RECIPROCITY OF ANGST AND FANATICISM: EXISTENTIAL-TERRORISTIC FEEDBACK LOOP IN NADEEM ASLAM'S SELECTED FICTION

By

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES ISLAMABAD

June, 2019

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BS (Hons) English Language and Literature, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2015

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
In **English Literature**

To

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

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Thesis Title: Reciprocity of Angst and Fanaticism: Existential-Terroristic Feedback Loop in Nadeem Aslam's Selected Fiction

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Master of Philosophy
  Degree name in full

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Reciprocity of Angst and Fanaticism: Existential-Terroristic Feedback Loop in Nadeem Aslam's Selected Fiction,** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: Reciprocity of Angst and Fanaticism: Existential-Terroristic Feedback Loop in Nadeem Aslam's Selected Fiction

Nadeem Aslam's selected novels, *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden*, represent war in Afghanistan. The latter text also depicts its effects on security situation in Pakistan. Set in post 9/11 world, the selected fiction highlights both objective and subjective violence. Barbarism is enacted by American involvement in Afghanistan as well as savage activities executed by terrorist organizations. The tumultuous circumstances exhibit exacerbated existential crisis in the selected texts. This renders the characters' lives uncertain. In order to feel uncontested in such a scenario, the characters affiliate themselves with core defining principles of life. Cultural, religious, and political worldviews help set the codes. The predefined set of rules is largely offered by terrorist ideologies. In his novels, Aslam shows that ideological constructs are ferociously defended in the wake of trepidations. Thus, when imperiled, violence increases. This research invokes Megan McBride's *existential-terroristic feedback loop* to investigate the role of fear of death in people's desire to observe certain beliefs. Also, I have adapted McBride's model to evaluate the reciprocity of angst and fundamentalism. I explore angst in the novels from Kierkegaard's perspective. My project, thus, identifies that this relation remains uncharted, and attempts to fill this gap. This study is interpretive and exploratory in nature and is, therefore, qualitative. I have read my primary texts through Textual Analysis.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMG	*The Blind Man's Garden*
TWV	*The Wasted Vigil*
TMT	Terror Management Theory
ETFL	Existential-terroristic Feedback Loop

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Almighty Allah for providing me with the strength to embark upon this project and completing it. I would never have been able to complete this project without His help. I am grateful to my dedicated, kind, and co-operative supervisor Dr. Sibghatullah Khan, who ensured that not only my thesis but also my research capacities are honed to perfection. I am indebted to him for serving as a beacon of light in the two years of my research.

I am so thankful to my parents who have ascertained my comfort and ease throughout my research. Their motivation and support in every regard propelled me to initiate this research. I am at a loss of words to express my gratitude for all that they have done for me. A special thanks to all my siblings who have been nothing but encouraging throughout my life. I have found my peace of mind and the courage to move on in their words and support. I am also thankful to my husband and in-laws who have assured my comfort after my marriage. Their care has allowed me to spend hours on my thesis undisturbed.

I would also like to thank all my teachers in BS and MPhil for playing their parts in making me who I am today. I am ever so grateful to Miss Asma Mansoor whose guidance in the initial years of my BS stirred my interest in research.

Lastly, I would also like to thank my friends, specially Zoya Rehman, Kinza Abbassi and Momina Hafeez for listening to my endless rants during thesis work. I would not have been able to finish this research without all these people in my life.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Muhammad Ismail bin Osama who was, and will always remain, the most important blessing of my life.

Just as tomorrow's wars might be begotten by today's wars, a continuation of them.

---Nadeem Aslam *TWV*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Two of their buildings fell down and they think
they know about the world's darkness, about
how unsafe a place it is capable of being"

---Nadeem Aslam, *The
Wasted Vigil*

This research investigates how, in the wake of war on terror and death anxiety, terrorist activities originate as a result of a desperate endeavor to make meaning in life. The research applies existential-terroristic feedback loop (ETFL) by Megan McBride, supported by Soren Kierkegaard's notion of existential anxiety, on Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden*. Before embarking upon this research, it is imperative to anatomize the title and its terminology. Discussion of the title lays forth the major argument of the thesis as well. Therefore, first of all, I briefly discuss the terminology employed in the title. The subtitle of my thesis declares that I explore the formation of "existential-terroristic feedback loop" in Nadeem Aslam's fiction. "Existential-terroristic feedback loop" is a phrase used by Megan McBride in her article "Logic of Terrorism: Existential Anxiety, the Search for Meaning, and Terrorist Ideologies." It describes the cyclical loop of violence created because of uneasiness that accompanies the fear of death. ETFL, as a model, suggests that death apprehension propels people to make meaning in life by associating with certain ideologies.

The doctrines that one affiliates with help him/ her vanquish the dread of death. The precepts of life ascribe a purpose to life. In the face of uncertainty of death triggered in war situations, beliefs that imbue life with meaning, are aggressively safeguarded. This, however, only leads to a further amplification of trepidation of death. A cycle is, thus, created in which exacerbated death anxiety leads to affiliation with meaning-making constructs, and results in a vehement defense of those ideologies through violence. Violence, then, steers the society towards a further aggravated distress of death. As a result, the cycle keeps going. ETFL describes this loop which never ends. It forms a part of the subtitle of my thesis because it serves as the basic theoretical model which is used to analyze Nadeem Aslam's selected fiction.

Application of ETFL on my selected novels has undergone a little adaption. A comprehension of this modification is instructive at this point because it allows a clearer grasp on the main title of my study. ETFL converges its attention on understanding the fear that entails death from a socio-psychological perspective. On that account, it uses Terror Management Theory (TMT), a socio-psychological theory, as its basis. Through social experimentation, TMT proved that death anxiety pervades human consciousness. It further evidenced that terror of death is managed by alliance with cultural beliefs and symbolic systems like religion, government, etc. According to McBride, when the foreboding of death consumes a human being, meaning in his/ her life starts to fall apart. In order to organize it, he or she starts defending the cultural or systemic dogmas. Some people use destructive terrorist ideologies to make meaning but this only heightens the perturbation of death. Thus, this creates an unceasing circle which only keeps building upon the existing annihilation (McBride 561). Since my research is in the field of humanities, I have altered ETFL by Megan McBride for its textual application. My research is not generalizable because I intend to dissect the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam. Therefore, I have adapted McBride's model and replaced death anxiety with Søren Kierkegaard's perception of existential anxiety. Hence, I argue, that it is *angst*[1] that stimulates a fanatical defense of one's beliefs and creates a reciprocity of angst and fanaticism.

The main title of my thesis holds the crux of my argument. Ergo, I briefly discuss angst before defining fanaticism. These two hold a directly proportional relation. Since I have altered McBride's theory and used Kierkegaard's ideas on existentialism, I use the term angst to specifically refer to his philosophical take on anxiety. I employ his concept of angst, analyzed in his work *The Concept of Anxiety*, as a supporting lens for my theoretical framework. The terrorist organizations, depicted in both the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam, uphold religious values. In fact, they commit terrorist acts and galvanize people in their cause through affirmation of faith. Kierkegaard's angst offers the closest possible religious cognizance of existential crisis. It, therefore, recognizes the spiritual dread stemming from an inability to comprehend the infinity of God and soul. His thoughts focus the role of unmonitored uneasiness pertaining to incomprehensibility of self. For Kierkegaard, existential angst emanated from a realization of possibilities that one could choose from. It was, then, an incompetence to fully recognize one's soul, which engendered distress. Thus,

Kierkegaard emphasized that one should use inner workings of the soul to transcend beyond the realm of the physical and gain familiarity with the spiritual. This gives meaning to life by providing a cognizance of the self. Across the thesis, angst refers to the way existential apprehensions have been philosophized by Kierkegaard.

It can be argued, in this light, that making meaning out of arbitrariness is the central idea that controls Kierkegaard's take on resolution of dread, while also dominating McBride's model. To comprehend this, a brief diversion, interpreting crisis that produces disquietude entailing a consequential desire to make meaning, is in order. War of/ on terror[2], fought in Afghanistan by America, has steered Afghanistan in to a chaotic state of affairs. A fright about death remains constant. It intensifies in the wake of war and magnifies the uncertainty and meaninglessness of life. Worry about death is so overpowering that not only "a threat of imminent death" but "even a passing thought of our own mortality—is sufficient to wrench us out of our current involvements—even if but for a moment—and force us to look at our lives" (Solomon xv). Consternations about death, in this manner, cultivate an existential attitude. It makes human mind meander in a search for one's understanding of the self and spirit. It is a "philosophical realization of a self-consciousness living" in a dislocated, broken, and ambiguous world where human beings have been thrown against their will as abandoned, yet free beings (R. Solomon xi). As war rouses the disarray of the world, it gives rise to an existential stance. "Existential attitude begins with a disoriented individual facing a confused world" (R. Solomon xi). Although it "is an attitude that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world" (R. Solomon xi), it still "resists the all-too-human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar— reason, God, nation, authority, history, work, tradition, or the 'otherworldly,' whether of Plato, Christianity, or utopian fantasy" (R. Solomon xi). Despite Solomon's proclamation, there is often an adverse response to existential dilemma. The war-stricken anxieties frequently result in seeking meaning in 'all-too-human' ways. In fact, it is done to a noticeable extent in the fiction selected for this thesis.

Evident in the selected primary texts, individuals search for a harmonized sense of self when their lives are threatened by a pronounced unpredictability of life. The war of/ on terror has been fought under the shadow of America's portrayal of itself as a victim of 9/11 attacks. However, it has been conducive to traumatizing circumstances

inciting anguish. As an outcome, a desire to search for meaning and purpose in life has inevitably enkindled. *TWV* and *BMG* both exhibit this situation of war in Afghanistan while its effects on security situation in Pakistan have been displayed in the latter novel. Existential crisis affects the characters in both the novels because of their jeopardized safety in the battle. Their lives start revolving around making meaning to overcome the feeling of desolation. Consequentially, cultural worldviews, religious institutions and government etc.[3] imbue life with purpose and allow a respite from feeling of purposelessness. When the concepts or philosophy of life is threatened by war, the end product is an intense defense of those ideologies. It is with the consideration of directly proportional relation of existential anxiety and violence that I embark upon this research.

Now that the idea of angst and its relation to violence has been clarified, I believe it is essential to describe the rationale behind usage of the term fanaticism in the title. Instead of using 'violence', I draw on 'fanaticism' because fanaticism specifically relates to the savagery executed passionately. It has a sadistic tendency to exterminate the other. According to Dominique Colas, "fanaticism is always profaning: attacking the temples, polluting the relics, defying the taboos, and cursing the gods of the 'other'" (5). Webster dictionary defines fanatic as a person with "an extreme and uncritical enthusiasm or zeal, as in religion or politics" (697). Since my research engages with ETFL as the basic model, I focus on coalition with terrorist ideologies as the center of attention for my thesis. Fanaticism, in this light, serves as the most suitable and accurate term to define my intentions. Reciprocity of angst and fanaticism, hence, explores the relation between angst and fanaticism. Although I mainly discuss the terrorist activities as fanatic ones, my study also keeps in mind political concerns that engender violence. Therefore, I analyze the texts to see the relation of both objective and subjective violence. In the following paragraph, I briefly define the two types of violence.

The post 9/11 war of/ on terror has impregnated the air of Afghanistan with violence because of the vigorous resistance by Americans, Taliban, al-Qaeda and local warlords against each other. The CIA administered torture/ violence, which is the 'objective violence' gives rise to a 'subjective violence', the violence perpetrated by an identifiable agent, and vice versa. Slavoj Žižek, in his work *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, defines the two kinds of violence. He describes subjective violence as that

which is "performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (1). It is, according to him, seen in isolation, ignoring the "contours of the background which generates such outbursts" (1). It can be said, then, that terrorist violence is the subjective violence because it is performed by an agent who can be labelled as a terrorist. Objective violence, on the contrary, is that background which is mostly ignored. It is "invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent" (Zizek 2). It is of paramount importance, thus, to perceive the backdrop against which subjective violence is recognized as outrageous. The terrorist ideologies and why people adhere to them can be enquired into through the analysis of Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* and *BMG*. Both the novels encapsulate the problem of terrorism prevalent in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Though the major part of my analysis concerns itself with the subjective violence, I still keep in mind the objective violence that produces the subjective violence[4] and vice versa. A knowledge of both enables me to fully comprehend the motives behind constantly charged forces fighting against each other in Afghanistan. Since the explication of my title has introduced the major argument of my thesis, I now highlight the historical context of 9/11 in which my selected fiction is placed.

1.1 Historical Background

The morning of 11th September, 2001 instigated an era of wars and dichotomies. America's Twin Towers, an icon of their power, collapsed. A wave of trauma and panic struck the United States of America. In the wake of these attacks, Islamophobia was triggered. The pre-existing colonially created hierarchical dichotomy of Us/ Them[5] was replaced by neocolonial hierarchical assembling of a victimized 'Us' against a demonized 'other'. The victimized 'us' represented itself in need of its emancipation against the evil 'other'. "Thanks to the bewildering moment" (Gray 3), America's resultant "descent into darkness" (Gray 3) after 9/11 created feelings of insecurity among the citizens (Gray 5). "Homeland was no longer secure and, to that extent, no longer home" (Gray 5). In fact, a legitimized genocide was put in order with President Bush's launch of a "rhetoric of 'evil'"[6] (Kellner 344). It demonized the image of the 'other' as a terrorist which came to include Muslims as well. The resultant "War of/ On Terror" opened a whole arena of research that either countered the narratives of victimization of America or supported them. It also produced accounts that either purported the Islamophobia or retorted to the newly fabricated Muslim identity.

Additionally, the war created an increased interest in the study of psychological underpinnings of the terrorist activities.

Collapse of Twin Towers brought about a traumatic wave in America. American exceptionalism[7] started paving way for a new pattern of thought. It stretched the already existing us vs. them dichotomy. The American dogma of exceptionalism set the sophistication of America up against the wilderness of the rest of the world. According to Americans, the world was uncivilized, and it sent out terror. The horror, according to President Bush, originated from the Eastern part of the world. President Bush considered his obligation as the President of the 'civilized world' to erase the rising terrorism in the world. He raised the civilized/ uncivilized and us/them dichotomies that indicated the need for American interference in the politics of the world. He promised, that the attack on the twin towers would be avenged. In one of his speeches, while expressing his sorrow, President Bush announced his plans. He stated that the attack on twin towers was not merely an attack on the twin towers but actually meant an attack on the values and ideologies of America as a nation (Bush 3). As a civilized nation, Bush announced that his country would wage a war against the terrorists. In fact, his announcement also made a pledge of war against all the governments suspected of sheltering terrorists (Bush 3).

It was after President Bush's speech that Afghanistan was invaded by American troops. However, the war on terror not only left Afghanistan disintegrated but also affected Pakistan because of the porous border. Pressurized under the US leadership, Pakistan was forced to wipe out the terrorist groups in the northern parts of Pakistan. Pakistan's military forces were used to fight the war across the border in Afghanistan. It gave rise to a state of insecurity in Pakistan as well. As Haqqani notes, Pakistan has always been "a nation that the United States has been happy to use without ever bothering to understand" (i). The war on terror, in this sense, did not stay confined to Afghanistan. As the tension has grown since the war on terror, the security situation in Pakistan has also deteriorated. Terrorism has raised its head in Pakistan. Groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have paved their way to these lands and affected the situation. The extremist groups of terrorists, using manipulated version of Islam, have brought about a distrust for the Muslims across the world. Literature produced in Pakistan discusses this Islamophobia. Pakistani Anglophone literature has been a response to the narratives

of victimization of America. A brief discussion of these narratives is instructive to understand the ideological construction of Muslim image.

1.2 Post 9/11 Fictional Narratives and Ideological Construction

Since my research focuses on examining the affiliation with terrorist ideologies, it is necessary to explore the Muslim as well as American narratives that have produced Islamic image as terrorists. Therefore, before discussing the research questions, significance of the study, and delimitations, I briefly highlight the ideological construction of Muslims as terrorists in post 9/11 American fiction. Afterwards, I discuss the Muslim narratives as a response to the over-arching Western narrative. Aslam also acts as a mouthpiece of Muslim image in post 9/11 world of conflicting narratives. Just like Aslam, Muslim authors have defended themselves against post 9/11 American narratives. They have explored the whole situation from their vantage point. Thus, 9/11 holds great significance for the Muslims and Muslim identity in the international arena because it thrust them under the scrutiny of the Western audiences.

A huge bulk of literature by Western writers was produced in the post-9/11 era in response to the growing market of readers eager to understand Muslim and Islam. This literature, therefore, attempts to assuage the readers' curiosity about Muslims and the Muslim experience. Yet, most of the times it tends to conform to the biased views about the Muslims as terrorists already present in the West. It is instructive to understand this image because people form desperate alliance with such image constructions. They also advocate and endorse them vigorously. Thus, I briefly call attention to the post 9/11 ideological clash between Islam and the West as a repercussion of the 9/11 attacks. Post 9/11 Pakistani fiction stood as a response to the narratives of 'barbaric' and 'uncivilized' Muslims. This response as a struggle to reconstruct Muslim identity started as a dichotomous standing built between America and the rest of the world. This ensued clash of civilizations was embodied in the media narratives as it became the "jargon of the politicians and the media" (Werbner 2).

As stated earlier, Western narratives catered to the demands of the market while, simultaneously, repeatedly propagating the negative image of Muslims. The repetition has been so intense that the Muslim identity has come to be seen as equivalent to being terrorist, and Islam as a religion of barbarism and violence. This reductive image of Muslims is not exclusive to literature only. In fact, literature merely reflects the popular

perceptions and biases articulated in the social, political and cultural discourses in the West. The result of these fallacious representations results in the vilification and marginalization of Muslims in the Western society. Peter Morey sheds light on this in the following lines:

> Far from being accurate or neutral, contemporary images of Muslims presented by politicians and in mainstream media and cultural forms are almost always tied to an agenda that simultaneously announces its desire to 'engage' with them while at the same time forcing debate into such contorted and tenuous channels as to make a meaning flow of cross-cultural discussion almost impossible. (2)

Morey rightly points out that such (mis)representations of Muslims, especially the ones found in literature, promote an air of distrust among the Western public. They help create an ever widening gap of communication between the 'demonized' Muslims and the real Muslims. It also increases religious bias and discrimination targeted at various diaspora Muslim communities present in the Western countries. 9/11 had a significant impact on the way Muslim identity has come to be viewed and, particularly, how it is constructed in the dominant Western narratives.

Much of the American fiction written after the attacks on the Twin Towers tends to present a stereotypical and totalizing image of Muslims. It reinforces the age-old Orientalist tropes found in the Western literature. Don Dellilo's *Falling Man* is one such work that presents a one-dimensional image of Muslims as vengeful, scheming terrorists, who plot against the American citizens to destroy their peace. John Updike's *The Terrorist*[8], similarly, relies on the stereotypical image of Islam as having a violent and regressive ideology. It describes Muslims as uncivilized barbarians ready to strike at the West at any given opportunity. Thus, Anglocentric fiction presents an overarching narrative that tends to portray a negative image of Muslims by associating a terrorist ideology with them. As Aslam's novels are directly a part of this canon, a look into this mediated image is important.

9/11 and the Western political discourse that ensued as a result of it has highly influenced the image of Pakistanis all over the world as they, being Muslims, are also stereotypically associated with terrorism. Pakistan's significant geopolitical location draws further attention to its citizens who are subsequently targeted and marginalized because of their false, malignant image in the Western discourses. In response to this

dominant Western narrative that imposes a fixed identity on Muslims, Pakistani writers have been trying to articulate their experiences in the form of fictional works. Their works deal with the socio-political issues that have arisen after 9/11. Pakistani novels written in English, thus, vocalize an alternate view of Muslims, which allows a recognition and discernment of the Muslims and terrorists. Doing so, it allows a comprehensive analysis of the terrorist figures in both the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam. At the same time, it keeps me alert to the possible prejudices regarding the image of Muslims, Islam, and any other religion, race, or nation for that matter.

Pakistani Anglophone writers like Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid, H. M. Naqvi and others have produced novels that deal with the 9/11 experience from a Pakistani perspective. These novels provide the readers with peripheral view of the event, and discuss the repercussions it has brought upon the world afflicted by the 'war on terror'. Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*[9] encompasses multiple significant political and historical events such as the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in 1945, the end of the British colonial rule and the subsequent partition of India in 1947, and the horrors of the post-9/11 era. Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*[10] presents a narrative about the fall of the Twin Towers from a Pakistani immigrant Chengez's perspective in America. It draws a comparison between the fundamentals of Islam, that the Western discourses highly focus upon, and those of capitalism that form the core of the American society. This novel is significant because it is written in a form of monologue in which only Chengez is given a voice. His listener, an American citizen in Lahore whose complete identity is never revealed, is made to listen to the Pakistani side of the story. This basically is an enactment of the inversion of hierarchy where the subservient non-Western discourse is highlighted instead of the dominant Western one. Similarly H. M. Naqvi's *Homeboy*[11] also deals with the tumultuous immigrant experience of three Pakistani young men and their lives changing in the aftermath of 9/11. Pakistani novelists writing in English, thus, attempt to challenge the central narrative about Muslims, in general, and Pakistanis, in particular. While doing so, it brings diverse, non-western accounts into light in their works. In this manner, fiction has played a prominent role in the development of identity and defence of that identity. This very identity defines one's association with their nation, religion and other meaning-making constructs or systems. This understanding has helped me place the novels of Nadeem Aslam in this context and consider them as not only a response but also a mediation of

Muslim image. As a researcher, I remain alert to the possibility of bias that exists in reductive image of Muslims as terrorists.

Identity and reconstruction of identity in Pakistani Anglophone literature has largely been discussed in the past one and a half decade following the 9/11 attacks. However, the reasons behind terrorism and the terrorist psychology have largely been ignored in the analysis of Pakistani literature. The state of Pakistan has suffered at the hands of the war in Afghanistan to a great extent because of the porous borders. The state of terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan is discussed in *TWV* and *BMG* respectively. The novels allow an insight in to the situation from the perspective of a Muslim whose identity has been suffering ever since the narratives started defining Muslims as terrorists. Nadeem Aslam's diasporic associations allow him an insight in to the issues pertaining to war on terror. Thus, his position as a writer is of primary significance. I believe that my situatedness as a researcher also holds importance. On this account, I fleetingly consider my situatedness below.

1.3 Situatedness of the Researcher

As a Pakistani national and a student of English Literature, I developed an interest in reading the novels written by Pakistani writers because of my cultural immediacy with the fictional characters. I am able to comprehend the characters and situation because of my situatedness. My research, in this sense, allows me to contextualize the aspects of terrorism as a Pakistani as well as a researcher. I am better able to understand the multiple layers of reasons behind terrorist activities. Since 9/11, war in Afghanistan has inevitably perturbed security in Pakistan. Terrorists have crossed the border to Pakistan and executed extremist attacks. Numerous adults and children have fallen a victim to their monstrosity. This scenario has intrigued Pakistani Anglophone authors to portray the dilemma. Terrorist ideology has been substantially discussed in fiction. Being a Pakistani, I understand the reductive pattern of thought which equates Muslims and Pakistanis with terrorists. Fiction writers act as significant channels to redefine that image. Therefore, I am eager to explore how Pakistani writers have presented the terrorist beliefs and the situation of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Also, I am keen to understand how the diasporic writers negotiate the space between home audience and the Western readers. The Western readers consume these writers' ideas for an insight into the exotic orient. My identity as a Pakistani, in this sense, makes it easier for me to see it from a vantage point. I understand the situation in Pakistan and its people from

a firsthand experience. My identity as a Pakistani and a Muslim is likely to impact my understanding and allow me to read my primary texts with a sense of cultural proximity.

1.4 Delimitation

I have delimited this study to the analysis of *TWV* and *BMG* by Nadeem Aslam. The study analyses both the texts from the perspective of Megan McBride's existential-terroristic feedback loop which is adapted and supported by Søren Kierkegaard's concept of existential anxiety.

1.5 Thesis Statement

Nadeem Aslam's selected fiction represents existential crisis in post 9/11 Afghanistan, leading to a creation and intense defense of beliefs that imbue life with meaning. However, the violent defense only leads to a clash of the objective and the subjective violence and creates a cycle in which one's beliefs are constantly threatened, vigorously defended, and the society is further disarrayed.

1.6 Research Questions

1. How does the existential angst that various characters in the selected texts exhibit create a need to be affiliated with meaning-giving constructs?

2. How does existential anxiety pave the way for adherence and support for terrorist ideologies in *TWV* and *BMG* by Nadeem Aslam?

3. How does the support for terrorist ideologies as well as clash between objective and subjective violence create ETFL?

1.7 Research Plan

I have structured my thesis in six chapters, each one flowing into the next one and leading to the analysis of the texts before final conclusion. The first chapter introduces the project and briefly discusses the context of the novels, the spatial setting of the novels, the research questions and the significance. It highlights the major aspects of the research. Chapter two divulges on scrutinizing the literature related to the research questions. It also reviews it to contextualize the study as well as to identify the research gaps that my study intends to fill. My third chapter focuses its attention on the theoretical framework best suited to carry out the research. In this regard, the third chapter explicates upon the ETFL as well as Kierkegaard's notion of angst to make space for a thorough examination of the novels under study. The chapter also dilates

upon the research methodology and method employed for the analysis of the selected texts by Nadeem Aslam.

The formulation of the basic structure in the first three chapters allows an organization of the next two chapters as they focus on the analysis of the selected texts. Chapter four analyses *TWV* whereas chapter five converges its attention on the analysis of *BMG*. The analysis of both the novels focuses on understanding the resolution of existential suffering through adherence to principles and worldviews. These chapters see how affiliation with worldviews leads to their aggressive protection and produces ETFL. Chapter six finally concludes the study, highlights the findings of the analysis and also establishes its usefulness with regards to future interpretation of Pakistani Anglophone literature.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study intends to investigate the terrorist ideologies as demonstrated in the works of Pakistani authors writing in English. The study tries to examine how the terrorist ideologies are acting as meaning constructing devices in the lives of the terrorists and those supporting those beliefs. A critical reading of novels from this perspective is likely to bring a new way of analyzing the literary texts. This dimension is, as yet, unexplored as far as the Pakistani Fiction in English is concerned.

Endnotes

1 See Thomte. Kierkegaard's *Angst* has been loosely translated as dread, anxiety or anguish. There has been a lot of debate regarding the usage of the translation. My thesis translates *Angst* as anxiety in line with the translation of Kierkegaard's work by Reidar Thomte. This very translation has been used to study Kierkegaard in the first place Usage of the term angst across the thesis implies that the idea of existential anxiety proposed by Kierkegaard is being specifically discussed.

2 See Zillah Einstein (London: Zed, 2004). This term was used by Zillah Eisenstein in her work *Against Empire* to highlight that the war was not only a war that was waged to eliminate terror, but was one that was used for geopolitical benefits and only started another regime of terror (11). This term has been used above to establish the context. Although, the term war on terror will be used in the rest of the thesis, this phrase will make recurrent appearance wherever needed to highlight the two-sided war and violence.

3 All of these have been time and again referred to as meaning-making constructs, beliefs, principles etc. throughout the thesis

4 As a researcher, I refrain from a reductive attitude as well as essentialism in my thesis. The claim that objective violence becomes a reason of perpetuation of subjective violence is based on the analysis of novels which also shows the objective violence to be an inevitable result of subjective violence. I do not hold anyone responsible for violence. I merely discuss the cyclical creation of a loop. The study only concerns itself with understanding the creation of a loop within the novel as both objective and subjective violence is carried out against each other as a revenge.

5 Masood Ashraf Raja (New York: OUP, 2010). The process of colonization in the subcontinent entailed an attempt at eradicating the historical, cultural and political supremacy that the Muslims of the sub-continent had been enjoying for centuries. As a colonial reconnaissance, the Muslims were subjected to face a "binary of the self and the Other" (Raja xix). Through this "politics of difference" (Raja xix), the colonizers aimed at subjugating the Muslims by establishing a cultural, political and historical supremacy that favored the colonizers. This dichotomy also operates in neo-colonial settings and set the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' world apart.

6 See speeches of President George W. Bush in fall, 2001. President Bush stated in his speech that "The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century. A war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them" (Bush 3). His words demonized the Muslim world and clearly established America as a civilized portion of the world which needed to be defended from such attacks again. This rhetoric has been used to legitimize the crimes of war against the innocents as well.

7 See Harld Hongju Koh. 'American exceptionalism' is a belief that "the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions" (Koh 225).

8 See Updike's *The Terrorist* (2007)

9 See Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)

10 See Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2008)

11 See Naqvi's *Homeboy* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2010)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> "You have spent your whole life
> believing such untrue things. Don't you
> know how alone you are, David? We are
> most alone when we are with myths"
>
> ---Nadeem Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil*

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the existing literature on the selected novels to contextualize my research as well as find gaps in the existing scholarship on my area of research. Pakistani Literature in English has undergone a wide range of critical survey in the past years. The diverse scholarship on post 9/11 Pakistani Literature helps me analyze my selected novels *TWV* and *BMG*, set in post 9/11 Afghanistan and Pakistan. These texts indulge into an appraisal of the entire situation created outside America after the collapse of the Twin Towers. The political nature of both the novels has produced diverse literature, specifically analyzing the texts from various political and social perspectives. Examining this research conducted on the novels allows me to scrutinize the themes of postcolonialism, Islamophobia and terrorism. A knowledge of these thematic concerns helps me pilot my research into the right direction by facilitating my knowledge of the political and social context in which the situation in Afghanistan can be placed. Additionally, it allows me to identify the current gaps in this area of knowledge that my study may fill. This may add not only to the existing literature but also lead trails towards new areas of research.

Both *TWV* and *BMG*, explore the *Jihadist* terrorism which remains one of the central problems in Afghanistan. Despite his focus, Nadeem Aslam does not remain ignorant of the violence inflicted in Afghanistan by US forces to avenge the 9/11 attacks. In fact, the violence and terrorism seem to have a relation which keeps the war going while also exacerbating the situation. Terrorism associated with Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and Afghan warlords is largely discussed in both the novels. As I scrutinize the texts to analyze the reciprocity of angst and terrorism, the selected literature enhances my contextual cognizance of the creation of *Mujahideen, Jihadists* and various terrorist organizations. Moreover, it gives me a chance to take a look in to the

reasons behind their conduct. Finally, it helps me find gaps in literature that my research may fill to add to the existing body of literature and open new arena for research.

2.2 Review of the Literature

For the sake of clarity, I have divided the chapter into two parts. My review of articles, books and dissertations falls into the following two categories:

I.   Review of scholarly articles and books, critically analyzing *TWV* by Nadeem Aslam from a diverse political perspectives

II.   Review of dissertations and book reviews focusing on the analysis of *BMG* by Nadeem Aslam from multiple historical and political lens.

For an orderly evaluation and appraisal of the texts chosen for review, the works are discussed one by one. Each review is followed by the other based on thematic unity to achieve an organized and harmonized analysis flowing inexorably into one another. Although this structural pattern is employed, it is instructive to add at this point that I have attempted to avoid redundancy in the content. Therefore, throughout the chapter, I have slightly deviated wherever the themes of the selected literature are similar. In such cases, I have reviewed the similar works together. Such a continual review following a thematic pattern allows a coordinated analysis at later stages.

I

Eo´in Flannery's "Internationalizing 9/11: Hope and Redemption in Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* (2008) and Colum McCann's *Let the Great World Spin* (2009)" converges its attention on the global effects of 9/11 showcased in the texts under examination. He is aware that Aslam grasps the entire situation represented in *TWV*. The discussion, in his article, "depart[s] from domestic, subjective reactions to 9/11 in literary fiction" (Flannery 295). In fact, his major argument concerns itself with the way the effects of 9/11 have been generally portrayed. He observes that, in the post 9/11 narratives, America estimated itself as a victim. It led to a mass production of literature that not only contends with such an image but also strengthens the on-ground consequential legitimization of war in Afghanistan. For a long period, writers remained largely unmindful of the world wide effects and deaths that 9/11 attacks had begotten in the war of/ on terror. According to the author, Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* and Colum McCann's *Let the Great World Spin* stand as narratives that question the reductive perception of Muslims as terrorists. It also challenges the formation of identity that has led war in

Afghanistan to be seen as war of emancipation. Although temporally and spatially unearthed in America, the reverberations of the attacks have led to a relentless suffering in Afghanistan. *TWV* carefully and extensively investigates the unsparing agony.

Flannery sees Aslam empathizing with the effects of war in Afghanistan. Aslam realizes and examines the 'othering' that Afghanistan is subjected to by narrating the personal tragedies of the inhabitants of Afghanistan (Flannery 297). In Eo´in Flannery's words, Nadeem Aslam remains "keenly alive to the density of American reality in its most globalized form" (296). Although the marked tragedy of 9/11 physically lasted for a day, the enormity of its entailing emotional ramifications last to date. However, media turned a blind eye to results of the attacks materialized in the form of war in Afghanistan. Nadeem Aslam does not remain oblivious to the chaos in Afghanistan while writing *TWV*. He cautiously evaluates the abominable atrocities incurred against the local and foreign inhabitants of the country (Flannery 297). In fact, as Flannery explores in detail, *TWV* exhibits a deep concern over the tragedies that the innocent locals of Afghanistan suffer from, highlighting how the war on terror is infecting the country and its peoples.

America has used the White Man's Burden[1] as its narrative to seek revenge on the terrorists involved in 9/11 attacks. America validates its stance as an Messiah of the people in Afghanistan. In this way, America legitimizes the viciousness its forces administer against the innocent. America's war in Afghanistan has targeted all communities. It has silenced the voice of the 'othered' Afghan community and has incurred atrocities against the entire nation. Afghanistan's guilt has not been ascribed to individual forces operating in Afghanistan. Flannery observes that *TWV* portrays Americans as the knights in shining armor for the masses waiting for their rescue (303). However, Nadeem Aslam's representation of this image is employed to express the silencing of locals. He sees, in its full potential, the American generalization of the community. It realizes that the generalization refuses to demarcate between the innocent and the guilty. According to Flannery, "voices of exiles, orphans, refugees, and lonely lovers convene at Marcus' house, on the margins of history in the sacred, private space" in Aslam's novel (305). As Nadeem Aslam underscores the savagery of Taliban, the insurgent forces, and even the locals of Afghanistan, he indicates that America fails to see the 'other' as an indigenous force. Nadeem Aslam underlines personal tragedies of people gathered at Marcus's house. That helps him to portray the

global effects of the war on terror subsequent to 9/11 attacks. Nadeem Aslam remains very much concerned with the voices of the 'othered' community subdued under America's account of its victimization.

Flannery's insight on how Aslam acts as an informed writer, probing into the issue of global war on terror, informs my research about the world wide effects of this war. It helps me contextualize my study in the post 9/11 world situation. As a researcher, I do not remain confined to Flannery's perspective on Nadeem Aslam's writing. However, it still helps me in remaining conscious about the context of war and America's narrative of victimization. As a result, I am better able to focus all dimensions of the work and produce an unbiased analysis. I am also in a more preferable position to scrutinize the motives of terrorists in detail. Since Flannery shows the role played by America in tragic state of affairs in Afghanistan, my research realizes that these individual injustices also play an active role in terrorist's motivations. My research takes cognizance of the possibility that reductive image of 'other' reaps reactionary defense which may be enacted in the form of terror. Moreover, Flannery's research does not directly look into the role played by existential consternations in promoting fanaticism. Hence, I look forward to research this unexamined area.

In line with Flannery's ideas, "Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in *TWV*" by Mudassir Altaf Bhatt takes a glimpse of Afghanistan as the focal point for all devastation at the hands of Soviets and Americans. According to Bhatt,

> After 9/11, American government has declared nothing less than a 'global state of exception' through the occasion presented by 'War on Terrorism'. The phrase 'War on Terror' provided US government enough freedom over time and space. The word 'terror' is not a country, so the war could be taken to different places. And it is very difficult to find out who the enemy really is in War on Terror. (105)

Bhatt sees Aslam as denying the hegemonic discourse. The hegemonic narrative fortifies American proclamation as rescuers of the world. In addition, Bhatt also precisely perceives Aslam's criticism of the condoned American brutalities in the name of war. Thus, like Flannery, he realizes the pretense that builds the illusion of saving Afghanistan from outer forces. It depicts that Afghanistan has merely become a site of legitimized terror; advocated by many in the name of war against terrorism. For Bhatt,

therefore, Aslam establishes a counter hegemonic discourse in *TWV* where he holds Soviets, Americans, Taliban and warlords as equally responsible for the state that Afghanistan is in.

The hegemonic discourse states that Afghanistan is in a dire need of eradication of terrorism and violence. America, in this regard, serves as a "beacon of light" (Bhatt 105). Aslam's sympathetic standing with the state of war in Afghanistan, as expressed in *TWV*, is viewed by Bhatt as a counter hegemonic discourse. According to Bhatt, Aslam's account of personal catastrophes of characters illustrates the condition created by the presence of external forces. *TWV* "exposes the actions of political powers that have been selfishly pursuing their own interests in Afghanistan for the past thirty years" (Bhatt 103). For him, it is the personal and political gains that create the situation in Afghanistan. Thus, Bhatt observes, like Flannery, that Nadeem Aslam is an observant writer. He stays alert to the sufferings that the inhabitants of Afghanistan face. These forces, though claiming to settle the situation in Afghanistan, actually aim at their gains.

As stated earlier, Bhatt highlights that Aslam's *TWV* manifests a commiserating perspective of people living in Afghanistan. He does so by recounting personal tragedies of the characters. His analysis confirms that "all [the] characters maintain, devoted, sometimes futile, vigils for long missing family members and loved ones. But the vigil or hope of finding every missing character results in despair because ultimately every relation is destroyed by death" (Bhatt 103). The characters in the novel have lost their loved ones and they all have tragic stories to share. Unfortunately, this has happened because Afghanistan is reduced to a "space where the rules of the world cease to apply, where we have the communities of people without the rights to have rights" (Bhatt 105). What Bhatt points out is that the war authenticates and justifies all the crimes against humanity being carried out in Afghanistan. He denounces America's proud assertion of the White Man's Burden to serve as the "beacon of light" (Bhatt 105).

Like Eoʹin Flannery, Mudassir Altaf Bhatt's article points out to the role of war on terror in Afghanistan. Resultantly, it keeps me enlightened about how the destruction in Afghanistan is not simply a consequence of war on terror but also of a war of terror. Keeping Bhatt's analysis of the novel in mind benefits me in recognizing the possible grievances that have been justified. Neglect of injustices could be one of the possible reasons of terrorist activities. Thus, Bhatt's article adds to my knowledge about the

multiplicity of factors involved in the delivery of terrorist actions. I keep this in mind while analyzing the characters to see how and to what extent does existential anxiety plays a role in inducing terrorism and creating ETFL. Additionally, as evaluated by Bhatt, each character in the novel is corresponding to a specific worldview. The endorsement of the ideologies one believes in makes it easier for me to analyze the novel from the perspective of ETFL. The reading of the article has been useful in that it has allowed me to recognize that ETFL has not been explored by Bhatt. Thus, my analysis can be more focused on the role that existential anxiety plays in making the characters defend their ideologies more intensely. Thus, I can manage a fixated analysis.

In contention with Bhatt, Ayesha Parveen's argument in "A Postcolonial Critique of *TWV*" examines the novel from a postcolonial frame of reference. Unlike him, she contemplates the occupancy of English, American and Soviet characters and their ideologies in *TWV* as instruments to channelize a colonial mindset (Parveen 3). Her analysis draws on the theoretical perspectives on postcolonialism proposed by Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Homi K. Bhaba. Parveen sees Aslam as a spokesperson of the colonial powers. In her view, Nadeem Aslam challenges Islamic principles. He shuns the culture of Afghanistan as far as its depiction is concerned. He merely presents it as an extreme one. In fact, for Parveen, "the interpretation of Islamic beliefs by the narrator in *TWV* as opposed to the extremist practices of Taliban seems to be drawing a parallel to Western practices of going beyond religious cannons" (Parveen 3). Parveen discerns Aslam's presentation of tragedies as a compartmentalized one. Her argument equates Aslam's discourse as colonial because, in her opinion, the exposition of sufferings of Afghanis illustrate that they are a result of their own shortcomings. For her, it is the equivalent standing of Taliban and Muslims in *TWV* that makes the study colonial. As a researcher, I believe that Ayesha Parveen is neglectful of the way Aslam portrays American brutality in Afghanistan. She perceives it as portrayal of a negative image. I, on the other hand, consider that Aslam merely tries to present an accurate picture by not generalizing Muslims or Americans. He shows both the positive and negative aspects of the study.

Parveen pictures Britain as the colonial center in the novel. According to her, Marcus, the British character in the novel, is placed in the center. Marcus has bought a house where he lives and establishes relations with everyone (Parveen 4). Everyone

trusts him, which Parveen distinguishes as an image of the arrival of the British colonizers in the twentieth century (Parveen 4). British colonizers came as traders and settled in the colonized nations (Parveen 4). Being a doctor, Marcus seems to be doing the same. He is characterized as a deliverer because he is a doctor. Marcus becomes host to everyone who has experienced some physical or emotional tragedy. His house becomes the focal point where characters from diverse religious associations and cultural standings come together to share their tragic miseries. His kindness as a host to people from different backgrounds makes him the light bearer. Thus, instead of seeing it as a postcolonial discourse which asserts the identity and culture of the inhabitants, Parveen sees the novel as a discourse defying the identity and culture of the locals who are in need of kindness of a British doctor.

When Aslam intentionally or unintentionally equates the locals with Talibans and presents them as brutes, he actually becomes a writer who is writing for the center instead of writing back to the center. Thus, he deviates from the normal path that a postcolonial text follows (Parveen 4). She opines that "we can see the imperial expansion as present in the land of Afghanistan and the locals have not been presented in their true light and the need to reform their culture is resonant throughout the narration of the novel" (5). Marcus allows self-immolation but remains in Afghanistan as a beacon of kindness. The depiction makes Parveen see Aslam as a diaspora writer who wants to satisfy the view point of the center. Center, in this case, becomes the colonial and hegemonic powers like Britain (represented by Marcus), Soviet Union (presented through the character of Lara) and America (embodied in the character of David). Taliban, local Afghans ,and the characters like Casa become the evils who validate the truth about the demonic 'other'. Thus, as Aslam paints a picture of men and women being tortured, for Parveen he highlights a need of rescuers like Marcus, Lara and David. Parveen considers his observation to be colonial in nature, writing to please the central forces like America, Britain and Soviet Union.

Since Parveen identifies *TWV* as a colonial discourse, her most intense critique centers its attention on the misrepresentation of Islam as a life-threatening religion. According to her, "it seems that Islam has been reduced to the mere personification of Taliban practices" (Parveen 7). She declares that "cultural coexistence should respect the sensitivities of all religions. However, the text intricately plays with the sensitivities of various ideologies as many of the colonial discourses indulge in" (Parveen 7).

Although the former part of her claim is right that sensitivities must not be trampled with or abused, her discontentment with the handling of Islam does not seem to have a strong base. Aslam does not have a reductive attitude towards Muslims. As Parveen observes, at numerous points in the novels, the brutalities that are imposed on people are erroneously allied with Islam. If they are not connected to Islam, their ruthlessness is credited to Taliban. These Taliban are shown to be following Islamic ideologies. Marcus's wife Qatrina, for example, is stoned because she did not marry Marcus in the traditional Islamic way. Her marriage was sermonized by a woman which made Taliban nullify her marriage. They labelled her as an adulteress and punished her savagely. While being penalized for her adultery, Aslam highlights the cruel punishment to be Islamic. Parveen sees how Aslam shows the people as being brutal and uncivilized who are in need of saviors. However, it is pertinent to note that Parveen's argument ignores the fact that Aslam does mark a line between educated Muslims and terrorists through the contrasting characters of Casa and Dunya. Dunya understands her religion. Her comprehension of religion is in opposition to the manipulated picture of Islam presented by terrorist leaders.

Parveen's perception of Nadeem Aslam's novel as written from an occident's perspective makes my research stay alert to Aslam's possible diaspora associations. As a researcher, I understand that such affiliations may have resulted in colonial representations. Parveen's stance that Nadeem Aslam is a colonial writer who shows the presence of colonial powers makes me conscious about the position these forces take as deliverers. Moreover, it keeps me mindful of the viciousness equated with Taliban as well as Islam. It helps me be vigilant about the possible biasness that may result from my analysis because of Aslam's analysis of terrorist's minds who use Islamic principles. Therefore, while anatomizing *TWV*, I discern the Muslims and terrorists. This allows my research to be more cautious about not accusing a terrorist ideology of being allied with a specific religion and avoiding any sort of controversy. His characters are not merely representing Muslims. Rather, they highlight the exploitation of religion at the hands of religious extremists. In fact, Parveen's article retains my alertness towards the view of identity from a colonial's perspective. The erasure of identity could be a possible reason of the intensity with which people try to reclaim their identity. Parveen's research, in this regard, allows me to see the psychological grievances that engender easy manipulation of minds. Additionally,

Aslam's representation of Islam helps my research to be informed about how Islamic ideologies that are considered to be channelizing and monitoring the Taliban ideologies are not actually Islamic. The extremism in the novels is not Islamic as pointed out by Ayesha Parveen.

In a similar light, Sobia Kiran's article "'Deterritorialization' in *TWV* by Nadeem Aslam" assesses concerns similar to that of Bhatt and Parveen. Kiran enquires into the historical context of war in Afghanistan which allows me to see the background of construction of Muslim identity as barbaric. In other words, the historical backdrop informs me about the creation of occident's perspective which has been explored by Ayesha Parveen. She examines the misfortunes and catastrophic air in which the characters struggle to survive. For Kiran, *TWV*, as a text, is a challenge posed to the American presence in Afghanistan. Besides, in her view, the novel challenges the 9/11 fiction and non-fiction discourses that present America as a victim. Kiran does this "by unveiling the historical fact that it was America who planted Taliban to fight Russians, it was America who provided them weapons and economic resources, and it was America that funded their training" (Kiran 262). Therefore, Aslam sees that America is not a victim of terrorism but its perpetrator (Kiran 259). Kiran rightly notes:

> *The Wasted Vigil* highlights through the tragedies of all the main characters that it is not only Americans who feel traumatized taking 9/11 as a blow to capitalism or technological advancement they stand for, others as well are going through traumatic experiences. (263)

In her point of view, America has legitimized all destruction in Afghanistan in the name of war by seeing itself as a victim (Kiran 259). Furthermore, it has interfered with the rest of the world and has caused unrest (Kiran 259). However, this is only done to fill their own appetite (Kiran 259). The war and the American presence in Afghanistan only intensifies the agonies of the locals. They suffer at the hands of Taliban, the warlords and the Americans.

According to Kiran, while America sees itself in isolation as a victim, Nadeem Aslam "successfully" takes *TWV* "beyond the borders and boundaries to present the shared experience of pain and trauma and to stress the shared responsibility of all the nations involved" (264). Kiran's perceives that *TWV* shows the shared responsibility of destruction of Afghanistan. It makes one identify that Islam and *Jihad* are not solely

accountable for terrorism and war in Afghanistan (Kiran 262). In fact, her scrutiny of the historical context highlights that Taliban were funded and trained as *Jihad*is in the name of a distorted version of Islam to stage terrorism (Kiran 262). "The text deconstructs the notion of Taliban as 'a few men willing to die' as presented by media and fiction alike" (Kiran 263). Since 9/11, Islamophobia has risen. Terrorist ideologies are channelized in an extremist form. These beliefs are erected on a disfigured version of Islam. The use of misshapen Islamic credos by Taliban have reduced image of Islam to a religion of fanaticism. Kiran's research realizes how Islam and *Jihad* have been defamed subsequent to America's formation of Taliban. It was Americans who trained the *Mujahideen* to fight for their own purpose in Afghanistan. America's fight against Russia was fought by these *Mujahideen*. It was these terrorists who later turned in to terrorists. The fight against these terrorist organizations in Afghanistan is seen as legitimized because they want to eradicate the Taliban. Through the narratives, America demonstrates the necessity to fight this war. It furthers the malignant image of Islam as a religion of Taliban which requires the use of force to be brought to peace.

Kiran's article strengthens my command on the historical background of the formation of *Mujahideen*. I have been familiarized with the eventual transformation of *Mujahideen* into miscellaneous terrorist organizations having assorted ideologies. This acquaints me with the backdrop against which the novel is set. As a researcher, I am able to remain cognizant of the historical facts that have yielded the terrorist mindset in Afghanistan. It allows me to penetrate through the relation between terrorist mindsets and existential anxiety. This information keeps me heedful of the fact that principles that the Taliban are seen to be performing are not purely Islamic. Although established in the name of Islam, these dogmas are manipulated. They present an extreme form of Islam. The analysis lets me remain attentive towards Nadeem Aslam's mention of Islamic principles as a source of Taliban savagery. Thus, as I was informed by Parveens's article, I remain unbiased while dissecting *TWV*. As a researcher, it is my responsibility an awareness of religious sentiments and an effort to avoid any insensitivity towards anyone's religion is my responsibility. Kiran's research makes me aware of these by instituting the historical context which may help me see the novels unbiasedly.

Gohar Karim Khan's thesis entitled *Narrating Pakistan Transnationally: Identity, Politics and Terrorism in Anglophone Pakistani Literature after 9/11* argues

that "Anglophone Pakistani writing counterbalances 'post-9/11' discourse in America and Fiction" (abstract xi). Unlike Parveen, Bhatt, or Flannery who distinguished Aslam's *TWV* as either a colonial or a postcolonial discourse, Gohar Karim Khan goes beyond a single rhetoric. She notices that "writing from positions of cultural and spatial uncertainty, these writers *simultaneously* 'host' a rigorous interrogation of fundamentalism, violence and oppression in Pakistan but also strive to facilitate a more 'hospitable' understanding of Pakistan internationally" (abstract xi, emphasis in original). She comprehends Nadeem Aslam's work as both writing back to the center as well as assimilating the view point of the center in order for him to be accepted globally. Khan realizes that Nadeem Aslam's work is a work of a diaspora. *TWV* by Nadeem Aslam is being written by an outsider in this regard. Besides, Khan realizes that the images of Taliban and Afghan warlords is not merely fabricated. Their sadism is real. Nadeem Aslam's acknowledgment of their ferocity should not be assessed as offering a damaging illustration of Afghanistan. Like Kiran, Khan also enters the historical discussion but her ideas also dilate upon the role of Soviets and Americans in the destruction of war. She is aware that Aslam's depiction holds American and Soviet invasion as responsible. Thus, Aslam reinforces the shared responsibility for the tumultuous proceedings in Afghanistan. In fact, as Kiran claimed on the basis of facts, Taliban were indeed a creation of America to fight their war. Taliban's reaction may, thus, be seen as created by America. However, Khan also highlights that not only were Taliban a creation of America, but were also aggravated by America's war in Afghanistan. Thus, America's presence in Afghanistan may be considered one of the reasons behind aggravation of such a state in Afghanistan.

Khan's inquiry of *TWV* and other Pakistani novels invites a look into her works in a gray area. Unlike Flannery, Bhatt, and Parveen, Khan does not write Aslam off in a black and white premise. Thus, her thesis informs me about the noteworthiness of neutrality as a researcher. I aim at assessing Aslam's intentions unbiasedly without compartmentalizing my opinion. Khan accentuates Nadeem Aslam's attention towards inhumanity. As a fiction writer, he captures all three dimensions of the picture in Afghanistan. Khan considers Aslam as a writer who writes back to the center. Simultaneously, she presents a true picture of the monstrous acts conducted by terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. However, as she notices, the war and inhumanities depicted in *TWV* cannot be attributed to Taliban only; America and Soviet Union are

equally responsible. Her unbiased ideas make me understand the offenses that the characters had to bear with. Hence, while analyzing the motives of terrorists, I do not remain oblivious to the atrocities that terrorists have to face. Thus, in addition to helping me carry out an unbiased point of view, this knowledge allows me to survey the unexplored area of terrorism in his work. My research focuses on terrorism and sees how existential anxiety is causing adherence to fanatic principles and intend to fill this gap.

Madeline Clements in her work *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective: Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam, Shamsie* also surveils the responsibility of these writers as Muslims. She observes the "reductive trend in Anglo-American discussions of Islam" (2). She claims that Pakistani Anglophone writers are responding to the narratives produced by Western powers. In their works, they explore Islam as a religion, and revise its knowledge. The post 9/11 discourses have used language to marginalize the Muslims. Besides, engagement with such jargon has also legitimized the war against them. President Bush's speech after 9/11 also employed language as a channel for the creation of us vs. them dichotomy. The effect of the language was materialized in the war in Afghanistan. Analyzing the novels that Clements has selected for her study, she sees how these novels not only revise the knowledge of Islam, but also create and channelize their identity as Muslims in historical and political realms.

In the post 9/11 world, according to Clements, the Western powers struggle to see where the Muslim loyalties lie (Clements 9). She observes that authors use their discourses to revitalize the perception about their identity. Their literature, as a result, forms "a part of new world literature in English that gives voice to experiences beyond the traditional canons of Anglo- American literature" (8). All these writers whose works Clements analyses "orient themselves towards the 'global' in their internationally disseminated novels, both in terms of their geopolitical subject matter and selection of settings which are of symbolic and strategic significance to the world powers" (Clements 9). Keeping in view the above statement, Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* presents Afghanistan as the hub of war on terror. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan hold crucial geographical importance for Western powers. It makes *TWV's* setting a basis for the reader's understanding of relationship between different ethnicities. These relations help Nadeem Aslam proclaim the identity of his people by representing neither a totalizing Western world view nor cultural cliché objects like saris etc. Like Khan, thus,

Clements also grasps and considers the need for revision of identity. She does so by channelizing her view point, found upon a middle ground, oscillating between Western perception of the 'other' and their actual identity.

Clement opines that the south Asian writers, writing in English, are conscious of the effect their literature can have on the world. Their peripheral position thrusts them under constant survey. They have a global audience waiting for them to present a picture of the exotic orient. These authors, thus, have a tendency to "mute Muslim voices of dissent, and demonize or trivialize Islamic acts of resistance to neo-imperial (Western) hegemonies in order to secure their entries into the 'global' public sphere" (Clements 11). Clements notes that, in a world where they are considered as 'others', these writers take a road which satisfies the Occident's thirst to see the exotic (Clements 12). Simultaneously, it presents a counter-narrative to the Western discourses. *TWV*, thus, does more than just highlighting Muslims or Afghanistan: it "reconfigure[s] Muslim being and belonging in today's global world as complex, challenging, and always multidimensional" (Clements 15).

In today's world, Islamophobia has reduced the image of bearded men and veiled women to terrorists. In such a scenario, Aslam endeavors to dispense a view which sabotages the Western view of Islam. Clements's research helps me steer my research in a focused way. Just like Sobia Kiran's distinction of Islam and terrorist ideals, Clements's book adds to my awareness of difference between Western perception of Islam as a fanatic religion and Islam as a religion. Although the terrorists in the novel utilize Islamic doctrines, I understand that the basic dogmas of Islam have been manipulated. They are extremist in nature, unlike that of Islam. As I explore the psychology of fanatics, I observe how their *angst* leads them to commit acts of terrorism. The consciousness about a Western view of Muslims keeps me on track. It helps me scrutinize the whole situation without any biasness of view point. Clements's focus on Nadeem Aslam as a writer who is forming Islamic affinities through his work, by simultaneously assimilating and denouncing a Western worldview, helps me keep unbiased.

Numerous questions raised about Nadeem Aslam's works and the statements made about him have also been answered, to some extent, by Nadeem Aslam himself. As mentioned in the introductory part of this section, I have structured my literature review in a way that it follows a thematic unity while reviewing the articles

independently. However, I have combined the review of the following two interviews instead of reviewing them independently. I have brought the reviews together to avoid redundancy and follow a thematic coherence. In his interview, "Interview with Nadeem Aslam", published on bookbrowse.com, Nadeem Aslam articulates the reason behind choosing Afghanistan as his setting in *TWV*. He states that he did so because he saw Islam and West dissecting in Afghanistan. He "wanted to explore and record all of that in *TWV*. Afghanistan—a crossroads of history—seemed an appropriate place to discuss the meeting of Islamic and Western culture, the 'civilising missions' and the 'bringing of democracy,'" (An Interview with Nadeem Aslam"). Based on the analysis of the novel, Clements and Khan also see that Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* stands as a meeting point of cultures. They observe that Aslam's exploration of the tragedies and consequences of war have been used to write back to the West. He has done that by satisfying the West's insight in to Afghanistan. The barbaric world of Afghanistan has been encapsulated in the reactionary acts of the Afghanis. Nadeem Aslam's own assertion that he chose Afghanistan as a 'cross roads of cultures' where he could see how various cultures meet, allows a deeper look in to the novel. It helps one apprehend the historical backdrop of *TWV*.

The historical and political background against which Nadeem Aslam's novels are set is crucial to the comprehension of his novels. Nadeem Aslam proclaimed himself a politicized writer, whose works cannot be separated from political sentiments. He expresses it in his interview in the following words:

> I always say that I vote every time I write a sentence. Politics for me is about feeling a certain responsibility towards the world I live in. From my viewpoint, all writing is political—even nonpolitical writing is political. Coming from Pakistan, and belonging to the Islamic world, I can't not be aware of how politics affects our daily lives. . . I am first and foremost a novelist. I am happiest when I write something that satisfies me aesthetically but which also repays some of the debt I feel I owe to the world. ("An Interview with Nadeem Aslam")

For Aslam, politics "is not just dry legislations and laws and statements. It's visceral" ("An Interview with Aslam"). Although Aslam's *TWV* is aesthetically written, he still considers himself responsible for channelizing Muslim identity. He testifies Clements's and Khan's argument about the responsibility of Pakistani Anglophone authors. This means that the writers writing in the post 9/11 world are burdened with ensuring a

middle path of representation. They are responsible for writing back in a way that does not hurt the sentiments of the peripheral subjects of the novels, while also answering back to the West.

In another interview, "Nadeem Aslam: A Question of Honor" by Marianne Brace, Nadeem Aslam's words echo the responsibility he takes as a Muslim. He says that "America is the sole superpower and as such it must be kept an eye on. But Islam is a great religion which means it, too, is open to abuse." (qtd. In Brace). Especially in the post 9/11 world, Islamophobia shows one how Islam has been reduced to a religion of extremism. Nadeem Aslma declares his responsibility by stating that "most ordinary Muslims say, 'We just want to get on with our lives. Don't identify us with the fundamentalists.' But it's a luxury" (qtd. In Brace). He asserts the responsibility of moderate Muslims by stating that "we moderate Muslims have to stand up." Aslam notes:

> As a child I was really frightened of the game Hangman. I was terrified that my not knowing the answer was going to get somebody killed. As a grown-up, I feel that a game of Hangman is being played on an enormous scale in the world, and that sooner or later I'm going to be asked certain questions, and if I don't give the right answer somebody is going to get hurt. (qtd. In Brace)

His words emphasize his seriousness towards the responsibility that he takes as a writer. He realizes that the post 9/11 situation is not that easy to be contextualized in the novel. It is a matter of life and death. Whatever he writes is a channel through which his fellow Muslim beings are understood and analyzed. His writings can be a cause of furthering the image of Muslims as miscreants. Discourses may lead to further wars in the name of taming the barbaric Muslims.

Like the previous literature that has been reviewed, both these interviews of Nadeem Aslam help me fully apprehend the politicized nature of his works. Such an awareness adds to my understanding of the political context in which the terrorists and their grievances can be placed. While exploring how existential angst leads people into enacting violence and terrorism, an understanding of the political context allows me to keep in mind the political reasons which created existentialism and meaninglessness in Afghanistan. This, in turn, allows me to place the terrorists and terrorism in a larger

political context. I have a better grasp on the understanding of their *angst* that leads them to violence

"Tradition and Tolerance: Reconfiguring Behzad in Nadeem Aslam's *TWV*" by Suhaan Mehta and "Dislocation of South Asian Families in a Foreign Land: A Case of Architectural Anxiety" by Salma Khatoon and Asma Khatoon both analyze the utility of art and architecture to establish the theme of war and monstrosities of war. As both the articles inform my research in a similar manner, I have reviewed both the articles after their independent discussion in the following paragraphs. This not only allows me to avoid redundancy but also helps me identify the gaps by analyzing the similar tendencies in *TWV* that have already been explored by various critics.

"Tradition and Tolerance: Reconfiguring Behzad in Nadeem Aslam's *TWV*" evaluates the way Nadeem Aslam responds to the Western discourse by presenting a tolerant image of Islam (Mehta 337). It also understands how the occident's appetite for the exotic orient is simultaneously satisfied (Clements 12, Mehta 337). In line with this argument, Mehta draws her analysis of *TWV* against the artistic presence of Behzad in the novel. Mehta argues that the figure of Behzad as an art piece in the novel is used to support a secular point of view. "Although scriptures are a source of creativity for Aslam, when decoupled from arts, they mostly inspire violence" (Mehta 336). She further contends that presence of art in the land of Afghanistan, as represented in *TWV*, is not supported by Taliban characters. An analysis of the novel shows many instances where artistic pieces have incurred violence on the creators. Qatrina and Marcus had to smear their paintings on the room walls with mud because the paintings were artistic. They appealed to the five human senses. Mehta observes that "the strain of Islam taught in Pakistani 'madrassahs' in the 1990s was instrumental in shaping the Taliban's hostility to 'traditional Muslim culture'" (337). The Taliban, as asserted by Gohar Karim Khan, were created as a body to fight the Soviet- US war in Afghanistan. They do not represent the true image of Islam. As Taliban's beliefs are exhibited as extreme forms of Islamic ideologies, Islam and art are seen as being far apart. It seems as if Islam does not allow any sort of artistic entertainment although this has been purely derived from Taliban ideology. A similar tendency is seen in the analysis of *TWV* by Salma Khatoon and Asma Khatoon. I contextualize the review of this article in my study after reviewing the article by S. Khatoon and A. Khatoon. Both these articles draw on similar tendencies.

In their article, "Dislocation of South Asian Families in a Foreign Land: A Case of Architectural Anxiety", Salma Khatoon and Asma Khatoon construct a relation between architecture and art. This relation acts as an objective correlative to the feelings of terror and awe in the novel. "Like the prototype gothic settings, the haunted castle, visited houses, dark and dingy places all create[d] the gothic ambience" (Khatoon & Khatoon 356), *TWV* is also replete with images of "house, secret panels, confined places" (Khatoon & Khaton 359). These images become "psychologically suggestive of the suppressed living conditions of the immigrants" (Khatoon & Khatoon 359). According to the researchers, these images have been used by Aslam in his novel to depict the tragic situation in Afghanistan. Like the gothic employment of supernatural elements in dark settings, Nadeem Aslam's employment of ghosts, specters and "seething appearances" (Khatoon & Khatoon 355) also reinforces a darker thematic concern: the war. Such an engagement with the gothic fortifies the element of uncertainty and death in the country. The tendency of the supernatural to be harmful makes the aura bleaker. The country suddenly starts seeming more overpowered than it is. It seems that people do not only have Taliban, US, Soviet, and the warlords to fight but also have the supernatural to resist. In such a scenario, death seems inevitable, making the architecture and the supernatural accentuate the prevalent anarchic uncertainty among the people of Afghanistan. The overall aura becomes one where death is a constant threat.

As also seen by Mehta, the prevalent consciousness of death, according to Salma Khatoon and Asma Khatoon, is further aggravated by the lack of art in the novel. Every piece of art is destructed in the novel. In Marcus's building, there are six rooms, each one of which has been artistically designed to appeal to a specific sense. The decorated walls have been smeared with mud as Taliban brutally punish the ones who draw or keep drawings in their home. This comments on the "anxieties and fear of the South Asian region particularly of Afghanistan" (Khatoon & Khatoon 357). In an artless place, the setting suddenly starts looking like it is overwhelmed by wretchedness. In fact, "the relationship of the inmates with the house is paradoxical; instead of providing the warmth and coziness it threatens the very existence of its inhabitants" (Khatoon & Khatoon 362). In other pieces of arts, one finds a similar element evoking apprehensiveness because of its connection to the past. In the novel, the Russian woman Lara looks at the statue of Buddha, being enchanted by its

exquisiteness, but the very next moment, she connects it to the past and thinks about how all the statues of Buddha were once "razed to the ground" (Khatoon & Khatoon 358). This induces an anxiety, bringing one to think of what has already ended is coming back to life. Thus, architecture and art, both create an aura in the novel which reinforces the horrors of war.

Mehta, A. Khatoona, and S. Khatoon discuss an artless place. They explicate how any piece of art is enough to induce violence against the one who made that piece of art. As a result, the reasons of existentialism in the society become evident. This helps my analysis understand the meaninglessness and fears in the society. The characters have to hide and bury pieces of art to avoid being brutally punished. This adds to their *angst* as they are never safe. Treading off the path even a little can bring about a brutal punishment inflicted upon them. This helps me understand the adherence to different ideologies in the novel in the wake of such increased fears. Additionally, it allows me to analyze the very situation of fear created by such small acts. As any piece of art can bring harm, people have to be extra vigilant about their acts. This allows me to understand how people may be adhering to violence in the wake of such violence.

Namita Singh's article "The Outsider's Gaze: Exploring Nadeem Aslam's *TWV"* focuses on the similar question. She investigates, to what extent is Aslam's depiction of the Afghanistan and its situation true and realistic. She sees Aslam as an outsider in case of *TWV* as he is not an Afghan but a Pakistani (Singh 47). According to her, although a diaspora, Khaled Hosseini can still be considered an insider because he happens to have his roots in the land he is talking about. However, Singh considers that Aslam is only an outsider. She still believes that "Nadeem Aslam as an outsider has shown a realistic imagery of Afghanistan" (Singh 51). Singh's article indicates that Aslam should not be seen as merely an outsider who is defaming one specific culture or country. His truthfulness, according to her, can be seen in the fact that he shows the tragedies of both locals and inhabitants of Afghanistan. The responsibility of those acts is placed on all the various forces present in Afghanistan. Marcus's hand was cut by Taliban, but his daughter suffered at the hands of American and Russian forces. Similarly, Lara's suffering also came from the war that Russia fought in Afghanistan because his brother was lost in that war. There are many instances where women's abductions and disappearances are discussed. The accusation has not been solely laid on the Afghanis. Although Namita Singh's argument, as outlaid in her article, focuses

on seeing to what extent an outsider produces a true image, it still goes in line with the argument of Clements, Khan and Mehta. All of them state that Aslam is answering both West and also presenting a counter-narrative. Singh's argument can also be used to draw a similar connection.

Singh's analysis of the novel does not incorporate the terrorist ideologies and their depictions. It is a research gap that my research aims at filling by understanding the reasons of terrorism in Afghanistan. The aura of fear that is created in the society also helps me see how this may be the fear of eradication at the hands of American and Soviet forces that makes the terrorists want to immortalize themselves. It may be because of this fear that they observe specific beliefs that will outlive them.

Both Qutb Ali Rind and Zakia Nasir explore the plight of women in *TWV*. As these articles allow me to see the ignored aspect of barbarity against women, I have reviewed the articles in the following paragraphs. The reviews have not been carried out independently so as to avoid repetition. "Women at the Edge: Crimes of Power Against Women in the Context of Nadeem Aslam's Novel, *TWV*" by Zakia Nasir also explores the tragic situation in Afghanistan. However, she specifically focuses the women of Afghanistan. The women of Afghanistan suffer from the "crimes of war" (Nasir) at the hands of Taliban, Soviet forces and US forces. Although women are not directly involved in the war as soldiers, theirs is the highest price paid. The crimes committed under the "hegemony of neocolonial superpowers" (Nasir) are legitimized as they adamantly keep the narrative of themselves as saviors in the limelight. Nasir's focus on how the crimes come from all sides highlights this very hypocrisy of such narratives which makes women the "abject target of extreme religo-political forces" (Nasir). A similar situation has been analyzed by Qutib Ali Rind in his article "Treatment of Women in Nadeem Aslam's Novels". He also sees that women not only suffer from domestic abuse but also from abuse at the hands of Soviets, Taliban, warlords and Americans. The women who suffer the most are the ones who "desire change, educate the children, help the sufferers or voice against injustice, and brutality" (Rind 103).

Both Rind's and Nasir's analysis helps me understand that despite lack of direct involvement of women in the war, they are still subjected to suppression. They are doubly colonized in the neocolonial reign. They are not only brutally treated by Afghan warlords and Taliban but also by Americans and Soviet forces who claim to be the

pioneers of women rights. These women are abducted and raped by the soldiers and then murdered later on. The Taliban and warlords also subject them to such a situation as they rape them to produce a so called pure breed of Afghans. Such a suppression makes me aware of how these women may find their lives meaningless in a war situation where they are not directly involved but suffering the most. Contrary to that, I also understand how these women may have internalized their stereotypes as being untamed. Such women may also be supportive of extremist philosophies and be equally assertive of the hatred towards America for invading their territory. Such an understanding not only allows me to talk about the area that these authors have not indulged in but also helps me to understand the reasons as to why terrorist ideologies are supported by people.

(II)

Articles, reviews, and dissertations highlight overlapping concerns in BMG. In order to avoid repetition, I have reviewed the texts with similar thematic concerns together. Abdelmoneim and Wijngaarden both focus on the reductive trend against Muslims as has been observed in *BMG*. In her thesis *Texts Between Worlds: Decolonial Asesthetics in Selected Iraninan and Pakistani Literary Works*, Nada Abdelmoneim dedicates a whole chapter to the interpretation of *BMG* exploring how Nadeem Aslam deconstructs the image of Muslims through his text. Entitled "the Side to be on", the chapter indulges into an investigation of how Aslam vividly portrays the situation of Afghanistan without completely blaming anyone. Specifically considering the Muslims in the post 9/11 world entailing Islamophobia, Abdelmoneim observes that "Aslam from the outset, writing against the grain and circumventing stereotype, introduces characters like Jeo and especially Mikal, who are both Muslim and Pakistani and gentle, loving and peaceful" (64). In such a world where the image of Muslims is reduced to fanatics, Aslam takes his responsibility as an author and does not replicate the already constructed image of Muslims. Rather, he deconstructs it and places Muslims and terrorists in a position which is based on the true representation of the situation in Afghanistan. He does not only label Muslims as good or bad, but places them in a context while analyzing them. In fact, "Aslam cleverly distinguishes between faith and fundamentalism in *BMG*. Aslam shows those of faith to be confident in their beliefs contributing to their societies while those with fundamentalist tendencies destroy and malign for political purpose" (Abdelmoneim 66). Thus, as Aslam's presentation points

out how the Muslims who are not terrorists are also suffering in the war. The innocent are equally suffering because of the narratives that have been constructed.

In addition to this, Aslam does not remain oblivious to the grievances that produce the fighting mindsets in Afghanistan. Abdelmoneim observes that "while there is never a justification for violence, the helplessness and powerlessness of *Jihadists* is important to note (68). Accurately scrutinized, the action cannot be legitimized. Aslam still stays alert to the whole condition. It is America's battle that is blood-staining Afghanistan but it is affecting Pakistan and Pakistanis alike. This makes America stand as an 'other' in the novel. However, Aslam stabilizes that out by also bearing in mind that America's war is reaping detrimental effects for their own soldiers. Such psychological grievances of the American soldiers, the miseries of the Afghanis, Pakistanis, and terrorists all make the situation worse. It seems as if these will continue. The fight is sure to amplify with an exacerbation of killings. "War ends, terrorists such as Major Kyra and his students are ultimately killed or arrested and the surviving learn to live again. While of course this is true, Aslam also makes sure to show the human costs of war and of terror such as the deaths of Jeo and Basie" (Abdelmoneim 79). Although the war may come to an end, the offenses and their consequences are bound to continue. They lead the future generations to avenge each other. In fact, these are the very injustices that allow the people to be easily manipulated for political purposes. The anxieties only increase this way and never come to an end.

Just like Abdelmoneim, Tinka van Wijngaarden, in her Master's thesis in North American Studies entitled *(Neo-) Orientalism in Post 9/11 Fiction and Film* also explores the representation of Muslim as "other" in *BMG*. According to her "*BMG* does not simply portray Muslims as the religious fanatics and dangerous terrorists that the conservative media showed American viewers after 9/11" (Wijngaarden 50). The Islamphobia that was mediated through media does not make appearance in the novel. Aslam critiques that image and does not compartmentalize Muslims as evil. In fact, "the novel features a variety of Muslim characters, emphasizing their humanity and vulnerability" (Wijngaarden 48). The us vs. them narrative constantly characterized the "them" category as demonic. Resultantly, it demonized the Muslim other completely. Aslam's narrative brings forward the characters that are "individualized and well-rounded" (Wijngaarden 50). In deconstructing the derogated Muslim identity, Nadeem Aslam's novel turns in to a critique of the Orientalist discourses. It also internationalizes

them. Aslam's view of Muslims as separate from terrorists, contended by Abdel Moneim, stems from his awareness of global effects of America's war on terror. This war is leaving marks on countries which had no relation to the attacks. In consideration of that, Aslam "humanizes the 'others,' giving them a face and thus enabling the reader to recognize their suffering and losses as well" (Wijngaarden 49). This implies that the losses are otherwise considered just during war. Innocent are murdered and their distresses are entirely neglected. Though it does not justify the acts of the terrorists in any way, Aslam's explication of the reasons shows how the responsibility is shared. It also clarifies the difference between fundamentalists and Muslims. In fact, there is a huge difference between the fundamentals and those with faith.

Abdelmoneim takes her readers through a thorough analysis that understands and expounds upon Muslim communities and terrorist ideologies as disparate. However, she does not investigate as to why fanaticism is adhered to. People hold on to their principle in a situation where these differences are not apprehended by Western powers in the land. They follow a reductive pattern of thought for Muslims. My research, by understanding how the generalization instigates anger among the innocent sufferers, looks into the relation between angst and fanaticism.

Wijngaarden's concerns are quite similar to that of Abdelmoneim, leading my research to be administered with a thorough understanding of the difference between those of faith and fundamentalism. Wijngaarden's concern over the justification of acts of brutality allows me to recognize the reservations of people arising from uncertainty. It further helps me apprehend the creation of an existential aura in Afghanistan. It makes me see whether existentialism, in such a case, affects the terrorist psychology in any way. In turn, it allows me to interrogate whether existentialism plays a role in leading to terrorism and terrorist ideologies.

In his book review, "*BMG* by Nadeem Aslam", digitally published on *World Literature Today*, Michele Levy traverses through the story of the novel. He concludes that "Nadeem Aslam exposes the greed, corruption, and deep spiritual and ideological fissures within the region as well as the limits of American and, indeed, global vision". As pointed out, Aslam does not entirely blame America for the war and war related grievances. He holds all powers at play as equally responsible. However, he notices that the global vision of the war in Afghanistan and its consequences in Pakistan is limited. People are unaware of the price everyone is paying. Merely because some faces are

shown as demonic on the television, the tragedies that take place in these countries become legitimized. In fact, the Americans come to be considered redeemers of people in such circumstances. The truth of the matter, however, is that these forces in Afghanistan are only working towards a satisfaction of their geopolitical benefits. "The geopolitical forces spawned by 9/11 drive the plot" (Levy). The plot is driven by 9/11 as the novel is set in October 2001 since the beginning. The journey only drives forward from there, inflicting characters with more and more suffering. Even human beings like Mikal and Jeo, who want to leave their homes to help the wounded in Afghanistan, are not safe from death.

The review sets out for me the understanding of the death lurking in Afghanistan. It highlights the lack of safety and the role it may play in making people's lives meaningless. In such a state of meaninglessness, people are bound to set out to find meaning. They may affiliate with tenets proposed by terrorist organizations. Thus, this review helps contextualize my research in a war situation where death is prevalent and fear of death becomes constant.

Another digitally published review by James Lasdun entitled "*BMG* by Nadeem Aslam: Review" also explores the conflicting views embodied in the love story that follows in the plot. "Set in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, this love story vividly captures conflicting views" (Lasdun). Comparing 9/11 attacks with Trojan wars, Lasdun observes how Aslam correlates the collapse of the Twin Towers with an initiation of a whole new era of mythical stories and conspiracy theories surrounding the attacks. A consequential search of weapons also followed the attacks. In such a scenario, myths reduced the image of Muslims to terrorists, and that of Americans' to saviors. Aslam seems highly aware of the world he is writing about. In the novel *BMG*, there is a "wide variety of human types portrayed" (Lasdun). Through the characters, Aslam deconstructs the generalizations about Muslims. H distinctly presents both people with faith and those with fundamental tendencies. Those with faith who are equated with the fundamentals are also suffering at the hands of the fanatic fundamentalists. No one is safe from the terrorist activities and their targets. In fact, the extremists themselves suffer at their own hands.

Investigating a similar concern in her review of *BMG*, Erika Banerji observes how Aslam portrays both dark and bright, as well as a human and inhumane world, simultaneously. For her, Aslam builds such a world through his imagistic descriptions.

He creates a "sharp contrast between the receding world of beauty and the unspeakable horror of war" (Banerji). According to her, "the exquisite tapestry continues to enthrall the reader, drawing one closer to the hard truth by starkness of contrast" (Banerji). The imagery of nature, as precisely depicted in the main character Rohan's garden, is often described through images that evoke a sense of disgust and degeneration. The darkness, in an otherwise beautiful garden, corresponds to the situation in the war-stricken land of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also highlights the fact that characters can also be both good and bad. There are good characters like Mikal and Rohan, who have committed their own sins. Similarly, though not justified in his acts, Major Kyra who is a fundamentalist has his reasons for committing such crimes against humanity. The contrasts created within a character or among various characters all point out to a world where there is both darkness and light. Aslam also shows this in his novel.

Nina Martyris, in her review of *BMG,* entitled "Of Pomegranates and Grenades: Nadeem Aslam's *BMG*" more or less examines a similar concern. She reviews the use of imagery in the novel to forward the natural beauty. It, according to her, contrasts with the ugliness of war, Martyris also analyses Aslam's focus on the injustices against people. Through the journey of Mikal, he takes the readers through the horrors of the war. Nadeem Aslam exposes the "old story of greed and political injustice" (Martyris). According to Martyris, his "finger pointing is so inconsolably even" (Martyris), that he does not exclude anyone from evaluation. The characters are both good and bad. Aslam condemns terrorism and violence in all the forms, whether such terrorism stems from the *Jihadist* mindset or from American forces. The latter is often justified in the name of patriotism as well as America's so called desire to take up the White Man's Burden. America legitimizes it in the name of its promise to eradicate the rest of the world from the evil. Martyris sees that "Aslam has a corrosive anger for the literalists, not so much for the brainwashed Casas of the world, but for the bigot escutcheoned with patriotism and for those caged behind the bars of Surah and verse" (Martyris). Although Aslam does not justify the acts of the terrorists, he still presets a situation which makes one interrogate the reasons of aggravated terrorism in Afghanistan. The state of affairs in Afghanistan and Pakistan, brought about by foreign forces, is what produces grievances of the masses. It leads them into waging a war against the central Western forces alienating the victims of war from the center. Aslam, thus, is on "nobody's side. All he wants to do is to ask questions" (Martyris).

Like Lasdun's review, Banerji's review creates an understanding of the generalized image of Muslims. As a researcher, I intend to avoid essentialism and, therefore, I understand the diversity among the Muslim characters as analyzed by Lasdun and Banerjee. I am in a better position to remain unbiased and avoid reductive stereotyping of any religion, or nationality. Resultantly, I am able to avoid generalizations. Review of Martyris also reveals both sides of the characters, helping me focus on violence carried out both objectively and subjectively. Thus, it permits me to answer my research questions in their entirety. Additionally, like other reviews of *BMG*, Martyris's review also contextualizes my research in to the era of violence and terrorist activities in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, it allows me to identify the uninvestigated research areas. My research realizes that the relationship between existential anxiety or death anxiety and meaning-making leading trails towards bonding with terrorist ideological constructs has not been explored in Pakistani Anglophone Literature. My research fills this gap by analyzing the characters in *BMG* who directly or indirectly involve themselves in terrorist activities because of their inability to resolve their existential anxiety which makes them search for meaning and vehemently defend it in the wake of heightened death anxiety.

Razeshta Sethna's review of *BMG* observes how Aslam's novels are an "evidence of his understanding of how the world works, how women are forced to suffer patriarchal traditions and the effects war leaves in its wake" (Sethna). Having a deep understanding of the real world situation responsible for war in Afghanistan, Aslam explores it in detail. He highlights the impact that the war has on the land of Afghanistan and its people. He recognizes the historical background which made both Pakistan and Afghanistan suffer the consequences of war. "In the wake of 9/11, hundreds of young men travelled from Pakistan as *Jihadi* fighters recruited through religious schools" (Sethna). These *Jihadis* were specially prepared by America to fight the war in Afghanistan. As the gap between the conservative *Jihadi* mindset specially designed for the war and the Muslims widened, the clash not only allowed international media to perpetrate the image of Islam as an extreme religion but also created a dichotomy in Pakistan. Pakistan became vulnerable to frequent civil clashes. In fact, "the clash between extremist Islam and liberal narratives is apparent in Pakistan today and Aslam's characters in this novel serve as a direct reminder that we haven't learnt the history lesson that this and previous conflicts might have taught" (Sethna). The war

has only created clashes. According to Sethna, Aslam realizes and understands that in its entirety.

Sethna realizes that Aslam remains politicized in his works. She sees that he takes cognizance of the difference between Muslims and the image of Muslims as terrorists. This image has been channelized by Western media. Such an understanding allows me to contextualize my research in the post 9/11 situation. As a result, I can keep my research on track and understand the motives behind adherence to terrorist ideologies in the light of the grievances. Additionally, I am able to see the relation between terrorist ideologies and existential anxiety

"Digging for Beauty in the Garden of Good and Evil" by Arminta Wallace centers on Aslam's interview by Wallace. In his interview, Aslam speaks of how he first chose the subject matter which he then wrote about. He says, "With me its always the subject matter. I wanted to write about honor killings, so I wrote *Maps for Lost Lovers*, I wanted to write about Afghanistan, so I wrote *The Wasted Vigil,* I wanted to write about Pakistan, so I wrote *The Blind Man's Garden*". After choosing the subject matter, Aslam chooses the character "who will help me to combine the various complexities, layers, hopes and moments of despair within that subject matter" (Wallace). It is, thus, subject matter first and foremost that forms his stories. He wrote *BMG* because he wanted to write about Pakistan. The novel, thus, reflects upon the situation in Pakistan. It also highlights how it is paying a price for someone else's war. He says that "people seem to have forgotten that Pakistan has paid an enormous price for the war on terror" (Aslam qtd. In Wallace). As he shows the situation of Pakistan, he shows a miserable state which seemingly comes off as a hopeless situation but Aslam says:

> I think it would be falsifying the situation to say things are not terrible in Pakistan. People say that the books are brutal. Someone said to me that they seem quite hopeless. I said, 'Look. I don't want to romanticise the situation and say that everything is fine'. (Aslam qtd. In Wallace).

For Aslam, showing the true situation, does not deprive the novel of hope. The hope remains, though the miseries may continue. The brutalities that depict a hopeless

situation stem from his desire to write about Pakistan as it is. He asserts:

> Really, if you read *The Blind Man's Garden*, you see how everyone in the story, when he or she is dropped into this terrible situation, when you see their behaviour, they say, 'I will act with dignity. I will act with honour.' The world tells them, 'There is a way out of this. Be corrupt. Lie. Betray.' And they say, 'No. No. No.' That is where the hope is

Such a portrayal helps me see a true image not being depicted through a tainted Islamophobic lens. This interview, thus, does not leave room for me to remain oblivious to the ugliness and an aura of hopelessness surrounding the text. This hopelessness, as asserted by Aslam, is merely a portrayal of truth that must not be ignored. As a researcher, I do not dismiss the atrocities incurred on the characters in the novel.

As Aslam "travelled extensively in Pakistan and Afghanistan" according to Leyla Sanai, one sees a veracity in his illustrations of both the countries. In her review of *BMG*, Sanai again discusses the exploration of "horror inflicted by fundamentalist Islam" (Sanai). According to her, "Aslam paints a chilling picture of Pakistan's government and army colluding with terrorism. The pressure on young men to become *Jihad*ists is illuminated". In fact, the "radicals in Pakistan urge residents to *Jihad*" (Sanai). However, Aslam mostly "enumerates achievements of peaceful Muslims" (Sanai) which allows one to see *Jihadists* as separate from Muslims. Despite the fact that the two entities are different, everyone suffers in their own way for living in a country where some terrorists may be living. According to Sanai, "Afghan warlords were paid for every Taliban member handed over [to Americans], so civilians as well as terrorists were sold, detained and subjected to inhumane Guantanamo-style treatment". When a price was paid, many innocent people were handed over in the name of Taliban. This highlights that Muslims suffered merely because their outer personality corresponded to that of a Taliban because of their beards. It is through the narrative constructed by America, in the wake of attacks on the Twin Towers, that the Muslims are suffering. These things have already formed what Veroniqe de Turenne terms as "the building blocks of war" in her digitally published review of *BMG*. Her review has been published on Barnes and Noble site.

Leyla Senai's review allows an insight into how Pakistani Anglophone literature is generally perceived and analyzed. It also helps me in realizing the capital interests of

forces involved in the war in Afghanistan. As my research interrogates the relation between death anxiety and terrorism, this review keeps me informed about the reasons other than death trepidations that drive people to execute terrorist acts. The reasons range from economical to political to religious. Therefore, I am able to avoid essentialism as well as generalization. While conducting my analysis, I keep in mind all the factors involved in adherence to fanatic principles.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has helped me explore the literature related to the works I have chosen for my study. Detailed review of the works has helped me understand the various perspectives form which Nadeem Aslam's Pakistani fiction has been analyzed. The novels have been examined from multiple view points. It has helped me realize the research gaps. I can steer my research in a direction which remains uninvestigated. I have realized that one of the areas that remains unexamined in Pakistani Anglophone literature is the relation of death trepidations and terrorism. In fact, Muslim image and identity as terrorists has been largely explicated upon in a number of scholarly journals. The reasons and reciprocity of existential disquietude and fundamentalism has not been looked into. Therefore, this chapter has helped in deciding the theoretical framework best suited to carry out my study. Keeping in view the review of the literature, my next chapter discusses Megan McBride's existential-terroristic feedback loop as the theoretical framework of the analysis. This model explores the correlation between consternations about death and religious extremism. In addition to this, the next chapter also expounds Kierkegaard's notion of existential anxiety to understand angst from a religious perspective. It is instructive because the terrorists have been associated with Muslim and Muslim identity in the post 9/11 world. They claim a religious basis of their actions. The next chapter also explains the research methodology and method employed to analyze the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam.

Endnotes

[1] See Kipling, for an insightful look into an illustration of colonial legitimization. "White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands" is a short poem that urges its people to colonize the 'uncivilized' and 'barbaric' people of Philippine because they do not seem to have a survival without the help of the US citizens.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"It's sheer panic. They attack out of panic"

"This much, yes, it may be true. Because they think world is a disease. This world, society, ours. A disease that's spreading," he said. "There are no goals they can hope to achieve... Kill the innocent, only that"

-- Don DeLillo, *The Falling Man: A Novel*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents theoretical perspective used for this research. A scrupulous examination and review of the existing literature on *TWV* and *BMG* has equipped me with the knowledge of uninvestigated areas in the research related to both the novels. Terrorism, which forms an integral backdrop of the novel, has not been considered in detail in the currently existing literature on the novel. The review has helped me recognize the research gaps in the present literature on the novels. It has provided me with a clear-sightedness as to what theoretical perspectives and research methodologies can be brought to service for the analysis of my primary texts. This chapter is divided into two parts. The former part discusses the theoretical perspectives that are employed to carry out the analysis of the selected fiction. The latter part analyzes the research methodology and methods. In the next sub-section, I try to explain my theoretical framework.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Existential-terroristic feedback loop, a model proposed by Megan McBride "represent[ing] a novel way of understanding why seemingly rational people would consistently choose to support or engage in terrorist acts" (561), forms the conceptual basis of this research. Besides, an overview of Terror Management Theory (TMT), which forms the basics of the feedback loop, is necessary to support the understanding of ETFL. A brief diversion to understand the theoretical underpinnings, maintaining McBride's model, aids me in conducting the textual analysis of the selected texts. Thus, I briefly discuss TMT for a downright unmitigated comprehension of ETFL. My

research slightly adapts McBride's model. It does not merely see the relation between death anxiety and meaning-making construct leading to adherence to terrorist ideologies. In fact, it also sees the relation between unresolved angst and its role in affiliation with cultural or religious beliefs. It also apprehends how such beliefs are defended through violence when confronted by death. Thus, McBride's model considers fear of death as a core psychological driver towards terrorism. However, my research also explores the element of existential crisis. I have specified the existential anxiety to the philosophy of Kierkegaard. Therefore, besides ETFL, the research also employs Søren Kierkegaard's ideas of existential dread as theoretical framework. Kierkegaard's theory acts as a lens to examine whether existential distress, operating in the selected novels, does or does not drive the characters to associate themselves with terrorist principles. The theoretical framework, hence, for the purpose of clarity, explores the two selected theoretical lens under separate headings. I have explained my conceptual framework under the following sub-headings:

1. Megan McBride's Existential- Terroristic Feedback Loop Model

2. Anxiety/ Dread/ Angst in Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*

3.2.1 Megan McBride's Existential-Terroristic Feedback Loop Model

In her article, "The Logic of Terrorism: Existential Anxiety, The Search for Meaning, and Terrorist Ideologies", Megan McBride "draw[s]from the work of political theorists, theologians, anthropologists, journalists, philosophers, and contemporary psychologists studying Terror Management Theory (TMT)" (560). She uses works from all the disciplines to logically establish the idea that death apprehension may steer human beings into a search for meaning (560). Such a pursuit may be satisfied by association with terrorist ideologies (560). Megan McBride explicates her model in her own words:

> The feedback loop is predicated on the idea that when a terrorist ideology acts as a meaning-giving construct, it may result in events that increase the existential anxiety it was intended to relieve and reinforce the original ideology. The cycle is relatively simple: existential anxiety compels individuals to seek meaning; for some individuals, support of a terrorist ideology functions as an anxiety-reducing, meaning-giving construct; these terrorist ideologies often result in acts of terrorist violence; terrorist violence ultimately exacerbates

existential anxiety, compelling terrorists to defend their ideologies and returning them to the very state the ideologies were meant to relieve. (561)

When McBride uses the term existential anxiety, she refers to the death anxiety which stems from a human desire to comprehend his existence. Existential anxiety has been treated as a subject by various philosophers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus etc. These philosophers basically point out that human beings face fear, dread, stress, and anxiety because they exist and want to comprehend their existence. They want to comprehend the purpose of existence in its entirety. The responsibility that comes with the freedom leads them to unanswerable questions about existence. It also alerts them to the suddenness and uncertainty of death which, in turn, brings about disquietude. Megan McBride takes 'existential anxiety' about the uncertain and sudden nature of death to locate the motives of terrorism.

McBride's theoretical model draws on the review of literature to suggest that "human beings are driven to imbue life with meaning in order to cope with the existential anxiety that comes from recognizing human mortality" (McBride 561). What her research proposes is that the sense of human mortality pervades human consciousness. Human beings, however, may not always be aware of such a control that consternations about death exercise over their mind. This existential/ death nervousness propels human beings to find meaning and purpose in life in order to relieve feelings of existential agitation. This is a goal that some might achieve by identifying with terrorist organizations and principles. For them, it satisfies the human psychological need to find coherence and certainty in an otherwise incoherent and certain world. Unfortunately, when such people seek to defeat the haphazardness of the world by advocating their worldviews, they only end up aggravating deaths in the society. This furthers the existential crisis and creates an unceasing cycle that follows.

McBride's model builds on a heavily studded and well-reasoned review of extensive literature. TMT seems to have a consequential role in the construction of her model. In line of the argument to follow, a discussion of TMT here provides with a better understanding of the theoretical framework. Besides, it contributes towards a ponderous analysis of the selected novels. The theory formulates the basis of the ETFL as it communicates the necessity of making meaning in the face of the unpredictability that life thrusts upon us. In order to get to the bottom of ETFL, it is imperative to understand the significance that searching and contriving meaning out of uncertainty

holds for human beings. It lays the foundations of McBride's proposition that angst prompts human beings to form an alliance with terrorist organizations. They, then, let those organizations weave meaning for them. The explication of the theoretical underpinnings that TMT laid forth supports the textual analysis of the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam. It does so by providing a basis for analyzing the concept of endorsing worldviews in the wake of exacerbated anxiety of 9/11. Both *TWV* set in Afghanistan, and *BMG* oscillating between Pakistan and Afghanistan, reflect a continuously sparking chaos. It is exhibited as a consequence of the post 9/11 war situation in Afghanistan. This keeps enkindling a trepidation and insecurity among people. The rise of unease in the war-stricken world of Afghanistan and Pakistan triggers a heightened yearning to uphold and endorse the tenets that provide for every character in the novel. TMT expounds upon that in a clear manner and, thus, makes both the textual analysis and the comprehension of the ETFL easier.

Terror Management Theory was proposed in the 1980s by Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski. It suggested and proved through various testing of the hypothesis that every human being lives in a mental conflict. The cognitive conflict engenders from his or her desire to live, coupled with an awareness of the uncertainty and inevitability of death. In their work *The Worm of the Core: On the Role of Death in Life*, Solomon et al. build on Ernst Becker's ideas stated in *The Denial of Death*. They prove, through experimentation, that death and its apprehension is directly proportional to the process of making meaning (Introduction). Megan McBride's ideas that *angst* functions as a navigator towards association with terrorist ideologies stems from this. This also leads her to state that distress steers human beings towards a search for meaning and fulfillment in life. In the chapters to follow, this proposition aids in the analysis of *TWV* and *BMG* by capacitating me to observe how the characters yield to the meaning making process in the face of forebodings. The characters involved in the terrorist activities, faced by uneasiness, depict an inclination towards creating worldviews. When such beliefs are threatened, they defend them violently.

Based on the idea of death anxiety and the consequential ideological construction, TMT hypothesized that it was important to keep their self-esteem intact by advocating and endorsing their views. Arndt and Vess state:

> Cultural worldviews imbue life with meaning by providing explanations for our
> existence, standards for appropriate behavior, and the potential to transcend

physical death via a sense of symbolic (e.g., contributing to a nation or a family) or literal (e.g., religious immortality). (911)

Symbolic and literal immortality provide life with meaning. Arndt and Vess stress that cultural worldviews and the individual self-esteem are two ways which relieve anxiety (Chap 2 & 3). Thus, "when individuals feel they are meeting the specific standards of value espoused by their culture, they are provided with a sense of self-esteem that functions to buffer anxiety which, in many cases, is tethered to deeply rooted existential fears" (911). The self-esteem depends on one's accentuation of beliefs for its satisfaction. It is the awareness of death, according to TMT researchers, that people try to relieve through "two-pronged anxiety buffers" (Arndt and Vess 911), namely cultural worldview and self-esteem.

When existential dread triggers the feelings of improbability, whirling around the thoughts of death, having a cultural worldview drives people forward. Greenberg & Arndt suggest, "our mortality requires us to find something bigger than ourselves for our salvation" (409). The greatest sense of salvation and that of "death transcendence is provided by participating in a heroic triumph over evil" (Greenberg & Arndt 408). The thoughts of death make human beings feel insignificant and vulnerable as they can be overpowered by death. They, thus, find meaning in something which can outlive them. When they find victory over evil, they believe that their name will outlive them. This evil, in such scenarios, is usually culturally or institutionally defined. Human beings, as a result, always look for beliefs that would resolve their existential questions. In this sense, TMT researchers saw how human life was built around a void which although, could never be filled in reality, was filled with the illusionary presence of principles. All meaning generated by cultural worldviews is illusionary because it is held together by the acclimatizing cultural authority. It can be concluded that this theory "portrayed people as dispassionate information processors guided by schemas and heuristics, operating in a historical, cultural, motivational and affective vacuum" (Greenberg & Arndt 399). Human beings, at times, may think that they have found meaning in life. Unfortunately, the idea that meaning in life is held by a non-absolute abstract entity in a constant dynamics, renders all their struggles useless. Human beings, thus, savor the false idea of their lives being glued together by beliefs and credos. However, even if the dogmas are not absolute in nature, they give life a direction which human beings seek in awareness of mortality.

Cultural worldviews provide human beings an opportunity to contrive meaning out of incoherence and purposelessness of life. They also construct their significance as a heroic human being by establishing the dichotomy of good/ evil. Evil, in their opinion, is any doctrine that does not correspond to their tenets. This is what TMT researchers refer to as self-esteem. "Self-esteem", according to Solomon et al.,"is the feeling that one is a valuable participant in a meaningful universe. This feeling of personal significance is what keeps our deepest fears at bay" (Chap. 3). In their endeavors to locate meaning in the universe, where meaning is not only dispersed but also missing many jigsaws, human beings find themselves defeated in the face of death. The uncertainty of death, combined with the absurdity of life, creates a distress which does not have an "imminent threat" (Popovic 32). It still thrusts the insignificance of man in his face. Human beings understand the triviality of the authority they have in and on their live. It enkindles perturbation in them. It is different from fear in that it results from the innermost fears which do not have an avoidable threat. In order to avoid this threat, human beings strive to stamp their significance on earth by trying to achieve symbolic immortality. They also do so by defeating their insignificance. This, as TMT researchers see it, is sought after by a triggered sense of self-esteem. It lets human beings reassert their faith in their superiority.

Although, cultural worldview furnishes life with meaning, it still keeps intact the illusionary nature of purpose. Chaos and violence, hence, appear to be a logical consequence. "Since cultures vary in what they value, the very same attributes and behaviors that provide self-esteem in one time and place may diminish it in another" (Solomon et al. Chap. 3). Thus, the previous arguments attract the attention to the insecurity it might ignite among human beings. If the meaning has already been created by a cultural worldview, a different ideology can easily qualify as a perilous risk to the only thing making sense in their world. In fact, Megan McBride has scrutinized the matter in the above quoted article "The Logic of Terrorism: Existential Anxiety, The Search for Meaning, and Terrorist Ideologies" where she states:

> Common-sense suggests that in some instances, existential anxiety compels people to reevaluate their lives. But research shows that this increased anxiety often results in cultural worldview defense, or a reaffirmation of the existing ideology. Thus, for terrorists, the very acts of violence committed in order to

assuage existential anxiety ultimately amplify this feeling and drive them back to their radicalized ideologies. (567-568)

In this 'loop', the eventually intensifying agitation exhorts the terrorists to safeguard their ideologies. Resultantly, the terrorists are impelled to support their ideologies. This keeps their self-esteem fully satisfied and allows formation of larger groups. With an increase in number of people who follow and defend similar group beliefs, individuals feel less alone in this precarious world. The ambivalence of the world, meanwhile, keeps on escalating the apprehension. This is the reason that the ideals are followed as a group. Moreover, they are designed and framed by organizations that make meaning through religion, culture etc. This relieves the individuals of the sense of responsibility that comes with finding meaning as an individual. Robert Pape's research, ''The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism'', concluded the same idea that "terrorists are satisfying a specific psychological need in addition to pursuing the more traditionally acknowledged sociopolitical objectives. They are, in response to feelings of existential anxiety, seeking respite in an ideology, a meaning-giving construct" (qtd. In McBride 564).

There are "four concerns in relation with death; dying (pain, sickness, helplessness, etc.); loss (at least of everything that is a part of material world, including one's body); unpredictability (of the moment of death); the unknown (related to the death experience" (Popovic 34). Having a number of people believing in similar tenets gives a sense of satisfaction. It engineers an authenticity. The more the number of people believing in same ideals, the greater seems the absolute nature of that ideology. Hence, it relieves the distress. Terrorist ideologies, thus, make meaning because they "exist as transnational organizations" (McBride 564). Humans feel less insignificant as they become a part of a bigger whole (McBride 565). Their importance is reassured by the provision of symbolic immortality. The symbolic immortality is achieved when people find a sense of satisfaction that their ideology will outlive them because of a larger number of people believing in that particular ideology. In fact, specifically seen from the perspective of terrorist groups, these groups offer both symbolic and literal immortality. McBride sees how the "contemporary terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda have clearly articulated local and global goals and offer both literal (via martyrdom) and symbolic (via identification with a righteous cause that will outlive its individual advocates) forms of immortality" (565). Presence of another group with different

dogmas only acts as a peril to the beliefs of the group. They mitigate the risk by endorsing their own ideology. In *TWV* and *BMG*, the terrorist ideologies are followed as a group. This argument lays down the premise for a conscientious probing into the reasons as to why the characters of the novels fail to disengage from violent activities.

In their book *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror*, Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon and Jeff Greenberg furthered their previously held empirical research. They used TMT to understand the consequences of terror initiated in the wake of 9/11. They realized that the increased dread relating to the improbability of death was provoked by attacks in any way. It could drive people to struggle to uphold the authenticity of their meaning giving construct/ cultural worldview. They believed that "their analysis could provide useful insights into the genesis of the prejudice, hatred, and hostility that lies at the root of the major wars and minor skirmishes" (Pyszczynski et al. ix). Through experimentation, Pyszczynski et al. made sense of the situation ensuing from fear of death. The conspicuous mount of hatred among proponents of different ideologies endorsed their already tested hypothesis relating to the directly proportional correlation of death anxiety and meaning-making. Their research noted that the terrorist attacks had "disrupt[ed] our normal means of managing our terror and, in so doing, threatened to undermine the psychological equanimity necessary for people to function effectively on a daily basis" (9). Then, midst the aftermath of 9/11, beliefs and ideals fell in jeopardy. The only way to stifle the feelings of meaninglessness, in this scenario, is to comply with their beliefs more strongly than ever. This is exactly what the researchers found while studying Americans. They stated that "reminding Americans of their mortality increases the positivity of their reactions to anyone or anything that praises America and the negativity of their actions to anyone" (Pyszczynski et al. 9). The research, thus, validated the hypothesis that owing to terrorism or elevated uncertainty of the surroundings, people could turn to violence. They do so in order to clutch on to what makes meaning for them in the prevalent meaninglessness of the world.

The detailed examination of the human psyche working behind acts of terrorism has been carried out by Megan McBride. She sees the inevitable human psychological necessity to find meaning and hold on to it. This makes TMT a suitable first step towards the analysis of the novels selected for this study. The application of McBride's theory on the selected primary texts of this research will evaluate and answer the

research questions of this study. The hypothesis of the research seeks to examine the relationship between existential crisis and acts of terrorism as depicted in the primary selected novels of this research. This research uses the ETFL as the basic model of study. As stated earlier, my research alters ETFL to some extent. It uses the idea of existential dread specifically described by Kierkegaard in order to see the relation between angst and fanaticism. To be able to carry out a rigorous research, the operating meaning-making has to be understood in the light of existential distress. For the purpose of clarity and precision, the rest of the theoretical framework is restricted to Kierkegaard's take on concept of anxiety. Limiting this research to Kierkegaard's philosophy will help bring a detailed analysis. It will also narrow it down to a point where its details can be carefully interpreted and used for analysis.

3.2.2 Anxiety/ Dread/ *Angst* in Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*

Søren Kierkegaard, considered the father of existentialism, spread his philosophical take on existentialism throughout his entire authorship. His work has been written under the *nom de plume* Vigilius Haufniensis[1]. His work, *The Concept of Anxiety*, is regarded, at times, as "a maddeningly difficult book" (Marino 308). It delineates the notion of anxiety or *angst*, as existing or engendering in human beings. In *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Gordon D. Marino appraised *The Concept of Anxiety* as the "single text needed to be chosen as the source book of existential psychology and psychoanalysis" (Marino 308). A similar philosophy has been asserted by Cole J. P in his work *The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard and Freud*. He believes this work to be the best companion for the study of existential psychology and psychoanalysis (131). The reason that this book is considered all-encompassing lies in the areas that the book successfully covers. Four issues dealt with in this book are:

    i)   Original sin

    ii)   Individual sins and the responsibility of each individual towards himself and God

    iii)   Issue of attaining freedom and an integrated self by overcoming anxiety

    iv)   Psychological perspective on anxiety

Considering the assiduous and conscientious efforts put into the explication of existential dread in this book, I have chosen Haufniensis's *The Concept of Anxiety*. I have chosen it out of a labyrinth of existing literature on 'anxiety' to stand as the

substratum for analysis to follow. In fact, the relation between distress, sin, and freedom as explored in the work makes it a perfect choice for this research. The reason behind this lies in the fact that terrorist organizations being scrutinized in this study also have a religious basis for their motives. Haufniensis also probes into the idea of existential crisis from a religious perspective. Thus, seeing the concept of disquietude in relation to the "psycho-spiritual vicissitudes of sinfulness" (Marino 310), supports the major portion of this theoretical framework which is contained in the ETFL. The book's recognition of "the connection between anxiety and sin, or, if you would prefer between anxiety and evil" (Marino 309) allows a comprehensive interpretation of the characters' motives in *TWV* and *BMG* because these characters recognize themselves as religious. *The Concept of Anxiety*, in this manner, allows my research to investigate the idea of dread as surfacing in the novels from a psychological and dogmatic perspective. The relationship that Haufniensis builds between anxiety and sin is also expressed in the long subtitle of *The Concept of Anxiety*: *"A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin"*. The 'psychological' and 'dogmatic' study helps construct the connection between anxiety and sin, sin and freedom, and between freedom and anxiety, with their ultimate relation of solution with faith.

Before indulging into the explication of the concept of perturbation and sin, Haufniensis establishes his subjective method of studying the very concept. Haufniensis's work begins with "complains about the sloppiness of contemporary thinking" (Marino 310). According to him, thinking of his time was full of "intellectual hubris" (Marino 311). Scholars "stepp[ed] outside the boundaries of their particular disciplines" (Marino 311) to come to a conclusion. Treating the "theological matters from an existential point of view" (Kassim 103), he disregarded the use of logic to study the matter of sin and anxiety. He believed them to be individual matters which he though should be studied by individuals themselves. His subtitle suggested that his work was not going to be a "theological treatise" but "a psychological treatment of the concept of anxiety" (Walsh 81). It was because he strongly believed that "contingent or actual existence falls outside the science of logic. Logic is the province of necessity" (Marino 311). He basically charged Hegel and his epigones for taking the wrong route towards the apprehension of existential matters. He was appalled by the way these authors ascended towards the actual (real beyond this realm) through the use of logic.

For Haufniensis, understanding of existence greatly revolved around being able to comprehend it subjectively through an inwardness. It is important to understand his concept of subjectivity and why he denies objective study of being to reach a cognizance of the overwhelming dread. Theodor Adorno, in his work, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* explicates upon Haufniensis's subjective philosophy:

> As an opponent of Hegel's doctrine of objective spirit, Kierkegaard developed no philosophy of history. He wanted to use the category of the 'person' and person's inner history to exclude external history from the context of his thought. But the inner history of the person is bound anthropologically to external history through the unity of the race... (32- 33)

As suggested by Ardono, Haufniensis's idea of angst also depends on an inwardness to come to a conclusion; to either overcome anxiety or to let it overcome one's self. Even in his *The Concept of Anxiety*, he scrutinizes the relational aspect of sin and anxiety by separating the individual from the responsibility of the Original Sin. He only sees the sin in the individual as a means to explore the angst preceding that very sin. Ardono notes the importance of inwardness in the following words:

> Kierkegaard takes the 'person' to be the point of indifferentiation between the [the individual and the race]. This point of indifferentiation must both maintain the exclusive unity of the subjective dialect and assign it an appropriate position in reality. The indifferentiation, however, cannot be stabilized. This can be show concisely in *The Concept of Anxiety*, whose definition of hereditary sin as an anthropological and equally as a historical constraint is supposed to illuminate the essence of historicity itself. (32-33)

Haufniensis identified human being as a self-contradicting oddity, a paradox. He saw him as a synthesis of his thoughts, spirit and body. Unlike Hegel, he dismissed the employment of rationalism to understand a human being because a human being is a paradox in existence. He believes that the construction of human being does not correspond to the extremely well defined, rationalistic and systematic method of Hegel. In his work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, written under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus[2], Kierkegaard says of this speculative process

that,

> Alas, while the speculating Herr Professor is explaining all existence, he has in sheer absent mindedness forgotten what he himself is called, namely that he is a human being, a human being pure and simple, and not a fantastical three-eighths of a paragraph. (Climacus 145)

Kierkegaard, thus, saw this rationalistic approach towards study of existence as a detachment of one's self from the very self that is under examination as for him, "for the speculating thinker the question of his personal eternal happiness cannot come up at all" (Climacus 56). The reason lies in the fact that for such a person; "his task consists in going away from himself more and becoming objective and in that way disappearing from himself and becoming the gazing power of the speculative thought (Climacus 56). So, for Kierkegaard, studying existential disquietude involved imagination and subjectivity. He realized that, although, sin and anxiety have been studied from "metaphysical, ethical and aesthetical point of view" (Marino 311), these still were a scientific and scholarly means of studying the idea of existential anxiety. He believed that systematic studies like these "presuppose[d] a mood in the creator as well as in the observer" (Haufniensis 14n) and "an error in modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought" (Haufniensis 14). He believed that because everything has a mood in which it was created and cannot be understood unless appropriated to that mood (Haufniensis 14). Therefore, in order to see the idea of sin in its earnestness, Haufniensis studied the idea of sin as it originated in Adam. Then, Haufniensis established its relation to perturbation.

Beginning *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis takes sin as the building foundation of apprehension. He starts off with the idea of the Original Sin and states that Adam was born in "a state of innocent ignorance" (Watts 157). He says that Adam was born with an "inner harmony" (Watts 158) resulting from a "perfect union" (Watts 158) and a consonance with his surroundings. This was because he was yet unaware of the constraints of past and future events. Such a state implies that Adam did not face any consternations as yet. This state, where anxiety has not yet been born, is actually ignorance. In "innocence, man is not qualified as spirit but is physically qualified in immediate unity with his natural condition" (Haufniensis 41).What Haufniensis opines is that Adam does not know any uneasiness or angst as yet. Because Adam has not experienced the nervousness, his spirit has not experienced any awakening. In such a

state, Adam was forbidden to eat from the tree. According to Haufniensis, it was in this condition that Adam realized his freedom. Adam sensed his inner being which could choose from a number of possibilities despite being forbidden. Adam committed the sin by leaping to make a choice. He tested the freedom he had to opt from various possibilities. This anxiety that Adam faced because of being able to do something and being held back at the same time created a paradox within him. He was simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the act he was about to carry out. Anxiety, thus, "is a sympathetic antipathy and antipethic sympathy" (Haufniensis 42).

The consequential illusion of having freedom instills in Adam a realization of an infinite being present within him. Adam cannot see him but nevertheless knows that it exists because it "projects itself" (Watts 158). It is projected through the ideas of existing possibilities. The presence of an infinite 'something' that Adam could sense existed alongside the concrete presence of his physical self. This only brought about dread by creating a dialectic without synthesis. Adam realizes that the existence of both his finite and infinite selves give birth to another thesis and anti-thesis. It is that of having a sense of freedom, yet being bound by the warning of God. The possibility of consequences make his freedom restricted. It, hence, turns in to distress which is "entangled freedom" (Watts 159). The freedom is entangled because it shows us possibilities but at the same time makes us feel powerless. Thus, the "symmetrical emotional ambivalence" (Watts 160) that comes with the notion of possession of freedom and the religious/ ethical confinements becomes one feature of the anxiety. Having infinite possibilities, yet being restricted at some point continue to make us finite unless we understand to synthesize these two opposing forces. Existential perturbations, thus, result from the existence of finite and infinite as thesis and anti-thesis. According to Haufniensis, "a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is a spirit" (Haufniensis 167). When Finite and infinite do not come together to form a synthesis, the "alienation of the finite from the infinite which is there from the beginning. It creates dread, fear, anxiety, or *Angst*" (Kassim 170) which overpowers man and leads him to live in a state where he avoids any stirring of the spirit and goes away from one's self.

Haufniensis's explication of the anxiety as faced by Adam is what stands as preliminary preface to anxiety of man. As stated earlier, Haufniensis does not see man as being related to external history in a way that would make man consider Original sin

as a pre-determiner of every being's sin. However, he sees that our foreboding is similar to the one faced by Adam when he ate from the forbidden tree. His sudden acknowledgment of the possibilities led him to feel a dizziness that caused him to choose against God's will. Just like Adam faced the anxiety, human beings go through a similar dizziness and experience similar feelings. Haufniensis describes the anxiety in the following words:

> Anxiety may be compared with a dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit want to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. (Haufniensis 61)

Just like Adam confronted an anxiety preceding his sin, man's anxiety preceding sin also follows a similar pattern. Just like Adam faced a dizziness, each individual faces a dizziness that leads him to choose from possibilities and end up committing a sin. The relation between sin and anxiety, thus, is established in this way.

Once the relationship between anxiety and sin is created, a similar pattern ensues with each subsequent sin. The state of anxiety continues to overwhelm human beings. It leaves them to decide whether they vanquish the anxiety by channelizing it in the right direction, or allow it to overtake their selves. Those who learn to defeat that anxiety find freedom from their feelings of angst. They, then, become an integrated self. When a man is innocent and sinless, he does not face the agitation to begin with. In such a situation, "the spirit in man is dreaming..." (Haufniensis 41). It has not yet known the spirit and its projection on man. There is "peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for indeed there is nothing against which to strive. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety" (Haufniensis 41). Once the sin has been committed, as sees Haufniensis, the spiritual state of the individual is altered. His confrontation of the possibilities leads to an awakening of the spirit (Haufniensis 156). Just like the stirring of spirit in Adam evoked a sense of good and evil, every individual comes to a realization of good/ evil after facing trepidations. The resultant sin also stirs the uneasiness. This is what makes Haufniensis consider existential nervousness as a necessary component to the incitement of spirit. A man who does not find this

awakening remains spiritless and wretched because he never finds his integrated self. Such a man is a poor man in a poor condition. His anxiety will stem from a feeling of nothingness. He will not be able to overcome it by indulging into a comprehension of his spirit. On the contrary, a man whose anxiety originates from his confrontation with sin will be able to look towards his future with a hope of overcoming that anxiety (Haufniensis 38-41). The right path to overcoming the existential apprehensiveness, according to Haufniensis, is having guilt consciousness and sin consciousness. Guilt consciousness allows human beings to realize the responsibility for their sins as individuals. Sin consciousness refers to the cognizance and acknowledgement of their sin and responsibility to answer God. The consciousness traces the passage for human beings to be followed towards an annihilation of their anxiety. It is enacted by looking into themselves; the way authenticated by Kierkegaard. It is only after stimulation of the spirit, thus, that the spirit projects itself in a way that man is forced to look into himself.

Those who suffer from anxiety but fail to depend on their inwardness to understand their existence also fail to have an integrated self. Their fretfulness takes them to a state of wretchedness. Over there, they find nothingness devouring them to a state of wreck. Such a man starts suffering from anxiety of evil. This implies that such a person is in evil and faces anxiety when doing good. It happens only after a failure to channelize one's anxiety in the right direction. Such a being takes flight from good but does not realize that this only takes him away from finding freedom from anxiety and achieving an integrated self (Haufniensis 123). A person in such a position enters a state of "indesluttehed" (Haufniensis 123) translated as "shutupness" (Haufniensis 133). In this state, he/ she does not try to understand his own self through his inwardness. Detachment from inner workings of the soul leads him to be isolated form his spirit. Additionally, such a person also isolates him/ herself from other people as he/ she first needs a connection with 'self' to truly understand the soul. Thus, 'shutupness' leads people to being a mere talking machine.

The 'shutupness' of one such person can spread nihilism in the society. Such a being depends on external factors like his profession, career, art etc to make sense out of his existence. He starts making meaning around such factors. He falsely assumes that more the number of people understanding their existence in this way, the less lonely he is. However, when he starts making meaning for others in such a way, he also makes

others move farther away from their inwardness. Thus it brings them into a similar state of wretchedness. "Among such demonics is a cohesion in which they cling to one another is so inseparably and anxiously that no friendship has an inwardness that can be compared with it" (Haufniensis 137). What Haufniensis tells about such a person is that he depends on association with other people in order to acknowledge his understanding of his own existence. He starts associating with others by carrying out the same actions and trying to be similar. Such a person also tries to make others do what he does. He falsely assumes that this will resolve his anxiety but as none of this is related to his spirit, he starts feeling lonelier and he becomes "the contentless, the boring" (Haufniensis 132) because his soul goes farther away from him.

This dizziness in a person exists, as stated earlier, because of the conflict between man's freedom to choose to do anything but the inability of breaking away from what he has been warned against. Haufniensis says that this dread cannot be transformed into freedom. Instead, this remains as it is and can only be fought with faith. Kierkegaard asserts that opposite of sin is faith, not virtue (Kassim 120). So "therapy for sin" (Kassim 120) is a leap of faith. For Kierkegaard, this is the ultimate and "whoever has learnt to be anxious in the right way has learnt the ultimate. (Kierkegaard 155). Kierkegaard says that "whoever is educated by anxiety is educated by possibility, and only he who is educated by possibility is educated according to his finitude" (Kierkegaard 156). Thus, Kierkegaard's theory analyzes the idea of anxiety in relation with sin and sees is not only as "the *predisposition* to sin and is *intensified* by sin, but more importantly it is a manifestation of man's potential to achieve perfection" (Watts 168; emphasis in original). Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*, in doing so, establishes grounds to study existential anxiety in detail. This supports the psychological analysis of the novel for its characters' actions. It highlights their association with terrorist ideologies. In this research, I apply Megan McBride's theory that existential unease creates coalition with terrorist principles in an attempt to find meaning in life. Thus, it requires, at first, an analysis of the existential anxiety in the novel and how it operates in the novel. In fact, my adaptation of McBride's model also engages with existential anxiety as the core reason for association with meaning-making constructs instead of reliance on death anxiety. The relation between death anxiety and meaning-making constructs depends on socio-psychological theoretical framework hypothesized by TMT. As my research is interpretive in nature, I have

reshaped the theoretical model to bring it in the domain of philosophy by addition of Kierkegaard's idea of existential anxiety. The research methodology is discussed accordingly.

3.3 Research Methodology

This project undertakes Megan McBride's ETFL as the theoretical framework. Violence and acts of terrorism are mostly executed in the both *TWV* and *BMG* in the name of Allah. Therefore, Megan McBride's ETFL, as well as Kierkegaard's religious exploration of existential anxiety is used to analyze the novel. Kierkegaard's philosophy of existential distress makes the novels' understanding all-encompassing. It brings McBride's theory to be understood from the aspect of comprehension of existence as well. This research uses an eclectic approach towards the comprehension of texts. This project, thus, is a reflective/ reflexive and exploratory investigation of the texts selected for study. Reflexive research, according to Mats Alveson and Kaj Skoldberg, begins with:

> A skeptical approach to what appear at a superficial glance as unproblematic replicas of the way reality functions, while at the same time maintaining the belief that the study of suitable (well thought out) excerpts from this reality can provide an important basis for a generation of knowledge that opens up rather than closes, and furnishes opportunities for understanding rather than establishes 'truths' (9)

My selected theories provide ground for explanation and evaluation of the real political and social situation. They make space for the analysis of the novels in the light of on-ground situation. Analysis of the novels, in such a way, opens new avenues for future research. Being interpretive in nature, the research uses the reflexive approach to first reflect on the theories. Secondly, it focuses on the novels to see the functioning of reality. Finally, it develops an understanding of the texts to generate new knowledge. In fact, the very goal of this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge by exploring new arenas and questioning "the taken for granted assumptions and blind spots in their own social culture" (9).

My research is a hermeneutic exercise focusing on the systematic analysis of a text which Gadamer believed to be a "dialogue between past and present" (qtd. In Eagleton 62). In order to completely comprehend what a text intends to say to us, one

needs to question it continually. Terry Eagleton summarizes Gadamer's idea by stating that "what the work 'says' to us will in turn depend on the kind of questions which we are able to address to it, from our own vantage point in history" (Eagleton 62). As a researcher, my methodology in this sense, includes viewing history from my own view point to analyze the selected fiction under study. However, this research does not comprise of just an analysis of the texts from a personal point of view. Although subjective, the interpretation is studded with "extra-textual knowledge" (Belsey 160). It is supported with allusions towards secondary texts. In this regard, my research, being qualitative in nature, explores a number of works in various domains. These areas have been already defined and restricted in my review of the literature. In the process of this subjective scrutiny of the texts, my study uses hermeneutic exercise to reach a conclusion. Hermeneutic exercise has helped me understand the multiplicity of meaning in my work.

The plurality of meaning indicated by Derrida gained ground soon after the Deconstruction Theory proposed by him. For deconstructionists, "reading a text is more like tracing this process of constant flickering than it is like counting beads on a necklace" (Eagleton 111). If seen in the light of deconstruction, specifically, "you might say, Derrida tells us, that the process that gives them meaning never ends" (Bertens 125). Since the process of meaning making never ends, my research dilates upon the constantly varying meaning. That allows me to generate new knowledge, not only in an external world, but also in my own mind. As perceived by Reception Theory, "the reader 'concretizes' the literary work, which is in itself no more than a chain of organized black marks on a page. Without this continuous active participation on the reader's part, there would be no literary work" (Eagleton 66). In line of this hermeneutic approach, this research places the researcher as the subject, expounding upon extra-textual knowledge. It is duly supported with secondary textual sources to perform a reflexive textual analysis of the selected texts. My research, also keeping in mind the undertaken hermeneutic approach, intends to be "flexible and open-minded, prepared to put our beliefs into question and allow[ing] them to be transformed" (Eagleton 69). Keeping aside any prejudices, this thesis undertakes investigation of the problematic understanding of terrorism. It focuses this setting in Afghanistan as reflected in the novels of Nadeem Aslam. Thus, my research employs textual method as most suited to carry out this research.

3.4 Research Method

Research methodology is only a philosophical and systematic concept of the way that the research is to be carried. Research methods supplement the research by providing tools and techniques to carry out the research in the light of the methodology. Paula Saukko, in her work *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to Classical and New Methodological Approaches* defines the distinction between research methodology and methods. She states that the "methods refer to practical 'tools' to make sense of empirical reality, methodology refers to the wider package of both tools and a philosophical and political commitment that come with a particular research 'approach'" (8). The choice of the use of method depends on "the kind of research one wants to conduct" (Griffin 3). My project intends to interpret the novels I have selected. I analyze them to understand the role anxiety plays in nurturing terrorist mindsets. Since this research scrutinizes the relation between acts of terror and existential anxiety as reflected in two chosen novels of Nadeem Aslam, textual analysis stands as the most suitable method to carry out the research. Therefore, I briefly discuss Textual Analysis as a research method in the next section.

3.4.1 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis, as a research method, is most commonly used in literary and cultural studies. It empowers a researcher and permits him/ her to use his subjective consciousness to study a selected text. This is done in relation to various theoretical underpinnings. Textual analysis, being "indispensable to research in cultural criticism" (Belsey in Griffin 157) is rather the only research method which has been employed in this research. I have added to the already existing understanding of the texts in accordance with my subjective, yet systematic study. In order to remain objective and unbiased in my analysis, my research assures that the approach does not exclude the author from its study. In order to avoid the research from getting person, I have added the author's perspective. If it is not taken into account, it makes a study extremely personal. Catherine Belsey also points this fault out in her essay on textual analysis. She observes the misunderstood meaning of Barthes' essay which announces "The Death of the Author" in the following lines:

> The main problem for us now is that, while most people are very willing to surrender the authority of the author.., they often want us to replace it with the

authority of the reader as individual. His reader is no more than the destination of the multiple writings and intertextual relations that make up the text itself. (Belsey in Griffin 162-163)

Hence, my research draws on an extensive literature from wide-ranging spheres. However, my research does not "support a vague subjectivism, in which the text means whatever it means to *me* and there is nothing to discuss" (Belsey in Griffins 162). Thus, my reading does not make my viewpoint arbitrarily constructed. "On the contrary; 'to read' is a transitive verb. We read *something* and that *something* exists in difference... Barthes urges us to be more rigorous, not less" (Belsey in Griffins 163). The argument I lay forth in my project is based on development of argument based on my readings. The literature I have read is not just haphazardly recorded. My study presents an impersonal analysis of the novels in accordance with the research questions stated in the introduction. The ideas have been developed through engagement with various readings.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theories used to analyze the selected texts by Nadeem Aslam. The characters in *TWV* form a syndicate of terrorist interests. All of them suffer from an apprehensiveness of death. In the wake of this trepidation, they depend on worldviews to make meaning in life. The existential dread has been understood in this chapter in the light of Kierkegaard's philosophy. It states that anxieties issue from man's first sin. Instead of overcoming their initial perturbation issuing from their sins, they form an alliance with external ideological constructs. They do not depend on the inner working of the soul to transcend beyond the physical realm. Thus, I argue that terrorists do not rely on their 'inwardness' to synthesize the infinite and the finite. It leads them to form a coalition with terrorist ideologies. It allows them to ascribe a purpose to their lives. When their beliefs are threatened, they vehemently protect their ideals through viciousness. A knowledge of angst has helped me understand how people depend on their ideologies when they are unable to recognize their soul through an 'inwardness'. Hence, I am better able to interpret the reasons of affiliation with organizations. I am in a better position to conduct a step by step analysis of the novels under consideration. The next chapter makes an analysis of *TWV* to see the relation of existential anxiety, creating worldviews and terrorist acts.

End Note

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¹ From this point onwards, in this section only, Kierkegaard has been referred to as Vigilius Haufniensis when his work *The Concept of Anxiety* is under discussion. However, his parenthetical citations of this work have been done under his *nom de plume* throughout the thesis.

² Like *The Concept of Anxiety*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* has also been written under a pseudonym; Johannes Climacus. From this point onwards, Kierkegaard's work is parenthetically cited by the pseudonym he chose for himself.

CHAPTER 4

"FAITH GOING TO WAR": POWER DYNAMICS, MEANING-MAKING AND TERRORISM IN *TWV*

> "My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop there will be *Jihad*. I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause."
>
> "But why, why?" Parvez said.
>
> "For us the reward will be in Paradise."
>
> ---Hanif Kurieshi, *My Son the Fanatic*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I interpret Nadeem Aslam's *TWV* from the perspective of Megan McBride's ETFL. ETFL has helped me apprehend the directly proportional relation between death anxiety and alliance with terrorist organizations/ ideologies. It has highlighted that distress related to death propels the desire to hold on to religious or cultural doctrines. Coalition with terrorist organizations makes it easy to have predefined core principles in life. Whether the violence is objective or subjective[1], the desire to find meaning in life is prevalent among the characters in *TWV*. It consumes most of them who are directly or indirectly involved in terrorism. The war on terror constitutes the setting of *TWV*. It shows barbarity being inflicted upon the masses in the wake of exacerbated improbability of death. Thus, they find basic tenets of life to render life meaningful in the wake of angst.

This chapter uses Kierkegaard's take on existential angst as a supporting lens to analyze how the characters in *TWV* cope with their existential crisis. They do not recognize their inner selves through an 'inwardness'[2] as proposed by Kierkegaard. Rather, they rely on external religious, cultural, or political credos to ascribe a purpose to their lives. Terrorist ideologies serve as one such means. The leaders of the groups exploit religion to maneuver the actions of their followers. Thus, those looking for defining principle in life become an easy target. Instead of allowing their stirring of the spirit to transcend and reach an understanding of the infinite and the finite, they depend on predefined principles.

Similarly, nationalist ideologies make meaning for actors of a legitimized objective violence. Instead of allowing their 'inwardness' to overcome anxieties, they make meaning through symbolic systemic institutions. This makes these people violently defend their beliefs that organize their otherwise uncertain and scattered lives. The inevitability and uncertain suddenness of death further intensifies their violence and creates ETFL.

Nadeem Aslam's *TWV*, written in 2008, is his third novel. It got short listed for the Warwick Prize for Writing. Nadeem Aslam visited Afghanistan while writing the book to understand the situation from a first-hand perspective. The prevalence of an anarchist condition in the country allows the application of ETFL. The characters committing ruthless acts in the novel endorse McBride's model as they are overwhelmed by their unresolved existential crisis. They vehemently defend themselves in the face of death. These characters survive in a violence-stricken country in pre- and post- 9/11 period. Ambiguity and insecurity following aggravated death rate is at its extreme. Fear of death engulfs them at all times and makes them feel insignificant. This insignificance threatens what makes meaning in their lives. Hence, they create ETFL which proposes that construction of meaning in the face of anxiety often leads people to associate with terrorist ideologies. When they use fanaticism to defend the ideologies creating meaning for them, they end up exacerbating the anxiety, hence, creating a never-ending loop.

The rest of the chapter explores ETFL by leading up to it in various steps. As the first step, my analysis highlights making meaning in life when faced by fear of death. In order to do so, I look into how characters adhere to doctrines established by some institution. They do not settle their uneasiness through 'inwardness'. This is understood through the notion of existential dread. After this, my analysis investigates the ideological clash as a result of adherence to distinct meaning-making tenets. These two steps lay ground and lead up to a careful explication of ETFL in the novel. All these steps are explored under separate heads.

4.2 Existential Angst and Meaning-Making

In his work, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis declares that there is an anxiety in man stemming from his "dizziness of freedom" (61). Haufniensis attributes all of man's life to a struggle to overcome anxiety. He sees that man comprehends his existence in the wake

of disquietude faced after the "dizziness of freedom". After first and each subsequent sin, man tries to grasp the meaning and purpose of his existence by viewing the available prospects to choose from. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the possibilities develop a conflict of finitude and infinitude. It happens because of spiritual projection towards an infinite number of possibilities. A synthesis of the infinitude and finitude in man, in this regard, is necessary. The former refers to the infinitude of possibilities positing freedom to choose as well as the infinitude with which the soul can venture itself onto the world. The latter defines the impossibilities encaged in one's physically restricted body. A fusion of both brings an integrated selfhood and leads man to freedom from anxiety (Anti-Climacus 59)[3]. What remains of crucial importance for Kierkegaard in this endeavor of man to subdue the overwhelming anxiety is the 'inwardness'. It is a passion to transcend man's own inner self to placate the conflicting finitude and infinitude. If achieved objectively, or through an external resource, that is without an insight into the inner workings of soul, the forebodings cannot be overcome. They evidently leave man to have no meaning in life.

Each and every single action by man can be faced by a "dizziness of freedom" (Haufniensis 61). It is forwarded by a number of choices standing in opposition to worldly impositions and barricades. Anxiousness constitutes the whole life of man. It can be vanquished by understanding one's existence. A person who is unable to comprehend his being based on an 'inwardness' remains apprehensive in the post-modern world. Post modernity is marked by a multiplicity of meaning[4]. One who depends on external constructs gets lost in such a world and becomes insane, for "insanity is the absence of inwardness" (Climacus 196)[5]. The meaning made by characters in *TWV* are marked by an absence of this 'inwardness'. It makes them desperately be contingent on predefined core beliefs. They are led into a "lunacy" which accompanies the "absence of inwardness" (Climacus 194). The textual analysis shows that various characters in *TWV* fall a victim to such an anxiety. Thus, they do not allow meaning to be administered through their 'inwardness' which constantly lunges itself on to them.

Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool stand in opposition to each other as warriors in *TWV*. They battle for the hold of a place named Usha; a place where most part of *TWV* is set. "Warlord Gul Rasool" was "one of the resistance leaders in this area" (*TWV* 32). He was a

"great rival of Nabi Khan" (*TWV* 32). Both these men ideologically antagonize each other. Where Gul Rasool is supported and backed by US ideologies, Nabi Khan is a conservative man who is against the American invasion. He disfigures Islam and uses this version to manipulate people into his following. He allows his ideology of violence against those contradicting him to make, advocate and strengthen meaning for him. The ideologies that make meaning for them are strongly upheld by both men, testifying to man's desperate desire to find meaning in life. Both these men pursue power to keep their understanding of existence intact, which, they believe, can be done through support of more people. A large number of supporters enhances the organizational value of the stance. Similar to Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool, other characters also make meaning based on external sources instead of relying on their inwardness to make meaning for them. Casa and Behzad, who are Nabi Khan's men allow Nabi Khan to ascribe meaning and purpose to their lives. Their existence is inescapably contingent on the cultural worldviews created by Nabi Khan for them. In other words, instead of seeking and utilizing their inner transcendence to make meaning in their lives, they are reliant and fixated on the ideologies that Nabi Khan infiltrates in their minds. David and James, who are CIA members also use the ideologies created for them by their country's government in the name of nationalism and inflict violence to defend what constitutes meaning for them. The meaning-making in different characters is dealt with under separate heads below.

4.2.1 The Demonic Warriors: Power as an Ideological Construct

As the novel opens, the introductory pages inform the reader about the prevalence of death and uncertainty in Afghanistan. Each and every man is bound to face existential crisis in such a situation. Death is inevitable. It is not even a consequence of one's own faults. Lara, "a native of the faraway St Petersburgh" *(TWV* 6) who is visiting Afghanistan to find her brother, makes her readers aware of this uncertainty in the initial pages. Speaking about Afghanistan, she says:

In any case no explanations are needed in this country. It would be no surprise if the trees and vines of Afghanistan suspended their growth one day, fearful that if their roots were to lengthen they might come into contact with a landmine buried nearby. (*TWV* 6)

In the scenario where uncertainty of life mars the very air, existence despairingly hunts for meaning. "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" (*TWV* 12). Everyone is a casualty in Afghanistan (*TWV* 33). Such a situation is bound to aggravate existential disquietude. It makes them question the purpose of their lives, leading them to a state of desolation. Having a set of codes becomes imperative to avoid disintegration.

As Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool denounce their 'inwardness' to transcend beyond the realm of the physical and understand the infinity of the soul, the purpose that they find in their life is founded on outward sources. Their reliance on outward structures for making meaning results in an unresolved anxiety. Thus, it turns them into a demonic personality. This means that confrontation with initial dread after their sin is the "highest spiritual trial" (Haufniensis 120). Faith has not been sought internally. Rather, it has been pursued in religious codes. They avoid comprehending their souls and inner selves in the light of Christianity[6] or religion to understand infinitude, while simultaneously using religious ideologies to make meaning for them. As these ideologies make meaning, they allow these people to overcome the conflicting finitude and infinitude within their personalities. Unfortunately, such people fail to form a synthesis. Haufniensis, according to Malantschuk, has given a highly comprehensive description of such a "man's attempt of coming into existential contact with Christianity" (271). The stirred spirit requires a transcendence which is sought through inwardness. Both Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool have resolved this anxiety without coming in contact with themselves. Their spirits start "conspiring with the body against itself" (Haufniensis 136). Such a stirring and lack of proper channelizing makes the body demonic because it takes it away from self-consciousness;

> Self-consciousness [...] is action, and this action is in turn inwardness, and whenever inwardness does not correspond to this consciousness, there is a form of demonic as soon as the absence of inwardness expresses itself as anxiety about its acquisition. (Haufniensis 143)

In addition to the discussion of demonic in *The Concept of Anxiety*, the demonic has also been discussed in other books by Kierkegaard. In his work *The Stages of Life's Way*,

written under *nom de plume* Hilarious Bookbinder[7], Kierkegaard gives an illustration of the demonic through the example of a fashion designer. A demonic fashion designer can seduce everyone with fashion. Kierkegaard's fashion designer states that he can easily bring any woman into his snare. He states:

> Now she stands at the place of sacrifice, that is, in my boutique. With the most contemptuous glance that snobbish nonchalance can exercise, I measure her. She is perishing with dread; a laugh from the next room where my trained minions are sitting demolishes her. Then when I have her dolled up in fashion, when she looks crazier than a mad hatter, as crazy as someone who would not even be admitted to a loony bin, she blissfully sallies forth from me. No one, not even a god, could dismay her, for she is indeed in fashion. (Bookbinder Chapter 1)

As one's fashion defines one's individuality, following a standardized fashion makes people lose their uniqueness and distinctiveness. A woman's virtue, considered her asset, is put at a price when fashion line is defined. At the hands of a demonic fashion designer, in a "short time every woman is going to be made a fanatic by the demented and defiling mirrored image of fashion, which corrupts her in quite another way than if she were seduced" (Bookbinder Chapter 1). A fashion designer who has been using his profession to make meaning in his life basically depends on an external source to define his life. The outward structure is his profession. Such a dependency makes him despairingly search some certainty in his life through his profession. In order for his meaning to be truthful and authentic, he needs to have followers of the similar ideology.

Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool both exemplify Kierkegaard's demonic fashion designer. They depend on externally constructed sources to make meaning for them. In their case, power and capitalistic endeavors do the required job. It allows them to understand their existence in this light. As they detach themselves from their inner selves, they enter a state of "shutupness". This "morbid reserve" (McCarthy 44) of theirs renders them unable to communicate the truth with themselves as they have furthered away from their souls. Both these men are in a wretched state like Kierkegaard's demonic, who manipulate others based on their ideologies. What makes meaning for them must make meaning for others because the validity of their ideological construct lies in a larger number

of people believing in the similar pattern of thought. Acting like the fashion designer, Nabi Khan reminds Behzad that "not only did the Americans imprison you, they caused your sister to die" (*TWV* 53). He invokes the insignificance of his people to elicit the responses that he wants. Just like the fashion designer ensnares women by challenging and questioning their fashion choices and thus, questioning their identity choices, Nabi Khan also makes them feel their insignificance. Casa and Behzad have been treated to provoke a response he wants. In fact, Nabi Khan uses their grievances to make sure that they adhere to the ideology that he has constructed for them. Nabi Khan is like the fashion designer in that he wants others to observe what he believes in. He lends to the world another person whose identity has not been constructed by himself. Another phantom has been created by him who does not know his inner self and makes meaning depending on external sources. He becomes "shutup" in his own self which he is already detached from. This leads to existential crisis and creates a never ending chain.

Gul Rasool also has a similar problem. Economically and ideologically backed by US, he struggles hard to keep his position of power intact. Being in power makes death seem a little less uncertain. This is what makes meaning for Gul Rasool. In fact, in order to do so, he plans and launches an attack on Nabi Khan's men even when he knows that Nabi Khan is not in the building. All he wants is to make Nabi Khan powerless so that he can continue to be in power and in the favor of the powerful. Having power promises him security and makes death less vulnerable in war situation. When Nabi Khan's building is decimated by CIA backed forces, Gul Rasool knows that he is not there although he ascribes it to his own faulty judgment. The truth, however, is that "the information that selects the target isn't always without its faults" (*TWV* 59). He wanted Nabi Khan exterminated so that he could feel powerful and safe in the wake of death. He does not realize his existential crises which hopelessly makes him want to find meaning for himself. America's financial strength makes him more powerful which is why Gul Rasool also seeks monetary power. In fact, "the first CIA team that arrived in Afghanistan soon after the attacks, to persuade warlords and tribal leaders, had brought five million dollars with them" (*TWV* 171). America needed to keep its position of power intact for which it made financial help available for the people. Finding safety under American protection, Gul Rasool allowed himself to find meaning in seeking escape from death. Because of his external

dependence on American backed ideology, he was unable to synthesize his infinite and finite selves; therefore, death seemed a wrong thing. The capitalistic acquirement of power by Gul Rasool makes him less exposed to death. Having a USA backed ideology and money also make him less vulnerable to death.

Gul Rasool and Nabi Khan find power to be so important in their lives that they want each other executed. They want to kill each other in order to keep the meaning intact in their lives. As both these people depend on external meaning-making constructs, both their personalities become demonic and they remain unable to transcend through their inwardness and overcome their anxieties. They are only fighting for their power. When Nabi Khan sends Behzad to fight in Usha, he tells him that "an enemy had appropriated power there [Usha] having accepted money and weapons from the Americans at the end of 2001 to help uproot the Taliban" (*TWV* 52). Nabi Khan is highly worried about his power because he also wants to escape death and anxiety associated with it. When he wants to send Behzad off to conquer the philosophy that goes against his[8], he tells Behzad that he has been made a fugitive out of his "desire to rid [his] country of infidels and traitors" (*TWV* 54). Unfortunately, "he cannot step outside without the fear of being apprehended" (*TWV* 54). Irony surfaces in his statement where he tells Behzad that he wants to carry out the blast himself (*TWV* 54). However, he fears that Americans will find him and put him to death. This shows that he is making meaning in the face of death because his finite and infinite selves have not yet synthesized in him. It makes him want to avoid death. Power seems to be the only means to do that. Influence keeps him safe by not only eradicating those who threaten him but also strengthening his organization in number.

Instead of depending on an inwardness, Gul Rasool and Nabi Khan make meaning through their dependence on external sources and become the images of Kierkegaardian demonic. It spreads nihilism in the society. They, thus, are like the fashion designer, seeking validation of the core principles defining their lives. These characters desert their inwardness in its entirety to come to a conclusion. They believe power to be the source of meaning for them. With power in their hands, they can avoid the inevitability of suddenness of death. It allows them to temporarily avoid thinking about the finality of death. They become demonic because they gather more and more followers to advocate their cause. They become a part of their enterprise making meaning for them. As their positions of

power are imperiled, Nabi Khan builds his own organization whereas Gul Rasool finds security in adhering with the ideologies of a bigger superpower: America.

4.2.2 "Death to America": Casa's and Behzad's Ideological Construct

As Casa and Behzad are both Nabi Khan's men, their life centers on the beliefs defined by his organization. Casa and Behzad are terrorists who carry out the missions of Nabi Khan in the name of God and his Prophet Muhammad[9]. Unfortunately, as Nabi Khan has acted like Kierkegaard's fashion designer, he has created an ideology that makes him feel powerful. Casa and Behzad follow those principles. They not only accentuate it for Nabi Khan but also make it the only ideology to be followed. As they follow the ideology of the 'demonic' Nabi Khan, they fall into a "dreadful exemption from doing the ethical, the individual's heterogeneity with the ethical, this suspension from the ethical, is sin as a state of human being" (Climacus 267). As Casa and Behzad start following Nabi Khan, they become completely unable to communicate with their inner selves. As they have not been able to connect to their inner selves, they fall in a perpetual state of sin; a detachment from the ethical. It encages them in a permanent state of sin which makes meaning for them. Nabi Khan's missions, carried out in the name of God, make meaning for Casa and Behzad and fill their lives with purpose.

Both Casa and Bihzad do not realize that the tenets they believe in are organized by Nabi Khan. It is leading them to a detachment from their inner selves. Explaining Kierkegaard, Louis Pojman reminds humanity in his work *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* that "whatever you believe, remember that your creed has no objective warrant, no *fundamentum in re* save the reality it has in your life" (63). What he actually wants to assert is that association with creed does not entitle one to an explication of life and existence. Meaning has to be sought through an inwardness which both Casa and Bihzad fail to do so. When Bihzad is told to carry out Nabi Khan's mission and blow a school built by Americans, he is told that "you must know that Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, will be greatly happy with you" (*TWV* 52). He asks Bihzad to "sit beside him and, taking his hand in his, begins to read aloud verses from the Koran- not always accurately" (*TWV* 53-54). Nabi Khan builds a system for him which helps him find himself and comprehend his infinite existence. He sees God as separate

from himself. God may be understood as an entity who may reward him for his good deeds and make him suffer for his bad ones. Nabi Khan's objective of gaining power in Usha has been made the objective of whole creed through manipulation of ideologies. They are told that Allah and his Prophet will be happy which lets them falsely believe that they have understood God.

The synthesis of finite and infinite is the most important thing for Kierkegaard in making meaning out of existence and overcoming anxiety. According to Kassim, Kierkegaard's "very concept of the individual as a synthesis of the infinite and finite, of the eternal and temporal is the real source of individual's struggle to become the infinite" (106). As for both Casa and Bihzad, meaning is being made through an external source, they are unable to synthesize with the infinitude of their souls. They have not transcended towards a comprehension of their infinite inwardness. As a consequence, they seek an understanding of the infinite as a separate entity. They do not seek God through an 'inwardness', rather they look for Him as an entity who is either pleased or displeased with them. Casa, for instance, seeks "*infinite mercy*" (*TWV* 179) of God. For him, this immeasurable mercy comes from pleasing God by carrying out the acts Nabi Khan wants him to carry out. Before Bihzad goes off on Khan's mission to destroy the school built by Americans, Casa tells him that "Bihzad was being given the honor of doing this for Islam and Afghanistan" (*TWV* 51). Doing it for Islam meant pleasing the Muslim God who is infinite. It is the infinity of God whose mercy Bihzad and Casa seek. Bihzad expresses his fear of moving out of God's endless compassion when his thoughts go astray and he accidentally lets his mind wander into the domain prohibited by God. At one point, he thinks of the "alluring" (*TWV* 53) reward of $5000 given if a Muslim told on his brother to US forces. Even his thought was accompanied by his fear of God as he first thought "May Allah forgive him" (*TWV* 53). His 'inwardness' is entirely shattered. His thoughts are severely organized. They do not allow any deviation or thoughts to allow stirring of the spirit and then an administering of thoughts.

Since Bihzad has not been allowed to connect with his 'inwardness', he seeks meaning in alternate dimensions. When killing the school children does not make sense for him, he seeks to make purpose out of his life. The mission of Nabi Khan becomes a preliminary step towards his freedom from this ideological construct. It becomes his

preface to making essence out of his own life. Unfortunately, his problem lies in the fact that he still looks towards making essence externally. He pursues comprehension of his life outside of himself. He is incapable of realizing that channelizing his inner self is the only path to making an anxiety free outer life. He thinks that after carrying out Nabi Khan's mission, "maybe he will get to go to England. A chance at last to make something of his life. Even find love: become someone's, have someone become his" (*TWV* 55). Unfortunately, there is absolutely no way out for him. As he looks for meaning, what he does not realize is that this life and the ideological construct he follows is inescapable. He has been sent off to blast the school in which, although he has been promised safety, he unfortunately won't survive. The moment he realizes this, he knows he cannot go back because he knows the fate of the traitors. Just before he left with the truck full of explosives to blow the school, he has witnessed a traitor who has been brought to Nabi Khan to be questioned. Bihzad thinks of his fate and says that "with a funnel and length of tubing they'll pour acid or boiling water into the man's rectum. That and much more, and then they'll slit his throat" (*TWV* 55). Even if Bihzad wants an escape, he has none because of the torture that will be inflicted upon him in case he takes his leave. As he sees no option ahead of him, he only seeks solace in the infinite mercy of God and his compassion. "He has no choice, and nothing but Allah's compassion to see him through this" (*TWV* 57). In the face of death, infinite God's mercy is the only thing that can provide him with peace.

Since both Casa and Bihzad are being religiously manipulated, they are being controlled through the idea of retribution and reward. Meaning for them is found in the afterlife. Their idea of infinity is restricted to an infinite after-life which restricts them from comprehending their infinity and synthesizing with their infinitude. This is the reason Bihzad looks for compassion as empathy can send him to Paradise after death. Idea of repentance out of fear of retribution has been instilled in them. Kierkegaard believes that retribution and repentance stand as barriers to the attainment of a synthesis of soul and body, of finite and infinite. He sees that "repentance cannot cancel sin, it can only sorrow over it. Sin advances in its consequence; repentance follows it step by step, but always a moment too late" (Haufniensis 115). The forebodings, thus, "throws itself into the arms of repentance" (Haufniensis 115) instead of being defeated. Casa feels this fear of retribution as he states that "*if you do not fight He will punish you severely and put others in your*

place (emphasis in original)*"* (*TWV* 187). This is the verse that Casa thinks about while thinking that his appearance does not matter, what matters is how he fights. Casa is so conscious about sinning that as he has been told that looking at women's face is a sin, he "wonders about the magnitude of sin he is committing by looking at Lara's face, even though his thoughts are pure" (*TWV* 199). Dunia, a girl who is teaching at an American run school where she has been hired by Gul Rasool also sees how Casa's prayers and understanding of his religion does not come from an 'inwardness'. "She'd rather leave- it's obvious that with him the source of prayer isn't delight, it's fear of Allah's retribution" (*TWV* 270). He fears Allah's retribution which makes meaning for his existence. He pursues a purpose in life which connects him to an 'infinite mercy' of his God instead of comprehending the divine infinity by first synthesizing the infinite and finite within himself.

Casa does not realize that understanding God is what he seeks in his life. As Ghazali explores in his works, his "existentialist tendencies" (Kassim 104) speak volumes about the idea of comprehension of God. Ghazali believes that "it is the idea of alienation of men from God which is the real cause of man's 'fear' of and his 'faith' in God" (Kassim 104). This alienation basically refers to the distance from God; an inability to understand him. As Ghazali sees, "in so far as the gnostic fears what is abhorrent in itself he fears the veil, that is permanent alienation from God" (Ghazali xii)[10] which he believes is overcome by inner transcendence as well as knowledge. In addition to lacking the internal struggle towards God, Casa also lacks knowledge. The Koranic verses that he recites are merely out of context verses which he has not understood on his own. When Casa looks at Marcus, he sees that Marcus has a lot of knowledge about the world. Marcus's talk, at times, confused him, "making him feel at times that he doesn't know much about Islam let alone other religions, that he knows little about Afghanistan let alone the world" (*TWV* 216). Casa's ideologies are dependent on Nabi Khan's which is barred him from knowledge and he realizes that he does not know the world at all. This is the biggest barrier which makes him unable to reach God. He needed to resign towards an inwardness in order to overcome this feeling of alienation. As Kierkegaard says, "faith is therefore no aesthetic emotion, but something far higher, exactly because it presupposes resignation" (De Silentio 76)[11]. He

does not resign towards his inwardness which makes him find meaning by depending on external sources.

As Nabi Khan acts like Kierkegaard's fashion designer, he makes everyone follow his ideology. That makes him feel less alone in his meaning making. Additionally, it makes him have power which makes him less vulnerable to death. As his man power increases with the help of Casa and Bihzad, he makes meaning for them as well; making them as anxious about life and death, and finite and infinite as he himself is. As Casa and Bihzad also depend on an external source for making meaning in their lives, they end up making meaning through ideologies that do not allow them to overcome their anxieties and they seek infinity. Thus, they are using external means to making meaning which allows them to be easily manipulated.

4.2.3 David and James: "America is not a Myth"

In a bout of confession, David tells Lara that as a CIA employee he knew about the attack which was to be carried out against people in the refugee camps. Everyone knew about the forthcoming attack but they allowed the bombing to take place in order to defame Communism. David justifies his action by posing himself and his people as the saviors and stating that "we were letting those men, women and children die to expose the brutality of the Soviets. We were saving the future generations of Afghanistan and the world from Communism" (*TWV* 332). David faces an existential crises as the Capitalist ideology of his country faces threat by Russian Communism. As Communism begins to take control, the Capitalist ideology that makes meaning for him makes him question his identity as an American. Instead of internally questioning it, he merely thinks of his duty towards his nation and his tribe. Basically, nationalism makes meaning for David and endows his life with purpose. Lara sees this patriotism in him and comparing it to her husband's patriotism states that "when it came to what he called his nation, his tribe, he too suffered from a kind of blindness: he saw what he wanted to" (*TWV* 332). This blindness occurs because like Nabi Khan, Gul Rasool, Casa and Bihzad, they seek meaning in life which nationalist ideologies completely provide.

As David stays with Marcus, her lover Zameen's father, in post 9/11 Afghanistan, he meets his CIA friend Christopher's son. James Palantine, his son, who is presently a

CIA member embodies a younger David who fervently protected his ideology against the Soviets. James Palantine, similarly, looks up to his nation, and does not want it to be destroyed at the hands of Taliban or al-Qaeda. As he makes meaning through nationalism, he considers everything below nationalism because that is what makes meaning for him. American ideology that Gul Rasool is basing his life and power on is backed by CIA employees like James. David tells James that Gul Rasool was involved in James's father's death which James dismisses by stating that his mission is not personal. He tells David that "we need his help right now in fighting al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Dad would understand perfectly. My own feelings are irrelevant when it comes to these things" (*TWV* 249).

Both David and James are being monitored through nationalist and patriotic ideologies. The core principles defining their lives are also dependent on external sources which makes their cultural worldviews weak in the face of any physical threat posed against them. Gul Rasool depends on this very ideology to make meaning in his life as being backed by a super power makes him have more and more people follow the national worldview which he follows. It keeps his position of power intact, which, in turn, allows him to keep his cultural world views alive. This dependence on external sources to make meaning in life creates problems as everyone desperately tries to hold on to that meaning and defies anything that opposes it. This leads to an ideological clash which has been thoroughly pointed out by Nadeem Aslam in *TWV*.

4.3 "Clash of the Civilizations"[12]: Ideological Construct as a Source of Clash

In her book entitled *Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims*, Pnina Werbner observed that in the wake of 9/11 attacks, "the clash of civilizations predicted by Huntington... between Islam and West had finally materialized" (1). Since 9/11, the narrative marginalizing Muslims as the perpetrators of violence has been issued. Through repetitive covering of the incident, the narrative has been constructed by America that shows America as the victim. Gray notes:

> There have been many incidents that have been repeatedly broadcast throughout the world, including, in the recent American context, the assassination of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. The difference here, however, is threefold:

witness at the actual moment of crisis, the failure of ritual and the mixing of the strange and familiar. (Gray 6)

Such broadcasting has created an image of the 'barbaric' other upon whom the infliction of cruelty seems automatically justified. As the attacks were horrendous, resulting in many deaths, Americans in *TWV* channelize the American narrative of victimization through characters like David and James Palantine who have both been members of CIA. Although David was a former CIA employee, his perception of America as a victim is visible throughout the novel. Such an insight is what leads to an ideological clash between Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool because Gul Rasool is backed by US ideology. Where Nabi Khan makes meaning by trying to comprehend the infinity of God in a way that it protects his position of power, Gul Rasool also tries to keep his power intact by having a super power back him. The meaning in his life is dependent on American ideology. As the novel progresses, the clash between these meaning-making constructs surfaces. As the American narrative legitimizes the brutalities against Afghanistan carried out in the form of 'objective violence', the threatened group of Nabi Khan seeks revenge. The ideologies are desperately supported and protected. Both the parties only have these ideological constructs to depend on in order to make meaning out of these lives. When these are disturbed, Gul Rasool's and Nabi Khan's position of power is threatened, making them feel closer to death, and ultimately leading them to fight for the purpose they have made out of their lives.

4.3.1 Us vs. Them: Language as an Ideological Construct

Before Bihzad is sent off to blast the school, Casa and Bihzad sit in an "interior filled with crates of rocket-propelled grenades, packets of explosives that smelled like almonds, and boxes full of DVDs and CDs depicting *Jihad* as Allah Almighty saw it and not as the world's media distorted it" (*TWV* 56). The awareness of distortion of media is understood by Casa who does not realize that even Nabi Khan is merely using a distorted narrative of *Jihad* to allow him to keep his power intact. Although the meaning of *Jihad* is misunderstood by Casa due to his lack of knowledge about Islam (*TWV* 216), James does not realize the distortion done by media at all. He legitimizes his torture against Casa in the name of nationalism. When stopped by David from torturing Casa, he asserts his act as justified by stating that "I am just searching for our country's enemies, David. It's nothing

personal against this man" (*TWV* 350). The image of the Afghans and the warlords is so strongly instilled in him that he considers them people who will always remain the way they are. When stopped by David from inflicting torture on Casa, he tells him that "They are the children of the devil. They have no choice but to spread destruction in the world" (*TWV* 351). The ideological construct which is making him inflict violence as 'objective violence' is dependent on beliefs instilled in him. As an American, he also depends on nationalism, patriotism and constructs of the like to make meaning for him. It leads him to become violent and feel justified in what he does. Unfortunately, this only inflicts grievances on the 'uncivilized' and 'barbaric' other. It makes them feel that death is closing in. Consequentially, as death closes in, it creates a forceful desire to get rid of anxiety. The desire is fulfilled through defense of ideological concerns, leading to a conflict between those holding opposite beliefs.

The language used to define people furthers this ideological clash as part of violence is legitimized through language. It inflicts grievances on one party which creates and reinforces the ideological clash. Since 9/11, it has been asserted time and again, that "homeland was no longer secure and, to that extent, no longer home" (Gray 5). Although, according to Chomsky, at one level the damage was done through the creation of fundamentals (21) by US forces in Pakistan[13], at another level since 9/11, this damage is being carried out through language which constructs ideologies (Chomsky 14). When James ruthlessly holds a flame against Casa's eye, he unflinchingly defends himself through the language of dichotomy that places him and Casa in an Us vs. Them relationship. Upon being stopped by David, James tells David that "it's not between him and me. It's between them and us" (*TWV* 350). As a victim of 9/11 attacks, James further legitimizes his act by stating that "when I say *us* I include the majority of the Afghanistanis, who want to get shot of sons of bitches like these. I include the majority of the world, not just Americans" (*TWV* 350). At one instance in the novel, David asks James if "he had heard about these guys who are going around abducting and torturing Afghans to get information about al-Qaeda and Taliban" (*TWV* 247). This elicits an explaining remark from James who says tell him that they have to be careful not to use the words like "torture" (*TWV* 247). He says that it can be "inflammatory. When these people hear that word they think of people being raped to death, of limbs being cut off, of six- inch nails being driven

into people's heads- that is what the word means here normally" (*TWV* 247). For the things that Americans do are not torture for him. For him, "a cold room is *not* torture. Withholding painkillers from someone with an injury is *not* torture" (*TWV* 247). The language which legitimizes these acts creates a physical clash between the opposite ideologies.

Casa realizes how the language is being used to label him and his men in one dimension. It creates a dichotomous standing of Us/ them which legitimizes the acts of cruelty inflicted on them. He sees the hypocrisy of language while thinking of how his people are considered suicide bombers, against whom, any defense or cruelty is justified. Casa thinks:

> These days they keep saying *why do Muslims become suicide bombers? They must be animals, there are not human explanations for their actions.* But does no one remember what happened on board flight United 93? A group of Americans- 'civilized' people, not 'barbarians'- discovered that their lives, their country, their land, their cities, their traditions, their customs, their religion, their families, their friends, their fellow countrymen, their past, their present, their future, were under attack, and they decided to take their lives- and eventually gave up their lives- to prevent the other side from succeeding. He is not wrong when he thinks that that is a lot like what the Muslim martyrdom bombers are doing. (*TWV* 212)

The hypocrisy-coated language bothers Casa because it rationalizes the torture inflicted against him. His image as a barbaric other makes him a victim of all the torture that he faces. Gohar Karim Khan believes that "Casa's frustration surfaces from American political hypocrisy that presents the acts on board the United 93 as heroic, but condemns Muslim martyrs" (125). This hypocrisy, coated in language usage, is the reason for the creation of clash.

The legitimization of acts leads to a similar effect. Aslam seems to be pointing out that the linguistic hypocrisy leads to ideological clashes which are resolved through physical clashes. The hypocritical language creates cause and effect relation as one calamity is seen in isolation from the other calamity. The 9/11 attacks, for example, are seen in isolation from the cruelties inflicted during the war on terror. In *TWV*, "the weeping father of eleven dead children insists the Americans leave Afghanistan because if they had

not come the atrocity would not have occurred" (*TWV* 53). The metalepsis further increases the ideological gap as people desperately struggle to cling on to meaning and fight to keep it intact. Their cultural worldviews are only held in place through war: a war of ideologies.

4.4 Heroism and Symbolic/ Literal Immortality

As the characters form coalition with institutions in the face of anxiety, they do not realize that they are making meaning to avoid death. In the face of death, different characters, directly or indirectly carrying out violence, start seeking symbolic or literal immortality. Symbolic and literal immortality have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Their reliance on religious or governmental institutions is linked to how well the symbolic or literal immortality is spread out in front of them. They are unable to escape death which makes them feel insignificant. Their insignificance leads them to make meaning which allows them to have a purpose in life. With ideological clashes, these people make meaning more intensely and start fighting to seek heroism, symbolic or literal immortality.

Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool, as stated earlier, seek power which makes meaning for them. It allows them to authenticate what they believe in by having more followers. If their cultural worldviews are threatened, they feel the insignificance of their purpose. It hurts their self-esteem. In the face of injured self-esteem, they make meaning with more intensity. In fact, Aslam himself points it out as he states in a descriptive bout that both these "men are little short of bandits and cruelest of barbarians, seeing all of life's problems in terms of injured self-esteem, their places in infamy well-earned" (*TWV* 60). As explicated in TMT, self-esteem is a feeling of one's value and importance. According to Ernst Becker, it is earned by believing that "one is an object of primary value in a world of meaningful action" (*The Birth and Death of Meaning* 79). Basically, self-esteem derives meaning for people and makes them feel significant in the face of death. This is done through religion and culture as both culture and religion provide a whole set of beliefs that make meaning in a complete way. According to Becker, "everything cultural is fabricated and given meaning by the mind, a meaning that was not given by physical nature" (*Escape from Evil* 4). As culture helps man in this way, "all systematizations of culture have in their end the same goal: to raise men above nature to assure them that in some ways their lives count more than merely physical things count" (*Escape from Evil* 4). Since both Nabi Khan

and Gul Rasool seek power, it becomes evident that they find power. They not only feel powerful and significant in the face of death, but also find meaning to be more coherent. Their self-esteem is saved from injury when they demolish the opposite force.

As Nabi Khan holds on to his position of power to maintain his self-esteem, he provides people with whole cultural worldviews which makes them feel heroic. When Nabi Khan sends Bihzad off to blow the school being run on American ideology, he hands Casa a statement to be read after the blast. Although, it is written by Nabi Khan himself, it is told that Bihzad wrote this statement. The statement goes telling that "*a passionate servant of Allah has carried out a glorious act in Jalalabad. He wrote this declaration personally to be read after his death*" (*TWV* 64, emphasis in original). The blasting has been referred to as a 'glorious' act which instills the feeling of heroism among people. Nabi Khan uses this heroism to make people follow his will and carry out the acts of violence for him. This does a two pronged job: it keeps meaning intact for Nabi Khan, and makes a whole new dimension of meaning for his people like Bihzad and Casa. It brings a clarity in the meaninglessness surrounding Afghanistan. Casa doesn't realize how he is using Nabi Khan's ideologies to make meaning for him, but while he is staying at Marcus's, he unknowingly expresses his desire to go back to war. As Aslam points out, "he wants to go back to the state of war. For the clarity it brings" (*TWV* 336). This clarity is brought about by a feeling of heroism which makes him feel significant as a fighter in war. He believes that defending his beliefs makes him heroic which makes him want to stay in a state of war and keep fighting.

In case of Nabi Khan, whose violence is considered 'subjective' in the context of war on terror, this self-esteem is satisfied by holding meaning together in the name of religion and fighting for it. In case of David and James, whose violence is 'objective', nationalism provides this sense of heroism. James finds this sense of satisfied self-esteem and heroism by working in the army and tells David that by being in the army, "I am still doing what I can for my country and the world" (*TWV* 246). For him, the war he was fighting was "about nations and ideals. About carrying the fire" (*TWV* 328). He believes that his fighting keeps the devastation of the world at bay. Consequentially, he feels heroic by fighting for the world. He asks David: "Just look around you, David. Look at all the devastation all around you. These people have reduced their own country to rubble and

now they want to destroy ours" (*TWV* 351). His self-esteem is incapacitated when his national ideals making meaning for him are threatened. In the face of that threat, he finds heroism in defending the worldview that makes meaning in his life. Heroism provides purpose to that meaning.

In addition to heroism, it provides people with a sense of literal and symbolic immortality. According to Ernst Becker symbolic immortality is a belief in immortality of things created by one's self which will outlive him. For him, people

> earn this feeling by carving out a place in nature, by building an edifice that reflects human value: a temple, a cathedral, a totem pole, a skyscraper, a family that spans three generations. The hope and belief is that the things that man creates in society are of lasting worth and meaning, that they outlive or outshine death and decay, that man and his products count. (*The Denial of Death* 5)

In case of James, it's a belief that he is seeking revenge on those who shattered the Twin Towers. He believes that fighting people who shattered it makes him rebuild meaning by obliterating those who decimated his country's sign of power. In a similar manner, Casa seeks literal immortality which provides belief in a life after death. It brings a sense of immortality. Nabi Khan provides Casa with this belief by glorifying death for him. When Casa loses blood on the night of *Shabnama*, "he goes through the orchard, trying to see if his blood is in the dust. Not spilled, but rather given to Allah" (*TWV* 197). The spilling of blood is overestimated to such an extent that his heroism leads him to seek literal immortality. Therefore, he wears a shroud at all times, showing his readiness to embrace death with full zeal. In fact, among his group, desire to achieve literal immortality was so strong that "everyone always [took] theirs with them on arduous operations, to signal their blissful willingness to die" (*TWV* 137). His portrayal of his willingness to die comes from the fact that he knows his death will lead him to another life. His fear of death has been overcome by Nabi Khan through provision of meaning in literal immortality.

4.4 The Creation of Loop

Heroism and immortality (both symbolic and literal) make Casa and Behzad destroy everything that comes their way. It also fulfills Nabi Khan's and Gul Rasool's desire to remain in a position of power. Nabi Khan wanted to see the school which Bihzad brought

down completely decimated. Although, "the building next to school was their original target, a warehouse belonging to their original enemy, but they would be delighted to see the school reduced to rubble as well" (*TWV* 52). Their desire to eliminate the opposite ideological construct creates a lot of destruction. Destruction of school means a destruction of future possibility of generating such an ideology. This acts both as a cause and a result of American invasion in the text. The torture inflicted by James and his men on Casa and many alike creates grievances and makes it easier for men like Nabi Khan to construct ideologies and make meaning for themselves. In the face of threatened position of power, they find a purpose to their existence. This purpose is fulfilled by demolishing the conflicting philosophy, making violence the means to do that. The violence disseminates more violence, leading to people defending meaning more intensely. It engenders an unceasing loop, reasserting that "only the dead have seen the end of war" (*TWV* 32)

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter shows that the desire to adhere to beliefs is also manifested in attainment of power or nationalistic concerns. Ideological constructs all lead to desperate attempts to defend meaning in the face of threats posed in war situation. This leads to a creation of McBride's ETFL in the novel. McBride's model suggests that consciousness about death makes us want to uphold a set of codes in life. Some people form coalition with terrorist ideologies. Fundamental activities result in more deaths in the society. It leads to an aggravation of angst. It creates ETFL. As explored in the analysis above, *TWV* corresponds to ETFL, though in a slightly different manner. Power, religious ideologies and nationalism make people cling on to these external constructs. Kierkegaard's philosophy of existential anxiety heightens the understanding of the terrorists in *TWV*. It is because the terrorists follow religious ideologies. Their distresses, thus, stem from a desire to seek infinity in religious terms. The next chapter also uses a similar pattern to analyze *BMG* and comprehend the operation of existential-terroristic feedback loop.

Endnotes

[1] Objective and Subjective violence have been clearly defined in the introductory chapters in the light of Slavoj Žižek's concept of both the terms. This chapter considers the torture committed by American CIA members as objective violence whereas the one committed by the warlords and Taliban as subjective violence.

[2] The term 'inwardness' has been discussed at length in the previous chapter which provides the theoretical framework for comprehension of Kierkegaard's notion of existential anxiety. This chapter concerns itself with the analysis of *The Wasted Vigil* and thus, does not explicate upon the terms to produce a precise analysis and to avoid redundancy. The term 'inwardness' has been used extensively in this chapter. It refers to comprehension of the soul to vanquish the conflict between finite and infinite. It denounces an external dependence like dependence on nation, religious or cultural consciousness.

[3] As in the case of *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* has been written under the pseudonym of Anti-Climacus. The parenthetical citation of this work has been done under the very pseudonym.

[4] For a detailed look at the postmodern issue of multiplicity and undecidability of meaning, see Bressler 117-125.

[5] Johannes Climacus is used as a pseudonym by Kierkegaard for his work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Henceforth, the parenthetical citation is carried out with the same name with the mention of this work.

[6] See Chapter 3 of this thesis. As stated earlier on, the reason Christianity is in question is that the character identifying themselves with terrorist organizations are under study and they claim to be religious in nature. Since these people unavoidably depend on religion, Kierkegaard's religious philosophy provides a closest possible understanding of the anxieties of these people engaging in terrorist activities.

[7] This pseudonym is used in the parenthetical citation throughout the thesis

[8] Nabi Khan wants Behzad to carry out an explosion at a school backed by American ideology. The extermination of a converse ideology promises Nabi Khan a safer future which can make him feel less vulnerable in the face of death.

[9] The ideologies that Nabi Khan constructs for Casa and Behzad have been based on Koran; the last book of Muslims. However, here it is pertinent to note that in post 9/11 world, an image of Islam has been created by media which makes Islam stand equivalent to terrorism. See Edward Said in *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003) and *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We see The Rest of The World* (London: Vintage, 1997). My research realizes that Islam or any other religion for that matter cannot be reduced to association with terrorism and mere manipulation of some Koranic verses (Holy Book of Muslims) cannot present a picture of Islam in any way. I, as a researcher, do not support intolerance towards any religion.

[10] See Also pp. 26-27, 53

[11] The parenthetical citation refers to another work by Kierkegaard written under the pseudonym De Silentio

[12] See Huntington, Samuel on *The Clash of Civilizations?* The work predicted that the clashes in future would not be based on geographical location, but based on ideological clashes.

[13] See Sobia Kiran as discussed in Literature Review

CHAPTER 5

"THUGS WITH KORAN": EXISTENTIAL-TERRORISTIC FEDBACK LOOP IN *THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN*

> "But have you ever heard a story in which the evil person triumphs at the end?". The boy thought for a while before replying. "No," he said, "but before they lose, they harm the good people. That is what I am afraid of."
>
> --Nadeem Aslam, *The Blind Man's Garden*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets Nadeem Aslam's *The Bland Man's Garden* using Megan McBride's ETFL. Based on the model, it draws a link between terrorism and violence in the novel. ETFL allows conceptualization of people's engagement with cultural worldviews to make meaning in life. It also allows an insight into people's participation in various terrorist acts mediated through ideologies. *BMG* geographically oscillates between Afghanistan and Pakistan. An analytical assessment of *BMG* highlights the disarrayed state of affairs that both Pakistan and Afghanistan have gone through since the collapse of Twin Towers. My analysis discusses the inhumanity and violence that precipitated in Pakistan when Pakistani and American soldiers joined hands to fight the war in Afghanistan. Aslam's description of war in *BMG* renders it to a reading from the perspective of ETFL.

To understand the relation between angst and fanaticism, I have extensively engaged with Kierkegaard's philosophical take on the concept of dread. A similar pattern has been used in this chapter. It apprehends how various characters search for meaning in the manipulated version of religion offered by terrorist leaders. Instead of relying on their 'inwardness' as postulated by Kierkegaard, they permit external factors to motivate them to their enterprise. The variants of religion presented by fanatic leaders grants their life with a purpose. They follow those principles and believe that they have found harmony in the world.

BMG by Nadeem Aslam was published in 2013. It concentrates on the condition of people affected in Pakistan because of the war on terror in Afghanistan. His novel zeroes in on the lives of two foster brothers Mikal and Jeo from a fictional town in Punjab called Heer. They travel to Afghanistan to tend to the wounds of those injured in the war. However, on their way, they are sold to warlords. Jeo departs this world in a raid on a Taliban house where Mikal and Jeo are held as captives. Mikal, on the other hand, is sold to American CIA members who inflict torture upon him as a terrorist suspect. Upon being freed, Mikal journeys back to Heer while encountering various people on his way. One of his stays, for instance, is at Akbar's house who is also hosting Taliban and al-Qaeda members in addition to hosting Mikal and keeping them safe from Americans. Through Mikal's journey, Aslam takes his readers into the heart of the conflict and allows them to analyze the violence imposed on the innocent and the guilty alike.

Mikal's admittance into the custody of the warlords, or his father Rohan's blindness at the hands of a warlord, Jeo's death in an American raid, disappearance of Akbar's sister in a similar American charge at his house, and the 'objective' violence inflicted on Mikal all make one easily understand how each member directly or indirectly involved in the viciously conducted interrogation at CIA administered cells or fierce battle against the 'infidels'[1] is both engaging with and legitimizing it in the name of religion/ nationalism. These people defend the worldviews which make meaning for them when imperiled. Assessment of this condition from the standpoint of ETFL allows me to explore and apprehend the motivations behind any kind of violence. It makes me aware of how barbarism is produced and maintains itself.

BMG is set in Pakistan and oscillates between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The character of Major Kyra, an ex-military man from Pakistan army, helps regulate the analysis of the deteriorated security situation in Pakistan in the wake of 9/11. As Aroosa Kanwal notes, Pakistan suffered from an insurgent situation both before and after the 9/11 attacks because of its involvement with America and its support of American cause. Under Zia's regime, Pakistan "support[ed] the US-funded Afghan *Jihad* against the Soviets" and consequentially "revived a concept of militant *Jihad*" (Kanwal 8). Trained in *madrassahs* in Pakistan, these militant *Mujahideen* turned into Taliban and al-Qaeda (Kanwal 8). "After the Soviets' withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US changed its policy towards these holy warriors from pro-Taliban to anti-Taliban"

(Kanwal 8). In *BMG*, Major Kyra, who is an ex-military man, does not advocate Pakistan's backing of this new US policy[2]. He begins utilizing savagery as a means to preserve what makes meaning for him. This chapter, thus, examines all the characters who are engaging in violence either to guard their core beliefs or to fabricate the basic principles of life. I intend to investigate how ETFL is produced in the novel.

The rest of the chapter analyses *BMG* from the standpoint of Megan McBride's ETFL to see how the characters uphold and endorse their tenets. As I have mentioned earlier, I have adapted McBride's model to conduct a systemic interpretive research. I have resorted to Kierkegaard's idea of existential dread in order to see the 'reciprocity of angst and fanaticism'. The remaining chapter, thus, pivots its concentration on both the idea of angst as executed in the novel as well as the role it plays in creating ETFL.

5.2 Inwardness and Meaning-making

In *Either/ Or*, Kierkegaard emphasizes his ever present concern over the use of inwardness to recognize one's self. He accentuates that one may triumph over the uneasiness that follow the first sin. He says:

> What, then, is this self of mine? If it is to be a matter of a first glance, a first shot at definition, my answer is: it is the most abstract thing of all which yet, at the same time, is the most concrete thing of all- it is freedom. (Eremita 516)[3]

Subsequent to the first sin, man identifies his spirit which stirs within him. It sets forth for man the multitude of choices which emanate from his capacity to choose. This begets a trepidation. It originally issues from the conflict between an infinite soul projecting itself against the finite physical self. For Kierkegaard, resolution of anxiety is freedom and this solution only occurs if man enables the soul to engage with itself. It means that one must benefit from his/ her 'inwardness' to transcend beyond the finite and grasp the concept of infinity. In order to cope with existential crisis, individuals try to figure out the reality of their existence by associating with certain tenets. Basically, Kierkegaard informs that there are two methods of discovering meaning and purpose in life. The first one involves using an inwardness. The latter involves disengaging one's inner subjectivity from one's self. It seeks meaning in cultural, religious or other worldviews supplemented by use of logic. Kierkegaard rejected the use of logic. He denounced Hegel for his endorsement of the same. Rather, he supported the use of 'inwardness' to recognize the spirit and vanquish nervousness.

In *BMG*, Nadeem Aslam's characters proffer an insight into the meaning-making through reliance on external constructs or beliefs. Such institutional principles majorly consist of nationalism or manipulated version of religion. Both bestow life with an aim. It allows people to remain free of existential and identity crises. The *Fakir*[4] in *BMG* testifies to the philosophy of Kierkegaard and defines how various people render their lives meaningful. He defines the world for Rohan in the following words:

> *Ahl-e-Dil* and *Ahl-e-Havas*. We are all divided into these two groups. The first are the People of the Heart. The second are the People of Greed, the deal makers and the men of lust and the hucksters... The first people will not trample anyone to obtain what they desire. The second will. Here lies this world. (*BMG* 85-86)

In the light of Kierkegaard's existential anxiety, the *Ahl-e-Havas* are the people who make meaning and ascribe purpose to their lives by killing and decimating anything that does not conform to their dogmas. Thus, they 'trample' with everyone to secure their meaning-making constructs in a high esteem. Unfortunately, depending on predefined set of rules leads a wrong path to the understanding of an infinite God. It is not done through the cognizance of the infinity of the spirit, which Kierkegaard believes to be the key to comprehending the infiniteness of God. God is, thus, understood in terms of others' perspective of God. This exterior dependence separates man from his soul. It does not allow a recognition of the very spirit whose immortality man unknowingly seeks. Hence, man remains in a state of angst. It produces ETFL, as characters are unable to defeat their disquietude, and it follows them to a ferocious defense of their organizational beliefs. It inflames the situation and stimulates both death and existential dread. Thus, overpowering one's agitations through institutional principles originates an incapacity to comprehend the infinite. It triggers a desire to conquer the infiniteness of life by pursuing immortality. It is, then, achieved by cohering with various ideological constructs and defending them with brutal force.

5.2.1 Of Capitalism and Greed: The *Ahl-e-Havas*

 Nadeem Aslam opens *BMG* in Rohan's garden where several birds are ensnared by a bird pardoner. He unravels his incentive to Rohan by explaining to him that "he rode through town with the cage full of birds and people paid him to release one or more of them, the act of compassion gaining the customer forgiveness for some of his sins" (*BMG* 7). As it was, "the freed bird [said] a prayer on behalf of the one who has bought

its freedom" (BMG 7). On the very onset, Aslam forecasts the events to come as he showcases a microcosm of the situation of innocent people in Afghanistan. Mikal and Jeo's imprisonment and trafficking alludes to the very image of encaged birds highlighted by Aslam. Mikal and Jeo's innocence provides neither consolation nor liberation. They pay the price for the attacks Twin Towers despite their innocence. They are just like the birds paying a price for others' sins. The subsequent ripples cross over the porous border and reach Pakistan. It causes troubles for Mikal and Jeo because "the logic is that there are no innocent people in a guilty nation" (*BMG* 6). Rohan's son Jeo informs his father Rohan about his wish to "go to the border city [Peshawar] and help tend" (*BMG* 6) to those getting injured in Peshawar. At this point, Rohan is unaware that Jeo wishes to cross the border to Afghanistan with his foster brother Mikal accompanying him. Both the characters remain unaware of the destiny that awaits him and his brother. Although both brothers leave Pakistan for a humane cause, they suffer like the caged birds. They become victims of capitalistic concerns like the bird pardoner's.

When Jeo discloses his desire of going to Afghanistan to Mikal to tend to the wounds of the injured, Mikal is clearly perturbed. He decides to accompany his brother. Unfortunately, both Jeo and Mikal fall prey to Major Kyra's capitalistic motivations. They are told to get off the van which is driving them to Afghanistan and are sent to bring water for the rest of the people in the van. When they return, Mikal realizes that they have perhaps been "exchanged for weapons" (*BMG* 53). "Or were we sold for money? The Taliban need soldiers, reinforcements, and I think we are two of them" (*BMG* 53). As is apparent in the text, the meaning/ cultural world view that provides organization to the otherwise disorganized life of the Taliban needs to be reinforced. Taliban's decision to make meaning in the face of threats that are furthered in the war on terror make them use money to buy people. They, then, make the captives fight for their cause. Mikal and Jeo both fall a victim to Major Kyra's greed and grievance. It makes him forward Mikal and Jeo as baits for Taliban's causes. The Taliban find the addition of two men to their cause an asset. It can reinforce their ideological concerns by having an army of advocates of the similar ideology.

Major Kyra, who is an ex-military man and an ex-member of Pakistan's intelligence force (ISI), does not approve of Pakistan's alliance in the extermination of al-Qaeda forces. Those forces were a creation of American training in *madrassahs* in

Pakistan. In the wake of his rapacity, he wishes Jeo and Mikal obliterated. Their major crime is that their father does not uphold what Kyra believes in. The very cause of creating al-Qaeda that had once defined his purpose of life was changed by new US policy. Now, it required annihilation of Taliban. When reversed, this led to a threat to the very purpose of creation of *Mujahideen*. As al-Qaeda and Taliban started being considered a motivation behind war on terror in America, Kyra wanted to eradicate those who maintained the opposite beliefs. However, in addition to his core convictions being threatened, he also faced the grievance of his brother Ahmed the Moth. Ahmed was killed by ordinary citizens because of his associations with Taliban ideologies. Major Kyra faces fear of death upon the murder of his brother. He becomes more passionate about what makes meaning for him. As he thinks of his brother and the principles that they both believed in, he decides to destroy anyone conflicting with those tenets. His very consolation lies in conveying Jeo and Mikal off to be sold to Taliban. The injustice carried out intensifies his apprehensiveness about death. The heightened perturbations make him seek revenge upon Rohan's sons. This feeling of revenge is further inflamed because Rohan did not believe in Ahmed's cause of fighting in the name of religion. In this way, Kyra develops a relation between death trepidations and terrorism propounded by McBride. It later leads to ETFL. Kyra plainly asserts his burning desire to avenge the boy and expresses that he would "like this boy to be sent to the very heart of the war, or bring one of the battles to where he is" (*BMG* 32). This very yearning administers his idea of selling off the boys and they are resultantly sold off to the Taliban.

The capitalistic motivations are not only limited to individual offenses. Kyra's trade of the boys provides him with money while simultaneously allowing the Taliban to stress their credos. It is accentuated through an advanced and a bigger organization that supports their religious worldview. Many people have been trafficked into the confines of Taliban and American. They fulfill the capital interests of the leaders of violence-inflicting institutions. Just like Kyra, warlords in the novel unravel their avarice by trading men with Americans. At one point, the bird pardoner's own son is sold off to the warlord who is freed later with the help of Rohan. Through Rohan's sympathy towards the bird pardoner's son, Aslam takes his readers to the heart of the warlords' pleonexia. When Rohan enters the warlord's compound, he sees many prisoners and thinks to himself that "these prisoners must all be insignificant, because

the important ones are handed over to the Americans for $5,000 each" (*BMG* 128). The warlord's detainees serve his need to have a good capital. It allows him to remain in a position of power. Rohan notes that "he clearly hopes to have a role in government" (*BMG* 128). The position of power makes meaning for him which he tries to establish through trade of men as well as acquirement of money in return. Thus, in order to overcome the existential crisis roused in war situation, monetary purposes become one of the ways in which people make meaning in their lives. In opposition to Kierkegaard's emphasis, warlords, Taliban, Americans and characters like Kyra all detach themselves from their souls. They find meaning in external constructs which are supplemented by capital because monetary power enhances the man power through human-trafficking.

The way Jeo and Mikal are merchandised provides a look into how the situation in war on terror is explicated by Aslam through his text. *BMG* opens into the horrors entailing the war on terror. It also observes how the acts of violence, and a desire to defend meaning is not restricted to one feature alone. As people in the novel are exchanged for money, one notices the aspiration of people to be able to hold monetary power which can buy them more advocacy. The bigger the organization formed by supporters, the easier it becomes to uphold one's ideals. These ideals are important to be adhered to because they give an integrated view to their world and thoughts. As a writer, Aslam makes space for one to look at the terrors that are disregarded. He gets inside the heads of the characters to elucidate the entire condition.

Kamila Shamsie states in an article published in *The Guardian* that as far as Pakistani writers are concerned, "one of the most compelling urges in [their] fiction is to tell those stories that have been suppressed" ("More Honest than Facts" 30). In fact, as Aslam gets in to the heads of his characters, he becomes able to comprehend the situation in a more profound manner. His aptitudes as a fiction writer lie in this possibility to get into people's heads. As Shamsie writes in the same article:

> Fiction writers go where news reporters and historians dare not tread: into characters' heads, into the dreams they lose at the moment of waking, into the memories forgotten, the fears never articulated even to themselves. We do all this, even while making stuff up or distorting and embellishing 'what really happened' for the sake of a dramatic arc; and, in so doing, we claim our ability to convey emotional truths, more revelatory about a time and place than any series of facts. (30)

Aslam's capability of keeping aware of the situation makes it possible to closely perceive how filling materialist appetite is of vital importance in the lives of terrorist leaders. It also helps other people who make meaning in the face of anxiety. When terrorist leaders and American forces buy and sell people to fight for them, they use their greed to not only attain power but also to enlarge their organizations in number. This allows them to contest for what is significant for them. When Mikal is sold to the Talibans, the money made on him gratifies Kyra's longing to retaliate against the suffering that was inflicted upon his brother. Concurrently, it satiates his greed for power. He becomes able to buy more people and utilize the money in order to fight and maintain the worldview that makes meaning for him. Similarly, when Mikal is sold to Americans, it permits them to enquire him by incurring torture upon him. Americans exterminate any insecurity about the future actions of the disparate forces. Consequentially, it lets the Americans remain in the position of power. As a result, they can continue to preserve their ideologies without the fear of al-Qaeda or Taliban. In short, exchange with money does not only satisfy the monetary greed but also allows to hold and maintain the position of power. These people, the buyers and sellers, become the brain behind ideological perpetration. The perpetuation of beliefs allows not only to make meaning but also to validate its authenticity by having more and more people following it. These ideological constructs, however, are external and not found on the basis of an 'inwardness', It makes people incapable of comprehending their existence through an understanding of the soul. They find immortality in the basic rule governing their lives and resolve the conflict between finite and infinite.

5.2.2 Leaders of Violence as Kierkegaard's 'Fashion Designers'

Kierkegaard in his work, *Stages of Life's Way*, spread out the comprehension of the nihilism in society by discussing the example of a fashion designer (Chap 1). Also discussed in previous chapter, the fashion designer constructs his purpose of life by basing it on an outward structure. In his case, it is his profession. In doing so, he makes everyone follow his profession. They lose their own identity by following the styles promoted by the fashion designer himself. They form their identity by clinging on to the beliefs designed for them by the fashion designer. They become like the fashion designer who does not understand his inner self or the soul. This does not allow him to find freedom from the anxiety that his soul faced after the first sin. He continues to build upon this meaning-making construct. The leaders of all violence in *BMG* take up

the form of the fashion designer in that they trade the men for monetary purposes as discussed above. Additionally, these leaders of groups, directly or indirectly involved in violence, shape principles for themselves out of various ideologies that they believe in. As they believe in those ideologies, they also make others believe in the same ideologies by manipulating religion. Thus, "terrorist recruits are offered a two-for-one deal in which the terrorist ideology combines the meaning-giving value of organizational identification with the meaning-giving capacity of religion" (McBride 565). The terrorist leaders, in this sense, create nihilism by making the recruits find meaning based on the external constructs created by the leaders themselves, thus contaminating others with the lack of understanding of their selves. It ultimately leads to nihilism in society.

When Mikal and Jeo are taken by Taliban, they end up in a Taliban fort which is raided by Americans. In the face of Americans, the leaders want their people to defend what makes meaning for them. Mikal and Jeo are instructed to take lives. Mikal instructs the young soldiers should lie low because they will be "better off" (*BMG* 62). He is answered by a passionate vehemence stating that "they will be better off but not our cause [...] everyone has to fight" (*BMG* 62). Paradoxical as it may sound, they fight and struggle to defeat death forebodings by embracing death. The leaders have told people that their cause has to be upheld in all cases. It is due to this fact that these people ascribe purpose to the lives of these people. The more defined the aim of life, the easier it is to vanquish existential angst. As McBride notes, the "meaning-giving effect is best accomplished via identification with a highly desirable goal or an organization that has permanence and consistency" (564-65). This is how a set of beliefs is premeditated by a Taliban warrior. He himself is reliant on external paradigms for finding meaning in life. These people are not contingent on an inwardness to understand infinity, rather they seek it through finding safety in life as well as afterlife. Safety in afterlife is in the form of martyrdom. As it has not been sought on the basis of an inwardness, it makes the society face nihilism as these people have to depend on external sources to find freedom. What makes meaning for them requires freedom for them to live peacefully, which cannot be achieved.

Kyra also presents the figure of the fashion designer in *BMG*, using his ideologies to make meaning for others. Thus, it leads to a huge number of people who have not been able to monitor their anxieties and have ended up holding on to cultural

and religious worldviews, desperately defending these meaning-making constructs in the face of death anxiety. He is nihilistic because he understands his life through an external construct and resolves his anxiety in a similar manner. His preaching to others leads him to make his followers also disengage with their spirits. Kyra so strongly believes in what makes meaning for him that he sends people to fight in Afghanistan for his cause. He is confronted by Basie about sending his brothers Jeo and Mikal to fight in Pakistan and also labout the lie he told to another father stating that his "boy would be looked after" (*BMG* 209) but led him to the heart of war to die. He tells Basie that

> I had to tell the father that. He is a eunuch and a traitor and an infidel in all but name and was granting the boy permission to go to *Jihad*. What are we supposed to do? Bow down before America? (*BMG* 209)

Kyra makes meaning by depending on ISI's cause; the military cause that revived the militant *Jihad*. As his fellow military men have allowed the alliance of America to alter their cultural worldview, Kyra has more forcefully clung on to his beliefs. As he feared that the boy's father would not send him to the heart of war, he lies to him, so that someone can defend his ideology for him.

Later on in the novel, Kyra also sends his pupil to fight for his cause by taking siege of a school based on American ideology. Strange as it may sound, "among the twenty-six recruits there are seven who don't know what today's destination is, and what is planned once they reach that destination. Nineteen are in the know" (*BMG* 264). Kyra does not care if his people are aware of what is going to befall them as long as they do what makes meaning for him. It makes him feel secure in what he identifies with. Kyra's cause is being led by others. It makes him feel secure in his identity What he believes in is not only understood by him but also by the rest of his companions. It eliminates any chance of being overpowered by an opposite ideology because of the man-force behind his cause. Thus, even faith becomes an external concept because it promises immortality in an unceasing afterlife. The infinity of spirit is easily understood through Kyra's construct based on religion. It provides a promise for future life in which the inifinite spirit remains infinite.

5.2.3 Faith as an External Construct

Kyra's exaction as Kierkegaard's fashion designer would not be complete without the comprehension of his followers who solely depend on him to find purpose in their lives. Not only is their purpose of life defined by Kyra, they also find faith by depending on him. Kyra's ideology "provides [them] the opportunity to find meaning via an external construct" (Mcbride 564). Instead of using their inwardness and becoming the *Ahl-e-Dil* like Aslam's Fakir in *BMG*, they use an external construct. Kierkegaard had solved the problem of overcoming one's anxiety about life, about finitude and infinitude through the inner workings of the soul. It is done so by comprehending one's soul, and reaching an understanding of the infinite to attain a level of faith. Unfortunately, Kyra's people use his description of the infinite to achieve that level of faith. Kyra disapproves of anything that does not correspond to his faith. When Rohan sells Ardent Spirit, his school, to Kyra's brother, he makes him promise that the school will not be used to produce warriors having radical ideologies. But, when a "bomb had exploded in a market in Kashmir, killing bystanders as well as two Indian soldiers [...] Rohan had confronted Ahmed, and Ahmed had let Rohan know that he had long had doubts about the soundness of his faith" (*BMG* 32). As Kyra's brother, Ahmed believed, only those who fought in the name of Islam could be verified as faithful. Those who did not testify by holding on to *Jihad* or other meaningful constructs were not compartmentalized as faithful.

Kyra's pupil solely depend on systemic institutions to define meaning for themselves. It leads them to feel insecure about their souls because their outward ideological constructs define the level of faith of their souls. One of his pupils Ahmed had gone to join *Jihad* following the 9/11 attacks in October and had "return[ed] only a fortnight ago" (171). His *Jihad* in the battlefield asserts his beliefs for him. It allows him to prove his faith to himself and other people. He believes that the fight in the battlefield will provide salvation to his soul. It makes him testify to the soundness of his faith. As his faith is dependent on worldly systems, anything which imperils his faith endangers his very soul. When asked by a woman to help her attest that her son has not attended Ardent Spirit, one of the pupils says, "It's a test [...] We, our very souls, are being attacked by the West from many directions" (*BMG* 177). The fact that the religious ideologies that they believe in are being attacked jeopardizes their soul's strength. It makes them strongly attest to their faiths by fighting to remove that

insecurity. In fact, they go to the extent of fighting and killing all those whose ideologies differ from theirs. It allows them to save themselves from the apprehension of watching their souls being attacked. Just like Kyra's pupil, others in the country also believe that their souls are under attack because their souls have not transcended all human knowledge and sought inwardness to make meaning in their lives. Instead, the needs of their souls have been enumerated by someone else. Therefore, this trend can be seen in various characters who appear in the novel even if they appear shortly.

At one instance in the novel, Mikal is asked by Akbar to help him by delivering a bag to his sister. Upon reaching, he only finds Akbar's cook and her husband and agrees to help him to find enough money to make his way back to Heer. He is asked to deliver some goods to another city while dropping Fatima, the cook, at her sister's. There, he stumbles upon an American. Considering the possibility that he knows about the whereabouts of Akbar's sister and her husband, he takes him back to Fatima's sister's house so that he can be interrogated in English. Mere presence of an American in the house triggers a war. The back of the van where the American is chained is attacked by the boys in the house. They feel that their very faith is being risked in the presence of an American. Any contradictory ideology is a menace to their soul and its salvation. Mikal wanted to inform the residents of the house that he had chained an Ameircan in the back of his van "but then [the boys] came and wanted to start a war" (*BMG* 365) His assertion is responded to by one of the boys who says "what do you mean start a war? [...] We are already at war" (*BMG* 365). The difference in ideologies makes these people feel that the Americans "want to wound not only our flesh but our very souls" (*BMG* 361). The insecurity of soul exists because their faith has found its base in external constructs. Thus, anyone advocating American ideology or the one that Islam is at war with disgusts these boys.

5.2.4 Nationalism and Meaning-Making: A Case of Objective Violence

National consciousness also creates meaning in life. It ascribes a purpose to life. For example, the Americans in *TWV,* maintain their national ideologies. The reason of the insecurity lies in the intimidation that the 9/11 attacks have posed to their identity. They wish to keep their identity intact. It is noted by TMT researchers that death apprehensiveness is not the only reason why people savagely defend what they believe in. In fact, "contemporary researchers have identified five major categories of existential anxiety: death, isolation, identity, freedom, and meaning. In this paradigm

the first essentially culminate in the fifth, a desire for meaning" (McBride 563). The threat to American identity as people of a superpower country led them to intensely hold on to the ideologies of nationalism. It made them defend their nations with intense passion. The identity crisis leads them to carry out barbarism against the Afghans. The ruthlessness is legitimized in the name of defense against the collapse of Twin Towers. The defense is against those who believe that their souls are seeking redemption. People like the Taliban and Kyra's followers all make meaning based on religion. It makes them feel that their souls are being fed even when they are just disengaged from their souls. The American ideology of nationalism makes them embrace their identities by clearing the potential threat posited by the opposite ideology. What they do in the face of such ideologies is that they buy and question the prisoners through violence. Mikal is made to confess to his crimes that he has not even committed. It has been done through torture that has been inflicted on him. It includes sleep deprivation, beatings and cold rooms (*BMG* 184-189). Not only that, many innocent people are also killed who had nothing to do with terrorism. Mikal is one of them. The patriotism legitimizes the violence and hence the meaning is made through national ideology which leads to objective violence.

As the identity of the Americans is threatened, they also start reducing the identity of the 'other' by reducing them to terrorists. Hence, their violence is made to seem legitimized. Valentina Bartolucci notes that in post 9/11 world, terrorism is "uniquely seen as 'Islamic terrorism'" (562), and all Muslims are "casually linked to terrorism" (582). The identities which Muslims associated themselves with have faced a reductive trend. Muslims have been generally considered terrorists without exceptions. The resultant identity crisis surfaces in *BMG* in multiple ways and leads to reconstruction of the identity through violent means. The defense of identity, however, is passionately pursued in the face of death angst. As people see that "their most sacred beliefs and values, even their own identities, are uncertain; that they face a bewildering array of choices in their lives; and that in many ways they are alone in an indifferent universe" (Koole et al. 212). In the face of worsened death forebodings, many characters in the novel safeguard their meaning- making constructs passionately. Major Kyra faces apprehensions of unease as he comes upon the death of his brother Ahmed the Moth. Ahmed is killed in the street because he was identified as a Taliban. His identity as a Muslim in the post 9/11 war on terror created room for being beaten to

death. He was one of the Muslim, who had gone from a "terrorized minority to a terrifying majority" (Appadurai 111). As a result, "a group of ordinary citizens had grabbed hold of him and a Taliban soldier on the street corner and forced them to the ground" (*BMG* 47). Every atrocity that had occurred in Taliban regime "was poured into the two men by fist, club, stick, foot and stone, and when they finished and dispersed nothing remained of the pair. It was as if they had been eaten" (*BMG* 47). Ahmed's identity as a Taliban and the mediation of that narrative led to this death. It did not only inflame the death anxiety in Kyra but also intensified the desire to avenge on people who did not approve of the way he made meaning.

Holding on to identities that have not been sought out through inwardness is what has made meaning for both Americans and the terrorists. The terrorists, whose violence is subjective and not legitimized as opposed to the legitimized violence perpetrated by the Americans as a means of defense, hold on to their meaning-making constructs. However, "though these meaning-giving entities may seem relatively dissimilar, they share a rudimentary framework" (McBride 564) in that both hold on to what makes meaning for them and defend their identities through violence. The violence of the Americans may be objective violence but it is violence nonetheless and all that befalls the people in Afghanistan is defended in the wake of death anxiety following the attacks of Americans. The violence is answered by further violence and leads to a creation of the loop. I have seen that the dependence of external constructs leads people to an unresolved existential anxiety and makes them defend those constructs with intense passion because such constructs are more vulnerable to physical threats. The rest of my chapter discusses how defense of meaning is creating a never ending loop of destruction.

5.3 Violence, Destruction and the Cyclical Loop of Death Anxiety

Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, and Tom Pyszczynski wrote about the anxiety of death in their article titled "Fear of Death and Human Destructiveness":

Potentially paralyzing dread of death is thus the inevitable result of a self-conscious organism. This horror is compounded by the realization of one's profound vulnerability. Death can occur at any time for reasons that often cannot be anticipated or controlled. . . . Furthermore, this horror and dread of death becomes amalgamated

into unmitigated terror when combined with the recognition that humans are . . . no more fundamentally significant or enduring than a fly. (qtd. In McBride 562)

The war on terror in Afghanistan results in such a fear and dread as death is inevitable and ever present in a state of war and as the rule goes, "there are no innocent people in a guilty nation" (*BMG* 6). The innocent and the guilty are questioned alike as is evident from the suffering of Rohan's family. Rohan's son Jeo, who merely wanted to help the wounded in Afghanistan, became a victim of American raid at a Taliban fort leading to the suffering of his father and his wife. Jeo's foster brother and Mikal's brother Basie is not an American but becomes a victim of Kyra's wrath for teaching at an American backed school and is killed with eighty-six bullets, leading the family to a state of remorse. Similarly, Mikal, who has nothing to do with Taliban is made a victim of the atrocities incurred by Americans to make him confess to his non-existent alliance with Osama bin Laden and such other brains behind terrorism in the eyes of America. In such a wake of death anxiety where existential crises is not only existing but overwhelming people in the form of un-channelized anxiety, people defend their meaning very forcefully. Such forceful assertion of their principles that are making meaning for them, is often carried out through violent means and acts. This leads to the creation of a loop in which death anxiety creates a desire to resolve existential crises by holding on to meaning-giving constructs and, thus, forming an identity. This identity is defended in the wake of threats through terrorism and violence which further creates devastation and increases death anxiety leading to the cycle. Hence, because

The relationship between anxiety, radicalized ideology, and violence is cyclical, once individual choose to find meaning and purpose in life by endorsing or actually joining a terrorist organization they are caught in a process which compels them to reaffirm their participation in, or support of, terrorist violence. (Mcbride 568)

The creation of this feedback loop is evident in *BMG* where people not only find meaning in their lives but also seek immortality in the face of death anxiety, thus making it easier for them to find immortality and create a sense of impermanence in after life. However, all of this merely leads to a never-ending loop of death and destruction.

5.3.1 Promised Immortality, Heroism and Meaning-Making

In the wake of death anxiety, nothing makes meaning in its entirety except for the desire to have permanence through literal and symbolic immortality. The immortality promised by religion is what comes to the rescue for the leaders executing terrorism through their torchbearers like Ahmed. Ahmed, who is one of Kyra's followers, is one of the many people who fight in the faith that they will receive martyrdom at the hands of the enemy and dwell in an everlasting afterlife. At the same time, the cause makes the idea and purpose of life apprehensible in terms of the symbolic immortality it provides. All the characters, directly or indirectly involved in terrorism, believe in an afterlife which makes them espouse the cause of their leaders with a more forceful passion than they first did. Kyra's cause, for instance, dwells on the idea of Muslim brotherhood and exalts those who are fighting for all the Muslims across the world. The cause believes in demolishing the opposite ideology using the deification of the past to mould the fresh minds. Kyra does not directly involve himself where death is a constant threat and directs his men to fight for his cause in the face of death. The ideas of immortality and glorification that are precipitated in the group are used to make his followers submit to what makes meaning for him.

When Kyra is first introduced in the novel, he sits in Ardent Spirit considering how he'll use the boys at school to "set his plans in motion" (*BMG* 31). It is evident that the ideology that is being used to send the boys is being driven by a sense of heroism. As some of the students get ready to depart to fight the war in Afghanistan, "many [are] in tears at the news of destruction and slaughter" (*BMG* 31). The interesting thing, however, is that,

> Some of the teachers and older children were telling stories of rescue and heroism from Islam's past, of populations in distress saved by pious gallants, and the listeners, becoming impassioned, were letting out cries of 'Fear not! Help is on its way from Heer!' Hoping to be heard across thousands of years. (*BMG* 31)

The reading of the stories of glory serve the purpose of making the boys abide by the ideologies that make meaning for them. Their survival in a scattered and disorganized world is subject to meaning made through symbolic immortality as these boys realize

that like their ancestors, they will be heard for a long period in time. Like their stories of glory are shared, so will the boys' stories be shared.

It is not only the praise of the fighting but also the glorification of what makes meaning for people. The cause that people are made to fight for is so strongly overestimated that everyone starts making meaning through the cause, and fighting for it. The laws that Taliban make are not man made and are credited to religion and its immortality. The infinity of God makes the laws which makes the supporters dwell in the misapprehension of infinity. In fact, this makes them feel at peace as the combats draw near. When Mikal and Jeo are sold off to the Taliban, they end up in the Taliban fort where they encounter the soldiers. Mikal meets one of the boys whom he guesses to be about thirteen at most (*BMG* 56). "Full of courage and the sense of duty", these new "boys are fighters and veterans of various *Jihad* training camps. They have a feeling of relief and a subdued stimulation in them at the prospect of holy combat drawing near" (*BMG* 56). As the war draws near, they also converse "earnestly about the Crusades and *Jihad*, of legendary weapons and famed warriors, and they are from all parts of Pakistan and the wider Muslim world" (*BMG* 56). They are reminding themselves about the grandeur that they can find in fighting the cause of Taliban. As the cause is exalted, these people desire to be remembered immortally like they are remembering the Muslims that have gone. It sets their acts in motion and makes it easier for them to fight for the attainment of heroism.

The veneration of death delivers further reasons to remain attached to the goals of the cause people believe in. Those who die are believed to have lived forever. They are associated with a literal immortality which describes them as living in an impermanent life. It is the hope of attainment of this everlasting afterlife that makes people seek martyrdom. Jeo's death has been considered in the light of martyrdom and his dead body is respected. As a martyr, his body is not washed as is done with normal dead bodies and he is "buried with the blood of the battle still on him" (*BMG* 77). After his death, when the women of the family go to the graveyard at the grave of Jeo, they are not to allowed to enter. The women standing at the gates consider it a sin for women to go into a graveyard. The women reflect their faith in the afterlife as they assert that they will pray for the soul of the departed (*BMG* 93). These women also believe in the glory of martyrdom and this literal immortality, and glorify death by chiding Jeo's female family members and stating that "You should be ashamed of yourself. He gave

his life for Allah and you are disgracing him" (*BMG* 93). His life was given to Allah which means that he found eternity and immortality. He became one with the infinite and found infinity. This is what makes meaning for the followers of terrorist organizations and makes it easier for them to fight for the religious causes. As they fight, they handle and overcome their death anxieties in the best way possible; by finding immortality and overcoming death.

5.3.2 Ideological Clash and the Loop of Violence

Mikal and Jeo's departure from home to tend to the wounded in Afghanistan informs them about the intensity of the ideological clash on their very first stop. As they are asked to find water to be handed over to the Taliban, they stumble upon a dead body with "a piece of cardboard [...] held in place on his chest by the broken-off tip of a spear, driven into him between the fifth and sixth ribs" (*BMG* 52). The sign reads "*this is what happens to those who betray Allah's beloved Taliban*" (*BMG* 52, emphasis in original). The Taliban are so aggressive in upholding their cause that any betrayal is treated and responded to in this manner. This is not where the ideological clash and the consequential brutality and violence stops, this is where it begins. In response to this, most Afghans hate the Taliban and inflict violence in response to the violence of Taliban. The Taliban fort in which they are taken instills a feeling of fear in the heart of Mikal and he thinks that "the people in the village will show no mercy when they come in with American reinforcement and weaponry" (*BMG* 59) for he thinks that the fort must be "the most hated and feared place in the region" (*BMG* 58-59). It is the clash of ideology that makes people intensely hold on to the worldviews making meaning for them and then defend them so violently that it leads to hatred for each other. The hatred is so intense that when the Americans raid the Taliban fort, one of the soldiers enters and instructs the people that "no one of you is allowed to die until he has killed twenty of the enemy" (*BMG* 66). The hatred based on the ideological clash leads to violent defense of meaning which ultimately leads to destruction and exacerbated death and existential anxiety.

The ideological clash is so strong that individuals carry arms against each other based on personal grievances. As stated earlier, part of Kyra's desire to seek revenge on Pakistani intelligence agency's alliance with America is caused by the loss of his brother. Just like Kyra's desire to avenge creates an atmosphere of destruction and devastation by killing innocent people during the siege of school, Americans also kill

other innocents for what happened to their people. While the Taliban fort was being raided, Jeo was murdered at the hands of a female American whose words before killing Jeo were, "this is for what your people did to my man" (*BMG* 67). The generalization of terrorist acts leads to killing of the innocents which results in exacerbated death anxiety and kills people for being a part of the community. Everyone at the Taliban fort is fighting because of the associations they form with groups. As they are seen as a part of community and not as individuals, the destruction caused by both ends is also aimed at whole communities. The destruction, in this sense, leaves no room for an end because each and every person is fighting for the grievances they are caused, for their meaning-giving constructs that are threatened, and for the death anxiety that is increased with every death. All of it leads to a never-ending loop of revenge where meaning and life is more intensely protected and defended. The bird pardoner's regret at existing after 9/11 resonates in his words as he expresses that "all I can say is if September's terrorist acts had to happen, I am sorry that they happened in my lifetime. They have destroyed me [...] What does Heer know about New York?" (*BMG* 117).

The strong defense of meaning creates destruction of schools and churches and creates a loop of destruction. As church and schools form the basis of ideological perpetuators, these places are bombed time and again merely to keep the ideologies safe. Churches in Pakistan are constantly bombed as Kyra mentions the destruction of churches "have not deterred the West from continuing with its war" (*BMG* 172). As the explosions on churches have not produced the desired results, Kyra has decided to take siege of the school as schools produce the ideological basis. However, it is not merely being carried out by Muslim fanatics like Kyra. Before Kyra's initiation of the siege, there has also been an attack on a school backed by Muslim ideology. It is reported by Ardent Spirit van that "a religious school had been bombed by the Americans in Afghanistan, killing a number of small children" (*BMG* 201). As Kyra's men enter the school, they are burning with rage which is not directly associated to particular attack being talked about, but still responds to the ideological clash and hatred for that school. As Ahmed enters the school, he tells himself, "the worse the better [...] the more ruthless we are, the more visible our fury" (*BMG* 270). The fury results from the ideological clash and the destruction of his land and his people at the hands of those holding the opposite ideology. This creates a loop of destruction in which Americans kill the innocent children studying in religious schools to obliterate the prospect of Muslim

ideology taking power in the future, while religious fanatics do the same to achieve vice versa.

5.4 Conclusion

BMG by Nadeem Aslam illustrates the existential crisis in the wake of post 9/11 war in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The existential crisis leads to a search for a purpose in life to comprehend man's existence. This purpose of life is found in creating meaning-giving constructs like religion etc. It allows people to make meaning and spend their daily lives feeling significant. The anxiety about death is worsened in Afghanistan and Pakistan because of the war. The characters in the novel start shielding their ideologies sadistically. Mikal and Jeo end up in a Taliban fort which is raided by Americans, highlighting the fury and wrath of Americans at the collapse of the Twin Towers. Their insecurity with the al-Qaeda and terrorists stems from the vulnerability and suddenness of death posited by the attacks on the Twin Towers. As a result, their wrath is inflicted on the masses in general. It is defended by other characters in the novel. Major Kyra, for instance, defends against the killings and war in Afghanistan by taking siege of an American school and being violent against people. Americans bomb religious schools whereas spiritual fanatics bomb churches. They take siege of American backed schools, creating more death anxiety in the wake of destruction. Hence, they bring an even more intense defense of beliefs and create a loop of violence. The next chapter concludes the whole research and sums up the findings of the analysis.

Endnotes

[1] In *BMG* and *The Wasted Vigil*, the word 'infidel' has been used by the characters who are carrying out terrorist acts to refer to those who are not Muslims. This has been used derogately to define the ones who have an opposite ideology.

[2] The new US policy towards Taliban is actually the initiation of war on terror in Afghanistan.

[3] Like other works by Kierkegaard, his work *Either/ Or* has also been written under the pseudonym. My parenthetical citations follow the same.

[4] *Fakir* basically refers to a beggar but in Muslim connotations, *fakir* is a religious person who is extremely poor because he refuses to accept any worldliness. He remains oblivious to what he looks like, to what he eats or to what he wears merely because he is too engrossed with his spirit and his God. By pleasing God, he only feeds his spirit and lets his body alone.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I started this study with the basic premise that Nadeem Aslam's novels *TWV* and *BMG* represent the state of war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It depicts both the objective violence and subjective violence carried out by American and Taliban/ extremist forces respectively. My thesis has focused on scrutinizing the existential breakdown in the wake of the death forebodings. According to my thesis statement, there exists an inevitable reciprocity of angst and fanaticism, which creates an unceasing cycle of war. I delimited my study to the analysis of *TWV* and *BMG* to understand the relation. My thesis has explored that the uneasiness accompanying improbability of death is perpetrated by war in Afghanistan and deteriorated security situation in Pakistan. It has sought to inspect the effects of existential concerns on the desire to maintain belief systems. The effects imbue life with meaning. Moreover, my study has concerned itself with highlighting how the worldviews are constantly imperiled at the hands of opposing forces. It leads to an ideological clash. My research has attempted to investigate the consequences of the conflicts engendered by disparateness of faith. While analyzing the novels, my project has also tried to converge its attention on the use of violence by both state and non-state actors to see the ideological clashes in their entirety. Therefore, my study kept its focus on resultant violence. It also sees its dependence on the clash of principles, resulting in continuity of war, as depicted in the novels of Nadeem Aslam.

The analysis on the selected works has been done in the light of the research questions that I began my research with. These research questions have been able to direct my research throughout. It has not only allowed a well-administered analysis but also helped me keep my study fixated. In the light of the research questions, I have first examined the characters' desire to make meaning to understand themselves and their existence. Secondly, I have tried to scrutinize the characters' affiliation with organizations that construct meaning for them. They merely try to overcome their existential crisis and find a purpose of life. Finally, I have studied how the tenets defining life have been aggressively defended in the wake of death apprehensiveness. It has produced an

ideological as well as a physical dispute. It creates a loop in which beliefs are constantly threatened by death and fervently protected. Keeping in mind my research questions, I have conducted a systematic analysis of the novels using existential-terroristic feedback loop by Megan McBride as my major theoretical framework. I have supported this theoretical framework with the concept of existential angst given by Kierkegaard.

Megan McBride's model ETFL establishes itself on the proposition that the vulnerability of death and its anxieties instigate a desire to find meaning. Worldviews allow one to ascribe a purposefulness to life. One's principles, then, are viciously shielded when endangered. The forebodings of death and angst, in this study, have been understood through the concept of anxiety given by Kierkegaard in his work *The Concept of Anxiety*. His concept of anxiety has been helpful as it explores the religion based resolution of death trepidations. It is the very case with the terrorists in the novels. Savagery perpetrated by non-religious institutions or by performers of objective violence has also been briefly discussed in the analysis of the novels. The major portion keeps its attention focused on the terrorist and religious extremist philosophies. The concept of angst given by Kierkegaard proves helpful in this light. It permits the understanding of the working of religious minds. It also answers as to why the terrorists in the novels have deployed religion to understand their existence and its purpose. Thus, I have first understood the role of existential perturbations in meaning-making and, then, allowed this to lead to my major area of concern; that of creation of ETFL.

In the analysis of *TWV*, I have primarily concerned myself with analyzing the state of objective and subjective violence in the novel. I have understood this violence as a consequence of defense of institutionalized ideals in the wake of death and existential forebodings. I have used Kierkegaard's proposition that inwardness is crucial to understanding of the soul. It states that dependence on external constructs is merely a replacement. This has resulted in adherence to beliefs that need to be vehemently defended. Any threat posed to those ideologies brings down the whole organizational value of that construct, ultimately causing an identity crisis. The analysis has exhibited a dependence on power and has highlighted the hierarchical structure that is upheld by opposite forces to keep the core principles intact. The protection of power has also been understood as a means of relieving the uneasiness of death. It allows the characters in the novel to vanquish

the feeling of their insignificance that they feel when intimidated by death anxiety and war. Power allows them to hold on to these ideological constructs and make meaning in life by having a larger organizational following. This leads to a vehement defense of meaning-giving ideologies. It creates a loop in which objective violence threatens the tenets of agents who enact subjective violence. The defense by these perpetrators of subjective violence brings about a further risked ideology of the originators of objective violence. This creates a never ending loop of destruction and death in *TWV*.

While conducting my analysis on *BMG*, I have followed a similar pattern as that followed in the analysis of *TWV*. First and foremost, I have focused on the characters' desire to find meaning. I have, then, noticed the cultural or religious worldviews that fulfill this desire. I have analyzed how the characters, directly involved in terrorism, have used organizational affiliation to make meaning for themselves. I have focused on the proposition that the violent defense of the meaning-giving constructs have been legitimized and justified by the leaders of the organizations. It has been done to keep the disarray of characters at bay. The characters have, in this illusion of organized meaning in life, adhered to violence to defend the causes of their leaders. I have seen how this has not only happened as a result of existential crisis but has also been made successful by a similar search of meaning by the followers of such principles. It has resulted from and in the existential breakdown. Furthermore, the analysis of my chapter has also seen how the dependence on external constructs of religion to understand the infinity of God and life has resulted in a desire to seek martyrdom. Martyrdom promises immortality in religious terms. The death consternations have increased in the novel as innocent people have also become a victim of violence. Although I have already summarized the major points of my study, I still want to provide a clear view of the findings of my study under a separate head for the purpose of clarity.

6.1 Findings

My research is a qualitative research. It analyzes the above mentioned fiction by Nadeem Aslam to understand the politicized repercussions of violence. The savagery is channelized by identifiable agents like labelled terrorists as well as by unidentified actors. The unrecognized actors are characters who are subjected to violence at the hands of American

members of CIA. The findings of this study cannot be generalized as they are based on the study of the fictional characters. Considering the analysis of the primary texts, the findings allow the understanding of the ETFL as suggested by the model of Megan McBride. However, as proposed by McBride's model, death concern, though prominently instilling a desire to make meaning and defend it violently, does not remain the only reason behind acts of fanaticism. It is also conducted because of the unmonitored anxiety as a sinner and a religious person. Additionally, it is executed in search for infinity through martyrdom, glorification and heroism found in death, ideological clashes exacerbated by both objective and subjective violence, injured self-esteem, capitalism, dependence on external meaning-giving constructs to achieve infinitude of soul, and grievances all add up with the death anxiety and create ETFL.

The first and foremost finding of the analysis is that the religious extremists in the novel, identified as Taliban, members of Al-Qaeda, or other terrorist organization, all suffer from an existential angst. It stems from their inability to channelize their anxieties. They recognize the presence of a spiritual self. It comprehends the possibilities and chooses between them. It also projects itself on the finitude of man. However, it leaves him perplexed. In most cases, it is this inability to seek an inwardness to comprehend the infinitude of this spirit that results in an unmonitored anxiety. As people do not use their spirit to understand itself, they become detached with that spirit and seek meaning in external constructs. Those who are directly involved in the acts of violence and terrorism in the novel, thus, start finding infinitude in institutionalized beliefs. The religious agenda of spiritual salvation allows them to overcome the death trepidations and pursue infinitude. The extremist ideologies are those made extreme by trampled version of religion. They make people understand the infinitude easily. ETFL does not speak of the notion of angst as purported by Kierkegaard. The analysis in the light of his take on angst has allowed me to gather a deeper apprehension of the reasons behind association with religious constructs. I have studied this specifically in the selected novels.

Another finding of the analysis showed that as suggested by TMT researchers- the theoretical basis of McBride's model- the issue of death and existential anxiety is also overcome by seeking literal and symbolic immortality. The characters seek infinitude of the soul. It makes them face death courageously because they believe that they will live in

an eternal afterlife if they die fighting for a religious cause. This, however, is a belief predefined by another human being. It has been defined without reaching the soul. Thus, it becomes an easy way to comprehend the infinity. It promises them eternity as a reward for martyrdom. Similarly, the novel also depicts the desire of attainment of immortality by finding an everlasting glory. They believe their acts of heroism will outlive them as anecdotes. This will also keep the organizations that make meaning for them alive. This finding is based on the study of characters in both the novels. Life remains an insignificant thing for characters enacting terrorism in both the selected texts. Paradoxically, the characters overcome death anxiety by facing death and finding infinitude in death.

Both *TWV* and *BMG* present characters who seek immortality. They also conform to the proposition made by TMT researchers that the insignificance of man engenders an even more intense defense of principles. The finding asserts that meaning-making constructs provide self-esteem. The belief systems help keep man's insignificance at bay. The characters in the novel very strongly hold on to such systemic institutions when faced by conflicts on beliefs. The contradiction between principles creates an aura of destruction. This finding, thus, leads to an understanding of the reasons that force the characters to defend their beliefs through fanaticism. It also shows why characters are forced to annihilate the opposite values. The ideals that do not conform to the terrorist ideologies imperil their authenticity. They feel insignificant and their self-esteem is injured. The ideological contradiction demands the characters to not only fight the ideology but try to demolish it by attacking schools, churches or any other institutions that can act as a hub of ideology to be channelized.

As stated earlier, the ideological clash stems because the followers of ideologies depend on external factors to understand their own existence. They ascribe a purposefulness to their life through institutionalized predefined set of codes. One of the findings shows that the terrorist leaders in the novels construct their meaning around attainment of monetary power. As the meaning in their life remains intact because of bigger force and more capital, they manipulate people and create illusions of infinity for those people. In this way, their cause can be upheld, power can be maintained and safety can be kept intact. As highlighted by Nadeem Aslam, there are no distinctions between innocent and guilty. In fact, innocent characters are traded to earn capital. It also leads to personal

grievances that make people try to avenge those who have committed crimes against them. Thus, a cycle of war and savagery continues.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

My research has enabled me to urge the future researchers to look in to Pakistani Literature in English from various perspectives. In view of the study of *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden*, I am able to suggest a reading of Marxist tendency in formation of terrorist ideologies. The terrorist beliefs are inextricably dependent on large capital. In fact, the novels may be inspected to understand the resolution of existential anxiety through capital power. Since the characters in the selected fiction portray capital interests, it is beneficial to comprehend Aslam's text from this perspective.

I have seen the execution of ETFL in the selected works of Nadeem Aslam which focused on terrorism. I believe Omar Shahid Hamid's novels can also be analyzed from a similar view point. Hamid himself worked in Police's Counterterrorism Department in Karachi. His works dilate the terrorist mindsets in Pakistan. ETFL can be applied on his work *The Spinner's Tale*. It highlights the development of an innocent mind into a *Jihadi*. The boy's character can be understood from McBride's point of view.

A similar comprehension of *Jihadi* beliefs and motivations is evident in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner: A Novel*. It represents a conflict between police and gangsters. Thus, it renders itself to a reading from this perspective. A similar story unfolds in Hamid's *The Party Worker*. This novel expounds dirty politics and terrorism. All these novels portray both objective and subjective violence. These texts, then, can be analyzed through exploration of ETFL as well as the relation between objective and subjective violence.

Bilal Tanveer's *The Scatter Here is Too Great* investigates sectarian conflict. It also highlights bombings. His novel can be analyzed to see the relation between existential angst and fanaticism in general. One can also explore the defense of sectarian ideologies in the novel in relation to existential crisis. In a similar line, Pakistani sectarian conflicts discussed in Shamsie's *Kartography* can be approached from this view.

Shamsie's novel *Homefire* also shows a third generation immigrant's character who turns in to a terrorist. He does not live in a war situation. His character can be explored to understand what crisis led him to associate with terrorist principles. His crisis resulting from his conflict between home and host identity can be investigated. Thus, I urge the potential readers to look in to these Pakistani novels and analyze them in the light of ETFL.

I hope that my research paves way for other scholars focusing on Pakistani Literature in English to analyze novels from the view point of ETFL. I also expect researchers to view the novels I have selected from various perspectives. This will allow an analysis of Nadeem Aslam's works in detail. I hope that my recommendations benefit in opening new areas of research.

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