore whether this genre of fiction fulfils this task of literature or falls prey to the structures put in place by the western hegemonic discursive frameworks.

After explaining in the foregoing pages the theoretical perspectives and some terms to be used in this study, I elaborate in the following pages the research methodology and methods I have used in this research project.

3.6 Research Methodology

The nature of research is descriptive. It employs qualitative approaches for collecting and analyzing the data. A qualitative study usually describes some phenomena, an event, or a problem. The examples of this type of research include "[t]he description of an observed situation, the historical enumeration of events, an account of the different opinions people have about an issue, and a description of the living conditions of a community, etc…" (R. Kumar 13). The data collected and analyzed is also qualitative which consists of analyzable texts and critical commentary on them. The interpretation of this data forms the main body of this exploratory research. To strengthen my point of view and asses the validity of my interpretations I have incorporated, contested, and partially/fully agreed with interpretations offered by other

critics. It progresses as a critical textual analysis of the primary texts and remains open to other possibilities of interpretations. Though my conclusions/critical interventions in the texts offer a particular view of the narrative content and strategies of the texts, I do not seek to impose any finality or reductive essentialism upon the texts.

The nature of this research is subjective. However, I have adopted an inductive method to avoid any arbitrariness that might result from subjectivity. The qualitative approach revolves around the study of the patterns that might emerge behind the particular behaviour/s of the characters in particular situation/s. I, however, remain alive to the fact that I pass them through the sieve of theoretical framework I have employed to study these potential patterns. "Whilst research methods are concerned with how you conduct a given piece of research, methodologies are concerned with the perspectives you bring to bear on your work such as a feminist or a postcolonialist one…" (Griffin 6). Therefore, I bring Lyotard's concept of *differend* as a theoretical perspective. It is concerned with differing opinions people have on a specific event and how they invoke incommensurable history, rituals, customs, and mythology to situate the event in the progression and projection of desired meaning. Therefore, I have adopted qualitative approach in my research project "to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people" (Kumar 104), the parties involved in a particular *differend*.

I have adopted a critical approach in the interpretation of data collected working on the "premise that all cultural life is in constant tension between control and resistance" (Thomas 9). I have used techniques of data collection and research methods that "are flexible and emergent in nature, and are often non-linear and non-sequential in their operationalisation" *(*R. Kumar 104). I concur with Kumar's view that "Most studies are a combination of the …three" perspectives: "that is, they contain elements of descriptive, co-relational and explanatory research" (R. Kumar 11). This research dissertation, therefore, employs the elements of description, correlation, and explanation to reach the conclusions objectively.

Through a combination of these approaches, I have studied the qualitative phenomenon of differing exclusionary responses to several 'events' of South Asian reality. This eclectic approach relies on qualitative data in the form of ideas, beliefs, cultural and religious phenomena, ideological affiliations, and customs which are hard to

quantify in numbers or mathematical equations. The very process of data collecting relies on interpretations and critical evaluation. It aims to discover ideas and insights. This methodology is helpful in investigating a problem to clarify certain concepts and open up new ways of developing research problems. This particular methodology is suited to my project as the concept of *differend* in its very nature is concerned with finding out new ways of re/presenting the social reality we find around us.

I have also made use of the 'conceptual' research methodology, as in this approach the researcher is usually concerned with some abstract idea or theory in order to develop new conceptions of the problem at hand. Cresswell explains this methodology employed by scholars in social sciences that uses a certain theoretical lens. He states that "researchers increasingly use a theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research which provides an overall orienting lens for the study of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups)" (62). All literary research which undertakes interpretive and critical analysis of literary texts to reach certain conclusions is conceptual in nature as it relies on the concepts and their interpretation or on its critique in the light of some theoretical concept to establish certain pattern behind the narration of the events. I have employed Lyotard's theorization of the concept of *differend*, wrong, and victim, as expounded in his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* as theoretical lens to interpret the primary texts. I have already explained in detail the nature of these concepts and teased out its suitability for the study of three primary texts in the above pages.

In my research project, I have engaged critically with the existing scholarship on Anglophone South Asian fiction to develop my own conception of this largely political fiction. The descriptive research concerns, among other things, with the study of social issues faced by a community or an individual. This type of study

> can attempt to describe… the living conditions of Aboriginal people in the outback, the needs of a community, what it means to go through a divorce, how a child feels living in a house with domestic violence…[.] The main purpose of such studies is to describe what is prevalent with respect to the issue/ problem under study. (R. Kumar 10)

This study suits the concern of my research as the living conditions of Aboriginal people, the Jews of Hitler's Europe, and the Muslims bear some similarities. The problem that I have undertaken to study in this research project is the condition of the Muslims and their religion, Islam, and their conflict with supposedly a secular globalized world.

3.7 Research Method

Research methods are concerned with how the research is carried out. The choice of a research method depends on the nature of the research project. Since my study and the research questions are exploratory in nature, I have used Textual Analysis as a principal research method. This method relies upon textual analysis of the texts. Catherine Belsey explains this method in these words: "Textual analysis as a research method involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help" (Belsey 160). Belsey further "suggests that understanding meaning making, differently understood in different historical periods and by different theoreticians, is key to undertaking textual analyses" (Griffin 12). As my textual analysis of the primary texts is animated by the debates triggered by and participated in by Aslam, Anam, and Tharoor, I have refrained from bringing any foregone judgement upon their works. This method has been useful for me to interrogate the view of South Asian cultural formations, as re/presented by the primary texts and critical commentary upon these work and unearth the ethnographic and demographic knowledge working behind the arrangements of the narrative content. I have been mindful of the fact that this research method yields contingent meaning of the literary texts. Therefore, far from imposing closures on the selected texts, the conclusions reached by me remain open to further interpretation of the primary texts through critical scrutiny.

3.8 Conclusion

Literary texts are, usually, interdisciplinary with regard to their content. Since they are the product of the varied cultural and textual influences, their analyses call for the deployment of diverse research methods. This is also true of the primary texts of my dissertation. Therefore, in order to study Anglophone South Asian local and diasporic fiction, I have used the above-mentioned two research methods. The textual analysis offers the possibility of employing diverse critical and theoretical approaches to the interpretation of the texts.

After having explained and putting in place the theoretical and methodological apparatus in the foregoing pages, I employ it to undertake a critical and objective analysis of selected Anglophone South Asian fiction in the following chapters. I dedicate

a separate chapter to each text and examine it to seek answers to my research questions. Lyotard's concept of *differend* provides me with the theoretical lens to interpret the primary texts whose critical analysis I have carried out in the following pages by using Textual Analysis as a research method.

ENDNOTES

[1] In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, 1984 Lyotard claims that knowledge is connected with politics and ethics. In his view scientific knowledge complements the narrative knowledge. p7

[2] See Michael Bernard Donals' *An Introduction to Holocaust* (Routledge 2005) for a complete understanding of the event of Holocaust.

[3] See Olivier Roy's *Secularism Confronts Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2007).

[4] Simon Malpas in Jean Francois Lyotard (Routledge London 2003) explains Lyotard's critique of rational discourse. p47

[5]Paisley Livingston in *Literature and Rationality: Ideas of Agency in Theory and Fiction* (Cambridge University Press 1991) explains the concept of rationality and its manifestations in literary writings. The book studies how the ideas of rational choice appear in theory and fiction.

[6] *Just Gaming. Translated by Wlad Godzich, University of Minnesota Press, 1985*. Lyotard presents the idea of justice and injustice. Injustice occurs when a particular language or people are excluded from communicative processes or society. This amounts to what he calls "absolute injustice". p67.

[7] See David Carrol's *Paraaesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard*. Derrida(Methuen 1987).

[8] In Malpas' view Lyotard adopts Kant of idea of Sublime (presenting the existence of something unpresentable") in T*he Critique of Judgement*, to explain how art and literature can show that there are voices and silences "that cannot be formulated in rational communication."(Malpas p. 47) *Jean Francois Lyotard,* (Routledge London 2003).

[9] See Bill Readings' *Introducing Lyotard: Arts and Politics*.(Routledge, 1991) for a detailed discussion of relation between art, literature, and politics.

[10] *Just Gaming. Translated by Wlad Godzich,* (University of Minnesota Press, 1985) presents Lyotard's ideas and their implication for the society, especially for justice, in the absence of metanarratives. The book is a series of dialogues between Lyotard and Jean Loup Thebaud. In this book he that states politics prescribes rather than describe. p23.

CHAPTER 4

THE SECULAR CONFRONTS THE ISLAMIST: TAHMIMA ANAM'S *THE GOOD MUSLIM*

4.1 Introduction

Tahmima Anam is a Bangladeshi born British novelist and Journalist. Born in Dhaka, she grew up in Paris, New York, and Bangkok. Her father, Mahfuz Anam, a prominent journalist, was once implicated in a controversy for printing a blasphemous cartoon in 2007. Anam completed her PhD from Harvard University in 2005 in Social Anthropology. The first part of Anam's trilogy, *A Golden Age* (2007), narrates the events that took place in the family from March to December 1971 of Bangladesh Liberation War. This part tells the story of their actual participation in this war. *The Good Muslim* (2011) is the second part of her Bengal trilogy. It engages with the problem of Islamism that began to emerge in Bangladeshi nation after its independence from Pakistan in 1971. The narrative revolves around consequences of the participation for Haq family who actively took part in the war. By delineating an ideological conflict between a secularist sister Maya and an Islamist brother Sohail, Anam foregrounds the tensions that result from their heterogeneous worldviews. Their diverging outlooks on life reflect a schism caused by their differing response to the changed social reality after the independence. The third part of the trilogy, *The Bones of Grace* (2016), tells the story of Zubaida Haq who is adopted by the same Haq family that forms the central cast of first and second part.

In this trilogy, Anam "charts the lives of three generations of Bangladeshi characters and brings the lesser-known history of Bangladeshi Liberation War into global domain" (Nath 127). Rimi Nath, in her Essay, "The "Long Shadows" of The Bangladeshi Liberation War: Religion and Nationalism in Tahmima Anam's Bengal Trilogy", states that Anam's trilogy "shows how a search for solace and purpose after one is touched by disturbing events(war or personal loss) can turn people towards religion" (126-7). Many of the events and characters in this trilogy have been patterned on real stories and personages of Anam's family and their acquaintances. Particularly, the character of Rehana, a widowed mother, bears close resemblance with Anam's

grandmother whose garden was used by *Mukti Bahini* guerrillas to bury their arms to be used against Pakistan Army (Ranasinha 99). Ranasinha describes Rehana as the "moral compass" of the novel to stress the centrality of her role (102). In an interview with Amy Finnerty, Anam states that *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim* "are based on people in my family and the people I interviewed in the course of researching the novels" (44). The first two parts of this trilogy are largely autobiographical and political as their themes resonate closely with her political activism. Her portrayal of different characters is influenced "by conventions that serve to structure [her] perceptions of extra-literary reality" (Cilano, *National Identities* 32). Nasia Anam claims that *A Golden Age* is "motivated…by an explicitly political impulse" (333). Anam acknowledges the political nature of her fiction in her interview with Amy Finnerty in these words:

> I am unapologetically and emphatically interested in politics. I believe writing fiction is an act of protest, in that we are asked to question our fundamental positions by entering into the point of view of another person. This act of stepping outside of ourselves and into the lives of others is a radical and radically political act. (45-6)

She further claims that her first two novels were about the effects of "larger social and political forces" on "familial relationships", while the third novel, *Bones of Grace,* concerned itself "with the political nature of relationships themselves" (46).

Although her Bengal trilogy testifies to her claim that writing fiction is an act of protest, her contention that she has 'stepped outside' of herself and been able to 'move into the lives of others' in her fiction merits further investigation. This would reveal on which side of the political and ideological divide she positions herself in this trilogy may be gathered by unraveling the strategic choices she makes to structure her texts. Although her earlier two novels offer some polemical space to the characters who contest Bangladeshi nationalism based upon linguistic distinctiveness, Rehana and Maya's privileged point of view of in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim* respectively resonates with the concerns of Anam's own political activism. Her view of the Bangladesh War of Liberation is infused with ideals of secular nationalism. The narrative in *The Good Muslim* is filtered through Maya's consciousness who offers an overt critique of religiously inflected social and political behavior of the post-war Bangladeshi society. Maya vociferates the ideas that reflect Anam's personal point of view as expressed in non-fictional writings and interviews.

The violence perpetrated by Pakistani soldiers is expressed in the first part of Anam's trilogy as religiously motivated persecution of the Bengalis. United in a national cause that reflected the zeitgeist of the whole Bangladeshi nation, they consider themselves engaged in the fight against Pakistani soldiers who "looted homes and burned roofs. They raped… every day feeling closer to divinity, because they were told they were saving Pakistan, and Islam, maybe even the Almighty himself, from the depravity of the Bengalis" (Anam, *Golden* 129). This presentation of the conflict brings into focus the divide between two types of Muslim sensibility. On the side of the divide lies the exploitative maneuvering of religious sentiments for achieving political and economic goals. Pitted against it is a cause motivated by ideals of secular nationalism. Haq family, a metonym of Bengali nationalist ideals resists justifying the acts of violence of Pakistani soldiers by appropriating the Muslim divinity, Islam, and Almighty. Although this narrative strategy of establishing links between delinquent Pakistani soldiers with the teachings of Islam and Allah Almighty may be critiqued for its desire to cater to secular imaginary of the potential western readership, it performs a very significant function of causing a rupture in monolithic view of the Muslim reality. Its potential to malign the Muslims and their religion, Islam, is somewhat set off by its ability to inscribe an episteme that remains at a considerable remove from the reality of South Asian spaces imagined by the target audience.

This view of the Muslims challenges to some degree the monopoly over interpretation of Islamic beliefs by an orthodox and conservative segments of Muslim population. It self consciously seeks to present an alternative view of the true aspirations of the Muslims. The ideals and personal norms of this category of the Muslims compete for legitimacy and authenticity with orthodox versions of Muslim ideology in Anam's text. This chapter critically examines *The Good Muslim* foregrounds the different shades of Muslimness and how the differend between contentious positions is mapped in Anam's second novel.[1]

4.2 The *Differend* between the 'Secular' Muslim and the 'Muslim' Muslim

The Good Muslim creates a differend between secular approach to life and a conception of life increasingly driven by restricted Islamic religiosity in post-war Bangladesh.[2] The tension between these two approaches to life is allegorized in the book by Maya and Sohail respectively. Through differing responses to crises created in their

lives by war of liberation, brother and sister seem to symbolize the divisions of Bengali society between the secularist and Islamist approaches to life in Bangladesh after the war of liberation. These fissures internal destroy the harmony that existed among the family members and whole Bangladeshi nation during the war and brings about disastrous consequences for Haq family.

Haq family's struggles to come to terms with confused realities of post-war Bangladesh explore the wider issues of exercising of power and consequent marginalization. Bengali Muslims before the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 have been represented by the Hindu writers. Nasia Anam, in her essay, "Bangladeshi Anglophone Literature: Rerouting the Hegemony of Global English" (2018), states that "[o]utside of *dalits* and the *adivasis*, Bengali Muslims have historically been among the most marginalised groups in South Asia" (italics in original, 328). She further claims that the Bengali Muslim is "the dialectical 'other' of the Hindu *bhardalok*" (italics in original, 328). In her view "they are present but silent" in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*, and Rushdie's *Midnights Children* (328). To describe their marginality in Anglophone South Asian fiction she uses Gayatri Spivak's phrase "doubly in shadows" (qtd. in N. Anam). Independence from all external political and cultural exploitation lands the newly the nation into unexpected dilemmas. The spectre raises its head in the shape of rising Islamism and betrayal of imagined ideal attitudes.

The Good Muslim may be regarded as an effort to grapple with this new social and moral landscape. Apart from narrating the events of the war, one of the main concerns of this book remains with what constitutes a 'Good Muslim'. Anam admits the centrality of this theme in the narrative scheme in response to a question, 'what makes a good Muslim', put to her by Amy Finnerty, she replies that the title of her second novel, *The Good Muslim* "ask[s] a question, not…answer[s] one" (46). She further explains her answer by suggesting that Sohail and her mother, Rehana, represent two different versions of the Muslims. In the same interview she insinuates towards her preferred type of Muslim: "Sohail, of course, would say that his version of religion is correct one, but I wanted to show a counterpoint in the character of his mother, who is more intimate and moderate in her practice" (Anam, 46). Despite Anam's disclaimer that she leaves it up to the reader to assess for her/him/self who represents the good Muslim, her proposed

project in the text consciously seeks to challenge Sohail's self-assurance about his sense of being a good Muslim.[3] Rehana's 'intimate and moderate' character in the book is offered as the counterpoint to Sohail's indifference and excessiveness in the religious matters. The difference between these two characters and their attitude towards Islam and true nature of its practices turns them into opposing parties in dispute that seems to be irreconcilable.

While Anam's reply to Finnerty suggests a tension between Sohail's and Rehana's differing versions of being Muslim, the main conflict over rising Islamism plays out between Sohail and his sister, Maya, who present a foil to each other in the novel. While Rehana, an Urdu-speaking Bengali mother, stands at the centre of narrative events in *A Golden Age*, her daughter, Maya and son, Sohail are the protagonists of *The Good Muslim*. The text divides the narration between two periods. The first strand tells events from 1971 to 1977 as a flash back, while the second strand covers the current narrative period from 1984 to 1985. This novel largely focuses on the differing responses of Sohail and Maya to the influence gained by Bangladeshi Islamic Right during the dictatorship of Hussain Muhammad Ershad in post-war Bangladesh. Sohail comes under the influence of rising Islamism and joins Muslim proselytizing group, the Tablighi Jamaat,[4] whereas Maya remains committed to the secular nationalism. Amy Fiinnerty describes this tension in these words, in the introduction to her interview with Anam in these words:

> Sohail, once the charismatic darling of the college scene, in thrall to the bell-bottoms and rock music, is broken by love and what he's seen during the war and, as a consequence, takes a retrograde, fundamentalist path. His more resilient sister Maya is fortified by the promise of the future and embraces the secular, feminist, progressive and scientific. (43)

This tension between Sohail's (restrictive) Islamism and Maya's secularism constitutes the locus of difference between two world views that drives the narrative forward. The terms Finnerty uses to describe shift in Sohail's character (retrograde, fundamental) seem to define Sohail as a bad Muslim. On the other hand, terms like secular, progressive, and scientific insinuate that Maya represents the 'good Muslim' of the title. Another explanation may also be possible that takes into account the ironical tone towards Sohail's Islamism. In this reading of the novel, Sohail stands for all that is bad in a retrograde and fundamental Muslim. His negative attributes are a measure of his

distancing himself from the ideals of secular nationalism held on to by the family during the war. In any case, the difference between Maya and Sohail seems to be an unbridgeable divide that keeps on widening as the narrative progresses.

In Saumya Lal's view "the silences of trauma, rape, and irreconcilable difference…occupy central positions in Anam's novel" (7).[5] The difference between Sohail and Maya's episteme manifests itself at various levels in the text. The critique of turn of Bangladeshi nations towards Islamism is voiced by Maya although Anam states that Sohail's ideological opponent is Rehana. Maya regrets and fights against the Islamization of the Bengali society that in her view is inherently secular because of historically multiple influences. The shift towards Islamization and transformation of the multicultural nation, however, "is reflected in the personal transformation of Sohail" (Nath 131) through the experiences of the war of liberation.

The crises of war and its aftermath serve as background to delineate the tension between the secular nationalism and rising Islamism. Cara Cilano proposes two treatments of the theme of war in Anglophone Bangladeshi fiction in her essay, "English-Language Fiction of Bangladesh" (2016). Among these thematics, "the first uses the temporal distance to assess the possibilities of reconciliation and forgiveness for the war's atrocities; the second frames the legacy of independence as troubling and bleak" (66). Maya's attitude towards the excesses committed by Pakistani Army against the Bangladeshi people remains unforgiving in *The Good Muslim* despite the displaced temporality of the setting of the book. Her thwarted desire for the justice for the victims of war remains firmly rooted in the past. Her frustration is, however, compounded by the change in socio-political sentiment of post-war Bangladesh. The shift of society's sentiment from secular towards religion amounts to the failure of the very ideals that were symbols of unity of the nation. Cilano quotes Asif Farrukhi and Niaz Zaman to strengthen this view of the major themes of Anglophone Bangladeshi short stories and fiction. She states that "many of the Bangla stories are of failure, failure of the people, failure of the government, failure of the country to live up to the promise of the nationalistic movement"(qtd. in Cilano, 71).

Anam's *The Good Muslim* highlights the basic contours of this failure by representing a tension between multiplicity of conflicting voices and ideological positions. The heterogeneous voices represented by Sohail and his fellows belonging to

Tablighi Jamaat on the one hand and by Maya and her friends on the other form the basis of *differend* between two conflicting approaches to life. "*The Good Muslim* is a novel of ideas" (Claire, *British Muslims* 161) and it is ideas and not the individuals that seek to win over the others. Sohail's religiously motivated otherworldliness results in indifference to the sufferings and needs of the others and actuates a negligence of the illness of his mother and disregard of his six-year old son, Zaid. His turn toward religion seems to have taken away his ability to empathize. This failure not only results in a family tragedy but also exacerbates the anxieties of the liberals like Maya about the negative impacts of religiosity upon domestic and social spaces. Between two mutually incommensurable epistemes represented by Sohail and Maya lies Rehana's moderate religiosity. She comes close to being the titular 'good Muslim' of the novel in Chambers' view for whom Islam "is just a part of everyday life" (165). Rimi Nath endorses this point of view when she states that "Rehana, though deeply religious, resists fundamentalism" (132). Rehana functions as a bridge between Sohail and Maya's regressive Islamism and uncompromising secularism respectively. Her moderation in the performance of religious practices and wholehearted devotion to not only filial duties presents a foil to other members of her family, neighbours, and friends but also inscribes an alternative but acceptable Muslim episteme.

The main conflict that Anam's novel enacts unfolds between Sohail's religious point of view and Maya's secularist and rationalist notion of human life. In the novel, the differences between three characters seem to represent the three shades of 'Muslimness'. The novel is focalized through the secularist voice of Maya. Despite occasional critique of her bigotry and stubbornness, the book seems to privilege her point of view. In *The Good Muslim*, "[a] secular point of view is, therefore, expressed through the character of Maya whose concerns, on the other hand, revolve around poverty, filth, and corruption in the new nation"(Nath 133). This privileging entails a corresponding marginalization reflected in the way Sohail has undergone a complete transformation. His responses are largely articulated in few words and are dismissive of others' point of view. Sohail's reticence in social and familial relations and vociferousness in religious credos works to highlight the negative aspects of his personality.

Maya's humanistic drives further incriminate Sohail's detachedness from social and filial duties. She embodies the ideas of rationalism, secularism, and liberal

humanism that Anam's novel contrasts with Sohail's religiously inspired bigotry and backwardness. Anam, in her interview with Andrew Wylie, published in Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fiction: Interviews with Contemporary Writers* (2011), explains the main themes of her novel in these words: "*The Good Muslim* mostly centres on the relationship between Sohail and his sister Maya, and that conflict between the religious and the secular which is represented by these two characters"(164). In Anam's opinion, any 'accurate' depiction of a Muslim society should include three types of Muslims. These include Muslims "who are very secular, people who live the religious life 100 per cent and others who use religion for political ends" (164). Maya and Sohail represent the first and second type of Muslim taxonomy posited by Anam. The third category of the Muslims is represented by Bangladeshi political leaders epitomized by Hussain Muhammad Ershad[6] referred to in the novel as Dictator by Maya and other liberal characters.

Among these three categories of Muslims Maya's rational and secular voice holds privilege over other forms of Muslimness. She seems to stand as mouthpiece for voicing Anam's own ideas about Sohail's faith.[7] Anam's personal relation with Islam, a religion she claims to represent from inside, however, remains problematic. Anam, although included in British 'Muslims' by Chambers, "didn't have any religious instructions" and "read Qur'an for the first time" when she was writing *A Good Muslim* (166). Despite lacking the insider's experience of a believing and practicing Muslim, her insistence that she presents Sohail's point of view from inside looks suspicious. Maya's reading of the Quran remains different from its instruction usually given to Muslim children in their childhood as a guide and complete code of life. Her motivation to read Quran is academic rather than an affirmation of faith in its teachings. Maya like Anam fails to assert her faith in Quran and the pillars of Islam it teaches: believing in and testifying to the oneness of Allah and finality of Prophethood of Muhammad, praying five times a day, fasting, paying Zakat, and going on a mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca. Maya's aversion towards Sohail is triggered and sustained by his acceptance and proclamation of oneness of the Book (and God) and by his abandoning the syncretic religious practices other than sanctioned by Islamic code of life.

The book nowhere suggests that Sohail and Maya received any religious education in their childhood. Sohail and Maya. Before their departure along different

lines, their westernized life style projects Anam's own secular vision of the Bangladeshi life. The text views Sohail's turn towards Islamic practices and beliefs and their expression in public spaces as fundamentalist acts. This view resonates with Anam's own negative evaluation of idea of Muslim *ummah*. One of the basic beliefs of the Muslims is their sense of brotherhood, concept of Muslim *ummah*, felt by them as a single community which defies national and international boundaries. Anam mandates in her interview with Chambers that this idea of *ummah* must be resisted (166). Anam's advice based upon the notions of sovereign nation state contradicts one of the basic precepts of Islamic faith that Muslim community all over the world regardless of their region and race constitutes one nation or *ummah*.

Her claim of having written from 'inside' becomes even more questionable when her reasons for not writing novels about England are brought into. In the same interview with Chambers, she states that "I didn't grow up here [in England] and don't have sensitivity, knowledge, or insider experience that I would need to write a good novel about Britain" (171). This reluctance to write about England and the confidence in her being an insider of Muslim sensibility reveal a dichotomy in Anam's reasoning. In the case of writing about Sohail's Islamism she feels confident of her 'insider's status', despite her non-existent Islamic education and her upbringing in largely non-Muslim environments. While on the other hand same lack of 'insensitivity' and 'insider's knowledge' is cited as reasons for not writing about England. The lack/absence of Islamic belief and insider's experience of performing the fundamentals of Islamic faith coupled with her world view based upon the notions of secular rationalism put challenges to the claims of authenticity and representativeness made by Anam. While Anam's presumption that she presents the insider's view of the Muslim experience remains questionable, it however un/willingly performs an important function of keeping the Muslim differend alive.

Anam's text also inscribes a differend between the putative inhumane impulses of Muslim faith and rational humanism of those who remain skeptical of these impulses. The religiosity of the Muslim characters like Sohail is made out to be a cause of their inhumanism. His adherence to religion is posited as an antithesis to humanism of the moderate, secularist, heretic, non-believing, and atheist characters. In taking up this theme, Anam's text relates to a tradition of South Asian fiction that vouches for

practicing upon the ideals of liberal humanism rather than anti-humanistic religious creeds. Rimi Nath states that "Taslima Nasreen, in *Lajja: Shame*, makes plea to replace religion with humanism" (136). [8] Maya pleads to others to return to their humanism of the war period and forego their insensitiveness attitude toward others.

Of the three categories of Muslims present in any Muslim community as explained by Anam to Andrew Wylie her critique seems to remain directed at the extremist and radicals like Sohail. Claire Chambers in her essay, "Bangladeshi Islam, Secularism, and the Tablighi Jamaat", states that Anam's book suggests that both religion and secularism are characterized by "reason and illogic, moderation and extremism, ethical and unethical behaviour" (*Imagining Muslims*, 142). Although Chambers' reading of the novel acknowledges the excesses of both religion and secularism, it fails to recognize the fact that in *The Good Muslim* individual acts of Islamist characters like Sohail are attributed to the teaching of Allah, Muhammad, and Qur'an. While Rehana's conciliatory attitude towards rift between Sohail and Maya evinces some criticism of Maya's over-zealousness of her secularist animosity of Sohail's Islamism, *The Good Muslim* exhibits a desire towards secularization of public and domestic spaces. It seems to have become complicit in perpetuating the stereotypes and negativities about Muslim faith by holding these to be responsible for Sohail's actions. On the other hand, the excesses of secularist characters are not made out to be mandated by the edicts of ideal secularism but as some faults in their judgement similar to the tragic flaw of the protagonist of classical tragedy. This dichotomous treatment is reflected by the way the novel presents Sohail and Maya's differential epistemes. The book stresses that Sohail's religious preoccupation compromises the welfare of his own child and mother. On the other hand, Maya's role in the tragic death of her nephew is described as her error of judgement and misunderstanding.

Chambers' evaluation remains valid for the study of negotiations of secularism and religiosity as Anam's novel's basic concern revolves around Muslim faith's relation with secularism. She, however, fails to acknowledge that the book highlights those areas that suggest the presence of an unbridgeable divide between these ideologies. Olivier Roy in *Secularism Confronts Islam* (2007) states that one school of discourse on Muslim faith maintains that "Islamic dogma is fundamentally an obstacle to secularization" (42). He further states that from this view of Islam "[t]wo conclusions are possible: either a

theological reformation is necessary, or Islam is not reformable" (43). This formulation equates Islam with orthodoxy and anti-modernity and sees its basic precepts as fundamentally against the notions of human life. Maya and some other characters in the novel seem to engage in a struggle against the orthodoxy and fundamentalism of Sohail and Bangladeshi society. In this dispute between two opposing social forces, Sohail and other Muslims' faith in the 'will of Allah' emerges as the other when viewed "through the lenses of science and rationalism" (Chambers, *Imagining Muslims* 152). Maya views Sohail's behavior through these lenses and finds it deficient in many significant aspects. Her evaluation insinuates towards Islam's lack of capacity to be reformed. Her phobic vision about Sohail's tilt towards Islamization verges on being myopic. Chambers states that her myopic and extremist estimation of his post-war character:

> shows us Sohail's conversion from the outside and is more comfortable with Hindu-inflected, pluralist forms of worship than the mainstream Muslim doctrine of *tawhid* or unity. In a novel entitled *The Good Muslim*… the lack of an internal perspective on Sohail's decision to join Tablighi Jamaat represents something of a missed opportunity. (152)

Chambers seems to suggest that a system of value judgement contrary to the very essence of Islam, Tawhid, is employed by Maya to judge Sohail's leanings towards Muslim way of life. He is denied any space to articulate his conversion from pluralist forms of worship to Tawhid from his own perspective. It is brought under the scrutinizing gaze of a secularist nationalist, Maya, whose preference for secularization of public and domestic spaces seems to admit all the syncretic religious practices except monotheistic creed of Tawhid. This silencing of the voice of the believing Muslims signifies a *differend* what Chambers, somewhat euphemistically, calls 'a missed opportunity' to represent the 'internal perspective' of a believing and practicing Muslim. Chambers' statement points towards the *differend* between Maya's extremist secularism and pluralist religiosity on the one hand and Sohail's belief in *Tawhid* on the other. Maya's worldview rooted in secular rationalism pitches it as the normative and divests Sohail's point of view of any legitimacy he might claim from the perspective of faith.

Maya's critique foregrounds some excesses and extremities in Sohail's behavior. At the same time its sole reliance on secularist and liberal ideals excludes the possibility of representing a voice entrenched in ethos of Islamic faith. Anam's own admission of having no Islamic knowledge and studying Qur'an only as a scholarly

research to be able to write about Islam and Muslims (Sohail and his life) may be contrasted with Sohail's conversion towards Tawhid. Sohail's reading of Quran is motivated by a desire to convert to the ways of life a task he seems to have achieved. On the other hand, Anam, through her mouthpiece Maya, largely takes a skeptical view of its teachings and holds it responsible for the moral and political corruption of her brother and the society as a whole. This view of Sohail's overt inclination towards Islam may hardly be hailed as an effort to represent an insider's view of Muslims' experience of faith. The novel eschews any analysis of the reasons behind Sohail's decision to join the Tablighi Jamaat. Instead, it lays all the blame at Sohail's beloved Silvi's feet for hypnotizing Sohail into the creed of *Tawhid*. This understanding of Sohail's conversion from pluralist religiosity to monotheistic Islamic creed implicates and incriminates the very foundational precept of Islam. Sohail's subsequent renunciation of familial and social responsibilities is made out to emanate from this original betrayal of the ideals of his youth. The Muslim difference he represents seems to be intolerable to his sister, Maya, a fact pointed out by Rehana after the book burning scene in the novel.

The Muslim difference signified by Sohail's religiosity remains uncontainable episteme in the text. It resists any homogenization by a rationalist vision of the world to understand Muslims investment in faith. Sohail's exhibition of Muslimness presents challenges to Maya's Marxist-inflected secularism and nationalism. After her mother's miraculous recovery she feels curious to know what Sohail has recited in his mother's ear while making her drink the holy water. This causes her to accept temporarily the comfort and solace offered by the spirituality she criticizes in Sohail. Maya occasionally feels attracted towards the solace and hope of her mother's recovery which are offered by her participation in the gatherings of Tablighi Jamaat. She, however, remains critical of Sohail's acceptance of Rehana's disease as the will of God. Rehana blames Maya for showing intolerance towards Sohail's difference: "'you couldn't stand for him to be different'", she tells her (Anam, *The Good Muslim* 253).

Saumya Lal, in "Silence and the ethics of partial empathy in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*", states that Maya and Sohail…chose the divergent paths of secularism and religious fundamentalism respectively" (1). Anam describes this bifurcation of their paths early in the novel in these words: "he had gone one way, and she another" (*The Good* 14). Lal further claims that their "differences about religion" are

"irreconcilable" (2). In her view some silences are the result of "irreconcilable disagreements. When one or more parties conclude that they have reached an ideological deadlock, they sometimes withdraw into the silences of resentment, evasiveness, and/or indifference that may or may not take the form of formal engagements" (Lal 9). Lal's essay indicates an unbridgeable gap between two important characters of the text and an 'ideological deadlock' that speaks of the *differend* that exists between them. In the novel, this tension is also visible from Sohail and Anam's differing attitude towards the punishment for war criminals. Maya holds that war criminals should be brought to justice whereas Sohail largely remains indifferent to this issue and shrugs it off by declaring that everyone has made mistakes in the war. As the war criminals include the followers of Jamaat-e Islami, one of the main political factions of Bangladesh, Sohail's evasive attitude towards this issue is regarded by Maya as the defense of his fellow Islamists.

The issue of bringing war criminals and their collaborators to justice remains a persistent theme in Bangladeshi political debates. In Lal's view, Anam's *The Good Muslim* deals with "the long history of the simmering, although relatively silent, public discontent about war criminals" (3). Maya, in the novel, attends the meetings arranged by Jahanara Imam, a political activist and source of inspiration for Anam's political activism, to lend her support for this cause. In the novel Imam holds, what she terms peoples' tribunals, to prosecute the war criminals. Piya, a girl Sohail rescues from the barracks where the Pakistani soldiers have been raping her, represents the women victims of the rape called "birangona" (or "war heroine"), the term coined by Sheikh Mujib to denote the rape survivors of the 1971 War" (Lal 4). Her appearance in the epilogue shows that the issue of *birangonas* remains one of the main concerns of Anam's novel. Maya, under the influence of Mujib's edict to remove the 'seeds of enemy' from the wombs of 'war heroines', performs many abortions on these women. Later, however, she regrets these operations and tries to even it out by helping Bangladeshi women deliver babies in Rajshahi and other places during her seven years stay away from her home. Maya's compensating empathy towards *birangonas* helps mitigate the negativities of her excessive investment in creeds of secularism and rationalism. This capacity to analyze and regret her earlier actions and transform establishes her as the favoured party in a conflict that is pointed out by Chambers and Lal in their essays. Sohail, on the other hand, undergoes a reverse transformation and shows a lack of the capacity to analyze and

regret his perceived misdeeds thus personifying a stereotypical Islamist who lacks the humanistic qualities that might lessen the effect of his religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Sohail's conduct towards his fellow human beings, after his return from war and conversion towards *Tawhid*, remains without any emotional involvement. Even his marriage with Silvi and the hinted at alliance with Khadija are presented as religiously motivated acts. Maya sees Sohail's failures as a son, father, brother, friend, and good Bangladeshi citizen as the result of his devotion to God and dedication to his cause of preaching of Islam. This narrative strategy takes a grim view of Muslims' devoution to God and presents the one-dimensional view of the religious experience of the Muslims.

This marginalization of the voice of believing and practicing Muslims like Sohail within the novel testifies to the presence of Muslim *differend*. Sohail, despite being an orator of exceptional qualities, is given little space to present his devotion to God and his group Tablighi Jamaat from the position of his faith. He remains largely silent in the novel. His actions and words are narrated and interpreted by his secular sister, Maya, who considers adherence to the values of secular rationalism as a test of her character despite occasionally feeling the pull of the religion.

4.3 The *Differend* between Western Canon and Muslim Practices

In this section, I explore how the value judgement system of liberal humanism putatively enshrined in Euro-American literary canon serves as benchmark to assess the social conduct of the believing and practicing Muslims in *The Good Muslim.* The figure of insensitive and cruel Muslim portrayed in this text bears similarities to the figure of zahid or an orthodox Muslim that recurs in many South Asian literatures. In the introductory part of this dissertation, I have traced the inception and repeated occurrence of this demonized figure of the Muslim in the earliest Indo-Anglian imaginative literature as well as in Urdu ghazal and short stories. Sohail's strained interpersonal relations as delineated in Anam's novel reinforce this stereotype of an extremist Muslim. His 'leaning towards God' amounts to forfeiture of pluralism and embracing of intolerance. This shift in his behaviour is stressed through many incidents in the novel. In an incident, Sohail burns the books written by Rainer Maria Rilke and Nathanial Hawthorne, the much liked writers of his youth before his turn towards religion. Maya longs for Sohail to return his old self, characterized by love of Western canonical texts

and music. Sohail's persistence upon the 'path of Allah' causes disappointment for Maya and his other friends. Love for Western literature and music becomes a touchstone of Sohail's character in Maya's value judgement system. Its presence in one's life speaks of the pluralistic and tolerant outlook on life. The book burning incident reminds the reader of the public burning of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in Bradford by the enraged Muslim students. Maya regrets Sohail's renunciation of allegiance to Western art and conversion towards Allah and Quran. In response to this, Maya "had turned away when he had leaned towards God, taken it personally, as though he had done it to offend her" (Anam, *The Good Muslim* 17). The altercation between secular and religious selves seeps into filial bonding and transgression of some moral code by Sohail reifies as a divisive boundary between the brother and the sister.

Sohail and Maya's opposing attitude towards (usually Euro-American canonical) books reveals another divide between Islamism secular humanism of those with secularist leanings. The love for western art and literature bears hostile relation with the extremist Muslimness which exhibits an antagonism towards anything artistic. Maya's love for art urges her to prevent Sohail from destroying his books. She hopes that the books liked by Sohail in his university life would help revive Sohail's secular spirit. The secularist, heretic, and transgressive Maya, a doctor of medicine, keeps her faith in the character building ability of famous Euro-American writers and their works. It is notable that she fails to show any sustained interest in Quran and other religious practices that other members of her family and community perform. Her sole hope amidst rising extremism remains entrenched in ability of the western classics to humanize the individuals and the society.

Before his religious turn, Sohail is hailed as a model Bangladeshi youth by her because of his love for Bangladesh's freedom as well as for Ibsen's Hedda and Nora; for "Lawrence, Fitzgerald. *The Scarlet Letter*" (250). Maya recounts her brother's merits, in these words: "He loved outcast heroines, Lily Bart and Hester Prynne and Moll Flanders. The Rilke, she knew, he had stolen from the university library" (241). She also thinks nostalgically about his liking for "Dante…Jimmy Hendrix and John Lennon" (250). Sohail's insensitiveness towards the needs of his loved ones then seems to have emerged as a result of his distancing himself from Western literature and music. Maya highlights Sohail's indifference towards the severe illness of his mother and neglect of his six-year

old son's suffering by excoriating his religiously inspired otherworldliness. In Maya's view, Sohail's turning toward Islam at the expense of the welfare of his mother and son amounts to being an 'absurdity', 'ugliness', and 'cruelty'(83). She wishes to wean him off these vices and desires that:

> He would see himself reflected through her eyes… [.] Cracks would appear in his belief, his faith would be shaken-not in the Almighty, she would not wish to take that away from him (or perhaps she did, but she was not willing to admit it), but in whatever force had taken him from her and delivered up a stranger. (83)

It becomes evident that Maya holds her outlook on social relations and the place of religion in them as the normative towards which she aspires to draw Sohail. Her ambiguity towards shattering Sohail's faith in Almighty or the alienating 'force' which reflects a temporary schism in her personality is criticized by her as betrayal of her ideals. This scrupulousness projects her as a feeling and developing being and reinforces by contrast Sohail's one-dimensional and insensitive Muslimness. Although, Sohail's neglect of his mother and son has not been mandated by God or the 'force', her hostility remains directed at them for alienating him from his duties towards close relations. In other words, Maya seems to suggest that Sohail's diversion from Western art and literature somehow is responsible for his devotion to Allah and neglect of his filial duties.

Tablighi Jamaat and its members come under Maya's spotlight whom she holds to be fundamental restrictive forces. She prefers the religion of Bangladeshi tribal people over Sohail's Islamism. Expressed through "love-infused songs" (Chambers 146) and dedicated to Bon-Bibi, this music stands as foil to Sohail's faith that caused many deaths and violence during Bangladesh's war of independence. This religion rooted in materiality instead of otherworldly spirituality resonates with Maya's secularism that seeks to unite the people. Sohail's religion, on the other hand, "could be so easily turned to cruelty" (Anam 158). The novel suggests that everything the upstairs people do is fulfillment of some injunction of Islam. Thus the actions of Sohail, Khadija, and other members of the Jamaat that "Maya had heard on the news… was the biggest gathering of Muslims after the pilgrimage to Mecca" (Anam 80) are depicted as an example of their insensitiveness towards other fellow beings.

Another cruel aspect of religion that comes under Maya's spotlight is Islamic punishments for different crimes. This system figures as cruel and particularly discriminatory towards women. In *The Good Muslim*, this themes surfaces through a story that bears direct relevance to the main narrative concern of the book. Nazia's punishment for giving birth to a baby that "looks like a Chink…with flat nose" (23) is fixed as "one hundred and one lashes" (23). Although the verdict comes from the local village committee, the manner of punishment to be doled out to Nazia refers to Islamic *sharia* by devising punishment with lashes. This reference towards lashes is another feature of Islamic Sharia that figures regularly in Anglophone South Asian fiction that deals with Muslims and their differences with other communities. Its recurrence serves to accentuate cruelty of Islamic system of justice and implicates Islam as a religion in the polemics of humanism and cruelty.

All these negotiations take place, according to Anam's own admission made in her interview with Finnerty, within a wider debate about what qualities define a 'good Muslim'. Claire Chambers praises Anam for moving "away from binary good/bad Muslim perspectives that pervade recent cultural commentary" (*Imagining Muslims* 147), and states that she makes difficult for the reader to identify a 'good Muslim' in the novel. The epithet, 'good Muslim' in the novel is used by the Huzoor when he praises Silvi, Sohail's late wife, during a sermon. The term has deep ironical overtures when viewed critically. Silvi is held responsible by Rehana and Maya for neglect of Zaid shown by his Sohail. Maya believes it is Silvi "who had finally brought the end of his [Sohail's] old self" (Anam 174). Earlier in the text, Maya suggests that it is Sohail's religious indoctrination at the hands of Tablighi Jamaat that is responsible for his indefensible behavior. Maya considers Silvi to be dogmatic and fundamentalist. Silvi seems to express Maya's idea of a bad Muslim whose corrupting influence has sucked in Sohail, once a pluralist and fervent nationalist youth. Her only positive trait that is mentioned in the text is her playing Ludo with Zaid and the promise she makes with her son to send him to school. The 'good' of the title when applied to Sohail, Silvi, and their fellow Tablighis assumes ironical dimensions and seems to hint that the really 'good Muslims are those who are free of the vices epitomized by Sohail and the group he belongs to.

Maya's ironical estimation of Silvi's preaching which was "about everything there was to know about being a Muslim. God, men, morality" (Anam 22) highlights the self-righteous bigotry of Silvi. Silvi preaches Islam to the congregations of Muslim women. Her character embodies all the negative qualities of an Islamist which come from practicing Islam literally. Maya considers her to be a wily and manipulative character. Maya "knew that whatever direction her brother might be taking, it would be Silvi who pressed him further along the journey; after all, Silvi had come to her own conclusions about the Almighty" (175). Sohail's reverting towards Islamic ways entails not only renunciation of pluralistic and tolerant ways of life but also a betrayal of erstwhile mesmerizing and charismatic qualities of oration and leadership.

Silvi's fundamentalism and imposing character are related with Allah and made out to be backed by his will. Maya believes that Silvi's manipulative power over Sohail is backed up by Allah. When Sohail's departure from her life seems imminent, Maya considers this to be the result of Silvi's influence upon his life. She muses that "Silvi's hold on him was too strong, and she had Almighty to back her up. A formidable foe" (242). Maya sees Silvi and God working in collusion to taker brother away from her. Therefore, she enlists God as her foe along with Silvi and the upstairs people in her struggle for keeping her brother to her. She is driven by exigencies of role of a self-appointed leader who is driven by the desire to keep Bangladesh's secularism intact. Just like Silvi who pretends to know everything about men, God, and morality, she is convinced that a secular Bangladesh is panacea to all the evils plaguing the nation after the war.

Maya considers Silvi to be responsible for corrupting Sohail's pluralism and conversion to *Tawhid*: Oneness of God. She imagines Sohail repeating Prophet Muhammad's companion Bilal's words to Silvi who suffered all kinds of atrocities by the Umayyad but refused to recant his belief in the 'One'(Anam, *The Good* 176). She thinks Sohail's almost hypnotic reply to Silvi that shows that the oneness of God "dealt the final blow" in wresting Sohail from his family and friends (176). Thus Sohail's embrace of *Tawhid* is regarded as his ultimate surrender and failure by Maya. Sohali's acceptance of *Tawhid* and forfeiture of plurality in his sermons and behaviour is described as an example of narrowing down of his worldview:

> The sermons continued, but they were no longer about the many faces of God. There was only

> one. One message. One Book. The world narrowed. Curtains between men and women. Lines drawn in sand. And Silvi, coated in black, reigned in her brother's heart. (Anam 178-9)

Maya mourns the loss of a pluralist vision of the religion with 'many faces of God' and rues its usurpation by an unrelenting single one. Sohail and Silvi on the other hand believe in oneness of God. Maya nostalgically recalls Sohail's speeches in which he quoted from all the major religions of the world. She attacks the preaching repertoire of Islamist like Silvi, Sohail, Huzoor, and upstairs people, hinted in the above block quote for its oneness of everything. Maya's implicit condemnation of this foundational concept of the Muslims, *Tawhid*, reveals her preference for a pluralist religion. As *The Good Muslim* narrates the events of the book through Maya's consciousness, the secularist and pluralist notions of life become the normative that reduce the expression of faith in *Tawhid* to absurdity, insensitivity, or even cruelty. Maya's views about the negative effects of Islam upon Sohail's character and behavior are endorsed by his mother as well. Rehana expresses resentment towards Sohail's disregard of her and others in these words: "For him, it is the afterlife that matters" (Anam 22). Rehana, like Maya, seems to suggest a link between Sohail's Islamism and neglect of his mother.

Anam's *The Good Muslim* brings into contact with each other different versions of the Muslim engaged in a polemic with each other. It is noticeable there is no non-Muslim character in the novel. Even if *The Good Muslim* does not clearly identify a 'good Muslim', it excludes any possibility of considering Sohail and Silvi and their fellow Tablighis as belonging to this category. Rehana seems to have come close to embody Anam's concept of being a 'good Muslim'. This reading of the novel becomes possible when her role is taken into consideration in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*. Claire corroborates this estimation of the character of Rehana when she considers Rehana as "being the two novels' most likely candidate for the title of 'good Muslim'" (*Imagining Muslims* 149). Rehana not only performs religious rituals but also shows a syncretic and forbearing character. She is not rigid in her behaviour and shows certain amount of flexibility towards precepts and rituals of Islam. Thus in Chambers' view "Rehana's moderate ethos" reflect the true spirit of Islam that rejects "excess and [puts] emphasis on balance" (149). Rehana's candidature as being the good Muslim because of her moderation puts her in contestation for this label with Sohail and brands him as a 'bad Muslim' for being immoderate and failing to strike a balance between religious and familial duties.

It is apparent that Rehana reflects a moderate ethos regarding quotidian religious practices and social interaction with fellow human beings. She accepts Sohail and Maya's revolutionary spirit and aversion to (Islamic) religion in *A Golden Age* as openheartedly as she does Sohail's 'leaning towards God' in *The Good Muslim* emblematized in his embrace of Tablighi Jamaat. Before this turn towards God, Sohail is allowed to articulate his cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism through reading of scriptures of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Sikhism. But after his conversion to one religion, i.e. Islam, Sohail comes to embody almost all the stereotypical traits of a Muslim believing in basic creeds of Islam the foremost among them the notion of *Tawhid*: oneness of God. It is this figure of the Muslim believing in and living his life according to dictates of *Tawhid* that seems to have been demonized and marginalised in *The Good Muslim.* Maya recalls the time nostalgically when Sohail "recited words from Torah, the Gita, the Bible. He praised the prophets of old, Ram and Odysseus, Jesus and Arjun, the Budha and Guru Nanak" (Anam 166). But as a result of 'narrowing' of his vision, to use Maya's term, he shuns this eclecticism and embraces monotheism of restrictive Islam.

Anam's text implicates Tablighi Jamaat in the question of radicalizing the youth of Bangladesh. Sohail's turn towards God through his adherence with Tablighi Jamaat has been presented as hardening of his human impulses and embrace of fundamentalism. Although Chambers refutes the possibility of Sohail's connections with terrorism, but mentions the scrutiny of Tablighi Jamaat's links with terrorism by British authorities. This scrutiny was prompted by the fact that "Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer were said to have worshipped at the (Tablighi) Markazi Mosque in Dewsbury before leading the 7/7 attacks in London" (Chambers, *Imagining Muslims* 150-1). Anam's choice of a radical Muslim character with considerable influence at its local branch results in the establishing connections between radicalization and terrorism. Although the book avoids mentioning of any such connection, but the extra-fictional reality brought into discussions of critical interpretations of fictional world more than suggest these links.

Anam's text emphasizes the "siblings' ideological differences over religion which gradually begin to mirror the more extreme ends of the secular-religious divide in the national imaginary of Bangladesh" (Lal 12). Maya's sense of identity is rooted in her

"ideological commitment to secularism" (12). Holding strictly on to her own sense of the self, she tries to wean Sohail off the religion. The book describes her secularism in these words:

> Maya had taught herself away from faith. She had unlearned the surahs her mother had recited aloud, forgotten the soft feather of air across her forehead when Ammoo whispered a prayer and blew the blessing out of her mouth. She had erased from her memory all knowledge of the sacred. (Anam, *The Good* 205)

Maya has acquired her secular self through conscious effort and seems determined to hold on to it. Throughout the book, she remains engaged in a conflict with expressions of religiosity by different characters. She resents the use of Arabic greetings (Allah Hafiz), expressions of praise of Allah (Alhamdulillah) and other traditional ways of Muslim social interaction. Anam's novel thus enacts a *differend* between the self-righteous secularism of Maya and perceived radical Islamism of Sohail. Both of these parties refuse to forfeit their ideological stance pointing towards the irresolvability of their differences. In representation of this dispute, however, Anam seems to decide the *differend* in favour of the secular and rational.

4.4 The *Differend* of Muslim Pedagogy

In my dissertation, I have claimed that the tension between rational and irrational attitude towards everyday phenomena constitutes another instance of *differend*. Secular and humanist characters often evince a rational attitude towards their fellow human beings and crises in their life. On the other hand, the Islamist characters seem to have abandoned the use of reason when making choices. Maya and Sohail represent this binary through their interaction with others and in their personal choices. Anam's book stresses the irrationality of Sohail, his colleagues, and other Islamist characters' acts and thoughts. This irrationality is foregrounded through Islamists' strict views about choices of dress and recreational items. Maya tells Zaid that his "father might not allow" him to wear pant-shirt as school uniform (Anam 38). Sohail's supposed objection is voiced by Maya and not by Sohail in the novel. Nowhere, he suggests that he would not allow his son to wear pant-shirt. His anticipated objection to this article of modernity, seems to have been actuated by his irrationalism and narrow-minded religiosity when read together with other objections that Maya expects him to make. For example Maya thinks that it would be "out of question" to present toys to Zaid who is about to leave home to

join a Madrassa (171). These two themes of resisting modern and secular education and of not allowing the children to play with toys are often discussed in many Anglophone South Asian novels which take up the theme of Islamic fundamentalism.

In Anam's novel, Sohail and his fellow Tablighis represent this orthodox facet of Islamic faith. This orthodoxy is brought to the fore through many incidents of the novel. Sohail who has "given up Ghalib and dear, dear Shakespeare"[9] expresses his irrational side when he tells Maya that for his son, Zaid, "School is out of the question" (Anam 83). Anam suggests that Sohail's renunciation of Ghalib and Shakespeare and other Euro-American writers and their books might be the reason for his objection to Zaid's education at a school. This decision lands his son into a religious school, a Madrassa. His education and stay at the Madrassa is depicted as monotonous routine and filled with abuse, both physical and psychological. The teachers at Madrassa are described as cruel and inhuman beings who routinely commit sexual violence upon very young students. The portrait of life at the Madrassa is clichéd and stereotypical with its cruel and sodomist teacher, the Huzoor, and a large number of abused students including Zaid. Sohail's insensitive decision of selecting religious education over the secular one for his son plays an important role in bringing about the tragic end for Zaid and Maya. Zaid runs away from the Madrassa after experiencing physical abuse at the hands of the Huzoor. He, however, is sent back to it, during the period Maya remains at hospital with her mother. When, later, he is rescued by Maya he drowns himself in the river leaving a lasting sense of loss and regret for Maya.

Madrassa, the basic unit of Islamic education, is regarded as a hostile establishment by Maya which undermines the promise the modern education offers Maya wishes for her nephew. The physical molestation Zaid undergoes at Madrassa by the Huzoor, a generic name for Muslim religious leader, and by other teachers implicates *deen* (Islamic faith) in perpetration of malpractices against the defenseless students. The narrator establishes connection through Huzoor's promise to Sohail that his son "will be instructed in the way of *deen*, he will not be tempted by the modern life" (Anam 172). Just like cruel and inhuman Islamists of Tablighi Jamaat flocking Sohail's house, the madrassa becomes a part of irrational Muslim way of life which effects badly not only its followers but also those who come into contact with them. Maya seems to believe that all a Madrassa has to offer is the physical abuse, the poor quality and paucity of food, and

indoctrination in extremist aspects of Islam.

Thus, Anam's *The Good Muslim* presents a stereotypical image of Islamic Madrassa where very young boys are molested by their teachers regularly. This regularity is hinted at by the reaction of the old students of Madrassa to Zaid's arrival there. The book also establishes connections between Huzoor's abuses of the minor boys with the divine will. The suggestion to this connection is made by Zaid's musing of his abuse by the Huzoor:

> My father took me across the river and he told the Huzoor, he is in your hands now and Allah's. The Huzoor takes my hand. He put my hand on his heat. His whip is a snake. His snake is whip. Hands on the heat. In the Huzoor's hands. In Allah's hands. (Anam 195)

Articulated through the voice of a neglected minor boy of an Islamist father, Zaid's fright not only incriminates his father and delinquent Huzoor but also Allah whose physicality is suggested through Huzoor's hand, whip, and snake. It is noticeable here that Anam's book almost entirely focalized through Maya, undergoes a narrative shift in this small chapter consisting of one page where to accentuate the enormity of the act of molestation, the narration of physical abuse is filtered through Zaid's consciousness. The innocent consciousness of a minor puts the Islamic education system of Madrassas under spotlight by linking the individual acts with the value system and its creator: Allah.

A few lines before this musing, Zaid's consciousness drifts towards Zaid, an orphan and a Companion and adopted son of the Prophet. Zaid relates himself with Prophet and his adopted son. These references, to the orphanhood of Prophet and his adopted son, further strengthen the links between Zaid's abuse and the Islamic way of life that Zaid's father chooses for himself and his son. Maya's stress on Zaid's education at a secular school presents a foil to this abusive system of education. The fate Zaid meets vindicates Maya's opinion about the abuse the students of Islamic Madrassas might face. Although *The Good Muslim* traverses some of the threats faced by students of Madrassas, its narrative falls short of presenting a nuanced view of this extensive network of Islamic education system. Moreover, myopic vision and religious extremism of the Islamists in Anam's text seem to have come from the lineage extending back to the figure of a *Zahid*, the pious one, who stands in for the anti-modernity and narrowness of vision in Urdu *ghazal* and fiction. In the novel, the same figure appears with the appendages which are routinely attached to him/her and the Muslim way of life. Sohail

and Huzoor seem to be a continuation of this negative figure of the irrational, orthodox, and extremist Muslims whose ideology Sajjad Zaheer and his colleague at *Angare* undertook to struggle against. Anam's novel, then, belongs to this tradition of anti-clerisy writings of South Asian literary tradition. It rehearses all those tropes that feature with an uncanny regularity in secular tradition of literary writings of Indian subcontinent. Maya represents the heretic, secular, atheist, and non-conformist protagonist figure of this literary tradition. It is through her consciousness that the text proffers its skepticism about veil, use of Islamic greetings and farewells, and the Islamic education at Madrassas.

4.5 The *Differend* of the Book: The Qur'an

After discussing the treatment of *Tawhid*, Tablighi Jamaat, and Madrassa in Anam's text in the earlier parts of this chapter, in this section what view of the source of Islamic code of life is presented by this book. *The Good Muslim* also brings Qur'an into the debates about good and bad Muslims. Maya squarely lays blames at the feet of the Qur'an for changing the path of her brother from his erstwhile religious pluralism to monism of Islam. She re-echoes James' estimation of the negative influence of the Qur'an upon the lives of Muslims. James, in *The Wasted Vigil*, blames Qur'an for violence committed by the Muslims and tells David that every other verse in the Qur'an is a call to arms. Maya sees Sohail's indifference towards his fellow beings as a result of his study of Qur'an. She resents not only Qur'an's influence upon Sohail's life but also is dismayed by the religiosity of her acquaintances that, in her view, is becoming too visible in their dealings with each other. The use of Arabic words and phrases for salutations and expressions of certain feelings irks her. She feels disappointed when her friend, Saima, uses the Arabic word for praising God, "Alhamdulillah" (53). Similarly she objects to vegetableman's use of "Allah Hafiz" instead of "Khoda Hafiz" (53). Society's shift from 'Khoda', a generic name for deity used by other Abrahamic religions towards 'Allah', a name specific to Muslims' God , is viewed as loss of essential character of traditional Bengali society.

Maya also expresses strong hatred towards divine determinism which is an essential part of Islamic faith. One of her disagreements with Sohail remains over his resigned and predeterministic attitude towards practical matters of life. Sohail's attitude towards their mother's illness is depicted as deterministic. Maya expresses her hatred for

this divine determinism that many characters showcase in their communication with each other. For example, when Mr. Rahman, Rehana's friend, says that Rehana's life is written on her forehead, the narrative voice goes like: "Maya hated, more than anything, the forehead explanation of life" (Anam 114). This contrasts with the beliefs of many characters in the novel, except those whose ideology about life aligns with Maya's. Her whole pursuit in *The Good Muslim* seems to be characterized by this hatred towards the expressions of Islamism by ordinary Bangladeshis in daily affairs of their lives. It amounts to, in her view, the betrayal of the ideals of the War of Liberation the people of West Bengal had fought against their East Pakistani oppressors. This hold of Islamism upon the daily lives of the people is regarded as the return of the very oppression they fought against.

Maya's differing attitude towards two avatars of Sohail, revolutionary Sohail and Islamist Sohail is determined by Sohail's relation with Qur'an and its teachings. As long as Sohail remains a revolutionary and criticizes Qur'an and creeds of Islam, he is regarded as a hero of the Bengali people by Maya. But as soon as signs of Islamism appear in his personality he starts to be regarded a villain. Maya approves of Sohail's actions when she thinks that as a revolutionary Sohail "believe[s] that the Book[Qur'an] was part of the problem…[b]ecause people were attached to the Book, or their idea of the Book, more than to each other, or to their neighbours, or to their country" (92). Here, Maya's evaluation of the effects of Islamism upon Sohail's conduct towards his fellow human beings creates a binary between the notions of allegiance of Muslims towards Qur'an and their duties towards other human beings. This binary highlights the anti-humanistic and anti-rationalist aspects of Muslim behaviour. This narrative strategy of creating an irresolvable difference between principals of rationalist humanism and religiosity of the Muslim characters may be noticed in novel's critique of Sohail's social mis/conduct with other characters. Both sides of the binary are reflected by Sohail's conduct during and after the war. As long as Sohail remains skeptical of the Book, his humanism remains intact. It is, however, the shift in his attitude towards the Book that sows the seeds of indifference in him towards his neighbours, country, and those related to him, Maya seems to believe.

Maya's conduct throughout the novel except for some vacillations between faith and disbelief remains wary of the Islamic beliefs of Sohail and others. Her

conscious effort to unlearn faith indicates that she holds it below her dignity to take consolation in it. She adores Sohail and other revolutionaries as long as they "believed that faith was beneath them, a consolation for simpler lower minds" (Anam, *The Good* 93). But Sohail's leaning towards God and the Book given to him by her mother is considered as Sohail's descent towards something degenerate. In Maya's view, everything negative that happened to Sohail "could be traced to Sohail's first steps towards God, beginning with the Book that she[Rehana] gave him…"(93).[10] This passage instead of hinting at the culpability of the Book for Sohail's degeneration directly and squarely lays all the blame at Book's feet for the undesirable change in Sohail. The Book seems to have divested Sohail of his humanism and made him an indifferent son, brother, father, and neighbour.

Anam's novel also blames Islam as a religion for the cruelty perpetrated by Pakistani soldiers against the Bengali people during Bangladesh's War of Liberation. In *A Golden Age*, Anam portrays these acts of violence, rape, and murder as motivated by an urge to protect Islam. Part of her resentment towards the increasing Islamization of Bangladeshi society springs from this cruel use of religion. The source of both cruelties perpetrated by Pakistani soldiers and insensitiveness shown towards their fellow Bengalis by Islamists remains the religion: Islam. It is first presented as the source of inspiration for brutalities of Pakistani soldiers and then as a motivating force for committing oppression on Bangladeshis. Before his conversion to the path of God, in Maya's view, Sohail "had been the opposite of a religious man. He had laughed and joked about it, and he had been angry at a religion that could be so easily turned to cruelty" (Anam 158). This facet of Sohail's character before his embrace of Tablighi Jamaat is characterized by positive attributes of humane conduct towards others and anger at the potential cruelty of religion, Islam. His loss of sense of humour, Maya suggests, is triggered by his acceptance of religion of his opponents with a tendency to turn towards cruelty and inhumanness.

Maya seems to hold allegiance to the principles of secularism as a barometer test of a person's character and an antidote to the negativities unleashed by adherence to the principles of a potentially cruel religion. Throughout the novel, she not only struggles to preserve these principles in herself but also labours to inculcate them in others who come into contact with her. She terms Sohail's ideas about religion as "religious mumbo-

jumbo" (Anam, *The Good* 126-7). Though she feels attraction towards the religion and comes close to realizing that religion is "an essential human need, hers as much as his [Sohail's]", she resolves not "[to] become one of those people who buckle under the force of a great event and allow it to change the metre of who they are" (126). She later regrets her weakness that triggered her visits upstairs as she feels that "she had betrayed something in herself by accepting the solace it had given her. She carried a small wedge of guilt, for her own falsity, the fraud of it" (212). While allegiance to diktats of secularism seems to confer some nobility upon the character of an individual, the belief in the 'religious mumbo-jumbo' is tantamount to falsity and fraud in Maya's estimation.

At the beginning of the novel, Maya views the doings of the upstairs people as suspicious. She blames Sohail and his colleagues living at upstairs for Zaid's lies and treachery. She shows her displeasure at how they make a minor boy labour for them. Later she, however, finds peace in the place occupied by upstairs people as "[h]ere in this room, was the only place she could believe, really believe, that her mother would live" (Anam 150). During Ammoo's disease, she becomes a regular "visitor upstairs, sitting on the fringes of their strange world, transfixed by its rituals, the air of calm and certainty that surrounded them" (156-7). At another occasion, on reciting the Aytul Kursi, a verse from Qur'an, with her mother, "Maya fe[els] relief flooding through her as she recited the prayer"(200). These spells of attraction towards faith are, however, short lived and motivated by her concern for the illness of her mother. She dismisses them as weakness in her character when she ruminates about them in her peaceful moments.

Maya's struggle with centripetal and centrifugal forces of faith is highlighted at another occasion in the novel. She tells her lover, Joy, about her experience of attraction towards faith and 'taleem' delivered at the rooftop of her house and states that "[i]t was-it felt like the only place in the world where I had hope she[Ammoo] wouldn't die"(Anam 218). But at the end of the novel she considers her act of spending afternoons with upstairs people as 'foolishness' and willing deceitfulness:

> Maya had allowed herself to be duped. All those afternoons she had spent, drunk on the possibility that there might be some other hand in her mother's illness, a divine hand she could manoeuvre with the help of Khadija and the jamaat. How could she have been so foolish? (Anam 264)

The moments of attraction toward the consolation of religion are short-lived and later

remembered as acts of insanity. She consciously resists the pull of faith to maintain her secular character. Indulging in religious rituals, like praying five times a day, is considered by her an act of unfairness. She refuses to pray one time a day as pleaded by her mother by saying that "I can't do that, Ma, it wouldn't be fair" (Anam 201). Maya's response to her mother's request again speaks of her resolve to keep her secularism intact. Conscious core of her identity as she visualizes it is constituted by ethos of secular way of life. Any digression from it, no matter how short or brief, tantamounts to betrayal of her own self. To protect her idealization of her self she not only refuses to indulge in any religious activity but also regrets the temporary moments of her indulgence.

Maya continues to interpret all phenomena around her in a scientific and rationalist manner. Another instance of this occurs when she helps Rokaya deliver her baby. Maya considers current form of human beings as a result of the evolutionary process started in what Maya calls "*little amphibian*" (Anam 238). She vociferates her belief in human evolution in these words: "Someone had to acknowledge the strangeness of this [human] soul, and the distance it had traversed, millions and millions of years, in order to be here" (238). This theme of evolution is also taken up by Anam in the third part of this Bengal trilogy, *The Bones of Grace* (2016). In this novel Zubaida Haq, the adopted child of Joy and Maya and a paleontologist, believes that a type of whale called Ambulocetus is distant ancestor of human beings. This is consistent with her rationalist and scientific view of the origin of the world and life in it. But it contradicts the Muslims belief in not only human but all kinds of life as divinely ordained phenomena. Judging from this position, Sohail's faith in the human fate and destiny appears to Maya to be irrational and even absurd. She contests this deterministic view of life and death, an essential part of Muslim faith held by Mrs. Rahman, Sohail, and other Islamists, at the end of the novel. She confesses her responsibility in Zaid's death to Sohail who rebuffs her by declaring that "'[o]nly God may choose the hour of a man's death'" (Anam 288). Her response to this conviction is expressed through the voice of third person narrator: "She didn't believe him" (288). Maya's belief in secularism and her training as a doctor of medicine may not admit of the possibility of divine control over bodily functions as well as over life and death.

In this chapter, I have analysed how some Islamic practices and rituals are delineated in Anam's *A Good Muslim.* I have noticed and pointed out that this novel

seems to posit that practicing (Muslim) religious rituals comes into conflict with individual's duties and responsibilities toward other human beings. Thus praying five times a day, keeping fast, and recitation and teaching of Qur'an by the Muslim characters is pitched against their duties towards other fellow human beings.[11] In this novel, the practicing Muslim characters, like Sohail, Silvi, and Khadija, usually, show indifference to their duties towards other fellow human beings.[12] Their disregard has been criticized and at times ridiculed not only by the narrative voice but also by the secularist characters in the novel. Maya imagines that Sohail would blame her for "not believing me when I turned to the Book, for mocking my allegiance to my faith, for attempting to lure me back to an old life…" (288). Although these accusations are not leveled against Maya by Sohail himself they, however, sum up a believing and practicing Muslim's resentments against secularists' attitude towards his/her expression of faith through religious practices and rituals. This mocking of religious allegiances of the Muslim figures is repeated in various forms. For example, at Sohail's birthday party Chottu, one of their friends, mocks Islamic ritual of praying five times a day. He advises Sohail "'to stand at the back yaar, [during the prayer] otherwise the other men will get turned on by your backside. All that squatting and leaning'" (Anam 164). Novel's protagonist, Maya, seems to believe that leading a religious life somehow seems outdated and a form of naivety that must be relinquished in favour of a more informed way of life.

Cara Cilano in her essay, "English-Language Fiction of Bangladesh" (2016) states that "[a]ny return characters make to their 'younger' selves frequently involves a condemnation of their own naivety" (66). In *The Good Muslim*, Maya desires Sohail to return to his 'younger' self that in her view belonged to the 'golden age' of Bengali struggle against West Pakistani occupiers of their land. Sohail, however, considers his old self characterized by naivety and resists Maya efforts to convert him to old ways of life. This dispute about the correct way of living between the siblings forms the central *differend* of Anam's novel. The difference represented by the Muslim figure of Sohail remains uncontainable within the value system and discourse of secular rationalism projected as solution to the problems plaguing the post-war Bangladeshi society.

4.6 Conclusion

Anam's *The Good Muslim* reflects its Protagonist's obsession with national history and Bangladeshi culture as distinct from that of Pakistan. Her intimate knowledge

and deep understanding of pre and post-war Bangladeshi society speaks of her preference for Bangladeshi (secularist) culture. As a result of her education largely in non-Muslim disciplines and her linking for forms of Western culture and art, her view of her native homeland seems to have coloured by the bias the West shows towards Islamic way of life and the Muslim difference. This bias is evident in *The Good Muslim*'s choice of the title with ironical overtures, its critical treatment of Muslim practices, and Tablighi Jamaat, one of the well revered Muslim proselytizing groups in the world.

The next chapter on Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* extends the discussion of the negative imaginings of the Muslim faith, religious creeds, and practices. Aslam, a Pakistani born novelist, lives in England after having moved there as a teenage boy**.** He, usually, writes about the problem of religious fundamentalism in native diasporic spaces inhabited by Pakistani Muslim community. His novel highlights a tension between fundamentalist and extremist version of Islam on one hand and a more tolerant and syncretic imagining of it on the other.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Mahmood Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. Doubleday, 2005 to understand how the West creates this distinction between the good and bad Muslims. Of particular interest Mamdani's discussion of Bush's rhetoric of 'us' and them.
[2] Bangladesh's Constitution describes it a secular state.
[3]Amertya Sen in *Arguementative Indian: writings on History, Culture Identity*, Penguin Books London, 2005 p. 289 quotes Abdul Haq to praise Akbar's as a Good Muslim. Anam's *The Good Muslim* evinces similar concept of being a good Muslim. Sohail's conversion from polytheism to monotheism is characterized as a shift towards being a bad Muslim. Anam here plays the role of Abdul Haq, whose words are quoted by Amertya Sen.
[4] Muhammad Ilyas, an Indian Muslim founded the Tablighi Jamaat in mid-1920s. This Jamaat now preaches about Islam all over the world.
[5] See Ulf Olsson's *Silence and Subject in Modern Literature: Spoken Violence* (Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan 2013) to understand the various manifestation of silence in modern literature.
[6] Hussain Muhammad Ershad was a military chief and ruler of Bangladesh from 1983 to 1990. His rule is characterized by violence, human rights violation, and Islamization of the Bangladeshi politics.
[7] For Anam's views on faith and her idea of good and bad Muslim see British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers(Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 143-153.
[8] Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*(Verso, 2005) shows how restrictive views of humanism contribute towards perpetuation of the oppressive systems.
[9] Along with Western writers, Ghalib is usually lionized by Anglophone South Asian fiction writers. Masood Ashraf Raja quotes Ghalib's *Dastanbui* in *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity 1857-1947*,(Oxford University Press 2010) . In the text Ghalib claims to be a 'half-Muslim'. It is his half-Muslimness that is cause of his celebration, by these writers, in my contention.
[10] Maya seems to reiterating the stance of Olivier Roy, presented in his book *Secularism Confronts Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2007) pp.56-68.
[11] Time and again Qur'an stresses the importance of delivering one's duties towards human beings before one's duties towards God. Anglophone South Asian fiction, usually creates this tension between duties towards God and human beings. This time worn strategy still works to demonize Muslims and Islam.
[12] Silvi bears close similarities with Kaukab, a demonized Muslim mother in Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004).

CHAPTER 5

THE CLASH OF UN/CIVILIZATIONS: THE *DIFFEREND* BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE WEST IN NADEEM ASLAM'S *THE WASTED VIGIL*

History is Allah working through man….You are not new to this: you are taking back what has always been yours.
Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil* 227

The heroes of East and West are slaughtering each other in the dust of Afghanistan.
Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil* 419

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I study Nadeem Aslam's third novel, *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), and analyze what view of the conflict between Islam and the West Aslam's book presents. Aslam consistently engages with the themes of Muslim extremism and terrorism and Western new/imperialism in his fiction. In his fiction (Western) notions of secular rationalism and liberal humanism seem to be engaged in a struggle against (Muslim) religious fundamentalism and bigotry. I examine how Aslam's portrayal of tension between these two seemingly antagonistic approaches to public and private life develops into an impasse. Aslam's fiction investigates this conflict, the *differend*, from the view point of a South Asian diasporic (Muslim) subject. In *The Wasted Vigil*, he sets out to confront the Taliban and their restrictive (Islamic) ideology and raises questions about West's role in the suffering and loss of human life in Afghanistan. This text incorporates real events from history of different times and places and connects them, through the musings or memory of the characters, with the main theme of the novel. This particular arrangement of events, linkages of phrases in Lyotardian terms, seems to present a lopsided picture of the situation n Afghanistan as well of Muslim faith. Though Aslam's novel problematizes the Western view of the Afghanistan and Muslim way of life, it gives an impression that it largely operates in Western assumptions about Islam and the Muslims.

Nadeem Aslam is a Pakistani born British novelist who writes about local and diasporic spaces, inhabited by South Asian Muslims. Their religious beliefs and their manifestation in everyday phenomena of their lived experience is the main concern of his writings. In an interview with Soumya Mukherjee he states that his mother, one of the main influences in his life, is a staunch and "practicing Muslim" (Aslam n.p). Aslam's father, Mian Mohammed, a communist poet, was a "member of the Progressive Writers Association writing under the pen-name of Wamaq Saleem" (Chambers, *British Muslim* 135). Fixing his mother as metonym for billions of "irrational" Muslim believers in Angels, djinns, Satan, the Judgement Day who ascribe each and every occurrence of human and material life to the will of God, he acknowledges in the same interview that "my ideas of decency, love, kindness, compassion were given to me first by my mother-this "'irrational' person was the one who laid down the first few layers in my consciousness of what it means to be a good person" (Aslam n.p). He further states that for him, however, the Garden of Eden and Jonah's stay in the body of a whale are only metaphors and not actual occurrences as mentioned in Muslim Holy text: The Qur'an. Aslam claims that it is the concerns of these more than one billion people (like his mother) that he writes about and that is how "politics enters the life of a writer, one of the ways he reveals his politics-by what or who he chooses not to see" (Aslam n.p).[1] Aslam, like Anam, claims that he is a political writer. This politics, by his own admission, performs the processes of exclusion and inclusion in his writings. Aslam's statement bears out, though in a quite a different context, Lyotard's view that narratives pursue certain ends through linking of phrases,[2] (events in Lyotard's conception and 'what or who he chooses not to see' in Aslam's words).

The themes that Aslam, usually, chooses in his fiction deal with extremism, conservatism, irrationalism, barbarism, and in-humanism of believing and practicing Muslims. Following the footsteps of the pioneers of Progressive Writers' Association, he, in his own estimation, takes on the clerisy and all it putatively stands for. "He says of the Taliban, 'although I may not have been able to stop you in real life, in my mind and my book you won't succeed in destroying this Buddha'" (qtd. in Chambers, *British Muslim* 139). This makes evident that Aslam's fiction, particularly, *The Wasted Vigil*, with a photo of half-buried face of a Buddha at the cover page, is a way of protesting the intolerance and extremism of the Taliban. Aslam's protest against and critique of Taliban and other hardliner Muslims, usually, slips into the unnuanced condemnation of some of

the foundational concepts of Islam. I examine this merger and analyze how the main concerns of Aslam's writings are present in *The Wasted Vigil.*

Aslam's fiction includes *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), *Leila in the Wilderness* (a short story) published in *Granta* (2010), *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013), and *The Golden Legend* (2017).These fictional works are the literary articulations of his perception of conflict between putative secularity and scientific rationality of the West and religious (Islamic) extremism and irrationality. Except for *Maps for Lost Lovers*, all of these stories are set in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Aslam, in an interview with Claire Chambers transcribed and published in *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*, states that he is an 'unbeliever' (152).[3] He also claims to be an unbeliever in his Essay "Where to Begin" published in *Granta Magazine*. Despite these claims, Aslam's work is anthologized, regularly, under the headings of Muslim writings. His representation of Islam and the Muslims is projected as an instance of inscription of Muslim voice at the global literary stage. In Aslam's fiction the usual stereotypical tropes of violation and denial of basic human rights (prohibition of education to Muslim girls; taboos on love; stoning and lynching of women on the charges of adultery; superstitious belief in the existence of djinns and Satan; cruel and murderous behavior of Muslim men towards women and religious minorities, so on so forth) repeatedly appear as the main concern of the writer. In so doing, he believes that he is inscribing the 'inner life' of his mother and the likes of her.

In his first novel, *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), set in a small town in Pakistan, he writes about the oppressive and restrictive force of religious narrow-mindedness, epitomized by a Muslim cleric. *Season of the Rainbirds* criticizes "Zia-ul-Haq's Islamizing regime" (Chambers, *British Muslim* 136). It is notable that one of the main thread of the narrative centres on an illegitimate love affair between a Deputy Commissioner and his Christian lover killed on the charges of blasphemy. *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), set in a fictional town Dasht-e-Tanhai in England, highlights the destructive forces unleashed by a cruel Muslim fanatic mother, Kaukab. In this novel, in Chambers' view "Aslam is unequivocal in his condemnation of superstitions associated with Islam, which harm many people, particularly women" (*British Muslim* 137).[4] In

Waterman's view, in this novel the tension exists between "two extremes" of Islamic orthodoxy and "godless communism" (10). Waterman further states that at one level, *The Maps for Lost Lovers* "is a 'clash of civilizations' novel, in Samuel Huntington's sense" (111).[5] In the novel, the "binary clash formula of traditional verses progressive is revealed as a complex aggregation of competing myths" (112). *The Wasted Vigil* explores in more details the ideological forces that sustain East/West binary. In this book, Aslam delineates the contours of the conflict between jihadist Islam and self-righteous West in the context of America's War on Terror.

Aslam's fiction is sometimes criticized for homogenization of billions of culturally and ideologically diverse Muslim population into larger categories of bigots, religious fanatics, and irrational persons. The presence of largely extremist Muslims in his novels creates an impression that the "existence [of ordinary Muslims] is discursively erased" (Merleau 89) by the strategic framing he employs in the process of representation. Although Aslam's fiction is regarded as voice of the Muslims, his relation with the Muslims and Islam remains nominal. The perspectives that he brings to study the practices and beliefs of the Muslims both challenge and corroborate the views of Islam as a religion offered by the anti-Islam writers like Rushdie, Amis, and Hitchens etc. Moore views Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* as "challenging multicultural and war-on-terror-affiliated discourses extant in twenty-first-century Britain" (Moore 3). Moore's statement about the ability of Aslam's *Maps* to challenge the discourse of multiculturalism points toward the uncontainable figure of the Muslim. Moore does not clarify whether this ability should be regarded as a merit or demerit of Aslam's novel for the articulation of the Muslim perspectives. His evaluation of book's power to challenge the discourses related to War on Terror, however, seems to celebrate its disruptive potential.

Aslam, however, avers that his novels are democratic in nature and present heterogeneous voices of his characters. His fiction clears some conceptual and physical space for the articulation of the concerns of the Muslims with regard to the West's treatment of them as terrorists. "By giving a voice to the different subalterns and disposed of Western society -Pakistani immigrants as in *Maps for Lost Lovers*-or Pakistani society with its strict ethnic, social, and religious stratification, Aslam performs fictional *kintsugi*" (Veyret 8).[6] *The Wasted Vigil* presents the usual concerns of Aslam's

fiction in the backdrop of Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and American War on Terror in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America in 2001. Veyret's evaluation of Aslam's *Maps* seems to have some relevance with the views on Muslim difference Aslam offers in *The Vigil*. The Muslim characters populating the pages of *The Vigil* seem to have aligned their sympathies on different axes. Their stratified thinking not only lends some credibility to Aslam's estimation of his own fiction as being democratic but also reflects an effort at *kintsugi* on the behalf of the writer. The demonized Muslim terrorists and war lords are seen to engage in a struggle to gain control over the lives of moderate Muslims. The presence of the West epitomized by a philanthropist British doctor and CIA agents, both good and bad, makes the novel more democratic but complicates the process of suturing over the differences Veyret Aslam performing in *The Maps*. In David Waterman's view, in *The Wasted Vigil* "identity is policed by the dominant competing powers, Taliban warlords or CIA" (*British Muslims* 9). It is this lack of agreement between opposing and competing forces claiming to represent different civilizations that may be termed as the *differend*. Aslam's proposed project of offering resistance to ideology of one of these parties in the differend, the Taliban, seems to have sided him with the other: the CIA or the West. It also speaks of the politics that works behind Aslam's decision to write about Taliban. "The choice of Afghanistan as the setting is also, of course, a declaration that the novel is inherently political" (Frawley 442). Not only the choice of Afghanistan as its setting and Taliban as its villains the politics of the book also plays out in the manner it delineates a conflict between varieties of Muslim faith and ideals of Western secularism, rationalism, and liberal humanism.

The book brings into contact in a British doctor Marcus' house a Russian girl (Lara) looking for her brother (Benedikt), an American and former CIA agent (David), a young Muslim terrorist (Casa), Marcus himself, settled in Afghanistan for many years. This house "functions as a microcosm of contemporary Afghanistan" (Waterman 87). The voices of these individuals "working from the same map" but extremely "diverse coordinates" (89) form the pivot of heterogeneity. The privileged point of view remains that of Marcus who has converted from Christianity to Islam only to be able to marry an Afghan Muslim woman, Qatrina. He, however, is a secularist, liberal humanist Westerner in his outlook. *The Wasted Vigil*, the result of a research trip by Aslam to Afghanistan (Chambers, *British Muslim* 148), brings into contact the rational secular and

liberal humanist voice with irrational and extreme religious tonalities ascribed to religiously minded Muslim characters like Casa and Bihzad. The resulting exclusivist claims of both sides create a *differend* between the two largely opposing discourses where rational secularist and liberal humanist discourse seems to have been given wider currency within the carefully crafted fictional spaces.

Marcus's house symbolizes as a 'contact zone' "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in a highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination" (Pratt 4). Configuration of these relations of dominance and subordination between Islamic and Western discourses, in Aslam's fiction, is politically motivated. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) traces the history of a wide variety of Western writers' collusion with European empires in creating and sustaining a particular image of the 'Oriental Other' and proves the Western scholarship to be not politically innocent or objective as secular liberal humanist discourse claims it to be.[7] Lyotard's theorizing in *The Differend* highlights how phrases (statements) from different discourses are linked together to claim authenticity and legitimacy and work to the suppression of certain voices which are denied articulation in rational and humanist discourse.

Lyotard's view posits the presence of mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in the process of representation. When applied to Aslam's fiction, this insight yields useful revelations. Aslam's view of current Islamic/Islamist codes of life and injunctions of Islam seems to attach a certain kind of inherent barbarity and savagery to them. It sees them as the antithesis of the principles of rationalism, secularism, and humanism.[8] Aslam, however, far from homogenizing all types of Muslim identities in the figure of an extremist Muslim offers different ways of being Muslim in a multicultural environment. Two types of Muslims populate pages of Aslam's fiction. The first type that bears the brunt of Aslam's critique is an orthodox, superstitious, cruel Muslim who professes that his/her actions are motivated by teachings, not distortion, of Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad.

The second type of Muslim is usually an atheist, secular Muslim with Marxist tendencies and skeptical of teachings of Islam and *Sunnah*. He is an outright unbeliever and a rational and humane Muslim who works as a foil to the first type. Being himself an unbeliever, Aslam's sympathies seem aligned with moderate, secularist, and rationalist

imaginings of Islam and Muslim identity. Aslam's imaginative representation of the Muslims and Islamic way of life, therefore, presents a conflicts between its moderates and orthodox forms. Aslam links together heterogeneous phrases from historical, anthropological, literary, political and ideological discourses and from widely different contexts to re/present a particular view of South Asian reality, which conforms to his political and ideological affiliations. The contours of Aslam's literary politics may be located in *The Vigil*. In this novel an extremist (Islamist) religious ideology is pitched against a tolerant, rational, and humanist discourse. These discourses give birth to relation of domination and submission in which one seems to enjoy a privileged position as compared to other. Extremist Muslim characters and their orthodox views about rites, beliefs of Islam and Qur'an are scrutinized to reveal their destructive effects upon the lives of others. On the other hand, the pretentions of Western ideals of democracy, secularism, rationalism, and humanism are challenged for their disregard of the local reality. Divergence from these ideals by the Western characters, however, is not described as the failure of these ideals per se but only as an 'aberration' on the part of delinquent individuals. Priyamavada Gopal states that *The Wasted Vigil* "draws most directly on familiar Anglo-American perspectives on the region ("Of Capitalism" 23).[9] Although Gopal's statement contains some truth about *The Vigil*'s treatment of the extremist Muslim ideology, it ignores book's portrayal of different shades of Muslimness which challenge the monolithic assumptions of Anglo-American discourses on Muslim identity.

5.2 The *Differend* of Analysis and Elision

Anglophone South Asian fiction, much eulogized in Western academic and literary circles for re/presenting objective South Asian reality and almost equally as much criticized by some critics for distorting it, is largely a political genre. These contradictory evaluations of the same genre are caused by the fact that it deploys a selection of events and their (teleological) sequence which reflect the principles of Lyotard's theorization of linking of (disparate) phrases in the presentation of reality. A certain pattern of detailed analysis of certain type of events, characters and their concerns, motives, lines of argument and elision (suppression) of the others' is another cause of its widely different reception by different critics. The perspectives of Western, Westernized or Western-educated South Asian characters or of those, skeptic of religious

and cultural orthodoxy of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladesh and other South Asian spaces, usually, dominate the narrative voice or consciousness in this genre. Their views about literature, politics, culture, anthropology, and religion reflect a heterogeneous reality of the region. While this discourse poses challenges to the normative Western perspectives on South Asian region it is seen to establish a new register of normative discourse. This privileged discourse, usually, relegates to margins (almost to the point of invisibility) through critique or ridicule the dissident voices articulated from orthodox and extremist religious positions.

This impression is created by the strategic choices different writers make to represent South Asian reality. The strategic framing of *The Vigil* may be broken into two large categories: analysis and elision. The analysis of motives of certain actions is selectively allowed to privileged voices whereas the demonized voices (of usually Muslim characters) are elided. Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* employs this narrative strategy in the presentation of the conflict between terrorist Casa and an ensemble cast of Western or westernized characters. It is through the representation of social interaction among these characters that the book reveals its narrative strategy. In its critique of the Islamic extremism it is, however, noticeable that it presents the behavior of the delinquent Islamic characters as embodiment of the Islamic teachings of Koran and the *Sunnah* (practical behavior) of the Prophet Muhammad. The book creates this impression because terrorists and Muslim war lords, usually, defend their objectionable acts by invoking some verse of Qur'an or saying of Prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, violations of civil and ethical code committed by Western characters during social, political and military engagement in Afghanistan are presented as individual acts of the characters and are not ascribable to the value systems the West claims to represent. They are instead described as 'aberrations' of ideals of secularism, democracy, rationality, and liberalism.

In such representation of the conflict, the *differend*, the Western or Westernized characters are allowed a considerable discursive space to justify (or mitigate the effects of) their acts of violence or criminal behavior. Whereas the Muslim characters' negative portrayal is further strengthened by the irrational justifications they offer for their 'barbaric and inhumane' acts. This strategy of re/presenting the extremist Muslim characters in negative colours may be seen as a fulfilment of Aslam's 'mission'

to confront the Taliban and (Muslim) terrorists through his fiction as admitted by himself in his interview with Mukherjee. The selection of events to be narrated in detail or those to be mentioned in passing and the manner of their presentation further corroborate Aslam's estimation of his fiction as a discursive battle against the Taliban.

It seems obvious that Marcus and David in *The Vigil* represent moral and ethical core of the novel largely set in a small village in Afghanistan. In the present narrative time of the book, both of them stand for the values of humanism, tolerance, and sacrifice. They seem to preside over the *differend* that is unfolding before them in the form of a conflict between Western forces, represented by James Palantine and Taliban militants represented by Casa. David Town's first tryst with South Asian reality comes in the backdrop of the siege of American Embassy in Islamabad in November 1979 when it was invaded by "a mob fired by visions of a true Islamic society, shouting, "'Kill All Americans!' 'President Carter the Dog Must Die!'" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 98). These murderous slogans of a mob consisting of a few Pakistanis, are, however, later made to reflect the opinion of all the Muslims living all over the world: "the rumour spread through all the cities of Islam-from country to country, continent to continent- that the killings in the Kaaba were carried out by Americans as a blow against Islam, perhaps in retaliation for the Tehran embassy siege" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 99). The incident of the siege is narrated as David's recollection and does not bear any direct relevance with the main concern of the narrative. It, however, reveals book's narrative strategy that mentions many such events from recent and past history in which Muslim individuals or countries come into conflict with the West. This single incident connects Iranian siege of American Embassy in Tehran with the siege of Kaaba by "a delusional fundamentalist" with his followers, and Attack on American Embassy in Islamabad. The omniscient authorial perspective on two different events and the similarity it detects in the murderous reaction of the Muslims all over the world ('cities of Islam-from country to country, continent to continent') speaks of book's narrative pattern that is repeated at many places in it.

David remains inside the embassy threatened for his life until, finally, he is rescued by Fedella, one of the ISI operatives who constitute the rescue team. David is, however, amazed by President Carter's gratitude expressed in a telephone call to "Pakistan's corrupt and brutal military dictator", for his help in saving American lives

(103). Narrator's voice justifies this act of American president in these words: "In the near future, upon joining the CIA, David would know that the explanation for some events existed in another realm, a parallel world that had its own considerations and laws" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 103). This pattern of making light of Western moral and political lapses and enlarging upon the individual Muslim acts of violence on to all Muslims of the world forms the basic paradigm of *The Vigil'*s representational politics. It is revealed through different narrative techniques the book employs. On one occasion, Marcus ruminates about the causes of destruction of Afghanistan and concludes that many countries of the world including America, Russia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia were responsible for it. Although his views about distributive responsibility might be regarded as his ability to remain neutral, yet it obfuscates the contemporaneity of the acts of violence being committed America and its allies. Thus, the effects of Western involvement in Afghanistan are diluted by Marcus through the very act of recrimination.

A similar evasive response is offered by Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, who takes the responsibility of creating the Taliban but sets it off by the benefits it yielded to the world: "collapse of the Soviet empire" and "liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War" (Epigraph Aslam, *The Vigil*). It is notable that Brzezinski's statement is attached as epigraph of the novel. Brzezinski and Marcus, though speaking from very different locations, seem to be equally evasive about apportioning a considerable share of responsibility to America for the chaos and destruction in Afghanistan. During the course of the narrative, the book makes many political statements about the war in Afghanistan. It criticizes West's involvement in the destruction of this nation but eschews the discussion of its specificities. By relying almost solely upon the details of acts of violence and torture by Taliban and Afghan war lords and explaining away the killings of innocent Afghanis by coalition forces as 'collateral damage' the text seems to accord some credibility to the justification of War on Terror. Most of the major characters of the book, like Marcus, Qatrina, Zameen, Casa, Lara, and her brother are the victims of Taliban or Afghan war lords. The book details the suffering they go through the narration or reminiscences. *The Vigil* not remains silent about victims of Western forces but their motives behind the War on Terror. In Frawley's view, "[t]he war in Afghanistan was funded by foreign sources that had stakes… which ranged from the mining of gems to the production of opium and heroin poppies" and also because Afghanistan was located "amidst oil-rich states and at a

perceived crossroads between east and west" (Frawley 443). The text eschews any discussion of the possibility of such ulterior motives working behind the stated rationale of the war. At another occasion it satirizes the opinion of the Muslims who believe that the 9/11 bombing of the American cities were orchestrated by Israel and CIA. The book's satirical stance towards such views bears similarity to the notions of Western media discourse which dismisses contrary perspectives on geo-political happenings as 'conspiracy theories'.

Apart from narrative technique of alternating analysis and elision the text also employs a strategy which alternates between planning of an act of violence and its impulsiveness or immediacy. Taliban and Muslim war lords reveal their cruel nature by planning and then carrying out the acts of murder and carnage against civilians. On the other hand, James and David commit such acts as last resort at the spur of the moment. One incident that is narrated quite elaborately in the novel is the suicide bombing of the school being run by David. *The Vigil* spends considerable narrative time in narrating how Bihzad is brainwashed by the mastermind of the suicide attack by reciting verses from Qur'an to carry out the bombing. Lara and David hear the news of this bombing in David's car on radio. The news also tells the reaction of those behind the bombing who

> wish to point out the hypocrisy of the Americans who condemn this killing of the children but whose president had shaken hands with the people who in the 1980s had blown up a passenger plane just as it took off from Kandahar airport, carrying Afghan schoolchildren bound for indoctrination in the Soviet Union.(Aslam, *The Vigil* 106)

Lara asks David about the truthfulness of this claim: "Is that true?"…but he does not answer" (106). David's non-response, the silent phrase, here, and President Carter's thanking of General Zia, his support during the 1980s in the jihad against Soviet Union, and many other episodes narrated and hinted at in *The Vigil* speak of the dichotomy of the Western world's behaviour in its dealing with rest of the world. The double standards are justified by David by calling them the events whose 'explanation lies in other world'.

The Vigil, however, articulates a muted exposition of these 'double standards' justified by the American State machinery working in 'international infrastructure of impunity' because of America's status as the world superpower. This critique of American criminality in Afghanistan is, however, diluted by the discursive space and opportunity of reasoning offered to Western characters, David, James, and Marcus, who

explain their actions and relate them with some hidden good that at the first instance actuated those re/actions. In *The Vigil,* they are provided with more opportunity to contextualize their acts than that offered to the Taliban and Muslim characters. This seems consistent with Aslam's proposed task of confronting the Muslim extremists and Taliban through his writings.

The strategy of selective analysis and elision seems to be providing Western presence in Afghanistan with a legality while criticizing its 'aberrations' mildly. The basis for such justification is provided by America's self-assumed role of 'watchman' of the world. James Palantine, the young CIA operative and the son of a former CIA operative, remembers his father's words quoted from President Kennedy's undelivered speech of 1963: "*We in this country are-by destiny rather than by choice-the watchmen on the walls of world freedom*"(*The Vigil* 271). At another occasion David justifies his decision not to inform the denizens of an Afghan refugee camp inside Pakistan of an imminent attack by the Russians and letting many people die by saying that it was to "expose the brutality of the Soviets" and "communism" (384). David's rationale for his role in letting the Afghan children be killed by the Russians is reminiscent of Zbigniew Brzezinsky's defense of American (and Western) role in the rise of Taliban. In response to David's reasoning, Lara accuses him of being like her Russian lover, Stepan, who worked for KGB, but this analogy is protested in a muted thought by David. In the thought, David feels offended by the fact that he is being compared with an 'agent of communist government'.

The Vigil, however, assumes an ironical tone towards logic of War on Terror that seeks to diminish its effects on the account of its being a part of noble cause of spreading democracy and protecting human rights. David's sense of righteousness of his (and his country's) actions emanates from his conviction of being on the side of freedom and democracy. Both David, a reformed former CIA operative, and James Palantine, a current CIA agent, defend American re/actions in Afghanistan in the name of democracy and freedom. David's role in the text remains that of a critic and reluctant participant in America's War on Terror. "David is the primary narrative voice through which we are exposed to the operations of military espionage" (Flannery 300). His current presence in Afghanistan is an effort to atone for his past acts of transgression in Afghanistan as a CIA operative. His presence, however, also points out certain anomalies and

inconsistencies in CIA's actions in Afghanistan and ruptures the logic of CIA's operations from within.

The Vigil adopts an ambiguous attitude toward David's role in the death of his own beloved, Zameen, the daughter of Marcus: "He was not innocent but he was not guilty", the omniscient narrator issues the verdict (*The Vigil* 390). This ambiguity does not fully absolve David of this and many other crimes although the text provides no convincing evidence of his or America's culpability in anything that caused the death of so many Afghans. The values of secular and liberal democracy invoked by David to justify western presence in Afghanistan seems to be an ensemble of "[t]he multitude of phrase regimens and of genres of discourse "which neutralize[s] *differends* [of native Afghan population]" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 158). For example *The Vigil* chooses not to see that:

> Perhaps no other society paid a higher price for the defeat of the Soviet Union than did Afghanistan. Out of a population of roughly 20 million, a million died, another million and a half were maimed, and another five million became refugees. (Mamdani, "Perspectives" 773)

The War on Terror fought by American-led Western forces against Taliban and Al Qaeda terrorists has its roots in Afghan invasion of USSR in 1979 and the consequent intervention of the Western world to support the Afghan *Mujahidin* against its communist rival. This fact is recognized by *The Vigil* but the discussions of its effects, as noted by Mamdani above, on the everyday reality of Afghanistan to establish Western culpability are missing in general in this novel.

The Vigil links war in Vietnam with War on Terror and *Jihad* against communist Russia in 1980s through David's character. His brother is killed in Vietnam War and he joins CIA to defeat communism which he perceived to be an 'abomination' and threat to democracy and freedom. David claims that he joined the CIA for higher principles rather than ulterior motives being sought by many actors involved in the *Jihad* against communist Russia. He states that there is possibility that who took part in fight against communism in Afghanistan were "mercenary or dishonest" insincere, motivated by greed or revenge, faked enthusiasm, "[b]ut, I never doubted that my own reasons were good, genuine"(*The Vigil* 108). David's belief in the righteousness of his 'good and genuine' reasons creates a division between a morally upright American (Westerner) and

his Western regime, both of which evade responsibility of the crimes committed or abetted by them against the ordinary Afghans.

Aslam's *The Vigil,* however, criticizes this smug posture of the West and claims that the Western double standards are visible in America's recent dealings with the Taliban. Broadening again its sweep to incorporate American policies in as far off and remote places as Vietnam and America's war there in 1960s and 1970s, *The Vigil* states that CIA 'ignored', not abetted, the drug smuggling by "anti-Communist guerrillas" and also by Mujahideen of 1980s in Afghanistan (162). In the same manner America "is 'tolerating' the activities of Gul Rasool…because it is needed… [Although he] was among the dozens of male politicians who had hurled abuse at a woman MP as she spoke in parliament, shouting threats to rape her" (*The Vigil* 162). Gul Rasool, an Afghan war lord is supported by America against his Rival Nabi Khan whose disciple, Casa, is the only Afghan character among the main characters in a story about Afghanistan.

The support of Gul Rassol, a misogynist and a barbaric Afghan warlord, is 'tolerated' because of his ability to provide a counter force to Nabi Khan, another warlord supported by Al-Qaeda. Not only Gul Rasool's involvement in killing of Zameen, David's Afghan lover, is tolerated but also the threat posed by him to all Afghan women is connived at and in many ways abetted by Americans led by James. Gul Rasool's threat to woman MP forces the woman parliamentarian to go into hiding and owning "burkas in eight different colours to avoid being followed" (*The Vigil* 162). CIA's support for Gul Rasool however, performs exactly the opposite function to the one, stated as the task of the Western forces in Afghanistan: it forces one of the most powerful of Afghan women, an MP, back into not one but eight Burkas. This event narrated in flashback further weakens the logic of War on Terror which is being waged on the pretext of protecting human and women right in Afghanistan. The text highlights many such instances when this effort proves to be a double-edged sword working mostly to the detriment of Afghan lives and properties.

David, the 'conscience' of the Western world, believes himself to be on the path of 'truth' which leads one towards 'freedom': "He thinks of the CIA's motto from the Gospel of John: *And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" (*The Vigil* 144). His sense of being on the true path allows him not only to pass verdict upon

chaos unfolding in Afghanistan but also enables him to justify Zameen's death as "collateral damage" (*The Vigil* 391) on this journey along the path of truth. David's estimation of Zameen's death also seeks to vindicate his friend and another CIA operative Christopher, the father of James Palantine, who, in David's view of the murder, had "made a mistake" (390). Lara challenges David's actions and complicity in many crimes committed against Afghanis by the CIA, including its complicity in the murder of Zameen.[10] She asks him about the expected reaction of Marcus on learning the fact that "his daughter's death was needed for the secure and singing tomorrows you were arranging for Afghanistan and the world?" (*The Vigil* 390). Lara's sarcastic critique of America's role in the killing of innocent Afghans puts challenges to David's and America's justifications for the war in Afghanistan. It also points towards the fact that no matter how convincingly the deaths and sufferings of Afghans may be justified on the pretext of 'secure and singing tomorrows' for Afghanistan in discursive spaces, the material reality testifies to aporias in the appropriating discourses. In Lyotardian sense, there is an 'abyss', a gap between reality of the material conditions and its presentation and the presented. *The Wasted Vigil* discursively both erases and inscribes this material reality of Afghan life, pointed out by Mamdani above, by stressing the suffering of Marcus and Qatrina and also by hinting at the sufferings of the millions of Afghanis. The text abstains from fully absolving David and James of their role in civilians' death although David lays blames at the feet of Russia and communism for his involvement in the killing of Afghan refugees in a bomb attack and James holds the faulty intelligence responsible for "civilian deaths" (318) caused by a CIA operation.

James vociferates the narrative of War on Terror which struggles to impose its own rules of judgement upon the dispute in Afghanistan. This is reflected in James' view of his and his country's role in this war. He claims that all his actions including torturing terror suspects are legal. In his view, David's understanding of the dynamics of the warfare who thinks torture to be illegal is faulty. He both questions David's opinion and justifies his own methods in these words: "'Illegal? This is war, David. You've been looking into the wrong law books. These are battlefield decisions'" (*The Vigil* 406). Casa, one of the victims of James' torture, along with other Afghans, in this view of the war is reduced to the status of a Lyotardian victim as he is deprived of any right to register his complaint at any tribunal against James and his accomplices. The injustices and wrongs done to him are justified on the pretext of war that accords certain moral and

legal latitude to those fighting in uniform like James but not to those who oppose them. The 'law books' that James invokes allow him to adopt any suitable measures during war with impunity. They provide him with umbrella term 'collateral damage' which provides him with the rationale and justification for torturing and killing ordinary Afghans as well as Muslim terror suspects like Casa and also for shrugging off any responsibility for the poor conditions the Afghan families and people have been made to live in as a result of CIA operations.

James considers Casa and his fellow terrorists to be inhuman and calls them "the children of the devil" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 407). He presents a "restrictive conception of the human" (Butler 33)[11] and refuses to acknowledge them as human beings like himself. When David contests this estimation of the character of human beings, James tries to convince him by drawing his attention towards the 'devastation' in the whole world that according to him is the result of the terrorist activities of these Muslim children of devil. He advises David: "Just look around you, David. Look at the devastation all around you. These people have reduced their own country to rubble and now they want to destroy ours" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 407). In this condemnatory estimation of the essential character of the Muslims all over the world, James not only seeks to hold Afghanis like Casa responsible for the destruction of their own country but also portrays them as a threat to his and David's homeland. His view clears establishes a binary between two worlds: 'theirs' and 'our'. James presents, like a solicitor, the case of conflict between Western world and the Muslim before the tribunal of the readers through eclectic linking of events, thoughts, musings, spoken responses etc. This presentation of the case before the tribunal, however, seems lopsided as it accords the Western characters and their point of view an analysis through discussion of the background of their actions which is, usually, denied to the other party in the conflict: the Muslims. This analysis helps provide justification for their actions and mitigate the intensity of their crimes and misdeeds. The edge is also taken out of these crimes or misdeeds by following a line of argument that appeals to the rational secular reader and brings in sharp relief the irrational and theocratic logic and rationale behind the actions of their opponents: not just the Muslim terrorists but Muslims in general all over the world.

Casa and his logic present a foil to James' rationale for continuation of War on

Terror. His arguments, musings, and responses tear apart the Western logic of the war and its presence in Afghanistan. It is notable, however, that a well-argued reasoning is not allowed to him in the polemics of *The Vigil*. He, almost, always enunciates a response to conflicting situations in a manner that heightens the effects of his already negatively drawn character. He seems to possess certain essential character traits that may be traced back Islamic religious ideologies. The effect of his character is further strengthened by selection of events to be narrated in which he takes part. The authorial intervention made through both musings ascribed to different characters creates an impression that the politics of representation foregrounds certain perspectives and suppresses certain others reducing them to the silence of *differend*.

The incident that reveals several narrative technique like alternation between elision and analysis, planning and abruptness/immediacy, and suppression and foregrounding is the murder of Marcus' Afghan wife Qatrina. The manner of its telling foregrounds the religious extremism, barbarity, inhumanity of the Muslim code of life by presenting the public stoning of Qatrina as a religiously condoned punishment. This incident is narrated as follows:

> a public spectacle after the Friday prayers, the stoning of a sixty-one-year-old adulteress. A rain of bricks and rocks, her punishment for living in sin, the thirty-nine-year marriage to Marcus void in the eyes of the Taliban because the ceremony had been conducted by a female. A microphone had been placed close to her for her screams to be heard clearly by everyone. (Aslam, *The Vigil* 38)

In this instance, the act of the perpetrators is placed in the context of some injunction of Islam that mandates that marriage must be solemnized under the supervision of a male Muslim. Qatrina's suffering is thus presented as the fulfillment of teachings of Islam and not the personal acts of the Taliban. The link between Islam and barbarity is stressed in the stoning incident by setting the timing of the event after Friday prayer, a mandatory prayer for all Muslims. The mention of Qatrina's old age and the long period of her marriage further accentuate the barbarity and cruelty of the act of stoning as do the rain of stones and rocks landing on Qatrina's old head and face. The microphone, a piece of technology, works here as misuse of the modernity by the Taliban to spread the terror of 'Islam', although a large number of Muslims, claims Kamila Shamsie in her book Offence: A Muslim case (2009), considers terrorism spread by Al-Qaeda and Taliban as un-Islamic. The Western values are brought to evaluate the bond of marriage

(solemnized by a woman), because in Western societies marriages, at least in theory, may be solemnized by females as well. In Islamic cultures and code of life, however, marriage has to be solemnized by a male Muslim.

Apart from this deviation from the Islamic rules of solemnization of the marriage, another factor that makes the marriage of Marcus and Qatrina questionable is Marcus' motivation for converting to Islam. *The Vigil* mentions the fact that he converted to Islam just to be able to marry Qatrina. His very motivation for conversion puts a question mark on his 'Muslimness' and speaks of insincerity of the act of conversion. This fact is glossed over ant its relation with the dynamics and requirements of the valid Muslim marriages are left unexplored by the text. The heretic and transgressive act of marriage asserts legitimacy when put side by side in narrating the suffering of old couple.

Many incidents in the novel show that the cruelty of Taliban and the Muslim characters is analysed in detail while their sufferings are elided and presented in (usually) a single sentence. However, when acts of cruelty or violence committed by the Western characters are made part of the narration, they are usually mentioned in the passing with sufficient discursive space provided to them to justify their actions. These acts are not analysed in detail with regard to the suffering they cause. On the other hand the sufferings and violence faced by these characters at the hands of Muslim characters is mapped elaborately. Casa tells Bihzad about the man who reads from Koran to brainwash the latter to carry out the suicide bombing, that "he skinned alive a Soviet soldier with his own hands…slowly to increase the suffering. They say it took four hours and he was alive for the first two" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 63). This manner of narration establishes another contrast between the violent acts perpetrated by the Muslims and the westerners. This contrast lies in the fact that the excesses committed by the Muslims are preceded or followed by the sadist pride and pleasure they derive from the act. The similar acts by their adversaries seem to be impulsive and followed by remorse.

The Wasted Vigil acknowledges the impact of repeated wars on the lives of ordinary Afghans but it lingers more upon the sufferings of Marcus, Qatrina, Zameen, and Lara than those of ordinary Afghanis. Lara muses: "This country was one of the greatest tragedies of the age. Torn to pieces by the many hands of war, by the various hatreds and failings of the world. Two million deaths over the past quarter-century" (14).

The book calls these killings as small scale 9/11s. This cursory mention of the number of Afghan deaths testifies to the sufferings of the ordinary Afghanis and registers it as an inerasable episteme despite the fact that it seems to be dwelling more upon the suffering of Westerners. It portrays Afghanistan as being the victim of cruelty, ruins, and barbarism of many wars spanning more than quarter of a century. It, however, shies away from ascribing responsibility to any one actor, organization, or factor.

In the foregoing pages of this chapter, I have examined how *The Vigil* presents a detailed analysis of the feelings and sufferings of Marcus, Qatrina, and Lara. It, however, elides the discussion of the violence faced by the characters like Casa who oppose Western occupation of their country. Using the exploratory and interpretative research paradigms, I have documented in this section how Nabi Khan, Casa, and Taliban guerillas' crimes against others are stressed and connected with Islam. I have also foregrounded the ways in which David and James are allowed opportunities to explain and justify their immoral and illegal acts. I argue that this narrative scheme works to suppress to some degree the voice of one party to the conflict, whereas the other party is afforded the more discursive and argumentative space to articulate their point of view.

5.3 The *Differend* between the West and Islam

In the previous section of this chapter, I have traced the contours of a pattern of alternating detailed analysis and elision employed by *The Wasted Vigil* to represent the conflict in Afghanistan. In this section, I examine how the scope of this dispute is enlarged upon to allegorize the tension that exists between the Muslim world and the West after the events of 9/11. *The Wasted Vigil* describes the processual and continuous nature of the conflict in Afghanistan between forces of East and West. The devastation of long and continuous war, its causes, and its impacts on the lives of those involved in it are presented largely from a liberal humanist point of view. Most of the major characters in the story that delineate and interpret the history of conflict in Afghanistan and its relations with the current war are of non-Afghan origins. Their thoughts and re/actions in crisis situations reflect their ability of logical thinking. The only character with questionable moral conduct, James, evinces a confidence in the uprighteousness of his conduct. On the other hand, the only main native Afghan character, Casa, seems to embody all the vices the West cites as reasons for its intervention in Afghanistan and

other Muslim countries. Thus the conflict between Casa's world view on the one hand and David, Marcus, James, and Lara's, on the other, starts to reflect the dimensions of a struggle between the East and the West during American-led War on Terror.

The presence of this historical seed of contention between these two ideological opponents, a differend, may located in many incidents that make up the fabric of *The Vigil*. For example, Marcus's visit to the site of latest bombings near Usha, a fictitious village near the mountains of Tora Bora, ignites a thought in his mind which presents the conflict in cosmic dimensions: "The heroes of East and West are slaughtering each other in the dust of Afghanistan" (*The Vigil* 419). In this fight, the West seems to be engaged in a moral struggle against the forces of destruction and tyranny: the Taliban and their backers (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and almost the whole Muslim world). Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's involvement in the conflict through putative clandestine support for the Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists is stressed time and again. Nabi Khan is backed by Pakistan and is an obstruction in the way of peace and progress of Afghanistan. The blame for American forces' failed attack on him at the end of the book is diverted towards Pakistan and Saudi Arabia: "Afghan officials speculate that conservative Saudi Arabians, as well as certain rogue elements within Pakistani government and military, are financing the attacks. Pull a thread here and you'll find it's attached to the rest of the world" (*The Vigil* 426). Marcus' musing that seems difficult to be distinguished from that of the omniscient narrator implicates Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the spread of terrorism in Afghanistan through their financing and support for attacks against Western targets. This pattern of implicating the Muslim countries in the spread of terrorism in Afghanistan, is set in motion in the very beginning of the novel. When Lara hears a voice in the neighboring room in Marcus' house where she arrives to look for the clues about her brother, she reassures herself it was not 'a Taliban….Nor an Arab, Pakistani, Uzbek, Chechen, Indonesian terrorist-seed sprouted from the blood-soaked soil of Muslim countries" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 14). This involvement of Muslim world in the events happening in Afghanistan is not just insinuated but reiterated at several pages of the book. Lara's apprehension singles out Muslim countries for breeding and spreading terrorism in the world. Lara's apprehension reflects metaphorically the threat and danger the Muslim terrorists pose to the whole world.

The West assures itself of the legitimacy of their task to quell this threat and

depicts its engagement in Afghanistan as an act of necessity dictated by the history. "Before these soldiers flew out to attack Afghanistan, the US secretary of defense told them they had been 'commissioned by history'" (*The Vigil* 35). These remarks almost echo verbatim President Kennedy's estimation of the role of America as being the watchman of the world out of necessity. This formulation of West's task in Afghanistan points to the deeper reasons of conflict working at the back of minds of western soldiers and leaders than the rationale for contemporary war.[12]

This invasion of Afghanistan by the West is also regarded by Casa, Nabi Khan, and their followers as continuation of some old rivalry between these two worlds. This point is driven home by *The Vigil* by depicting the conflict in the parlance of crusades. When "Casa and one thousand others" were sent into Afghanistan in 1996, their assignment there is conveyed to them in the vocabulary of Jihad and crusades. The omniscient narrator who articulates most of the critique of restrictive ideology of Taliban states that Taliban were told "'History is Allah working through man….You are not new to this: you are taking back what has always been yours'" and that they were undertaking the task of "continuation of a long line from Muhammad onwards" and would be "kings of tomorrow, who hated the carnage they must cause but cause it they must" (*The Vigil* 227). It becomes apparent, then, that American soldiers and the Taliban are motivated by the opposing histories that define the nature of relationship between them.

One of the major characters, Marcus, like Lara and Duniya, challenge the self-righteous view of both of these histories. He seems to include the West, contrary to its self-imagining as the watchman and moral leader of the world, in the ranks of 'barbarians' that ruined his life. He believes that the 'others', including the West, share the blame for ruining of Afghanistan. He tells David: "But, you see, the West was involved in the ruining of this place, in the ruining of my life. There would have been no downfall if this country had been left to itself by those others" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 84). Although Marcus recognizes the role of the West in the destruction caused in Afghanistan advocates he, however, fails to recognize his violation of one of the basic culture code of Afghan society by accepting his marriage with Qatrina to be solemnized by a woman. His sham embracing of Islam remains as null and void as his marriage according this cultural code. His house (with classics of Greek literature) may also be read as symbolizing the capture of Afghan physical space by the West. Not only are

physical spaces invaded by the West but also efforts have been made by it to dominate it culturally. Marcus' conversion and marriage might be regarded as part of this *Kulturkampf*. Before him, his father also worked at a hospital in Afghanistan in 1934 where, the narrator would have us believe, "No attempt at conversion was made at the hospital but a chapter from the Gospels was indeed read in the wards every night" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 39). The recitation of a chapter from Gospels to the patients indebted to Christian Missionaries for their treatment, however, is not considered 'subtle pressure' for conversion to other religion. *The Vigil*'s apology seems to point out a contrast between the ethics of the missionaries and those of Afghan society that put pressure upon Marcus for conversion not only 'subtly' but also openly.

It is notable that only Casa, Nabi Khan, and terrorists in *The Vigil* assert their religious identity whereas Marcus, David, Lara, and James exhibit their secular selves despite Marcus' conversion to Islam. Through heightened religiosity of the Muslims and "Accentuating the religious fervour of his [Muslim] characters, Aslam dramatises the potential clash between secular and Islamic approaches… as well as between East and West" (Kanwal, *Rethinking Identities* 17). Kanwal's observation notes the cosmic dimensions of the conflict in Afghanistan. Both *The Vigil* and *The Good Muslim* posit an unbridgeable gap between secular and religious approaches to life. Former's Islamists are however more violent than Anam's Sohail and his fellow Tablighis. While Sohail, in the avatar of a religious leader, Huzoor, remains indifferent to the material world around him, Aslam's cleric and Islamists commit many acts of violence against the ordinary Afghans by exploiting their position as well as the precepts of Islam.

It may be noted that *The Vigil* 'accentuates the secular fervor' of different characters to draw a contrast with the religiously fervent Muslims. Marcus, the conscience of the book, along with her wife Qatrina, exhibit tolerant and secularist credentials of their world view. The narrative voice tells us that they have taught Zameen not to believe in the djinns "quietly, undemonstratively, because Marcus with his outsider's nerves did not wish to injure anyone's sensibilities" (*The Vigil* 23). Moreover, Marcus and Qatrina, in spite of being related to medical profession, like Maya in Anam's text, evince an interest in (Western) art and literature. Qatrina has pinned up the books along the ceilings of the rooms to protect them from Taliban who are portrayed as enemy of knowledge and learning. The walls of the houses are adorned with portraits of lovers

in different moments of intimacy. The images are bullet ridden exhibiting Taliban's intolerance of anything that is artistic, apparently because of Islam's injunctions regarding drawing and painting. These transgressive paintings and literary masterpieces of different languages (but mainly Western classics) preside over the happenings in Marcus' house where most of the current conflict between faith and secular values takes place and revelation of past secrets are made. The values enshrined in the Western literary and artistic pieces provide Marcus with the yardstick against which the doings of two parties of the conflict, theocracy/faith and rationalism/secularism, are measured. The proverbial conflict between laws of Gods and laws of the state as depicted in *Antigone* bear clear resemblance with the situation in Afghanistan but with a slight inversion: "Up there Priam begged Achilles for the mutilated body of his son Hector. And Antigone wished to give her brother the correct burial, finding unbearable the thought of him being *left unwept, unsepulchred*" (italics in original, Aslam, *The Vigil* 19). The quest of Lara, one of the main characters of the book, is not very different from that depicted by Homer and Sophocles in their classics. She is on a mission to find the whereabouts of her dead brother Benedikt, torn to pieces by the Afghans in a game of Buzkashi.

The savagery of Afghans is contrasted with the supposed inner goodness of the non-Muslim characters. In this essentialist view of the nature of characters belonging to different ideologies even the Russians, the agents of communism, seem to possess some vestiges of humanity that Muslims like Casa and Nabi Khan seem to lack completely. Benedikt, the abductor and rapist of Zameen and father of Casa, is given some redeeming qualities of sense of guilt and grief over what he has done to Zameen. After having raped her repeatedly, he hands over the key to the handcuffs to Zameen and asks her to leave, lest she should be drained of blood to save his commanding officer, Rostov, who is wounded mortally. The narrator tells us: "There was pleading in the whispered voice, as when, his thirst quenched, he sometimes asked her to forgive him for what he had just done. During the daylight hours he was ashamed of what he did to her…" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 52-3). His acts of abduction and rape are made out to be motivated by human desire and moments of weakness of character rather than acts of fulfillment of some command of communist ideology or some religious decree. So his crimes are given a human dimension and are mitigated: "Disgrace and mortification and dishonor had made him enter her room the first time…" (*The Vigil* 357). The dishonor that he suffered at the hands of his fellow soldiers and later, at his colonel's, was the

result of his refusal to take his turn at rape of a small Afghan girl who "wanted to collect as much of the remains [of the bodies of her brother and father] as she could, to provide a grave for them" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 357). The remains were caught in the chains of the tanks who drove over their dead bodies. This reason behind Benedikt's rape of Zameen has been described in some detail and accords the saving grace to his character. In the foregoing pages, this pattern of assigning a human reason for transgression of moral and ethical law has already been pointed out with reference to several actions participated in by David.

No such saving grace or mitigating background details are offered to Muslim characters' acts of violence and savagery. Rather, such acts are linked with the will of Allah and wishes of Prophet Muhammad. Casa's unaccomplished wish to 'possess' Duniya, a fellow Afghan refugee in Marcus' house, is not born out of his human desire. Rather, he thinks "Allah has sent her here so he may possess her. It is His command that he do this, then go and find a way of becoming a martyr" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 387). Casa's desire is thus mandated by Allah and related with the act of martyrdom giving the impression that a soon-to-be-martyred jihadist is somehow Allah to 'possess' any woman randomly. Casa'a justification Casa's musings conveyed to the reader through omniscient narrator's voice relate even the breakdown of electricity generator the night before with the will of Allah.[13] David's act of leaving the generator unrepaired that night provides Casa with the opportunity to possess Duniya unnoticed. He considers this a divinely planned act. Thus Casa's justifications for his planned crimes implicate the religion that seems to have sanctioned his acts.

Instead of witnessing a conflict between individuals the reader starts to recognize the presence of deeper conflict of ideas in *The Vigil*. It may be described as 'novel of ideas', a term Chambers uses to define Anam's *The Good Muslim*. It enacts, allegorically, the conflict between ideas related to faith and values of secular rationalism. These two sides of the conflict are represented by Islam and the West respectively. Casa ruminates about the futility of NATO's bombing campaign against Taliban in these words: "As though, along with mere bodies, you may bomb ideas out of existence too. They have sent a few arrows towards the sky and think they have killed Allah" (*The Vigil* 277). Casa presents foil to James at both physical and ideological level. He represents James' "them" who are target of America's war against 'children of devil'.

Casa's statement reveals his conviction that West's War on Terror has deeper roots. The War on Terror, according to him, is actually a war against his religion/faith (ideas) which is hard to defeat. The contents of the Night Letter that he pastes on the walls of the village give voice to his resolve: "*We and others like us will never stop until we have covered ourselves in glory by reaching Jerusalem and blowing up the White House,* says the Night Letter" (italics in original, *The Vigil* 143). These words of the Shabnama, Night Letter, seem to vindicate James' words where he tells David that after having destroyed their own country, terrorists, like Casa, want to destroy theirs: America.

Many other events of the text and the consequent musings they generate in the minds of the characters along with observations made by narratorial voice foreground the cosmic dimensions of the conflict in Afghanistan. When Marcus falls to the ground because of the explosion caused by the truck driven by Bihzad, the narrator describes this war in terms of Armageddon: "he gets to his feet in the midst of this war of the end of the world" (72). This depiction of the conflict between Taliban and the Western forces suggests that Bush's assertion about War on Terror as a fight between the forces of evil and forces of good is largely true and credible. In this 'war of the end of the world', the West seems to be engaged with the forces not only of Taliban and Al-Qaeda terrorists but against Islam as a whole. The forces of evil are represented by religious fundamentalism of the Taliban and their supporters. Equating Muslims' acts with religious fundamentalism and their opponents' as personal moral or ethical failures may be understood as text's politics. The mechanisms of this politicization of the conflict in Afghanistan are reflected in Nash's view of the demonization of the Muslims. "While religious fundamentalists are by no means limited to the Islamic world, Muslim fundamentalism has been disproportionately emphasized (in comparison with Christian, Jewish and Hindu varieties) due to the political threat it is held to represent" (Nash 72). Political threat of the Muslims is displaced and accentuated by assigning them the negative traits of intolerance and barbarity.

Nabi Khan notes, after seeing "international military patrol vehicles" with "women and black soldiers" among them, rushing to the site of suicide bombing and says that it is an attempt "by the USA-led Western world to humiliate Muslims by having sows and apes be their new monarchs" (*The Vigil* 120). This resistance to foreign presence is what, according to the Taliban, legitimizes their struggle and the

methodology they adopt in it. It challenges and opposes the claims made by the West that its presence in Afghanistan aims to root out terrorism from it. After his confrontation with James, Casa gives voice to Afghans' concern that earlier Nabi Khan has expressed with regard to foreign soldiers in their country. He thinks that "every Muslim should be told what his fate would be if his sword hand fails. This is his country, but the sense of entitlement he detects in their eyes brings home to him the full extent of the peril and challenge faced by Islam" (*The Vigil* 243). Clearly, Casa's apprehension is triggered by the Western 'sense of entitlement' to Afghan and by implication all Islamic lands. Once again this war between America and the Taliban is enlarged to reflect the conflict between West and the Islam when Casa reacts emotionally to his encounter with James and his men. His musing at this moment is assimilated with the observation of the omniscient narrator: "The west wants unconditional love; failing that, unconditional surrender. Not realizing that privilege is Islam's" (Aslam 43). Casa's understanding of this conflict between Islam and the West as well as James' depiction of this continuing conflict as a war between 'us' and 'them' reflects the *absolute difference* between their respective positions. For their respective audience, both positions gain appeal and traction. This situation of irreducible difference represents the *differend* which is termed by Lyotard as a conflict between two parties with competing claims on a single issue.

The narrator's voice plays an important role in not only representing but also presiding over this conflict. The voice speculates that the Night Letter is from the same people who have carried out the attack against school and who "have Islamic goals". They believe that their fight "is about the glory and aspirations of Islam" (162). The people behind the Night Letter claim their cause is different from that of the Palestinians who are fighting for their land. In their view Palestinians are not succeeding because unlike Saladin who "fought for Allah and for Muhammad" (*The Vigil* 162), their goal is limited to the achievement of a piece of land. The third person narrator's musings further make clear Muslims' grievances against America and their supporters. The narrator states that Taliban consider Gul Rasool an enemy for the role he played in "having allowed girls to be educated here" (163).The cause of Taliban is thus expanded from Afghanistan to the outside world and then to Allah, Muhammad and Islam through the rumination of the omniscient narrator that is difficult to distinguish from Casa's estimation of his own fight against America and its allies and supporters. This mention of the 'Islamic goals' of the organization Casa works for may be helpful in understanding

as to what view of the conflict is offered by the text itself notwithstanding Aslam's claim of it being a democratic novel. It relates Taliban's war against the West with Crusades of the Saladin. It also describes Taliban's aversion to the education of Afghan girls as part of their jihad/crusade. This linking together of the different concerns not only maligns the (Islamist) struggle of Taliban but also provides a saving grace to unlawful activities of Gul Rasool whose support for the education of the girls is acknowledged.

This repetition of linking of Islam, Allah, Koran, and Muhammad with the evil deeds of the delinquent Muslim characters speaks of Aslam's narrative strategy of accentuating their religious fervour. Despite uttering their concerns and sufferings in a language of religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism, their interpretation of the war and their role in it stalls the discursive monopolization of this conflict by the West. They seek to assign an ideology to David, James, and Marcus' activities in Afghanistan. The notion of their presence and humanitarian work, including the war against Taliban, as beneficial to the people of Afghanistan starts revealing its fissures in the face of these challenges. The dispute/*differend* between these two opposing forces represented by the West and its values of rationalism and secularism and fundamentalist Islam and its anti-rationalist import defies any resolution. *The Wasted Vigil* seems to have not only inscribed but also stressed the presence of this *differend* by not allowing any party to the conflict establish its hegemony over the representation of this unending war.

5.4 The *Differend* of *Jihad* and Terrorism

After having examined in the foregoing pages two narrative strategies of *The Wasted Vigil* that register the engendering and perpetuation of the Muslim *differend*, I propose to explore what place is accorded to the notion of Jihad in this text. I also endeavour to explain what view of the relation between this Islamic concept and terrorism is offered by Aslam's novel. Priyamavada Gopal believes that the concept Jihad is, usually, conflated with terrorism in *The Wasted Vigil*. In her view, the resistance offered to foreign occupation by armed groups in Afghanistan, Iraq and other Islamic countries is made synonymous with terrorism. It may be argued that while the pattern of identifying terrorism with Islam and jihad may be located in different modes of narration and through thoughts and statements of different characters, they also reveal the gaps in their own logic. The pattern of displacing violence and murder onto Islamic code of life starts early in the text. David Town, a reformed American, establishes this link with his

thought: “The first two words of the call to the Muslim prayer are also the Muslim battle cry, he remarks to himself…” (Aslam, *The Vigil* 45). The first two words of call to prayer- Allah O Akbar- are uttered at a number of occasions to motivate and express gratitude etc. Moreover, David’s formulation of the difference between the West led by America and the Taliban over the occupation of Afghan land is framed in the terminology of concept of jihad and its importance in Islamic ideology. Nabi khan seems to contest David’s view of the Jihad and brings it from the realm of abstract to that of concrete. He sees Americans like David as foreign occupiers of Afghan territory and asserts his right to fight, like all other occupied people, against their occupiers. Thus Nabi Khan tells Bihzad that “[t]he desire to rid my country of infidels and traitors…has made a fugitive of me” (Aslam, *The Vigil* 63). Nabi Khan’s estimation of this conflict incorporates ideas both modern concept of nation state and classical of Jihad that mandates the Muslims to fight against foreign aggression. His use of the vocabulary of Mujahideen (rid my country of infidels) contextualizes his struggle in the narrative legitimized by the same vocabulary mobilized by the supporters of jihad against Russia in 1980s. His involvement in drug dealings, killings and torturing of his enemies, and preparing young boys for committing suicide attacks against schools in the name of Jihad aligns him with the forces of evil in the eyes of his opponents. It also vindicates the Western stance on the War on Terror which presents their struggle as a fight against evil forces epitomized by Taliban.

Nabi Khan and his associates’ struggle against foreigners is not regarded by the West as the legitimate struggle of a native against the occupier as it would in another scenario. America and West insist on being seen (As James makes Duniya realize) the friends and helpers of the Afghan people. Nabi Khan’s arguments, though quite valid and just in many other scenarios, gain no currency in Western academic, literary, and media discourses. Taliban are aware of the delegitimization of their struggle against the West through these discourses. To counter this negative image of their struggle pejoratively called jihad by the Western literary and media discourses Taliban produce CDs and DVDs that “depict… Jihad as Allah Almighty saw it and not as the world’s media distorted it” (*The Vigil* 65).[14] Their mission involves as much a physical struggle against American ‘apes and sows’ as a verbal fight against the discursive war waged against them in Western media.

The articulation of legality or legitimacy claimed by the Taliban for their actions as having emanated from the will of Allah both portrays the conflict as a religious struggle and provides legitimation to West's apprehension of the Muslims as a new bogey-man of America. Nabi Khan terms the act of suicide bombing as the direct will of Allah and as a legitimate action. Casa tells Bihzad that he "was being given the honour of doing this [suicide bombing] for Islam and Afghanistan" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 59). He has already been also told by the Madrassa teacher, supposedly Nabi Khan, that the act of suicide bombing he is going to perform is for the sake of Allah and Muhammad: "'You must know that Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, will be greatly happy with you'" (*The Vigil* 60). In a similar manner, the sentiments of the Muslim prisoners at Bagram detention centre are also related with the will of Allah and Islam "Though at one level everyone in there [Bagram detention centre] was happy because Allah had especially chosen him to suffer for Islam" (61). In the polemics established by *The Wasted Vigil* these views of the fundamentalist Muslims imply that the act of suicide and indiscriminate killings are sanctioned by Allah. A reader unfamiliar with Koran and Islam's injunctions about suicide and rules and regulations about the necessity, method, and purpose of jihad is likely to believe that this distorted version of Islam and jihad represents the real idea of Jihad.[15] This constructed image of Jihad and the measures, adopted by Taliban in its name, are appropriated and cited by the West as a legitimate reason to intervene in Afghanistan. It may be argued that *The Vigil* seems to participate in this distortion of the notion of Jihad as it fails to present a correct view of the ideology, methodology, and legality of Jihad and relies upon its stereotypical image of the western imaginary. It is pertinent to note that the following idea of Jihad and its legitimate targets comes from the authorial intervention and is not filtered through the consciousness of any character in the novel. It goes like:

> According to the laws of the jihad the enemy can include the entire supply chain. Those who give them water…food…provide moral encouragement-like journalist who write in defense of their cause…. [A woman] if she prays for [her husband] to kill and triumph over Muslims then she becomes the enemy. If a child carries a message to the enemy fighters, he can be targeted and erased. (Aslam, *The Vigil* 135)

It may safely be said that it reflects Aslam's own estimation of the concept of Jihad and his own estimation of the actions of the Taliban. This putative law of jihad, which reflects the tactics adopted by the Taliban and many brutalities committed by them on

those they regard as 'agents of the enemy', is in itself, in violation of many of the rules laid out by Koran and Muhammad for jihad. This spurious view of the 'laws of jihad' not only relies upon the already constructed negativities but constructs many falsehoods about Islam and the idea of jihad. The order given by Abu Bakr, the second caliph of Islam, to his armies about the conduct of jihad contradicts the view of jihad *The Vigil* offers:

> Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by the people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone. (qtd. in Alkhateeb 31)

It may be gathered from the pages of *The Vigil* that the text eschews completely the discussion of this ideology of Jihad. The ideas of jihad and methods that may be adopted by the mujahideen are described as an unnuanced monoliths. Not only the Taliban represent its distorted form but the omniscient narrative voice also constructs a negative list of actions allowed in jihad. Aroosa Kanwal points out this tendency of conflation of terrorism with Jihad. She states that "it is not only Muslims but also Islam that is being targeted, particularly in terms of its concept of *jihad* as propounded in the Qur'an…" (Kanwal, *Rethinking Identities* 4). The maligning strategy pointed out by Kanwal is reflected in the presentation of many acts of violence committed by Taliban. Casa's mission in the midnight "to post shabnama", the night letter, on the walls of village Usha and Gul Rasool's house, has been presented as obeying the injunction of Koran. Casa thinks he is performing this act "[b]ecause the Koran calls upon Muslims to create alarm among nonbelievers" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 134). Casa's appropriation of a verse from Qur'an removed from its true context implicates Qur'an with acts of violence and cruelties committed by the Taliban. In the similar method, the 1993 bombing of the North Tower of the World Trade Centre carried out by "a graduate of one of the training camps set up in Afghanistan to fight the Soviets" (*The Vigil* 194) is linked with Qur'an. The North Tower targeted by terrorists in their attacks upon US is presented as the very tower mentioned in the Qur'an: "*Wherever you may be, death shall overtake you, though you may put yourself in lofty towers,* said the Koran" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 195). This relation between an act of terrorism and some verse of Qur'an or saying of Muhammad is repeated in many ways with regard to many incidents in the text.

The concept of Jihad is further delegitimized by contrasting it with the generosity of the West. *The Vigil* establishes a binary between the West and Islam in the context of Jihad. In the book, the Muslim cleric who has been given asylum by America "had called on Muslims to assail the West in revenge for the centuries of humiliation and subjugation, cut off the transportation of their cities, tear it apart, destroy their economy, burn their companies, eliminate their interests, shoot down their planes, kill them on the sea, air, or land'" (*The Vigil* 196). The advice to Muslims to target civilians and civil infrastructure of the West delivered through the mouth of a Muslim cleric implicates Islam in the killing of civilians. This list almost repeats the itinerary of legitimate targets that the omniscient narrator attaches with code of conduct of jihad.

On page 215, the book starts a paragraph with a verse from Koran: "*If you do not fight He will punish you severely and put others in your place,* said the Koran" (*The Vigil* 215), and then goes on to enumerate the torture exercise Casa has had to go through to be able to resist interrogation by the Americans if captured by them. This verse, quoted from the Koran has no apparent link either with the paragraph preceding or with the one following it. The stand-alone verse only serves the purpose of referring every act of terrorists like Casa to Koran and what it preaches about human relations. This link between terrorists and Koran is stated explicitly by James when he tells David that "'they don't need jihadi literature-they've got the Koran. Almost every other page is a call to arms, a call to slaughter infidels" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 286). In James's understanding, the Koran assumes even more sinister aspects than the DVDs and CDs the terrorists produce and circulate to propagate their ideas of jihad to other Muslims. James, however, does not recognize the fact that it was America and the West that propagated the ideas of jihad, by recording them on to DVDs and CDs, to inspire the Muslims all over the world to take up arms against the 'communist infidels'.

Aslam's *The Maps for Lost Lovers*, *The Vigil*, and *The Blind Man's Garden* employ the narrative technique of quoting verses from Qur'an and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad to establish their link with cruel acts of the Islamists. *The Vigil* employs this strategy with regard to Jihad and seems to equate it with terrorism. One gets the impression that the acts of violence and suicide bombings have been condoned by "Muhammad, peace be upon him, [who] had appeared in the dreams of many at Bagram prison" (*The Vigil* 62). Gopal points towards this narrative strategy in her discussion of

Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*. "There is an unmistakable elision of lines between what could be construed as the brainwashed thoughts of a single character and what could represent Afghanistan or Islam" (Gopal, "Of Capitalism" 25). Gopal highlights the book's view of the Islam and how it conflates Taliban's act with the teachings of Islam in these words: "In many ways, with its relentless emphasis on the crude savageries of the Taliban as both *Islamist* and *Islamic*, this is the novel's view too…" ("Of Capitalism" 25). Gopal's opinion seems to deny any redeeming qualities to *The Vigil*. It may, however, be pointed out that the narrative voice adopts a satirical and ironical attitude toward both points of view of the conflict although its sympathies seem to lie on the side of secularist rationalist view of life.

The question of Crusades and conflict between Islam on the one side and Christianity and Judaism on the other surfaces again and again in the book not just through Taliban's claim that they are fighting for the glory of Islam but through Western characters' actions and reasoning they offer for their actions. James relates the struggle of the United States against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda with conflict between Muslims and Jews dating back to times of the Prophet Muhammad. He questions Prophet Muhammad's killing of several hundred Jews after the battle of Trench and asks "Why must the United States be the only one asked to uphold the highest standards?" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 289). He further claims that Muslims wrongly insist that they are innocent and "'until everyone admits that they are capable of cruelty-and not define their cruelty as just-there will be problem'" (*The Vigil* 289). James' statement like that of Casa's earlier, makes it clear that the conflict between these two representative of different sides engaged in a historical battle is longstanding and irresolvable. Put in Lyotard's terms, it is a *differend* between two parties: The Islam and the West. This claim also gains traction when the group, Tameer-e-Nau, a group behind bombing of school run by David expresses its achievement in religious terms. Their statement takes pride in claiming that the bombing of the school was carried out by "*A passionate servant of Allah"* and that *"hundreds more young men like him, lovers of Muhammad, peace be upon him,… are willing and eager to give their lives in this jihad against the infidels*…"(italics and ellipses in original, *The Vigil* 74). This statement performs two functions when placed in the overall schema of *The Wasted Vigil*. One, it posits that the struggle of those behind the suicide bombing is part of an old dispute of the Muslims against infidels. Attributed to a Muslim who calls this act of suicide bombing as a sign of love of the bomber for

Prophet Muhammad, it testifies to Gopal's view that acts of Taliban are made out to have been condoned and mandated by Qur'an and Muhammad in Aslam's text. The statement of the group also works to distort the idea of jihad, as suicide bombing is made out to be a legitimate strategy of the Muslim struggle against the infidels. When read together with *The Vigil*'s earlier list of legitimate targets of Jihad, this reinforces the idea that Jihad allows for the killings of innocent people by any means possible. The second function this representation of Jihad performs is that it conflates the strife of the Muslims against the foreign invaders to gain freedom for their land with terrorism.

The discussion of Jihad and its presentation in *The Vigil*, in the foregoing pages, strengthens the impression that Aslam's text participates in West's *Kulturkampf* against Islam. Conflating the ideology of Jihad with acts of indiscriminate killings of innocent people and terrorism, *The Vigil* seems to further reinforce West's negative imaginings of Muslims and their religion. The text may, however, be redeemed by pointing out the fact that it stalls the smothering of the Muslim view of the War on Terror. Although it articulates the concept of Jihad largely from the standpoint of a Westerner, yet it implicitly seems to raise the question as to how to respond to the occupation of Afghan land legitimately? This questioning not only signifies the Muslim *differend* but also keeps it from being hegemonized by the appropriating discourses of the West to legitimize its imperialism in Afghanistan.

5.5 The *Differend* of Rational/Irrational and Moral/Immoral

In this section of the analysis of *The Wasted Vigil*, I explore what view of the essential character of the Muslims and that of the Western characters the text posits. I analyze if the text seeks to attach any essentialism with the two parties while describing the dispute between Islam and the West. I further explore whether their incongruent responses to same events or crises in their lives engender a *differend*. *The Vigil* narrates many incidents and episodes which bear tangential relation with the main storyline of the book. In consonance with the main storyline, these digressions draw contrasts between the irrationality, immorality, barbarity, and inhumanness of the (Muslim) terrorists, clerics, and students of Islamic madrassas and the rational, tolerant, moral and human approach to life of the Western characters and their way of life. The fundamentalist Muslims in the text, usually, defend their irrational and barbaric acts of cruelty by projecting them as having been mandated by the two source of Islamic faith: Koran and

life of Muhammad. This extremist version of Islam and its teachings is countered by both Western characters and the moderate Muslims like, Zameen, Duniya, and Qatrina. The mild Muslim voices, however, also disrupt the West's view of Islam as being inherently violent and irrational religion.

The text seems to enunciate an essentialist view of some of the aspects of Islam reflected in its choice of events and thoughts to be narrated and explicated. In this narrative scheme Islam as a religion largely emerges synonymous with irrationalism and anti-scientism. The omniscient narrator at one point tells us:

> The religion of Islam at its core does not believe in the study of science, does not believe the world runs along rational and predictable laws. Allah destroys the world each night and creates it again at dawn, a new reality that may or may not match the old one of yesterday… .(Aslam, *The Vigil* 130)

This authorial intervention seeks to posit a contrast between rational and predictable laws of science and the erratic will of Allah. This belief in the omnipotence of Allah over physical phenomena and disregard of natural laws highlight the irrationality of Muslim faith. The irrationality of the Muslim faith in the will of Allah is further highlighted by the narrator who states that Muslim clerics demand a ban on weather forecast as it challenges the omnipotence of Allah (*The Vigil* 130-1).

It is such unreasoned view of the world and the place of human being in it that is cited by James to vindicate his conviction that he was on the path of 'truth', mentioned in the motto of CIA. His rational thoughts and behavior are pitted against the irrationality of the Afghans (and by extension all the Muslims of the World). At one point, he comes across a group of Afghans who are engaged in a discussion regarding a ruling made by "a gathering of distinguished Muslim clergymen in the United Arab Emirates", to decide whether "under Islamic law a man can divorce his wife through SMS text messaging"(*The Vigil* 320). His reaction to this is astonishment at the compulsion that America feels "to get involved this closely with people like these" (*The Vigil* 320). The disgust and revulsion experienced in this instance by James is not directed against Taliban but the ordinary Afghanis and their view of an important aspect of social interaction and its laws. He takes a reductive view of Muslim faith and tries to sum it up in these words:

> with their fasts and their prayers, and their desire for four wives and the segregation of sexes, their fondness for crimes of passion and their abhorrence of the very word 'alcohol', not forgetting their belligerent self-pity…will not adjust to life in the First World.(Aslam, *The Vigil* 320)[16]

This homogenizing of all Muslims of the world on the basis of their religious creeds and practices not only demonizes the Muslims but also contrasts it with the life in the First World. The above quote lists all the grievances the Western media and literary discourse hold against the Muslims without making any distinction between the Muslims belonging to different cultures. It is pertinent to note that the harmless acts of 'fasting' and 'praying' are included among the threats the Muslim way of life supposedly poses to the West.

A similar critique of the Muslim way of life is voiced by a British born and bred Muslim daughter of a Pakistani born and bred mother in Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*. Kaukab's daughter, Mahjabeen, tells her that she has brought her "laws and codes, the so-called traditions" to "this country [England] like shit on your shoes" (117). Kaukab presents, in embodied form, the threats that James believes emanate from the Muslims who are not likely to adjust to the life in the West. James' evaluation of the character and practices of the Muslims makes no distinction between the Muslims as it seems to believe that all Muslim males keep a desire to have four wives, they indulge in crimes of passion, believe in segregation of sexes, and so on so forth. This description of 'essentials' of the Muslim way of life implies that the host Western societies of the First World are free of these evils. James' opinion of the differing ways of life of the Muslim and First World exhibits the binaristic logic of his thought. He seems to believe that the conflict in Afghanistan between Islam and the West is a reflection of the contrast between these two essentially different ways of life.

The Maps for Lost Lovers describes a similar contrast between the values of intolerance, irrationalism, and insensitiveness of the orthodox and believing Muslims and forbearance, logical reasoning, and assimilation in western society of the secular Muslims. The difference of the motives, behavior, and intentions between the caricatured Muslim characters like Kaukab and Surraya and Westernized secular Muslim characters like Shamas, Jugnu, Ujala, in *Maps* is quite in line with the difference that Aslam depicts in *The Vigil* between Marcus, David, Lara on the one hand and Casa, Nabi Khan, and

Gul Rasool on the other. It is the conflict between these two essentialized positions that features in recurrently in Aslam's fiction. In his fiction, the orthodox Muslims express their allegiance to Islam and their grievances against its supposed enemies in irrational, illogical, and dogmatic religious jargon which seems to suggest the presence of an inherent fault in it. Kavita Bhanot points towards Aslam's narrative strategy of "relentless articulation…of all that is wrong with Islam and all believing Muslims" (209) that he employs in his fiction. Clements draws a contrast between the portrayal of Muslim and Western characters in *The Vigil* and says that Western characters "are permitted to paint themselves in Aslam's multi-focal fiction in slightly more sophisticated, intelligent and defensible lights than *Vigil*'s Islamist jihadi types" (110). These western characters are likened by her with Paul Gilroy's definition of "rights-bearing bodies" (Gilroy, *After Empire* 89). Bhanot and Clements' judgement on the contrast between western and Muslim characters in Aslam's fiction testifies to the claim that his fiction foregrounds the conflict between rational and irrational ways of being epitomized by westerners and Islamists respectively.

In *The Vigil*, an irrational and immoral Muslim misfit in the First World just like Kaukab, is James' neighbor in America who " keeps Islamic Radio on all day" and whom "apart from what he sees of it on al-Jazeera, America does not concern…, it seems"(321). In this thought, James seems to suggest that America or the world it involves itself with is something different from what Al-Jazeera describes or portrays. His assertion points towards the difference between 'real America' which unfolds around his neighbor in day to day dealings and the America of al-Jazeera. James' resentment at the coverage of America by Al-Jazeera highlights the role of media in directing the lives of people. James, however, eschews the discussion of the ways the Western media (CNN, BBC etc.) shapes his and other Americans' view of the Muslim world whose affairs they, in their reckoning, reluctantly, get involved with. This objective media largely excludes or at least ignores the concerns or point of view of the Muslims whose culture and religious practices are usually made available to its audience from the stand point of a westerner instead of reflecting Muslims' own estimation of them. In *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*(2011), Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin highlight how Western media carries out the "distortion of particular features of Muslim life and custom, reducing the diversity of Muslims and their existence as individuals to a fixed object- a caricature in fact" (3). Aslam's representation of the

Muslims and their lives is criticized for its reliance on discourses of Western media. He is taken to task for implicating Islam as a religion in the crimes committed by extremist or orthodox Muslim characters. "In *The Vigil* more than *The Maps,* Aslam figures aspects of Islam itself… as having belligerent, anti-scientific, anti-cultural historical associations and connections" (Clements 108). Clements further claims that Aslam's statement on Islam and its teachings "seem to paint Islam as warmongering and inherently barbaric" (Clements 108). Anushman Mondal in his essay, "The Trace of the Cryptic in Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and Anticommunism: A Genealogy of the Rhetoric on Hidden Enemies and Unseen Threats" edited in *Muslims, Trust and Multiculturalism* (Amina Yaqin et al. 2018), relates the crypticness of Muslims in Western cultures with Jews and communists and states that "[t]he crypto-Islamist figure is, however, but one avatar of the wider figure of cryptic" (Mondal, "The Trace" 41). The trope of this Cryptic figure slides "from Jew to Communist to Muslim, despite the very different ways in which each of these relates to notions of visibility and invisibility as such (Mondal, "The Trace" 41). In Morey's view, Mondal "sees this figure as an instance of the 'cryptic': a totalising construction in which Muslims are understood always to possess the lurking qualities of extremism, even when they are ostensibly passing as integrated, Westernised subjects" (Morey, *Muslims, Trust* 13). These observations expose the role of Western media that colours James' view of his Muslim neighbour that he presents as an example of a Muslim misfit in host Western societies.

The irrationality and hatred of Western way of life of his Muslim neighbour in America is further highlighted by James, by musing about his decision to remove bacon, alcohol, and ham from the shelves of his convenience store and by refusing to stock Jewish newspapers, in a neighborhood with ninety-five percent white population (*The Vigil* 321). Pitched against this is James indifference towards these personal (though irrational and extremist) choices. James, however, regrets his neighbor's and his family's decision not to socialize with his fiancée, a fellow CIA operative who had taken part in the bombing of Afghanistan which killed many civilians. He absolves her fiancée of all blames of killing of innocent Afghanis. He thinks that storekeeper and his family "should know she was helping to uproot terrorists, that efforts were made to keep the civilian casualties to a minimum" (Aslam, *The Vigil* 322). James grievances against his neighbor portray him 'ungrateful' and irrational Muslim refugee in America. His extremism not only, in James' view, restricts him from understanding his personal profit or loss,

signaled by his neighbour's removal of bacon, alcohol and other essentials needed by ninety five percent Jewish neighborhood but also by his wife's refusal to accept James' fiancée's suggestion of visiting a music recital with her (*The Vigil* 321).

This narrative strategy *in The Vigil* seems to foreground contrasts between two different approaches to life. The first approach, benign, humane, and receptive is reflected in James' and his Fiancée's behaviour. The other harsh, confrontational, and ungrateful is evinced in the manner of owner of Muslim convenience store and his wife's attitude towards the neighbours and their socializing efforts. Islam Channel and Al-Jazeera are singled out by James for inculcating 'invented grievances' in the Muslims all over the world. James critique of the Muslim channels homogenizes the Muslim world and its attitude towards Western conduct with regard to the Muslims in countries facing war situations and inside their own Western borders. James' and his fellow Americans' fight in this sense assumes wider dimensions as they are seen engaged in war against a whole way of living and not just against the al-Qaeda and Taliban guerrillas. In this fight, however, they seem to occupy higher moral grounds than their Islamist opponents.

Taliban seem to present an embodied form of Islam as an irrational and anti-science/knowledge religion. Apart from science, Taliban are averse to every new idea or knowledge that conflicts with their sense of the Islamic faith. Explaining Qatrina's reason for nailing the books to the ceiling of her house, the narrator states that "[t]he original thought was heresy to the Taliban and they would have burned the books" (Aslam 11). In a similar critique of Taliban's aversion to images made out to be part of Islamic faith, Marcus informs Lara that "'The Taliban would even burn a treasured family letter because the stamp showed a butterfly,'" (*The Vigil* 13). Taliban's demand to slap a ban on weather forecasts; the likelihood of burning of books by them; and the destruction of treasured letters by them speak of their aversion to knowledge, rationality, and affective attachment. As the anti feelings are cited by the Taliban as injunctions of religion, Islam and Taliban's ideology start to look inseparable from each other.

In a contrast to the outer spaces dominated by Taliban and their restrictive Islamic ideology, Marcus' house becomes a metaphor for safety, syncretism, tolerance, and hope for the future of not just Afghanistan but of the whole world. All the characters belonging to different countries and representing different ideologies gather, for one reason or another, under the protective domestic space his house offers. This domestic

space is an epitome of dominance of reason and senses over irrationality of blind faith prevalent in outside the four walls of this house. The house "[beginning] on the ground floor, each of the first five rooms, was dedicated to one of the five senses…" and contained paintings and calligraphy depicting the embodiment of these senses (*The Vigil* 12). This reliance on five senses depicted in the beginning of the book is then contrasted with the theocracy of the Taliban and Islamists, dominating the outer spaces of Afghanistan. The reader is told that in the room dedicated to the faculty of smell the "angels bent down towards the feet of humans, to ascertain from the odour whether these feet had ever walked towards a mosque. Others leaned towards bellies, to check for fasting during the holy month of Ramadan" (*The Vigil* 12). This painting performs two functions in the narrative scheme of *The Vigil*. First, it foregrounds the superstitious and irrational belief of the painter in the existence of angels. Second, Taliban's intolerance of paintings showcasing the religious themes testifies to the restrictive thought that governs their social dealings. *The Vigil* brings out this inhumanity, irrationality, immorality, and cruelty of the orthodox Muslims by narrating many incidents in its pages. In one such incident, the cleric of Usha obstructs Qatrina and Marcus from using their house as a clinic for needy Afghans. He grants the two doctors the permission only when Marcus promises to make "satkash rose perfume for him" that "the very few people who could afford it took it with them to Arabia to sprinkle on Muhammad's grave. An immense honour" (24). At another place, the book relates the murder with Muslim way of life by stating that:

> no true Muslim should shrink from killing in cold blood his jihad training included slitting the throats of sheep and horses while reciting the verse from the holy Koran which gives permission to massacre prisoners of war: *It is not for the Prophet to have captives until he has spread fear of slaughter in the land*. (Italics in original, *The Vigil* 121)

A few lines later this relation is further strengthened when Casa chants the sacred words of the Koran. "*I will instil terror in the hearts of the Infidels, strike off their heads, and strike off from them every fingertip*" (italics in original, 121). Although the original verse of the Koran is in the form of a command to the believers in a certain context, Casa's chanting it makes it out to be as if it were a motto, a song, an oath of allegiance or code of conduct prescribed for ordinary Muslims in ordinary situations. Priyamavada Gopal summarizes this tendency of distorting and quoting the verses of Qur'an in *The Vigil* in these words:

> The novel is dotted with long passages where linguistic flourishes and internal monologues in italicized print (mostly in Casa's head) conceal generalizations of somewhat startling crudity and questionable historical insight in relation to Afghanistan, Afghans and Islam. ("Of Capitalism" 23)

It may safely be said that at many places the text displaces the immorality, irrationality, and inhumanity of the orthodox Muslims on to the verses of Qur'an and saying of Prophet Muhammad.

The book also narrates several instances that rehearse the themes related with stereotypical aggressive sexuality of the Muslim males. The character of the cleric responsible for Zameen's abduction by the Soviet soldiers and killer of his many wives is an example of this male dominated by desire. This desire is then linked with teachings and commandments of Allah and Koran. Casa earlier sees appearance of Duniya as a gift from God to be possessed by him. This putative Muslim obsession with desire is highlighted by *The Vigil* by claiming that Allah wants Muslims to have sexual intercourse/intimacy before dying. This idea is articulated by Nabi Khan before sending suicide bombers to their mission: "And since Allah says that no one must die a virgin, Nabi Khan had arranged for them to know intimacy for the first and the last time in this life" (*The vigil* 246). Their obsession with desire is reflected in their thoughts of women and *houris*. The omniscient narrator quotes an Islamic teaching with ambiguous authenticity to highlight Muslim males' obsession with desire: "David read somewhere that if a Muslim doesn't look at a beautiful woman here on earth, Allah will allow him to possess her in Paradise" (*The Vigil* 273). Both fulfillment of desire and abstinence from it are abstracted as some religious code and not reflect a personal choice of an individual.

David and James' perspective on Muslim males' preoccupation with sexual desire is challenged by Casa. Casa questions many of the Western assumptions about the Muslim way of life and Islam with his character and musings, though some of these thoughts confirm the negative imaginings of Western characters of the Muslim. As a taxi driver, he questions his Western passengers' view of the afterlife as a promise of several houris for a male Muslim. Casa reacts internally to the questions of his Western interlocutors: "…their prurience was an offence to him. He didn't know a single Muslim whose first thought on hearing the word 'Paradise' was *Seventy-two virgins*" (*The vigil* 228). At another place, James confronts Casa about Muslims belief that states the "that

everyone on the planet will become a Muslim when the Islamic Messiah appears just before Judgement Day, and that those who refuse will be put to the sword?" Casa's reply negates this piece of information regarding Islam in these words: "'I have never heard that before…You've been misinformed about Islam'" (289). Casa's reply contests many of the falsehoods and misconceptions David, James, Marcus and the narrative voice attaches with the figure of Muslims and Islam. Examples of this erroneous knowledge of the Islam may be found in critique of Anglophone South Asian fiction as well. Discussing Munil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu* (2001), in *Modern South Asian Literature in English*, Paul Brian states that sacrifice of goat is performed at Bakr-Eid "to commemorate the end of Ramadan" (216). At another occasion he states that Sikhism's holy book is the *Unjeel* (Bible) (Brian 55). James and to some extent David and Marcus hold some Islamic creeds as central to its theology that bear little significance in the quotidian life of the Muslims. This imagined centrality then is employed to pronounce judgements on whole Islamic way of life.

A somewhat similar process may be detected at work in the Marriage and divorce laws of Islam that come under spotlight through questioning of Westerners in *The Vigil*. "It's not as though Allah in his inscrutable wisdom has made it difficult for a man to divorce his wife: he just says the words 'I divorce thee' three times and all connections are severed" (*The Vigil* 281). Removing the verse from its context which inverses the whole meaning of the preceding theme in Qur'an and presenting the act of divorcing as an act desired by Allah falsifies the Islamic laws of divorce. The whole philosophy of Islamic laws of divorce makes it very difficult for a Muslim male to divorce his wife. Allah describes the act of divorce as the worst of the legal acts He recognizes. Moreover, Islam stresses the need not to sever the bond of marriage for petty gains and sexual desire. A particularly distorted picture of the Islamic laws of divorce is also described *Maps for the Lost Lovers*. A Muslim woman (Souraya) in the novel is trying to reunite with her previous husband who has divorced her in a drunken state. She must, however, must first marry another Muslim male, get divorced by him to be able to reunite with her first husband. Her quest and methods adopted remain in violation of the true spirit of Islamic code which stipulates that the second marriage must be an act of complete sincerity and not a stepping stone on a pathway to reunion with the first husband. Kanwal contests this depiction of the laws of divorce and offers an Islamic perspective on them in *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani fiction* (2015).

5.6 Conclusion

All the instances of contrasts between West and Islam discussed in the foregoing pages of this chapter indicate that there remains a significant gap between worldviews of these two civilizations. Some fundamental points of this difference are traced by *The Wasted Vigil* through different incidents by creating a dialogic contention between different characters. In this discursive confrontation, rational secular and liberal humanist premises seem to collide with theologically determined epistemology of the fundamentalist version of Islam. The former seem to have usurped some of the discursive space of the latter not only through more opportunities of articulation it is afforded but also through the inherent nature of literary articulation which seems to favour the premises of the former. This situation signals the silence of *differend* which denies one party to the conflict the possibility of being heard equally. Moreover, the voice of the moderate Muslims is also appropriated by the warring factions who speak and decide for them. The relationship and struggle for power between the powerful like Nabi Khan, Gul Rasool, David, Casa, and James, are the underlying causes of the helplessness and destruction of the people of Afghanistan. The absence of a rational, kind, and tolerant believing and practicing Muslim from *The Wasted Vigil* reflects how he/she is made a (silenced) victim in this novel of ideas.

This view of Aslam's text is validated when his representation of Western and Muslim characters is compared and contrasted. *The Wasted Vigil*, a novel set in Afghanistan and Pakistan, narrates the story from Western characters' perspectives. Moreover, it is populated by personages that are either Western or westernized in their outlook on life. These characters have been given some saving grace to counter the weaknesses in their behaviour. On the other hand, Muslim characters are delineated as one-dimensional and lacking in sensitivity and humanity. There are also parallels between Taliban's decimation of the artistic representations inscribed on the walls of Marcus' house and Sohail's burning of books of Western literature. Both of these acts evince hatred towards artistic expressions. Both novels portray Islamist characters as averse to secular education. Sohail refuses to send Zaid to school and the Taliban launch suicide bombings against school run by David and bar learning of Afghan girls. Anam and Aslam's portrayal of life inside an Islamic Madrassa is quite similar as well. Zaid, Bihzad and Casa, are subjected to physical and sexual violence by their teachers and

fellow students. While Anam's *The Good Muslim* and Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* inscribe the differend between religious fanaticism of the Islamists and rational secular and liberal humanist zeal of the Western or westernized fictional characters, Tharoor's *Riot* describes the tension that exists between extremist Hindus and secular Muslims. I investigate the *differend* between these two parties in the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews With Contemporary Writers*(Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)*for* Aslam's view on politics of writing and selection of themes in his writings.pp.134-157

[2] Simon Malpas' Jean Francois Lyotard (Routledge, 2003) explains Lyotard's concept of phrase as an event. In his estimation even silence or movement of a cat's tale is a 'phrase': an event.

[3] Madeline Clements' *Writing Islam from a South Asian Perspective*(Palgrave McMillan, 2016) and Amin Malak's *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (State University of New York Press ,2005), both treat him as a representative voice of the Muslims.

[4] In "Phoenix Rising: The West's Use(and Misuse) of Anglophone Memoir by Pakistani Women by Colleen Lutz Clemens(162-171) *Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* (2019), Lutz states that the Taliban is the "most fearsome bogeyman in the US' collective imagination"(169).

[5] Samuel Huntington's book *A Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of the World Order* (1996) states that Muslim values are incompatible with Western values.

[6] A Japanese word that means 'highlighting or emphasizing imperfections' to visualize mends and seams. It is Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold.

[7] Said in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*(1997)shows how Muslims, Islam, and Arabs are portrayed in Western Media. He demonstrates that they equate Islam with violence and as a threat to world (xi-xxii). Aslam's fiction reiterates all the negative opinions of this media in the portrayal of his Islamist characters.

[8] See *Faith and Reason: Their Roles in Religious and Secular* Life by Donald A Crosby, 2011, State University of New York to understand the conflict between faith and reason. I hold that Aslam's book enacts this conflict in its pages.

[9] In *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (Harvard University Press 2011) highlight how Laura Bush and Cherie Blaire, used the discourse of women's right to justify the War on Terror. p 178. On the other hand Senior Bush praised his son by saying that h was a 'devout Christian'.

[10] Rashmi Sadana in *The English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India*. University of California Press, 2012, prescribes an 'ethnographic method of reading the literary texts. This method can reveal the scale of suffering the 'others' of the War on Terror face. Although, *The Vigil*, is praised as expressing the oppression of Afghanis, the victims that are portrayed in favourable colours are Marcus, Lara, David and Qatrina. Marcus' amputation, Qatrina's stoning to death, Beenedikt's killing in Buzkushi, disfiguring of the paintings on the walls by Taliban, and destruction of Buddha's statue emerge as bigger crimes than the crimes against twenty million Afghans whose suffering Mamdani details.

[11] *Sadaf, Shazia. "Human Rights and Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Literature". The Routledge Companion To Pakistani Anglophone Writing, edited by Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam, Routledge, 2019, pp.138-150.* States that human rights is a contradictory enterprise as unknown "enemies are excluded from the same rights through legal codification(p.139).

[12] In "Phoenix Rising: The West's Use(and Misuse) of Anglophone Memoir by Pakistani Women by Colleen Lutz Clemens(162-171) *Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* (2019) states that George Bush's language during War on Terror portrayed America as the "savior of the women" p.167.

[13] To see the transition of Idea of Jihad turning into terrorism of groups see, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader* 1996, Princeton University Press.

[14] See Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin's *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*.Harvard University Press, 2011 for media representation of the Muslims.

[15] Aroosa Kanwal in *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11* discusses how Aslam has quoted the verse out of context.

[16] Kavita Bhanot in "Love, Sex, and Desire Vs Islam in British Muslim Literature" pp 200-212, in *Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*, 2019. Explores how "Young Muslim believers are caricatured" in British Muslim Literature p. 200.

CHAPTER 6

RIGHTING THE WRONGS: RECLAIMING HISTORY BY GRABBING TERRITORY IN SHASHI THAROOR'S *RIOT: A NOVEL*

Can you imagine? A mosque on our holiest site! Muslims praying to Mecca on the very spot where our divine Lord Ram was born!
Shashi Tharoor, *Riot* 53

Everything you write as the truth, I can show you the opposite is also true.
Shashi Tharoor, *Riot* 231

Nothing can be said about reality that does not presuppose it.
Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Differend* 3

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine what view Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Novel* (2001) presents of the strained relations between the Hindus and the Muslims of India. Tharoor's novel engages with the idea of 'Unity in Diversity' presented in Jawaharlal Nehru's book *The Discovery of India* (1946) to stress the significance of syncretism and multiculturalism in India. In *Riot,* Tharoor dissects this nationalist Indian ethos and passes it through the sieve of Hindu/Muslim conflicts that recur in India at regular intervals. Although the book presents Muslims of India as a threatened minority that is often discriminated against by the people and state institutions, it tries to salvage the image of secular India by drawing a line between Hinduism and Hindutva. The book describes 'Hinduism' as a religion without fundamentals that embraces many doctrines and practices. The ideology and practices of Hindutva on the other hand, have been portrayed as a threat to secularism of syncretic and multicultural Indian.

Shashi Tharoor is an Indian politician, a writer, and a former international diplomat at United Nations. He has been a Member of Indian Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, since 2009 from the platform of Indian

National Congress. He has also served as Minister of State for External Affairs and as Minister of Human Resource Development in Indian Government. He is also the author of a large number of columns and articles in newspapers and scholarly journals. His fiction and non-fiction deal with Indian history, culture, film, politics, society, and Indian foreign policy etc. Tharoor's fictional writings include *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990), *Show Business* (1992), and *Riot* (2001).

Some of Tharoor's non-fictional titles are listed below that show his preoccupation with Indian political and cultural life. These include *Reasons of State* (1985), *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997), *Nehru: The Invention of India* (2003), *Bookless in Baghdad* (2005), *The Elephant, the Tiger, and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India-The Emerging 21st-Century Power* (2007), *Shadows Across the Playing Field: Sixty Years of India-Pakistan Cricket* (2009), *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century* (2012), *India Shastra: Reflections on the Nation in our Time* (2015), *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (2017), first published in India as *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* (2016), *Why I Am A Hindu* (2018), *The Paradoxical Prime Minister* (2018), and *The Hindu Way* (2019).

In his fiction as well as non-fiction, Tharoor presents the idea of an Indian nation that is historically secular, plural, and tolerant. He portrays Hinduism as an absorptive religion but criticizes the rising tide of Hindutva which, according to him, is against the very idea of India and true spirit of Indian nation. He upholds Nehru's vision of syncretic past of secular India but, at the same time, the books like *Why I am a Hindu* and *The Hindu Way* reflect his preference for the Hindu religion. His political, ideological, and social views about India, the relation between Majority Hindus and minorities, particularly the Muslims, and the place of religion in public and private life constitute the main concerns of *Riot*.

Shashi Tharoor is a political writer whose writings project the image of India as an ancient abode of secularism, a fact enshrined in the Constitution of India. *Riot* is born out of his vision of secular India working as a *Thaali*, a platter of different foods, just like American 'melting pot'. To advance the vision of 'secular', 'tolerant', and 'benign' India, Tharoor makes use of Indian ancient and recent history, particularly the period of British Raj in India and lays blame at the feet of the British policy of 'divide and rule' for inciting hatred among the different communities of India.[1] His version of

the Indian History (like that of most of the Hindu historians and official Indian version of it) narrates Indian freedom struggle against the British in a way in which Muslim League and its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah (along with the Muslims who later became Pakistanis) emerge as villains for dividing 'mother India' into two parts by playing (consciously) in the hands of the British Raj.[2] This particular (linear) version of history stressing some landmark events of Indian freedom struggle and separate histories of independent India and Pakistan helps cement the image of Muslims and Pakistan as extremists and that of India as a tolerant secular nation in Tharoor's fictional and non-fictional writings.

Tharoor's first novel, *The Great Indian Novel*, writes the history of late colonial and independent India in terms of the characters and events of great Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. The iconography and terminology used in this epic saturate the quotidian Indian reality and has become part of contemporary Indian nationalism. "Writing *Mahabharatas*, it seems, is by no means a 'medieval' practice but very much part of the ongoing negotiations of 'Indianness' in the postcolonial state" (Wiemann 86). Wiemann, in *Genres of Modernity: Contemporary Indian Novels in English* (2008), claims that Vyasa, the narrator of the rewritten *Mahabharata* in Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, presents the Sanskritized version of the history of India and that "Tharoor's text not simply repeats but principally *reflects* the ideological manoeuvres that Chatterjee and others have identified at work in the creation of 19th century Indian nationalism" (Wiemann 87).[3] In the novel, Tharoor "superimpose[s] his own selective reading of the epic onto modern Indian history" and confirms "elitist historiography" in the manner employed by the nationalist elite of the freedom struggle against Britain (Wiemann 87). Wiemann also relates emergence of Tharoor's text with televised broadcast of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and claims that these broadcasts from the TV channel run by Indian state articulated the national unity in terms of Hindu culture and brought the "Sanscritic high culture into the domain of popular culture" (Wiemann 87).[4] The role played by Tharoor's text in promoting a Hindu-inflected nationalism through his advocacy of secularism, syncretism, and multiculturalism highlights a deeper pattern of containing the Muslim difference within the compulsive discourse of Indian nationalism. While this nationalism is portrayed as secular the idiom it employs to articulate the social and cultural requisites as its markers remains influenced by ideology of Sanskritized Brahmanism. Although Tharoor's fiction and non-fiction project the image of Hinduism

as an eclectic and non-binding religion, his critique of Hindutva employs the same Sanskritized idiom projected as rational and secular discourse. Tharoor's *Riot* operates largely in the framework of these ideas of Indian secularism and syncretic past of the Hindu/Muslim relations that are utilized by the (Hindu) Indian state and its institutions to suppress the voice of the Muslims who fall short of conforming to the demands of Hinduised secularist nationalism.

Frederick Jameson's evaluation of Indian writing as 'an allegory of the nation' seems an apt description for much of Tharoor's writings. He is political writer and incorporates the events from past and recent history of the South Asian region in his writings in order to represent its political and social reality. In an effort to present an imagined syncretistic and multicultural history and view of the social realities of South Asian (real and imaginary) spaces, he relies on the ideas of secular rational discourse and liberal humanist vision of life. This discourse looks at expression of religiosity (mostly by Muslim characters) with skepticism and enforces instead of dismantling the negative image of the figure of the Indian and Pakistani Muslim.

In *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* or *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*, Tharoor undertakes to establish this conception of the Indian nation as a historical entity. His writings seem to continue the project of (Hindu) nation formation started by Henry Vivian Derozio and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee at Hindoo College of Calcutta although he criticizes the exclusionary imaginings of Indian nation by Hindutva. Citing exclusion of "black American slave populations of the colonies and the Native American Indian population of the New World" as examples, Seyla Benhabib states that: "Every act of foundation and every act of constitution of a polity may conceal a moment of exclusionary violence which constitutes, defines, and excludes the other" (Benhabib 10). I study Tharoor's *Riot* to analyze how his projection of the view of a secular, syncretic, and multicultural Indian nation engages with processes of exclusions and inclusions utilized by the Rightist Hindutva in their idealization of a Hindu nation. Identity formation "is indeed the site of the appearance of 'differend' in history" (Benhabib 10). I analyze to what extent Benhabib's insight may be applied to emergence of the Muslim differend in the process of imagining a nationalist historical identity in *Riot*.

6.2 The *Differend* of Democracy: A Rational and Secular Hindu's View

In this part, I document what view of the Muslim difference the apparently objective historiography of India traced in the pages of *Riot* offers. I explore how the bureaucratic voice of an Indian civil servant both foregrounds and suppresses the Muslim *differend* within Indian social and political debates. Tharoor, like Aslam and Anam, is a political writer whose politics seeks to diffuse and assimilate the difference the figure of the Muslim indicates within the polemics of religious and the secular revolving around the debates about what constitutes an Indian identity.

Tharoor's *Riot* begins with two diametrically opposed epigraphs regarding the nature of history. The first one is from Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*: "History is sacred kind of writing, because truth is essential to it, and where truth is, there God himself is, so far as truth is concerned"(qtd. in Tharoor, epigraph) . The second epigraph has been taken from Karl Marx's *The Holy Family*: "History is nothing but the activity of man in pursuit of his ends" (qtd. in Tharoor as epigraph). The novel narrates the story of an American PhD student, "Priscilla Hart, 24, of Manhattan, a volunteer with the nongovernmental organization HELP-US" who "was beaten and stabbed to death in Zalilgarh town in the state of Utter Pradesh" (*Riot* 1). It also narrates the events leading up to this murder as well as subsequent investigation and analysis of Hindu/Muslim relations between these two largest of the Indian communities. The murder of American student occurs in fictional town of Zalilgarh in which a huge procession is organized by the majority Hindu population "to take consecrated bricks" to be used in the construction of "a temple, the Ram Janmabhoomi, on a disputed site occupied by a disused sixteenth-century mosque, the *Babri Masjid*" (Tharoor *Riot*, 4).[5] The town of Zalilgarh metonymically represents whole of India in its demography as well as social and political life. It has the Hindu majority population with areas of Muslim population, Muslim places of worship, and shops and businesses owned by the Muslims. The Muslims remain threatened by prospect of the communal violence by the majority Hindu population and also because of the inaction or complicity of government of India. Federal District Administration and Police which are tasked with the responsibility to ensure peace and normal life in the town marred by sporadic violence between the Hindus and the Muslims become un/willingly complicit or incapable of delivering their charge.

The story of Priscilla's murder during Hindu/Muslim riot unfolds through newspaper reports, personal diaries, cables sent by different characters to each other, personal notebooks, and transcripts of recorded interviews, Priscilla's scrapbook and letters to her friend, Cindy Valeriani, personal narrations, and her married boyfriend Lakshman's personal journals. Priscilla's death activates different registers of narration that articulate the differing responses (from highly affective to completely indifferent ones) by the characters. Within these registers is inscribed the unfolding story (largely linear but interrupted by episodic narration) of the death of American university student. Although the love affair between Priscilla and Lakshman, the District Magistrate of Zalilgarh, constitutes the frame story of *Riot*, the novel through its polemics exemplifies the two (opposite) functions assigned to the history by Cervantes and Marx quoted as epigraphs of the novel. The novel enacts seemingly irresolvable conflict, the *differend*, between the Hindus and the Muslims of India over ownership of history and Indian spaces, metonymically represented by *Babri Masjid*/Ramjanmabhoomi. The claims of Hindus and Muslims offer heterogeneous versions of the history of India that compete for legitimacy and authenticity.

These differences between the Hindus and the Muslims represent an instance of *differend* as the parties to this conflict offer mutually exclusive versions of a single 'event' or phenomenon. With regard to this *differend* a single rule of judgement acceptable to both parties seems to remain unavailable. The novel juxtaposes opposite claims of the Muslims and those of the Hindus about the history and their territorial rights. These claims provide the basis for breeding ground for recurring communal riots among them and claim the lives of the rioters as well as of the bystanders. Priscilla is one such bystander whose death, her parents will learn, "doesn't make that much of a difference in a land of so many deaths" (Tharoor, *Riot* 11). Priscilla's lover, Lakshman, represents the rational secular and liberal humanist voice of putative multi-faith and multi-ethnic India and remains (avowedly) an outsider like her in the conflict over territory and history of India, despite occupying the highly influential place of District Magistrate of the town. The view of the communal riots offered by Lakshman, Gurinder (District Police Officer), and Professor Sarwar resonate with Tharoor's own estimation of Indian (supposed and actual) realities. It is mostly through these characters' engagement with and responses to the events happening around them that the text offers an idealized view of Indian reality. They largely proffer the similar account of the riots

and the murder that reflects their preference for rational and humanistic vision of human relations. Priscilla and Lakshman are the only two persons in conflict-ridden town of Zalilgarh, the book tells us, with "a comparable frame of reference, who['ve] read the same sort of books, seen the same movies, heard some of the same music" (Tharoor, *Riot* 20). As Lakshman and Priscilla's view of the Hindu/Muslim conflict drives the narration forward, it is justifiable to hold that it occupies a privileged position among many view points. Ram Charan Gupta who represents the extremist Hindus of India contests their evaluation of Indian reality. A conspicuous absence in the novel remains, however, the voice of the Marginalised poor Indian Muslim along with that of those who became Pakistanis after the partition of India in 1947, although a considerable part of the polemics in *Riot* may be understood as an effort to delegitimize their claims of separate culture and identity. How these two categories of the absent characters view the Hindu/Muslim relations in India remains outside the concerns and debates of the novel, although they constitute as the one party to the irresolvable conflict, the *differend*, between Hindus and Muslims of India.

Riot employs value judgement system of secular rationality to interpret the tensions between the Hindus and Muslims of India. This is the comparable frame of reference mentioned by the narrator to describe the commonalities between Priscilla and Lakshman. Within this (largely Western) 'comparable frame of reference' shared by both lovers unfolds the story of the legacy of British colonial rule and the palpable effects it left on the lives of the Indians. This conflictual reality is articulated from different positions, Priscilla's being just one such version of the social reality of present day India. Lakshman's reasoned view point seems to claim privilege over all the others articulated from different heterogeneous positions. But his homogeneous view is likely to hit many snags as it tries to present India as a collectivity unified in its diversity. K. D. Verma states that inscribing India as a unified entity "presupposes a direct confrontation with the moral and philosophical incongruities and unresolvabilities of history" (*ix*). Verma seems to suggest that the tensions present in history of India are likely to remain irresolvable because of their incongruous nature.

One such tension is realized by Priscilla who keeps on informing her friend, Cindy, about the social and political realities of India. Her detached view of the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims helps dilute the effects this tension leaves on the

lives of the Muslim of India. After imparting basic information about demography and ethnic spread of India and story of its independence from British rule to Cindy Valeriani as told to her by Lakshman, Priscilla writes to her friend back home:

> There's a lot of tension in these parts over something called the Ram Janmabhoomi, a temple that Hindus say was destroyed by the Mughal emperor Babar in 1526. Well, Babar…replaced it with a mosque, apparently, and these Hindus want to reverse history and put the temple back where the mosque now stands. Though Lakshman tells me there's no proof there ever was a temple there. (Tharoor, *Riot* 22)

Priscilla's understanding of the tensions between two Indian communities presents it as dispute over land. This understanding, however, has been transmitted to her by Lakshman. Lakshman, a representative of the avowedly secular Indian state, the sane voice of the novel, and proponent of 'Nehruvian secular consensus', however, calls Zalilgarh "armpit of India" to underscore the insignificance of what Priscilla calls 'tensions' in this town (23). Thus, despite the longevity of the 'tension' and frequency of riots between Hindus and Muslims in Zalilgarh the phenomenon, Lakshman views it as marginal and peripheral with regard to (putatively) mainstream secular and tolerant Indian reality. His position as the most powerful person in the District accords him the privilege to 'effectuate' the "establishment procedures [of reality] defined by a unanimously agreed-upon protocol", as he wants (Lyotard, *The Differend* 4). In Lyotard's view "the publishing industry" and "historical inquiry" work as two major protocols to establish reality (4). When applied to Tharoor's novel, Lyotard's observation may be helpful in unmasking the procedures that hide the *differends* between different communities through publishing industry and historical inquiry. Lakshman's idea of India like that of Sarwar is based upon historical inquiry. Although it challenges the extremist Hindus' claims about the place of Ramjanmabhoomi at the site of *Babri Masjid* by employing the method of historical inquiry, it nonetheless uses the same method to suppress the *differend* of Hindu/Muslim conflict by suggesting that it is a minor phenomenon when viewed in the context of overall Indian reality. This playing down of the significance of the ever present hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims of India reflects a nationalist impulse that puts the Muslims under pressure to conform to the views of Indian reality as desired by the (largely Hindu) nationalist imaginary.

Despite his differences with extremist forms of nationalism that seeks to expunge the Muslims from India, Lakshman appeals for a nationalism that is

assimilationist in its character. Employing ethnographic and rational secular historicizing idioms, Lakshman tells Priscilla some of the basic demographic and historical 'facts' about India. He tells her that "there are five major sources of division in India- language, region, caste, class and religion" (Tharoor *Riot* 42). Hinduism and Islam being the two major religions of India are, generally, at odds with each because of the polytheism of the former and monotheism of the latter. The divisions and antagonism between these two religions and the consequent interpersonal, linguistic, social, and political (often antagonistic) relations among their followers constitute the quotidian reality of larger part of this South Asian polity. Lakshman says religion breeds "communalism- the sense of religious chauvinism that transforms itself into bigotry, and sometimes violence against the followers of other faiths" (Tharoor, *Riot* 44). As earlier, Lakshman plays down the importance of religious differences among the Muslims and Hindus of India by using the objective language and the adverb 'sometimes'. The (Hindu) chauvinism expressed by the desire of the Hindus to build a temple for Ram where a mosque stands has its roots in Hindu mythology and *varnashrama,* the division of society into four castes. Lakshman acknowledges this "three thousand years of discrimination" against Untouchables and the status of Indian Muslims as "threatened minority" (44). His condescending acknowledgement of the status of the Indian Muslims exhibits a desire for protective tolerance of the 'other'. He enunciates Secular India's position that these problems of India might be dealt with by what he terms "creative federalism" and "resilience of Indian Democracy… [.] Democracy will solve the problems we're having with some disaffected Sikhs in Punjab; and democracy, more of it, is the only answer for the frustration of India's Muslims too"(*Riot* 44-5). The solution Lakshman offers to the problems of different marginalized communities of India remains a distant prospect and blunts the immediacy of the life threatening conditions of the Muslims. Moreover, he converts the religious differences into political ones and puts forth a remedy that holds more threat than ameliorative potential.

The benign view of Indian democracy offered by Lakshman, however, remains a suspect promise in view of the many scholars. Arundhati Roy, among other critics of Indian democracy, describes the oppressive workings of it in her Essay "Democracy", collected in her collection of essays, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2013). She exposes the political moves of Parliamentary democracy made by democrats of different Indian political parties that disregard the predicament of oppressed Indian

communities especially of Muslims for political gains. In a political environment of parliamentary democracy governed by the considerations of personal gains by democrats the already ghettoized and Jewishized Muslim minority remains 'unrepresented or underrepresented'. The solution that Lakshman offers for the redressal of the complaints of the plaintiffs, the Muslims, would likely turn them into Lyotardian victims through the political moves of democracy resulting in perpetration of wrongs against them by the majority Hindus.

Lakshman not only posits a one dimensional view of Indian reality but also lays down the principles for confirming it. Put in Lyotardian terms, he establishes and employs "verification procedures" of reality (Lyotard, *The Differend* 32) through his recognition and interpretation of the threatened status of the Muslims of India and the violence against. The similar procedures of verification of reality helped in the "annihilation of the reality of gas chambers" and also the "annihilation of the referent's reality during verification procedures" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 32). Lakshman's solution to the problems faced by the Muslims of India presupposes a reality about what he calls 'frustrations' of the Muslims which indicates surety of his knowledge of the conditions of the Muslims. It is significant to note that his proposed solution is not articulated before a Muslim but before an American (outsider). So the suggested solution is articulated and shared between those (Hindus and Euro-Americans) who are not the target of the silence and wrongs of the *differend* but its objective onlookers. This appropriation of Muslim voice is a greater *differend* than the one suffered by them in the form of rapes, killings, torture, lynchings, and other atrocities committed against them by the rightist Hindus with the active support of government. At best, Lakshman's support for the Muslims of India represents the scenario that Linda Alcof explains in her essay, "The Problem of Speaking for Others":

> Though the speaker may be trying to materially improve the situation of some lesser-privileged group, the effects of her discourse is to reinforce racist, imperialist conceptions and perhaps also to further silence the lesser-privileged group's own ability to speak and be heard. (26)

Lakshman's estimation of the constituent elements of Indian demography and the nature of their interpersonal relationship with each other derives sustenance from the nationalist narrative of inclusive India that itself relegates the concerns of the Muslims to the

margins of mainly Hindu society of India. Spivak insinuates towards this lack in Western concepts when she challenges the naturalness, goodness, and incontestability of the concepts like nation, democracy, and participation as they were "written somewhere else, in the social formations of Western Europe" (Spivak, *Teaching Machine* 60). Seyla Benhabib also points out the flawed nature of democracy, in her essay, "Democracy and Difference: Reflections on Metaphysics of Lyotard and Derrida" (1994), in these words: "Certainly the closed circuit of institutional democratic politics may stifle the differend, it may even make it disappear" (17). Therefore, Lakshman's proposed solution for addressing the problems faced by the Muslims not only appropriates the voice of the Muslims but also 'stifle' the *differend*. It seems convincing to state that this differend has in the first place been effectuated through the workings of democratic institutions of India.

Lakshman's (and latter Sarwar's and Gurinder's) representation of the reality faced by Muslims and other less-privileged communities reveals more about their privileged position in Indian society than describing the status of the re/presented: the Muslims. Ilan Kapoor, in his essay, "Hyper Self-Reflexive Development? Spivak on Representing the Third World 'Other'", claims that the "representation of the subaltern are inevitably loaded", and native informants or Privileged Westerner is determined by his/her privileged position instead of the consideration of the truthful articulation of subaltern's reality (I. Kapoor 631). The core of Lakshman's identity is already situated in the (Hindu) culture and discourse of democracy and democratic institutions of which he is a prominent part. Therefore, in Kapoor's view he "can never represent or act from an 'outside', since [he is] always already situated inside discourse, culture, institutions, geopolitics" (I. Kapoor 640). His situatedness within the discourse of democracy forecloses any chance of his being an insider of the community that is marginalized by this discourse. Lakshman's phrase 'more democracy' without explicating what and wherein this increase in democracy lies or how and where it would come from might help strengthen further a *differend* among the majority Hindus and minority Muslims in India. It operates as a verification procedure that reduces the Muslims to the position of a Lyotardian victim.

Lyotard exposes the role of democracy in stifling the voice of the victims it creates in these words: "In the deliberative politics of modern democracies, the differend

is exposed, even though the transcendental appearance of a single finality that would bring it to a resolution persists in helping forget the differend, in making it bearable" (*The Differend* 147). Lakshman's statement thus both exposes and helps forget the *differend* of Muslim sufferings. This protective benignity emblematized by Indian democracy may be extended to the Muslims by allowing them "their own Personal Law" and by adopting a policy of non-interference by the Indian Government "with their social customs, however retrograde they may be…"(Tharoor, *Riot* 44). The term 'retrograde' Muslim customs, reminiscent of Nehru's critique of Muslim middle classes' lack of modernity in *The Discovery of India*, also resonates with the Indian state's position on the status and nature of the Muslims and the religion they belong to: Islam. It also establishes Indian polity made up in large measures by the Hindus and non-Muslims as a progressive and tolerant entity in contradistinction with the actual reality experienced by the Muslims of India. Lakshman's view of India also assigns certain essentialism to Indian 'way' of being. He claims that the rising "militant Hinduism" is "challenging the very basis of Indianness…" (Tharoor, *Riot* 45). The reality of 'basis of Indianness' that Lakshman proffers contradicts the criteria Lyotard lays down in *The Differend* for establishment and verification of any reality:

> Reality has to be established, and it will be all the better established if one has independent testimonies of it. These testimonies are phrases having the same referent, but not immediately linked to each other. (Lyotard, *The Differend* 38).

There is hardly any independent testimony to verify the nature of 'the very basis on Indianness' that Lakshman posits as some knowable fact. It hides the fact that "historical suspicions between Hindus and Muslims could still act as mobilizing principles leading to extreme violence and brutality" (Morey and Tickell, x). Lakshman's downplaying of the significance of Zalilgarh and the violence in it as ignorable instances with regard to the wider peaceful coexistence of the Hindus and the Muslims seeks to lessen the significance of what Morey and Tickell call the historical suspicion.

Arundhati Roy frequently highlights the deteriorating nature of Hindu/Muslim coexistence caused by the rise in Hindutva sentiment in India. She states that after the burning of train at Godhra in Gujrat, Muslims were subjected to worst kind of torture and humiliations.[6] In Lakshman's view the Hindutva sentiment is limited to a minor section of Hindu population but in Arundhati Roy's reckoning this is a widespread phenomena

that has spread even to "Middle-class people [who] participated in looting [the houses of Muslims] (On one memorable occasion a family arrived in a Mitsubishi Lancer)" (Roy, *Algebra* 187). In the essay, Roy goes to considerable length to put together the evidence to establish the fact that hatred of the Muslims is a widespread phenomenon among the ordinary Hindus and not just limited to a minor section of extremist Hindus whose intolerance of the others is defined as Hindutva. Amir Mufti, in his book, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, confirms this view and states that the video tapes of rapes of the Muslim women were shared and circulated among Middleclass households of India.

Roy further states claims that the patterns of torture and brutalities committed by the Nazis were repeated by the Hindu mobs who destroyed Muslim businesses and who "had computer-generated cadastral lists marking out Muslim homes, shops, businesses and even partnerships…They had not just police protection and police connivance but also covering fire" (A. Roy, *Algebra* 187).[7] The discrimination against the Muslims were not limited to businesses as they were "not served in restaurants" with their children denied entry into schools while the parents continuously "liv[ing]in dread that their infants might forget what they've been told and give themselves away by saying 'Ammi!' or 'Abba!' in public and invite sudden and violent death"(Roy *Algebra*188). Roy's assertion that these crimes against the Muslims were committed by the active support of the 'democratic' government elected by the people deflates Lakshman's confidence in the healing power of democracy and creative federalism. Roy claims that either because of its inability to stop the massacre or because of its support for the crimes against the Muslims, "[e]ither way, the State is criminally culpable. And the State acts in the name of its citizen" ("Democracy" 189-190). Peter Morey and Alex Tickell in the book, *Alternative Indias: Writing, Nation and Communalism* (2005), also speak of the complicity of Indian state in stoking up of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims to gain politically in parliamentary democracy. In their view the Congress Party, considered to be a secular political outfit and opponent of the rightist Bharitya Janta Party (BJP), "has had a poor record when it comes to making a stand against aggressive communalist discourses, adopting divisive rhetoric and actions when it has been considered politically expedient" (xvii). Their condemnation of the failure of Congress to stand up for and protect the rights of the Muslims confirms Roy's claim, she

makes somewhere else, that Congress and BJP are the two sides of the same coin when it comes to the treatment of the Muslims by Indian state and its institutions.

As an important part of this state machinery, Lakshman's stakes are mirrored in the way he presents the view of democratic India which is largely peaceful for and just towards its citizens, irrespective of the five differences mentioned by him. His argument thus picks and chooses phrases (events) and links them "by eliminating those that are not opportune" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 84). The intended teleology of Lakshman's argument, to use Lyotard's theory of *differend*, suspends the "differend between genres of discourse" and seeks to achieve "[a]n internal peace… at the price of perpetual differends on the outskirts" (151). In other words, Lakshman instead of advocating the elimination of the Muslim differend defers it to peripheral concerns of the socio-political responsibilities of the state.

Moreover, Lakshman's view of the strained relation between the Hindus and the Muslims of India is articulated in the objective language of a rational secular servant of Indian government. His upper-casteist understanding of the Muslim oppression, the Muslim *differend*, seeks to resolve this dispute through the use of very procedures that engender this victimization in the first place. The rhetoric of Democracy derived from the principles of secularism and rationalism suppresses the dissident voices of the Muslims in order to delineate an image of India that is peaceful. Seen through this lens, it increases the sense of victimhood, wrong, and *differend* felt by the Muslims at the margins of the (Hindu) Indian society.

6.3 The *Differend* of Mother India: The Case of Rightist Hindus

In another manifestation of the *differend* that the novel enacts, Ram Charan Gupta, a Hindu chauvinist, expresses his claims (and those of the extremist Hindus like him) about Hindus' right to ownership of place and history of India. In this view, Muslims and their religious and cultural symbols stand out as heterogeneous impurities introduced into the harmonious civilization of India. The irresolvable conflict, the *differend*, between Hindus and Muslims is metonymically represented by their heterogeneous claims about the birth of Hindu God, Lord Ram, at the place where now Babri Mosque stands. Lakshman's acknowledgement communicated by Priscilla to Cindy Valeriani that the proof confirming the place of Ram's temple at the site of *Babri*

Masjid is lacking evinces his belief in reason and historical research conducted through scientific rational method. The claims of the extremist Hindus that Ram was born at the site of the mosque are, however, derived from the events of an epic (*Ramayana*) and are mythical in their character. Gupta voices this extremist Hindu point of view and considers Lakshman as lacking in 'Indianness' which according to him lies in believing in Hindutva ideology adhered to by him and his associates. He put forth an 'indianness' that is opposite and antagonist to Lakshman's version of it.

Basing his claims of historical truth and reality on a completely different epistemology, Charan Gupta tells Randy Diggs, an American journalist covering the story of Priscilla's murder, that "our god Ram, the hero of the epic Ramayana…was born in Ayodhya" and that "in treta-yuga period of our Hindu calendar, Ayodhya is a town in this state"(Tharoor, *Riot* 52). The next few sentences , phrases, revert to the idiom of logical inference as Gupta concludes that the presence of so many temples to Ram in the city of Ayodhya establishes the fact that "[i]t is the Ram Janmabhoomi, the birthplace of Ram" where the most famous of his temples was built but is now missing(52). In Lyotard's formulation, Gupta's eclectic selection of phrases from the genres of history, mythology, logic, and rhetoric moves towards a teleology which arranges heterogeneous phrases in a sequential order to establish the presence(at some point of history) of Ram's temple at the place of *Babri Masjid*. Gupta's logic tries to convert his mythical view (assumed as the logical one) of the reality about Ram and its temple into a cognitive one but Lyotard states that "[t]he logical genre of discourse is not the cognitive genre" (*The Differend* 51). As Gupta's certainty about the place of Temple to Ram completely negates Lakshman's assertion about there being no historical evidence to corroborate Ram's birth at Babri Mosque's present location, this mode of establishing reality "entails the differend" (5) between Lakshman and Gupta's respective claims. But Lakshman's own position with regard to the larger reality of India and the place of Muslims in it corresponds with that of Gupta as I would discuss below.

The conflict triggered by construction of *Babri Masjid* or demolition of Ram's temple activates a number of registers of articulation. Occupying the place of heterogeneous symbols of mutually antagonistic religions, cultures, traditions, and ideology along with myriad other differentials, these two religious sites engender a *differend* between the Hindus and the Muslims. "This heterogeneity, for lack of common

idiom [that may regulate their conflict], makes consensus impossible" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 55-6) between the two parties to the conflict. Lakshman's view, though synonymous with that of the Muslims in this particular instance, has different origins and seeks other ends to achieve. He seems to reiterate the Nehruvian absorptionist and assimilationist view of 'national Indian culture' in which Muslim (including Mughal) rule in India is also a part of Indian tradition and culture. Gupta views this rule as a yoke and echoes the view of the Muslim rule held by literary tradition originated at the Hindoo College of Calcutta: "For hundreds of years we suffered under the Muslim yoke", he tells Diggs (Tharoor, *Riot* 53). It is notable that Gupta sees the introduction of the Muslims and their ideology in the physical and ideological landscape of India as an outside impurity that must be expunged altogether to restore the erstwhile pure cultural and religious harmony among the 'true Indians'.

Lakshman's idea of Indianness is based upon the secular and rational whereas Gupta relies upon mythical and miraculous to define the essence of his view of Indianness. Gupta resorts to the 'miracle' of appearance of "an idol of Ram… spontaneously in the courtyard of the mosque" to prove that "[i]t was a clear sign from God. His temple had to be rebuilt on that sacred spot" (53). Similar to the Cashinahua's claims in their story telling as Lyotard discusses in his writings and also to the aborigines' claims to their ancestral land, Gupta's claims about the place of birth of Ram and his temple belong to religious mythology. The origins of these claims lie in oral tradition and are not admissible as evidence in courts of laws which operate in a completely different language and set of rules: criteria of judgement in Lyotardian conception. Gupta underscores this helplessness of the Hindus when he excoriates the state institutes of India and their functionaries who are all "atheists and communists" (Tharoor, *Riot* 53-4). His criticism is directed against Lakshman and the judicial system of India that refuses to accept Gupta's miraculous evidence as valid. In his view, in a truly Indian legal system the appearance of Ram's idol would be accepted as valid proof.

Gupta's assertion about the Indian justice as being different from the English law of India is instructive in understanding the plight of the Muslims in India as well. Indian constitution and the equal Laws based upon it are projected as India's greatest achievement by Lakshman and other state functionaries. The equality these law profess remains of little practical value in a scenario where a legal dispute arises between the

Hindus and the Muslims. In reality the 'Indian Justice' Gupta invokes adjudicates the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in socio-economic life of Indians. This working of the Indian justice may be seen in Zalilgarh's judge's granting bails to the Hindus while imprisoning the Muslims who took part in the conflict. Although Lakshman deplores this 'justice' and remonstrates before the presiding judge but his helplessness in obtaining justice for the Muslims and ineffectiveness in stopping the riots between Hindus and Muslims in the first place establish Gupta's 'Indian Justice' as the *de facto* law of the land.

It is this *de facto* Indian justice that works behind Gupta's understanding of the rules of citizenship which seek to exclude the Muslims of India from Indian citizenry. The origin and allegiance to a place serve as marker of the true Indian citizenship in Gupta's understanding of the domicile rights. The Muslims laying claims to origins in places located outside India become a suspect collectivity. Gupta claims that the "Muslims are evil people, Mr. Diggs….They are more loyal to a foreign religion, Islam, than to India" (Tharoor, *Riot* 54). This resentment enunciated by Gupta with regard to Muslims as being loyal to a foreign faith is shared by Hindu secularists like Nehru and his spiritual and political disciples as well. Lakshman's evaluation about Muslims' faith being 'retrograde' points towards this collective sentiment. It also designates Islam as a foreign faith and excludes Muslims from being true Indians on the basis of their loyalty to a foreign religion. In Lyotard's theorization, demands of racial purity exert 'terror' internally on the members of a particular race "who are always suspected of not being pure enough. They cleanse themselves of suspicion by excepting themselves from all impurity through oaths, denunciations, pogroms or final solutions" (*The Differend* 103). Gupta's denunciation of the secular Indians for not living up to the demands of Hinduism and his role in riots that claim Priscilla's life with others' reflect this impulse in members of Hindu community.

He also lampoons those Muslims who converted from the Hindu faith but lay claim to a foreign identity by claiming to be descendants of conquerors of Indian subcontinent from places like Arabia or Persia or Samarkand. In his conclusion, such claims to identity and (supposed) allegiance to foreign places and religion and refusal to assimilate into his country make them liable to be expelled from India. Their aloofness and indifference to Indian culture is presented by Gupta to Diggs as: "They stay together,

work together, pray together" and have "ghetto mentality" (*Riot* 54-56). He strongly criticizes Muslim social customs and blames Muslims for the division of great Indian civilization. Gupta's claims, however, reveal the working of an ideological program that drives the project of describing and shaping India into a Hindu nation. It reflects the assumptions of a "majoritarianism" that "attempt[s] to reshape national identity along Hindu lines, [is] prepared to use democratic and extra-parliamentary means to achieve its aim, and [seeks] to create a purified Hindu culture in a purified Hindu homeland" (Morey and Tickell, x). The workings of this majoritarian view are revealed by Gupta through the resentment he expresses towards the special status accorded to the Muslim-majority state, Kashmir. Although Kashmir is a disputed territory claimed in entirety by both India and Pakistan but partly managed by both, Gupta evinces Indian state's official stance here by designating it as Indian state. He laments the fact that Muslims "have even managed [to achieve] special status for the only Muslim-majority state we have, Kashmir" where Indians from other parts of the country are barred from buying any property (Tharoor, *Riot* 55).The Muslims of India are suggested to be posing a serious risk to the demography of the whole nation besides having secured special status through Muslim Personal Law in India and special status for Kashmir. Gupta also gives vent to the popular Hindu apprehension that Muslims possess a 'prolific fecundity' to strengthen his claims about the threats posed by the Muslims to the welfare of its natives: the Hindus. He states that the "Muslims are outbreeding the Hindus" and soon they will "outnumber us Hindus in our country, Mr. Diggs" (55-6). This (putative) increase in Muslim population of India poses grave challenges to India's ability to stay as a Hindu nation, Gupta seems to suggest to Diggs (56).

Local and diasporic English writers of Indian and Pakistani origins local depict the partition of the Indian subcontinent as the defining moment in the history of South Asia. It is due to the fact that the controversies surrounding it still impact heavily on the relations between Pakistan and India as well as between majority Hindu population and Muslim minority defined as 'threatened' by Lakshman earlier in the book. Aamir Mufti describes the partition of united India as the culmination of the process of 'minoritization' of the Muslim population of India. He also describes the different processes of 'Jewishization' of the Indian Muslims through the discourse of Hindutva which bears similarities to the demonization of the Muslims all over the world through the discourse of neo/conservative intelligentsia of the West. Translated in

Lyotard's terminology, the claims of the forces of Hindutva and Western neo-conservatism stand in for SS phrase and those of the Muslims in India and West as (Jewish) deportees. "The linkage between the SS phrase and the deportee's phrase is undiscoverable because these phrases do not arise from a single genre of discourse. There are no stakes held in common by one and the other" (*The Differend* Lyotard 106). Not only are the Muslims treated as the 'other of the Hindu majority but their grievances and complaints based upon their faith continue to lose legitimacy in the secular dispensation of the world. Their phrases, deportee's phrases, have no purchase in the rational secularist and liberal humanist discourse.

The novel is set in 1989, three years before the actual demolition of *Babri Masjid* by the Hindu mobs. The party that had largely been ruling till then in India at the Centre was Indian National Congress. The extremist Hindutva, constituting a large part of the Indian population, rises to prominence in response to Congress's failure to address the grievances of the Hindus against the Muslims. Congress government's response to the 'rising threat of the Muslims' in Gupta's opinion has been "[p]ure and simple appeasement" (Tharoor, *Riot* 56). Gupta's words refer to Lakshman's earlier proposition that 'creative federalism' or 'more of democracy' will help Muslims assimilate in Indian way of life. But this unquestioned alignment of the Congress with the ideals of secularism, though denounced by Gupta, is problematic when the realities of the Muslim life in India are brought into equation. Tharoor, a long time member of the congress party, in his critique of extremist Hindutva seems to be flagging up the secular credentials of the Congress which are challenged by Sumit Sarkar, Partha Chaterjee, Snehal Shinghavi, Priya Kumar, and Aamir Mufti in their writings.

Gupta, however, seems frustrated with the special rights accorded to Muslims in the form of Muslim Personal Law by the Congress governments. He tells Diggs about Shah Banu's case (in which the widow was given the right to alimony by the Supreme Court of India as against the Islamic Law) and the offence that the Muslims felt about court's verdict and how they expressed it in the form of protests. He criticizes the Congress government for succumbing to the pressure from the Muslim clergy for political gains and violating the "directive principals" of the Constitution of India which "call[s] for the establishment of a common civil code for all Indians" (Tharoor, *Riot* 56). Gupta deplores the status accorded to the Muslims of India through Muslim Personal

Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 of Indian Constitution that regulates issues of marriage, inheritance, succession, and divorce through Islamic Jurisprudence. He instead lobbies for a common civil code of Western countries. But even the prospect of such a common civil code made Muslims and their leaders act "as if the gas chambers had been prepared for their entire community" (56). Gupta's position seems to be paradoxical as his argument vacillates between support for Indian civil code practised by the Indian courts and the 'Indian justice', sanctioned by the oral tradition of (Hindu) Indian nation which he wants to be utilized with regard to the birth of Ram at the site of *Babri Masjid*. He criticizes the common Indian civil code when it is applied to the question of Ramjanmabhoomi but favours its application by denouncing the exemptions accorded to the Muslims of India from this code. In Lyotardian terminology, this eclectic choice of linkages of phrases is triggered by the desire to achieve a particular political end. It testifies to the fact that linkages of phrases are contingent without there being any fixed necessity in the linkage. Gupta's earlier reliance on mythological past and its idiom, now, shifts toward the legal and constitutional idiom. He seems to be contradicting his own earlier assertion that the secularist and atheist rulers are cut off from their true Indian roots which are Hindu in essence.

This arbitrary alternating invocation of secularist and (Hindu) religious language works as a double edged sword to contain the Muslims of India within the bounds of (Hindu) Indian nation. Not only Gupta, an extremist Hindu, but also secularist minded Indian subjects evince a deep skepticism towards the expression of Islamic faith by the Muslims in matters of inter-personal and social issues. In Lyotardian sense, Gupta's linkage of phrases shuffling between different registers chooses from heterogeneous eclectic resources to prove his point: first, Congress's governments have failed Indians and second, Muslims are uncivilized and the enemy within. He claims that "this pampering" of the Muslims working to the disadvantages of the Hindus of India will not stop "until we have defeated these so- called secularists" and "until we have raised the forces of Hindutva to power" (Tharoor, *Riot* 56-57). The *differend* here plays itself at two levels; one between Hindus and the Muslims and the second between 'secular rulers' and the forces of Hindutva. He quotes Sadhvi Rithambara's (a Hindu nationalist ideologue and the founder-chairwoman of Durga Vahini) words as the solution to the problems, posed by the Muslims to the existence of India. She proposes that Hindus should cut the Muslims into little pieces, squeeze out the pips and throw

them away" (Tharoor, Riot 57). Gupta here brands all Muslims as 'evil'. His Sangh Parivar, although projected as marginal political and social entity within India, garners the overt and covert support and sympathy of large strata of Indian population. The widespread presence of the cadres of Sangh Parivar, the pervasiveness of their ideology, and their hold upon the lives of ordinary subjects of India, particularly its views of the Indian Muslims, reflect the conditions of everyday life of the Muslims. Hundreds of RSS shakhas and Saraswati shishu mandirs across the country are "no different from, and no less dangerous than, the madrassas all over Pakistan and Afghanistan that spawned the Taliban" (A. Roy, *Algebra* 193). Roy further claims that present at every level of the Indian government, the extremist Hindu "enterprise has huge popular appeal" and holds a power and reach in Indian society which "may only be achieved with state backing" (193). In other words, Roy holds that Extremist Hindu outfits work in collaboration with the Indian state to suppress and deny the Muslims their rights behind the façade of inclusive Indian democracy.

It is significant to note that despite the wide ideological gulf that seems to exist between his views and those expressed by Lakshman, Gupta also takes pride in India being a democracy. India claims to be the biggest democracy of the world and this fact is stressed by Gupta to prove the evilness of the Muslims all over the world. Gupta's linking of evil traits of Muslims of India with those of the Muslims all over the world show that many stereotypes and essentialities of the figure of the Muslim, circulated in Hindu and Western discourses, animate and strengthen each other. One such evil characteristic of the Muslims as enunciated by James in the *Vigil* and shared by the Hindus is voiced by Gupta who states that Muslim countries all over the world "are all dictatorships, monarchies, tyrannies, military regimes" (*Riot* 57). In a broad sweep, he further strengthens his point about the 'true' nature of the Muslims who are "fanatics and terrorists…only understand the language of force" (57). Gupta attaches a certain cruelty to the nature of governance and day to day life of the Muslims by stating that when in power they oppress other people; where they live with other people they "fight with others" and concludes his argument by claiming that violence against non-Muslims is in their blood, Mr. Diggs!" (Tharoor, *Riot* 57). The distinction made by Gupta between the Muslims of Yogoslavia where according to him the Muslims have accepted the majority culture and the Muslims of rest of the world points towards the pressure that majority Hindu culture's desire puts on the Muslims of India to assimilate like the Muslims of

Yugoslavia. His distinction divides the Muslims between those who are fanatic about their faith and those who are not.

Gupta's estimation of the 'true' character of the Muslims is reminiscent of Atal Bihari Vajpai's statement about Muslims where he claims that the behavior of the Muslims with regard to other communities remains hostile whether living in Malaysia or Indonesia. Thus Gupta finds the cause of supposed cruel nature of the Muslims in their 'blood' and in their faith. Hindu faith as opposed to the Muslim faith, in Gupta's estimation, reflects the true Indianness. This essential Indianness is however threatened by the presence of the Muslims and secular minded government and its officials. Gupta believes that Lakshman and Gurinder Singh, the servants of the Indian state are the people, removed from their religious and cultural roots because of the "so-called secular ideas they have learned in English-language colleges…and they have no right to call themselves Indians" (Tharoor, *Riot* 59). In his view, the right to citizenship of India remains exclusive to Hindus or the people who own the 'Indian' culture and religion and not to those whose affiliations are with non-Indian religions (Islam and Christianity) and nor to those imbued with secular ideas acquired through English education.

Gupta attempts to justify the proposed construction of Ram Temple at the place of *Babri Masjid* through his Hindu faith and historical evidence. His Hindu faith and knowledge "passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth" proves to him that Ram was born where now *Babri Masjid* stands (Tharoor, *Riot* 120). This knowledge is corroborated by historical evidence, Gupta explains to Diggs by quoting Joseph Tiffenthaler, an Austrian priest's claim that the "famous temple marking the birth of Ram had been destroyed 250 years earlier and mosque built with its stone" (Tharoor, *Riot* 120). He and "millions of devout Hindus" know that "this accursed mosque occupies the most sacred site in Hinduism, our Ram Janmabhoomi" as their "faith is the only proof" needed by them in this regard (Tharoor, *Riot* 121). For Muslims to be true Indian nationals, they must acknowledge the edicts of Hindu faith. Guru Gowalkar's words quoted by Gupta sum up the kind of nationalism he wants from the Muslims which requires "the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu Religion" (123-124). Despite the exclusivist nature of the nationalism he desire from the Muslims, Gupta draws a contrast between Hindu and Muslim faith and claims that the former is a tolerant

and all inclusive religion.

He highlights the religious tolerance of Hindu rulers of India, by telling Diggs that religious communities other than Hindus, like Muslims, Parsis, Christians, and Jews have been allowed to stay and practice their religion by the Hindu rulers of India (*Riot* 229). At this moment Gupta's version of Indian past and reality of present day Indian society echoes the idea of India presented by Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, and later secularist leaders. In his view, Hindu religion historically has been benign and receptive towards its immigrants. Islam, in contrast to it, has been a tool of oppression towards its subject, Gupta asserts. Defending the Hindutva movement against the charges of fundamentalism, he states that it is a reaction against "the thirteen centuries of Islamic fundamentalism and oppression" (230-1). Once again Gupta demonizes the whole Islamic faith by equating its emergence and rule in India with fundamentalism and oppression. Gupta's view of Islam makes it anathema to native Indian Hindu religion and defines the Muslim rule in India as a foreign rule. Hinduism, in Gupta's view, stands in since long for the humanism evinced by the Hindu rulers of India whereas the rise of Islam is made synonymous with spread of fundamentalism and oppression. In Lyotard's theorization, the legitimacy that Gupta accords to the Hindu nation in India, "owes nothing to the idea of humanity and everything to the perpetuation of narratives of origin by means of repeated narrations" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 147). The legitimacy of Hindu religion and nation sought by Gupta not only relies on the celebration of thousands of years of Hindu religion but also denunciation of its adversary: Islam. Gupta's version of history aligns itself with that of the Hindu ideologues that see Muslim rule in India as not part of tradition of India but as foreign occupation and oppression of the native people of this land. Like Hindutva ideologues, he holds secularism as an outside idea and questions the Western attitude towards this expression of Hinduism which is seen as a threat to Indian 'secularism' and asks: "May the word "secularism" be found in the Vedas?" (230-231). Thus secularism like Islam or Christianity, according to him, is not an indigenous idea but a contamination of the pure Hindu culture. He, therefore, rues what he calls the rule by these secular minded officials like Lakshman and Gurinder.[8]

Gupta's estimation of the Hindu religion, (Hindu) Indian nation, and Muslims place in it enacts *differend* at two fronts. In the first variation of the *differend*, he sketches a historical view of the antagonism between the values and principles of

Hinduism and those of Islam. In the second variation, he pitches Hinduism against the ideas imported from the West through English education of the Indian administrators, like Lakshman and Gurinder. In both these forms, the difference between Hinduism on the one hand and Islam and Secularism on the other seems to remain absolute and irresolvable according to extremist Hindu ideology Gupta gives voice to justify his claims about Indian society and history.

6.4 The *Differend* of Silent Indian Muslim: The Oxymoron of Secular Muslim

The second plaintiff who is the rival party to the *differend* of Masjid/Temple conflict is a secular Muslim and Professor of History, Muhammad Sarwar who counters Gupta's (Hindutva) arguments. He criticizes the extremist Hindutva ideology and invokes a (non-existent) syncretic and tolerant tradition of peaceful coexistence of India. He plays no part in the progress of the narrative and seems to have been incorporated in the novel to give voice to realities of India from the mouth of a secular and nationalist Muslim. His privileged position in the society, however, comes in the way of presenting the truthful picture of the realities of underprivileged or completely marginalized Muslims represented by Ali and his wife. His position in Indian society remains on secure footing as compared to Meetha Muhammad the boy who serves tea to government offices, the Muslim boys killed in the riot and their parents victimized by Indian judicial system. In the text, Sarwar rehearses Tharoor's and official Indian historians' views about the partition of United India in 1947 into India and Pakistan and lapses into quite long digression to excoriate the separatist Muslims for their role in the partition.

Sarwar's views despite challenging Gupta's exclusive claims on the history and culture of India fall short of representing the voice of the ordinary Muslims of India. Moreover, the view point of Pakistani Muslims remains completely absent from the polemics about justification or otherwise of the partition. Their claims about the separate status of Indian Muslims remain unarticulated but are contested within the dialectics of the novel. Gupta's and Sarwar's heterogeneous ideas about Indian history and the place of the Muslims in it constitute a *differend* between the Muslims and Hindus of India. Sarwar's advocacy of the rights of Muslims of India, however, seems to be idealistic and removed from the harsh realities of his fellow Indian Muslims. This view with its

potential to be re-appropriated by the (Hindu) Indian state constitutes the Muslim *differend*. This differend signifies a condition of the Muslims where they are deprived of their right to articulate their concerns through the position of their faith and are pressured into succumbing to dictates of hinduized secularism.

Sarwar almost reiterates Lakshman's views of secularity and inclusivity of Indian tradition which he terms as "Composite culture" and "Composite Religiosity of North India" (Tharoor, *Riot* 64).[9] This composite religiosity is reflected, Sarwar claims, in the fact that "a number of Muslim religious figures in India are worshipped by Hindus" (Riot 64). He names Nizamuddin Aulia, Moinuddin Chisti, Syed Salar Masood Ghazi (whose life history he has come to research in Zalilgarh), etc, as those who "are worshipped by both communities" (Riot 64). Syed Salar Masood Ghazi, popularly known as Ghazi Mian, has been represented in both Hindu and Muslim ballads and folk songs of different languages of India which assign him contradictory qualities, claims Sarwar. In the context of the book that deals with the riots between Hindus and Muslims, the insertion of tales about Ghazi Mian seek to reinforce the overlapping, crossover, and syncretism of whole India culture although Sarwar's research deals with the northern parts of India. These tales and ballads about Ghazi Mian and his appearance in Hindu tales also build a particular narrative of India which hides the immediacy of the conflict at hands between Hindus and Muslims. This evasion diverts the attention from the contingent harsh lived reality to a mythic past of peaceful coexistence.

This narrative of shared worship and deities performs a 'redeeming function' by trying to prove "as if the occurrence, with its potentiality of differends, could come to completion or as if there were a last word" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 151). Sarwar's efforts at creating a syncretic past for India and the place of Indian Muslims in it come very close to the procedures adopted by the founder of meta-narratives to construct a particular narrative the progression of which is dictated by the ends it sets off to achieve. He picks up events from the recent and remote past of India to establish a particular reality of India, the reality which "is established as the result of playing language games with specifiable component parts" (Bennington 121). Sarwar's procedures of effectuating the reality of India rehearse Lakshman's ethnographic method of 'inventing' an idea of Indian nation that comes into conflict with the quotidian realities of the poor Muslims of India. Although in Sarwar's view Ghazi Mian and his worship by Hindus are

reviled by Hindutva, he claims that saints like him prove the composite nature of Indian traditions and religiosity. His arguments resonate closely with those enunciated by Abu al Kalam Azad, termed as "Muslim Showboy" by Jinnah and paraded as symbol of Indian composite culture by Hindu nationalists. Azad asserts his place in Indian nation in these words: "I am an element in the composite…indivisible nationality of India. I am a significant element of its composite nationality without which the figure of its greatness remains incomplete" (qtd. in Mufti, *Enlightenment* 161). But appeals to 'composite religiosity' and invocation of "the syncretism of Hindu-Muslim relations in India" is not sufficient, Sarwar realizes, as the people of India are in a need to be reminded "that communal crossovers are as common as communal clashes" (Tharoor, *Riot* 64). Sarwar's acknowledgement of communal clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims of India and their setting off by equal number of communal crossovers reiterates Lakshman's earlier assertion that Zalilgarh and the riots in it are a negligible affair when viewed in the context of whole Indian Polity. His assertion that there have been communal crossovers remains somewhat misleading. Although Hindu and Muslims have lived side by side for centuries, one of the manifestation of communal crossovers i.e. intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims is a rare event. Being the mouthpiece of Shashi Tharoor, an assimilationist Hindu politician himself, whose pretentions to intimate knowledge of the real essence of Islamic faith remain questionable, Sarwar wrongly claims that Muslims also 'worship' these saints. The use of the word 'worship' instead of 'revere' imports elements of polytheism from Hinduism and speaks of his removal from Muslim faith as they worship only one Allah as against Hindus who worship multiple deities.

At this point, I would indicate a similarity between Maya's celebration of Sohail's plural religiosity and Sarwar's idea of composite religiosity of North India. Both these similar ideas reflect the wistfulness of Anam and Tharoor, rather than the aspirations of the monotheistic Muslims. While secularist Sarwar and Maya seem to celebrate [Hindu] polytheism, for the believing and practicing Muslims this act amounts to violation of the basic creed of Islam: *Tawhid.* It is conversion to this Tawhid that provokes Maya's criticism of Sohail's Islamism in Anam's *The Good Muslim*. Sarwar may be said to epitomize Tharoor's idea of a 'good Muslim' in *Riot*. Ghazi Mian's Sufism created through legends and ballads is often foregrounded as alternative version (usually Sufism) of fundamentalist Islam which is misleading and wrongly pitches the

two against each other. All of the Sufis mentioned by Sarwar (*Riot* 64) were strict Muslims who followed the injunctions of Islam in letter and spirit.

Sarwar, a professor of history, occupies a privileged place in Indian society just like Azad did whose speech at Ramgarh in 1940 he quotes verbatim. His status accords him a certain safety and protection unavailable to those millions of oppressed and threatened Muslims whose daily lives are little better than those of the Jews of Nazi Germany. One such character is Ali who has fathered seven children. He beats up his wife and threatens to kill Priscilla for her role in motivating his wife Fatima B to undergo an abortion. Gurinder tells Lakshman that "Ali looks like he's capable of anything" (*Riot* 256). His abode in a Muslim neighbourhood is portrayed as almost a 'ghetto' by Priscilla. He along with his wife represents all the anti-modern characteristics (prolific fecundity, fundamentalism, aggression) of the Muslims Gupta enumerates before Randy Diggs to describe the true character of the Muslims all over the world. Muslims like Ali are, however, labeled as chauvinists by Sarwar who advocates the necessity of wresting the "field of religious conflict [from] chauvinist on both sides" (Riot 64). Sarwar again invents a crime for the extremist Muslims of India as no Muslim character in the novel claims the Indian spaces in its entirety. His view echoes the concerns of the putative secularist Hindus who view the Muslims as a threat to Indian nation. Apart from Ali and his wife, Metha Muhammad, a young Muslim boy who serves tea in government offices, the Muslim boys who prepare petrol bombs to be thrown at the Hindus, and Sarwar's host and relative constitute the Muslim cast of *Riot*. It is noticeable, however, that it is only Sarwar who articulates his point of view in the novel. The circumstances of the rest of them are narrated and represented by other characters. These group of Muslims, threatened by a Hindus majority for their life, property, and children, represent the silent figure of *Riot*.[10]

Muhammad Sarwar enunciates the ideas of a typical Anti-partition, anti-Two Nation Theory nationalist secular Muslim. He claims that the Muslims of India have equal right to the citizenship of India and quotes Maulana Azad's Speech at Ramgarh in 1940, which highlights Indian Muslims' belief in united India to prove his loyalty as well as right to live and prosper in post-partitioned India.[11] Sarwar's narrative then reflects India's nationalist ideas of secular India as being a homeland for different communities, despite the widespread prejudice and violence committed on minorities by the majority

Hindu population with state's complicity as exemplified in *Riot*. Sarwar like Azad blames Pakistani Muslims with claims to separate identity on the basis of his/her religion for the widespread prejudice against Indian Muslims. His polemics remain directed more at the absent figure of this Pakistani Muslim than discussing the plight of ordinary Indian Muslims. Like Tharoor, he invokes the history of pre-partitioned India to delegitimize the creation of Pakistan. He pitches the Muslim religiosity of Azad, "who was a religious scholar, born in Mecca, educated in the Koran and the Hadith, fluent in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu, an exemplar of Muslim learning and culture in India" with un-Islamic ways of life of Jinnah, "the leader of the Muslim League, an Oxbridge-educated Lincoln's Inn lawyer who wore Savile Row suits, enjoyed his Scotch and cigars, ate pork, barely spoke Urdu, and married a non-Muslim" (Tharoor, *Riot* 107). Considering Azad a better Muslim than Jinnah as result of this comparison, Sarwar deplores the fact the later "claimed to speak for India's Muslims" (*Riot* 107). Sarwar divides the Muslims into 'good' Muslims and 'bad' Muslim, as posited by Mahmood Mamdani in his book, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: Islam, the USA, and the Global War against Terror*, to serve the purpose of his projected vision of India and Muslims' place in it. In Sarwar's reckoning "Pakistan was created by "bad" Muslims (secular Muslims like Jinnah) not by the "good' Muslims in whose name Pakistan now claims to speak" (108). To further discredit Jinnah's status as the legitimate leader of the Muslims of India, he quotes the words of different Indian Muslims, (not even one of them a Pakistani or other national than Indian) and avers that Jinnah's 'defection' has made Indian Muslims bear the burden and the "brothers into foreigners" (109). The evaluation Sarwar presents of the character of Jinnah, although full of contradictions, has been picked from the standard version of his character constructed, repeated, and circulated in Indian official and non-official history.

This version of history presents the resentment of few successful Indian Muslims about the creation of Pakistan and holds Jinnah responsible for this division. In the similar vein, Sarwar sites the words from a speech of Muhammad Currim Chagla uttered "during the Bangladesh war of 1971", where he says 'Pakistan was conceived in sin and is dying in violence'" (109) to delegitimize the very idea of Pakistan. A similar damning pronouncement made by M. J. Akbar, "India's brightest young journalist, a real media star, and a Muslim", is quoted by Sarwar to further prove the veracity of his claims. Sarwar claims that Akbar accused Jinnah of having "sold the birthright of the Indian Muslim for a bowl of soup'" (Tharoor, *Riot* 109). Sarwar however proves the

superiority of his morals to Jinnah's by asserting that "[s]ome of us feel that our birth right may not be so easily sold" (109). In his reckoning, he has stood up and would continue to do so for the protection of that birth right for himself and for all the Muslims of India.

It may be noted that the addressee of much of the polemics of Sarwar remains completely absent and silent. Addressing this silent addressee/s, Sarwar complains that "Pakistanis will never understand the depth of disservice Jinnah did us, Indian Muslims as a whole, when he made some of us into non-Indians" (Tharoor, *Riot* 111).[12] He evinces deep pride for being a fellow Indian of the "Indian Air Force commander in the northern sector…,Air Marshal Latif, Later Air Chief Marshal", who is father of his classmate and a "distinguished Muslim?" and questions the legality of Pakistani general's statement who declared jihad against India and by extension against such a Muslim(113). Sarwar's argument utilizes a rational and secular discourse that operates only in a discursive realm and dissolves the contingent lived realities in the abstract dialectics of history and missed opportunities. It also relegates human experience of differences of religion and culture to the margins of social interaction which, however, remain supreme in the lives of ordinary Hindus and Muslims of India. Sarwar's invocation of the composite culture and religiosity "becomes almost a form of propaganda for state policies" of community cohesion (Bhanot 205). The solution he offers for the exclusion and oppression faced by the Muslims of India sounds similar to the one offered by Lakshman through 'more democracy' and 'creative federalism'.

Sarwar's view of the historical Hindu/Muslim conflict born out of his privileged position in Indian society sutures over the multiple differences between Hindus and Muslims that define the everyday reality of their co-existence. His narrative presents the embodied manifestation of Lyotard's claim that "a genre of discourse imprints a unique finality onto a multiplicity of heterogeneous phrases by linkings that aim to procure the success proper to that genre" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 129). He evinces a strong belief in the secular character of the Muslims and of those Hindus "who haven't sold our souls to either side in this wretched ongoing communal argument" and urges these non-partisans "to dig into the myths that divide and unite our people" to counter the force of , what he calls, Hindutva brigade, that "is busy trying to invent a new past for the nation….They are making us into a large-scale Pakistan; they are

vindicating the two-nation theory" (Tharoor, *Riot* 67). Sarwar seems to appeal to secular character of the Indians and stick to a non-divisive Indian nationalism which, in Anushman Mondal's view, "has throughout its history been either covertly or overtly associated with a 'Hindu' majoritarianism that is far from secular ("The Limit" 5). Mondal further claims that "the grammar of politics in India has been communal even when its syntax has been secular" (9). Sarwar's secularism bears the imprints of this Hindu majoritarianism which works to hide the communal grammar of everyday Indian life through a secular syntax. Sarwar's claim to a unified Muslim identity as advocated by Azad bridles the heterogeneous claims of not only Muslim identities but also unified Indian identity as well. Sarwar and Lakshman's process of identity formation may be described, with reference to Muslim *differend*, in these words:

> Derrida observes that all claims to cultural and national identity have a homogenizing logic, that they level out differences, create imaginary and purified forms of identities, and eliminate the non-identical and the differend from their midst. (Benhabib 20)

Sarwar's faith in the 'myths that divide and unite our people' contains a homogenizing and unifying logic which is reminiscent of Nehru's 'unity in diversity' idea. It is, however, very distant from Nehru's upper-casteist homogenizing view of Indian nationalism and reflects the threatened status of 'Jewishized Muslim minority', pressurized by the exigencies of the present to prove their loyalty to India and by the burden of the past role of the Muslims in the partition of India. Sarwar rues the fact that the Muslims of India are often termed as 'enemy within' and 'Pakistanis at heart'. Sarwar accuses the Hindutva brigade for trying to prove the stance of Jinnah and Muslim League as legitimate who claimed a separate country for the Muslims of India on the basis of Two-Nation Theory.

Sarwar's invocation of 'the composite culture' and 'composite religiosity' of India, however, rakes up another contradiction in the project of charting up the collective response to the threat of rising Hindutva. His "privileged upbringing, an elite education, and…position of intellectual authority" creates a wedge between his position and "the way for millions of my fellow…Muslims[who] suffer disadvantages, even discrimination, in a hundred different ways that I may never personally experience" (Tharoor, *Riot* 112). This realization of the everyday prejudice, disadvantage, and discrimination faced by his fellow (but less privileged than he) Muslims is employed to

appropriate their voices that might pose more radical challenge to the secular claims of India. He expresses his belief in modern Indian politics of democracy and secularity which promises but has failed so far to accord status of equal citizens to Muslims of India. The myth of inclusive democracy and creative federalism, proposed by Lakshman "would then be this monster: an archaic, modem politics, a politics of the community as a politics of humanity, a politics of the real origin as a politics of the ideal future" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 152). This mythical democracy and secularity of Indian constitution and society, however, fails to yield verifiable dividends for the Muslims of India. "Indian nationalism articulate[s] visions of nationhood that [are] implicitly communalist in structure and specifically Hindu majoritarian in emphasis" (Mondal, "The Limit" 10). Through the discourse of democracy and secularity participated in by the few elite Muslims of India like Sarwar, the voice of the tens of millions of oppressed Muslims is suppressed or at best appropriated to blunt its radical edge. The near approximation of one such underprivileged Muslim is Ali and his wife whose relationship is stereotyped, even caricatured, by the book that apparently seems to be registering a critique of the phenomenon of Hindutva. Without venturing to devise a way out for 'millions of such Indian Muslims', Sarwar takes an affective turn and just like Abul Kalam Azad before him claims :"I love this country" despite the fact of "seeing more and more the demonization" of the Muslim collectivity (Tharoor, *Riot* 112-3). Sarwar's evasive stance towards the real sufferings of the millions of Indian Muslims evades the question of redressal. His evasive estimation of the reality of Hindu-Muslim conflictual relations within India exemplifies Lyotard's idea that when genres of discourse jostle for legitimacy through linking of phrases, only one may achieve victory while the "others remain neglected, forgotten, or repressed possibilities (*The Differend* 136). Thus Lakshman's and Sarwar's shared solution to Indian social, political, religious, and cultural heterogeneity remains the transaction between the elite that suppresses the concerns of poor Indian Muslims like Ali and his wife, the Muslim characters represented not by themselves but through other characters like Lakshman, Gurinder, Priscilla, Shankar Das, and Kadambari.

Sarwar's shuffling between mythological and historical registers presents a *differend* in Lyotard's formulation. This *differend* arises because of the heterogeneous natures of the phrases employed by these registers and also by the gap that exists between them. Both Sarwar and Lakshman's narratives try to bridge this gap in their

pursuit to depict India as a secular and just place for its communities. Their version of the Indian history and reality perpetuates the Muslim *differend* which is signaled in Lyotard's words as:

> With the normative, whatever its supposed legitimation and whatever the form of this legitimation (myth, revelation, deliberation), one genre seizes upon heterogeneous phrases and subordinates them to the same set of stakes. (Lyotard, *The Differend* 144)

Sarwar employs past myths and rational and historical deliberations to legitimize a place for Muslims in India. He in the manner of Nehru and Gandhi before him tries to re/construct a collective past for whole of India but this effort falters, in his view, because of the presence of the extremists on both sides. While eschewing completely the Muslim version of the Indian history, Sarwar tells Diggs: "We, off course, have both history and mythology. Sometimes we mayn't tell the difference" (*Riot* 87). Sarwar seems to suggest here that both Hindu and Muslim histories, as distinct from the one Nehru tries to construct in *The Discovery of India*, do not have evidence to prove their claims beyond any doubt because of the infiltration of the mythological content in them passed on through word of mouth(Gupta calls it oral tradition). Thus the history (mythology) of one party to the conflict over place of Ram Temple/*Babri Masjid* negates the claims of the other and results into an impasse. This impasse (*differend*) first comes into existence because of Hindus' attempts to revise the past through re-inscription of Indian history in Sanskritized idiom and gains perpetual sustenance through refusal of the Muslims to be left out of that history.

Sarwar like Azad wishes to be part of the Indian whole willing to relegate his Muslim identity to the second place. The reality of India, however, is quite jarring to his secularist sense of an Indian Muslim intellectual and Historian: "How ashamed I feel. Of everything. Of everything that we are", he admits before Lakshman, a fellow believer in secular and syncretic tradition of tolerant India (*Riot* 258). This admission of 'shameful' Indian behaviour, however, lays responsibility for the riot between Hindus and Muslims at the feet of communalists on both sides for which secular Muslims and Hindus like Sarwar and Lakshman feel regret and become on-looking bystanders. He tells Lakshman about raids of police at his uncle, Rauf-bhai's house and the "excesses committed" (258) and feels assured that Lakshman would take action. He, however, questions this repeated pattern of cycle of violence that keeps occurring again and again with renewed strength:

"What kind of country are we creating when the police response to a riot simply sows the seeds of the next one?" (258). Sarwar, in the final estimation, un/wittingly seems to admit the perpetual victimhood and sense of wrong felt by the Muslims. His criticism of the role of state in proliferating the riots testifies to the victimhood made possible by the very means that are supposed to turn a victim into plaintiff by turning the wrongs into damages through devising some means of redressal and compensation.

6.5 The *Differend* of Secular Silence: The Death Dance of Riotous Faiths

Lakshman and Gurinder Singh, the two representative of the central Indian government appointed in the city of Zalilgarh, embody the stance of the (putatively) secular Indian polity. Their response to the riot and efforts to prevent and contain the riot epitomize the dual role administrative and judicial arms of the government play during the recurrent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in India. Although both of them castigate the failure of some of the government institutions in preventing and then exploiting the riots politically, they continue to express a confidence in the ability of tolerant and syncretic Indian tradition to dispense justice to both parties to the conflict. This response tries to convert this *differend* into litigation, a legal case where both parties could seek redress for their grievances. Lakshman's bureaucratic, objective, and dispassionate voice evinces a belief that the *differend* (dispute) between Muslims and Hindus could have been resolved through state procedures but "[t]he legal and political processes", they could have resorted to were abandoned due to which "much of North India was seized by a frenzy unprecedented since partition" (*Riot* 71). It is worth mentioning here that Sarwar earlier had expressed his belief in "composite culture' and 'composite religiosity of North India' (64). Lakshman's statement challenges the presence of composite culture and religiosity of north India and instead points towards the latent hostilities between the culture and religion of Muslims and that of the Hindus. The recurrent riots between the two religious groups also rebuff Sarwar's claims regarding shared culture and religion of two of the most numerous communities of India. The statement also lays bare contradiction in Lakshman's earlier claim that Zalilgarh is an 'armpit of India' which sought to downplay the significance of riot between Hindus and Muslims in it. It is pertinent to note here that Muslim population is mostly concentrated in northern parts of India. Therefore the social, religious, political, and cultural tensions present in these parts may metonymically stand in for whole of India.

So, when Lakshman admits that there was 'frenzy' in northern India, it means it is likely to affect the larger parts of Indian Muslim population. Lakshman's acknowledgement of the widespread religious frenzy in northern India points out the contradictions in his own narrative of democratic India and the improvement it has achieved with regard to what he calls 'unnecessary deaths'.

Although Lakshman tries to offer a progressivist view of Muslim social life in India, the harsh realities of this life remain largely unaltered. The riots that actually took place in 1992 after the actual demolition of the *Babri Masjid* exposed the deep seated schisms between the Hindus and the Muslims. Aamir Mufti in *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* writes, as already mentioned above, about the videos of rape of Muslim women circulated and watched in the drawing rooms of middleclass Hindu families. Arundhati Roy mentions looting of Muslim properties and Harsh Mandar, in *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice, Indifference in New India*, deplores Indian middle-classes' behaviour during Hindu/Muslim riots after demolition of *Babri Masjid*. The reality of such acts of violence committed by (mostly) Hindu and Muslim population against each other is abstracted by Lakshman. He tells Diggs that killings in the name of religion were seen as "an assault on the political values of secular India" and all the states comprising union of India, except Bengal, "were trying to have it both ways. They proclaimed their secularism but did nothing to maintain it" (Tharoor, *Riot* 72). Arundhati Roy is more explicit, in revealing the reality of Indian secularism. She states that "[e]very political party has tilled the marrow of our secular parliamentary democracy, mining it for electoral advantage" and has reduced it to "just an empty shell that's about to implode" (Roy, *The Algebra* 200). Roy stresses this un-acknowledged collusion between Congress and Bharitya Janata Party and states that they are the two sides of the same coin when it comes to rights of the Muslims and Dalits of India. In her essay, "The End of Imagination", collected in her book, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*(2013), Roy avers that BJP:

> is prepared to do by day what the Congress would do only by night…. BJP stepped in and reaped the hideous harvest. They waltz together, locked in each other's arms. They are inseparable, despite their professed difference. (123)

Lakshman also elaborates the complicity of the government officials, media, and

intelligentsia, in the killings of the Muslims in riots erupted in Zalilgarh because of the tensions over *Babri Masjid*/Ramjanmabhoomi conflict and states that "there were certainly some in the government who had sneaking sympathy for the cause of rebuilding the Ramjanmabhoomi temple. Not just sneaking many expressed it openly" (72). Lakshman's critique of the inability of the Indian secular voices is quite instructive in understanding the Muslim *differend*. The atrocities perpetrated by the Hindus against Muslims in the riot are not only connived at by the government but abetted actively by its law enforcement and judicial arms. The same applies to media and the general populace cohabiting with persecuted Muslims. All this involvement of official and non-official organs of the state in the persecution of the Muslims at the slightest provocation and "at frightening regularity" (*Riot* 74) unravels the myth of peaceful co-existence of these two antagonistic communities that Sarwar and Lakshman continue to build by exhibiting their faith in Indian secularism and its syncretic cultural tradition.

The secular and tolerant credentials of 'Indian Soul' and 'Indian soil' are further undermined by not just failure of the (putative) secular forces to stand up against the communal violence, but also by their complicity in condoning it in many ways. Lakshman states that "a deafening silence" enveloped everything instead of secular voices (72). This deafness may be described as the deafness of the judge of the tribunal that fails to hear the complaints of the plaintiffs and turns them into 'victims'. The control of the Hindus over state institutions and leanings of the majority Hindus in the government departments towards Hindu version of the history continues to propel the Muslims of India towards the periphery of the Indian society. It turns them into 'victims' and their damages into 'wrongs' by denying them any meaningful access to avowedly secular arms of the state: judiciary, parliament, civil administration, and police. This fact is highlighted by Lakshman's critique of the avowed secularity of Indian state and its covert and overt sympathies for the cause of Hindutva. The complaints against the oppression faced by the Muslims of India at the hands of society and state during the riot may not be lodged, heard, and redressed at any tribunal in India. This inability and lack signals towards also the 'deafening silence' of the Muslims, a condition that bears testimony to the Muslim *differend*.

Coming from the mouth of a high ranking official of the central government, Lakshman, the recognition of the marginalized state of Indian Muslims indicates its

scope and pervasiveness in Indian society. Underscoring this pervasiveness of communal sentiment in the Indian polity, Lakshman states that within three weeks of the launch of the program to celebrate Ram Sila Poojan "as many as 108 towns were simultaneously under curfew" and that starting in 1921 the communal clashes in this town "have been repeated with frightening regularity over the following decades" (*Riot* 73-74). This restates Lakshman's earlier explication to Priscilla about the abundance of death in his country than he wishes to see. What these articulations underscore is the perpetual threat faced by the Muslims of India in a variety of ways and scenarios. It is not only the Muslims but also their very religion (Islam) and loyalty towards Indian land and nation that emerge more soiled than before after every clash between majority Hindus and minority Muslims.

This outcome materializes despite the fact that it is the Muslims who usually suffer the killings, lynchings, burnings, and arsons. But because of the hold of Hindus in the government, media, intellectual, and academic circles the conflict is presented as a clash between intolerant and retrograde Islam and a tolerant, modern, and secular Hinduism. The Muslims have also been Jewishized and ghettoized through literary discourse since the inception of literary creativity at the Hindoo College of Calcutta. Comparisons are often drawn between the condition of the Indian Muslims and Jews of Nazi Germany to portray sufferings they have to undergo in their daily lives. Roy states that because of the pressure that is exerted upon the Muslims to submit to the Hindu way of life in India "majority of the Muslim community will resign itself to living in ghettos as second-class citizens, in constant fear, with no civil rights and no recourse to justice" (*Algebra* 193). She compares Hindu purification drive with "fascism's previously failed projects-the restoration of Roman glory, the purification of the German race, or the establishment of an Islamic sultanate" (202) and claims that the Massacre at Gujarat has been likened by the world "to Nazi Rule" (203). The language employed by Hindutva to describe what it calls the 'essential nature of the Muslims all over the world' bears the imprints of discourse used by the Nazis to justify their persecution of the Jews of Europe.

In *Riot,* the Western point of view with regard to the communal tension in India is represented by Diggs, an American journalist reporting on Priscilla's death. Priscilla Hart's father reinforces this view and sees the root cause of this problem in overemphasis both Muslims and Hindus lay on their respective history. This point is

brought to fore by him about the communal tensions in India when he talks to Sarwar: "I'll tell you what your problem is in India. You have too much history. Far more than you may use peacefully. So you end up wielding history like a battleaxe" (*Riot* 205). This observation of apparently a neutral and objective foreigner, free of the prejudices of Hindus and Muslims, points out the differential histories of these two communities. Heroes of the history of Muslims are quite often regarded as the villains of the Hindus' history and vice versa. This conflict over the same historical events and personages between Hindus and Muslims articulates an embodied form of *differend*. The events of Indian history, wielded as battleaxe, represent the phrases whose (mutually opposite) linkages by Hindus and Muslims creates an impasse over the authenticity of history and claims to territory of India.

The role of state institutions in according overt and covert support to the claims made by Hindus and conniving at and abetting the persecution of Indian Muslims cement this impasse into a Muslim *differend*. Their complicity in suppression of the Sikhs (another minority) and Muslims gains added evidence in Gurinder Singh's narration of his personal history to Diggs. He tells Diggs about the attack of the Indian military forces in 1984 on the Golden Temple, the holiest site for the Sikhs, and the killings of Sikhs by the Hindus as a revenge for Indira Gandhi's murder by her Sikh guard. This incident highlights the similarities and the parallels among the violence committed against the Indian minorities that recur at frightening regularity with the help of Indian state. The Hindu Majority denies the fundamental rights, Gurinder Singh suggests, not only to Muslims but other minorities of India. Roy quotes Dr. Ambedkar to highlight the prevalence of violence in India against minorities and also to answer why such crimes against them go unpunished: "If the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no Law, no Parliament, no Judiciary may guarantee them in the real sense of the word" (qtd. in Roy, *The Doctor and the Saint* 5). Gurinder Singh and Lakshman's account of the riot highlights the veracity of Dr. Ambedkar's claims about the role of Indian society in denying human rights to the minorities although as state functionaries they seem to keep their faith in Indian secularism and justice intact.[13] Singh tells Diggs about how the derogatory expletives against the Muslims took the form of slogans raised through the whole town of Zalilgarh. The Hindu mobs fired by the zeal to avenge the centuries of oppression, he tells Diggs, shouted in the streets of Muslim neighbor in Zalilgarh:

> Mussalman ke do hi sthaan/Pakistan ya kabristan" -There are only two places for a Muslim, Pakistan or cemetery…."Jo kehta he Ali Ali/Uski ma ko chodo gali gali"-He who calls out to Ali [a Muslim]. Fuck his mother in every alley…."Mandir wahin banayenge" -The temple will be built right there. (Tharoor, *Riot* 128)

The slogans though uttered in the context of the riots in Zalilgarh bear similarity with those raised by the Sikhs and the Hindus to force Muslims of India to flee to Pakistan in 1947. Gurinder's account of the events also questions the secularity and impartiality of the Indian state institutions (this time judiciary's) when he tells Diggs that although the Muslims rioters were being refused bails, the Hindus were released on bail by the courts "within a frigging week" (Tharoor, *Riot* 178). He imparts to Diggs the exasperation and frustration of Lakshman at this partial verdict given by the judge by quoting Lakshman's words spoken to the judge: "But here- the same riot, the same offenses, the same sections of the Penal Code-how can there be two such openly different standards for people of two communities?" (178).

This discriminatory treatment of the Muslims and the Hindus for the same crimes at the hands of secular judiciary reflects a deeper divide between the positions of Indian Muslims and Hindus in the eyes of Indian state. The Indian Muslims assume the role of others not only in the society but also in Hindu dominated state institutions. Therefore, their sufferings and remonstrance against the Hindus at the legal tribunals (courts) as well as at social places are largely ignored. At the same time violations of the law or the same crime of Muslims bring into motion the relevant clauses and statutes of law with full force and quite often with acrimony.

Rosemary Marangoly George in her book, *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature* (2013), explores the complicity of English language in marginalizing dissident articulations of non-English literary traditions of India. Her study suggests that re/construction of Indian national tradition in English neutralizes the internal conflicts. Though Gurinder Singh utters the following words in the context of the objective portrayal of the killing of the Sikhs by the Hindus after the murder of Indira Gandhi, they evince a particular relevance with those situations where violence committed against the Muslims is objectified and suppressed through the use of neutral language: "Isn't it wonderful how the English language manages to bureaucratize the savagery out of bloody human violence" (*Riot* 192). In other words, it may be asserted that the discourse

of secular India works in collaboration with Hindutva-inflected grammar of quotidian life to deny Muslims their basic human rights as well as the opportunity to give voice to their oppression and dehumanization.

6.6 Conclusion

Tharoor's *Riot* gives voice to nationalist vision of syncretic, multicultural, and tolerant India. The book allegorizes this idea of India through registering the views of a large number of characters around a single event and state of relations between the Hindus and the Muslims. Characters ranging from very involved to detached observers, from extremist Hindus to Secular Muslims, and from Indian bureaucrats to American journalists populate the pages of *Riot*. The final picture of state of Indian social relations that emerges from this text and which is projected by small fictional town of Zalilgarh, however, resonates with the vision held by upper-casteist nationalist Hindus including Tharoor. This understanding, despite recognizing the fraught nature of Hindu/Muslim relations and latter's persecution at the hands of the former, suppresses this aspect of Indian culture and society. Instead it, usually, projects the syncretic and multiculturalist image of India with a secular constitution that guarantees the equal rights to and safety and protection of its minorities. The realization of these guarantees, however, remains elusive in the lives of the Indian minorities.[14]

ENDNOTES

[1] For a counter point to Tharoor's view of the Hinduism, see *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture, and Political Economy*, 1996. Kancha Ilaiah, Calcutta Samya.
[2] Alex Padamsee in *Representations of Indian Muslims in British Colonial Discourse,* Palgrave Macmillan 2005, states that "the Muslim 'fanatic' as a pan-Indian figure of insurrection was born into colonialist discourse in the events of 1857-59"(p.46). Indian nationalists, like Tharoor, repeat the same tropes employed by British colonials to describe the Muslims.
[3] For detailed discussion of the nationalist movement in India and its relationship with vote population see Christophe Jaffrelot's *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* new York Columbia University Press. 1998.
[4] See how novel and television projected the image of Hinduism as normative in India. Van der Veer, Peter. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. University of California Press, 1994.
[5] For the genesis of the movement for Ramjunmabhumi See Nandy, Ashish. *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self.* Oxford University Press 1998.
[6] Arundhati Roy counts the loss of human life in her Essay "Algebra of Infinite Justice" Roy, *Algebra* p.187
[7] Regime of Impunity put in place by state claims Rana Ayub in her Book *Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover Up*(Independent Publishing Platform 2016). Modi's selection as Prime Minister corroborates Rana Ayaub's claims about regime of impunity. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Major Amrik Singh operates in "Infrastructure of Impunity".
[8] For deterioration of secularism in India see *The Crisis of Secularism in India 2006,* Duke University Press by *Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan*.
[9] For connection between Nehru's idea of secularism and Rushdie's treatment of the Muslims under the influence of this idea see Clements discussion of Rushdie's *Enchantress of Florence*.
[10] Arjun Appadurai in Fear of Small Numbers holds that the rivalry between India and Pakistan and the social historical conflicts between these two countries contribute towards the negative images of the Muslims all over the world. He describes them as "terrifying Majority.
[11] Amertya Sen in *Arguementative Indian: writings on History, Culture Identity*, Penguin Books London, 2005 p. 289 quotes Abdul Haq to praise Akbar's as a Good Muslim. Sarwar, here, fulfils this role of being a 'good Indian Muslim', a Muslim who should condemn Pakistan for dividing up the mother India.
[12] See Arjun Apadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers*(Duke University Press 2006).
[13] For different shades of Secularism see Rajeev Bhargava's edited *Secularism and its Critics,* 1998, Oxford University Press.
[14]Ashish Nandy in *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self.* Oxford University Press 1998, pleads for religious tolerance instead of state secularism. p 327.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In order to conclude this study, I present a brief review of the argument and the rationale for approaching the primary texts in the manner adopted in this research project. I have used qualitative research approach to interpret and analyze these texts. In this dissertation, I have studied the three primary texts by using the method of Textual Analysis. In this section, I review if my analyses of the primary texts vindicate the thesis statement and answer the research questions which I have raised in the introduction to this dissertation. My thesis statement claims that Anglophone South Asian fiction gives voice to the cultural, social, religious, and political heterogeneity of South Asia and represents the conflict between peoples and communities of these countries. These conflicts revolve around some irresolvable differences that exist between the faith-based ontology of the Muslims on the one side and the putative rational secular world view of the rest of the world on the other.

By selecting the texts written by Anglophone South Asian native and diasporic authors whose fiction and nonfiction deal with the conflicts that involve Islam and the Muslims, I have proceeded with the idea that these authors in many important ways both challenge and uphold assumptions of the West about South Asian reality. Their texts enact the *differend* of conflicting world views of different South Asian ideological groups. I have discussed these differences between heterogeneous voices in the chapter four, five, and six. These writers, born in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, explain from insiders' positions (to their Western readers) the South Asian social and political conditions that concern the global world of twenty first century. The central concern in these primary texts is occupied by question of Islam's and Muslims' relation to the rational secular non-Muslim world. Their writings inscribe their point of view in these debates and help explain some of the important historical, religious, cultural, and social issues involved in debates around these issues.

If the question of relation of Islam with rest the world is seen from Western point of view, it only dismisses the expressions of Islamic faith as a sign of its frozenness in the past and of an inability to adapt to the demands of multicultural and multi-ethnic global world. The West's relation with Islam remains antagonistic, although some efforts

at conciliation may be detected in Western societies with considerable Muslim populations and also in those Islamic countries where economic or strategic interests of the West dictate it. Aslam, Anam, and Tharoor, however, belong to the places where Islam and Muslims form a large part of the population. Their understanding of the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim world expressed in their writings inscribes a difference within the normative Western view of the Muslim world and Islam. These writers are seen as engaged in a struggle to break up the monolith of Muslim world and Islam and present a nuanced understanding than that the West utilizes to demonize and jewishize Islam and the Muslims.

At the same time, their reasoned understanding of Islam and the Muslim world challenges the more orthodox and extremist manifestations of Islamic way of life as well West's understanding about some foundational precepts of Islam. These texts may be regarded as extended polemics between these three heterogeneous views of the Muslims and their theology which remain at considerable variance from each other. The resulting tensions between contradictory claims of personages representing these ideological positions seem to fail to agree upon a single system of value judgement that may help reconcile their differences. I have termed this impasse as *differend* as Lyotard's theorization of this concept provides a useful lens to understand the struggle among ideas that seek to claim hegemony over others. Therefore, I have employed Lyotard's notion of *differend* to offer an analysis of the primary literary texts to ascertain whether any particular view of the South Asian reality has been privileged in them. This theory has helped me dig out parallelism between Lyotard's critique of the rational discourse employed by Robert Faurison to deny the existence of gas-chambers and the rational and secular leanings of the texts which tend to delegitimize the fundamentalist and exclusivist interpretations of Islamic faith. While their critique of the violence and excesses committed by the Muslims in the name of religion offers alternative visions of Islamic faith, the rationalist and secularist discourse of these text seems to fall short of according legitimacy to some essential components of Muslim faith. Therefore, the irreverent and skeptical approach they adopt toward *Tawhid* and *Jihad* and towards expressions of uniqueness of Muslim identity is likely to engender a sense of wrong among the Muslims.

By focusing on the gap that exists between the lived reality of the Muslims

and the significance of the sense of their rootedness in Muslim identity and the presentation of these within the primary texts, I have opened up new areas of research. I have generated new questions to be answered by the researchers by moving away from the mere discursivity and by incorporating the dynamics of lived reality as truthfully as possible into the discussions of relation of Islam and the Muslim world with the rest of the world. But this task is easier said than done as Lyotard maintains that there always exists a gap between reality and its representation. Through my analyses of these texts, I have answered the controlling research questions and pointed out the differences as well as common grounds that exist between Western assumptions about Islam and the Muslim world and those the primary texts both deconstruct and seem to confirm. My analyses of the primary texts provide answers to the research questions which I have raised in the Introduction part of this project. It would be instructive to present them one by one.

The analytical discussion that answers the first question may be summed up in these words: *Tahmima Anam, Nadeem Aslam, and Shashi Tharoor delineate the differences between the Muslims and non-Muslims in The Good Muslim, The Wasted Vigil and, Riot respectively and foreground the ideological conflict between Islamic faith and the values and principles of secularism and rationalism.* Their portrayal of the tension between two heterogeneous worldviews bears similarities and differences and seems to foreground a secularist vision of the South Asian reality. These texts highlight difference between different ideological positions where one position claims to represent the faithed perspective of the Muslims on the contested issue/s at hand. My analyses have further divided this answer into two parts to bring clarity to it.

Anam's *The Good Muslim* and Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* make use of the many stereotypes circulating in Western media and literary discourse. Both these texts engage with issues of veil, religious education at Madrassas, inhumanity of the believing and practicing Muslims, and deterministic view of personal and social life of the Muslims supposedly gathered from Qur'an. Though Anam's critique of some of the basic precepts of Islam is subdued in comparison with *The Wasted Vigil*'s, it is pertinent to point out that the expressions of faith and religiosity gain little traction and purchase in her text. This reading of the text is borne out by privileging of Maya's secular rationalist critique of Sohail's obsession with religious practices and ideology in the text. Anam "map[s] the rise of religious rights" (Ranasinha 129) and the threats it poses to the

secularist nature of Bangladeshi society. Aslam's text, however, seems to enunciate an outright condemnation of some of the Qur'anic verses and Islamic belief system by highlighting their anti-rational and supposedly inhumane aspects. Both of these texts seem to connect acts of violence and delinquency of the characters with some foundational creeds of Islam.

Tharoor's treatment of the Muslim difference seems to be dictated by the contingencies of the nationalist politics of India. His book reiterates assumptions of Nehru's 'secular consensus' in an upper-casteist neutral idiom vociferated mostly by a District Magistrate and a Muslim professor of history. Their view about the place of the Muslim of India seems to pressurize them to prefer their Indianness over their Muslimness. This pressure works to suppress the Muslim *differend* instead of highlighting it. I point out that in Tharoor's text, like Anam's *The Good Muslim*, the Indian Muslims along with Pakistani Muslims privileging their Muslim identity over the other forms of nationalist identities are spoken for and not given the space to register their own concerns. In *Riot* their voice is usurped by a secular Muslim and professor of Indian history who upholds a polytheistic form of worship as essential part of his identity as an Indian Muslim. This idea, however, remains inimical to the foundational concept of Tawhid reveals his unfamiliarity with this basic requirement of Muslim faith.

Although the texts engage with many of the stereotypes about the Muslims and expose the logic operating behind them, they seem to operate within the paradigms set up by debates around the mis/conduct of the Muslim in a multicultural world. The depiction of their relations with others seems to offer a binaristic view of the social, political, and cultural reality involving the Muslims. Sohail impersonates two opposite aspects of a Muslim in Anam's text. As long as he continues to uphold, read, and admire canonical western writers and other forms of art, he is admired by Maya. His turn towards Qur'an and indulgence in Muslim religious practices may be said to reflect the ironical undertones of the title of Anam's *The Good Muslim*. His adherence to the Muslim creeds not only distances him from western cultural productions and the values enshrined in them but also from his fellow Bengalis.

This binaristic logic is quite apparent in Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*. This novel seems to offer an extended commentary upon the tensions between rational and irrational, moral and immoral, and the putative ways of the West and Islam. Although

some characters and their behavior may be said to have been placed along these continua, most of the Afghan male characters are immoral and irrational in their conduct towards other fellow human beings. The depiction of their struggle against occupying American forces blurs the boundaries between jihad and terrorism. On the other hand, the presence of British and some American personages in Afghanistan comes out as beneficial for the larger population of Afghanistan in the schema of Aslam's text, although at a cost. In both Anam and Aslam's texts, Qur'an seems to be the fountainhead of the restricted thought and irrational behavior of Casa, Nabi Khan, and the Taliban.

Tharoor's *Riot* seems to offer a model of good Indian Muslim that must be followed by all the Indian Muslims. In the book, a Muslim professor of history vociferates his right to be considered a full blooded Indian like the Hindus. The reasons he offers for the legitimation of his claims rest as much on his love and loyalty to India as on his denunciation of Muhammad Ali Jinnah whom he thinks to be responsible for the precarious situation of Indian Muslims because of his role in the partition of India in 1947. He upholds Azad as the true and good Muslim who presents a foil to separatist and selfish tendencies of Jinnah.

In the final estimation, although all the primary texts deal with Muslim difference they seem to view the motivation behind the behavior of the Muslims from outside and fail to register their experience from within. Thus, the Muslim difference acquires negative hues and contrasts with the reasoned and humanistic discursive environment that surrounds and evaluates the manifestations of it.

The answer to the second question may summed up as: *The selected texts seem to offer different possibilities of resolution of the Muslim differend by attempting to come to terms with the difference that the figure of the Muslim presents.* Anam's text may be read as an elegy over the loss of secularist nationalism of Bangladeshi youth like Sohail. It looks like an extended critique of the religiosity that has gripped the Bangladeshi society. Its proposed resolution of the differend involves a return to the pre-independence secular society and the values held on to by all Bangladeshis during the war against Pakistan. Aslam's novel, however, seems to offer a pessimistic view of the future of Afghanistan. This is epitomized by tragic end David and Casa meet at the end of the book. Tharoor's text on the other hand offers spread of Indian democracy as panacea for the discrimination and violence faced by the Muslims of India. It seems, however, to demand that the Muslims remain loyal to India under all circumstances. This reading seems plausible as Professor Sarwar asserts his right to be considered a legitimate

resident of India by invoking the past syncretic and tolerant cohabitation of all communities of pre-partitioned India. These proposed resolutions of the conflict, however, are likely to perpetuate the sense of Muslim *differend* among them. These solutions may be broken down in the following sub categories.

In the texts, Muslims feel themselves under pressure to arrange their views and public and private lives according to requirements of a rationalist and secularist vision of peaceful coexistence in a multicultural and multi-ethnic world. In many cases, this prerequisite necessitates the relegation of some of the basic creeds of Islam to background to claim their place in such a world. The strong critique of Sohail's conversion to Tawhid in *The Good Muslim* offered by Maya and James' reduction of Casa to the level of subhuman beings for his participation in Jihad against the Western forces in Afghanistan in *The Wasted Vigil* testify to this pressure. Professor Muhammad Sarwar in *Riot* seems to have already succumbed to the pressures of nationalist politics that requires of the Indian Muslims to privilege their Indianness over their Muslimness. The binaries created in the texts between reason, humanism, tolerance, syncretism, and democracy on the one side and dogma, cruelty, violence, separatism, and absolutism on the other create a discursive space where Muslims seem to embody the latter part of the binaries. The narrative logic of the texts suggests to them the foregoing of these undesired values to be able to acquire acceptance in multicultural discursive fictional world of the texts.

Their refusal to conform to these demands, usually, results in a maligning campaign against them in this discourse. This may be seen in the way religious practices of the Muslims are portrayed in these texts. Reciting of Qur'an, offering prayers, and using Muslim greetings at particular times become suspect activities because of their juxtaposition with some other more desirable humanistic and secularist necessity. Teachings at madrassas in *The Good Muslim* and *The Wasted Vigil* are contrasted with Maya's teaching of English alphabets to her nephew and Duniya's education to poor Afghan children in these texts respectively. Sohail, Casa, Jinnah, and many other Muslim characters lack any redeeming qualities possessed by David, Maya, and Professor Sarwar. The texts seem to suggest that the personal and collective tragedy could have been averted had Casa, Sohail, and Jinnah left their extremist and separatist positions. These suggestions, however, offer the possibilities of the solution of the Muslim differend that might fail to redress their grievances and are likely to further their sense of being wronged.

The third question has been answered in these words: *Muslims' anxieties and sense of in/justice largely play out in the selected texts within the framework of rational secular and liberal humanist worldview. This framework, however, fails to allow them to articulate their voices from the stand point of their faith and seems to contribute towards their sense of victimhood.* The writers of the three primary texts remain at a remove from the ethos of Muslim faith. Aslam describes himself as a non-believer. Anam confesses that she did not have any religious education and read Qur'an only when she was researching for her novel. Tharoor is an upper-caste Hindu. The understanding of these writers of the creeds and practices of the Muslims arises from their observation rather than experiencing them personally. The whole edifice of postcolonial studies rests on the premise that white Westerners may not appraise the value of cultural practices of the colonized. The same may hold true in the case of the beliefs and practices of the Muslims when viewed from the standpoint of reason and secularist notion of life. I have further divided this answer into the following parts.

The internal struggles and experiences of the Muslims characters in these texts are largely elided and seem to have been viewed from the outside. Sohail's actions are interpreted by his secular minded sister, Maya, whose consciousness filters and analyses the different happenings in *The Good Muslim*. She pronounces judgements over other people's behavior and thoughts. Her point of view is accorded legitimacy by allowing it to portray and interpret the motives of other characters. Her views are also endorsed by the occasional narrative voice of the author. In *The Wasted Vigil*, it is Casa who embodies all the vices of an orthodox and extremist Muslim. His occasional introspection about the motives and righteousness of his actions is interrupted by remembrance of some Qur'anic verse or Islamic injunction and causes the hardening of his heart and mind against sympathetic impulses. David and Marcus on the other hand remain perplexed by their past and current actions. The detailed analyses are allowed them to justify and authenticate their actions and motives behind them. In *Riot*, District Magistrate and Professor Sarwar investigate the toxic relation among the Muslims and Hindus of India. Their polemics is directed as much against the Hindutva as against the absent figure of the Muslim epitomized by Jinnah with separatist tendencies that caused the division of India.

How the sense of Muslim in/justice is played out in these texts may also be noted by how certain characters and their thoughts invoke history to authenticate their respective positions. Maya, David, Marcus, District Magistrate, and Professor Sarwar

often invoke recent and past history of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and India to uphold a syncretic and secularist vision of these spaces. This history brings into sharp relief the exclusivist actions of the extremist Muslims. In *The Good Muslim,* Maya laments the ideals of the just finished war of independence. In *The Wasted Vigil*, the broken head of Budha in Marcus' house seems to preside over the violent proceedings unfolding around it. In *Riot,* Lakshman and Professor Sarwar rely on ancient tradition of syncretism to criticize the current tendencies of exclusionary visions of India. These historical claims, however, suppress the tensions that have remained present throughout the history in these places. They further seem to dictate a normative code of conduct in these places that might withhold the religious freedom the Muslims want to have about their religious practices.

To sum up the answer to the third question, it may be argued that skepticism of religions in general coupled with the difficulty of experiencing Muslims' sense of their own religion makes re/presentation of the Muslim difference in the primary texts a suspect act of representation. In view of the foregoing discussion, I argue that the three primary texts partially give voice to the anxieties and sense of injustice experienced by the believing and practicing Muslims. This loss of their voice through usurpation and appropriation makes the Muslims a victim and perpetuates their sense of injustice. This is the situation that I have described as the Muslim differend in my dissertation.

These answers have been offered in my analyses in chapter four, five, and six of this dissertation which comprise the main body of this research project. The discussions in these chapters engage with the questions of relations of the Muslims with non-Muslim world by highlighting the differences between their two irreconcilable worldviews. My dissertation also explores the possibilities of resolutions these texts offers to resolve this conflict. It sheds light on how the primary texts succeed in a limited way in articulating the concerns of the Muslims in a rational and secular idiom. Sometimes these texts become the tools of critique of some of the basic creeds of Islam that remain paramount to the sense of the Muslim identity. Esra Mirze Santasso in her book, *Disorientation: Muslim Identity in Contemporary Anglophone Literature* states that "Rather than isolating religion as a taboo, or writing it off as an irrational system unworthy of critical attention, it is necessary to acknowledge its impact on the individual, and recognize the challenges it presents for the political order despite, and perhaps

because of, the inherently secular policies of Western states" (6). After reading texts of many Muslim writers Santesso further claims that their writings "suggest [.] that an irresolvable tension exists between Eastern and Western values" and that By advocating for secularism, these authors seem to insinuate that the only road that leads to successful integration is the one which removes religion from configurations of identity"(6).

7.1 Recommendations for Further Research

My research project would spur the other researchers to further delve into this minefield of research that I have called Anglophone South Asian fiction. My research picks up three texts different in many respects with regard to religious, cultural, ideological, and social views and studies them through Lyotard's concept of differend. The issues of Muslim religious extremism directly and indirectly concern almost the whole world. As the main point of contention in these conflicts, dealt with in the primary texts, revolve around the relation of Islam and Muslims with the rest of the world, a research into the causes of these conflicts from the point of view of those who 'suffer' and not those who observe would help bring a change into the attitude of the world. The study of writings of Khalid Husseini (*The Kite Runner*, *And The Mountains Echoed*), Mirza Waheed (*The Collaborator*), Basharat Peer (*The Curfewed Nights*), Rahul Pandita (*Our Moon Has Blood Clots*), Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*), Muhammad Hanif (*Red Birds*), Adib Khan (*Seasonal Adjustments*, *The Spiral Road*), Yasmina Khadra (*The Swallows of Kabul*), Kamila Shamsie(*Home Fire*), Mohsin Hamid (*Exit West*), and many others' who write about Hindu/Muslim conflict and religious, social, political and cultural tensions in the places cohabited by the Muslims with others through Lyotard's concept of *differend* may help understand the Muslim difference in a more informed way.

Although I have studied only one text by each of these primary writers, the interpretation of the whole oeuvre of each writer through Lyotard's idea of differend might offer viable possibilities of research. The research carried out on these lines is likely to disseminate a more nuanced understanding of the Muslim difference and call for its acceptance rather than its demonization in literary and critical discourses. As Lyotard's idea pleads for the acceptance of uniqueness of the communicative as well as political and social events in their own right rather their being appropriated by

hegemonic discourses, it may be applied to interpret the other creative writings of these writers as well as those written by other South Asian Anglophone writers.

A particular interesting research might be the one where faith based ontology of the Muslims is employed as a legitimized normative value judgement system to interpret and evaluate the rationalist and secularist thoughts and actions of the characters of a particular text. Aslam's fiction offers tenable possibilities for this kind of textual analysis although it might require the potential researcher to adopt a contrapuntal approach in his/her analyses. This reversal of the value system has rarely been employed by the researchers in their studies on Anglophone South Asian fiction. This particular approach may be adopted to study the texts written by Taslima Nasreen, Hanif Kureishi, Adib Khan, and Khalid Husseini to reveal an alternative understanding of the basic creeds of Islam and their significance in the construction of their identity. A conspicuous absence within debates around Anglophone Pakistani Writing is rigid hierarchies of Caste that characterise the quotidian reality of much of Pakistan, especially rural areas that contain the majority of population. Theories offered by Subaltern Study Group with a combination of Foucault's ideas employed by New Historicists may open up a research horizon with considerable positive social implications.

I would also stress that Lyotard's theorization of the irresolvable difference would offer very useful tool to stem the flow of meta-narratives that seem to delegitimize the Muslim difference for the sake of Western economic, political, and strategic interests. It would explicate how local and situated and not the global or abstract would help the world live with these differences. It would also raise a barricade in the way of marginalization, assimilation, appropriation that is carried out by employing the discourse of secularity and scientific rationality to pressurize different religious communities spread all over the world.

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