

## **REASON, ENLIGHTENMENT AND RELIGION: AN EVALUATION OF THE CONDITIONS OF LISA LU'S "RE-ORIENTALISM" IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE FICTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Orientalism by Edward Said is the standard explanation of determining the West in relation to the East. However, Lisa Lu has reinvigorated it through her notion of re Orientalism, which aims to redefine West/East binaries in order to revitalize the image of the East. In contrast to Said's "Orientalism," which focuses on how the West builds the "Orient" and the "Occident," this theory looks at how eastern cultural producers respond to an "Orientalized" East and whether they choose to conform to or subvert the expectations of Western readers. In this perspective, the research interprets a selection of Anglophone Pakistani fiction. The major theoretical area of the critical debate here is to see where Pakistani writers practice re-orientalist discourse and where they are taking the burden of independent representation (the core element of re-Orientalism). The paper argues that most Pakistani fiction as for instance *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam fails to reorient the narratives along the lines mentioned below. First, it fails to reorient incompatible views of religion, reason, logic, and contemporary enlightenment. Second, it fails to reorient the beliefs linked with fanaticism and Muslimness by submitting to a stereotyped interpretation of religious extremism. Thirdly, it fails to distinguish between religious and Islamic attitudes and the cultural and political marginalization of Pakistani minorities.*

**Keywords:** *Orientalism, Re-Orientalism, Pakistani Anglophone writings, Enlightenment, Reason, Religion.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Pakistani English fiction represents a distinct literary domain, expressing the rich tapestry of narratives that arise from the complicated interaction of postcolonial history, cultural identity, and linguistic hybridity. This collection of literature, as a product of Pakistan's colonial past, embodies the legacy of British imperialism while simultaneously claiming a distinct Pakistani voice and wrestling with the problems of a nation in transition. A strong sense of postcolonial consciousness pervades Pakistani English writing.

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These narratives examine the historical, social, and cultural ramifications of colonialism, delving into the legacy of power dynamics, cultural erasure, and the quest for self-definition. Pakistani authors question and disrupt colonial myths through their writing, recovering agency and establishing their own cultural and national identities (See Cilano 2018, 2009). Furthermore, Pakistani English literature provides a venue for disadvantaged voices and alternate perspectives (Shamsie, 2011). These works draw attention on the experiences of women, religious and ethnic minorities, and other oppressed groups, providing a counter-narrative to prevailing narratives and questioning cultural standards.

The discussion of cultural representation in postcolonial Pakistani fiction would be inadequate without mentioning the obstacles and criticisms surrounding its occasional failure. It is important to recognize that not all works of postcolonial Pakistani literature succeed in their goal of representing and reclaiming Pakistani culture. A number of issues contribute to the lack of cultural representation in this literary form.

The homogeneity or exoticization of Pakistani culture is the primary factor. Postcolonial Pakistani literature has occasionally come under criticism for its constrained or clichéd portrayal of Pakistani culture, which supports too literal or flat political/cultural representations: "caught within the politics of the nation and national representation (Raja, 2018). In fact, by failing to express the country's full richness, diversity, history and cultural variety, this might result in the reinforcement of orientalist stereotypes in which Pakistan's cultural identity is reduced to tropes of terrorism, destitution, or backwardness.

This can lead to the perpetuation of orientalist stereotypes in which Pakistan's cultural identity is reduced to stereotypes of terrorism, poverty, or backwardness, failing to convey the nation's complete complexity and diversity. Secondly, the dominance of Western perspectives and readership is another factor that contributes to the problem of cultural representation. Pakistani authors who write in English frequently negotiate the preferences and expectations of Western audiences. In this process, there may be a tendency to prioritize narratives and experiences that correspond with Western interests or preconceived notions of Pakistan, thereby diluting or eradicating certain facets of Pakistani culture that may not conform to these expectations. This may result in an inaccurate or insufficient depiction of Pakistani culture. Thirdly, language's limitations can present obstacles to cultural representation. While Pakistani English fiction has acquired popularity, it is predominantly accessible to a small English-speaking audience. This presents an obstacle for authors who choose to write in regional languages, whose works may have difficulty reaching a wider audience. This linguistic divide can impede the

representation of Pakistan's diverse cultural experiences and contribute to the underrepresentation of marginalized communities whose narratives may be best conveyed in regional languages.

Moreover, issues of power dynamics and privilege intersect with the question of cultural representation. Then postcolonial Pakistani fiction frequently emanates from a particular segment of society, typically urban and educated elites, whose perspectives may not encompass the complete diversity of Pakistani experiences. This can result in a limited depiction of cultural identities, marginalizing voices from rural areas, religious minorities, or underrepresented communities who may have distinct cultural practices and perspectives that are inadequately portrayed. It is essential to engage postcolonial Pakistani fiction critically, acknowledging both its successes and shortcomings in terms of cultural representation. By acknowledging these deficiencies, authors, readers, and critics have the opportunity to actively resolve the voids and work towards more inclusive and accurate depictions of Pakistani culture. This can be accomplished through a commitment to amplify diverse voices, challenge stereotypes, and provide space for multiple narratives that reflect the complex tapestry of Pakistani society. And by fostering a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of Pakistani culture, postcolonial Pakistani fiction can evolve into a space that captures the full breadth and depth of Pakistani experiences and contributes to a more accurate and authentic representation in the global literary landscape.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

The major theoretical area of the critical debate here is to see where Pakistani writers are practicing re-orientalist discourse and where they are taking the burden of independent representation (the core element of re-Orientalism). Drawing on Lis Lu's notion of Re-orientalism, the study examines a selection of Anglophone Pakistani fiction from this point of view. The main theoretical focus of this critical argument is to determine where Pakistani writers engage in re-orientalist discourse and where they shoulder the burden of autonomous representation (the key aspect of re-Orientalism). The study contends that most Pakistani literature, such as *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam, fails to reorient narratives along the lines outlined below. To first of all, it fails to reorient contradictory perspectives on religion, reason, logic, and modern enlightenment. Second, by accepting a stereotypical view of Islamic extremism, it fails to reorient the concepts associated with fanaticism and Muslimness. Third, it fails to distinguish between religious and Islamic sentiments and Pakistani minority' cultural and political marginalization.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the problems of re-orientalizing the epistemological standpoint of religion, science, rationality, enlightenment, and fundamentalism in contemporary Pakistani fiction, specifically *The Geometry of God*, *The Wasted Vigil*, and *the Golden Legend*.

## **1.3 Research Question**

How could contemporary Pakistani fiction be evaluated in the context of Lisa Lu's theory of re-orientalism?

# **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2.1 Re- Orientalism**

This research aims to address that gap by offering a critical analysis of the selected texts in light of "re-Orientalism," a term coined by Lisa Lu. "Orientalism" as Lisa Lu (2007) argues, "has long been evident in the literature written about South Asia from the days of colonialism, which began with non-South Asians writing and representing the Indian Sub-Continent and its people". Re-orientalism, in a new way of looking at the representation of the Orient:

The curious development over these few recent decades is that Orientalism is no longer only the relationship of the dominance and representation of the Oriental by the non-Oriental or Occidental, but that this role appears to have been taken over (in part at least) by other Orientals, namely, the diasporic authors. This process of Orientalism by Orientals is what will be termed as 'Re-Orientalism' [...] which is the same relationship of the powerful speaking for and representing the other, who is all but consigned to subalternism. In Re-Orientalism, we have the curious case in which the positionality of the powerful is simultaneously that of the insider and outsider, where the representing power can be simultaneously self and other (Lu, 2007). It's oddly exciting to see the diasporic authors extend their re-Orientalist viewpoint. Lu says that while some may see the work of diasporic writers, most of whom are based in the West, as Orientalism, the distinction is there since these diasporic writers may be identified as Orientals in terms of their culture, ethnicity, etc. As the Orient is the source of their ancestry and culture, they are not complete outsiders to the Orient (and indeed many have very immediate and strong links to the Orient). Even though they are geographically located outside of Asia, diasporic South Asian writers hold a dominant position in the literary canon and in the construction of the South Asian stereotype (Lu, 2007). Furthermore, Re-Orientalism inherently subversive and suffer from serious epistemological instability, "In Re-Orientalism, we have the curious case in

which the positionality of the powerful is simultaneously that of the insider and outsider, where the representing power can be simultaneously self and other" (Lu, 2007). But it is "perhaps, in part, an extension of the totalisation<sup>2</sup> that had always been present in the literature, imposing the culture, values, attitudes, etc., of a select minority as representative of the diverse majority" (Lu, 2007). At another place, Lu and Mendes (2012) write, "There can be no doubt in the 21st century that the East is no longer only spoken of, about, and for by the West, but is also speaking for itself. (3); "At the root of re-Orientalism theory is the recognition of the significant fact that the East/Orient has increasingly achieved greater and greater degrees of self-representation and all the implication and ramifications resulting from this increased self-representation." (4). Though she welcomes it as a new trend, but cautions us as well saying "That said, the playing field is by no means level, and its continued unevenness owes much to the colonial structures of power long embedded globally, via institutional structures and hierarchies, systems of knowledge, languages and literature, and colonization of minds" (4). She continues with the same argument, saying, "Therefore, despite having far more access to self-representation than previously, deep-rooted postcolonial legacies continue re-enforcing the significant power imbalance, particularly in the way knowledge is selected, constructed, authorized, then recognized, legitimized, and disseminated." (4). She also draws attention to two intriguing elements of this power of self-representation: First is that the onus of representation "is still largely in the hands of a very few, a select elite, mostly an English-speaking and Western-educated group of Orientals (Pakistani diaspora). – This may merely be a transfer of power from one dominant group to another and not a significant change in the paradigm of power (albeit the exercise of power has changed); this raises questions about the comprehensiveness, representativeness, and authenticity of representation" (5). the second intriguing aspect is again problematic as it ensures that the west "maintains its advantageous position as "Centre"; re-Orientalism theory consequently appreciates that Eastern representations to a large extent inevitably continue in large part through Western lenses, within Western frames of discourse, and via Western knowledge systems" (Lu & Mendes, 2012).

Critically, however, re-orientalist modes of writing are frequently unstable as well as subversive spaces where meanings are always in the process of a shift between opposing modes of creativity. They are shifting in the sense of reinvigorating West as the center as well as attempting to move away from the center. In this sense, re-Orientalism theory demonstrates the potency of Orientalist discourse while also demonstrating its instability and changeability

(Lu & Mendes, 2012). This raises the question of why Orientalist practices continue to exist today which have gained a peculiar significance in view of post 9/11 global developments and the way contemporary Pakistani English Fiction has responded to the narratives. From another perspective, the subject of understanding the evolution of literature from the third world (including Pakistan) has become a political one, rather than an aesthetic one, in a way that is unprecedented in modern writing in the English-speaking world. Ultimately, it comes down to colonialism and the post-9/11 legacy of ideological and cultural pluralism concerns. Both provide specific perspectives through which to read and write fiction (mostly in Re-Orientalizing fashion), undermining in a way issues about where re-orientalism is about paralleling western serotypes and where it means going along the western view point.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is based on the critical debate to see where Pakistani writers are practicing re-orientalist discourse and where they are taking the burden of independent representation (the core element of re-Orientalism). Drawing on Lis Lu's notion of Re-orientalism, the study, based on Textual Analysis examines a selection of Anglophone Pakistani fiction from this point of view. The main theoretical focus of this critical argument is to determine where Pakistani writers engage in re-orientalist discourse and where they shoulder the burden of autonomous representation (the key aspect of re-Orientalism).

### **4. FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Re-Orientalism: Reason, Rationality and Religion**

The portrayal of Islam in the West is one of the areas where the re-orientalist approach is most important. Following 9/11, the polarization between Islam and the west has impacted the way Muslims are read through a certain religious classification, giving rise to disputes about religion and human conduct, religion and fanaticism, and religion and cultural conflicts. It has also sparked a discussion about secularism vs fundamentalism, with a call for worldwide cooperation in the face of so-called "jihad" against western centers of secular liberalism and democracy. In this context, current Pakistani authors are significant since they allow for the study of Islam and its effect on world social order.

The portrayal of Muslim identity in *The Wasted Vigil, and The Geometry of God*, as it will be argued, suffers from an intrinsic deficiency that interrupts the entire formulation of truth about Islam. It will also be claimed that the information and imagery in Pakistani literary narratives such as *The Wasted*

*Vigil* produce a certain kind of depiction of Islam and impact how readers absorb the visuals. It also investigates the issue of contemporary enlightenment and its embodiment in literature such as *The Geometry of God* in order to explain the same insufficient link between Islam and reason. It will be claimed that Khan's writing reproduces several key features of contemporary enlightened thought in order to generate discursive patterns of confrontation between rationalism, science, and Islam. Collectively, the aforementioned narratives fail to Re-Orientalize the East (Islam) apart from western narratives/discourses regarding terror and extremism. As a result, the texts mimic rather than reverting the limited range of western views to portray Islam and Islamic identity in various styles of expression.

Besides, most Pakistani novelists belong to the Pakistani diasporic community. The diaspora condition of the authors accrues them a distinct geographical position where the fiction's intended primary audience is not Pakistani, but transnational audience. Researchers studying diaspora have discovered substantial linkages between diasporic authors and the resident population. Among these links, the question of one's ethnicity and nationality have the most weight, as it is further enmeshed with other aspects of social and cultural life, such as income differences across generations and religious beliefs. The question of religious differences has aptly been demonstrated by the thematic focus of numerous Pakistani novels that offer a post-9/11 reading of the clash of cultures scenario and the tensions of intolerance, terror, and violence associated with Islam (See Blunt 2003 for debates on Diaspora).

The representation and the narratives raise questions about the significance of novels in the process of forming communities and nations. The most important question is: are novels more of a space for articulating multiple belongings than they are a medium that creates imaginary communities? According to an influential idea developed by Anderson in 1983, books were a contributing factor in the formation of imagined communities, or nations. In this context, we need to study how Pakistanis living abroad have articulated this issue in their writings and determine the extent to which their perspectives concur or conflict with those of their Indian counterparts. Predominantly, the imagined Pakistani narratives relate to how their diaspora status has endowed them with a position of "representation" of Pakistan to the rest of the world, which they have thus far chosen to ignore to its full realization. By and large, authors from the Pakistani diaspora describe themselves through a specific range of terms, limiting the variety and breadth of their options for collectively portraying "home", and as Raja (2018) asserts, they ". . . tend to highlight the darkest and the most troubling aspects of

Pakistani culture, the Pakistani readers, constantly under attack from various kinds of Western media. . ."

In its teachings and principles, Islam, like numerous other religions, promotes reason and rationality. Islam acknowledges the significance of intellectual inquiry and critical thinking in understanding the world and strengthening one's faith. Science, mathematics, philosophy, and medicine have all benefited from the contributions of Islamic scholars and philosophers throughout history. Islamic philosophers have developed a tradition known as "Ilm al-Kalam" or "Islamic rationalism," which attempts to reconcile reason and faith. In order to defend and explain Islamic beliefs and principles, they use logical arguments and critical analysis (Nasr, & De Santillana, 1968; Saliba, 2007). This tradition acknowledges that reason can be used to deepen one's understanding of religious teachings and overcome intellectual obstacles. In addition, Islam recognizes the limitations of reason and emphasizes the significance of the spiritual and intuitive aspects of human existence. Islam emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to knowledge that integrates intellectual inquiry with spiritual insight and revelation, despite the importance of reason. It is important to note that individuals and communities can have diverse interpretations and understandings of Islam. Some may emphasize reason and logic more prominently in their approach, whereas others may emphasize other aspects of the faith. Nevertheless, the general consensus within the Islamic tradition is that reason and rationality are valued and can be used to investigate and appreciate the beauty and wisdom of Islam.

The western epistemology is contrary to this. According to Sorkin and Sorkin (2011), despite some support for compatibility between religious beliefs and the enlightenment by claiming that the enlightenment did not undermine the place or authority of religion in European society, the dominant scholarship on the subject tells a different story; a story of the rise of modern secular culture at the expense of traditional religion. The enlightenment, as a movement, generally advocated the lofty objective of secularism, humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, and emancipation from a large variety of repressive regimes and regimens in order to carve out a contemporary and individualistic position in the world, since "neither the certainties of religious faith nor the a priori constructs of metaphysical systems could any longer offer dependable direction" (Vogel, 2000). To Zafrovski (2010), "The Enlightenment represents the paradigmatic exemplar of a cultural or spiritual revolution within Western civilization." "It is especially an axiomatic (by definition) intellectual and rationalistic (including scientific) revolution, a revolutionary vision and process of enlightening, rationalizing, and liberating via human reason, science, knowledge, and societal progress, overcoming unreason, superstition,

ignorance, stagnation, and oppression". There was a clear shift away from the religious authorities towards the autonomy of the individual, who was supposed to take more responsibility for his or her beliefs and decisions (Stewart, 2023)

This change brought about a fundamentally secular and modernist cultural shift. The foundation of enlightenment discourse was the idea that the metaphysical framework or certainties of faith could no longer offer trustworthy direction, necessitating a shift to the world as experienced via experience and scientific inquiry. In this context, the 18th century is a crucial time period. The new world's discovery by Columbus and the ensuing globalization profoundly altered European perceptions of geographic and cultural dynamics and borders. An organized, secular interest in the geography and history of the planet evolved as a trademark of the modern enlightenment endeavor as new continents kept appearing. Numerous intrepid naturalists, astronomers, and botanists explored a wide range of topics, including the genesis of the world and the evolution of plant, animal, and human creatures under various climatic and ecological situations. In this setting, theology and religion have primarily come to be linked to extremism. In the early stages of human evolution and society, Zafrovski (2010) describes how theological knowledge came to be perceived as factually impractical and a form of irrationalism. In contrast, science was considered to be a fundamentally secular endeavor, and its contributions to knowledge, education, and technology were seen as defining characteristics of the contemporary rationalist, progressive, and secular civilization.

From a Re-orientalist standpoint, Pakistani literature must unravel a clear position of asserting the Orient in terms of compatibility between Islam and rationalism, as well as between Islam and modernist emphasis on science and reason. In contrast, works such as *The Geometry of God* narrate the above-mentioned Western epistemological viewpoint of the contradiction between religions, orthodoxy, and rationality. The fiction creates contradictory and discursive patterns between reason, science, rationalism, and religion in the aforementioned environment by mimicking certain fundamental elements of modern enlightened thought. The problem is positioned within the modernist progression of knowledge based on reason and rationalization as the distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization. As a consequence, science is totally independent of religion; rather, it is founded on the categorical denial of theological and metaphysical explanations for scientific facts and utter hostility to religious fanaticism, in her opinion.

The alignment with the modernist enlightened paradigm in *The Geometry of God* (2003) could be explained in the following patterns:

(i) Here, Orientalism is intriguingly questioned through an unequivocal rift between science and religion (Islam), which affirms the so-called binaries between the enlightened west against the dark east. It can be strongly gleaned from the text through the disputed enunciation of determinism and rationalism as two disparate entities in the novel. In the beginning, it is maintained through a dialogic dispute between orthodox Junayd and grandpa Zahoor, which brings to the surface an uncalled-for polarization between religious senses of determinism and rationalism. For instance, while talking about a great achievement of Muslim scientists that is the observatory, Zahoor argues that the Muslim scientists had a worldly objective to use it and that it was not part of any religious connotations to explicate transcendent phenomena to "prove their faith" (Khan, 2003). Likewise, the disagreement between the traditionalist Aba and the heretic Zahoor about the significance of the Arabic alphabet's first letter, "Alif," is illustrative of this tension. Aba is more likely to teach alif in the context of Allah (God), whereas heretic Zahoor insists on linking it to aqal (reason). Similarly, reference to the ancient dogwhale and Zahoor's interest in archaeological excavations of the whale in Margalla Valley is a giant declaration in favor of the scientific, rationalistic, and evolutionary explanation of the world's formation; asserting complex evolutionary process and ruling out any notion of creationism: "Pray five times a day and be a real Pakistani!" Speak Urdu and be a real Pakistani! or English and half Pakistani! Well, here's my answer: study whales and be Pakistani (Khan, 2003).

(ii) Discussions regarding baby Mahwish's blindness also lead to debates over the importance of discussing Islam's relationship to logic, science, and reason. The primary issue is how Muslims should understand scientific progress and the use of reason as a tool for deciphering the truth. There are two divergent points of view on the topic: those who completely dismiss "the potential and feasibility of a compromise between religion and science" (Kamali, 2003), and others who see such a compromise as not only conceivable but vital if the balance of values is to be preserved (Kamali 2003, 116). The rifts between those who adhere to Islam's beliefs and those who embrace science and technology to advance their societies have had a profound and visible effect on the social fabrics of almost all modern Islamic civilizations. Baby Mahwish's blindness must be accepted as God's will, according to the religious Aba. However, Zahoor and Amal disagree. If she wasn't going to need them, Amal thinks God shouldn't have given her eyes, and Zahoor responds, "Maybe, or He started something He [God] no longer wished to continue" (Khan, 2003). "If He knew it was going to get boring, why did He start?" "Perhaps He didn't realize. "or did know but still wanted to try" (Khan,2003).

(iii) One reason the author favors science over determinism and religion is because of his or her pursuit of an explanation for the causes of external events (Khan, 2003). For example, Zahoor provides a causal explanation for Mahwish blindness those conflicts with the deterministic view of the condition. I asked Zahoor, "Why is this poor child's deformity a reason for dieformity?" Who exactly was this dweeb you brought her to? Perhaps she entered one of your husband's workplaces where the sun's rays blinded her and a rock shattered her eye sockets. A response from Aba: "She was blinded, not by man." It was God who made her see nothing. Zahoor is not a fan of this. He snaps back at the determinist notion, "Next you will believe God was taking your sins out on her." Again, Zahoor lashes out in anger, this time at the religious Baba for interfering with his deterministic remark that "you know it is worthless seeking for a reason" (Khan,2003).

In order to properly wrap up this discussion, it is important to point out that the focus on reason as being in opposition to a deterministic understanding of something related to humans is an outright denial of the compatibility between scientific inquiry and religious practice during the medieval period of Islamic civilization and more recent allusions to Quranic teachings on Islam, human creation, and the creation of the universe.

## **4.2 Fundamentalism**

Re-Orientalism gets further complicated when it comes to description/narration of Islamic fundamentalism. The word "Islamic fundamentalism" refers to an ideology that promotes a stringent and literal interpretation of Islamic teachings, frequently with an emphasis on extreme adherence to religious ideas and a rejection of modernity. While Islamic fundamentalism can present itself in a variety of forms and to varying degrees, it becomes problematic when it leads to intolerance, fanaticism, and the denial of basic human rights. Contemporary debates on fundamentalism are strongly embedded in the post 9/11 narratives about "war on terror" The religion of Islam is of particular relevance in this setting, particularly in connection with discussions on religious fundamentalism, extremism, radicalism, and violence that is motivated by religious beliefs (Wilson 2007, Mazrui, et al 2006, Gabriel 2002). The emergent situation, generally referred to as post 9/11 global order, strongly indicates a state of polarization between Islam/Muslims and the West. Akbarzadeh & Mansouri (2007) describe the contemporary brand of Islam as "neo-Islamism" which "can pose a security threat because it does not seem to conform to the conventional differentiation between civilian and military targets. It views civilian casualties as unavoidable 'collateral damage' in its perspective on grand civilization conflict". Though the East is not immune to

these developments as is evident by the protracted war against terrorism in Pakistan, the West is at the center of discursive debates and formulation of regulatory policies /measures to preempt increasing radicalization as it poses serious threat to world peace, and western liberal democratic order. Understandably, the conflict between the West and Islam is not a novel phenomenon. Funk and Said (2004) contend that the conflict between the two civilizations is confrontationalist in nature, spanning over hundreds of years, best described by "us versus them" framework. In the face of the rising level of conflicts "discussion of competing interests and areas of possible compromise gives way to a reframing of conflict in terms of opposed values and essences. Furthermore, it has been argued that due to the decisive nature of the perceptions about the west and Islam and the prevalent "narratives on each side of the cultural divide exhibit remarkably similar tendencies toward polarization of identity issues, adversarial framing of historical relations, and rejection of shared responsibility for contemporary conflict" (Funk and Said 2004, 4). Rahnema (2007) also argues that "The dominant stereotypes in the West, legacies of Orientalist and colonial perspectives that consider Muslims as essentially different and a homogeneous group, have made all people from Islamic cultures guilty by association and cast them as potential terrorists [. . .]."

As discussed above, *The Geometry of God* creates an absolute division between science and Islam to create a condition of conflict between the two. Thus she appropriates a different perspective on the dialectics through the reincarnation of the age old and conventional stereotypes of religion versus rationality. Developing closer affinity with rationality as a superior human faculty, she projects religion (Islam) as opposed to and in-fact averse to rationalized truths. But in the process, she reveals a very limited understanding of Islam –science relation. In fact, her representation core secular renunciation of religion. In this way the west serves as the "Other" to define Islam-science compatibility. Science in total opposition to religious fundamentalism stands in the text fully independent of religion and in fact represents an unconditional renunciation of validity of religious explanation of the natural occurrences.

Specifically, Re-orientalism gets greater significance when it comes to defining and narrating fundamentalism. Agreeably as Emerson and Hartman argue, Fundamentalism is a commonly and loosely used term. Initially used for American Protestantism (Emerson and Hartman, 2006;Salzman, 2008), the term is now used more often from a modern and secular viewpoint to designate fundamentalists in terms of being radical reactionaries or fanatics struggling to grasp power and reverse the process of modernization. Generally, fundamentalism designates religion as an absolute code of conduct; "a closed

system" and aiming to provide clear defined standards to guide followers through the confused labyrinths of modernized living, "simultaneously signifying the denial of the "notion of multiple truths or relative truths" (Salzman, 2008). In Salzman's views, fundamentalism owes a deeper connection with globalization's threat to group identification and self-esteem as upheld by SIT, and motivated cognition theory. Likewise, strong and defensive action from the fundamentalist would be expected when homogenizing effects of globalization threaten self-esteem i.e. the distinctiveness of being part of important groups. Recent development in thoughts on fundamentalism pertains to associating it with violence (Juergensmeyer, 2000) and its convergence on Islam.

In contemporary political rhetoric, 'Islamism' and 'Islamists' are bound with the concept of Fundamentalism in meaningful ways and precisely refer to a set of beliefs that argue that Islam is inseparable from the political process and provides the moral basis for humanity. Such views can properly be distinguished from the proponents of secularism, and therefore in conflict with the modern liberal and democratic norms in the West. Then fundamentalist affiliation need not be only among the adherence of faith. It may even be identified among the most "the most effective buffers against existential anxiety" (Eschaafsma and Williams 831) as it helps them create a perception "of psychological security and hope of immortality" (831). It may help the religious persons to win the support of "relevant others and acquire a sense of value or self-esteem as well" (Eschaafsma& Williams, 2012). Fundamentalism as Gellner (1992) writes, renounces the claim of the tolerant modernist that their faith could imply something that is milder, not very much exclusive, less demanding and accommodating others and therefore quite compatible with all other faiths, or with the lack of faith. Gellner (1992) also argues that the Western uncompromising drives towards secularization have however broadened the cleavage between the religious and modern. Some states particularity in the western peninsula have developed overt association with secularist or anti-religious ideologies, while many have dissociated from the religious to become secular state by default. The eastern bloc/Muslim states still move around religion as a political and cultural factor. Generally, as Gellner explains there is stress on a pre-industrial faith, a founded, doctrinal, world religion in the proper sense, which at any rate for the time being, totally and effectively defies the secularization thesis (Gellner,1992).

Again, instead of dissociating from the predominant western epistemology on Islamic fundamentalism, Pakistani authors delve into a clandestine narration of Islamic fundamentalism that fits well into the Western rhetoric. Aslam for instance complicates Islam to make it synonymous with the

Taliban's radicalism, and in the process of fictionalizing, Aslam highlights some particular practices as religion writ large, sensationalized and dramatized beyond truth, whereas practices that are democratic or egalitarian in nature continue to be completely silenced or destabilized in the text. Without the support and endorsement of history and scripture, radical Taliban Islam is nothing more than a particular type of bigoted performance. Contrarily, Aslam develops a strong relationship between radicalism and Islam: they are opposed to ingenuity of thought, temperance, contemporary education, forbearance, cultural diversity, and science. Without distinguishing Islam from such paranoid conditions as irrationality and radicalism, Aslam clearly projects Islam as a faith that promotes irrationality and radicalism amongst its followers. "At its heart," Islam "does not believe in the study of science; it does not believe that the world operates according to rational and predictable laws..." (Aslam, 2008). The fundamentalist Taliban's aversion to learning has been emphasized, with no reference to Islamic rulings on knowledge and the need to expand knowledge (Ilm). The text frequently refers to verses in the Holy Text that command followers to promote insightful knowledge, wisdom, and development. Suicidal attacks and religious fanaticism are aligned with the teachings of the Koran (Aslam, 2008), and occasionally explicit references to the Koran for the Taliban's terrorist rudeness are contextualized (Aslam,2008). Fundamentalist Taliban ministers, mosques, and madrasas are mixed up in extremism and parochialism. Through polarized views on modern education, conflict between civilizations is inadvertently highlighted. For instance, western laissez-faire and coeducation are detested because "three million Bangladeshis are born in Britain every year because of mixed education" (Aslam, 2008), and the mosque is used as a platform to spread this message across the population (Aslam, 2008). There are paragraphs where suicide bombing and fanaticism line up with Koran teachings (Aslam 2008, 363, 364–365). The Koran is contextualized for Taliban terrorist arrogance (Aslam 2008 121). Also, terrorists, radicals, and "jihadists" are put together through their vicious acts of carnage and typical appearance, i.e., hair style (Aslam, 2008).

#### **4.3 Minorities and Politics**

Pakistan is a diverse country with various ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees certain rights and protections for its citizens, including minority communities. However, like in any country, there have been challenges and issues faced by minority groups in Pakistan. Human rights organizations have raised concerns about the treatment of minorities in Pakistan, particularly regarding forced conversions, discriminatory laws, and sectarian violence (Isphahani, 2018). These issues

require attention and efforts to promote equal rights and protection for all citizens. Curtis argues in her 2016 article that the issues of religious freedom and communal violence in South Asia have deep historical origins and are very difficult to fix. Following the British evacuation of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, partition was carried out to create a separate nation for the Muslim population. Riots between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of people, turning what was intended to be the largest exodus in the history of humanity into a horrific sectarian bloodbath. Both India and Pakistan continue to harbor ill will against one another as a result of the wounds inflicted by the division of their countries. Pakistan views itself as a safe haven for Muslims, while India views itself as a secular democracy accessible to people of all religions. As in India and a number of other nations, the marginalization of minorities in Pakistan is exacerbated by diverse social categorizations. Although a full review is not feasible at this stage, the reason must be understood in terms of political, cultural, and religious elements. Gregory (2012) argues that When Salmaan Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti were killed in 2011, it was a shocking event for Pakistan and the rest of the world. However, it came as an even bigger surprise when it was discovered that their killers had had significant support from inside Pakistan. Gregory attempts to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Taseer and Bhatti and to explain why the killings were met with such widespread approval in Pakistan. Specifically, this article focuses on explaining why the killings of Taseer and Bhatti were met with such widespread approval. These executions raise attention to the worsening situation for Christians (and other religious minorities) in Pakistan and imply that the nation may be adopting a more conservative and Islamist turn. In Pakistan, Christians are a religious minority. The problem has been exacerbated due to many factors, the principal being the failure of developing nationhood in the post-independence Pakistan (see Karim, 2021). Humaira Iqtedar (2012) argues:

While debates about secularism and citizenship have remained focused on the relationship between secularism, minorities and citizenship, it seems to me that the focus of the state is in fact defining and attempting to manage the 'majority', through the paradoxical creation of minorities, if need be. The notion of citizenship so articulated carries an inherent bias towards exception and regulation by the state.

Again, the failure to Re-Orientalize perspectives on the rights of Minorities in Pakistan are gravely undermined, as literary narratives have explicitly attached it to religion alone, which falls under the post-9/11 narratives about Islamic fundamentalism/extremism. As a result, the novel's prejudice and violence against non-Muslim minority is symbolic of an explicit

political discourse that appears to collectively involve Islamic culture in the vagaries of extremism and intolerance. *The Golden Legend* by Nadeem Aslam is the case study. Building on his previous narratives about Islamic fundamentalism (*Maps of Lost Lovers*) and Islamic extremism (*The Wasted Vigil*), this novel focuses on Islamic extremism once more, but this time it is linked completely to anti-Christian hatred and violence. The consistency and form of Islamic extremist discourse is massively skewed, since it not only ignores historical truths concerning Islamic injunctions about treating non-Muslims, but also appears to make extremism the most loud and prominent viewpoint within the Muslim society (see for equitable treatment of Jews by the Holy Prophet (Al-Qāḍī, 2016). To conclude the debate on the topic, it is pertinent to refer to Maria-Magdalena & Fuchs (2020). The authors argue that a one-sided conversation like this might be problematic for a number of reasons. It ignores the fact that many of these traumatic events don't only affect religious minorities. Rather, they are shared by a large number of Pakistani people who are dealing with a lawless state, a failing judicial system, and other issues. The nation's overall human rights record is appalling in 2019, according to reports from many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and watchdogs. Contrary to common belief, a large portion of Pakistan's population, including minorities, face risk there. One cannot overstate how much this common experience of violence and its detrimental ramifications binds minorities in Pakistan to other groups of the population.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Edward Said articulated the notion of the Orient being produced by a hegemonic European political ideology in order to govern and conquer it in his seminal interventionist book *Orientalism*. This notion was supported by Said's usage of the term "orientalism." According to Said, the word included contrasts between the "East" (also known as the Orient) and the "West" precisely so that the "West" could regulate and approve ideas originating from the "East" (the Occident). According to Said, the "West" was able to make broad generalizations about and portray an incorrect picture of Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa due to the convergence of knowledge and power. The essential subject under consideration was how contemporary Pakistani English literature fails to re-orient viewpoints on Islam, Islamic extremism, the clash between faith and reason, and minority treatment. It was analyzed that the global political system is still being influenced by the forces that have emerged since September 11. It has largely molded how we see Muslim communities via a certain theological lens, sparking a slew of discussions on religion's impact on human behavior, extremism within the faith

community, and the potential for a clash of cultures. This is a continuing argument that has been made more heated by the proliferation of non-state actors and their tendency to spread fear over the world. It has sparked a discussion on the relative merits of secularism and fundamentalism, and there have been calls for international cooperation to combat terror. Modern Pakistani authors, as analyzed, offer insight into Islam's influence on the worldwide social order. Yet, the novels' depiction of Muslim identity has fundamental flaws that undermine the whole. Hence Re-Orientalism fails to establish Islam identity irrespective and independent of western stereotypes associated with the worldwide usage of the label "other" to describe Muslims. Therefore, the texts like *The Wasted Vigil* produce a certain form of representation and impact the way readers absorb the pictures. It depicts the Muslim identity in connection to the "other," the native and in fact through them, which is never free from its deficiencies and incompatibilities, particularly within the context of Islam and extreme thought. Furthermore, it examined the problem of contemporary enlightenment and how it manifests in texts like *The Geometry of God*. Contrary to the other two texts reviewed here, Khan's novel reproduces certain key features of contemporary enlightenment in order to generate discursive forms of struggle between rationalism, science, and Islam.

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